

Livelihoods Resilience in Peri-urban Communal Areas of Zimbabwe

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Abstract

This paper reflects on livelihoods options adopted by residents of peri-urban communal areas in Zimbabwe in demonstrating their ability to withstand shifts in survival strategies. The paper characterises the adopted livelihoods options, highlights the drivers of change in established livelihoods strategies, describes the opportunities and challenges from the adopted livelihoods strategies and proposes approaches to building resilient livelihoods options and strengthened rural-urban linkages amid ubiquitous change. Established livelihoods strategies in many peri-urban communal areas globally are generally changing as a result of increased rural-urban linkages, migration, urbanisation, as well as other socio-political influences. In Zimbabwe, residents in peri-urban communal areas demonstrate resilience to such changes as they adopt livelihoods options that enable households to adapt to change and cope with local circumstances. A systematic review of literature guided a detailed and comprehensive search of pertinent and related studies, as well as interrogating patterns on similarities and differences from the selected researches. Online publications including Ebscohost; Science Direct; and JSTOR were reviewed to understand emergent livelihoods options in peri-urban communal areas of Zimbabwe. The livelihoods framework and the structure-agency dialectics were used to extract meaning from the changing local circumstances and the choices made by households to survive in peri-urban communal areas. Peri-urban communal areas of Zimbabwe are depeasantising. However, land remains a critical household asset for diversification of livelihoods options as residents continuously straddle the rural-urban divide. A thorough examination of the growth-point strategy to enhance local development in peri-urban communal areas; reengagement of the third sector (Non-Governmental Organizations) to extend pro-poor credit to small businesses; and addressing the national macro-economic fundamentals are critical to building resilient livelihoods options, and strengthened rural-urban linkages amid ubiquitous change.

***Keywords:** depeasantisation, livelihoods, peri-urban communal areas, resilience, rural-urban linkages*

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INTRODUCTION

Peri-urban communal areas are located in the periphery of urban zones. These spaces are neither rural nor urban and are administered through both the urban and rural land administration systems. Peri-urban communal areas are therefore settlements largely associated with sprawl due to unregulated growth and absence of application of spatial planning functions. In Zimbabwe, the development of human settlements in the peri-urban zones creates shifts in livelihoods strategies for local households that largely depend on peasant farming. Peasant farming in Zimbabwe entails small scale livestock rearing and growing of crops in summer around September and October of each planting season. Mature crop is harvested and stored for food until the next harvest. Peasant farming is seasonal and highly dependent on natural cycles, climatic conditions, as well as good soils. The activity is largely manual and involves use of draught power for tilling land, as well as hoes for weeding. Ranger (1983: 110) refers to the practice as '*chibhakera*' meaning 'fist' cultivation. Holleman (1952: 2) describes weeding as 'scratching the soil' using hoes. This approach to agricultural production is labour intensive.

The established way of life in many households in peri-urban communal areas is under siege and no longer holds. These households are left with little or no choice but to remain resilient amid the changing circumstances. Resilience to shifts on livelihoods options reflects the ability of households in peri-urban communal areas to control the perceived challenges from the process of peasant farming. This paper therefore characterises the adopted livelihoods options; highlights the drivers of change in established livelihoods strategies; and describes the opportunities and challenges from the adopted livelihoods strategies. The paper proposes approaches to building resilient livelihoods options and strengthened rural-urban linkages amid ubiquitous change.

This study focuses on peri-urban communal areas of Zimbabwe that are characterised as small and intermediate human settlements compared to the adjacent towns and cities. Masvingo town and Harare the capital city, are the selected cases to animate this narrative. Masvingo town is largely 'rural' and is surrounded by villages where people mainly practice peasant farming, whereas, Harare is the commercial hub of the country. In Zimbabwe, most urban areas are rather surrounded by emergent human settlements in the periphery – the peri-urban. Most peri-urban communal areas located adjacent to urban centres are slowly transforming from rural to urban and are characterised by a coalescence of activities and residents that interact with

space in dynamic ways. These interactions are largely determined by land rights, thereby impacting the household livelihoods in response to local circumstances. Indigene and migrant households form the broad categories of residents that live in peri-urban communal areas.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Household livelihoods are experienced variedly in space and time. This section provides an overview of literature on concepts that assist to understand the changing dynamics of household livelihoods in peri-urban areas, and how these households adapt. It is therefore important to understand the concepts of land rights and livelihoods in peri-urban communal areas; resilience; and rural-urban linkages.

ACCESS TO LAND RIGHTS AND HOUSEHOLD LIVELIHOODS IN PERI-URBAN COMMUNAL AREAS

Access to land rights is a key element in livelihoods debates in peri-urban communal areas of Zimbabwe. Land rights in peri-urban communal areas of Zimbabwe are categorized as customary under communal land tenure. These land rights are administered by the local traditional authority on one hand and the Rural District Council on the other. In addition, a plethora of Acts of parliaments including the Communal Lands Act Chapter 20: 04 of 2002; the Traditional Leaders Act Chapter 29: 17 of 2001; the Regional Town and Country Planning Act Chapter 29: 12 of 2001; and the Rural District Council Act Chapter 29: 13 of 2002 regulate access to land rights in peri-urban communal areas. The Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment 20 Act of 2013 section 332 (b) (iii) defines communal land as “land set aside under an Act of Parliament and held in accordance with customary law by members of a community under the leadership of a Chief”. The Communal lands Act Chapter 20: 04 of 2002 also defines communal land as, “land which immediately before the 1st of February 1983 was Tribal Trust Land ... vested in the President who shall permit it to be occupied and used”. This parallel administration of communal land rights under the system of customary tenure is enabled by both the traditional leadership and the state through statutes of law. Both indigenes and migrant residents in peri-urban communal areas acquire land rights under the system of customary land tenure through an array of mediums and transactions including inheritance, land sales, land grabs, and renting in order to maintain the balance of household livelihoods in their everchanging circumstances. Access to land rights under the system

of customary tenure is important for household livelihoods generation through peasant farming.

The much-used definition for sustainable livelihoods was coined by Chambers and Conway (1991) who define livelihoods as comprising capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living (Carney, 1998: 4; Cahn, 2002: 2). Livelihoods are therefore a combination of resources used and activities undertaken in order to live (Scoones, 2009). Often, this involves a repertoire of activities (Chambers and Conway, 1991). “A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets ... both now and in the future” (Chambers and Conway, 1991:5). Thus, the sustainable livelihoods framework presents a complex archaeology and hybrid of ideas, practices, and concepts that cut across a variety of development thinking and disciplines (Scoones, 2009). This paper reflects on the sustainable livelihoods framework as proposed by Carney (1999). From that framework, the thrust of the paper is on the livelihood assets and livelihood outcomes from a peri-urban context.

Debates on resilient livelihoods are framed from the perspective of a vulnerability context in peri-urban communal areas in Zimbabwe that engenders people to adapt and cope with stresses and shocks from shifts on peasant farming. For example, trends in population increases, national policy initiatives, national politics, drought and changing land rights all constitute the vulnerability context for many. People’s livelihoods, their capabilities to access and control assets as well as resources are largely affected by the circumstances that surround them, that is, the context in which vulnerabilities to their well-being manifest (Cahn, 2002; Scoones, 2009). This requires them to be resilient. Examining and understanding the household livelihoods resilience is therefore significant in extracting sound and meaningful analysis on what happens to livelihoods in peri-urban communal areas. In this paper, household livelihoods are conceptualised as survival strategies, and simply an art of living.

RESILIENCE AND HOUSEHOLD LIVELIHOODS

The concept of resilience emanates from environmental change and ecology discourses. Resilience is used to explain the capability of a system to adapt to change. According to Walker *et al.* (2004: 2), resilience is the “capacity of a system to experience shocks while retaining the same function, structure,

feedbacks and therefore identity”. Marschke and Berkes (2006: 2) also state that resilience offers a lens with which to explore stresses and shocks...” From a household livelihoods perspective, the concept of resilience simply explains the ability and willingness not only of households, but the livelihoods structures as a system to endure changes and shifts from any form of disruption. In peri-urban areas, household livelihoods often respond to changes from the internal and external environments such as migration, policy and political contexts. Therefore, resilience emerges as a combination of strategies that are adopted by households to derive opportunities from challenges they face. The questions that arise from the peri-urban contexts of Zimbabwe focus on how the livelihoods options or strategies are (re)shaped by the activities of everyday; and how these households respond to such change (and often stressful conditions) in order to survive. The assumption is that – the more the peri-urban communal areas experience change, the more resilient households become by not only sticking to the status quo, but switching and shifting to alternative livelihoods regimes for survival. In most cases, these dynamics are sustained by rural-urban linkages.

RURAL-URBAN LINKAGES IN ZIMBABWE

A reflection on rural-urban linkages in livelihoods debates is important because rural and urban areas are mutually dependent on each other for sustainable livelihoods (Lynch, 2005; Tacoli, 2008). In Zimbabwe, the kinds of rural-urban linkages are complex than usually thought as people continue to straddle the rural-urban divide for survival purposes. These linkages are characterised by movement of people, goods, and services; and the processes are experienced differently in space and time. For example, households that live in rural areas of Zimbabwe largely rely on peasant farming, whereas in urban areas survival activities are predominantly non-agricultural. Since peri-urban communal areas are neither rural nor urban, the survival strategies are a mixity of on-farm, off-farm and non-farm activities as mediated not only by the rural-urban linkages, but the dynamics of human interactions as well.

These rural-urban linkages in Zimbabwe explain the politics of the new movement of people through circular migration from a social, political, and economic perspectives. For example, Bekker (2002) describes rural-urban linkages as important in maintaining both social and kin networks as integral social obligations necessary for continual investment in social capital. The incessant mobility of rural and urban populations straddling the divide is a vital coping strategy that ensures resilience and strengthened livelihoods in

peri-urban communal areas. Well established communication systems and road networks remain key rural development and spatial planning imperatives that enhance ease of movement. It is therefore important to note that the urban influence into peri-urban communal areas demonstrates how rural-urban linkages and migration mediate the processes that characterise generation of household livelihoods as well as resilience that arises not only from local decisions by each of the households, but also from local circumstances since peri-urban communal areas emerge as dormitory villages that host both rural and urban settlement patterns.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A systematic review of literature guided the detailed and comprehensive search for pertinent and related studies, as well interrogating patterns on similarities and differences from the selected researches (see Petticrew and Roberts, 2006). Online publications including books, peer reviewed journal articles and policy briefs on Google Scholar; Ebscohost; Science Direct; and JSTOR were reviewed to understand emergent livelihoods options in selected peri-urban communal areas of Zimbabwe. This paper focuses on experiences from Domboshava, Seke and Manyame near the city of Harare, as well as Zimuto near Masvingo town. The author of this paper is very familiar with these urban centres and peri-urban zones because she visited there on a number of occasions. Her personal experience influenced the findings presented in this paper. Literature search through the systematic review approach did not generate the much-needed data to make concrete statistical inferences as earlier thought. Therefore, there was much reliance findings from a PhD thesis (Hungwe, 2014), as well as observations and informal conversations with residents from peri-urban communal areas of the selected cases. However, substantial consideration was made not to impose personal assumptions and values on the livelihoods' dynamics experienced in these peri-urban zones.

The livelihoods framework (Chambers and Conway, 1991), and the structure-agency dialectics (Giddens, 1984) were used to extract meaning from the changing local circumstances and choices made by households to survive in peri-urban areas. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework postulated by Cahn (2002) explains that people's livelihoods are based on the nature, availability, and capabilities to access assets also known as resources within the vulnerability context they live (Cahn, 2002). Assets include social, human, physical, cultural, and economic elements (Chambers and Conway, 1991; Tacoli,

1999). The Sustainable Livelihood Framework refers to these as forms of capital (Scoones, 1998; 2009; Cahn, 2002). People are always competing for resources and can do whatever it takes to access them (Peters, 1994; 2007).

Whereas, the structure-agency dialectic by Anthony Giddens sees structure and agency as vital social indicators the interplay of these concepts lead to structuration (Giddens, 1984; 1999). Structuration is a result of the structure/agency relationship - the duality of the structure (Giddens, 1984; 1999; 2001). Structures consist of rules and resources that people reflect upon and utilise in their daily conduct within the social world. Such structures are important reference points that enable or limit human action (Giddens, 1984). Agency is the capacity or requisite ways of individuals in solving social problems that arise while they continuously interact with the structure (Giddens, 1984). For example, the capability of community residents in peri-urban communal areas to survive amid shifts in livelihoods options demonstrates agency.

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Peri-urban communal areas of Zimbabwe are experiencing rapid population growth as a result of circular migration, from the urban areas as well as within the peri-urban zone. Three types of households were identified in the peri-urban communal areas. These include the indigenes, migrants, and migrant lodgers. Livelihoods in these households are also shifting.

HOUSEHOLD ASSETS IN PERI-URBAN COMMUNAL AREAS

Secure tribal land rights (through belonging) are a significant component of identity for both indigene and migrant households. In some cases, migrant households hold indigene land rights in their homelands elsewhere. Land transactions are thus an important livelihoods strategy, as well as a process of asset accumulation within peri-urban communal areas. In peri-urban communal areas of Zimbabwe, land constitutes arable, grazing and the commons. Arable land comprises fields and vlei gardens, whereas the commons encompass forests, water, grazing, wetlands, hills, rivers, and watersheds. Arable land constitutive of fields and vlei gardens is supposedly meant for growing crops and vegetables on a rotational basis (see Plate 1).



Plate 1: Arable land and peasant farming in a peri-urban communal area of Zimbabwe

Observations revealed that households in peri-urban communal areas grow crops such as maize (the staple), groundnuts, roundnuts, pumpkins, beans, sweet potatoes, and to some extent sorghum on their fields. They also grow vegetables such as tomatoes, green beans, cabbages, carrots, pepper, and to some extent crops in their vlei gardens. Land use in vlei gardens is often perennial owing to the water retention capacity of soils and dams. Households often dry surplus vegetables and crops produced from fields and vlei gardens and store them in sacks for consumption during off-season. When households run out of stock, they supplement their food resources through supermarket purchases in urban centres and at local shops. For example, in Domboshava, Seke and Manyame people go to Harare; in Zimuto people go to Masvingo. Clearly shifts from peasant farming does not only engender the process of depeasantisation, but also prompt supermarketisation of food provision as a way of dealing with shocks and stresses of livelihoods in peri-urban communal areas.

Community residents of peri-urban areas have rights to access the commons. Common property regimes such as forests and pastures are collectively 'owned' by community residents in perpetuity under the custody of traditional authority. Indigenes that own livestock use common grazing land. Community residents in peri-urban communal areas get firewood for energy

and wild fruit from local forests. Fruit such as loquates (*mazhanje*) and water-berries (*hute*) are common in Domboshava, Zimuto and Seke. Wild fruit is critical in supplementing food supplies particularly when households fail to survive on agricultural production during dry spells. Exotic fruit trees comprise but are not limited to avocado, guava, lemon, apple, mango, mulberry, orange, and peach. Gathering wild fruit and leaves is also an important regular source of food in the peri-urban areas. In some cases, fruit are sold at local markets or in urban areas.

Apart from common property rights, community residents hold individual private property rights. These are associated with the built structures such as homesteads as well as household property such as wells, and household furniture. Individuals in communal areas of Zimbabwe can own built structures, but not the land (Communal Lands Act Chapter 20: 04 of 2002). Owning homesteads in peri-urban communal areas entails belonging and distinguishes substantive community members from lodgers. Community residents of peri-urban areas regard homestead owners as ‘landowners’, and lodgers as ‘landless’. Homesteads are significant assets that not only entail belonging, but ‘ownership’ of land although legally land belongs to the state. Cousins (1990: 6) however stresses that, “absolute landlessness is rare in communal areas”.



Plate 2a: Example of homesteads in peri-urban communal areas of Zimbabwe



Plate 2b: Another example of homesteads in peri-urban communal areas of Zimbabwe

Livestock is also regarded as a significant household asset. Livestock in peri-urban communal areas comprise mainly cattle, chickens, sheep, pigs and goats. Owning livestock is regarded as symbol of status. For example, Vambe (1972) states that traditionally, cattle are as important as the ‘whiteman’s bank account’. Households in peri-urban communal areas use cattle as a hedge against poverty, as well as accumulation of wealth and food production. Household also use cattle to get milk, draught power, and to generate income through sales. Money obtained from sale of livestock is often used to purchase food and to pay school fees among other household expenditures. In some cases, livestock is used as bridal wealth. Migrants that own cattle in their homelands often sell their cattle in time of need to purchase land and building material. Such migrants are thus materially better-off compared to some indigenes as cattle in their homelands are considered as household assets. Homelands emerge as safety nets and fallback positions for migrants in the event that they are ‘fed up’ or ‘tired’ of ‘urban life’ in the peri-urban zone. Many people in Zimbabwe regard their rural homes as retirement spaces (Potts and Mutambirwa, 1990).

Like cattle, goats provide meat, milk, and skin for household consumption and use. Goats and their products are also sold to generate household income.

In some cases, small livestock are used to mediate land transactions as gifts, and inversely mediate conflict between community residents. Community residents also owned chickens and rabbits in some cases. For most households it is easier to sell chickens to generate quick cash particularly during emergencies.

SHIFTS IN LIVELIHOODS AND CHANGING PATTERNS OF SUBSISTENCE FARMING - DEPEASANTISATION

Established livelihoods strategies in many peri-urban communal areas globally are generally changing as a result of increased rural-urban linkages, migration, urbanisation, as well as other socio-political influences. In Zimbabwe, residents in peri-urban communal areas demonstrate resilience to such changes as they adopt livelihoods options that enable households to adapt to change and cope with local circumstances. Households in peri-urban zones of Zimbabwe engage in multiple and extended livelihood strategies. Both indigene and migrant households employ these livelihoods options as a way to adapt to vulnerabilities of living in an ever-changing peri-urban context that requires resilience.

Currently, the practice of peasant farming in peri-urban communal areas is simply a way of avoiding destitution associated with inability to generate income through other means that require wit. Access to land rights and the land holding capacities of households remain critical elements to the practice of peasant farming in peri-urban areas. By resorting to practising peasant farming even on a reduced scale in small gardens and yards, indigenes and migrants demonstrate that they had not abandoned this traditional method of household survival completely, but are simply responding to the local circumstances. Community residents with limited land holding capacities also utilise empty spaces on their yards or small gardens to grow vegetables, and crops such as maize, groundnuts, beans, and roundnuts mainly for household consumption. The practice of peasant farming is related to the symbolic relevance of the peasant economy in communal areas. This demonstrates loyalty to peasant farming as a traditional method of household survival as community residents are not completely ‘dropping out’ but are just ‘hanging in’ this process (Scoones *et al.* 2010; Matondi and Dekker, 2011). This also shows that peasant farming is not necessarily intended to provide household food that lasts a harvesting season, but is just a way of getting and keeping in touch with the past values. In most cases, the output from peasant farming is inadequate. This renders most households food

insecure as they rely on purchased food from supermarkets in most instances. For migrants, growing of crops in small gardens or on empty residential spaces is a hobby since they practice peasant farming at a larger scale in their homelands in some cases. Clearly, peasant farmers' ways of life in peri-urban communal areas manifests in different forms, and these are far from being homogeneous, but are simply being replaced by a new economic order.

In addition, residents from peri-urban communal areas engage in formal employment as a survival strategy. Cousins (1990: 9) refers to this category of workers as “salaried” because they hold salaried jobs, and earn a salary from their engagements. The salariat include both males and females that participate variously on the formal job market. Formal employment comprises a mixture of professionals and non-professionals. Professionals include inter alia university lecturers, teachers, accountants, civil servants, engineers, and construction workers. On the other hand, non-professionals encompass mainly farm workers, shopkeepers, and domestic servants. Some community residents are retrenchees. The older generation engage mostly in traditional professions such as teaching, lectureship, and civil service, whereas the younger generation associated mostly with construction work apart from traditional professions.

Formal employment in Zimbabwe used to be synonymous with education and professional qualifications. Education and professional qualifications of individual household members are significant household assets capable of generating other kinds of income through formal employment. However, some degreed individuals and highly qualified individuals are often unemployed or under employed. As such, community members regard the salariat as better-off because their income streams are often constant although in some instances employers struggle to pay their workforce on time. On the other hand, some professionals choose to engage in nonprofessional activities because they are better paying compared to formal professional employment.

Many households in peri-urban communal areas no longer rely solely on farming or formal employment, but engage in repertoire of perennial off-farm and non-farm activities that are largely informal as forms of livelihoods. Such activities are often marginal, of less significance, and not prime cash earners (Bryceson, 1996; 1999). These activities require low investment and are “easy-entry” points (Gaidzanwa, 1997: 161). The place of informal employment as a distinct household survival strategy in peri-urban communal areas comprises income generating activities that are in most cases

opportunistic. Informal employment and activities are referred to as '*kiya-kiya*' in local language. The idea behind '*kiya-kiya*' is to generate as much quick cash as possible from opportunistic and usually incidental activities through little or no investment. In this regard, the level of informality does not really matter compared to the relevance and contribution of such activities to household survival. In some cases, community residents survive on a day-to-day basis - literally from 'hand to mouth'. While Cousins (n.d.) and Scoones *et al.* (2010) believe such activities are significant within the process of 'accumulation from below', for many peri-urban community residents that engage in less significant forms of '*kiya-kiya*' it is more of 'accumulation from hand to mouth' as they survive each day as it comes. The behaviour of community residents shows that household members as agents continuously reflect on their actions to suit the demands and dynamics of survival in a peri-urban resilient context.

Indigenes and migrants engage in an array of informal activities that embrace informal trading and small business enterprises. These include buying and selling, petty trading, vending/*musika*, cross-border trading; and small business enterprises such as tuck shops, local shops, barber shops, welding, building, brick moulding, small livestock projects, and transport business/*kombi* operators (*mushikashika*). *Mushikashika* is enabled by ex-Japanese vehicles which are relatively cheap to import from Japan. These cars are also called '*zvikipippi*' because the drivers horn recklessly to attract commuters. Cross-border activities and migration to other countries is done on short and long-term bases depending on the nature of activities people engage in while in faraway destinations.

Engagement in multiple informal activities is a common phenomenon in peri-urban zones of Zimbabwe. These informal activities are both a source of investment and basic survival. Even those with salaried jobs engage in informal activities. As such, these activities are not relegated to the poor or those informally employed; but are viewed more in terms of generation or supplementing household income. This demonstrates the disparities entrenched in the practice of '*kiya-kiya*' as a process of accumulation in general, as well as a process of accumulation from 'hand to mouth'. The returns often depend on luck. Most young women and men in their late twenties or early thirties engage in street vending. This activity is a necessity and not necessarily a choice. Street vending is a response to household survival needs, as well as an alternative to orthodox means of survival such as peasant farming and formal employment.

There exists a strong demand by urban residents for traditional commodities such as wild fruit, wild mushroom, wild vegetables, salted peanuts, green mealies, roundnuts, groundnuts, fish, cucumbers, and sometimes firewood. Wild vegetables include wild mushrooms, pumpkin leaves (*muboora*), and the African spinach (*nyevhi/ cleome gynandra*). These commodities are availed to urban residents through street vending. Street vendors that sell wild fruit and vegetables are driven more by the market demand, as well as the access dynamics associated with season and abundance of common property resources. Community members gather wild fruit from the local forests for sale. However, street vending as a household survival strategy is associated with risks. The city by-laws require vendors in urban centres of Zimbabwe to use designated selling points. However, in most cases vendors opt to sell their wares on undesignated spaces. This attracts penalties such as fines, arrests, and the confiscation of wares. Street vendors intentionally violate local authorities' by-laws through vending on undesignated spaces resulting in clashes with the municipal police officers. Yet, vendors view 'risk' and undesignated vending zones as synonymous with generation of higher returns. The undesignated and prohibited zones mostly in the inner city are the ones convenient to customers. Clearly, street vending by women is open to women "with courage, wit, and resourcefulness" (Razavi, 2003: 18). This clearly demonstrates the spatial and structural complexities associated with household survival strategies in peri-urban areas. It also shows resilience through whichever action households adopt to change their situation or status quo, and that resilience depends upon the capabilities of households to make a difference under prevailing circumstances.



Plate 3: An example of small and medium enterprise in Domboshava

Household survival in peri-urban communal areas is rather opportunistic and contingent. Every household member has an obligation to generate and contribute to household income within his or her ability. This provides a sense of responsibility for the individual household members. In such cases, survival strategies are involuntary as household members have little choice. It is not the amount of income generated by these members that is of relevance, but their roles, effort, and contribution to the pool of household income. Household members neither quit nor exit activities that produce low returns, but they continue for as long as they can to accumulate from below, and in some cases from hand to mouth - the idea behind '*kiya-kiya*'. Engagement in informal activities is somewhat a forced choice under these circumstances as traditional methods of income generation such as peasant farming have lost relevance. Community residents as agents use their capabilities to construct their own action as practical and strategic responses to circumstances that surround them (Giddens, 2001). This also demonstrates community residents' ability to manipulate and resist what they perceived as constraints to their households' survival - resilience.

THE DRIVERS OF CHANGE IN ESTABLISHED LIVELIHOODS STRATEGIES

The drivers of change in established livelihoods strategies and the ultimate resilience of households in peri-urban communal areas are dynamic and complex. Exchange of land under the system of customary land tenure for personal gain are the major drivers of change in established way of life in peri-urban communal areas. The most prevalent land transactions are inheritance, direct land sales, and renting. These land transactions also emerge as household survival strategies. Most indigene households practice direct land sales as a household survival strategy as these generate quick and large amounts of money. Speculative hoarding of land by migrants are a form of investment for those involved as they accumulate land for resale at a higher price later. Although direct land sales provide brief gratification, indigenes seek to obtain long-term benefits from the practice through agency.

Rental housing emerges as a common income generation activity for both tribal members and migrants that own homesteads in the peri-urban areas through provision of continuous income streams as households lease rooms or land with homesteads. In some cases, migrants rent out part of their homesteads (rooms) to migrant lodgers. Apart from generation of financial capital through rentals, homesteads also generate social capital through

relationships and networks. For example, households that live in neighbouring homesteads often end up related through sharing common boundaries of homesteads as well as common property resources such as wells, rivers, dams, grazing, and forests. Relations and networks also develop between lodgers and homestead owners.

THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FROM THE ADOPTED LIVELIHOODS STRATEGIES

As community residents diversify their livelihoods portfolios, they straddle the rural-urban divide. This activity as a livelihoods strategy, is viewed as significant in coping with the changes in peri-urban environment, and demonstrates that “peasants’ livelihood strategies embrace far wider geographical terrains than the village, and their working lives are full of contingent rather than permanent aims” (Bryceson, 2000: 317). Community residents of peri-urban zones of Zimbabwe straddle the divide on both short and long-term basis. Almost all the community residents that participated in this research indicated that at least one of their household members commutes to town on a daily basis. Most peri-urban residents straddle the rural-urban divide to access other services such as health and retail in the urban zone because of the shorter travel time, and availability of transport such as buses, taxis (*kombi*), *zvikipipi* and private vehicles.

Competition for provision of transport to daily commuters is also common amongst transport. For private vehicles owners, offering transport services to commuters is a household survival strategy. This is referred to as ‘pirating’ in local language. These fares are however regarded by many commuters as exorbitant given the daily trips they make, and the income generated. Elsewhere in Tanzania and Mali, the cost of transport is a hindrance for those that seek services in urban centres (Tacoli, 2002).

Urban centres also play significant roles in the rural-urban linkages in terms of provision of markets for agricultural produce. Such movement of goods and people does not only sustain the rural-urban linkages (Lynch, 2005; Gough *et al.* 2010), but defines peri-urbanity of the communal areas as human settlements. Many peri-urban residents work in urban centres while they stay in communal areas on a permanent basis. Movement of people creates linkages for rural and urban people as they drift into zones of comparative advantage (Bekker, 2002). In Ghana for example, most people that live in peri-urban Kumasi commute to work, and to trade in the city

thereby creating diversity in terms of migrants and tribal populations (Berry, 2011).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Peri-urban communal areas of Zimbabwe are depeasantising. However, land remains a critical household asset for diversification of livelihoods options as residents continuously straddle the rural-urban divide. Households engage in multi-activities as survival strategies. Customary land rights and homesteads are the major assets. Survival strategies of both indigenes and migrants characterise the processes of accumulation and determine the scale and magnitude on which land-based peasant farming could be practiced. Both indigenes and migrants diversify their survival strategies by continuously straddling the rural-urban divide, and beyond the national borders through migration on short-term and long-term bases. Diversification of household survival strategies in peri-urban communal areas is more of an involuntary and coping activity to supplement household income in response to other stimuli, and not necessarily the reduction of land holding capacities of individual households although land holding is significant in the practise of peasant farming.

In many cases, diversification is a result of opportunistic activities during which advantage is taken of situations to make profit through income-generating activities. Residents of peri-urban communal areas are simply responding to other factors outside the village boundaries that embrace inter alia urbanisation, adverse weather conditions, and the time of research dollarisation of the national economy. Community residents are therefore not trapped by orthodox modes of household survival, but use their agency to adapt to changing conditions within their peri-urban context. Diversification of household survival strategies is processual, and not static. As such, this paper proposes approaches to building resilient livelihoods options and strengthened rural-urban linkages amid ubiquitous change in peri-urban communal areas of Zimbabwe. A thorough examination of the growth-point strategy to enhance local development in peri-urban communal areas; reengagement of the third sector (Non-Governmental Organisations) to extend pro-poor credit to small businesses; and addressing the national macro-economic fundamentals are critical to building resilient livelihoods options, and strengthened rural-urban linkages amid ubiquitous change in peri-urban communal areas.

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