EXPLORING NEW FRONTIERS IN COMMUNITY DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT
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ABSTRACT

The need to move people out of poverty has informed many and varied approaches to development. While positive and measurable strides have been achieved, slippages have also been commonplace with poverty relentlessly persisting, in spite of good interventions. A key vexing point that this paper seeks to address is that poverty discussions and consequent strategies have been driven by development experts and professionals who themselves are not poor, with dismal results. Poor people's voice are conspicuously silent, yet their input would help inform more productive interventions. However, there are evident impediments to engaging poor people pro-actively given their limited capacity to recognise root causes of poverty, and lack of informed competence to negotiate livelihood solutions. Thus even with the best of intentions, the efficacy of poor people's voices will be compromised even where notional efforts to engage their perspectives are in place. This paper recognises the value of genuine dialogue spaces to enable poor people articulate their needs, and uses cultural historic activity theory (CHAT), a tool that enables an analysis of human activity within their socio-cultural and socio-historical environment. The paper also provides an analytical framework for conducting community assessments with a view to opening up dialogue spaces for the benefit of poor people, which dialogue spaces would inform poverty reduction strategies. The paper is drawn from my PhD research study.

Key words: *poverty, livelihoods, community, agency, dialogue spaces*

1. Introduction and Background

The human condition has been the subject of many debates for decades. Undesirable conditions include abject hunger, lack of basic livelihood support like shelter, access to clean water, basic education, access to health facilities, etc. These have informed development efforts such that varied approaches, strategies and initiatives have been commissioned and funded in the hope of finding lasting solutions. The founder of the Human Development Report in describing the essence of development said:

> "The basic purpose of development is to enlarge people's choices. In principle, these choices can be infinite and can change over time.… The objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives" (ul Huq 2012).

The underlying assumption is that all human beings can make choices that benefit them. The reality of poverty, however is that many poor people have limited choices and limited information to negotiate livelihood solutions (Sen 2012). Thus a World Bank study noted that poor people experience voicelessness, powerlessness and exclusion, evident in their inability to have access to and influence over decisions that matter to them. Even when they exercise their agency, it is "in very limited spheres of influence…the voices that count most are those of the powerful and wealthy." (Narayan et al 2000:265). The study observed: "there are 2.8 billion poverty experts, the poor themselves. Yet the development discourse about poverty has been dominated by the perspectives and expertise of those who are not poor- professionals, politicians and agency officials" (Narayan et al 2000:2). In this regard, the World Bank prefixes the cited study as follows:

> *"What can be more important than listening to the poor and working with our partners all over the world to respond to their concerns? We are prepared to hold ourselves accountable, to make effort to try to respond to these voices (Narayan et al 2000: xv)".*

This observation begs a solution to engaging poor people's voices in development initiatives that affect them.

1.1 The problem statement

The problem statement is that though it is imperative for poor people's voices to inform development strategies that benefit them, there are impediments to engaging these voices given poor people's limited education and skills, the challenges of participation and the limitations of social capital as a common good. The participatory action research therefore sought to inquire on how poor people articulate their livelihoods in ways that elicit appropriate responses and support, and how that could be institutionalised for long-term benefits. The action research worked with the Chinyika Community in rural Zimbabwe and the COSUN (Community Support for the Needy) women's group in peri-urban Zambia. The overall research plan was to respond to the question:

> *How can poor people's voices inform development practice in ways that can evolve impactful models?*

1.2   Literature Review

The relevance of voice

Agency is the ability that people have to act towards the goals that matter to them (Sen 1999). This applies to everyone regardless of their economic status. The Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin developed a social theory on the agency that human beings carry through language. In his reading of Bakhtin's literary work, Folch-Serra (1990) argues that dialogical connotations present multiple possibilities steeped in history and the cultural practices that culminate in constant interaction of meanings. Zinchenko (2013:235) gives a rounded perspective when he says: "Language is not only a means of communication and thinking. It is a whole world in and of itself, whole and instantaneously available. It is the world we carry in us, with us". Thus through voice and language, people can and should exercise their agency.

Participation and Empowerment

Agency can be exercised at an individual level or collectively, whereby through interdependent efforts, pooling knowledge, skills and resources, a group can act together for defined goals. Participation can thus be viewed as an expression of both individual and collective agency. Oakley defines people's participation as a "political process in which previously excluded classes or groups seek to become involved, have a voice in and generally gain access to the benefits of economic and social development" (Oakley 1995:7). In recognition of the need for inclusive and collaborative efforts in people's movements out of poverty, The World Bank (2004:1) championed the idea of community-driven development (CDD) as a process that "…supports and empowers participatory decision making, local capacity building and community control of resources".

Yet this notion has elicited strong contradictory views and evidence of it not working as well as expected, with high incidences of poor people being marginalised further. Rankin (2006:6) argues against the assumption that families and communities are "harmonious institutional frameworks within which the benefits of social ties and networks are enjoyed". She asserts: "common moral frameworks are not in themselves desirable planning objectives, so long as they serve to entrench dominant cultural ideologies and undermine the potential for critical awareness on the part of the oppressed". In most cases, cultural ideologies within communities engender power and gender imbalances that effectively alienate poor and marginalised people. Cornwall and Brock (2005:6) observe that participation has not provided the right space for people to participate in deciding their own development. Instead, "what participation had come to mean to the mainstream was less to do with radical shifts in power than engaging communities in sharing the costs, and the burdens, of development". They argue "participation and empowerment, words that speak to the laudable aim of enabling poor people to have voice and choice, have now come to symbolize the legitimacy to pursue today's generation of development blueprints" (Cornwall and Brock 2005: 15).

Social Capital- Not Always a Common Good

Proponents of participation as an effective tool for community-driven development recognise the role of social capital in empowering poor people and ensuring that their voices are heard. Rankin (2002:4) asserts:

> Participation has been recognised where social capital assures those benefits. However, social capital cannot be assumed- it depends on strong community bonds. Social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions. Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions, which underpin a society – it is the glue that holds them together.

As communities work together and participate in development efforts that benefit them, they begin to gain control and expand their assets and capabilities. This level of empowerment is meant to enhance their participation in negotiating, influencing and basically holding accountable those institutions that affect their lives (Grootaert 2003). Grootaert argues that empowered communities with stronger institutions and social capital will be more successful in implementing community-driven development while the nature of community-driven development will in fact enhance social capital and further empower poor people.

Portes (2000). notes that the notion of individuals deriving benefits from working together and participating in groups is not a new concept. He traces early discussions on social capital to Emile Durkheim a French Social Scientist, who placed "emphasis on group life as an antidote to anomie and self-destruction…". Portes describes social capital as constituting two components: a) the social relations that enable a claim and access to resources possessed by the associates in a group; and b) the amount and quality of those resources. In making this distinction, he acknowledges firstly that social networks are not a given and have to be constructed, and secondly, that the process of investing economic and cultural resources to gain social capital is characterized by less transparency and more uncertainty. The obligations created within a community that has received such an investment are not specified, the time horizons are uncertain and there is always a likelihood of reciprocity violations.

Portes acknowledges undesired outcomes as individuals cohere. These include free riding by some community members who might not be investing as much as others, but still getting the full benefit of being part of the community. Wood (2003:457) notes that the problem of poor people "is that they are exposed to the weaknesses of social capital (as a public good), without any prospect of meaningful social resources (personalized networks) to compensate". Social capital as a common good is therefore wrought with loopholes that can be detrimental to movements out of poverty for those already marginalised.

Challenges of Externally Driven Development Initiatives

Most development initiatives have been externally driven creating challenges for local adaptation and ownership. The recipient communities often work on instructions from external parties with little or no understanding of the intricacies of the full project and this creates problems. Vollan (2011: 758) captured some of the challenges of externally engineered urban community development. He observed that in the mid-1990s, in efforts to construct social capital that would drive community development projects, donors introduced "a large number of single-purpose committees responsible for maintenance and management (women's self-help groups, water user committees, development committees, parent-teacher committees, health committees, forest management committees, and many more) in Asia, Africa, and Latin America". From his analysis, he makes the following findings:

> "There is anecdotal evidence from user committees pointing toward insufficient management support from the outside organizations, unclear or too little delegation of tasks and decision-making power, insufficient financial resources as well as embezzling of money by leaders....also elite capture might increase due to the lack of transparency and accountability… with the focus on short-term incentives it could be harder to persuade communities to engage in creating long-term benefits (Vollan 2011:766)".

While the literature reviewed highlighted the need to engage poor people's voices as a way of enabling their agency, it is clear that participation does not always lead to empowerment and that social capital may not necessarily bring about the benefits of being a common good. Evidence also attest to the challenges of externally driven initiatives in people's movements out of poverty. This research therefore aimed to explore a different development frontier.

2. Methodology and Methods

2.1 The research Design

The ultimate goal of this research was to explore a novel process for poor people's voices to inform development practice that benefits them. Participatory action research using qualitative methods was the preferred methodology.

Initial fact-finding trip in 2009 was with the Chinyika community of Tavengwa village located in the Gutu District of Masvingo Province. The area lies in agro-ecological Regions 3-5, which are dry, prone to droughts and ill-suited for maize growing. The second part of the research happened with the COSUN Women's group, a financial savings society (FSS) that was affiliated to the Chipata Pamodzi Savings and Credit Cooperative (CPSCC) as part of CARE International's project called Program of Support for Poverty Elimination and Community Transformation (PROSPECT) that aimed to establish community-driven development in Zambia.

Given the challenges of participation as outlined in the literature review, the fact-finding mission with Chinyika rural community aimed to find out how they managed to reach food security without external

parties leading the process. Insights from this interaction necessitated in-depth understanding of the community norms and culture. Cultural historic activity theory is the lens that I used to analyse this community. The ensuing framework was used to compare and analyse a peri-urban community consisting of the COSUN group of sixteen women.

Table 1- The Research Design

ACTION	PURPOSE	QUESTION
Analysis of Chinyika community using activity theory	Listen and learn how poor people influence actions that benefit them.	How can poor people's voices inform development practice in ways that can evolve impactful models?
Analysis of COSUN group using activity theory. This action is informed by the analysis of the Chinyika community.		
Comparison of data from the two cases	Evolve a working model for empowering dialogue spaces	Conclusion- identifying conditions for individual and collective agency

The research identified limitations to the chosen methodology and methods, which are not discussed in this paper.

Qualitative Inquiry

In order to address the voices of the poor, this research uses qualitative data. Qualitative research consists of 'interpretive, material practices that make the world visible' (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:3). It enables the researcher to study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of the meanings of those around particular phenomena. The researcher is able to interact with people's experience, opinions, feelings and knowledge through in-depth interviews. Because qualitative inquiries are not constrained by pre-determined categories of analysis, they tend to start with open-ended questions and therefore engender openness. A researcher can, through direct observation, postulate descriptions of activities, behaviours and interactions of human experiences (Guba & Lincoln 1994; Darlington & Scott 2002; Patton 2002).

Participatory Action Research

Action research is associated with the central themes of action and learning, and has been used as an "emancipatory practice aimed at helping an oppressed group to identify and act on social policies and practices that keep unequal power relations in place" (Herr and Anderson 2005: 2). The nature of action research is largely determined by its primary aim: to achieve change as well as bringing about new knowing. The participation of local people in research recognises their expertise in resolving their problems and evolving solutions. The use of the term 'action research' goes back to the work of Kurt

Lewin who believed this to 'be the process of gathering information about a social system while simultaneously attempting to change the system' (Detardo-Bora 2004: 241).

Lewin identified action research steps that start with a general idea to reach a certain objective and figuring out how to carry out that idea using available resources. This assessment or fact-finding leads to an overall plan of action as well as identification of the first step of action. The evaluation following first action will determine whether the objective has been achieved and also provide insights to inform next action step or modify overall plan before moving on to next action step. This process creates a research spiral of planning, execution and evaluation depending on the insights gathered at the execution stage (Lewin 1946; Herr and Anderson 2005). Subsequent cycles become a function of how those insights provide enough of a basis to inform a continuation into the next cycle. The first cycle therefore is just as informative as subsequent cycles. The following diagram demonstrates the research cycles in this research:

Figure 2.1- Action Research Cycles
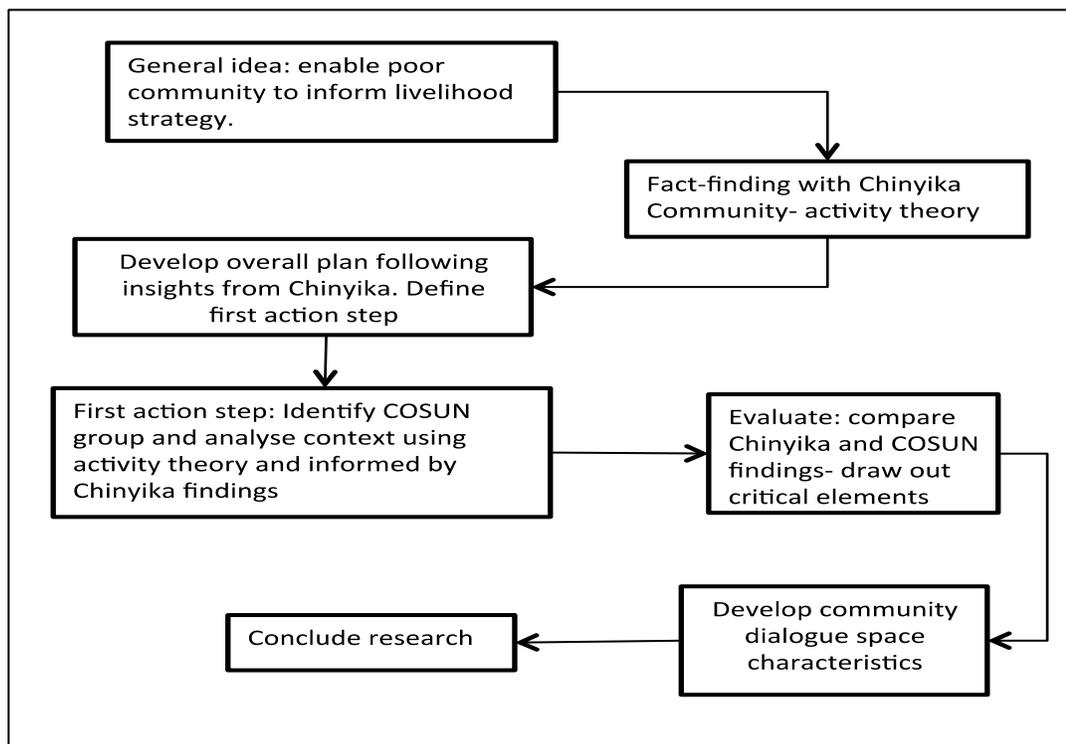
I introduced an innovation through the use of the cultural historical activity theory as a way of analysing the communities for the purpose of understanding inherent dynamics.

Activity Theory

Activity theory is a tool that analyses of human activity within the context of their socio-cultural and socio-historical environment (Nardi 1996). It was started by a Russian philosopher Leo Vygotsky who was concerned with how people bring about change in their lives through their own activities (Engeström 2001). His work was further developed into a second and third generations of activity theory. The following diagram captures the essence of the third generation of activity theory:

Figure 2.2- A Human Activity System
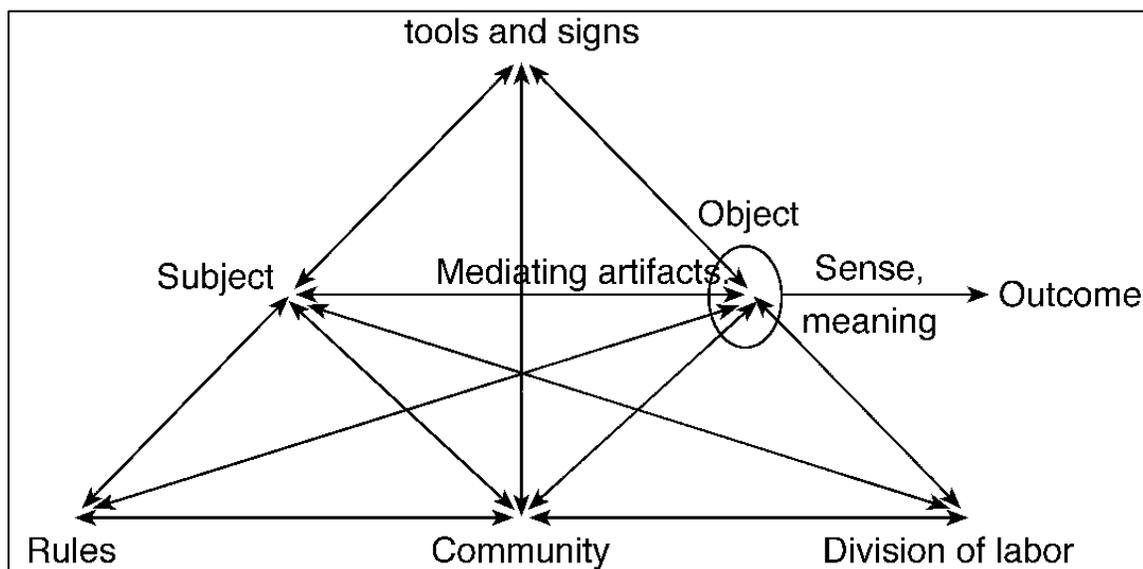
Engeström 2001

In this diagram, the outcome is the reason for the activity. Engeström depicts the object with the oval shape "indicating that object-oriented actions are always, explicitly or implicitly, characterised by ambiguity, surprise, interpretation, sense-making and potential for change" (Engeström 2001:134). The model enabled an all-encompassing examination that included the community environment, its rules and how the individual actors cohere within the collective. Human need motivates the activity.

In the Chinyika Community case for instance, their need was food following a famine that was triggered by drought. They did achieve food security. In discussion with them, the path to getting to a solution was not abbreviated: they attributed their success to the ingenuity of their Headman in responding promptly with both short-term (bags of maize grain) and long-term (reverting to growing hardy crops most suited to the arid regions they were in) solutions. It is only when the analysis was done through the activity theory lens, that the cultural and historical factors were clearly evident as having a strong

bearing in their movement towards a lasting solution. Further, the context was defined and the voices of poor people were located within that enabling context.

Philosophical Underpinnings

This research has characteristics that are steeped in the critical social science paradigm. Critical social science focuses on "the *critique and transformation* of the social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender structures that constrain and exploit humankind"(Guba & Lincoln 1994: 110). Critical theory is linked to the Frankfurt School in Germany where conversations focused on understanding the social sphere especially in relation to power structures and dominion. A critical social science theory is therefore concerned with "issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy; matters of race, class and gender; ideologies…and [how] other social institutions and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system" (Kincheloe & McLaren 2002: 90).

In involving poor people in the inquiry, the research presupposes that they are holders of knowledge that can inform a process that challenges their social realities towards a higher level of emancipation (Freire 1970; Fay 1987). Fay (1987:47) postulates: "critical social science assumes that humans are active creatures, that is, creatures who broadly create themselves on the basis of their own self-interpretations". Critical social science aims to go "beyond surface illusions to uncover the real structures in the material world in order to help people change conditions and build a better world for themselves" (Neuman, 2000: 76).

Ethical Considerations

In both communities, my goal was to create an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. It was necessary to clearly explain the reason for the fieldwork and to court their willing and un-coerced participation (Herr & Anderson 2005). In the Chinyika case, it was the village Headman who consented to the research. When we got to the village, further elaborations of the research were made to the villagers. Though the village Headman had given consent, we still inquired with the leader of the village committee who also consented to us conducting the interviews and capturing data. I had prepared a questionnaire for this part of the research but was unable to use it due to political sensitivities in the region that we needed to observe.

In the COSUN case, I sought permission from the leaders of the CPSCC, who consented and selected the COSUN group to be the one I would work with. They proceeded to introduce me to the women who, after explanations had been made, consented to participating. I later presented a statement of ethics form for clearance with the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS) Ethics Review Board in May 2012. In the statement of ethics I declared to abide by the ethical guidelines established by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) of the United Kingdom. My research was cleared to proceed.

As the research progressed, I provided the group with information regarding the direction of the research. The reason was to continually assure the principle of reciprocity and respect for allowing and

participating in the research. Herr & Anderson affirm "the principle of respect and reciprocity addresses the idea that research participants must not be treated as a means toward an end, but rather as "reflective moral agents" who deserve to be treated with dignity" (Herr & Anderson 2005: 120). During the process, the group agreed on rules that we all had to abide by. The group had the option at any time to stop participation and a few of them chose to do so. In presenting findings, all the names were changed to protect the identity of participants.

3.   Results
<u>Chinyika Community</u>

The following diagram captures the Chinyika Community Activity System:

Figure 3- Chinyika Activity System with Drought
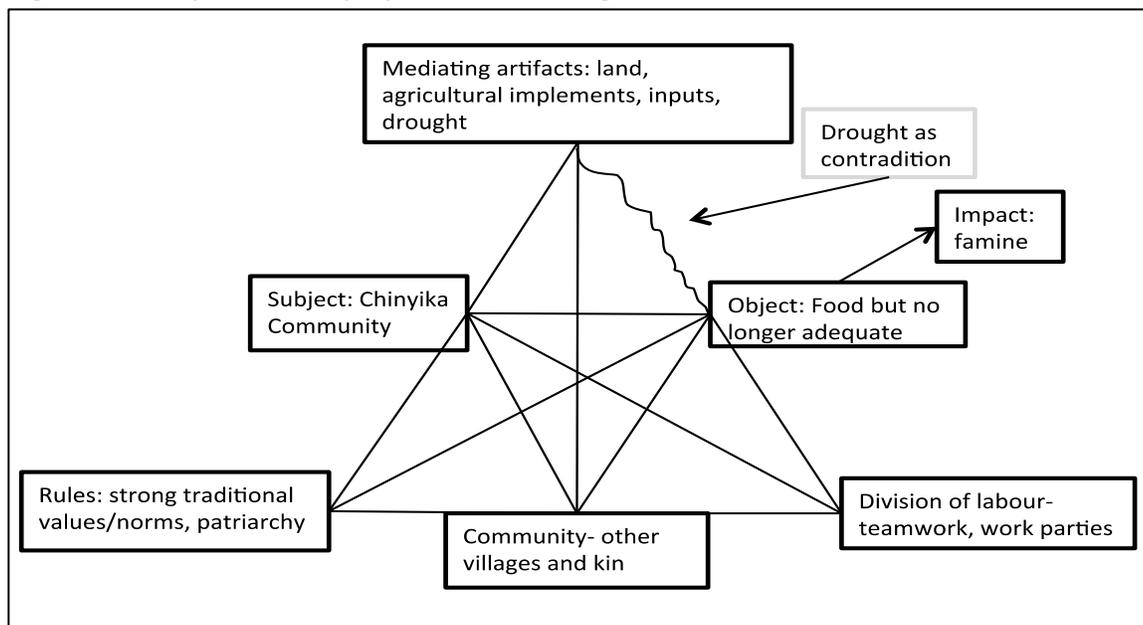
The Chinyika Community are the subject whose object is food production from farming activities as they interact with mediating artefacts like land, agricultural inputs and weather patterns. Within their context are strong traditional rules and values, such as being a patriarchal society, the women know that they need authorisation from the men to take on leadership roles. They also interact with other members of the community in sharing food and other social events. In terms of division of labour, the community comes together in working parties to plough a field, build a hut or most major projects (Tavuyango et al 2005). The diagram shows the interconnectedness of the activity system with the individuals using mediating artefacts that include land, and agricultural implements within an integrated community to produce food for their sustenance.

The poor conditions caused by limited quality farming inputs and persistent drought introduced a disturbance in the system and adversely affected food production such that "in Zimbabwe, the famines of 1974, 1982, 1992, 2002, and 2004 affected the lives and livelihoods of millions of rural households…" (Chikobvu et al 2010:6). Food shortages led to cycles of poverty that in turn led to migrations to urban areas as people searched for alternative means of earning a living (Tavuyanago et al 2005). The community had no skill to negotiate this dynamic and the resultant famine made them appeal to their headman for a solution- at the time he lived in the city (Banda-Mutalima 2016: 177, 127).

Tendai: Tiri mukati mwenzara…takararama mukati mazwo tichirya chakata…	Tendai: During the time of famine…we survived by eating wild fruits…

Tendai: Patakatangira committee yedu… ivo vari ivo vasabuku, saka vakauya vakazwiona vakaona kuti zvokwadi vanhu vangu vari kufa nenzara ndobva vatitaurira- ndingati vakataurawo nemadumeni yedu ndobva vakurukurawo navo ndobva vakurukura nemasabuku akavakidzana navo ndobva vati hutigarei pasi tione kuti tingazwiringa sei- ndo pavatanga kuronga kuti tofanira kuita committee inotungamirira- kuti zwinhu zwibudirire zwofanihwa kuva necommittee.	Tendai: When we started our committee… the village Headman came and saw that indeed my people are perishing from famine-he consulted with the Government Extension Officers and also headmen from neighbouring villages. They saw that there was need to do something about the situation. They agreed that there was need to establish a committee that would foresee the success of a plan to end hunger.

He in turn provided a short-term solution by sending bags of maize to the village, while working on a longer-term process. He knew that reliance on maize as a single staple crop combined with persistent drought presented a poor set of circumstances for food security. In an earlier publication, the Headman had been cited as lamenting: "the combination of smaller plots and with the difficulties of growing maize in Gutu has created a situation where many rural communities now consume more food than they produce" (Muchineripi 2005:8).

The importance of this part of the research is that it identifies the dialogue space that the community members used to articulate their livelihood issues. Because of their strong community structure and connectedness to their ancestry, the Chinyika community have an inherent way of meeting their livelihood needs through food production. This is part of who they are. Consequently when famine strikes, they are able to talk about the effects of that phenomenon among themselves. They deposit the content of their individual and collective voices in the person of the Headman who is able to enjoin an external activity system to come up with a long-term solution. In this way, he enables the voices of the community to influence processes that benefit them. The headman is therefore a critical figure who

assumes the collective voice of the community and uses his own academic story to craft a pathway to a solution for the rest of the community.

He recognised the need for a new way of knowing and enrolled in a research program which takes them back to their traditional grains using modern methods. His decision to enjoin another activity system was in exercise of his own agency as well as the collective agency of the community. When he initiates interaction with another activity system he ensures that the community participates by keeping that dialogue space open. The Headman takes on his role in a benevolent way. The Headman becomes the champion of the community and has the authority, respect and recognition to do so. The Headman incorporates the community in the pathway out of their problems and they in turn own the process. A community member attests to this (Banda-Mutalima 2016:127)

Tendai:…mafield day atinoita Tinotanga nekudemonstrata – vanoita demonstration yekurima kudzidzisa kuti unorima seyi – mapedza kuita ploughing, vodzidziswa zwekuita kuti kudzwara sei rukweza kwacho- tabva ipapo toenda pakuzoona kuti zwakura- zwabereka sei- zwaibva zwakadii- saka pese ipapo pataatichiungana tichiita izwozwo, vanhu vanenge varipo vachiuya kuzodzidza…	Tendai: …This is how a field day goes- we start with a demonstration- they demonstrate how the ploughing should happen, after ploughing, they teach us how to plant the millet- after that we learn how to tend the plant until it produces and matures- during all those processes we come together – the people who are around all come to learn…

COSUN Group

The COSUN group was set up to empower the women by enabling them to save and borrow money for economic activities in order to buy water and support livelihoods. The following diagram captures implementation of the project as initiated by CARE.

Figure 3.1- Implementing Expectations (Banda-Mutalima 2016)
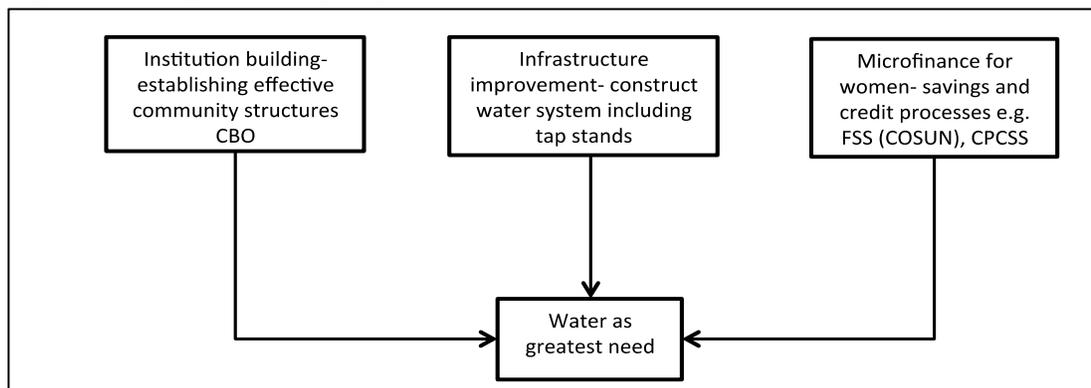
It is not clear whether the motive to increase incomes for water purchases were in line with the women's expectations. What is known is that it met PROSPECT's logical aspirations to empower that community in line with survey results. In addressing this need, PROSPECT included the savings and credit schemes as a means to the end of ensuring sustainable water system in the community. It is evident that by agreeing to form groups, the COSUN women embraced the phenomenon of the savings and credit scheme as a way of generating more income. However the research findings reveal a disjointed understanding (Banda-Mutalima 2016:203)

Lubuto: Batwebele ati tamwakalelipila …mwamona…uyo onse uushakabombeko tukamumona … tamwakalelipila indalama iiliyonse – so bombeni amenshi yalaisa- efyo twaimbile imifolo ukufuma kulya …	Lubuto: They told us that we would not pay [for water] if we dug the drainages- anyone who was not willing to work would not benefit. That is how we started digging ditches.
Kunda: Vanakamba kuti ife vamene tikumba mifolo tizayamba kupeza nchito yotapisa manzi pamatap, but after nchito ija yasila, nkhani yotapa manzi – noyamba kukamba kuti vafuna vaja vanthu vophunzira- ndiye vamene vazayamba kutapisa manzi …	Kunda: They told us that all those who were digging ditches would be employed to work as water attendants at the communal taps. But when we finished digging, they turned on us and said that they could only employ educated people as tap attendants.
Lubuto: Olo abana besu bekala fye, takuli tumonafye ifinso fimbifimbi efyaisa papompi – kanshi avavantu valemba shani? Vasendanafye fila fine- …	Lubuto: Our children are not working, yet we see faces we do not know as tap attendants- we wonder how they were employed. They take people they know-
Lubuto: Nangu ifi fine ifyamenshi indalama tulipila tatwaishiba ukutila bushe indalama shiya kwisa- nangu shibomba chinshi – abene veka evaishiba – pantu pakuchita inchintu fila fine vatwebele ati imbeni imifolo twaimba, neliline bafilwe baletwibukishako O bane indalama mwakulalipila nindalama twakulachita ifinefi – nomba takwava- twalivalavako. Ngafinshi vakatuchitila…	Lubuto: We do not even know how the money we pay for the water is used. We are the ones who were digging, should they not think of us as well? Or even to tell us how the money is being used. Nothing of that sort happens- we have forgotten about them [CARE]- what do they do for us?
Sonaya: Elo nangu baCARE bene tabatala besa ukuti batuchite address meeting ukutila mebantu ichalenga ukutile ifwe tube kwati twaluba tatulemoneka kuchinso chenu chilli so so so – tatumfwako nangufye report iili yonse. Abene report limbi nivapanopene paoffice yabo eyo vashile but ifwe tapaba echo twaishiba-	Sonaya: CARE did not address us to tell us why they left- we did not get any reports. Maybe they gave the report to the office but we have not been told anything.

When the community leaders were asked to comment on this understanding by the women, in agreeing, one of the leaders explained the historical context that may have led to the women feeling let down:

> We were doing a lot of meetings at the initial stage trying to find out the needs assessment…we were asking them what type of problems they face in the community. They said we face a lot of problems but we feel water is the major one because we are raped at night, we are killed and we are harassed [ferrying water at night from nearby suburbs]… What was coming up from CARE International at that particular time was that water was actually meant for the poor people…today all the people that suffered strongly in terms of trying to bring water structure are not benefitting much …there were stones underground digging up to the level that was required, but now these people do not even have water in their residences, they are the ones who go out again to queue…” (Banda-Mutalima 2016:208)

So there was an issue that some members of the community may not have appreciated the role that CARE took and the consequent benefits.

What was also clear from the onset was the fact that this leadership was put together at the behest of CARE International, though even they had challenges of finding suitable people to organise and lead the community. This is evidenced in the following quote:

> In Zambia, before the November 1991 elections most urban organisation was based on the party- local government, women's and youth organisations were all political party structures. Consequently when UNIP lost political power organisations collapsed, with church groups remaining virtually the only institutional base within the compounds. So community – interest group development - needs nurturing,…. Choosing where and with whom to perform codes has been an initial issue – following church services, at markets, near a water point or clinic, with the FFW [food-for-work] women or in a street, and how to advertise, by poster and if with people, which people? (Drinkwater 1994:3)

While the leaders felt that the cooperative "provides a place where the community voices can be heard" (Banda-Mutalima 2016: 168), they recognised that they level of support to the community was hampered by limited support from CARE. They also felt that the women were unable to understand the intricacies of the relationship with CARE given their limited education. When the leaders were informed about the concerns that the women raised, the following responses ensued:

> …coming to the point of being neglected, I do not think so- it was a matter of not being able to understand the concept. So because they are not educated, I think they needed some clear cut answers and proof of what they would expect maybe five or ten years later" (Banda-Mutalima 2016:208)

> "I think the issue of neglect …has to do with the manner in which CARE left- they left without an exit strategy. They more like just left people in suspense…the colleagues in the water sector were left with some sort of structure where to start from unlike the

cooperative…the moment CARE left, people used to come here expecting that CARE left some money, the seed money, of which it was not the case…(Banda-Mutalima 2016:208)

Thus though CPSCC was set up to support the COSUN women, there were significant impediments that negated this support. This is the way the activity system loo like upon analysis using activity theory.

Figure 3.2- COSUN and CPSCC Activity Systems: No Collaboration
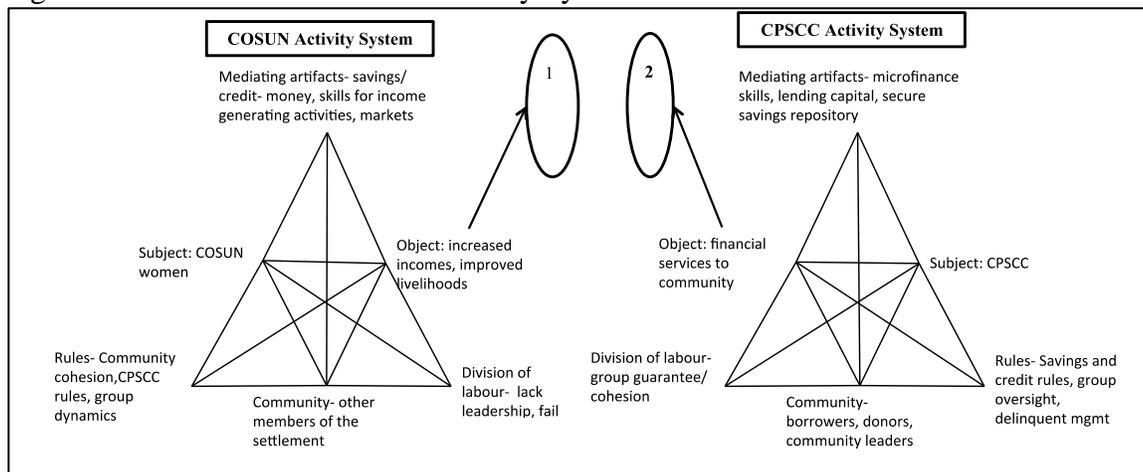
Within the community are other members with whom they have a neighbourly relationship though bonds are only as strong as the members accommodate and trust one another: they come from different ethnic backgrounds with little to hold them together. While they desire benevolent leaders, they lament that this has not happened to expectation (Banda-Mutalima 2016: 167, 185,186)):

Jenala: …tulelanda efyotumona kuntungulushi ashitubonfya ifwe…	Jenala: We are talking about what we see from our leaders who use us…
Jenala: balebonfya abantu- ukubapafye ubunga, but balebomba hard job, ukwimba umufolo …inchito ishakosa	Jenala: They used people- hard work of digging drainages and other strenuous jobs for a bag of mealie meal …
Jenala:…ubunga fye babika limbi natusaladi- limbi 3 months pakuti ukesepoka akasaka kambi…elo limbi ninakulu bantu alekonkoteka fye ukwimba umufolo…	Jenala: Simply a bag of mealie meal and maybe some cooking oil; sometimes three months pass before the next bag [of mealie meal]. And sometimes is it an old lady who is made to dig a ditch.

Sonaya: …*kulaba amaproject yamo ayesa, intungukushi shesu shaisatusenda …twakwata limbi ka workshop…ifwe tukapelela fye muli tea. Ifikachitika kula kuntanshi limbi balabapela ifwe no-ishiba nangu fye chimo- tukesa mukwiishiba nonshi papita na one year ukutila ula muntu aliletele fyakuti …(d.1.5)*	Sonaya: …our leaders ask us to go and work with them on some projects…or maybe there will be a workshop they want us to attend…the only thing we will be given is tea. The leaders will not tell us what happened behind closed doors- we will only know maybe after a year that some things were given out.
Jenala: *...ifi fintu filatuchitikila ukutila ati tatwachitefi kwena tachakabombe- nomba ukulingana nokupelelwa eko tupelelwa, vambi ma widows…twaima twaisa but tapali ichiletubombela awe (d.2.2)*	Jenala: …these things happen to us and sometime we do not want to do what they ask anymore- but because we have nowhere else to go- some of us are widows…we have no choice but to agree, yet there is no benefit for us.

CPSCC functions as an umbrella body overseeing several affiliate groups like COSUN in the community. The cooperative model was chosen to actualize the essence of a community-driven initiative to "promote member interests around a common goal" and therefore engender principles of self-help, self-management and self-accountability (Takaizya 2002: 5).

The importance of this part of the research is that it highlights the effects of externally driven collaboration for not strengthening local ownership although this was the aim. The voices of poor people were initially expressed through the riots and civil unrest that followed escalating cost of living against reduced prospects of waged employment. The coming in of CARE was therefore proof of the efficacy of those voices. However, the community did not have knowledge of the underlying ideological reasons that motivated CARE to establish PROSPECT and engage with this community. What is evident is that the outcome of this project left a trail of discontentment within the community. The COSUN women's group perceived that CARE only brought water when they expected more; that they had little knowledge of how the collections from water were used; CARE did not tell them how to work together after the project wound down; they were now not aware how the leaders were chosen. The CPSCC also felt let down as they expected PROSPECT to have left enough lending capital for the program to continue but left without an exit strategy that would ensure continuity in the community.

Thus the process of enabling poor people's voices to be heard did not constitute an effective and enduring dialogue space. The lack of robust support structures highlighted the extent to which the women depended on others to organise them, and how that made them vulnerable. They also realise that the very leaders who are supposed to support them were taking advantage of them, but because of their desperation, they keep hoping things would change.

4.   Discussion

Both the Chinyika and COSUN communities were faced with precarious livelihoods without a clear pathway to a solution. The Chinyika community had suffered spells of drought that led to famine such that they started foraging for wild fruits in the forests. Though the Chinyika Community activity system seemed functional, it had an inherent flaw in focusing on maize; a crop that was ill-suited to the climate, and being cultivated without adequate supporting inputs to boost yields. This posed a huge risk and without mitigating actions in place, the system succumbed to famine as drought persisted. The COSUN activity system was set up as a sub-set of another externally engineered activity system, CPSCC. Their poverty situation was triggered by lack of income to sustain livelihoods. Being in a peri-urban set-up, they need constant income to meet livelihood needs and this is difficult without someone earning money. This is how they describe their situation (Banda-Mutalima 2016:159):

Umphawi kwaine ndikusowa zinthu *Umphawi uthantauza kubvutika* *Umphawi ndikusowa zakudya zokwana* *Umphawi ndikusakwanitsa zonse zapanyumba* *Umphawi ndikusowa zochita chifukwa cosowa ndalama zozithandizila* *Umphawi nichintu chimodzi chamene chilengesa muntu kuleka kuganiza bwino; monga kusowewa* *Umphawi nimatenda panyumba, njara, bana kusaphunzira* *Sinikwanisa kumanga nyumba chifukwa chosowa ndalama (*Group work feedback)	- Poverty is being deprived - Poverty means suffering - Poverty means not having enough food - Poverty means failing to meet the needs of the home - Poverty is being helpless because of not having money - Poverty is one thing that causes a person to stop thinking properly- it is being deprived - Poverty is disease in the home, hunger and children not going to school - I have failed to build my house because of not having money.

*Twenzi: Chamene tinajoinila group iyi kuti tizilongana pamodzi tizipasana nzeru then tizipezako tandizo penango…(*c1.4)	Twenzi: We joined this group so we could meet together, share wisdom and maybe find help.

They look to CPSCC as a structure that would help them, however this does not work as expected.

The Chinyika activity system has a farming history that has inherent benefits: food security, social cohesion, utility value and serving as a connector to their religion and common ancestry. The drought leads to famine and they address this problem through an established channel- their Headman. The COSUN women on the other hand come from different ethnic groups and are in the urban settlement as a result of migration. They need cash to support their livelihoods. The coming in of an international NGO provides some assurance of livelihood support. However their problems happen at various levels as indicated in the following comments (Banda-Mutalima 2016:203, 205):

Jenala: ... nomba kulingana nokupelelwa oko tupelelwa bambi mawidows, bambi kuti batila nalyupwa nomba vulnerable, nalyupwa nomba kupwa fye, ishina, nomba fila fine ngachaisa ichamusango ifi- iyoo limbi ifi kuti chabakobwino- twaima twaisa but tapali ichile tubombela awe- tuleima ifintu twaishiba ukuti limbi aba- tulalimbika, limbi- kapena aba vangatichiteko bwino kupambana paja, so kambili tisevenzesewa navakutsogolo – (d.2.2)	Jenala: …because of despair; some of us are widows, others though married, are vulnerable-married in name only [husband does not have means to provide]- so when we are called, we think maybe this time it will be different, and we come, yet there is nothing that is working for us. Often we are used by our leaders [without any benefit].

Lubuto: Ifwe tulelombako fye ukuti mutulubululekofye. Mumone fwebambi natukwata abana bamasukulu, umwana alefilwa ukuya kusukulu- nga alachita shani…Ukukosa twalikosa nomba uwakuti tukwateko uwakututwalako pantanshi nangu atwebe ukuti uchite ichi- nangu ni business ine kulaba ukusambilila- iyo business mwalachita muchite ifi nefi, nomba takuba- (c.7.5)	Lubuto: We are asking that you save us. See the way some of us have school-going children, if a child fails to go to school, what can they do? …We are strong but we do not have someone to help develop us or to tell us what to do- even in business one has to learn- now we do not have someone to teach us.

- In the absence of an earning husband the women need to be the breadwinners. They lack business skills and cannot find jobs though they are strong.
- They agree to participate in manual labour with the expectation of accessing free water and getting jobs at water points- this does not happen.
- They need leadership because current leaders let them down. For example, the group makes periodic savings with CPSCC but there is a lack of transparency so the women have little understanding on the security of their savings.
- The CPSCC lending capital dried up and so the women have no way of getting loans to do business. CPSCC have no way of getting more lending capital.
- CPSCC feel that PROSPECT left without a sustainable strategy for the continuity of the programme.

The community has no place of recourse to deal with these problems.

The Chinyika community belongs to the Shona tribe with hierarchical authority and structures that have precedence and succession. The patriarchal system ensures a hierarchy where there is no absolute equality: there is someone with the overall responsibility and there are subjects. The system engenders togetherness and they have a common heritage. Land is communally owned, enabling all community

members to have a place they call home, implying a place of support, nourishment and belonging. Togetherness is further seen in cooperative work and reciprocity. No one is ever really alone and problems are shared.

The COSUN group on the other hand are in a structure that responds to the programme they participated in, that was externally derived. They have an elected hierarchy in line with the constitution that they were required to follow. As an affiliate of CPSCC, they are beholden to that leadership. They crave benevolent leaders to help them out of their poverty. The CPSCC leaders' commitment to assisting the COSUN women is rather patchy as they feel that PROSPECT did not empower them enough to continue the work. Their role as leaders was dependent on CARE's facilitation. So while the COSUN women are looking up to their leaders in CPSCC, those leaders are also looking to an external other in the absence of PROSPECT to provide much needed lending capital. The structure does not serve the COSUN women and has broken down.

Critical to food production, the Chinyika Community uses basic artifacts for which they have historic familiarity. Using their passed on knowledge as agriculturalists, they are able to till the land and plant their crop. The persistent drought and subsequent famine highlighted an inherent problem within the activity system for which a solution was needed. It also raised an issue about the capacity of the community to recognise the limitations of the artifacts and devise a solution in a timely manner. The critical role of leadership especially through the Headman led to expansive learning as a result of new information into the community to resolve the food security problem.

The COSUN activity system is predicated on the members utilising capital and skills to engage in economic activities that would earn them an income. They find themselves lacking on both accounts, and without anyone to help them.

Object- Motive Alignment
Activity theory recognises that objects that meet human need will form the motive for undertaking any activity (Leonty'ev 1977). In the Chinyika case, the Headman's motive was to ensure long-term sustainability of food security. His understanding of the problem included his recollection of the versatility of grain crops against maize. At a social level, he understood that he would need the support of the other chiefs in convincing the community about the need to change focus from maize to grain crops. He also understood that they all needed a new way of knowing through a learning process. At a personal level, his actions were driven by his motive as future paramount chief. He saw the need to align his personal motives for the throne with the needs of the community. Furthermore, a proposition that recognised the importance of going back to grain crops made him enjoin traditional with modern agricultural practices, an action that would endear him to the community. This alignment made it possible to move the community towards a sustainable solution.

The COSUN case presents multiple motives as well. PROSPECT was set up to pilot a community-driven development approach whose success would have informed replications across CARE International's structure and among development agencies (Mattingly 2008). PROSPECT's object motive to provide water aligned with that of the COSUN women. The reality of using local leaders to take over the running of the project seems to have created a discordant fit. There is no evidence that their motive was to ensure poverty reduction for the community. The COSUN women's experiences with their leaders suggest a motive that was misaligned and therefore a failure to inform sustainable solutions. Other motives were at play at the time of the PROSPECT project. The funder DFID (United Kingdom's Department for International Development) had just embraced the sustainable livelihoods approach that espoused holistic and people-centred development to build on community strengths for sustainability (Solesbury 2003). CARE International had similarly embraced a sustainable livelihoods approach called Households Livelihoods Framework, and together they partnered in the establishment of PROSPECT. It can be argued therefore that one of the motives was to try out this bottom-up approach and thus PROSPECT should have proceeded as a research project (Mattingly 2008). A different motive could be linked to the fact that CARE International had around the same time, started a microfinance institution in Lusaka and that may have inspired the microfinance component in the PROSPECT project, since there was no evidence of the community expressing a need for this initiative (Entrepreneurs Finance Company: 2012). The various motives were not aligned to support the most vulnerable and thus the frustrations that the women experienced.

5.   Responding to Research Question

This research was premised on responding to the question: How can poor people's voices inform development practice in ways that can evolve impactful models?

From an analysis of the Chinyika community, we are able to pick up five key elements that enabled community members to influence actions that benefit them. We are also able to recognise that the absence of these elements in the COSUN group had a great likelihood of contributing to a lack of success. These are: the context, the structure, the object motive, the ability to identify the problem, and the action trigger. These elements together form the theoretical framework that is discussed below.

The Context: The Chinyika Community had a hierarchical authority that ensured a sense of belonging and that all members of the community had a voice. The COSUN group did not have this benefit and yet looked up to existing leaders to help them resolve their livelihood issues. There was a gap between their expectation and the reality they experienced, and by their perception, were thus open to people taking advantage of them. Their sense of belonging was highly compromised as they experienced the constant reminders of their vulnerabilities. From this level of comparison, the research concluded that for community members to articulate their issues in ways that can enable them to inform solutions, they need to have a context that facilitates individual and collective agency. Individuals should have enough space within which to articulate their needs.

The Structure: In the Chinyika case, the community members were within a hierarchical structure that located members within the same ancestry, culture and values. The hierarchy allowed for a Headman as the 'go to' person. The Headman in this case became proactive and sought both short-term and more sustainable solutions. His level of competence enabled him to not only identify knowledge gaps within the community, but also how to bridge them within the known context, such that individual and collective voices were heard and participated in crafting a solution. The COSUN structure also had leaders, however the difference is that these leaders were put in place by an external entity- CARE International with a specific purpose. They found themselves lacking to provide continued support within expected parameters let alone exploring new ways of knowing. Thus when one leader felt that there was tension with the women, he "washed [his] hands" and was no longer willing to support them (Banda-Mutalima 2016:248). Thus it is important to have a supportive structure that guides community members on how to handle vexing situations and who to go to for a dependable point of recourse.

The Object- Motive Alignment: The Chinyika case reflects a clear object-motive alignment because the Headman was part of the community and had legitimate responsibility over the welfare of the community. He also had an added object-motive as in-coming chief to respond to his people as a way of strengthening his soon-coming role. In the COSUN case, a consortium that included the government, donors and CARE International externally engineered the developmental agenda. The object motives were disparate: the government wanted to appease the populace and stop the rioting; the donors and development agency wanted to try out their sustainable livelihoods models; and the communities wanted food prices to come down; they also wanted subsidies and employment since most of them had been retrenched. There is therefore need for parties driving a development agenda to ensure adequate alignment of motives for development solutions that are commonly owned.
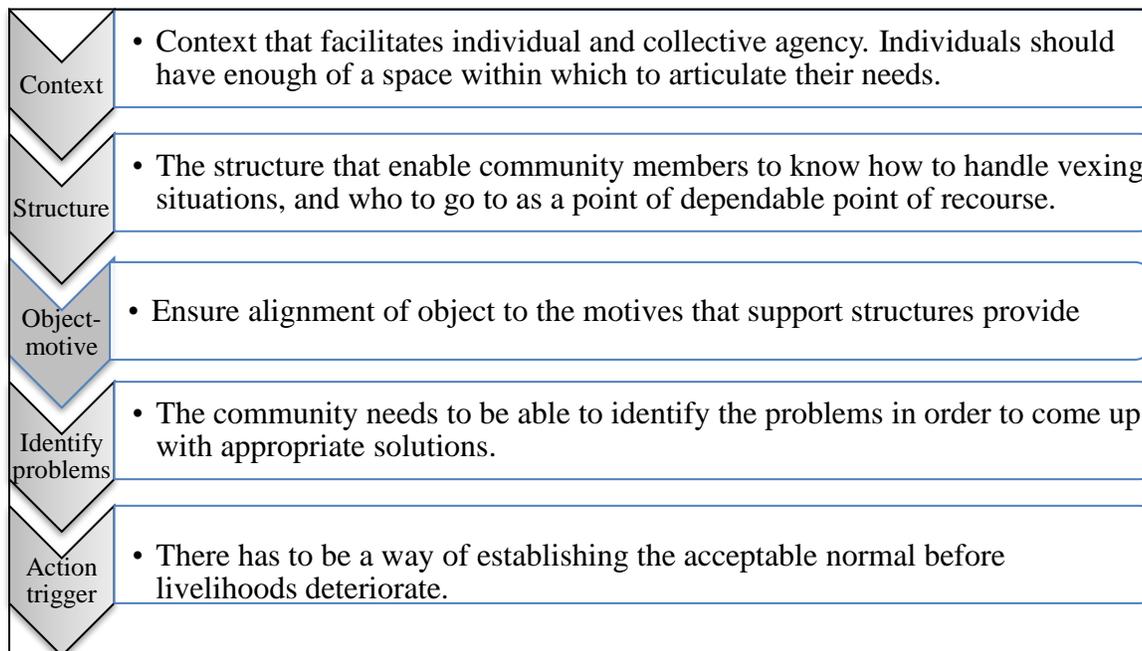
Ability to identify problems: In the Chinyika case, the community experienced famine in the immediate. However, the Headman identified hunger as symptomatic of the real problem: focusing on growing maize, which was ill suited for the climate. He was therefore able to seek appropriate solutions to that specific problem on a sustainable basis. Thus the capability of individual and collective agency is greatly assisted by the inherent competence of those intending to assume and exercise such agency. The COSUN group did not have this advantage. Though an early survey had identified water as the problem, literature points to other problems that were being experienced in the squatter settlements (World Bank 2002). Even the water solution was not successfully resolved, as community members who were unable to pay were still not benefitting. There is therefore a need to have adequate competence within the community to identify the underlying problems in order to come up with appropriate and sustainable solutions.

The Action Trigger: People have a knack of adapting to their environments and normalising problematic situations until a specific event triggers action. In the Chinyika case, they had experienced drought conditions in previous years; there were therefore opportunities at earlier times for the community to take action. However the drought of 2004 pushed the community to the end of their resources that they started doing things they had not done before like foraging the forest for wild fruits and tubers. This

event triggered action. The COSUN case on the other hand was in a situation of decreased incomes and increasing poverty that had protracted and may have become normative. This raises the question of what happens when there is no obvious action trigger. There has to be a way of understanding what the acceptable normal would look like before livelihoods deteriorate. This again points to strong and benevolent leadership that would determine certain livelihood standards below which action would be imperative.

In pulling together the above elements, the results of this research informed the Analytical Framework as depicted in the diagram below

Figure 3.3- Analytical Framework

- **Context** • Context that facilitates individual and collective agency. Individuals should have enough of a space within which to articulate their needs.
- **Structure** • The structure that enable community members to know how to handle vexing situations, and who to go to as a point of dependable point of recourse.
- **Object-motive** • Ensure alignment of object to the motives that support structures provide
- **Identify problems** • The community needs to be able to identify the problems in order to come up with appropriate solutions.
- **Action trigger** • There has to be a way of establishing the acceptable normal before livelihoods deteriorate.

The framework developed using the cultural historic activity system lens, highlights the complexities of communities that cannot be ignored when evaluating the capacity of poor people's voices to inform development interventions that benefit them.

6.   Limitations of the Paper

The comparison between the Chinyika community, which is rural and the COSUN group which is peri-urban, may at the face of it appear like comparing unlike elements. However, the rationale consists in the fact that the research aimed to look at the efficacy of poor people's voices in informing development

efforts that benefit them. Thus the congruency happens in the element of voice as Zinchenko (2013) states (see literature review above). Through voice, people can exercise their agency and this is particularly essential for poor people regardless of whether they are rural or urban based (Narayan et al 2000). Though the study was conducted from the premise of the provision of microfinance, the focus was on the efficacy of the voices of poor people, and therefore the lessons could be applied to development efforts that aim to move people out of poverty. This paper takes that approach.

7.   Conclusion

This research identified that poor people need to be facilitated to competently articulate their livelihoods needs in ways that match them to appropriate livelihood solutions, and thus identified the need for genuine dialogue spaces. It would therefore be important for communities to build these dialogue spaces in order to facilitate listening and identifying livelihood needs. The lack of competent knowledge and skills limitations would have ramifications on individual and collective agency. However, where communities have organised themselves and community dialogue spaces are functional, the likelihood of there being leadership with the capacity to identify livelihood needs will be high. Once the livelihood needs are known, the quest for solution might lead to engaging other activity systems providing solutions. Also, community structures need to deliberately recognise the different gender roles and support women against vulnerability.

This research recommended that in communities with disparate cultural values and norms, community structure would need to be identified to undertake leadership and on-going analysis of the community with a view to ensuring effective dialogue spaces. The research identified the Church as one such entity. Other community organisations could be considered.

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