



**Midlands State University**  
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**FACULTY OF ARTS**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

Being a dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
of Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree in History and International Studies

Women and urban agriculture from 1980-2017. A Case study of Gweru  
urban.

By

**OLGA KAHONDE**

[R142747V]

**SUPERVISOR DR I. MAZAMBANI**

**NOV 2017, ZVISHAVANE**

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## **APPROVAL FORM**

The undersigned certify that they have read and recommend to the Midlands State University for acceptance: A dissertation entitled: Women and Urban Agriculture from 1980- 2017. A Case Study of Gweru Urban submitted by Olga Kahonde in fulfilment of the requirements of Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree in History and International Studies.

(Students's signature).....

(Date).....

(Supervisor's signature).....

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**DECLARATION**

I, Olga Kahonde declare that this dissertation is my own academic product and has not been submitted in any University for degree purposes other than Midlands State University. It is being submitted in the partial fulfilment of the Bachelor of Arts Honours in History and International studies.

Signature

.....

Date

.....

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my family for the encouragement they gave me throughout my studies.



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank God Almighty for granting me wisdom, knowledge and understanding throughout my study. I also want to thank Dr I Mazambani for the supervision and guidance. All department of History lecturers, I thank you for your support. Special appreciation goes to my parents and family for encouraging and supporting me. My deepest gratitude goes to my love Tinashe Marongwe and my son, Kaleb Marongwe for all the support and encouragement. I would like to extend my gratitude to all the people who provided information for this study. My friends, Racheal, Patience, Susan, Flavie, Mobie, Kudzanai and Norman. I enjoyed your company at college. To those I did not mention by name, I appreciate your support. God bless you.

## ABSTRACT

*This study is an analysis of the participation of women in urban agriculture in Gweru. The importance of urban agriculture has often been overlooked, thus this study sought to explain how urban has been important in sustaining livelihoods. Over the years urban agriculture has been increasing due to the socio-economic and political problems. The study examines urban agriculture and its contribution to the livelihoods of women urban farmers. The study seeks to highlight the reasons why women engaged in urban agriculture, how urban agriculture has contributed to their livelihoods of women as well as the challenges women face in urban agriculture. Urban agriculture has become a means of generating income, a coping strategy to the urban economic hardships which has been increasing. The study made use of various methods of gathering information. Interviews were used to gather information. Personal observations, questionnaires and focus group discussions were employed to gather information about women and urban agriculture. Interviews reviewed that, urban agriculture has a significant contribution to household food security for the women who practice it. Key challenges faced by women in urban agriculture have been identified and the impacts they have on agricultural production have been established. Secondary sources were consulted to fill in the gaps which were left by primary sources in data collection. The study analyses intervention strategies which have been implemented to promote urban agriculture and these strategies proved to have improved urban agriculture in Gweru. The key players for implementing strategies were the International community, the Government of Zimbabwe, the Gweru City Council, NGOs and individual initiated programmes. These initiatives include the Nyanga declaration of Urban and Peri urban agriculture, the Harare declaration of urban and Peri urban agriculture. The study analyses the effectiveness of these initiatives in promoting urban agriculture in Gweru.*

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.
CIRAD	Agricultural Research Centre for International Development.
ECHO	European Commission Department for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection.
ERCU	Emergency and Rehabilitation Coordination Unit.
ESAP	Economic Structural Programme.
EU	European Union.
FAO	Food Aid Organisation.
GCC	Gweru City Council.
GWAPA	Women's Aids Prevention Association.
HIV	Human Immune Virus.
IDRC	International Research Development Centre.
IFPR	International Food Policy Research Institute.
IWMI	International Water Management Institute.
MASO	Midlands Aids Service Organisation.
NGO	Non-governmental Organisations.
NRI	Natural Resources Institute.
RUAF	Resource Centres on Urban Agriculture and Food Security.
SME	Small to Medium Enterprises.
UA	Urban Agriculture.
UN	United Nations.
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme.

UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund.
VAT	Value Added Tax.
WRI	World Resource Institute.
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Unity Patriotic Front.
ZBC TV	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Cooperation Television.
Zim ASSET	Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation.
ZIMSOFF	Zimbabwe Small Holder Organic Farmers Forum.

## INTRODUCTION

This study focused on women and urban agriculture in Gweru with reference to the period 1980-2017. Agriculture in Gweru urban has been increasing day by day due to the economic hardships. According to Mbiba, urban agriculture refers to the production of crops and or livestock within the administrative boundaries of the city<sup>1</sup>. Since the development of settlements, urban agriculture has been increasing rapidly on global, regional as well as national levels. Urban agriculture has been increasing because of various reasons such as rapid urbanisation, ineffective government policies, withdrawal of subsidies, wage cuts, inflation, unemployment, crippled domestic food distribution systems and economic recession<sup>2</sup>.

The problem of food insecurity in Zimbabwe used to be more predominant in the rural areas than urban areas. However, food insecurity has also been prevalent in the urban areas. The problems which are in the social, economic and political environment have exacerbated the situation even in urban areas thereby causing many women to try and navigate the problem through urban agriculture. Authorities around the world have recognised that urban crop production is important to household food security. This has also been acknowledged by authorities in Zimbabwe.

In Gweru urban, the key challenge has been that, the level of contribution of urban agriculture in ensuring food security had not been thoroughly investigated. This study focused on Gweru in order to fill in the gaps left by past researchers. Gweru is one of the major cities of Zimbabwe, the capital of the Midlands Province. Researchers have focused on bigger cities like Harare and Bulawayo, overlooking cities like Gweru yet urban agriculture in Gweru has expanded, hence the study seeks to investigate urban agriculture in Gweru. In addition, women have proved to be the ones who mostly practice urban agriculture thus the study focused on women. Women have always been the most vulnerable group in terms of

unemployment, women have been responsible for preparing food in households and also gender and cultural roles have directed women to urban agriculture, thus the study is designed to articulate the reasons why women engage in urban agriculture.

The growing importance of urban agriculture has been under rated. According to UNDP, globally, about 200 million urban dwellers are now farmers, providing food and income to approximately 700 million people<sup>3</sup>. The study therefore seeks to analyse urban agriculture from 1980 to present. Mbiba states that, the use of urban space for crop production increased during and after the years of drought which are 1982/83; 1988/89; 1991/93<sup>4</sup>. These droughts affected Southern Africa and particularly the women in Gweru. More so, since 1990, the land under cultivation in residential areas has more than doubled<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, the study seeks to analyse change and continuity of urban agriculture in Gweru from 1980 to 2017 considering the changes which have been happening in the social, economic, political environments in Zimbabwe, and particularly Gweru, and how they have influenced urban agriculture. .

For a long period of time, the importance of urban agriculture was overlooked or dismissed as merely the result of traditional habits brought by rural migrants to the city, expected to fade away over time when these people integrated into the economy<sup>6</sup>. This has not been the case. In Gweru, urban agriculture has been increasing rather than decreasing. Therefore, the study seeks to investigate why women in Gweru are adhering to urban agriculture.

Urban agriculture has been the major activity that women in Gweru are using as a coping strategy for poverty alleviation brought about by drought, economic hardships, political instability and food insecurity. Women tend to dominate in urban agriculture. According to Mbiba, urban agriculture can be classified into on plot and off plot urban agriculture<sup>7</sup>. Women grow crops on plots around houses, as well as in open spaces within the boundaries of the city. Urban agriculture takes place on roadsides, railway sides, and school grounds and on undeveloped land. The crops which are grown are mainly the staple crop; maize, sweet

potatoes, ground and round nuts, pumpkins, vegetables and beans. These are mainly for household consumption though surplus can be used for marketing. Therefore, the study seeks to explore the types and forms of agriculture, and the level of contribution of urban agriculture to household food security.

Land is the major input for agriculture to take place. Urban agriculture has been taking place in open spaces known as “zviminda zvedhora”, meaning that they pay a dollar to the city council in order to farm on the land<sup>8</sup>. Access to the land has basically been through informal means like self-allocation. This shows that urban agriculture has been associated with a lot of problems, thus this study wishes to investigate the problems faced by women in urban agriculture and how they have affected sustainability, continuity and productivity. It also seeks to analyse how women have navigated the problems.

This study also seeks to analyse the effectiveness of the intervention strategies that have been implemented to promote urban agriculture in Gweru. There are various strategies that have been implemented to promote urban agriculture such as the Nyanga Declaration of 2002 and the Harare Declaration of 2003. The Gweru City Council, NGOs and individuals have also employed ways of promoting urban agriculture, thus the study seeks to analyse the effectiveness of these measures.

The study is significant in the way that it hopes to fill in some gaps left by past researchers on women and urban agriculture in Gweru. There is no much literature written on urban agriculture in Gweru. Researchers have not been paying much attention to urban agriculture in Gweru yet it is expanding. Agriculture has been synonymous with rural areas and farms, therefore, gaps still exist in knowledge and appreciation of urban agriculture. Urban agriculture in Zimbabwe has been too few hence this study seeks to provide the much needed information of urban agriculture. There is also need to prove if urban agriculture is a viable intervention for women in Gweru with regards to livelihoods thus making it as essential area

of study. Little information has been documented about women and urban agriculture. Most studies about urban agriculture have not been carried out in Zimbabwe and particularly Gweru, thus this study wishes to provide information which is much needed to understand urban agriculture in Gweru.

### **Aims and Objectives**

- To investigate the reasons why women engage in urban agriculture.
- To examine the contribution of urban agriculture to the livelihoods of women in Gweru.
- To investigate the challenges faced by women in urban agriculture.
- To examine the intervention strategies which have been implemented in promoting urban agriculture.

### **Literature review**

There is a lot of literature on urban agriculture but the focus was not on Gweru. Various scholars have written about urban agriculture but Gweru was neglected. More so, the available literature has also neglected the participation of women in urban agriculture. Hovorka postulates that, women are the majority amongst urban farmers in many cities around the world, and they tend to predominate in subsistence farming<sup>9</sup>. This provided a foundation for my study. However, Hovorka did not recognise the existence of urban agriculture for marketing purposes; hence this study seeks to fill that gap.

Furthermore, Hovorka states that, urban agriculture compared to other informal activities in the cities has been especially convenient for married women with children<sup>10</sup>. Most women who practice urban agriculture in Gweru are married women with children. However, Hovorka overlooked the participation of single women in urban agriculture, thus this study seeks to address that. Therefore, there is need to acknowledge that there are single mothers who also share the same practice with married women, hence this study wishes to fill in the gap by examining the status of women who practice urban agriculture.



Chinyanza states that, over 11.6 million population of Zimbabwe, 35% of these live in urban areas and 70% of the population live in abject poverty<sup>11</sup>. Women and children constitute the majority of the population. Therefore, Chinyanza's findings on poverty statistics explain that poverty has been a reason why women are involved in urban agriculture. In addition, Mbiba asserts that, urban agriculture involves the production of food and animals within the boundaries of cities<sup>12</sup>. He further explains that, urban agriculture takes place on plot and off plot. On plot agriculture is practiced around houses like backyard farming and off plot agriculture takes place in open spaces of the suburbs<sup>12</sup>. However there is need to acknowledge some form of urban agriculture such as indoor cultivation hence this study seeks to fill in the gaps by exploring other types of crop cultivation.

Women who are involved in urban agriculture have different reasons why they engage in it. Kinser argues that, urban farming was an idea used by urban women as a solution to protest against patriarchal control in cases whereby women were oppressed<sup>13</sup>. Kinser's argument is in line with the study such that, in Gweru, women use urban agriculture as a way of income enhancement. Urban agriculture is a way of generating income in those cases where women can sell their produce. However, the study will fill in the missing gap by investigating other problems which women face in Gweru which lead them to engage in urban agriculture, such as unemployment, culture, gender roles amongst others.

Urban agriculture involves labour, capital and it is also time consuming. Kinser further argues that urban agriculture can be a way of relaxation, particularly referring to the case of non-food items like flowers<sup>14</sup>. Considering the hard work, associated with agriculture, Kinser's point of view can be in contrast with the researcher's line of argument such that, women practice agriculture in order to earn a living. Therefore, market gardening is a way of income enhancement.

The study benefited tremendously from Nugents' work on urban agriculture. He postulates that, urban agriculture is a practice carried out by people of different levels of income. For the poor, it provides food, for the middle class it acts as income and gives food at low costs, and for the stable it is a source of income<sup>15</sup>. This is in line with the researcher's line of argument that urban agriculture is important for women as it has an impact on livelihoods. In Gweru, urban agriculture is no longer practiced by the poor only, even those who are formally employed utilise their weekends by practicing urban agriculture, hence Nugents' study is in line with what is on the ground in Gweru.

Urban agriculture faces transition. Lesher is of the view that urban agriculture has the characteristics of the chameleon and phoenix. It adapts and modifies itself<sup>16</sup>. The study benefited from Lesher's metaphor such that Lesher lays the basis on how to find out the origins and development of women and urban agriculture in Gweru. Urban agriculture faces transition hence the study seeks to investigate the development of urban agriculture since 1980 to date. During the 1980s, the rate at which urban agriculture was being practiced is different from the present day. Urban agriculture is now being practiced tremendously by women; hence it has faced a transition. Thus, the study benefited from Lesher,s point of view.

Wiblers focuses on the reasons why women participate in urban agriculture. He argues that the first reason emanate from previous practices meaning that some women who migrated from the rural areas brought their agricultural practices to urban areas. Secondly, there are women who have a rural background and are involved in urban agriculture by choice or need<sup>17</sup>. Investigating the backgrounds of women is crucial in trying to understand the reasons why they participate in urban agriculture. Wibler's contribution prompted the researcher to examine the background of women practicing agriculture in Gweru. Hence the study benefited from Wilbers' argument.

Nuggent explains the reasons why some people are involved in urban agriculture and this enabled the researcher to compare them with women in Gweru. She explains that, Muslims in Cairo raise small livestock in preparation for traditional ceremonies such as celebrations and funerals<sup>18</sup>. In Gweru, women raise animals for occasions such as wedding and public holidays. Mainly poultry is done whereby women raise chickens for even hence Nuggents' assertion is similar to this study.

Urbanites involved in urban agriculture are usually composed of the poor and disadvantaged groups such as orphans, women, unemployed rural migrants, and the elderly<sup>19</sup>. This is the case in Gweru urban, hence the study benefited from Hovorka's work. Women are the ones who are practicing urban agriculture and amongst these women, the elderly women constitute the higher percentage of women involved in agriculture. However, his study contrasts in the case whereby employed women also engage in urban agriculture in Gweru, thus the study wishes to fill in the gap.

Millions of people in the growing cities of the developing countries have become urban farmers in recent decades. They grow vegetables, raise livestock, poultry and fish, and practice many other types of agriculture. Researchers are paying increasing attention to a sector often neglected by governments, one which can contribute greatly to the sustainability of cities. The practitioners of urban agriculture need no convincing about its merits. They enjoy better diets, higher income, employment or combinations of all these benefits. Urban agriculture is offering many benefits to women hence improving livelihoods of families<sup>20</sup>. The study benefited tremendously as this prompted to investigate the contribution of urban agriculture to food security. Researchers have neglected the social benefits of urban agriculture hence the study wishes to capture them hence filling the existing gap.

According to the International Research Development Centre, apart from the nutrition and health, farming in cities contributes to producers' wellbeing in a number of ways, including

cash saving and income generation<sup>21</sup>. Amongst the low income groups, urban agriculture can cover a huge share of household's total food consumption and can save cash that would have been spent on food. The study benefited though some gaps have to be covered explaining how urban agriculture brings communities together. Researchers have focused on the individual benefits overlooking the benefits of urban agriculture to communities, and nations hence it is a priority of the study to fill the gaps.

## **Methodology**

Various tools were used to collect data. This section highlights a description of the methods that were used in the study and the reasons why the methodology was considered to be the most suitable for gathering the data needed to answer the research questions. Observations, personal interviews, questionnaires and focus group discussions were used as a means of data collection.

Personal observations were used in the study. Observations were used to study the way women practice urban agriculture. They benefited the study as they showed the type of agriculture practiced by women and also the types of crops which are grown. It was done directly by the researcher so as to get a better understanding. Observations allowed independence and objectivity. They provided room to evaluate information since it was based on a wide range of behaviours.

Interviews were conducted for soliciting answers from women involved in urban agriculture. This method provided more interaction between the interviewer and the respondents. Interviews allowed interviewees to explain further and it also allowed the interviewer to ask questions and to ask the respondent to repeat if something has been missed. They were face to face interviews with the women involved in urban agriculture. This helped shed light on specific problems in considerable depth as well as other complex issues. Interviewees were allowed to express themselves more freely, the daily challenges that drove them to take in

urban agriculture and the challenges they face as they work in the fields. Some people did not want their names to be known hence the study made use of pseudonyms.

Interviews were effective as the interviewer could explain a question, which the interviewee could not understand. Interviews also provided face to face interaction and thus enhancing the reliability of the information. In addition, questions were made to tailor suit the interviewee's level of understanding. There was also room for probing further. The major weaknesses of interviews were that they were costly to conduct, that was transport charges involved and also they were time consuming.

To back the interview efforts, the researcher visited more locations to converse with and conduct focus-group discussions with the female farmers. These discussions provided an opportunity for the participants to share their feelings, insights and experiences about urban agriculture. The information sought from the discussions covered farming tendencies, land ownerships, reasons for cultivation and problems they face as farmers in the city.

Questionnaires were also used. A list of questions was designed to gather information and they were given to the participants to answer written questions using their views. These were distributed to women in both low and high density suburbs of Gweru. Most people were cooperative. Questionnaires brought different views of people, however, it was difficult in cases of illiteracy and some failed to understand questions.

Secondary sources were also consulted. These were targeted to kick start the study, to provide much needed information on the study and also to cover the gaps left by primary sources. The researcher used books, journals, published and unpublished articles, internet, and newspapers to gather information. These provided a historical background of urban agriculture as well as current trends.

The dissertation is divided into four chapters. The introductory chapter outlines the aims and objectives of the study. It focuses on introducing the study. Various sources were consulted and literature review was done to provide evidence of written literature. Various ways which were used to gather information were captured such as interviews, observations, questionnaires, secondary sources such as books, articles were also consulted.

Chapter one focuses on urban agriculture in Zimbabwe. It gives an overview of urban agriculture in Zimbabwe, how urban agriculture came in to being. The chapter also traces the historical development of urban agriculture in Zimbabwe. It investigates how the international community and NGOs perceive urban agriculture and how they have impacted on Zimbabwe. The chapter also reviews scholars who write in promoting urban agriculture as well as scholars who write condemning urban agriculture.

Chapter two focuses on Women and urban agriculture in Gweru. It outlines the reasons why women in Gweru engage in urban agriculture such as poverty, unfavourable government policies such as ESAP and Operation Murambatsvina, droughts, unemployment, culture, religion, and gender amongst others. The chapter also explains the forms of urban agriculture such as crop production and livestock production. It also shows the contribution of urban agriculture to livelihoods.

Chapter three investigates the challenges faced by women in urban agriculture in Gweru. It outlines the problems and show how they have affected productivity. Women face problems such as lack of land, lack of capital, inputs, lack of market, and lack of storage amongst others. Some of the problems women have managed to counter them but some cannot be addressed.

Chapter four examines the effectiveness of intervention strategies which were implemented to promote urban agriculture. The international community, the government and NGOs have

put measures to promote urban agriculture and these have benefited the women in Gweru. More so, the Gweru city council, manufacturing companies as well as individuals have also participated in promoting urban agriculture thus the chapter seeks to examine the effectiveness.

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## **CHAPTER 1: URBAN AGRICULTURE IN ZIMBABWE**

### **1.0 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the development of urban agriculture in Zimbabwe. It traces the history of urban agriculture since the pre-colonial era to the present day. It also gives a historical background of urban agriculture. The chapter captures how different actors view urban agriculture, examining how the International community perceive urban agriculture and how NGOs acknowledge urban agriculture. The chapter also examine scholarship and the promotion of urban agriculture as well as scholarship and the condemnation of urban agriculture. Various scholars were reviewed to show how they promote or condemn urban agriculture.

### **1.1 Overview of urban agriculture in Zimbabwe**

Urban agriculture in Zimbabwe has been increasing owing to the increase in economic hardships. Women bear household responsibilities hence they are the ones who practice urban agriculture as compared to their male counterparts. According to Mbiba, urban agriculture can be classified in to on-plot agriculture and off plot agriculture. On plot agriculture is practiced on plots around houses like backyard gardening<sup>1</sup>. In this case it can be for household subsistence or marketing. Women involved in urban agriculture grow maize, vegetables and keep small livestock such as poultry. During the dry season, households use tap water and most households have dug wells to irrigate gardens. Another form of urban agriculture is off plot agriculture and this is conducted in public open spaces<sup>2</sup>. In these open spaces where urban agriculture is taking place, it is illegal and highly contested. Women usually contest for ownership of the land yet none of them owns it. If a person cultivated on the same piece of land for several years, she regards the land as hers but the land belongs to the local government or individuals who haven't gotten the money to develop their land.

In Zimbabwe, urban agriculture has greatly been practiced within pegged residential stands or out of pegged residential stands. In low density areas, stand sizes are larger and there is usually enough space for partial agricultural activities. Some of the low areas with large stands are classified as agro-residential stands, entailing that urbanites can lawfully practice urban agriculture<sup>3</sup>. The Greenvale area in Gweru is one such example. However, the scenario is different in high density areas where stand sizes are usually small, varying from about 150-300 square metres, such as Mkoba in Gweru, Cowdray park in Bulawayo, and Kuwadzana in Harare. There is barely some space left for cultivation and yet the activity is most desirable for the purposes of supporting the livelihoods of people in these areas ,hence women occupied the open spaces of the locations for agricultural purposes.

Urban agriculture in Zimbabwe is mostly practiced along roadsides, along railway lines, and in open spaces which are adjacent to schools and residential areas. In Zimbabwe, women involved in urban agriculture and who practice it in open spaces largely cultivated maize, sweet potatoes, groundnuts, roundnuts, beans, pumpkins, amongst other crops. These crops have been mainly for subsistence.

In Zimbabwe, apart from crop cultivation, households have engaged in livestock rearing where animals such as chickens, rabbits, quails, turkeys are reared. Urban agriculture has become a means of generating income for urban women. In the past, growing crops in the small fields was for struggling housewives but nowadays, even those in formal employment scrambled for the small pieces of land. Some engaged on other people to work on their pieces of land for them.<sup>4</sup> It becomes clear that, even those women who are formally employed are resorted to urban agriculture in order to supplement their incomes.

Conferring to the African culture, a woman should be hardworking, explained by a Shona phrase which says, “musha mukadzi” which means that for a home to be successful, it needs a woman. People often blame women if things do not go well in households, hence women

practice in order to sustain their homes. Despite limited support and heavy losses associated with urban agriculture, women tend to continue the practice. Most women have that heritage of having at least a piece of land to till and produce something for personal satisfaction. According to Chikudza, wherever there are people, there is need for food and employment opportunities Zimbabweans are land hungry and the desire to participate in some sort of farming all the time<sup>5</sup>. Women are culturally connected to the soil and they would use every available opportunity to exploit this resource.

## **1.2 Historical background of urban agriculture in Zimbabwe**

Urban agriculture in Zimbabwe can be traced from the pre-colonial. It can be traced from the rise of early organised settlements where by people no longer concentrated on hunting and gathering. Rakodi states that, urban agriculture in Africa is not new. It played a pivotal role in pre-colonial cities of non-Islamic origin, especially those which were seats of rulers and religious centres.<sup>6</sup> This therefore highlights that, probably in centres like great Zimbabwe, where the economy was based on agriculture, cultivation of crops was done to sustain people. Even during the pre-colonial era, agriculture was dominant and it was the backbone of the economy, hence urban agriculture in present day Zimbabwe, is not a new phenomenon. It is just that, because of industrialisation, and urbanisation, most women are now living in urban areas, so that is where they practice agriculture for food security. This highlights the continuity of urban agriculture.

The history of urban agriculture can also be traced from the colonial era. Arku etal states that, urban farming was done to cater for the consumption needs of bureaucrats, settlers, and other elites.<sup>7</sup> It clearly depicts that urban agriculture is not new then, since it was practiced during the colonial era. However, this contrasts with the present day urban agriculture that, UA has become an increasingly substantial source of food security for the urban people due to the

increase of economic hardships and rapid urbanisation. This however indicates change in urban agriculture.

Urban agriculture has been increasing since the 1980s. This was due to a number of factors such as ineffective agricultural policies, inflation, withdrawal of subsidies, urbanisation and unemployment amongst others. The 1980s witnessed an increase in the number of income earners and other professional women in the practice. As stated in the Urban Agriculture Magazine, urban agriculture now involves women in all social levels and not the poor only.<sup>8</sup> With increasing poverty in urban areas, city councils and policy makers became aware of the relationship between urban agriculture and food security.

Mbiba states that, during the 1980s, there was a widespread and significant increase in the cultivation of food crops in both public and private open spaces in urban areas. A variety of reasons may account for this rapid increase such as the crisis of the 1980s and 1990s. The use of urban space for crop cultivation by women increased during and after the years of drought which were 1982/83, 1988/89, 1991/93.<sup>9</sup> The economic collapse and in particular the decline in the formal sector employment and incomes since 1980 has contributed to the increase in off plot urban agriculture for food procurement. SAPs, decline in the formal sector, government initiated programmes such as Operation Murambatsvina, the economic recession, of 2007 saw an increase in off-plot urban agriculture with maize being the main crop of production. During this period, most men crossed borders to look for employment in neighbouring countries while women who remained to look after children resorted to urban agriculture for survival. This indicates that, there was continuation in urban agriculture since 1980, and the practice increased with time.

The World Resource Institute postulates that, the people who dwell in urban areas in Africa grew from 27 to 38 percent from 1980-2000. It is predictable that it may reach approximately 50 percent by 2020<sup>10</sup>. The reality is that, urbanisation does not mean economic opportunity

and success for the majority of the people, rather, it means poverty. Thus, Rabinovitch notes that 50 percent of the global population's poor, 40 percent of the African population's poor live in urban areas.<sup>11</sup> This explains the increase of urban agricultural activities in Zimbabwe such that, with the rise of urban populations and the increase in poverty, urban agriculture is increasing as well.

### **1.3 Scholarship and promotion of urban agriculture**

Urban agriculture has become an important practice which is generating food in urban areas. Due to the increase in economic hardships, urban agriculture has become a way of ensuring household food security. It has been discovered that, women who practiced urban agriculture were better off than those who do not. Various scholars have supported the notion that, urban agriculture is beneficial and they have written literature promoting urban agriculture.

Mougeot is of the view that, urban agriculture is one of the important source of supply of food in urban food systems and only one of several food security options for households.<sup>12</sup> This proves that urban agriculture has been recognised as a reliable way of food production in urban areas. Women who practiced urban agriculture often had food security. Scholars have recognised the important role played by urban agriculture.

Furthermore, many scholars have supported that urban agriculture is beneficial to the urban people. Nugent states that, for every \$1 that is invested in a community garden or plot, approximately \$6 worth of vegetables can be grown.<sup>13</sup> This highlights how urban agriculture has been seen as profitable and hence urban agriculture has been crucial sustaining families. Instead of buying agricultural produce from shops or vendors, women engage in producing it themselves. It shows that urban agriculture generates income in households.

Tansa argues that, in Africa, low income households spend up to 90 % of their income on buying food. Thereby urban agriculture reduces the costs of buying food<sup>14</sup>. Tansa stresses out

the importance of urban agriculture such that it lowers the costs of buying food. It shows that, if women practice urban agriculture, the money used on buying food stuffs will be reduced and the money can be used to buy other things or pay other services hence it shows that urban agriculture is of importance since it reduces the costs of living in urban areas.

Hovorka's work on urban agriculture shows that she acknowledges the importance of urban agriculture. She asserts that, urban agriculture compared with other informal sector activities in cities, has been especially convenient for married women with children, given that it can be practiced close to home, requiring little cash investment, and combining multiple roles of urban women<sup>15</sup>. It clearly explains that, urban agriculture has been a suitable way of earning a living in urban areas. More so, for those who practice it for subsistence purposes, it requires less investment. Urban agriculture can be combined with other roles hence it acts as a bonus in urban areas for example, those who are formally employed practice urban agriculture after work which shows that it is not a full time activity.

Urban agriculture is of importance as it promotes the economy and reduces levels of poverty. Chaminuka argues that, urban agriculture plays and will continue to play significant role in promoting food security, employment creation and income generation, health and nutrition and improving the economies of urban areas.<sup>16</sup> With the increase of unemployment rate, urban agriculture has proved to be a job in the informal sector. It has moved from subsistence to market gardening hence creating employment for the vulnerable women in urban areas, thus UA is an important activity as it creates employment and generates income for women in urban areas.

Mbiba states that, despite the possibly conditions for urban agriculture, urban households meet their food needs from rural produce and acquire their incomes from a diverse range of informal activities of which urban agriculture is a tiny component.<sup>17</sup> He points out that urbanites benefit from urban agriculture by generating income from it. It shows that, though

urban agriculture is regarded as unimportant, it has been providing for the vulnerable people living in urban areas and these are mostly women.

### **1.3.1 International organisations and urban agriculture**

International organisations have been working towards promoting urban agriculture. These organisations have been facilitating research to promote urban agriculture, workshops, declarations of promoting urban agriculture, writing articles, magazines and pamphlets, stressing out the importance of urban agriculture hence it shows how urban agriculture has been an important practice around the globe since these organisations have realised that, UA promotes food security. These laid a base for acceptance of urban agriculture in Zimbabwe. More so, these organisations facilitated assistance in the foundation of multi-partner on urban farming, arrangement of process support to the making of local policies and activity designs, establishment of checking frameworks and arrangement of input to policymakers and urban organisers on the social, financial, and the biological effects of urban agriculture.<sup>18</sup>

International organisations have research organisations for example, International Research Development Centre(IDRC), International Water Management Institute(IWMI), International Food Policy Research Institute(IFPRI), Natural Resources Institute(NRI), Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD) are implementing and supporting development research on urban agriculture.<sup>19</sup> These organisations have been carrying out research on agriculture globally in order to ascertain the importance of UA and how it is being carried out globally. After gathering information, they then implement programmes which allow the promotion of urban agriculture and they have participated in Zimbabwe.

One example is of the Quito declaration by the United Nations, which was a declaration to promote urban agriculture. It was a landmark, the first to call for the region's cities to embrace urban agriculture as a way of reducing poverty, food insecurity and environmental degradation.<sup>20</sup> The declaration proves that International Organisations have recognised the



importance of urban agriculture hence they called for all regions and countries to promote urban agriculture. The declaration was a landmark as it influenced Zimbabwe to accommodate urban agriculture.

More so, FAO has been proving that urban agriculture is of importance by aiding national, regional governments and city administrations to improve their policies and support facilities for urban agriculture, and improve production, processing and marketing systems. FAO's Emergency and Rehabilitation Coordination Unit (ERCU) has been a focal supplier of agrarian information and specialised guidance for the humanitarian group in Zimbabwe since 2002. Through the ERCU, FAO aids to the creation and spread of an extensive variety of instructive material covering issues related to regular advancement and execution of urban agriculture, availability of inputs, and humanitarian mediations in agriculture. The information is utilised by partners for programming interventions, setting up benchmarks to gauge the effect and practice of urban agriculture<sup>21</sup>.

In Zimbabwe, FAO produces monthly journals that report news on urban agriculture, offer project updates and also makes presentations and information available to the agricultural community. This highlights that International organisations have been promoting urban agriculture in Zimbabwe by assisting with agricultural extension services and also researches which will then initiate the implementation of better ways to promote urban agriculture.

The European Commission also played a pivotal role in Zimbabwe as it encompassed UA in its appeals for project proposals and it has implemented some programmes in Zimbabwe. In Gweru, the EU has aided with developmental aid by assisting with the provision of water sources and farm inputs<sup>22</sup>. This clearly highlights that the International organisations have recognised the contribution of urban agriculture to livelihoods.

### **1.3.2 NGOs and urban agriculture**

There are various NGOs which have recognised urban agriculture as an important aspect of promoting livelihoods in urban areas. These NGOs have implemented different initiatives to promote urban agriculture. It has to be noted that, in Zimbabwe there are many NGOs which have been in support of agricultural activities by offering aid, it might be financial or technical, carrying out research, training women in urban agriculture amongst others.

(RUAF) Resource Centres on Urban Agriculture and food security has been working on promoting urban agriculture in Zimbabwe by knowledge management and networking. It facilitates the gathering of local information and analysis on urban agriculture, promotion of networking, cooperation and exchange of research and project results between researchers, policy makers, urban farmers and other stakeholders, maintenance of a bibliographic database and a database of resource persons on various aspects of urban agriculture. It has been doing the publication of the urban agriculture magazine, the production and translation of leading publications on the subject, the maintenance of RUAF websites and internet access databases, CD-ROMs with databases and RUAF publications, publication/ translation of 'Growing cities, Growing Food' and other publications.<sup>23</sup> The work of RUAF in Zimbabwe shows that it has recognised the growing importance of urban agriculture.

RUAFs works in the city of Harare and Bulawayo have been success stories though Gweru is tended to be overlooked. The NGOs has facilitated the growth of urban agriculture and it is a clear indication that, through publications, magazines, assisting in policy making, RUAF has led to the fundamental growth of urban agriculture in Zimbabwe in which women are the participants.

There are some NGOS such as CARE International , MASO, GWAPA, JOINTS HANDS, which have recognised the importance of urban agriculture hence they started promoting it by filling in the gaps that were hindering its development. These NGOs assisted with financial,

technical support for example, they offered credit facilities, drilled boreholes and established community gardens. In Gweru, CARE International, GWAPA and MASO have established gardens and this shows their promotion of urban agriculture.

More so, in Zimbabwe, the presence of NGOs which promotes urban agriculture has shown their support. ZIMSOFF is another example. Zimbabwe Small Holder Organic Farmers Forum is there to create and nurture a dynamic alliance of small holder farmer organisations that promote urban agriculture. This organisation has been lobbying and advocating for policies in support of the practice<sup>24</sup>. It also facilitated the establishment of herbal gardens. This shows that NGOs have been working in Zimbabwe, in support of urban agriculture, thus they have recognised urban agriculture as an important way of generating food for the urban dwellers.

#### **1.4 Scholarship and condemnation of urban agriculture**

Though many scholars are of the view that urban agriculture is of importance to livelihoods as it has enhanced food security , created employment and generated incomes, some scholars argue that urban agriculture is destructive, it affects the conditions of the urban setting hence it must be stopped. Some scholars argue that, UA can cause diseases through the way it is practiced; breeding of mosquitoes can cause diseases. More so, the way it is practices in some cases led to land degradation.

Smit et al argues that, various exercises related with urban agriculture can cause health and sanitation issues. Cultivating in the city conveyed high health dangers than in the rural areas on the grounds that the urban air, water, soil, and waste might be more contaminated and harmful for cultivating.<sup>25</sup> The closeness of urban cultivating to the populace builds the danger of spreading both transmitted and transferrable infections. Urban cultivating has contaminated the earth through utilization of agrochemicals and draining of creature excreta, and in addition increase the territory for certain illness transmission. Cases of non-transmitted

health risks possibly connected with cultivating incorporate harm from pesticides utilized as a part of cultivating.

Furthermore, urban agriculture has been blamed for ecological damages. Banga argues that urban agriculture leads to poor land use patterns<sup>26</sup>. Stream banks and stream bed are being farmed on and it affects the soil. Thus increased siltation has reduced water available for evaporation hence it has affected humidity and rainfall, thus he condemns urban agriculture as a cause of reduced rainfall.

Urban agriculture has been considered as a practice which is harmful. Rodier et al argued that, there is great concern for instance over risks posed by open patches of cropland as breeding grounds for anopheles malaria vectors, but little actual evidence<sup>27</sup>. He stated that urban agriculture has led to diseases hence it is unfavourable. The increased digging of soil and the open spaces left when cultivating has become breeding grounds for mosquitoes hence posing health threats, thus, he condemns urban agriculture.

Urban agriculture has been condemned, that it causes threats to lives. Ngena pinpoints that, urban fields have become havens for muggers and robbers who take advantage of the tall maize<sup>28</sup>. People are being murdered, raped and robbed because of the urban farming practices such that, because of the tall plants no one can see anything or if anything is happening. Therefore, urban agriculture is blamed for accommodating various crimes.

## **1.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has captured the overview of urban agriculture in Zimbabwe. The chapter has also highlighted the history of urban agriculture in Zimbabwe such that it can be traced from the pre-colonial era to the present day. This chapter captured different actors which promote urban agriculture, the International organisations as well as NGOs, reviewing the works that they have done, analysing if they have promoted urban agriculture. Scholars who have

written supporting urban agriculture as well as scholars who have written condemning urban agriculture have been captured and it shows that most scholars acknowledges urban agriculture whilst just a few are in contrast.

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## **CHAPTER 2: WOMEN AND URBAN AGRICULTURE IN GWERU**

### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the reasons why women in Gweru urban engage in agriculture. The chapter focuses on the reasons why women practice urban agriculture. Droughts, economic recession fuelled by political instability have contributed to the rise and spread of urban agriculture. Policies such as ESAP which were adopted by the government became unfavourable such that they led to the economic hardships which drove women into urban agriculture. The land reform programme and operation Murambatsvina have also affected the livelihoods of families which led to the practice of urban agriculture by women. These led to poverty, unemployment, closure of companies, inflation, homelessness which left women without any option but to engage in urban agriculture. In most cases, urban agriculture is resulting because of need; hence it is used by women as a way of generating incomes as well as enhancing food security.

### **2.1 Overview of the city of Gweru**

Gweru is Zimbabwe's third largest city and is the capital of the Midlands province. It has a population 231 675 people and the population ratio of males to females is 48.5% as to 51.5%.<sup>1</sup> The major industries in Gweru are BATA Shoe Company, BOC gases, Waterglass, Zinglass but they are downsized<sup>2</sup>. Most of the business in Gweru are SMEs which cannot afford to employ the bulk of the unemployed population of Gweru. According to Dewa et al, most of industries were closed for example Zim Alloys, David Whitehead, BP Shell, Oliken Housing Construction, PG industries<sup>3</sup>. Some residents in Gweru practice stream bank cultivation along the Gweru river banks the participants are people living in suburbs such as

Riverside, Athlone, Windsor Park, Nashville, Mtaba. Most women practice urban agriculture in the open spaces of the locations such as Mkoba, Ascot, Lundipark, South view, Montrose and Mambo.

## **2.2 Reasons why women engage in urban agriculture**

The rise of urban agriculture in Gweru is attributed largely to economic hardships. Various reasons explain why women in Gweru engage in urban agriculture. 80% of women in Gweru said their involvement in urban agriculture was due to economic hardships. Urban agriculture is therefore seen as a coping strategy by women to enhance food security<sup>4</sup>. The reasons for participating in urban agriculture are largely based on the economic status of people. Those who come from poor families practice urban agriculture mainly for subsistence so as to ensure food security. Those who are not in much need practice urban agriculture as part time or having some cultural value. The reasons for engaging in urban agriculture are also influenced by the types of crops grown and size of the field. For example, maize grown on small pieces of land is meant for household consumption and that on a larger plot of about five acres, is grown to remain with surplus which is then sold<sup>5</sup>.

### **2.2.1 Drought and urban agriculture**

Urban agriculture was being practiced in Gweru since the 1980s. According to Leshar, urban agriculture is like a phoenix and a chameleon. It modifies and adapts itself<sup>6</sup>. This explains that urban agriculture is taking various forms depending on the social, economic conditions. Various changes that have been occurring in Zimbabwe, particularly Gweru have increased the participation of women in urban agriculture. The long term causes of urban agriculture stems from 1980.

Many women were affected by the droughts of the 1980s. Mbiba states that, the use of urban space for crop production increased during and after the years of drought which are 1982/83; 1988/89; 1991/93<sup>7</sup>. These droughts affect the livelihoods of families and particularly the

women in Gweru. It needs to be highlighted that, the occurrence of these droughts affected the production of food crops in Zimbabwe such that access to food was limited because food was scarce. Droughts forced women in urban areas to grow their own crops to supplement what they got from the stores which was not enough. These droughts of the 1980s marked the advent of urban agriculture in post-colonial Zimbabwe. Women are the ones who could participate in urban agriculture to ensure food security since they were the ones who remained at home whilst their husbands went to work. Therefore, one can state that, the participation of women in urban agriculture in the 1980s was fostered by the droughts which affected the country.

### **2.2.2 ESAP and urban agriculture**

With the advent of the 1990s, women's participation in urban agriculture increased. It can be noted that, the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme {ESAP} which was adopted by the government affected the living standards of families. It came with the withdrawal of subsidies in the health, education sector. Household expenditure increased. During this period, most of people lost their jobs, there was high inflation and prices of basic commodities increased, there was de-industrialisation and most people were retrenched<sup>8</sup>. A lot of people were left with no source of income hence agriculture was the most suitable way to cope with the economic problems and to sustain livelihoods since women would get food for their families from agriculture produce.

During this period, the use of urban agriculture continued to increase. Women are the ones who practiced urban because they are the ones who are responsible for making food in households and also, some men engaged in the informal sector leaving their wives to engage in urban agriculture. Therefore, women engaged in urban agriculture in order to ensure food security after economic conditions had deteriorated due to ESAP.

### **2.2.3 Effects of the Land reform and urban agriculture.**

Sanctions which were imposed on Zimbabwe in 2002 due to the fast trek land reform programme affected the livelihoods of urban families and these led a lot of women to partake in urban agriculture because, the imposed sanctions worked to the detriment of industrial trade in Gweru<sup>9</sup>. Zimbabwe's foreign relations were crippled by sanctions hence it meant that the industry was crippled because of lack of trade. Companies began to strive and eventually closed. In Gweru, companies such as Zim Alloys, David Whitehead, ZIM CAST, Kariba fire batteries, BP SHELL, Fort Concrete closed. This left thousands of people in Gweru jobless. In order to earn a living women were left with no choice than to engage in urban agriculture while their husbands engaged in other jobs in the informal sector and some crossed borders to look for employment in neighbouring countries. During interviews, a woman had this to say,

'We used to have everything because my husband was a foreman at ZIMALLOYS. When the company closed, I was clueless because I never thought that big company would close. I had to farm so that at least we can get food and the little money that my husband sends from South Africa pays the children's school fees. Farming is good. I do not buy mealie meal at all. Sometimes I do not buy bread, I grow sweet potatoes. I will never stop farming, as long as I am fit.'<sup>10</sup>

From the interviews, it shows that it is because of the economic hardships that women engage in urban agriculture.

### **2.2.4 Poverty and urban agriculture**

In 2005, the situation in Zimbabwe worsened such that most women flocked to urban agriculture. According to Shale, the Operation Murambatsvina which was initiated by the government in 2005 was targeted on illegal street vendors and illegal structures such as markets, shacks, houses<sup>11</sup>. The destruction of these structures left women with no choice but to practice urban agriculture. Houses were destroyed; sources of business such as barbers, salons, tuck shops, and kitchens were destroyed. It became hard for families to survive in a country where the economic conditions were deteriorating. Women resorted to urban

agriculture in order to feed families. Hence, women's participation in urban agriculture is not out of choice but out of need since their children will always look up to them for food.

In 2008, conditions worsened. The country was in a state of distress, inflation was high, shortages of money, shortages of food products, hunger and starvation, and there was high rate of unemployment<sup>12</sup>. The political conditions were terrorizing. The country was in a high state of poverty. In the shops, there were no food stocks even if one had the money to buy. Queues could be seen in urban areas people waiting for food. There was no money in the banks. That year experienced a huge number of illegal migrations, a lot of boarder jumpers going to neighbouring countries. Those who decided to stay, who are mostly women, returned to urban agriculture, thus, economic hardships led to the increase of urban cultivation of crops by women. The year 2008 witnessed high rate of urban agriculture since almost every household resorted to farming.

### **2.2.5 Urbanization and urban agriculture**

Rapid urbanization has contributed to the engagement of women in urban agriculture in Gweru. Increasing population in the cities caused by rural- urban migration and natural growth rate necessitated the need to feed more mouths<sup>13</sup>. Many people have migrated from areas such as Lower Gweru, Chiwundura, Silobela amongst others. These hoped to find employment in the city but after being disappointed by conditions in the city as life in the city has shown that agriculture is not for those in the rural areas rather, it has become a source of income in urban areas.

'My husband and I decided to migrate from Lower Gweru to this place. We decided to have a place of our own since we were living with my husband's parents. We thought we would find jobs but here we are, jobless. I decided to farm so that we find something to eat. We have one child. it's really hard but there is nothing we can do. My husband looks for firewood and sell. That's where we get some money.'<sup>14</sup>

To add on, According to UNDP, the outbreak of the HIV/AIDS pandemic has forced many couples to live together in urban areas<sup>15</sup>. This forced some women to leave their fields in the

rural areas where they practiced agriculture and they brought along their agricultural practices to the cities. Hence whilst they remain at home when their husbands have gone to work, these women engage in urban agriculture.

### **2.2.6 Religion and urban agriculture**

Religion is also another factor that has led women to partake in urban agriculture. Women have been encouraging one another to work and be virtuous women. As coated from the Bible, ‘She is like merchant’s ships she bringeth food from afar...She considereth a field and buyeth it, with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard’ proverbs 31 v 14 &17.<sup>16</sup>

Thus women are involved in urban agriculture as they are encouraged by religion such that a woman should have her own field where she grows food for her family. Many women from ZAOGA were proud of having their own fields where they grow crops such as beans, vegetables, maize, onions, tomatoes, cabbages. After harvests, these women sold their produce in order to raise money for a programme they call ‘Talents’ this programme encourages women to use their hands by engaging in to something which gives them money rather than relying on one source of income hence some women choose to farm. During interviews a woman said;

‘A woman should stop relying on one source of income, even the bible says, God blesses the work of thy hands..Thus a woman should find something to do which gives her money rather than to wait for her husband to do everything. I also get some money to pay for church subscriptions without bothering my husband. So we encourage one another to work.’<sup>17</sup>

### **2.2.7 Culture and urban agriculture**

Wilbers argues that urban households participate in urban agriculture for one of two reasons. The first reason comes from previous practices which mean that women engage in urban agriculture because they came from a rural area and brought along their agricultural practices<sup>18</sup>. These women would have been married and were taken to urban areas. Some of them do not lack anything but just because they are used to the rural life of not letting the

rainy season pass without making use of the soil, they find themselves involved in urban agriculture. There is a kind of people who are land hungry and they make use of every piece of land they encounter<sup>19</sup>.

The second reason involves households that have an urban background but got involved in agriculture out of choice or by need<sup>20</sup>. In this case, there are women who were born and bred in the city but because of the failing economic conditions; they are subjected to urban agriculture. More so, some women are into urban agriculture because of peer pressure. In Gweru, in areas such as Mkoba, Mtapu, mambo, Ascot Ivone, people live very closely such that other people's lives are influenced by others. Some women are ashamed of not having a field while the rest of the community has hence they begin to practice urban agriculture because of peer pressure.

### **2.2.8 Illiteracy and urban agriculture**

Illiteracy has contributed to the engagement of women in urban agriculture. According to Hovorka et al, the predominance of women can be ascribed to two factors: first, women bear responsibility for household sustenance and well-being; second, women tend to have lower educational status than men, and therefore more difficulties in finding formal wage employment<sup>21</sup>. This thereby shows that, urban agriculture is a need for many women. Many elderly women are illiterate thereby they find it difficult to secure employment in a country whereby those who are educated are also failing to secure employment. Agriculture becomes a cheap and easy way of getting income since no training is needed and also they can get inputs easily.

More so, since women bear responsibility for household sustenance, they dominate in urban agriculture. Women are mothers. They are more responsible as compare to men. They work hard so as to put food on the table for their children. Kutiwa et al, postulates that, it is women who provide labour, especially the middle aged and the elderly, whilst their male

counterparts view urban agriculture as part of women's household chores<sup>22</sup>. That's why women are seen working under the hot sun of October, tilling the land in preparation of the rainy season. No work is too hard for a mother when it comes to her children, hence such circumstances have led women engage in urban agriculture. A woman had this to say, "I can not watch my children starve when I am able to farm."<sup>23</sup>

### **2.2.9 Gender and urban agriculture**

Gender roles have contributed to the engagement of women in urban agriculture. Agriculture is often viewed as a duty of women, thus urban agriculture in Gweru is mostly practiced by women. A few men that is seen in the fields are often hired for tilling the land but the fields belong to women Hovorka et al is of view that, women are in urban agriculture because of gender and cultural roles<sup>24</sup>. In gender, men believe that it is the role of women to farm because they are the ones who are responsible for preparing food in the homes. More so, gender also reign forces that fact that women are the ones who practice agriculture whilst men are doing masculine jobs. This has led to the predominance of women in urban agriculture.

### **2.2.10 Income enhancement and urban agriculture**

Patriarchy, domestic violence and abuse of women have also led to the growth of urban agriculture by women. From interviews, it could be noted that many men abused their wives financially. Women were subjected to their husbands by begging money. More so, because of infidelity, many men have left their families, leaving women with the burden of taking care of children. Many women were left with no choice but to engage in urban agriculture to enhance incomes. Therefore, women engaged in urban agriculture so as to enhance their incomes. During interviews a woman had this to say,

'I am an urban farmer because I have to feed my 3 children. I am a divorce. I used to be a prostitute so that I can take care of my children. I later realized that prostitution does not pay because sometimes men would leave without paying me and sometimes I was raped by men. Now I am HIV positive. I



resorted to agriculture because it ensures me of food. I would have been a trader but where can get the capital? If I get money I can start a business because agriculture is painful...'<sup>25</sup>

## **2.3 Forms of urban agriculture**

### **2.3.1 Crop production**

Many women practiced backyard farming and off plot agriculture in the open spaces of the locations. The land on which women used for agricultural purposes belongs to the city of Gweru and some open spaces belong to those individuals who have bought stands and have not started to develop them. Some rented land from farms which are between Mkoba and Lower Gweru whilst some were members of the CARE International community gardens. Many women grew crops and chief amongst them is maize. Women usually practiced maize production during the rainy season.

Most women have employed farming God's way<sup>26</sup>. This indicates that, agriculture has become a need because of poverty. Farming God's way refers to the use of God given resources only which are the land, the sun, rain. These women stored seeds from previous harvests which were maize seeds, stored pumpkins and beans seeds, sweet potatoes leaves etc. In such cases, the crops grew the natural way without anything added to them. These women often got low yields as compared to their counterparts who would have made use of better inputs. A woman had this to say," because of lack of money, I can not afford to buy fertiliser. Ploughing without fertilizers affects crops. You do not get much yields'.<sup>27</sup>

Some households made use seeds from reputable seed companies such as SEEDCO. They also used fertilizers to aid their crops. Ammonium nitrate (Top) and Compound D fertilizers were the most commonly used among the respondents to fertilize their crops. Mbiba states that, in Zimbabwe, urban agriculture utilizes basic technology<sup>28</sup>. Some women harvested large yields of maize which could last for the rest of the year. Some would go for many months without buying mealie meal. In terms of labour, women have formed cooperation

groups whereby they help in each other's fields. This is called 'nhimbe' whereby they gathered in one field for weeding or harvesting so as to provide labour in bulk. They thereby makes turns of working in each other's fields.

More so, women engaged in vegetable production, which was done in backyards. It has been an advantage to those women living in the last row of houses which have undeveloped land at the back of their houses. Vast vegetable farming was done and vegetables were grown throughout the year, vegetables such as rape, covo, tsunga, cabbages, tomatoes, onions, lettuce. These women usually sold their surplus to the community and they also sold in bulk to those women who would want to resell in other areas. They watering of gardens was done using tap water. Some fetched water from nearby government drilled boreholes in order to save their water bills. Chicken drops, cow and goat waste, grass and in some cases human waste taken from burst sewage pipes was utilised as manure. A group of women from Ridge Mont were involved in mushroom production. They practiced mushroom agriculture indoors. From one group interview they mentioned that:

“We came to the realization that mushrooms are now scarce. Men love different types of mushroom hence we decided to start this project of growing mushrooms. Mushrooms require intelligence or else they can be poisonous. When entering the room where we grow the mushrooms, one should be free of any perfume because it affects mushrooms. We are getting lots of money from this project”<sup>29</sup>

This shows that this type of crop production favours the literate because of danger it has. One has to be able to read and understand the requirements of the crop. It is not for subsistence but for commercial purposes.

Those women living the CBD also practiced urban agriculture. Some of them live in flats therefore there is no enough land to farm. These women made use of plastic drums or containers. They cut the drums, filled them with soil and the planted their vegetables. These drums were kept on balconies where sunlight could reach. This therefore showed that urban

agriculture is being practiced by almost every household in order to reduce household expenditure. Urban agriculture has become a practice that can no longer be ignored.

Just a few women were farming flowers. These have established nurseries in town and along the highways. This type of urban agriculture was used mainly for commercial purposes by women to enhance their incomes. However it can be noted that many women practiced urban agriculture in order to ensure food security and to minimize household expenditure.

### **2.3.2 Livestock production**

Livestock production was another form of agriculture where small livestock were kept to supplement incomes. Women kept small livestock such as chicken {broilers, layers and road runners}, quails, and rabbits. Some kept livestock for household consumption but most of them kept livestock for resale. Many opted for broilers since the broilers matured within 5-6 weeks as compared to roadrunners. A few kept road runners mainly for household consumption. One woman had this to say. 'My husband prefers road runners to broilers because they are good meat therefore I keep road runners to cook for my husband'<sup>30</sup>. Three out of five women in the locations are now into broiler production for resale and this has been a way of generating incomes. Those who kept rabbits and other species of birds used them to supplement vegetables for their meals.

Fish farming has been a growing form of production in urban agriculture. Just a few women in Gweru practiced fish farming. From interviews, a woman had had this to say,

'We are now into fish farming. We were grouped into groups of 20 and we were trained on how to farm fish by an NGO. Fish farming required a huge space of land where one can dig and build a breeding ground for the fish. It is one of the profitable businesses because if you can properly take care of the fish, you harvest large amounts. Some practice fish farming in swimming pools. We do it in groups as it require much investment'<sup>31</sup>

From the interview, it can be noted that, fish farming is a form of urban agriculture that has been rising in Gweru urban. Just a few women practiced this form of agriculture, as it required much investment and also land for practicing it.

#### **2.4 Benefits of urban agriculture**

Urban agriculture has been beneficial to the women in Gweru. It can be noted that, urban agriculture has been sustaining livelihoods. It has been a source of income, a form of employment, and a source of food. Women have been using urban agriculture as a primary strategy to maintain livelihoods and safeguard household incomes through subsistence production. Urban agriculture has been a source of cheap and fresh food. It has been a way of sustaining livelihoods. More so, in some households, there is availability of mealie meal all year round because the maize that they would have harvested lasts for up to the next season. It shows that, urban agriculture has been of importance since it has been reducing household expenditure.

For those who kept small livestock, it showed that they were able to have a balanced diet as compared to those who did not participate in urban agriculture. Therefore, urban agriculture has been a viable way to households since it provided quality nutrition. Maxwell, et al's study measured stunting as an indicator of malnutrition, finding that urban agriculture had a significant, positive relation to higher nutritional status of children, particularly height-for-age, hence urban agriculture improves the health of families<sup>32</sup>.

Urban agriculture has brought relief to women as it is an income generation measure, women involved in urban agriculture were making profits which they used to buy other foodstuffs that they could not plant such as cooking oil, salt, sugar etc. Urban agriculture has proved to be a way of promoting health as it reduced high levels of stress and personal trauma amongst women. It reduced fear, anger and boosted self-esteem in women who practiced urban agriculture because it generates income and ensures food security within

households. Therefore it can be noted that urban agriculture has proved to be a viable way of coping with the economic hardships.

Urban agriculture in Gweru has been significant since it has brought communities together. With the use of cooperatives and community gardens, women socialized. In this way, gardening empowered women by bringing people together, building communities, and improving neighbourhoods therefore, urban agriculture has been of importance<sup>33</sup>.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

The chapter has captured the reasons why women engage in urban agriculture. It has been highlighted that, economic hardships are the major cause for the involvement of women in urban agriculture. The chapter has also captured the forms of urban agriculture in Gweru which are mainly crop production and livestock production. The contribution of urban agriculture to livelihoods of women has also been captured. It also explains how urban agriculture benefits women economically, socially and mentally.



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## **CHAPTER 3: PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN IN URBAN AGRICULTURE IN GWERU**

### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter unveils the problems faced by women in urban agriculture. In Gweru, women faced various problems and these differed according to economic status, location, as well as age. Although urban agriculture empowers women, it is associated with many problems. Most women urban farmers faced the problem of lack of capital/ finance which led to lack of inputs. Land has been difficult to access hence posing a challenge to urban agriculture. Shortage of land has been the major problem for many women. Due to developments that occurred in urban areas, much land that was used for agricultural purposes has been developed, hence people were left contesting over the small pieces of land that were left. However, women urban farmers also faced problems such as lack of inputs, unreliable rainfall, vandalism and theft, lack of availability of farming land in Gweru, lack of storage facilities, lack of markets amongst others. The chapter captures the problems faced by women and how they have affected sustainability, productivity and continuity.

### **3.1 Lack of land**

Women engaged in urban agriculture faced the problem of unavailability of land for agricultural purposes. Hovorka asserts that, women face severe constraints in accessing, using, and/or controlling land in cities, compared with their male counterparts<sup>1</sup>. Women are disadvantaged in terms of acquiring land. It can be noted that, patriarchy still rules even in urban areas concerning agriculture such that a woman cannot own land. Women are treated as second option whilst men put their needs first. A woman had this to say, "Men allocate themselves fertile and arable land leaving low quality land for women. Some women were evicted from their pieces of land by men with violent means and most of the times women

were left helpless<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, it can be noted that, because of gender and cultural roles, women cannot easily access land yet they are the ones who are in need of it. Women need land to farm for subsistence purposes but men need land for commercial purposes, hence the lack of land for agricultural purposes affected production.

Land tenure insecurity was one of the major constraints for women in urban agriculture. Most women urban farmers confessed that they did not enjoy the security of tenure in off plot land. “I am afraid to farm in the open spaces because I was once evicted by someone who claimed to be the owner of the land. I was disappointed because I had already tilled the land”.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, women became insecure because there was no guarantee that their crops will be secure in off plot land, they lived in fear that any day they can be removed from the land by the owner or by the local governance. Due to this land tenure insecurity, women, became afraid of committing their capital on such land as they were afraid that they could be evicted from the land anytime.

Due to the increase in development as well as urban population, land for agricultural purposes became scarce. The rate of urban growth created increased demand in land use for both industrial and residential development. More land owners were demanding for their land even before harvesting periods, farmers often forfeited their crops without compensation<sup>4</sup>. Upon realizing that they lack claim to the pieces of land they were farming, women saw no reason for investing much in urban agriculture. Women continued to use basic subsistence-type farming equipment such as hoes, forks, shovels, harrows and spades. At the same time, for the majority of the women urban farmers, the low degree of farm capitalization, improvement and mechanism was a function of the fact that there was no enough land where they could maximize investment. Women are the lowly paid working class and urban poor with very limited and stretched financial resources, hence acquiring land became a huge problem for them.

Those women who were lucky to have land, had small plot sizes which were not even adequate for subsistence use. Women needed much land because on the same plot of land, they to grow maize, sweet potatoes and other basic crops such as beans so that they maximize on the basic food they need for household consumption. Therefore, because of land scarcity, women could not able to grow all the crops they needed. Some harvested only 2 bags of maize which would be consumed within 3 months. For those who were lucky to have large portions of land they harvested maize that could feed them for the whole year. Therefore, the majority of women wished to find larger portions of land. Thus, women in Gweru faced the problem of shortage of land for agriculture and this affected food production. A woman had this to say,

‘Nowadays it is difficult to find a field. Those who already have fields are not letting them go. Even if one moves to live in another village, she will continue to farm on that land. For those who relocate to other cities, they give their pieces of land to their friends who already have some. Some women have many fields in different areas whilst we do not have any. It is unfair. With these economic hardships everyone needs to farm. Something has to be done so that one person own one portion of land so that everyone can find somewhere to farm...’<sup>5</sup>

Thus, from interviews, it can be noted that, land is the major issue and women contest over it.

Harvests are directly proportional to the size of land and women urban farmers stated that the land they had was small to be economically viable as a business model and was even too small to cater for their subsistence needs<sup>5</sup>. Some of the land is easily waterlogged in some seasons further minimizing the quantity of the harvest. They could have harvested more produce if they had bigger pieces of land. Some households only practiced on plot agriculture because there was shortage of land. Those who had managed to get land when it was still being rented for a dollar were fortunate enough because they managed to hold on to the land even when they no longer pay for it.

In Gweru, some of the respondents said that the land that they used for cultivation was developed into an industrial site for a Chinese factory, some lost out when CARE International established some community gardens. With the high rate of development that has been there in Gweru, many open spaces were developed into houses, shops, churches, schools etc. Therefore, land shortages continued to rise and many women could not access land for agriculture.

### **3.2 Shortage of labour**

Women in Gweru faced the problem of shortage of labour. It led to poor quality of agricultural practices because tilling and preparing land for farming was not properly done since such practices when done by women may not be effective. Musiimenta postulates that, at the household level, women have to take care of their reproductive, productive and community roles (traditional roles of women), hence urban agriculture increase women's productive workload leaving them with no time to rest and making their working day longer<sup>6</sup>. Most women confessed that, if there were other means of sustaining their lives, they wouldn't be engaged in urban agriculture. The activity is tiresome and wearing as it requires a lot of labour. Many women resented being urban farmers but because they had to sustain their families, they practiced urban agriculture. Women ended up practicing masculine jobs such as tilling and digging the land. Some women were able to hire labour, but in most cases, most women could not afford to hire labour therefore they ended up doing the tasks themselves. Labour by women to dig, weed and harvest of crops made agriculture painful and did not produce much yields.

Labour proved to be a problem for elderly women. These already suffered from back aches and yet they had to spend much of their time working in the fields. Therefore, it can be noted that, labour is a problem that women were facing in urban agriculture. A woman had this to say, "I live with my grandchildren, their parents died. I am the one who take care of them. As

you can see I am now old. I suffer from back aches but I have to farm to supplement food for the children.<sup>7</sup> This thereby shows that, urban agriculture poses workloads upon women, since some women do not have anyone to assist them.

### **3.3 Unfavourable working conditions**

The conditions associated with urban agriculture posed health threats for women. Furthermore, Moyo states that, urban agriculture just like most activities in the informal sector are mainly conducted in unfriendly and unhygienic conditions such as scorching sun, dusty streets, near filthy garbage heaps and water-logged market grounds, women's health is adversely affected<sup>8</sup>. Women spend most of their day under the hot sun, and near garbage heaps where dangerous chemicals and dangerous objects are dumped. These conditions affected women. They ended up inhaling dangerous chemicals which may be of harm to their health. Some women complained that they found human waste in their fields and this posed threats to their health.

Other women complained that, after cultivation they found garbage dumped in their fields and this affected their crops as well as their health. For those who had their fields located near sewage tanks, they complained about sewage bursts which affected their crops and it made it unfavourable to work in the fields. When the tanks busted, the fields became waterlogged which resulted in the sinking of crops. Therefore, women in Gweru faced problems with the conditions of urban agriculture which were not favourable hence it affected productivity, sustainability and continuity.

### **3.4 Unreliable rainfall and bad weather**

Unreliable rainfall patterns posed problems for women urban farmers in Gweru. In some seasons, women experienced droughts and they could not harvest greater yields. However, in some cases it was different. In 2016, the season experienced rain in abundance crops, were

destroyed due to too much water. Those women who practiced agriculture along the Gweru river harvested low yields because the crops were destroyed when the river flooded. Therefore, unreliable rainfall patterns affected urban agriculture.

Furthermore, since the fields are largely rain-fed, problems emanated from unreliable rainfall patterns. Due to limited capital, women urban farmers were not able to invest in mechanical irrigation equipment to thwart the consequences of dry-spells on their agricultural activities. In off plot agriculture, there is rarely room for irrigation considering that it is practiced in the open spaces of suburbs where there are no external sources for irrigation purposes. Consequently, weather conditions affected not only those farmers producing for subsistence purposes but those considering intensifying their off-plot production into small-scale agribusinesses.

Weather conditions also posed problems to those women who were in livestock production.

Weather conditions affects animals such as chickens.

‘Chickens are not easy to rear. If there is too much rain, chickens are affected. They are also by colds so there has to be heaters for them not to die. If there are high temperatures also, chickens are affected. Therefore, rearing chickens is risky because if there are unfavourable weather conditions when you are unaware, you can lose the whole batch of chickens.’<sup>9</sup>

### **3.5 Lack of farm inputs**

Most women faced the problem of lack of inputs owing to the economic hardships. They lacked working capital. These women could not afford to buy seeds and fertilizers because of lack of finances. Most of them were not employed and they did not have access to credit facilities for them to buy farm inputs. They ended up using seeds stored from previous harvests, which were recycled and untreated. This affected sustainability because the soil loses fertility after so many years of cultivation so fertilizers are needed to boost soil fertility and because of lack of money, women could not afford to buy hence they were bound to have low yields. One can conclude that, women were not able to maximally utilize the pieces of



land they had because of lack of input. Lack of inputs intensified women's problems because they wasted their time on unproductive land which gave them low yields, thus lack of input affected women in urban agriculture.

More so, in urban agriculture, women faced the problem of lack of agricultural tools. Some poor did not own even a hoe. They would borrow hoes from others and this indicates that, on a day that the owner of the hoe refuses with it, there was no work for her, hence shortage of inputs posed challenges. Comparing to others, some women hired tractors or men who would till and dig their lands. For the poor women, they could not afford to hire labour hence they ended up doing it on their own with ineffective tools. This affected produce because the land would not be properly prepared for cultivation, thus, lack of inputs affected women in urban agriculture.

### **3.6 Lack of agricultural extension services**

Women in Gweru face the challenge of lack of knowledge of agricultural practices. Hungwe, states that, women lack access to knowledge, training and information on the use of modern inputs and technologies. The latter is partly due to women's limited exposure to commercial urban agriculture or to their limited access to training courses offered by institutions or non-government organizations<sup>10</sup>. This lack of knowledge has been a major problem to women and has led to little or no produce. Some women tend to misuse fertilizers and this has led to the burning of crops by fertilizers to the extent that nothing can be harvested. In some cases, fertilizers were put to crops which do not need fertilizers leading to abnormality of crops or destruction of crops. Some put fertilizers on vegetables and at the end they ended up losing customers when they had to sell their produce because the vegetables were sour. Therefore, it can be seen that, lack of knowledge has been a major challenge which women involved in urban agriculture faced.

### **3.7 Lack of land tenure**

In Gweru, women lacked land tenure security. According to Maxwell, urban agriculture is also thought to be of little importance to the urban economy and is therefore not considered a legitimate form of urban land use<sup>11</sup>. As such, urban planners or policy makers generally do not plan for urban agriculture or husbandry activities<sup>12</sup>. Urban agriculture is not yet included in Gweru's Master Plan<sup>13</sup>. Gweru city council has however been lenient to women urban farmers. They have responded by giving people temporal land for cultivation. 'With the help of its engineers, councillors, department of housing and welfare and police, the municipality allocates pieces of un-serviced and non-urgent land yearly to residents who have registered or applied for it'<sup>14</sup>.

These pieces of land are often known as 'zviminda zvedhora', meaning that a person pays a dollar to the city council in order to cultivate on the land. These can be taken away from them if any development has risen. Therefore women are not sure whether to invest in much since this is an unpredictable sector. When urban agricultural land is allocated to developers, they are given a short notice to vacate their gardens and this means loss of substantial amounts of capital and labour invested in urban agriculture.

It becomes a problem for women as it affects the sustainability of urban agriculture. After they have grown their crops, if the land needs to be developed, the owners do not wait for the crops to mature, they respond by grading or slashing the crops even if the crops were almost ripe. This occurred in Mkoba, when the Woodlands area was to be developed, crops were destroyed in order to develop the land and many women cried as they saw what they had laboured for through the season being reduced to nothing. The fear of eviction, slashing and grading of crops has killed the motivation in women practicing urban agriculture yet it is of use as it enables food security.

Another major constrain that off-plot urban farmers face is operation in an environment characterized by ambiguous application of urban land use by-laws. In terms of Zimbabwe's governance structure, the local government authority has powers to regulate all activities within its jurisdiction including agriculture production, marketing and processing. The regulation of urban agriculture activities is largely dependent on the local city or town council's by-laws, policies, and practices. In line with this local governance structure, urban agricultural in Gweru is governed is governed by the GCC through implementation of the Regional Town and Country Planning Act<sup>15</sup>.

### **3.8 Vandalism and theft of agricultural produce**

Theft is a major problem faced by women in Gweru. 90% of the respondents complained of theft of produce from their fields. These matters of theft could not be reported to the police as they are regarded as petty issues unless if one is caught red handed. There is no law which protects people's fields. People thereby take the law into their hands by employing various methods which are at times dangerous. Some even used traditional medicine and people were often seen in the fields, lying dead have been bitten by snakes.

In one such incident recalled by one respondent, a woman stayed for 4 days in a person's field saying that when she wanted to exit she sees a big snakes pointing at her and the snake will be all round the field. When the owner was asked, she refused saying she did not put any snake in the field, hence this shows how women try to deal with challenge of thieves. However, to deal with problem, some women put scarecrows, or red cloths, to scare away thieves because most people are afraid of being bewitched. This challenge has been the most painful one because some thieves go to the extent of harvesting the whole field pretending to be the owners and the owner is left with nothing meaning that she would have laboured for other people to benefit. More so, apart from crops, thieves also steal animals in the suburbs. From interviews, women complained about thieves; a woman had this to say,

‘One early morning at about 4am I heard a sound near my fowl run. I told my husband to go and check. He found a man holding a sack and he had put 7 chickens in the sack. He would twist the necks of the chickens so that the chicken won’t make noise. We have been losing chickens to thieves until we decided to keep a dog’<sup>16</sup>.

Another woman complained about thieves in the fields;

‘Thieves have become a pain in the neck. What is even painful is that, those who steal from your field are those who know you. Nowadays people are afraid to steal because of the stories of witchcraft hence those who steal from you are the people who know you, those who know that you are a Christian. Women are the ones who steal more as compared to men. It is painful because when you will be labouring, they will be moving from one house to another, gossiping but when it comes to harvest, they harvest in your field before you even start.’<sup>17</sup>

Poor security has also affected women in urban agriculture conferring to stray animals. Some people leave their animals moving around the locations and this has affected urban women farmers. For those who keep livestock, they often lose their livestock to stray dogs. They can find their chickens eaten by dogs and it leads to loss. More so, donkeys also feed on maize cobs and some women have found their fields being harvested by donkeys. Donkeys have proved to be a major problem in locations. In areas such as Mkoba, Mtapa, mambo, Ascot, Woodlands, many people keep donkeys. Women urban farmers complained that these animals destroyed their crops. They also feed on people’s vegetables. This is a disadvantage for those who do not have proper security. Therefore, stray animals are a challenge to women urban farmers as they lead to loss of agricultural produce.

### **3.9 Political interference and urban agriculture**

In Gweru, women confessed that, for one to be allocated a piece of land, one has to be a member of the ruling party ZANU (PF) and attend meetings which are done in the wards of the areas they live. According to Hungwe, even on the rare occasions when the government wants to allocate seed, individuals must register with their local councillor, who is always a staunch member of the ruling party<sup>18</sup>. Use of political identity has led to differences amongst women. Aid is to be given to those people labelled as ‘vanhu vemusangano’ and these are strategies of excluding others from benefiting. More so, participation in the political activities

and recognition is considered on land allocation. This becomes a huge problem because it means that, someone who supports another political party does not access these benefits. This has led most women to belong to a certain party in order to receive aid, or pretend to be a member of the party. For some women who could not pretend, it has been a challenge to them because they end up not receiving aid. This shows that politics becomes a disadvantage to urban agriculture as some women could not access land and aid.

### **3.10 Uncontrolled pests and diseases**

Pests and diseases have been a problem for women involved in urban agriculture. These proved to be a problem to both crops and animals. Some of the produce is affected by pests or diseases before the farmer has harvested. Crops such as sweet potatoes are eaten by pests which women refer to as 'pongwe'. Other crops such as tomatoes are affected and this can leave the farmer with nothing. For those who keep livestock, they face equal challenges. Some said that broilers were affected with flu and this led to loss of livestock. There are also many diseases which affect chickens. In some cases, one can lose the whole batch of chickens owing to diseases hence these are a problem.

### **3.11 Lack of availability of farming land in Gweru**

Distance has been a related problem for women in urban agriculture. Women are often left to travel extensive distances to marginal lands, their journeys requiring considerable time, physical effort, and financial expense for transportation, if it is available<sup>20</sup>. In Mkoba, women walk long distances to fields. Some rent spaces in other people's farms which are a distance away from where they live. For example a woman who lives in Mkoba 12 walks a distance of about 6km just to get her field in Fisher's farm. It is a problem because one will get tired before she has even started working. Distance often affects yields because the labour input that will be implemented after one has travelled a long distance is obviously weak hence poor produce is harvested..

### **3.12 Lack of water for irrigation**

Most of the households experienced water challenges and this affected their crops. This mostly affected those who practiced backyard farming. In areas such as Mkoba, women urban farmers faced challenges of water for the longest of times. Villages such as Mkoba 15, 18 and 19 lie on higher ground and this affects the facility of municipal water. Therefore, crops would go for days without being watered and this resulted in the withering of crops. Residents have been relying on the boreholes which had been drilled by the government but these boreholes could not satisfy the whole community. Women complained of waiting for long hours in a queue for them to fetch water from the borehole. Some would eventually give up and this affected urban agriculture. Some boreholes were no longer functional and they have not been repaired. Therefore, shortages of water have been a major challenge to women in urban agriculture as shortage of water affected crops as well as produce. According to Ziwenga, the councilor was quoted saying;

“The ground is much higher in Mkoba 19 and this makes the drilling of boreholes very expensive, the few boreholes that we have are not deep enough and most of the times they do not have any water at all, the pumps at Gwenhoro cannot pump much water to higher ground and the rainfall is poor at times. Last year however we had good rains and we expect this year to have just as good a rainy season. If it rains at least people will have something to eat.”<sup>21</sup>

### **3.13 Lack of storage facilities and unavailability of markets**

The problem of storage facilities affected many women who are involved in urban agriculture. After harvesting their crops, some would have gained big yields but without a place to keep them. Lack of space in the houses they rent to store the bulk of the harvested crops forced them to store their crops outside their houses where there is poor security and at times, the agricultural produce got stolen or disturbed by pests. Therefore, lack of storage facilities often led to loses of agricultural produce. Lack of adequate freezers to keep dressed chickens forced women to sell live birds of which they continued to feed them. This thereby reduced the profits they expected to get from their produce.

Lack of market posed problems to women urban farmers who practiced urban agriculture for commercial purposes. After harvesting perishables such as fruits and vegetables, women expected them to be bought within a short space of time. Therefore, things would not work out well such that, the produce would start to wither before being bought. This led to losses hence it is a problem faced by women urban farmers. Moreover, for those who engaged in selling live birds, the problem was the same. If the chickens are bought at a low price, it led to losses because the chickens will be feeding on stock feeds, hence lack of market has been a problem faced by women and it often led to losses of expected profits.

### **3.2 Conclusion**

The chapter has unveiled the challenges faced by women in urban agriculture. It has shown that amongst other challenges, access to land is the most challenge faced by women urban farmers. Some challenges are lack of agricultural extension services, lack of market, pests and diseases, vandalism and theft of produce. The chapter has shown how these challenges affect sustainability, productivity as well as continuity.

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## **CHAPTER 4: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERVENTION STRATEGIES THAT HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED TO PROMOTE URBAN AGRICULTURE**

### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter analyses the intervention strategies that have been implemented to promote urban agriculture, examining their effectiveness in promoting urban agriculture. With the increase in economic hardships, rapid urbanisation, and increase in urban population, it has become inevitable to stop urban agriculture. The Gweru city council used to respond to urban agriculture by slashing crops so as to bring an end to the practice of urban agriculture but that strategy failed because women continued to farm since agriculture was their means of survival. Food insecurity and poverty in urban areas increased since the 1980s such that, the global community, the government of Zimbabwe and City councils realized that urban agriculture contributes to household food security, hence, they acknowledged the growing importance of urban agriculture and therefore, there was a paradigm shift from resilience to accommodation of urban agriculture. Therefore, the global community, the government of Zimbabwe, Non-Governmental Organisations, the Gweru city council and individuals, implemented strategies to promote urban agriculture.

It needs to be highlighted that, the initiatives that have been implemented by various participants were effective in terms of promoting urban agriculture. Urban agriculture has been promoted since the Gweru city council is now allowing women to farm on the open spaces. The study made use of interviews in order to understand whether the strategies were beneficial or not. Therefore, this chapter is aimed at reviewing the initiatives that have been implemented to promote urban agriculture.

#### **4.1 The international community and urban agriculture**

The Global community has worked in promoting urban agriculture and some initiatives are still being implemented. The United Nations Organisation has come to the realization that, urban agriculture is contributing to the urban food security. The UN organ, FAO has since stressed out that urban agriculture should be in cooperated in the urban planning hence it promoted policies which recognized urban food production. FAO supported the change of urban agriculture into a recognized economic activity which should be integrated into the urban planning. It urged national, regional governments and city administrations to improve their policies and support facilities for urban agriculture, and improve production, processing and marketing systems<sup>1</sup>. This tolerance of urban agriculture by the global community has led to the tolerance of urban agriculture by local governments. Therefore, it led to the growth of urban agriculture in Zimbabwe, particularly Gweru urban such that women were granted the right to farm on the urban open spaces thus promoting urban agriculture.

Furthermore, the Quito declaration of 2000 was a milestone in promoting urban agriculture. This was a landmark development as it encouraged local authorities to promote urban agriculture. The Quito Declaration was the first to call on the region's cities to embrace urban agriculture as a means of reducing poverty, food insecurity and environmental degradation<sup>2</sup>. The Quito declaration, signed by 40 mayors urged all regions to promote urban agriculture since it was playing a pivotal role in providing food for the urban dwellers. After the Quito declaration in 2000, Zimbabwe went on the Nyanga declaration of 2002 and the Harare declaration in 2003. Although Zimbabwe was not a signatory to Quito declaration, it remained vital in terms of urban agriculture, thus, it was a foundation laid for the acceptance and promotion of urban agriculture in Zimbabwe, and particularly Gweru.

The European Commission also played a pivotal role in promoting urban agriculture. It has past the age of just providing aid to the poor and vulnerable but rather, it embarked on

providing developmental aid. The European Commission's department for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection [ECHO] has been providing aid for development in Gweru urban. However, with the economic recession that Zimbabwe has been experiencing in the recent years, urbanites have been left tremendously vulnerable. The EU project contradicts the rational that the vulnerable people only exist in rural areas, at times, those living in the urban areas are more vulnerable and they too needs help. In response to the problems that women in Gweru have been facing, the EU provided assistance, hence promoting urban agriculture.

‘The European Commission is aiding for the establishment of a protective fencing around the farm, the provision of farm inputs, and the rehabilitation of water sources for irrigation. In 2009, the Commission has provided over €9 million towards the improvement of food security in Zimbabwe, and will contribute further in 2010’.<sup>3</sup>

This explains that, the global community has been promoting urban agriculture in Gweru urban and the aid that it offered was a foundation in improving urban agriculture.

## **4.2 Government initiatives in promoting urban agriculture**

The government of Zimbabwe also realised the importance of urban agriculture in ensuring food security. The government therefore started accommodating urban agriculture. The initiatives were targeted for all cities, thus including Gweru urban. The government's approval of declarations pinpoints that, the government promoted them.

### **4.2.1 The Nyanga Declaration of 2002 and Urban Agriculture**

The Nyanga declaration was an intervention approach to promote urban agriculture initiated by the government, headed by the minister of local government. It was an urge to local authorities to promote urban agriculture. This initiative proves that, urban agriculture was in cooperated in to the country's development agenda and also a response to the Quito declaration. The local government was urged to develop suitable incentives and other strategies necessary for the growth of urban agriculture. The declaration stated that;

‘We, the delegates to the Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe’s 61<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference, comprising of the Minister of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing and his Deputy, the Minister of State for Informal Sector, Executive Mayors and Chairpersons, Town Clerks, Chairpersons of Council Committees, Councillors, Heads of Departments, representatives from the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing, International, Regional and Local Non- Governmental Organisations, meeting at Montclair Hotel, Nyanga, from 4-7 June 2002, acknowledging that Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture contribute to urban food security, poverty reduction, local economic development and sustainable urban development.’<sup>4</sup>

The declaration also stated that the government had to include urban agriculture in its programmes so as to alleviate poverty and promote economic empowerment, food security, promotion of local economic development and environmental and health improvement. Non-governmental organizations and donors were urged to offer financial support and material support to urban agriculture projects for the benefit of the urban poor. The private sector was also urged to invest in intensive value for urban agriculture and agro- industries in order to create employment opportunities and promote local economic development. Urban local authorities had to recognize the import of the contribution of urban agriculture to social development, generation of jobs and income, self-esteem, environmental improvement and urban food security and to add them to their key development goals<sup>5</sup>. This declaration led to the acceptance of urban agriculture by local communities. The Gweru city council, NGOs, private sector and other began to promote urban agriculture, thus the declaration was a landmark in promoting urban agriculture.

#### **4.2.2 Harare Declaration of Urban and Peri- Urban agriculture of 2003**

Upon realizing that there has not been much attention invested in assisting urban agriculture, the ministers of local government and agriculture in eastern and southern Africa had a meeting in Harare in order to discuss the state of urban agriculture in their countries. The ministers recognized how urban agriculture was growing tremendously in their countries. They also realized that there has not been much attention invested in assisting urban

agriculture. Therefore, they agreed to promote urban agriculture in a document that became known as the Harare Declaration on Urban and Peri Urban Agriculture in 2003<sup>6</sup>.

#### Harare Declaration on Urban and Peri Urban Agriculture Preamble:

‘We, the Ministers accountable for Local Governments from Kenya, Malawi, Swaziland, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, at our meeting in Harare on Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture (UPA) in Eastern and Southern Africa organized by the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing of the Government of Zimbabwe and the Municipal Development Partnership for Eastern and Southern Africa, in collaboration with UNDP, UNICEF, FAO-SAFR, FANRPAN, RUAFS and IDRC held on 28 and 29 August, 2003; Acknowledging, The presence of local government practitioners and representatives of nongovernmental organizations and community based organizations; Acknowledging further that: UPA is a widely practiced activity in and around towns and cities within the region on parcels of land with alternative competing uses.’<sup>7</sup>

The objectives of the declaration were to urge the local government, and NGOs to formalize urban agriculture with appropriate policy, legislation and institutional frameworks. It aimed at incorporating urban agriculture in the urban development plans. The meeting stressed out the challenges that had been affecting urban farmers such as absence, inadequacy and or inconsistency in the policies, legislation and institutional arrangement for regulating the sector, limited availability of and access to resources, limited research, documentation and information-sharing nationally and regionally, the need for environmental sustainability<sup>8</sup>.

Therefore, the significance of the declaration was to call for immediate and practical reform of policies, legislative and institutional arrangements in order to efficiently incorporate urban agriculture into urban economies of which Zimbabwe was a signatory.

‘We therefore, Call for the promotion of a shared vision of UPA that takes into account the specific needs and conditions in the region, and according commit ourselves to developing policies and appropriate instruments that will create an enabling environment for integrating UPA into our urban economies’.<sup>9</sup>

It can therefore be established that, the Harare declaration was a major port of call in promoting urban agriculture in Gweru because it raised awareness of the importance of urban agriculture, reviewed the challenges that were hindering it and then suggesting possible solutions that would lead to the promotion of urban agriculture. This declaration witnessed a

tremendous change in the face of urban agriculture such that, policies that were hindering urban agriculture were reviewed and UA was accepted in Gweru. More so, NGOs responded by providing aid to urban agricultural activities, hence the Harare declaration was a huge step in promoting urban agriculture.

#### **4.2.3 Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation and urban agriculture**

Due to the increase of economic hardships, the government of Zimbabwe in 2013 embarked on an agenda to promote the socio-economic growth of the nation. Amongst the objectives of the agenda, Food security and Nutrition security was one of the major goals. The aim of the agenda was to bring self- sufficiency in food production, resenting how Zimbabwe used to be the bread basket of Southern Africa but of late maize was being imported from Zambia to feed the nation since harvests were inadequate. There was a call for giving agriculture top priority in the implementation of Zim ASSET by any and all government ministries and stakeholders<sup>10</sup>.

This initiative promoted urban agriculture because the government and the local authorities realised that urban agriculture brought food and nutrition security at household level and also since almost every household was involved in urban agriculture, it would reduce the high levels of hunger and poverty. It promoted the tolerance of urban farming since it also contributed to food security. Therefore, one can agree that this initiative led to the accommodation of urban agriculture thus promoting it.

Amongst other aims of the SI 64 which was implemented in 2016, the government of Zimbabwe played a crucial role in promoting urban agriculture through the instrument. SI 64 restricted the importation of agricultural produce, plants and plant products as well as domestic animals<sup>11</sup>. The restriction of importing agricultural produce was meant to boost the

local industries which produced the same items, and hence women urban farmers are included. It promoted UA by facilitating market for their produce. Since people no longer imported, it meant that there was availability of a huge market. More so, duty free when importing agricultural products such as inputs, mainly machinery was adopted. This promoted UA since those who were able to buy machinery from neighbouring countries could import without being levied an extra fee, hence reducing the costs of inputs and also increasing the availability of inputs for better yields.

To assist farmers with their cash flow, many of the products which are used or consumed in the course of conducting a farming enterprise were zero rated or exempted from VAT. Animal feed, agricultural clothing, agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, seeds, pesticides, are tax free<sup>12</sup>. The prices were made affordable for easy access hence promoting urban agriculture. More so, agricultural produce which are crops such as cabbages, maize, lettuce, carrots, vegetables, onions, shallots, tomatoes, potatoes, eggs, poultry were exempted from tax and also, traders who exclusively provided exempt supplies were not required to be registered for VAT. This enabled women to have a wider market since they could supply shops with their products without any tax clearance, thus by improving the marketing system, thus the initiative worked in promoting urban agriculture by reducing costs of inputs as well as creating markets for agricultural produce.

The government of Zimbabwe has also promoted urban agriculture by allowing NGOs to establish in Zimbabwe. These NGOs have been offering support through finance, technical and training assistances. Therefore, it can be noted that, government initiative played a crucial role in promoting urban agriculture and the response has led to high productivity of UA in Gweru urban and this has led to sustainability and continuity of urban agriculture.



### **4.3 Urban agriculture and the Gweru City Council**

Owing to the realization of the expanding food insecurity of the urban population, especially women, there has been a paradigm shift from hostility to accommodation of urban agriculture by the Gweru City Council. The GCC moved to acceptance of UA built on humanitarian grounds. The GCC have come to the realization of the progressive effect of UA in alleviating poverty and the sustainability of urban livelihoods. Though there has not been policies enacted in promotion of urban agriculture, tolerance of the practice has been a huge stepping stone since it has led to high production in the fields, hence promoting UA.

Gweru city council has been supporting the initiative in the expectation that, one day the city may become self-sufficient in food. Shangwa Mavesera the director of housing and community services said that, ‘hundreds of jobs are going to be created but more importantly, we believe that cheap food will be produced, enough to feed the population here.’<sup>13</sup>

#### **4.3.1 Offering access to land**

In response to the problems faced by women, the Gweru city council has however been lenient with women practicing urban agriculture. Women are now allowed to plant in the areas that are awaiting development. According to Chaminuka, GCC authorities allowed urban farming after having looked at its own development plans and it is lenient to farmers based on humanitarian grounds as UA is assisting in poverty alleviation<sup>14</sup>. GCC has adopted the tolerance of urban farming in undesignated zones. This move has been effective in promoting urban agriculture because initially, the GCC would respond by slashing any crops they found in the open spaces. Now, women were then allowed to practice urban agriculture and they have been maximising on production since they are secure that there is no room for either eviction or slashing of crops. The town clerk was quoted; ‘Those interested in urban agriculture can contact our housing director of allocation of plots at other designated areas.’<sup>15</sup>

This shows a paradigm shift from resilience to accommodation, hence promoting urban agriculture. During interviews, many women expressed gratitude... 'We used to be afraid of the city council because they used to slash our crops. Now we can farm without any fear. This has enabled us to increase production. We want to thank the city council for allowing us to use the open spaces for farming.'<sup>16</sup>

The Gweru city council has also promoted urban agriculture by making access to land free. Initially, the GCC used to levy a dollar for a small piece of land to farm on the pieces of land were often known as 'zviminda zvedhora' This has however been revised. Women are no longer paying for the land, hence reducing the costs on inputs. Thus one can allude that, the GCC have been working in favour of urban agriculture hence promoting it.

Further, it needs to be highlighted that, the city council has given land to various NGOs that are in Gweru for farming purposes. These large tracts of land are designed for agricultural purposes only. This clearly shows how the city council has promoted urban agriculture and it has brought a positive impact to urban agriculture since the practice is being done throughout the year.

To add on, it is significant to note that, GCC has revised their policies in the sense that, they have improved communication with the citizens relating to urban agriculture. If there is any development that has to be done, the GCC releases a press statement informing urban farmers who are mostly women about the initiatives. Meanwhile, GCC released a statement aimed at informing people not to farm on a certain designated area for the season of 2017 because development will be commencing. The town clerk issued a statement, 'All plot holders who used to engage in urban small holder agriculture activities at the areas between Mkoba 12 industrial site, Mkoba 16 , Mkoba 17, Mkoba 20 and Woodlands are advised that the area has been set aside for industrial stands development'<sup>17</sup>.

This shows how they have been promoting urban agriculture such that they inform urban farmers rather than letting them farm and then later destroy the crops for development purposes, thus this strategy of communication is a major initiative of promoting urban agriculture.

#### **4.4 Non- governmental organizations and Urban Agriculture in Gweru**

In a bid to promote urban agriculture, NGOs have worked hand in glove with the government, the local authorities and the women in Gweru to make sure that the implemented strategies are effective. Different NGOs are involved in different initiatives. Most of them have been training farmers to improve production in terms of quality and quantity. In Gweru, there are NGOs that promote urban agriculture so as to promote the livelihoods of the citizens. These are mainly, GWAPA, MASO and Eighty twenty.

##### **4.4.1 Urban agriculture and agricultural extension services**

NGOs have been offering training services to women in Gweru hence promoting urban agriculture, Gweru Women's Aids Prevention Association [GWAPA] has played a pivotal role in promoting urban agriculture in Gweru. It is another organisation that has been playing a pivotal role of promoting urban agriculture by training women mostly those living with HIV, widows, single mothers and those involved in prostitution. Eighty twenty organisation has also been offering training to women urban farmers. The organisation played a pivotal role in training in conservative farming. Conservative farming helped in preserving the soil to ensure continuation of urban agriculture and also it improved knowledge of farming leading to high production. NGOs for example GWAPA grants loans to members which are women, established cooperation for women and these cooperations helps in financial and labour assistance. NGOs offer hands on experience through community gardens. A woman had this to say,

‘Organisations helped us a lot by offering training to us. We were put into groups of 10 and the training officers would give a different group a date when it would go for training. The training that we were offered was educative such that it changed our lives. Some of the methods of farming we are not practicing them due to lack of money but we were trained free of cost.’<sup>18</sup>

A woman said that, ‘I plan to grow some sweet potatoes and tomatoes as well as some green leaves for soups. I didn’t know how to grow food, but after receiving training, I can produce enough to feed myself and my family’<sup>19</sup>.

The interviews depicts that, NGOs have promoted urban agriculture by training women different forms of farming, improving their skills and knowledge hence it was an effective way of promoting urban agriculture.

#### **4.4.2 Urban Agriculture and community gardens**

By establishing community gardens, NGOs have promoted urban agriculture by improving access to land, land security and agricultural produce security. The gardens are fenced and locked. Midlands Aids Service Organisation [MASO] is one of the NGOs that have established community gardens. These gardens are known as herbal and nutrition gardens. They are aimed at producing quality and fresh food for those people living with HIV and AIDS. These have been beneficial to women since they improved food security in households and also women were trained to farm different types of plants that are of importance for nutrition. Each women was allocated her own piece of land which has security of tenure and there is availability of resources such as water and agricultural tools which enhances maximum production. However, this initiative has loopholes such that, some women who do not want to disclose their health status are afraid of participating in the programme of community gardens and also the pieces of land in community gardens are small and that hinders the farming of variety of crops.

#### **4.4.3 Urban Agriculture and Availability of water**

By improving water sources, NGOs have played a major role in promoting urban agriculture. NGOs drilled boreholes in many suburbs of Gweru, in Senga, Lundipark, Mkoba, Ascot, Mambo, Mutapa. The Eighty Twenty NGO was responsible for drilling boreholes as well as maintaining them. This has promoted urban agriculture in such a way that, urban agriculture can be practiced throughout the year without waiting for the rain season since water for irrigating gardens will be available. However, in some cases, the boreholes were no longer functional because of being misused by residents. The GWAPA and MASO gardens have boreholes for watering the crops hence they have been active in promoting urban agriculture.

#### **4.5 The business community and urban agriculture**

Manufacturing companies such as National foods have also been promoting urban agriculture by offering training to women involved in poultry production. They have a database of the people who buy feeds from them and they use those databases to contact and group people for training on how to raise chickens, proper feeding and dealing with diseases. This programmes have been beneficial. Many women are now involved in broiler production and they are benefitting since they have acquired knowledge. The programme has promoted UA such that there are no loses due to deaths of chickens and the practice is profitable.<sup>20</sup>

The media has also been promoting urban agriculture by improving the knowledge of the people. Through the Zimbabwe broadcasting cooperation television {ZBC TV} a programme, Talking farming has been educative over the past years. The programme engages various experts in agriculture who will be live on TV, educating people about crops, the soil and animals. They also give a platform for those who are interested in asking questions, and they respond to questions very well. The programme has been beneficial to the individuals who watch it as it improved their knowledge about agriculture.

#### **4.6 Gweru residents and urban agriculture**

Apart from the aid that they have been receiving, individuals have employed intervention strategies in promoting urban agriculture. In order to do away with water shortages, some women have facilitated the digging of wells at their backyards. These wells help in promoting urban agriculture in the sense that, when irrigating their crops, they do not use municipal water thereby reducing the costs of water, more so there is availability of water for irrigating crops throughout the year, hence digging wells at backyards was an effective way of improving urban agriculture.

To improve urban agriculture, some women engaged in hiring tractors so as to maximally prepare the land for agriculture. This has improved productivity since the land will be properly tilled, though just a few women urban farmers could afford hiring tractors. However, hiring tractors proved to be profitable for those who have large pieces of land. For those who have small portions, the cost of hiring a tractor is too much and at times the harvest does not tally with the capital invested on the land. A woman had this to say.

‘I hired a man to prepare the land for me using a tractor, he charged me \$40. When he was half way, he complained that the land had not been farmed before so it was consuming too much fuel to till the land so he said I should top up another \$40. Since he had already started, I gave him the \$40 making it \$80. After farming and harvesting, I got 3 bags of maize from the plot. It was not profitable. I even think that if I had used the \$80 to buy maize, I would have bought more than 3 bags...’<sup>21</sup>

Some women have been promoting urban agriculture by researching for themselves. The literate women wouldn’t wait for anyone to train them about urban agriculture but they would do it themselves. Interviews and group discussions revealed that, some women bought magazines about gardening whilst some used the google for research. A woman had this to say,

‘When I am at work, when I am not busy, I research about agriculture on the internet. I get information about the seasons when some vegetables are to be grown so that don’t grow them out of season. I also research about how to grow and maintain the vegetables, how to control pests and diseases. It has been working.’<sup>22</sup>

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

The study has stressed out the intervention strategies that have been implemented to promote urban agriculture starting from the Global community, national level, council level, NGO level and also individual level. The study shows that, the strategies have been effective and beneficial to a large extent since urban agriculture has been promoted and is also growing tremendously. The strategies can be accredited for promoting urban agriculture. However, but to a lesser extent, some strategies have not been able to effectively promote urban agriculture. Some have loopholes.

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22. Interview with Tarisai Nhongo, Gweru, 12 October 2017.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study focused on women and agriculture in Gweru urban. The aims and objectives were to investigate the reasons why women engaged in urban agriculture, the contribution of urban agriculture to livelihoods, to investigate the challenges faced by women in urban agriculture as well as analysing the strategies that were implemented to promote urban agriculture. Households have been facing harsh times economically over the past decades due to the increase in economic hardships. The economy of Zimbabwe continued to deteriorate since the 1990 when ESAP was adopted. This fostered urban agriculture in Gweru. Women wanted to find means of survival hence urban agriculture was the available means.

The study indicated that, women got involved in urban agriculture because of various reasons but the major reason is poverty due to economic hardships. Women who practiced urban agriculture, practiced it out of need. Most have resorted to urban agriculture as a way of ensuring food security. Urban agriculture has been benefiting women as it created employment, enhanced food security and generated income for families. The study investigated the forms of urban agriculture which women in Gweru practiced. Maize was the major crop of production.

Women practiced both crop cultivation and rearing of animals. They grew crops such as maize, vegetables, sweet potatoes amongst others. They also kept livestock such as chickens, rabbits, quails. This improved nutrition in households. Most households have been able to withstand the harsh economic environment as a result of urban farming through which they could sustain themselves for months. The study has shown that, without urban agriculture some households would not be able to feed themselves adequately.

Urban agriculture has been very beneficial however it has been faced with its own challenges. Land shortage has been affecting women in Gweru. Due to the rise in development, the land

on which women used to farm was developed into schools, churches etc. women were left contesting over the small pieces of land which were left. More so, shortage of labour, shortages of inputs, unreliable rainfall, lack of agricultural extension services have been hindering women to maximally practice urban agriculture. It should be noted that, these shortages affected productivity and the sustainability of urban agriculture in Gweru. The study has shown transition in urban agriculture in Gweru. The Gweru city council used to slash maize in the fields as a way of stopping urban agriculture but the Gweru city council moved from resistance to tolerance of urban agriculture. Women were given land to farm on and this shows that the GCC has acknowledged the importance of urban agriculture.

Various actors have implemented intervention strategies to promote urban agriculture and these were effective in promoting it. The International community issued declarations encouraging all governments to embrace urban agriculture and these have been landmarks in promoting urban agriculture. The declarations laid foundations of the acceptance of urban agriculture in Zimbabwe, particularly Gweru urban.

More so, there have been government initiative in promoting urban agriculture, the Nyanga declaration of 2002, the Harare declaration of 2003 were declarations initiated by the government to promote urban agriculture. These were effective as they led to the tolerance of urban agriculture in Gweru city council. NGOs have also played major roles in promoting urban agriculture in Gweru through their initiatives. They have drilled boreholes, they offered credit and technical assistance. They established community gardens to promote urban agriculture. Therefore, the study has highlighted that, urban agriculture has been practiced by women in Gweru urban and it has proven to be a viable way of coping with the economic hardships. Urban agriculture has been of importance since many women confessed that, it is a way of income generation to cope with the challenges of the urban areas. It has brought food security in households in Gweru.

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