

Department für Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften Fachgebiet
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***Food and Nutrition Security in Black South African Households:
Creative Ways of Coping and Survival***

Stefanie Lemke

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2. Prof. Hester Hendrina Vorster, D.Sc.,
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African Households –
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*“If I look into the future, I see our country suffering and being poor for
the next years.”*

(A female interviewee from a rural area)

*“The social support here is very good ... you can't have everything in life, but
this is very important.”*

(A female key informant from a rural area)

PREFACE

“There is no use in trying to help these people. These dirty, ignorant people are putting too many children into the world. They won’t work; they have no discipline. They misuse every opportunity they get. Every time they get some money in their hands it all goes to drinking and senseless waste. All the help we give them is just an incentive to laziness, and another opportunity to produce even more children.”

This statement was made by an English industrialist (Burkey 1993:3) working in Norway in the 1880s. Norway was at that time a very poor country, which is attested by the fact that nearly every Norwegian family has relatives in Canada or the United States, who emigrated ‘for a better life’. Today, Norway has one of the highest per capita incomes of the industrialised nations.

The quote, that must sound very provocative as an opening of the thesis, reflects the prejudices and the predetermined stereotypes of someone who is affluent and does not see beyond what he wants to see. I believe that most of us will find some of the common prejudices that exist towards certain population groups in our own countries, maybe with some alterations, reflected in the above statement.

This reminds me of a conversation I once had with an elderly female farmer about the black farm worker who looks after cattle on the farmland that she and her husband rented to someone else. I asked her about the family of this black farm worker. She told me that his wife and several children, she did not know how many, live in a township near Schweizer Reneke, which is at a distance of 30kms drive. He visits them once a month for one night because he always has to stay at the farm to look after the animals. She further told me that his salary is R400 per month. She then complained that he wastes his money on drinking and that he does not save anything to try to make a better living.

This man stays all month long on his own, living in a shack beside the stable of the cattle, having hardly anyone to talk to – 30kms drive from his family, having no means of transport whatsoever and not being able to see them more often than one night per month. I said that from R400 per month, having to feed a family, there is no money left to be saved, and that, if I were in his position, would do exactly the same and try to enjoy myself once a month. When I said this, she conceded that this was probably true.

Someone who is affluent cannot imagine what poverty really means and how it is to be trapped in the vicious circle of poverty. Chambers (1983) called this vicious circle “the deprivation trap”. To understand the deprivation trap, we have to understand the causes of poverty and the types of disadvantages which poor people experience. Food insecurity is directly linked to poverty, being not always, but often one of its outcomes. The issue of poverty is a constant theme in this thesis and put into words by the people I interviewed. I had the chance to have a glimpse into the every day life of households who are struggling to attain food security and to survive.

Of course, the way I see and interpret things will be with a European view, which might result in a certain bias. It will always be the view of an outsider, who on the one hand might have the advantage to see things from a distance but who on the other hand often might not understand and is in any case not in a position to judge. I want to give an example for the typical Euro-centric view I certainly had in the beginning of my stay in South Africa: at a conference, I asked a rather naive question, framed by that typical view one has when coming from Europe. I realised this immediately by the reaction I received. At a conference a year later, someone from the Netherlands also posed a question that could only come from someone who is not familiar with the context. I could then see, observing someone else, how my own view had changed over time.

The thesis refrains from being judgemental. Historic events are illustrated where it seems helpful for a better understanding of present social circumstances and living conditions. Some people tend to point the finger at South Africa, but racism is a problem all over the world. While we in western societies often take racism not seriously enough, South Africa with its diversity of both culture and race has always been confronted with the issue of “race” in an extremely acute way. To face present problems and to deal with them instead of being stuck in the past are the challenging tasks the people of South Africa are undertaking.

Personally, I have learned immensely during almost three years in South Africa. The experiences gave me a different perspective on my own life. They also provided me with an even more critical view on our western values. Moreover, I became more sensitive to the issue of racism in Germany and to the problems of immigrants living here.

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ABSTRACT

Poverty and food insecurity are among the most pressing issues in South Africa and the sub-continent at the beginning of the new century. Studies reveal that not only the economic situation, but more importantly control of resources and intra-household relations determine whether households are food secure. In South Africa, there is an urgent need for research on such underlying causes of malnutrition and food insecurity, with limited empirical data available.

This interdisciplinary study investigates composition, socio-economic characteristics and intra-household relations of black African households and the effects these complex indicators have on their food situation. The research is part of a broader project that studied the impact of urbanization on the health situation of black Africans in the North West Province. For the investigation in question, 166 people, mainly women, were interviewed, using qualitative and quantitative methods.

Many families are disrupted, due to continuous migration and poverty, with extended networks of mostly kin being the predominant household type and half of households being female-headed. A majority of the households studied have incomes less than R1 000 per month, which is approximately 143 US \$ (1 US \$ was equal to R7 at the time of June 2000). About three-quarters of the households are chronically food insecure. Strong competition for and tension about scarce resources occur frequently. The 'stretching' of households over several domestic units and the search for migrant labour are among the most important coping strategies people use for improved food security and survival, as well as social networks of kin, neighbours and friends, using credit and engaging in occasional jobs. Certain female-headed households and also couples having partnership relationships, although economically worse off, achieve a better food situation through mutual cooperation and networks than male-headed households.

More multidisciplinary work is needed to ascertain more exactly the economic and social status of people. This would form a sound basis for future programmes of development, in which existing networks could be used to spread resources and mobilize the poor.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Armut und unsichere Ernährung zählen am Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts zu den drängendsten Problemen in Südafrika und dem gesamten Sub-Kontinent. Studien haben gezeigt, dass die Nahrungssicherheit von Haushalten nicht allein von ihrer wirtschaftlichen Situation, sondern vielmehr von der Kontrolle über vorhandene Mittel sowie sozialen Beziehungen innerhalb von Haushalten abhängt. In Südafrika ist trotz des Wissens über das Ausmaß von Nahrungsunsicherheit und Unterernährung nur sehr wenig über die genaueren Ursachen bekannt.

Die vorliegende interdisziplinäre Studie untersucht unter Verwendung von qualitativen und quantitativen Methoden sozio-ökonomische Verhältnisse und Beziehungsgeflechte innerhalb und zwischen schwarzafrikanischen Haushalten sowie die Auswirkung dieser komplexen Faktoren auf ihre Ernährungssituation. 166 Personen, überwiegend Frauen, wurden ausgiebig befragt, eine Untergruppe über einen Zeitraum von zwei Jahren. Die Studie wurde im Rahmen eines größeren Forschungsprojektes durchgeführt, das die Auswirkung der Verstädterung auf den Gesundheitszustand von Schwarzafrikanern in der Nordwest-Provinz Südafrikas untersucht.

Viele Familien sind aufgrund zunehmender Arbeitsmigration und Armut auseinandergerissen, was sich unter anderem darin auswirkt dass die Hälfte der Haushalte von Frauen geführt wird. Die Mehrzahl der untersuchten Haushalte verfügt über ein monatliches Einkommen von weniger als R1 000 (etwa 143 US Dollar, Stand: Juni 2000). Drei Viertel der Haushalte müssen als "chronisch unsicher" im Hinblick auf ihre Nahrungsversorgung eingestuft werden. Das "Ausdehnen" von Haushalten über mehrere räumliche Einheiten ist eine der wichtigsten Strategien der Menschen, um eine bessere Nahrungsversorgung zu erreichen, ebenso wie Migration mit dem Ziel, Arbeit zu finden. Entscheidend für das Überleben sind daneben soziale Netze wie sie innerhalb von Familien und unter Freunden und Nachbarn geknüpft werden, ausserdem Gelegenheitsarbeiten und Mikro-Unternehmen sowie das "Anschreiben" (Kredit) in kleinen Geschäften vor Ort.

Innerhalb von Haushalten herrscht oft starker Konkurrenzkampf um knappe Ressourcen, deren Verteilung vom Machtverhältnis zwischen den Geschlechtern sowie der Hierarchiestruktur der Haushaltsmitglieder abhängt. Bestimmte Kategorien

von Frauen geführter Haushalte sowie Haushalte, in denen die Beziehung von Paaren auf Partnerschaft basiert, stellen durch gegenseitige Unterstützung und Kooperation sowie mit Hilfe sonstiger sozialer Netze eine bessere Nahrungssituation her als allein von Männern geführte Haushalte, obwohl diese über mehr wirtschaftliche Ressourcen verfügen.

Multidisziplinäre Forschung ist dringend gefragt, um die wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Verhältnisse der schwarzen Bevölkerung Südafrikas genauer zu erfassen. Diese Forschung sollte die Basis für künftige Projekte der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit bilden, in denen viel stärker als bisher bereits bestehende soziale Netzwerke genutzt werden könnten, um Mittel besser zu verteilen und eine nachhaltige soziale und wirtschaftliche Entwicklung armer Bevölkerungsschichten zu fördern.

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Abbreviations and definition of terms

ACC/SCN	Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, Sub-Committee on Nutrition, THE UN SYSTEM'S FORUM FOR NUTRITION
ANC	African National Congress
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations
FEST	Foundation for Education, Science and Technology
GEAR	Growth, Economic and Redistribution Strategy
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
THUSA	THUSA, which is the name of the broader research project, the <i>THUSA study</i> , is the acronym for <i>Transition and Health</i> during <i>Urbanisation</i> in South Africa and in Setswana means 'help'.
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation

Bantustan

Bantustans were areas of land set aside for exclusive African occupation, where systems of governance were meant to follow 'traditional' African ways and where regimes of African collaborators were established as formal leaders. In time all were supposed to have become fully independent states. Only four of the designated ten achieved that status which was never recognised beyond the borders of South Africa (Spiegel 2000:3).

Lobola

The term is stemming from one of the native languages and means bridewealth. Bridewealth is paid by the groom to the parents of the bride. It signals the transference of a woman's reproductive powers, and is considered an investment in the children (Stadler 1993:68).

Mealie rice

Mealie rice is the smallest broken end-product of maize kernels, more or less to be compared in size to rice.

Mealie meal

Fine maize meal

Morogo

A type of wild spinach

Pap

Porridge made from maize meal. There are a variety of different forms of 'pap': smooth maize meal porridge, stiff porridge, crumbly porridge and others.

Shebeen

The word shebeen is originally an Anglo-Irish word and describes illegal (unlicensed) liquor outlets. Given the fact that it was prohibited in South Africa to sell commercially produced alcohol to black South Africans until 1962, these outlets became a common feature of South African townships (Spiegel 2000). They furthermore evolved from the government's policy of restricting black South Africans from formal economic activity:

“In order to earn a living, township mamas sold a variety of home-brewed concoctions. Patrons would guzzle the rotgut from outsized jam tins that would be passed around a human circle for each to have a sip ... many people turned their ... houses into places where one could stop for a drink ...” (Mail & Guardian & Foundation for Education, Science and Technology 1997:18).

Spaza

Spaza shops are micro enterprises operated by black people within the confines of their residences. The formation of spaza shops is connected to the resistance of black South Africans against the apartheid regime: among the methods of resistance was the consumer boycott of formal economic retail outlets. As a result of these boycotts, spaza shops arose as a significant feature of the township landscape from the mid to late 1970s (Spiegel 2000).

Stamp mealies

Stamp mealies are broken dried maize kernels, also called samp.

Township

The term township is used quite specifically in South Africa to refer to densely settled residential areas that, during apartheid years, were established for black people on the outskirts of cities and towns (Spiegel 2000).

Ubuntu

Ubuntu is a southern African conceptualisation of humanness and means ‘I am because you exist’. It may be seen as an expression of community life and collective responsibilities (May *et al.* 2000b:254).

Veld

The term veld is specifically used in South Africa and means grassland (PONS 1997:669).

Vetkoek

Afrikaans word for fat cake or dumpling. It is dough made from wheat flour which is fried in oil. Vetkoek can be filled with meat or eaten as a sweet.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview and aim of the study

Poverty and food insecurity are among the most pressing social issues in South Africa and the sub-continent at the beginning of the new century. The majority of the population are subject to increasing poverty, with about half of the South African population subsisting below the poverty line (Bernstein 1994; Barberton 1995; Haddad & Zeller 1997). About 44% of the South African population are considered food insecure (Parikh 2000).

Food insecurity is not always visible and entails far more than an obvious state of undernutrition. While food insecurity may lead to, and is often characterised by hunger, its principal meaning refers to the risk of people being hungry. Therefore, food security is not just about absence of hunger, but it is about absence of risk relating to adequate food consumption (Kracht 1999a). This also entails the ways in which food or the resources to get food are obtained. It further depends on how available resources are used and distributed in the household. The necessity of revealing the marked differentiation in resource access and decision-making in the household sphere and also between socially connected households has been indicated as of utmost importance (Adams *et al.* 1998; Maxwell & Smith 1992, Jones 1999).

The concept of food security developed since its beginnings in the 1970s from a uni-dimensional to a multi-faceted and very complex issue. This research is consistent with the shift and explores food security on the household and individual level, including livelihood, coping strategies and also subjective perceptions of the food insecure about their food and general situation.

In South Africa, the focus in the past regarding food security was on national food supplies. Empirical research on food security and knowledge about the specific underlying causes of food insecurity are very limited. This research could contribute to baseline data in this field. The focus is not on why households fail to achieve food security but on why they are successful in managing with adverse situations, as it is a priority to understand, "*how people gain access to food rather than how they fail to do so*" (Maxwell & Smith 1992:49). Throughout this thesis, perceptions of people are included. This is done with the purpose of illustrating what *food security* and

livelihood mean for “real” people in “real” life, and to try to make transparent why people act the way they do. According to Budlender (2000:120),

“ ... malnutrition in South Africa is related as much to poor people’s living conditions and the social and psychological consequences of poverty, as to the economic dimension of poverty. The relative importance of different causes in particular groups or geographical areas is less well understood. There is an urgent need for research on causality.”

South Africa is in a process of rapid transition. Such processes cause problems of adaptation mainly for the poor regarding their often deteriorating socio-economic conditions (Parikh 2000). In South Africa, this adds to huge economic imbalances still existing as a legacy of past discriminatory laws. Looking at food security globally, the burden of adjustment, whether these are climatic shocks, a shift in policies or economic conditions is always passed on to poor people. As Parikh (2000:17) states,

“The system is resilient for the rich, but stubborn for the starving ... it is likely that the power of multinationals and of technologically advanced countries will increase, while the basic human rights of food-insecure people remain unfulfilled.”

Keeping this in mind, the present situation regarding food and nutrition security in black South African households in the North West Province is investigated. Special focus is laid on the organisation of households, as the household itself is a problematic concept, especially in the South African context. The issue has been dealt with in detail by South African anthropologists. The concept of household is here investigated closely, as it is crucial for the understanding of intra-household processes. Individual members of a household will experience different food security risks and often follow different food security strategies. Emphasis is placed on the role of women, gender relations and other intra-household relations, as they are central to the issue of food security. Therefore, different household organisations and their dynamics must be closely investigated and should be the centre of attention of all programmes on poverty relief. Ensuring food security can be sustainable only if these intra- and inter-household relations are understood.

This research is part of the THUSA study¹, a cross-sectional, multidisciplinary survey carried out from 1996 to 1998 by the Nutrition Research Group of Potchefstroom University, in all districts of the North West Province, South Africa. In the study the impact of urbanization and the resultant demographic transition on determinants and

outcomes of physical and mental health of 1854 black South Africans was assessed. A sub-sample of 166 people, mostly women, was interviewed on household food security.

This study is of an exploratory, qualitative nature and follows an interdisciplinary approach, making an attempt to shed light on the complex phenomenon of food and nutrition insecurity in this study area. The research extensively draws on anthropological work. In a number of them, not only the disruptive effects of powerlessness are described, but also the innovative social mechanisms of survival, of which social and individual actions for improved food security are essential elements. The specific place of food security as an element of daily survival within the different spheres, however, has still to be studied. A better understanding must be gained of the social system within which people live, and its use as a mechanism of ensuring greater food security for those involved and for wider networks of relatives, friends and other dependants.

1.2 Food and nutrition security: From a uni-dimensional to a multi-faceted concept

Since the first World Food Conference in 1974 food security has been defined and described in many ways (Maxwell & Frankenberger 1992). The concept of food security in the last three decades underwent significant changes, from a uni-dimensional to a multi-faceted and very complex concept. While in the 1970's food security was mainly concerned with national food stocks, in the 1980's food security was viewed from the point of view of individual entitlements, based on Sen's concept of entitlement (Sen 1981; Bohle 1993). The emphasis shifted from global, national and regional levels to the household and the level of the individual, giving greater attention to physical and economic access to adequate food and moving the focus from a largely commodity orientation towards an orientation concerned with the human condition (Kracht 1999a). Maxwell (1996:155) describes the three main shifts as follows:

“ ... from the global and national to the household and individual, from a food first perspective to a livelihood perspective, and from objective indicators to subjective perceptions.”

It is recognized nowadays that food security is a very complex issue (Steyn 1998). For a reasonable quality of life, the concept of food security cannot be separated from other important service facilities and aspects of life. Besides household food insecurity, other underlying reasons for the seriousness of the effect of inadequate food consumption and diseases are the following: inadequacy of basic facilities such as clean water, sanitation and housing conditions, as well as the quality of health care in the community. All of these underlying factors are crucial for adequate dietary intake and the prevention of diseases, and they are also crucial as a base for sustainable food security.

The conceptual framework developed by UNICEF (1990) is widely accepted internationally and shall be used here to illustrate causes of malnutrition and undernutrition:

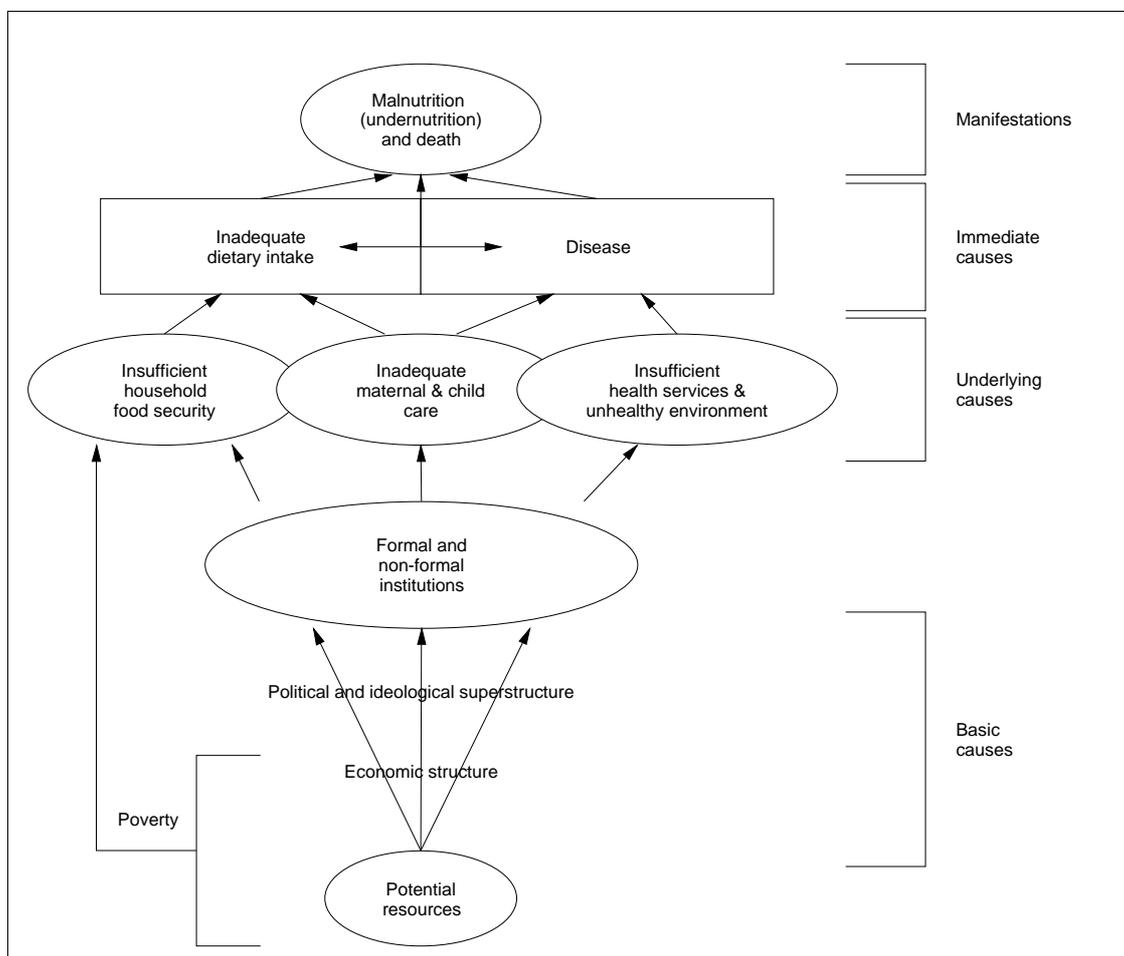


Figure 1.1: The role of food security in the causes and consequences of malnutrition and undernutrition (adapted from the conceptual framework of UNICEF 1990).

The conceptual framework relates the causal factors for undernutrition with different social-organizational levels, such as the *immediate causes* affecting individuals, the

underlying causes relating to families/households and the *basic causes* relating to the community and the nation (Gross *et al.* 2000). The assessment of malnutrition, undernutrition and death is the ultimate manifestation of poor living conditions. The immediate causes, inadequate dietary intake and diseases, interact in a mutually reinforcing manner: the impact of disease is made much worse by the malnourished state of a person. In developing countries, infectious diseases, such as diarrhoeal diseases and acute respiratory diseases are responsible for most nutrition-related health problems (Gross *et al.* 2000). These diseases also often cause a loss of appetite (UNICEF & NCRC 1993b). From the above figure it is clear that insufficient household food security, often coupled to poverty, is one of the underlying causes of and major determinants for undernutrition and malnutrition. Other underlying causes influencing nutrition are appropriate health systems and a healthy environment, as well as adequate maternal and child care in the household and the community. Finally, human and environmental resources and their allocation, the broad economic system and the political and ideological structure that is reflected and represented in various formal and non-formal institutions contribute as basic factors in malnutrition or proper nutrition.

It is clear that the underlying causes do not only impact on the immediate causes, but that there are interrelations between them that are illustrated by the overlapping circles in *Figure 1.1*. Moreover, emphasis has to be laid on the psychological and emotional state of people, especially that of caregiver and dependent children, as it influences nutritional status (Richter 1993). Also, available energy sources for cooking, cooking facilities and storage facilities, as part of economic conditions and available infrastructure, are of great importance, as they concern the general concepts of labour and time and also the safety of food and people. Education and information, which are not included in this graph, are further underlying causes influencing nutritional status, which is nowadays also widely recognized (UNICEF & NCRC 1993b). As becomes clear from the framework, food availability and secure access to food and to meet household food needs are necessary, but not sufficient conditions for good nutritional status (Frankenberger 1992). Thus, food security is not identical with nutritional wellbeing and food insecurity is not necessarily synonymous with hunger, under- or malnutrition. The term *food security* has recently been replaced by *nutrition security* or *food and nutrition security*, as this more accurately reflects the complexity of nutrition problems, beyond food supply and access to food (Kracht 1999a:55). Merely for reasons of simplicity, throughout this thesis the term *food security* will be used.

There has been much debate about the concepts and definitions of food security (Maxwell 1996). There are, however, common themes which cut across discussions on intra-household bargaining, nutrition adaptation, livelihood security, ecological resilience and questions of culture and perception (Maxwell & Smith 1992). The most recent definition established by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations at the 1996 World Food Summit, apart from slight variations, seems to be widely accepted now:

“Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO 1996:7).

The above definition of food security entails several underlying concepts. Some of them, such as the safety of food, nutrient value and individual dietary needs, can be determined to a certain extent, more or less objectively and accurately (see also 3.3.13). The question remains *what is enough or sufficient* and *what food do people prefer and is culturally acceptable?* The concept of *socio-cultural acceptability* is entailed in the term *food preferences* in the FAO definition. Especially the latter criterion has long been neglected in the context of food aid, while nowadays it is widely accepted that the cultural acceptability of food is critical to a household's perception of food security (Eide 1999). These issues cannot be measured with objective criteria, but can only be defined by the people concerned. Another important criterion concerns the circumstances and environment under which food security, as understood by the people themselves, can be achieved. Identification and weighting of objectives can only be decided by the food insecure themselves (Maxwell & Smith 1992). It is also important to point out that every definition has limitations, taking into account the complex and multi-faceted issue of food security. Also, there will often be trade-offs between different objectives in food security. As Maxwell & Smith (1992:51) suggest, for intervention in household food security a set of key defining characteristics and priorities could be used².

The Rome Declaration on World Food Security 1996 renewed the focus of a human rights dimension to food security, reaffirming

“ ... the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger”(FAO 1996:1-3).

This brought a new momentum and dynamic for change and several initiatives since the 1996 World Food Summit (ACC/SCN 2000b). Jonsson (2000:6-9) in his approach to Human-Rights-Based Programming in UNICEF emphasized that language reflects ingrained perceptions, conceptions, attitudes and the pattern of likely decisions and actions. He therefore required and formulated a shift from a basic needs approach to a human rights approach, with a change of language that reflects the paradigm shift.

The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) held an “International Consultative Conference on Food Security and Nutrition as Human Right” from 25 to 27 May 1999 in Johannesburg. Among the participants were representatives from the South African Government, both at National and Provincial levels, South African professionals and civil society institutions and organisations, as well as representatives from international agencies operating in South Africa, among them FAO, UNICEF, WHO, UNDP and others. The aim of the conference was to

“ ... enable stakeholders in the relevant fields to assess country case illustrations on the application of a human rights perspective on food security and nutrition as a framework for further action” (SAHRC 1999a).

As Eide (1999:7) stated in his conference speech, South Africa has the most advanced constitutional commitment to human rights anywhere in the world, and further stated that:

“What is required is that the promises contained in them are implemented.”

In line with this was the comment of Jonsson (1999:23), emphasising that:

“It is not about whether [food and nutrition security] should be human rights oriented, it is about how to do it.”

During the conference it came to the fore that, despite many efforts and propositions being made, many problems still occur in implementing the right to food. It was concluded, among other suggestions, that greater coordination between government departments, NGO's and other monitoring bodies is essential (SAHRC 1999c:125).

Reviews on the future of health in African populations have indicated that, socio-economically and with regard to nutrition, the outlook is almost uniformly bleak and still likely to deteriorate (Walker A.R.P. 1994; Schulz 1999). The prevalence of food-

insecure persons in Central Africa, East Africa and South Africa has increased, in South Africa from 32% of the total population in the years 1979-1981 to 44% of the population in 1995-1997 (Parikh 2000). Additional problems for food security are created by trade liberalization:

“For the South, world agricultural trade liberalization has led to the acceleration of the rural exodus and further impoverishment of small family farmers. This is due primarily to the lack of strong compensatory regulations to protect them against undue competition from cheaper, imported, subsidized goods” (Parikh 2000:17).

Taking this situation into account, with an increasing population and shrinking natural resources, the aims entailed in the definition of food security, reflecting an optimal nutritional situation and wellbeing for all, seem beyond reach. At the World Food Summit in 1996 in Rome the right to food was reaffirmed, but it was also stated, however, that this right will not be realised for millions of people in the foreseeable future. Delegates reaffirmed their political will and common and national commitment

“ ... to eradicate hunger in all countries, with an immediate view to reducing the number of undernourished people to half their present level no later than 2015” (FAO 1996:1)

According to Kracht (1999b), this implies a tacit acceptance that in 15 years from now over 400 million people will still be undernourished. As Parikh (2000) concludes, only if the UN's human rights approach to adequate food could fully be operationalized, could the world food system become resilient for all people.

1.3 The position of black women in South African society

“How to strengthen the family and at the same time weaken patriarchy – nowhere in the world has this been fully achieved, and yet this is precisely the daunting task facing us in South Africa” (Sachs 1992).

The aim of this chapter is to illustrate the role of women and to give a brief overview of the historical development of some of the past traditions still influencing women's position in contemporary South Africa. This shall serve as a background to the understanding of the position of women and gender relations, which form the basis for all actions and research connected to family life and sustaining livelihoods.

Throughout the thesis, gender relations crop up when researching contexts such as head of household, singlehood, decision-making and the incidence of rape and violence against women. For more in-depth information on the role and position of women, the reader is referred to these sections and to the published sources mentioned in the arguments.

If talking about the position of women, the experiences and problems black South African women are facing nowadays have to be recognised. There are many constraints that have a huge impact on women's lives, as well as on those of their children and the whole family. Although the new constitution of South Africa articulates equal rights for women, and although this is partly being implemented, the position of black South African women is far from being equal with that of men³ (Walker C. 1994). It is also again a matter of who of them has access to improved rights and more equality – and whether these changes reach poor, marginalised women who are in the greatest need.

Universally, gender relationships are characterised by the domination of men over women. While sexual differences are something we are born with and refer to basic and biological facts, gender roles and relationships are socially learned, reinforced and modified by the economic, political and cultural environment in which we live (Ramphela & Boonzaier 1988). In South Africa, gender relations are specific due to the specific culture in which they are enacted on. With regard to the background of the great variety of cultural groups in black South African society, it is of course a somewhat dangerous oversimplification to give a broad generalisation of the position of black South African women. However, despite this diversity, there is a marked degree of cohesion and some common, general patterns are discernible (Steyn & Uys 1983). To understand the present situation and position of black women in South Africa, one needs to go back to the historic roots of this development. South Africa has been characterised since pre-colonial times by an extensive system of patriarchy, with women of different races, classes and cultures experiencing patriarchy in different forms and degrees (Popenoe *et al.* 1998). Black women in pre-capitalist farming societies of Southern Africa worked the land and were responsible for child care and domestic work. Although women's productive and reproductive capacities were highly valued, these capacities were controlled by men. However, the household was the foundation of political and economic life and was self-sufficient (Sachs 1992). Within the system of sharecropping, where black South African families lived and worked on farms owned by white South Africans, usually all

remuneration for labour performed by members of a family was paid to the household head up to the 1960s (Bank 1994).

With the economy's turn to capitalism, black women were again subject to new forms of oppression. Within the migrant labour system, they were expected to maintain the home and provide food for children and the elders in the homelands (ethnically determined "states" for several black groups), thus relieving employers of the responsibility of providing food and housing for the mine workers' families (Popenoe *et al.* 1998). Following this development, old patriarchal control was undermined and the black family as an institution came under pressure, leading to a gross disruption of existing systems, not only of suppression, but also of support (Burman 1991; see also 2.2.5). The family has been grievously injured by apartheid and at the same time, apartheid has been particularly devastating to the rights of women (Sachs 1992). In urban households the basis of patriarchy rested on the economic power of male wages and on migrant men's superior access to urban resources such as residential rights, accommodation and social services, all of which women did not have access to under apartheid laws (Bank 1994).

In the more recent past, during the last phase of apartheid, the issue of gender did not constitute an obvious element in the political discourse in South Africa. Concern about gender relations was either irrelevant or was overshadowed by the more pressing problems associated with relationships between different races, ethnic groups, cultures and tribes (Ramphela & Boonzaier 1988). What was common between the different races and cultures was the system of patriarchy, which constituted a point of agreement between black and white South African men. The following two quotes, cited by Ramphela & Boonzaier (1988:154-155), best explain the underlying ideology of patriarchy within both cultures:

"This patriarchal tradition of the household is one of the most beautiful national legacies of the [white] Afrikaner ... as main characteristic of the old farming household we can mention that it was a community of authority. In this small community the father was the highest authority. In other words, he was the head of a specific authority structure. Since every authority structure ... can have only one head, the woman was under the authority of her husband ... the mother, on the other hand, was pre-eminently the loving and understanding party who cared and served in silence" (from the *Kultuurgeskiiedenis van die Afrikaner*, Cronje 1945).

"This respect within the [Zulu] nation is found even among adults. In the family the man is head. The woman knows that she is not equal to her husband. She addresses her husband as 'father', and by doing so the children also get a good example of how

to behave. A woman refrains from exchanging words with a man, and if she does, this reflects bad upbringing on her part” (from the *Inkatha's Ubuntu-Botho: Good Citizenship*, cited in Mdluli 1987).

With the political change in the 1990s, the discussion of gender issues received a new profile and for the first time the significance of these issues was fully recognised. Apart from this official stance, one has to take into account that systems might sometimes change overnight, but people and attitudes do not change quickly. Therefore, past inequalities cannot be eradicated easily and gender awareness has to grow. According to Sachs (1992),

“We need democracy in our processes, democracy in our mechanisms, and democracy inside the family itself.”

Sachs sees the family and the relationships within the family as a starting point for development in other fields, emphasising that it is not about some abstract, idealised model of the perfect family, but about the actual lives that people lead today.

Although things are changing in contemporary South Africa, the manipulation of tradition is, however, often still a means to legitimate male domination (Ramphela & Boonzaier 1988), especially in black South African culture. One has, of course, to distinguish between rural and urban women: while women in rural areas often have no choice but to continue to retain traditional patterns, which depends again on age, upbringing and other factors, most urban women have adapted to a westernised way of life and values, although there are also those who adhere to “traditional customs” (Steyn & Uys 1983).

The concept of *head of household* is still very strong in contemporary South Africa. If there is a man in the house, he will naturally be regarded as head (Evans 1992). This has implications for gender and power relations within the household. Often, women, especially when being dependent on the man as the income earner, do not have equal rights in the household to decide on the use of resources (Young 1992). Women, on the other hand, find creative and ‘hidden’ ways of manipulating certain customs and inequalities and thus undermining male authority (Liebenberg 1997; Van der Vliet 1991; Bank 1997). Another reality is that the majority of households in rural areas are female-headed (Popenoe *et al.* 1998) and women then take over certain roles and make decisions. The fact remains, however, that women are often powerless, especially if they do not have proper access to education or

income. At present, the situation for a majority of both men and women is desperate, having to face unemployment, poverty and a lack of prospects in general. In this situation, women still are more vulnerable than men, which is for example revealed in the alarming statistics on violence against women both outside and inside their homes (see 2.2.4). Koen (1994:17) sees this as a result of a patriarchal society because:

“Women’s vulnerable position in the home is a reflection of discriminatory institutionalised values and practices regarding women’s position and role in the broader patriarchal South African society.”

The existence of parallel legal systems in South Africa, namely customary law and South African law (with its origin in Roman-Dutch law) confused the legal situation regarding the rights of black South African women (Koen 1994). Under customary law, black South African women had unequal rights with regard to property, inheritance, marriage, divorce, children and the household. They were permanently under the guardianship of their husband or a male relative (UNICEF & NCRC 1993a). Today, customary law, for example customary marriage, is recognised (The Sunday Independent 08 November 1998). This also introduces recent changes to customary practice, for example that women have equal status to men and can make joint decisions regarding property, whereas in the past women in rural areas were not allowed to obtain land without their husband’s consent. Even then, they were not allowed to own it (Popenoe *et al.* 1998). The new Gender Bill caused negative reactions on the part of some African academics and politicians. The Inkatha Freedom Party threatened to take legal action if the bill became law, on the grounds that it sought to equate customary marriages with the ‘Western’ civil variant (Mail & Guardian 1998b). The Bill on the Recognition of Customary Marriages Acts that was introduced in 1998 became law on 15 November 2000 (Republic of South Africa Government Gazette 1998). The implementation of these laws in the rural areas places extreme limitations on the double goal of the government of keeping up traditions and at the same time enabling gender equality (Walker C. 1994). Although laws regarding marital contracts have changed, they are not retrospective, and any black South African woman married before 1988, or white South African woman married before 1984, may still be considered as dependent, which limits women’s ability to enter into contracts or apply for loans without their husband’s consent (Koen 1994). The custom of bride-wealth (*lobola*) that is still alive and common in contemporary South African society has undergone several transformations (Burman

1991). Bride-wealth payments before the 1970s were quite standardised: the groom usually had to pay 12 cattle to the parents of the bride. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the payment in cattle was replaced by cash payments (Stadler 1993). This transfer of marriage goods was not a form of purchase of the bride and the man received no ownership rights over the woman, as is still erroneously believed (Steyn & Uys 1983). It was, besides serving as a form of gratitude to the bride's parents for rearing their daughter and a compensation for their loss of a source of labour, an exchange for the fecundity potential of the bride and the right of the father over his children. The man, by giving bride-wealth (sometimes called "child-price") retains the right over the children also in cases where the woman leaves him, no matter what the circumstances are (Steyn & Uys 1983). The system of *lobola* also had a stabilising influence on the marriage. If the man ill-treated the woman, she could leave him and go back to her parental home, with the man forfeiting his *lobola* or *bogadi*. If the woman was the guilty party and she left her husband, her relatives had to return all or part of the *lobola*. Both sides thus had an interest in the success of the marriage (Steyn & Uys 1983). When the payment of *lobola* was still made with cattle which were never sold, and with the cows having calves, the means to provide for a woman and possibly her children if she should leave her husband, were there in the form of increasing stock. Nowadays, since payment is almost exclusively in money which is usually spent immediately, if the marriage ends and the wife returns to her family there is no ready-made source of food and clothing for her and the children, who are a burden on her family of origin (Burman 1991). Another aspect is that women who are married under the custom of *lobola* are expected first of all, to be mothers and to bear children for the husband and the parents-in-law. These rules, in the context of a subsistence economy, that appeared designed for the subjection of women, often also operated to ensure their security (Nhlapo 1991). Nowadays, these roles and their surrounding circumstances have changed, but the perception still persists regarding the primary role of women. This ties women down to the role of mothers and retains their dependency on their husbands.

Although the custom of bride-wealth is often criticised and questioned, it still seems to be seen as a rational response to social change rather than a hangover from the past (Stadler 1993). Bride-wealth payments represent a significant contribution towards household income and moreover provide men with rights over children and establish their masculine identity. For women, on the other hand, bride-wealth, within the constraints they are facing in marriage, means having a certain security. If the husband treats her badly, she can go back to her parental home, and the husband would in the end lose the money he "invested" in his wife (Burman

1991). Also, if the woman becomes ill, the husband has an obligation to look after her and pay for medical expenses. Therefore, although the system of *lobola* still seems in conflict with women's rights, it gives them at least a certain amount of social security. This does not prevent a number of men from regarding women as their possession, as is framed in the following comments:

"I have given lobola (bridewealth) for her. She belongs to me" (cited in Van der Vliet 1991:232).

"I am the head, because it is me who had paid lobola for this wife." (Comment of a male interviewee in this study on the question on who is head of household)

The distinctly normatively prescribed nature of women's subserviant roles were also noticeable in premarital relationships (Steyn & Uys 1983). In former times, virginity of women was highly valued and affected the amount of *lobola* paid. Premarital pregnancies were strongly disapproved of. In the Xhosa and Venda tribes, girls were regularly examined to determine whether they were still virgins. In contemporary South Africa, this tradition comes to new life: in the face of the AIDS crisis, in some areas girls are again subject to examinations to control their "virginity"⁴ (ARD/Weltspiegel 2001a). As long as there is no change of attitudes in the South African society as a whole towards the rights of women, and the continued double standard for sexual behaviour of men and women, these measures have to be regarded as one-sided and again discriminatory against women. Furthermore, if a girl is found not to be a virgin anymore, she has to fear discrimination from her family and the whole community. The practices illustrated show that women were and still are disempowered in many spheres of their life. This cannot be discussed separately, as it impacts on them as women in society. Nhlapo (1991:113) investigated the question why sex discrimination is such an enduring part of African traditional systems, and states that

"... it is in marriage that the position of women is defined in terms that may prove problematic ... the overriding value in the African family is reflected in the non-individual nature of marriage, sometimes called the collective or communal aspect of the marriage relationship. This ... embodies ... an alliance between two kinship groups for purposes of realising goals beyond the immediate interests of the particular husband and wife."

While the goals of procreation and survival, implied above, can be seen as being essential for the wellbeing of a larger group in a pre-industrial society, with wives and children being economic assets, and while the rules that developed around them had been part of a survival strategy, one must also be aware that

“ ... to say the interests of the group are more important than those of the individual is to say something else: in patriarchal societies group interests are framed in favour of men ... if that system masks inequality under the guise of group interest, women and children are certain to be disadvantaged” (Nhlapo 1991:113-114).

Another important aspect in the discussion about the position of women is the ‘crisis of African masculinity’ (Bank 1994) which can partly explain violence against women. The underlying reasons of violence among black South African men was dealt with in a television documentary (SABC 1998), which argued that since colonial times and reinforced during apartheid, black South African men have been constantly subject to suppression and humiliation, in this process losing their self-respect. They were cheap labourers in the mines and on farms, denying them family life and rights. They had to live on their own in deprived conditions in single-sex hostels, uprooted from their families, culture and traditions, and had to perform tasks that were traditionally women’s work, such as cooking and washing. Previously young black South Africans grew up with the tradition of *Ubuntu*, which implies having respect for others, and could prove their manhood in rites such as the ritual of circumcision. In the cities, these traditions were replaced by gang activities where young men had to prove themselves, sometimes even by killing a person (SABC 1998). All of these conditions added to the loss of self-respect and self-esteem of men and can result in violence as a means of reaffirming masculinity (Bank 1994). This at the same time keeps women in their subservient roles and does not provide the possibilities for changes. In this regard, the current role of ‘custom’ or ‘tradition’ as it is understood nowadays is important to mention. According to Nhlapo (1991), during the colonial period a shift took place from ‘custom’ to customary law. This involved an alliance between colonial administrators and African male elders, with the latter seeing their power dwindling and seeking to regain it, by then manipulating institutions such as *lobola* and guardianship. In the name of tradition, instead of custom, rigid rules were turned into customary law. This argument is supported by Walker (C. 1994:349), stating that

“ ... as is now well established, what is today cast as ‘custom’ or ‘tradition’ and therefore sacrosanct is in fact the product of a complex, dynamic and frequently

ambiguous history of contestation, co-option and reconstruction ... unfortunately, this important insight does not appear to have taken root in current political debate ... 'custom' can be refashioned again, to better fit contemporary goals of non-sexist and non-racial society ... it is the principle of gender equality that needs to be reaffirmed."

The way in which men are 'using tradition' for their benefit is also expressed in the following statement on aspects of marriage and perceptions about the model of 'traditional' and 'modern' marriage:

"[The man] is so selfish and arrogant that he will go along with change when it suits him and will resist change and hide behind tradition when he cannot defend a particular practice" (cited in Van der Vliet 1991:223).

According to Van der Vliet (1991), men tended to favour the segregated and polygynous style associated with the 'traditional' model of marriage, providing personal advantages and gratifications such as patriarchal privileges, freedom from household chores and far greater social, financial and sexual freedom for men. Women, particularly the younger and more educated ones were more likely to want a closed monogamous style associated with the 'modern' model of marriage. As a consequence of these traditional roles that are more or less still ascribed to men and women, Niehaus (1994) argues that in domestic relations in Southern Africa sibling relations in contrast to hierarchical conjugal relationships are much more relaxed. He further argues that in Southern Africa it is rather siblings who stay together while conjugal pairs are more easily dispersed (see also 5.1.3.3). The perceptions of women towards marriage are investigated in more detail in chapter 5.1.1.3.

Amid all the other limitations and the general subservient position mentioned above, the cruel reality for black South African women is the high incidence of domestic violence and rape. The ground for a deprecatory attitude towards women and girls can partly be seen in the above described history of suppression. The enormous amount of stress and the psychological state of many women who cannot feel safe can only be guessed. Living in fear has a huge impact on their lives, their wellbeing and therefore also the wellbeing of their children and the atmosphere in the house. This of course also affects white South African women. Still, black women are in most cases more vulnerable, due to their unsafe environment and deprived living conditions especially in crowded townships, with very limited access to basic facilities such as police stations, hospitals, doctors, counsellors or legal advisers (see also 2.1.2). Moreover, there is distrust of many ordinary people towards the police that

discourages reporting, apart from the fear of reprisal if the offender knows the victim. This is mostly the case with crime such as rape or assault (Budlender 2000). The issue of rape and violence against women is dealt with in chapter 2.2.4.

According to Walker (C. 1994), the two goals which the ANC attempts to promote and co-opt – gender equality and accommodating ‘tradition’, which is fundamentally patriarchal – are ultimately incompatible. She concludes by stating that unless the government is impelled towards a much deeper commitment to the realisation of gender equalities, and with the ongoing clash between the principle of gender equality and the circumscribed accommodation of traditional leaders, rural women are most likely to continue to suffer the consequences of an ‘official’ patriarchal domination legitimised as ‘tradition.

2. SOUTH AFRICA AND THE STUDY AREA NORTH WEST PROVINCE

2.1 Geography and history of South Africa

2.1.1 Geography and environment



Photos 1&2: National emblems of South Africa - King Protea and Springbok

South Africa can broadly be divided into two main regions: a huge inland plateau fringed by a narrow coastal plain on three sides, with the west coast bordering the South Atlantic and the eastern coastline running along the Indian ocean. Dividing the two is an escarpment of mountains and hills, dominated by the Drakensberg range. Other mountain ranges are to be found in the southern and western Cape (Anon 2000b). The country falls squarely within the subtropical belt of high pressure, making it dry with an abundance of sunshine. The wide expanses of the ocean on three sides have a moderating influence on the climate. The topography ranges from highveld grasslands to bleak semi-deserts to subtropical swamps. Within these contrasting zones, some of the world's most diverse animal and plant kingdoms are to be found.

South Africa is a dry country, with 80% of the rain falling during the summer months of October to March, much of it accompanied by hail and thunderstorms. The average annual rainfall is only 464mm, against a world average of 857mm. In total, 65% of the country has an annual rainfall of less than 500mm, which is regarded as absolute minimum for dryland farming. South Africa is periodically afflicted by prolonged droughts, often ending in severe floods (Anon 1995).

2.1.2 From apartheid to democracy: Implications on black South African people's lives

The first democratic elections in South Africa took place from 26 to 29 April 1994, with the African National Congress (ANC) gaining a majority of over 60%, and Nelson Mandela becoming the country's first black president on 10 May 1994, after he had been imprisoned for 27 years. Immediately afterwards, most sanctions were lifted (some gradually) and South Africa reclaimed its seat in the UN General Assembly, became a member of the Organisation of African Unity and rejoined the Commonwealth. A new constitution was signed into law on 10 December 1996 (Anon 2000b). In June 1999 after the second democratic elections in South Africa, Thabo Mbeki succeeded Nelson Mandela as president.

The general socio-economic situation of black South African households and their situation of food security and livelihood have to be seen in the context of the history of this country and can be indirectly inferred from a vast number of sources. The struggle for control of resources between settlers from Europe and those of mostly African descent had a direct and severely limiting effect on the latter's access to land, their right to labour or choice of labour, and also their right to movement and residence in large parts of the country (Plaatje 1916; Omer-Cooper 1989; Davenport 1988). Discriminatory political practices did not only create limitations for those of mainly African descent and other "non-white" categories, but also disrupted existing and functioning social systems of support by creating a vast system of migrant labour and the statutory removal of people from certain so-called "white" areas. In some ways these disruptive forces were aggravated by the rapid industrial and urban growth in South Africa (Posel 1997).

There can be no doubt that the above situation with its dire effects on the general wellbeing of black South Africans had to impact on their level of food security and the way this was and still is experienced and enacted on within daily life. This has been indicated by authors working in the fields of networking between families (Murray 1981; Ross 1993; Spiegel 1987; Van der Waal 1996), life in hostels (Ramphela 1993; Jones 1993), and "levels of domination" within lower class families (Kotzé 1986). In some of these works, not only the disruptive effects of powerlessness on black South Africans are described, but also their innovative social mechanisms of survival. For further reading into these issues the reader is referred to the above quoted sources.

Some of the general influences of colonialism and apartheid on people's lives shall be illustrated briefly here.

□ *Urbanization*

The rapid urbanization of black and white South Africans that was initiated with the rise of the mining business, and the migrant worker system, had profound political consequences (Anon 2000b). Urbanization is continuing to take place at a rapid speed, reflecting similar types of experiences in other parts of the world where rapid urbanization is accompanied by massive unemployment (Spiegel 1995). Whereas during the apartheid years, black South Africans were kept away from the cities, after the abolition of influx control in 1986 this backlog in black urbanization is now correcting itself. The desperate need for jobs and the existing “urban bias”, implying that cities hold much promise, drives people from rural areas to the cities and results in an explosive growth of the urban population (Swanepoel & De Beer 1997). Most people end up in slums, trying to settle wherever there is an open space. Often, it is a chaotic process, as there is mostly no infrastructure in place and:

“...the resultant social conditions are as abhorrent as anywhere in the Third World”
(Nuernberger 1994:33).

This development has severe repercussions for health conditions and also provides the circumstances for social tension. As most people coming from the rural areas are unskilled workers, their chances in finding a job are very slim and they will mostly remain unemployed. It is increasingly women who migrate, often having no partner whom they can rely on. At the same time, the number of available jobs is decreasing (see 2.2.2). The resultant marginalisation of the unemployed has severe social, psychological and criminological consequences.

On the other hand, although many people followed the course of flooding into the cities, others preferred to remain where they were. According to Sharp (1994), this led increasingly to the realisation that processes of urban migration in contemporary South Africa are intricate and complex, and that patterns of circular migration that link urban and former Bantustan areas (the core of tribal areas which were earmarked for the creation of several “independent” ethnic or national states) in relatively permanent ways are not simply the product of coercion by the apartheid state. This intricacy and complexity of urban migration is especially important with regard to existing extended networks.

□ *Access to land*

“The seed is mine. The ploughshare is mine. The span of oxen is mine. Everything is mine. Only the land is theirs” – Kas Maine (cited in Van Onselen 1996).

The issue of land is of cardinal importance in South Africa due to the history of apartheid. The passing of the Natives Land Act of 1913 restricted the black peasantry's access to land by preventing African acquisition of property outside designated areas (the so-called homelands) (Van Onselen 1996). This limited black South Africans, constituting 80% of the population, to 13% of the land and therefore deprived them of their most important means of production, forcing them to become wage labourers (UNICEF & NCRC 1993b). One of the most striking and appalling features of apartheid in South Africa was the extent of population growth in the so-called homelands or Bantustans in the period after 1960, when black South Africans were displaced from white-owned farms and directed to the Bantustans by the state's massive relocation programme (Sharp 1994). This move by the state was designed to turn sharecroppers into labour tenants (De Wet 1994). Subsistence farming has furthermore largely been destroyed by the underdevelopment of black rural areas, depriving people of producing their own food (Coovadia 1993) and thus contributing to household food insecurity (Vorster *et al.* 1997). This was initiated by the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act which enabled the government in the reserves to undertake what it called “rational land-use planning”, separating arable, residential and grazing land, with the intention to relocate people from these areas (De Wet 1994). Van Onselen in his life story of Kas Maine, a black South African sharecropper, gives an authentic historic account of land use and contracts between the landless black South Africans and property-owning white South Africans that started in the second half of the 19th century. This practice led through racial and political inequities to the enriching of the white South African population and the impoverishment of the black South African population because:

“Unequal access to state resources such as credit from the Land Bank, deepened the divide between landlord and tenant ... as white landlords in the ‘wet’ east slowly accumulated capital and put on the economic muscle that enabled them to mechanise production and expand the areas under cultivation, so black tenants were pressured into accepting wage labour, when they refused they were evicted, and in a renewed search for the land-rich but labour-poor white landlords, they were driven farther north and west into drier areas where grain farming was less dependable” (Van Onselen 1996:7).

Of the total land area in South Africa, only 3% (4 million hectares) are considered to be high-potential agricultural land. As a result, farmers often farm on marginal lands of poor quality and with limited water supplies. Estimates of land degradation in the rural poor areas indicate that at least 20% is severely degraded and a further 40% moderately degraded (May *et al.* 2000b:234). About a quarter of black South African rural households currently have access to a plot of land for the cultivation of crops, and about 24% of black South African rural households own livestock, both of which comprise small-scale farming. Regarding the land reform and redistribution, about 68% of black rural households desire farmland, most of whom want very small amounts of land of one hectare or less. The fact that the demand for farmland is uneven from province to province probably reflects that farming is perceived in some areas to be more viable than in others (May *et al.* 2000b:234).

The process of land restitution is very complicated and emotive, as was recently experienced in the example of neighbouring Zimbabwe where “land restitution” was made a central political issue.

□ *Access to food*

A majority of the South African population, predominantly black South Africans, in the past were lacking the economic resources and the infrastructure to obtain the necessary and sufficient food (UNICEF & NCRC 1993b; Vorster *et al.* 1997). According to Coovadia (1993), the denial of social and educational means to achieve skills and expertise, and the suppression of the labour movement have kept the black population unemployed and underpaid, which reduced their opportunities to buy food. Therefore, malnutrition can, among other reasons, be related to the very early creation and maintenance of a cheap labour force in the colonial setup, which was later on legitimised and “perfected” through the policies of apartheid.

Nowadays, partly as a legacy of the past and partly due to current economic problems, the situation has not improved, but worsened. Several factors play a role in the worsening of the situation, among them increasing unemployment, rising prices, a backlog in education and skills and the decline of prospects with regard to global competition. Whereas in the past, people living and working on farms at least had access to basic foods, often supplied by the farmer, the trend of people moving away from farms into informal settlements cut off that security of obtaining basic foods. Also, the flow of people to the cities where jobs are scarce and social networks are missing worsens their food situation.

□ *Infrastructure services and health care*

A majority of the population has no access to piped water and also no access to modern sanitation. Of rural black South African households, 74% have to fetch water on a daily basis (Stavrou 2000). A lack of these services directly impacts on the health of people and on their ability to generate livelihoods. Both water supply and sanitation can have a strongly positive effect on the degree of food security. According to a report of UNICEF & NCRC (1993b:3), also adequate health care was not available to people living in the former homelands, the majority of them being women:

“On all available health indicators which were reviewed, African women and more specifically, rural African women were the most disadvantaged which is largely due to the inequities in the allocation of health resources over several decades.”

In general, there is a prevalence of diseases of poverty among lower income groups, among them tuberculosis, diarrhoea and fever (May *et al.* 2000a). Also, the rates of mental disabilities are much higher among the poor, which indicates besides a lack of mental health facilities the adverse influence of violence and trauma on these people.

□ *Education*

According to Nuernberger (1994), the general situation of education in South Africa gives reason for concern, with the South African population being underqualified for a modern economy. One of the reasons has to be seen in distortions brought about by apartheid: while in 1985 63% of the white economically active population had matriculation, only 5% of black South Africans had reached that level. In 1994, 46% of black South Africans were still illiterate (Nuernberger 1994:34). During apartheid, black schools, apart from few exceptions, were severely neglected in comparison with white schools. The huge differences in the quality of the two education systems cannot easily be eradicated by new measures. Nowadays, there are additional problems in predominantly black schools such as a lack of discipline among teachers and students, mass action and gang warfare.

South Africa has a fairly good record in enrolment at school, but a poor one in repetition, pass rates and attendance (Budlender 2000). In 1994, only 55% of 10-14 year old children were in the 'normal' standards for their age. This is a result of late entry in school and high repeat rates. Matriculation results also show poor performances: in 1996, only 55% of full-time students passed the exams, with only

16% having qualified for entry to a university. According to Budlender (2000:99), these figures also suggest that

“ ... young women and men in impoverished areas stay at school despite poor performances because of the high unemployment rate and lack of alternative possibilities, and the (often misguided) perception that education provides a route out of poverty.”

A further factor believed to impede the performance of black South African children is the weak technical and pedagogical background of teachers (UNICEF & NCRC 1993b). In 1994, 36% of teachers and 40% of women teachers did not have the officially required three-year post-matriculation qualification (Budlender 2000). Often several grades are taught in one classroom at the same time (personal communication with teachers at a farm school, May 2000).

Another problem is the appalling state of many schools. This concerns the dire physical state of schools as well as the poor supply of educational material such as books. The poor state of schools, especially in rural areas, is frequently the subject of reports in newspapers, because:

“Like most schools in the nearby villages ... a first glance ... suggests chaos: shattered windows, roof falling apart, reeking toilets and flattened fences. The school is eight years old. In 1997, not one of the 50 pupils ... who wrote matric examinations passed ... [there are] no electricity, phones, water or proper sanitation ... [there is also] a severe shortage of textbooks, with a ratio of one textbook for five pupils” (Mail & Guardian 1999c).

□ *Crime*

South Africa has among the highest rates of violent crime in the world: more than 16% of all deaths occur as a result of trauma with regard to violence. This ranks trauma as the second largest cause of overall deaths, compared to a ranking of fourth place in the USA (Budlender 2000). According to figures of the Crime Information Management Information Centre 1996 (Popenoe *et al.* 1998), the incidence of burglary at residential premises is still increasing, being very high in some provinces, among them Gauteng. Possible causes are gang activities, poverty, retrenchment and high population density. Gauteng also has the highest number of car hijackings in South Africa: in the period January to June 1996, 3895 car hijackings occurred in this province alone. Stock theft has the highest incidence in those areas where small-scale stock farming is practised and is mainly attributed to

socio-economic circumstances, while greed also plays a role. South Africa has among the highest incidence of rape in the world:

“After assault, the most commonly reported crime by the ‘very poor’ was child abuse and rape ... in 1995, 95% of reported rapes were of African women” (Budlender 2000:134).

The number of reported rapes and attempted rape against children under 18 years from January to June 1996 was 6400. The incidence of rape is still increasing (see 2.2.4). Other frequent crimes are taxi-related violence, hostel-related violence, murder of police officials, and in certain areas farm murders⁵ (Popenoe *et al.* 1998). Policy on crime so far has concentrated on wealthier suburban areas, although other areas experience much higher levels of many types of crimes. According to Budlender (2000), crime rates in black townships have been high for years, but racial segregation largely insulated the white population. Extreme levels of inequality and the political conflict both contributed to high levels of crime. With the political liberalisation in the early 1990s, there was an explosion of crime, as social controls as well as police control were loosened. The poor suffer most under crime:

“Poverty, high unemployment and marginalisation of men increase the risks ... furthermore, areas inhabited by the poor are less likely to have infrastructure such as street lighting, telephones, public transport and decent roads that might facilitate crime prevention” (Budlender 2000:134).

Women are especially vulnerable to crime: in rural areas, for instance, they often have to walk long distances to collect water and firewood, which increases their chances of victimisation (see also 1.3, 2.2.4 and 5.2.5).

As Burnett (1999:11) concludes in her study on gang violence as a survival strategy in the context of poverty,

“The violence of poverty is unique, because living in such circumstances is violent ... the negative experience of the self are what give violence significance as a functional survival strategy ... this violence is only less destructive if the underlying causes (poverty and deprivation) are addressed as part of the whole picture.”

2.2 Demography, socio-economic indicators, nutrition situation and prevalence of HIV, AIDS and rape

2.2.1 The people of South Africa and demographic features

The earliest historically known inhabitants of South Africa were the San (Bushman) and the Khoikhoi (Hottentots), who are collectively known as the Khoisan. They were hunter-gatherers and about 2000 years ago the Khoikhoi turned to pastoralism by acquiring livestock from Bantu-speaking tribes migrating southwards. The black population, forming about 77% of the population, may be divided into four categories on the basis of their language affiliation. They are the Nguni (Zulu, Xhosa, Swazi and Ndebele), the Sotho (Southern Sotho, Northern Sotho and Tswana), the Venda, and the Tsonga or Shangaan. The first Dutch settlers under Jan van Riebeeck arrived at the Cape in 1652 and established a base for the East India Company to provide ships on their way to the East with food, fresh water and hospital facilities. In the 1820s, large groups of English settlers arrived. In the 1860s, Indian people arrived to work on the sugar plantations on the east coast. With the discovery of diamonds in 1867 and gold in 1886 new immigrants flooded into the country, transforming a rural, pastoral land into an industrial economy, given its thrust by mining. The white population of South Africa are descendants of mainly Dutch, British, German, French, Portugese, Greek, Italian and Jewish people (Anon 2000b). All over the country, but mostly in the Western Cape, people of mixed origin are found. In the past, this category was named "coloureds" when so-called "population groups" were still determined by statutory means. Although this category is commonly accepted as being of mixed origin, all other categories have an admixture of other categories within their "boundaries".



Figure 2.1: South Africa and provinces (adapted from *Cartographic and GIS Services, Potchefstroom University*. Scale: 1:2 600 000)

South Africa has nine provinces: Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, Northern Province, the North West Province, and the Western Cape. The country has a total land area of 1 219 090 km² (Anon 2000b). South Africa stretches from the Limpopo river in the north to Cape Agulhas in the south. Neighbouring countries are Namibia in the north west, Botswana and Zimbabwe in the north, and Mozambique and Swaziland in the north east. Lesotho, although an independent country, is surrounded by South Africa. Under apartheid, four “independent” homelands – Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, Transkei, Venda – and six “self governing” territories – Gazankulu, Kangwane, KwaNdebele, Kwazulu, Lebowa and Qwaqwa – were created within South Africa and were re-incorporated after the end of apartheid.

The first census to cover the re-integrated South Africa was conducted on 10 October 1996. Estimates suggested that there were 37.9 million people living in South Africa. This figure was almost double the population size of 1970 (Bradshaw 1997). By 2000, this figure had risen to about 40.5 million people (Anon 2000b). There are slightly more women (50.5%) than men (49.5%). Population density is 33.3

persons per km². Differentiated into population groups, 76.7% are black South Africans, 10.9% are white, 8.9% are coloured and 2.6% are Indian. Of the total South African population, 53.7% were classified as urban, 46.3% as rural. Of the total population, 65.8% are literate, with illiteracy defined as 'people age 20 and more with no schooling or some primary schooling'. The national average unemployment rate is 33.9%, with figures of 1997 estimating an unemployment rate of 37.6% (Anon 1998).

South Africa is one of the world's richest countries in terms of minerals. It has the largest reserve of chrome ore, vanadium and andalusite, and substantial reserves of other important metals and minerals, including asbestos, diamonds, coal, lead and zinc. Gold is the main source of foreign currency and South Africa is the world's largest producer of gold. Among other important commodities exported are platinum metals, coal, diamonds, titanium, copper and others (Anon 1995).

Figure 2.2 is a computer projection of Gross Domestic Product per square mile in South Africa, illustrating how everything is concentrated around a few economic centres in South Africa (Nuernberger 1999:40).

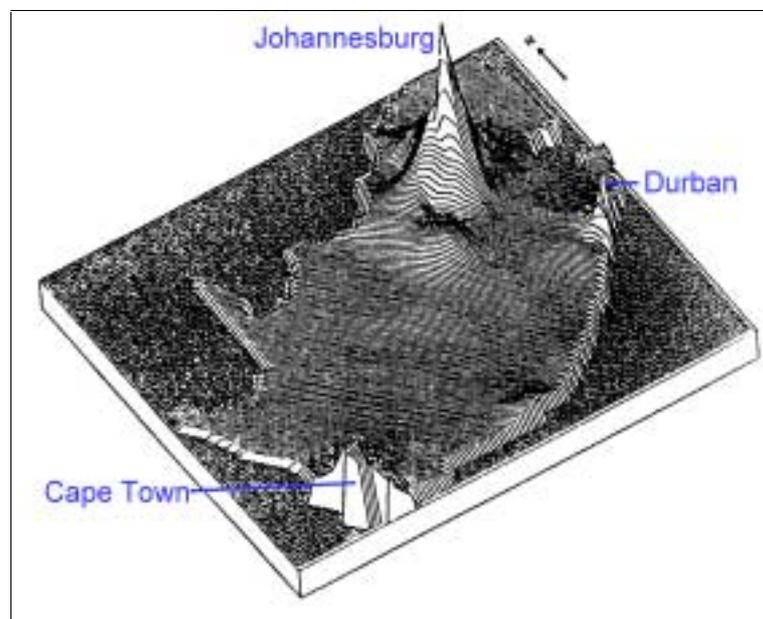


Figure 2.2: Gross domestic product per square mile in South Africa

With regard to economic activity, one can speak of the economic centre and the economic periphery (Nuernberger 1999). Most South Africans live in the eastern regions of the country, where the higher rainfall, better soil and rich minerals offer more job opportunities. The highest concentrations of people are to be found in the

four metropolitan areas, with more than one-third of the population living here: in Gauteng around Johannesburg and Pretoria, in KwaZulu Natal around Durban and Pietermaritzburg, in the south-western Cape around Cape Town and in the eastern Cape around Port Elizabeth.

2.2.2 Socio-economic indicators and the national macro-economic situation:

The ever widening gap

The disruption of families (see 2.1.2) continues to take place, now accompanied by increasing and current economic problems. There is broad agreement that some 40-50% of the people in South Africa can be categorised as being poor (May *et al.* 2000a: 48). The South African Gini coefficient, which measures the degree of inequality consistently, is with its figure of 0.58 the second highest in the world, topped only by the situation in Brazil. This indicates a very skewed distribution of income in South Africa (May *et al.* 2000a:26). Many black South African households exist on limited or very unpredictable incomes or mainly or even solely on the pension of an elderly person living in the same house (Breslin *et al.* 1997). Nuernberger (1999:58) calls the huge gap between the rich and the poor the 'affluence and poverty gap' (see also 5.4.4).

The economic growth rate in South Africa was already declining from the early 1970s and set the pattern for stagnating employment figures. This economic decline was due to structural problems inherent in the apartheid growth model (UNICEF & NCRC 1993b). The poor macro-economic performance of the economy since the mid-1970s greatly contributed towards widespread poverty, unemployment and declining per capita income (Mokate 2000:53). The restructuring of a democratic South Africa, of course, causes additional problems having adverse economic results, but it should not be overlooked that the ground for rising poverty and unemployment was laid much earlier. In 1970, 24% of the workforce was without formal employment, in 1988 the figure had risen to 42% (Nuernberger 1994). In 1997, according to the October household survey 1994-1997, 24.6% of black South African men and 34.6% of black South African women were unemployed. The unemployment figure given in 1996 for the North West Province was 37.9% (Anon 1998). These figures refer to formal employment and do not include the informal sector. Nuernberger (1994:29) sees unemployment as the result of

“ ... vast and growing supply of unskilled labour and dwindling demand for such labour in the modern economy.”

Important causes for economic stagnation are, among others, poor training of workers, limited need for unskilled labour and rising labour costs that lead to rationalisation of enterprises. The chances that this situation will change are very slim:

“Economic growth, if it takes place at all, has largely become *capital-intensive* and no longer creates jobs in substantial numbers. In fact, it may destroy more jobs than it creates” (Nuernberger 1994:31).

People living in rural areas are especially disadvantaged. According to May *et al.* (2000a:48), the cheap labour system in South Africa

“... relied upon the existence of a rural population unable to produce sufficient for its needs and therefore bound to a migrant labour system but still tied to the land ... with the dramatic contraction of the South African economy and the erosion of the rural economic base through population expansion, the absence of infrastructure, and outright dispossession ... households previously dependent upon a cash income now find themselves with neither the income nor the assets from which to generate an adequate income themselves.”

May *et al.* argue further that in addition, few marketing opportunities now exist in the former homelands, with most requirements having become commoditised and being purchased from chain stores.

As pointed out above, a number of people establish their own small businesses, such as selling food in small shops (*spazas*) or along the road, sewing and selling clothes, driving taxis or other forms of self-employment. Small businesses are seen as part of the informal sector. They have to be viewed

“as a second-best alternative to formal employment ... the informal sector predominantly includes workers involved in survival activities ... the informal sector represents those who, while being employed, are severely disadvantaged in the labour market” (Tørres *et al.* 1999:79),

or, as Nuernberger (1994:31) puts it,

“... sitting on the pavements vending a few fruit cannot be a substitute for a regular and sufficient family income or a substantial contribution to the Gross National Product.”

The lack of jobs hits men as hard as women. Driving through certain areas of Johannesburg one can observe men sitting on street corners, waving to motorists who they think could be prospective employers. The following example gives insight into the hardship these men go through (summary of an article in the Mail & Guardian, 2000a):

D. is 56 and has been a migrant worker throughout his life. He has a wife and five children who are living in a rural area and depend on him. He used to work for a big construction company for 16 years, before he was retrenched in the late 1970s. He invested his savings and pension payments in a herd of cattle, but the herd was stolen a few years later. In the 1980s, he had to move from one construction job to the next, as there was a lot of fluctuation. The last formal job he had was in 1997. Since then, he comes every morning to one of the street corners in Johannesburg, joining many others who hope for a job. D. shares a room with a friend in a hostel. His breakfast consists of maize meal, a cup of tea and slices of bread. Often this is his only meal during the day. On a good day, he earns R35 for a daylong gardening job. From that money he can buy a bag of maize meal and some groceries to keep him going for the whole month. The remaining money he saves. When he has R200, he sends it home to his family. In December last year he visited his family. He had saved R250, from which he used R100 for a return train ticket. From the rest he bought groceries that he took home.

The comment of a woman with a two-year-old child, who is a domestic worker for a landlord in Johannesburg where we used to live, illustrates the situation in the way many women like herself experience it. Despite several constraints, she keeps to her job, because of the ever diminishing employment opportunities:

"I have been working here for ten years now. I do everything, I look after the house, I work every day. When Mr. K. is away, he will come home and find everything is in order. I get only R300 a month, since many years. And I don't even get a 'thank you'."

The gap between the rich and the poor is widening, as elsewhere in the world. In South Africa, nowadays this is not only a matter of colour or race anymore, but of class. Besides the already poor black majority that is becoming poorer, a growing number of white South Africans is increasingly subject to poverty. At the same time there is a growing elite of black South Africans. While in 1975 only 2% of black South African households belonged to the wealthiest 10% of South Africans, in 1996 22% of the wealthiest South Africans were black South Africans (Südafrikanische Botschaft 2000).

2.2.3 Food and nutrition insecurity

Early studies on dietary intake report the use of a wide variety of food and procurement methods among rural populations in South Africa, thus ensuring adequate diets (MacIntyre 1998). As was pointed out by Grivetti (1978), dietary diversification was a successful coping mechanism against the effects of food shortages brought on by drought and other natural disasters and essential for nutritional wellbeing. On the other hand, Vorster *et al.* (1994) could show in their study among the adult rural Venda population that even with a limited dietary diversity a reasonably adequate nutritional status could be achieved, if maize as staple food was supplemented with legumes, vegetables and nuts. In contrast, studies conducted in urban areas indicated for example that among unskilled workers 70% to 80% were suffering from dietary deficiencies due to low consumption of fruit, vegetables and milk (Keyter 1961) and that nutrient intakes were inadequate regarding several micronutrients and vitamins (Manning *et al.* 1974).

In general, the review of the eating patterns of various African populations indicates that there has been a shift from the “traditional”, agrarian and pastoralist African diet that was varied and nutritionally adequate, towards a monotonous diet that is low in meat, milk, fruit and vegetables (Vorster *et al.* 1997; MacIntyre 1998). A study of rural households in the Transkei found that 50-60% of respondents did not consume any milk, eggs, meat or fish (Bembridge 1987).

The South African population, as many populations in other developing countries, is experiencing a rapid urbanization characterised by a double burden of diseases in which non-communicable diseases (NCD) become more prevalent and infectious diseases remain undefeated, at the forefront of which is HIV/AIDS (Vorster *et al.* 1999). The constraints adding to the present nutrition situation in South Africa were described in previous chapters (see 2.1.2 and 2.2.2).

Undernutrition and malnutrition are significant problems in South Africa. In the past, policies concentrated only on the national food supply. Official figures indicated that on the national level, South Africa is self-sufficient regarding most basic foods (Van Zyl & Kirsten 1992; Land and Agriculture Policy Centre 1994), while on the household and individual level there is often a striking occurrence of food insecurity and malnutrition (Naidoo *et al.* 1993; Van Zyl & Kirsten 1992; Van Rooyen *et al.* 1996). This is especially visible in children. Malnutrition among children is generally assessed through anthropometry, using various ratios of weight, height and age. Stunting, measured by low height-for-age, is a result of chronic, long-term dietary inadequacy thus reflecting poor living conditions (Vorster *et al.* 1997:6). Weight-for-

height is useful as an indicator in populations where date of birth is not recorded or age is not known and indicates wasting or acute malnutrition (Ulijaszek 1998). Weight-for-age is also reliant upon reasonable age ascertainment, and is intermediate in its usefulness in identifying stunting, wasting and acute undernutrition (Ulijaszek 1998). Weight-for-age is therefore used as a general indicator for malnutrition (Kracht 1999a:57). If values are below minus two standard deviations from the median of the index reference population, stunting, wasting or underweight are present. According to Budlender (2000), research and policy in the past focused on the impact of severe malnutrition, largely ignoring the impact of mild to moderate forms of malnutrition. With the severity of malnutrition, the risk of death increases, but the largest numbers of deaths occur among those with mild to moderate malnutrition. Pre-school and primary school children in rural areas are especially affected by food insecurity and malnutrition, with at least 20-25% of pre-school and 20% of primary school children being stunted (Vorster *et al.* 1997:31-32; Steyn 1996:152). Among the poorest 20% of households the stunting rate among young children is 38% (Budlender 2000:120). Acute malnutrition is a less significant problem in South Africa. However, micronutrient malnutrition, leading to learning disabilities, mental retardation, poor health, low work capacity, blindness and premature death, is a public health problem of considerable significance in South Africa: one in three children display marginal vitamin A status, some 20% of children are anaemic and 10% iron deficient (Budlender 2000:120).

According to UNICEF & NCRC (1993b:47), some of the immediate causes of malnutrition are inadequate food consumption, the early weaning of babies (see 5.4.6), vitamin and micronutrient deficiencies and low birth weight which is directly related to maternal wellbeing. For women, both folate and iron are essential especially during pregnancy. Several studies have documented deficiencies for both micronutrients in large parts of the female population (UNICEF & NCRC 1993b).

2.2.4 Alarming figures: HIV, AIDS and rape

At the end of the year 2000, worldwide 36.1 million people were infected with HIV, of which 25 million are living in Southern Africa (UNAIDS 2000). South Africa has the highest prevalence and incidence and increase of HIV, and the figures are alarming: about 4.2 million people, constituting one-tenth of the population, are infected with HIV (Mail & Guardian 2000b). National figures indicate that in 1997 the prevalence of HIV in pregnant women was 17.0% (Anon 1998), while for 1999 a figure of 22.8% was estimated. These figures could according to some scientists be even higher (Mail & Guardian 2001b).

There is increasing evidence that in Africa women are more likely to be infected with HIV than men and at an earlier age. Women have an increased vulnerability to the virus, which is due to a variety of factors, among them fewer contraceptive choices, unequal health care access for women and for many women physical and psychological violence. Also, because of their biology women are naturally more vulnerable than men to the virus, which is especially marked in girls whose genital tracts are still not fully mature (Mail & Guardian 2000c). According to the World Bank, six times more girl children than boys in Africa are HIV-positive (Smith 2000). Also in South Africa, HIV has a higher prevalence in women (Budlender 2000; Mail & Guardian 2000c). According to Budlender (2000), the combination of poverty, natural disasters, violence, social chaos and the disempowered status of most rural and peri-urban women in Southern Africa form a fertile environment for the transmission of HIV infections. Smith (2000) sees a direct correlation between HIV and rape, and HIV transmission following rape is an issue of growing concern (Women's Health Project 2000). Rape figures are rising from the age of 11 and have their peak between the ages 13–25. The highest incidence of HIV is in girls aged 15–25. The Department of Health announced that in South Africa 20% of girls aged 13-19 are HIV-positive (Smith 2000). This leads to the conclusion, also considering the high incidence of rape, that the high infection rate is not only due to unsafe sex practices as is mostly assumed, but largely due to the increasing rape of children – virgins – because many men wrongly believe that this is a cure of AIDS (The South African National STD/HIV/AIDS Review, 1997). Yet, there are too few campaigns to persuade these men of the erroneous nature of their beliefs. In a study of teenage mothers attending an antenatal clinic in Cape Town (mean age 16.3), 30% reported that their first intercourse was forced and 11% said they had been raped (Women's Health Project 2000). The majority of crimes committed against children were of a sexual nature and in more than 80% of the cases, the perpetrators were known to their victims (Popenoe *et al.* 1998). In studies conducted among women in the Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga in 1999, the prevalence of physical violence by a male intimate partner was 26.8% and 28.4%, respectively (Women's Health Project 2000). Also in schools rape is very common: one in four school-going children under the age of 16 is sexually violated. The incidence of sexual harassment and violence results in young women not carrying on with their education as they might otherwise have done (Budlender 2000:134). The Minister of Education described school rape as a national crisis (Mail & Guardian 1999b).

All of these figures highlight the extent to which young girls or women experience rape, coerced sexual relationships and the lack of power or perceived

lack of power they have over sexual acts. Violence is a reality in the lives of women and girls and in many settings, girls are socialised to expect violence and forced sex as part of their relationship with men. Smith (2000) clearly sees rape as one of the reasons for the increasing HIV infection rate:

“AIDS is storming across the continent because of despicable practices towards women and children – and rape leads the field.”

Smith calls the society in South Africa a “*society of rapists*”, based on the high incidence of rape, and on how victims are treated by the state and society⁶. In a survey conducted at schools in the Southern Metropolitan Local Council of Johannesburg, the attitudes to and experience with sexual violence were assessed (The Sunday Independent 17 January 1999). Among school boys aged between 12 and 22 years, 25% stated that gang rape is “fun” and 16% thought it was “cool”, while 43% of the girls said sexual violence was very common. The figures on rape in South Africa are shocking:

- one in two South African women is raped at some time in her life
- a woman is forty times more likely to be raped in Cape Town than in any other city in Europe. The danger of being raped is five times higher in South Africa than in the US.
- in 1983 the police recorded 15 342 rapes, by 1998 the number had increased to 54 000. Not included here are those who never report the rape. According to police officers in Johannesburg, the incidence of rape is escalating: in February 2000 there were 116 rapes alone in central Johannesburg
- in 1998, less than 7% of the reported rapes made it to court
- 75% of rape incidents are gang rape actions, where a woman is raped by three to thirty perpetrators

(quoted from the Mail & Guardian, April 7-13 2000, Smith 2000. Sources among others: Department of Health, Human Sciences Research Council, WHO, Dr. Lorna Martin from the University of Cape Town, several hospitals, Johannesburg Magistrates Court, South African Police Services, Department of Justice)

A new feature that emerged out of this dire situation is that insurance companies now offer special policies for rape victims, to obtain anti-HIV treatment, legal fees and counselling. The following is an excerpt from the rape survivor policy brochure:

“Think about it...

Can you afford to pay for the required medication that may be your only chance against contracting AIDS or any other sexually transmitted disease?

Will you be able to afford the psychiatric treatment to help you and your loved ones through the trauma, should the unforeseeable happen to you?

This policy is specifically designed to help rape survivors overcome their physical and psychological ordeal.

For as little as R 25.00 a month, you will be able to buy the medication that could lessen your chances of contracting AIDS after being raped, and have funds available for professional counseling” (Women’s Health Project 1999:2).

The fact that such a policy has been established, and the content of this text, are a reflection of the normality of rape in South African society. The reality is, that the majority of women in this country can afford neither the cost for this rape policy nor the treatment they would need immediately after rape to prevent HIV infection. Despite the high danger to rape victims of contracting HIV, the government does not provide free treatment for victims of rape, who often cannot afford it nor do they know how to get the anti-retroviral drug. The anger towards the attitude of the government, still questioning a relationship between HIV and AIDS, is increasing among the South African population⁷. The lack of government action and the lack of reactions of the society as a whole against rape are being criticized by the Women’s Health Project (1999:2), stating that

“While we have women’s rights articulated well in our constitution, laws and policies, rape – the ultimate power of men over women – is endemic in our society. Most men in our society are not organizing to do anything about it. In fact many men in leadership positions in our society who work in communications, the judiciary, the religious sector and insurance companies are resisting change [...] South African women are waiting [...] we are still living in fear and being subjected to acts of violence daily [...] we are also waiting for [...] visible male leaders in sports, arts, politics and business [...] to actively speak out publicly on violence against women and lead by example.”

Another reason of concern is violence that arises from being identified as HIV-positive. Women who know their HIV status and either speak out about this or attempt to tell their partners, are often at risk of violence from their husbands, families and communities. Although HIV-positive men also face violence and discrimination, it is likely, as women are more vulnerable to domestic violence than men, that they are

also more vulnerable to violence associated with their HIV infection. According to the Women's Health Project (2000:7),

“Violence against women is not just a cause of the AIDS epidemic. It can also be a consequence ... women have been beaten, thrown out of the house, abandoned by their families and even murdered, following disclosure of their HIV status to their partner or family.”

According to Budlender (2000), the South African response to the AIDS epidemic emerged slowly and has overall been characterised by poor coordination, limited inter-sectoral collaboration and variable commitment from role players. In the same vein a statement was made at a workshop on STD, HIV and AIDS (The South African National STD/HIV/AIDS Review 1997:5):

“There is dire need for some kind of political commitment at this point in order to give credibility, support, morale and example to the society at large ... throughout the areas visited, there seems to be no effective communication between local administration and the provincial office, this would also be strengthened if and when there is/was dedicated commitment on the part of departmental and public leadership.”

With regard to HIV/AIDS prevention, care activities and future research on HIV/AIDS, violence as a reality in the lives of women and girls must be recognised for the serious issue it is. Violence in many cases is not committed by strangers, but by men the women already know, often by their male partners or within the family. Within testing initiatives for HIV, there needs to be awareness of the sensitivity of the issue within groups and communities and concern about the safety of HIV-positive women and men. The dimension of HIV/AIDS and rape and its consequences for the society and individuals have to be taken into account seriously in any investigation.

The incidence of AIDS has serious implications for the food situation of households. People who are infected with HIV at some stage lose their working capacity and therefore an important income source for the household may be lost. Furthermore, there are additional medical costs for households due to several illnesses that occur when being infected with HIV. Beyond the individual and the household, the incidence of HIV/AIDS contributes to a general lower level of health in communities, because of its close relationship with other communicable and poverty-related diseases such as TB (Budlender 2000). AIDS destroys families and the economy

(Swanepoel & De Beer 1997). The combination of both is a vicious circle, leaving more and more people subject to poverty and destitution. Children may lose both parents and become orphans in need of care and financial support. It was estimated that in East and Central Africa there will be between 3.1 and 5.5 million AIDS orphans in the 1990s, which means that between 6% and 11% of children under the age of 15 years will be orphaned (Swanepoel & De Beer 1997). In other cases, extended kin take in orphans, which reduces the average available food resources in this household. Therefore, there is a significant link between AIDS, household food security and individual nutritional status (Maxwell & Smith 1992:23). According to UNICEF (1998), the role of nutrition in preventing HIV infection is being investigated as one possible way to help reduce the transmission of AIDS. In this regard, vitamin A may form part of multiple factors needed to reduce infection. A study in Malawi found that 32% of HIV-infected mothers who were vitamin A deficient during pregnancy had passed HIV on to their infants, while this was the case only for 7% of HIV-infected women with sufficient vitamin A levels (UNICEF 1998:9).

2.2.5 Black South African households: The phenomenon of fluidity and migration

One of the consequences of the South African history of repression, relocation and dispossession was the oscillating migrant labour system that resulted in a situation of fluidity, residential instability and disorganisation of households (Spiegel 1995; Van der Waal 1996; Ross 1993). This caused a major change of family and kinship systems, which had traditionally provided a sound measure of support (Bazilli 1991; Byarugaba 1991; Coovadia 1993; Moosa 1984; Naidoo *et al.* 1993).

The disruption of the traditional black South African household and its self-sufficiency started in the later colonial period, enforced by the authorities with the weapons being used the following: ideology (African customs were called savage, African beliefs heathen), legal means (head tax and so-called hut taxes were imposed) and economic measures (the monetarisation of all relationships, including lobola or bride-wealth) (Sachs 1992). Pass laws, the tax system, the establishment of compounds for mine and farm labour and the creation of what were called black locations on the periphery of urban areas all resulted in the separation of African families. The men should work for the white population on the basis of single-person wages, while the women produced new generations of labourers in the so-called reserves. Thus, family life for black South Africans was to be made impossible in the homelands and illegal in the town. The Native Labour Regulations Act of 1911 provided single-sex compounds where no family life was permitted. Also the Native

Urban Areas Act of 1923 resulted in black South African women and children being prevented from living with their husbands and fathers in the towns⁸ (Davenport 1988).

The present existing pattern of household types is to a large extent the result of this historical development. Nowadays there are several other factors that are compounding the disruption and disorganisation of families and the maintenance of the migrant labour system. Among them are high or endemic unemployment, poverty and increasing societal violence. One of the consequences of former policies and present socio-economic circumstances is that couples often cannot live together. Migrant workers are in many cases separated from their family for exceptionally long periods. Sometimes, they return home only every two to three months for brief visits. Only few couples are able to maintain a stable relationship through this situation. According to research done by Ramphela (1993) in the migrant labour hostels in Cape Town, some of these relationships seem to function well, while others are highly unstable or totally dysfunctional. Her findings revealed that the stability of relationships appeared to depend on the security of the man's employment, his remittance behaviour, the level of communication with his wife and how well the couple had adjusted to the periodic contact. As Niehaus (1994:134) found in his investigation into household formation in Phuthaditjhaba,

“There is great marital instability.....[this] is due not merely to wage labour and migration in search of it, but also to the very formality of the affinal bond itself and the expected gender roles of spouses. The roles of ‘husband’ and ‘wife’ were regarded as incompatible with those of migrant and commuter labourer.”

In many cases, women with their children are left behind in the rural areas, depending on the remittances of their migrating partners. In many cases, these remittances are not reliable. A finding that is consistent throughout a number of studies is that women often do not know what their migrant partner earns (Breslin & Delius 1996; Jones 1999; Bank 1997). This situation puts women and children in a vulnerable position and must have serious implications for the food situation of households.

Men often get involved in new relationships at their workplace. In doing so, they are on the one hand neglecting their female partner and possibly children left behind in the rural area, on the other hand they are looking after another woman and possibly her child/ren to some extent, in providing food and/or money and other resources on a more or less regular basis. This is in a way a coping mechanism with the situation of migrancy, affecting the family at home negatively. Sometimes, men after a while do not remit money home anymore, as Van der Waal (1996:34) notes:

“Men’s severe neglect of their family-support commitments particularly eroded interpersonal relationships, especially when men established new marital relationships or liaisons at their workplace.”

The fact that women get involved in sexual relationships with migrant men is motivated primarily by the need to obtain accommodation and maybe other economic advantages. There is general agreement amongst both men and women that most of these lover relationships are characterised by mutual abuse: men need a ‘domestic slave’ as well as a sexual partner, women need a place to stay and maybe other support (Ramphela & Boonzaier 1988). This ‘system’ originated during the colonial period and was perfected during the apartheid era, when only men were given a bed in a hostel where they worked, to keep their families out of the cities. Despite women and children officially not being allowed to stay there, unofficially they often became co-residents of one bed. As Kiernan (1997) describes it, wives, children and single women, driven by hunger, left the countryside to flood into the hostels. The result was that a variety of family and domestic units were attached each to a single bed, with as many as eight such units cohabiting in the same room. The living conditions and the lack of privacy people had to endure under these circumstances can hardly be imagined.

Also, women who stay behind in the rural areas sometimes engage in relationships with other men. As in the cases described above, this can also be seen as a coping mechanism, as these women might feel that it is necessary to have a man to turn to for help if their partner is absent. They might be able to get some money from a boyfriend in times of shortage while otherwise they would not be able to cope (Liebenberg 1997:355). According to ‘tradition’, this behaviour is still regarded as neither common nor appropriate for women. Due to their submissive role, women are mostly unable to openly challenge the double standards of sexual mentality which men demand, irrespective of their own behaviour (Ramphela & Boonzaier 1988; Liebenberg 1997; Van der Vliet 1991).

Apart from migrant husbands or partners, women are also increasingly forced to leave their homes to work elsewhere and remit money to their children and other relatives. Mothers who commute on a daily basis especially experience great strain. As Niehaus (1994:121) found in a study on 133 wage-earners, migrant women often

“...woke at three in the morning to prepare food for themselves and their dependants. After work they cooked, cleaned the house and washed their children.”

In many cases, migrant women were and still are domestic workers for white families in the towns. The situation of female domestic workers is described by Cock (1980) in her book "Maids and Madams". Although written in the seventies, it still reflects the situation of many working women who either commute on a daily basis or live far apart from their family:

"We leave our children early in the morning to look after other women's families and still they [the madam] don't appreciate us" (Cock 1980: 53).

The situation of migrancy and how it affects people's daily lives has been described in detail by Ramphele (1993) and also by other South African anthropologists (see also 2.1.2). Nowadays, the expansion of migrant labour still continues, due to poverty and a lack of jobs in the rural areas. The migrant labour system is one of the main factors contributing to the alarming increase of AIDS (Budlender 2000).

Besides the resulting disruption of families, out of this specific situation support systems between extended families were created that are often stretched over several domestic units. Also, new household forms developed. They are dealt with in chapter 5.1.

2.3 Study area: The North West Province

2.3.1 Demographic profile and infrastructure

The North West Province comprises 9.5% of the total land area of South Africa and 8.3% of the total South African population, with a majority being of Tswana descent (these and the following figures are taken from the *South African Health Review 1998, Anon 1998*). The population density is 28.8 persons per km², compared to Gauteng with 432 persons per km². In 1996, 65.1% of the population in the North West Province were classified as rural and 34.9% as urban, which makes the North West Province the Province with the second lowest degree of urbanization, after the Northern Province with an 11% urban population.

Employment opportunities in the rural areas are very limited or non-existent. The unemployment rate in the North West Province is 37.9%. This is higher than the national average of 33.9%, according to the figures from 1996. In comparison with the other provinces, this is the fourth highest unemployment rate, after the Eastern Cape (48.5%), the Northern Province (46.1%) and KwaZulu-Natal (39.1%). In the North West Province, 58.3% of the population are literate. This indicates a high rate

of illiteracy. In comparison, nationwide 65.8% of the population are literate, with Gauteng being the province with the highest literacy rate (80.6%).

Large parts in the North West Province are inhabited by farming communities. The province is one of South Africa's major maize producing areas, producing one-third of the country's total crop. Other crops are citrus, tobacco and cotton, as well as sunflower and groundnut. Mining is an important economic factor, accounting for almost 60% of economic activity. The North West Province is the largest contributor to South Africa's mining sector, responsible for 94% of the country's platinum production, 46% of the granite and 25% of the gold (Anon 2000a).

The focus of economic activities, making use of mostly unskilled labour, already indicates that incomes for a majority of the population in the North West Province are relatively low, compared to economic and business activities concentrated in the centres of the country (see 2.2.1 and 5.4.4).

2.3.2 Health and nutritional status

According to the South African Health Review 1998 (Anon 1998), in the North West Province 14.1% (national average: 13.2%) of primary school children in sub-standards 1 and 2 are stunted and 4.4% (national average: 2.6%) are wasted. The percentage of underweight children in this age group is 12.0% (9.0%). Of children aged 6–71 months, 24.7% (22.9%) are stunted, 4.5% (2.6%) wasted and 13.2% (9.3%) underweight. All of these figures that include all population groups are above the national average, indicated in brackets. Compared to the other provinces, the North West Province ranks second or third for most of these indicators and is therefore among the provinces with the highest prevalence of malnutrition and undernutrition.

The North West Province among all provinces has the second highest percentage of deaths due to diarrhoea in children under the age of five (29.3%; Free State: 34.5%; national average: 20.8%) and also of deaths due to upper respiratory infection in children under five (12.3%; Northern Cape: 13.8%; national average: 9.4%) (Anon 1998). These illnesses are related to poor socio-economic living conditions, such as lack of clean water, and are responsible for most nutrition-related health problems (Gross *et al.* 2000).

The socio-economic indicators for health status in the North West Province, such as access to clean water and sanitation, are illustrated in chapter 5.2.8 in comparison with the results obtained in this study.

3. MOTIVATION, RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND HYPHOTHESES

3.1 Motivation and objectives

3.1.1 Introduction

As has been outlined in chapter 2.2.3, about half of the South African population is subject to chronic food insecurity and poverty. Apart from this and other known facts, there is a need to analyze the nature of food insecurity further. Empirical research on food security is limited in South Africa (Land and Agriculture Policy Centre 1994; Mekuria & Moletsane 1996). There is a serious lack of knowledge about the specific underlying causes of inadequate nutrition (Vorster *et al.* 1997; Steyn *et al.* 1998; Budlender 2000), as well as about the specific characteristics of households struggling to attain food security (Coutsoudis *et al.* 1994; Kuzwayo 1994). The position of women is assumed to be crucial for the food situation of households (FAO 1996; Fourth World Conference on Women 1995; Von Braun 1999; Zdunnek & Ay 1999). Several studies have documented that in female-headed households both food security and nutritional status of individual household members are better than in male-headed households (Kennedy & Peters 1992; Kunze & Pilgram 1993; Kuzwayo 1994; Maxwell 1996; Popkin & Doan 1990).

From the international literature it is obvious that there is a need for investigation into certain issues that have been neglected in the past, but are now taken up more and more frequently. These are inter- and intra-household issues, the relationship of food security to livelihood security and self-perceived security, as well as cultural acceptability. The ensuring of food security can be sustainable only if these complex interactions and household dynamics are understood. Therefore, households should be the centre of attention of any investigation, whether on poverty relief, food security or any other developmental issue.

The findings of this study could provide a basis for information on households and social networks, which is essential for the appropriate targeting and implementation of future programmes and their sustainability.

3.1.2 General objective

Due to the above situation, with little knowledge available about underlying causes of food insecurity in black South African households, it was decided to conduct an exploratory study. Baseline information was needed at first, from where one could

draw further conclusions. As this study attempts to explore the multi-objective phenomenon of household food security, covering several related fields, there must be limitations regarding the depth of analysis of some of the issues and the indicators for household food security. These limitations are described in chapter 4.8.

Research on household food security in South Africa and qualitative investigations into this matter and other nutrition-related fields are very limited. The input and understanding of the social sciences are usually not part of the nutrition sciences. The emphasis in the latter is still very much on physiology and biochemistry. Therefore, one of the main objectives of this research was to follow an interdisciplinary approach that includes the disciplines of nutrition physiology, sociology and anthropology. An attempt was made to incorporate the qualitative approach of the research on household food security into a broader quantitative research project. A representative number of households were included in this sub-sample to be able to make broader generalisations and conclusions for the study areas, without losing the necessary depth of analysis. Qualitative and quantitative data that derive from multiple sources and from different disciplines could be used. With this approach, the study meets the demand for multidisciplinary research in the field of food security (Frankenberger 1992; Steyn *et al.* 1998).

3.1.3 Specific objectives

The aim is to evaluate the specifics of the socio-economic factors influencing food security. A better understanding must be ascertained of the characteristics and composition of households struggling to attain food security. Coping strategies regarding food security and the functioning of social networks are evaluated with this in mind. Special attention is also given to gender relations and to the position of women in households, as well as to other intra-household dynamics, to uncover how this may affect the food situation of households. The term 'female-headed household' is closely investigated and clarified, as it comprises a wide variety of households that face different opportunities and constraints (Breslin *et al.* 1997:282). Emphasis is also placed on the subjective perceptions of the people studied about their food situation as well as their general situation of wellbeing. This is one of the central themes, especially at a time where the South African society as a whole is in a process of change in many spheres of life. Besides these main issues, other indicators relevant for food and nutrition security are also investigated.

With the ongoing research, the emphasis of some of the objectives shifted, as one would expect especially in a qualitative approach. It became clear that household composition and its significance for better food security is **the** central

issue. Other indicators declined in significance, due to better insight gained during the research process. One of these indicators is nutritional status. A good nutritional status does not necessarily mean that a household or a specific person is food secure. Even if there is *enough* food for this person at this present moment, other factors play a crucial role, such as the means to obtain food and the social and psychological environment, both inside and outside the household sphere. Furthermore, data on nutritional status in this case was available only for the person who participated in the larger study, while the focus of this study is on the household as a whole and relations within and between households. Data on nutritional status of interviewees and in the larger research setting is, however, included and used for interpretation.

3.2 Hypotheses

After the completion of the pilot study, the following hypotheses were formulated for the study area:

1. There is high fluidity of households and other residential units and a wide variety of household categories exist.
2. Female-headed households form a major proportion among black South African households.
3. Women who have better education and/or occupations will be more involved in decision-making and resource management.
4. In female-headed households, a bigger proportion of the budget will be spent on food.
5. The state of food security will be better in households headed by women, although female-headed households seem to be poorer than male-headed households.
6. There is a wide range of coping strategies and an extended social network for ensuring greater food security, and the movement of people between residential units is such a coping mechanism.

3.3 Indicators of household food and nutrition security – The framework for assessing the multi-dimensional issue

3.3.1 Introduction

As has been outlined in chapter 1.2, the concept of food security has shifted from a global and national level to the household and individual level. This has also had implications for the development and the choice of indicators used to assess food security. A historical overview of the development of indicators is given by Frankenberger (1992). He points out that governments and donor organisations still require quantitative information such as food supply data focusing on production data and nutritional status. They are seldom willing to avail the time and resources necessary to obtain information on socio-economic indicators that are sensitive to the vulnerability of different local groups with different circumstances. Frankenberger suggests that for the purpose of household food security information systems, both approaches should be taken into account. Quantitative information is needed to make informed planning and decisions regarding the spread of limited resources across regions, and qualitative, location-specific information at the community level is needed to design appropriate interventions (Frankenberger 1992:77-78). In this regard, one must be careful not to generalise indicators across regions, as they can be very specific to certain areas.

Based on the research objectives and hypotheses, indicators for household food security were chosen from the range of indicators available in the international literature. They were selected according to their relevance in this specific context and also the practicality of their being included in the research design. The wide range of indicators illustrates the complexity of the issue. The primary focus is on household composition and organisation, intra-household dynamics and gender relations as determining factors for household food security, correlated with other indicators relevant for household food security. Moreover, the focus is on experiences of food shortage and hunger and on the perceptions of people about their situation.

In the following section, the selected indicators are presented and put into context in the specific setting of black South African households.

3.3.2 Households and families: Concepts, categories, size and composition

□ Concept of household

The understanding of the concept and characteristics of households and social relations is a necessary basis for an investigation into household food security and in

the planning of economic and social development. Therefore, before looking at other factors, the household has to be defined for the context where it will be used. According to Evans (1992:19),

"There is no single answer to the question of how to define a household or the relationships within it. The decision [for definition] should depend on whether the household is viewed primarily as a kinship unit, a residential unit or an economic unit, and which definition will provide the most useful information for the purpose at hand."

The different household categories with their specific characteristics and dynamics have to be distinguished, as they determine the general situation of wellbeing of household members. It is assumed in this study that the dynamics of intra- and inter-household resource management influence the state of food security of its members immensely, besides the impact of socio-economic and other factors.

Households have been subject to numerous analyses and definitions (cf. McNetting *et al.* 1984). Nowadays, there is wide recognition that the standard conceptualisation of the household, as it is still often used, masks vital information on the diversity of household types and the characteristics of women's socio-economic position within households (Evans 1992:18). Therefore, conventional models of how households operate as economic units are questioned (Young 1992:135). There is an emerging consensus that this conventional economic analysis of household behaviour inadequately reflects heterogeneous preferences of different household members, as well as the constraints faced by different decision-makers and actors within the household in allocating resources and the contribution they make to individual and household food security (Maxwell & Smith 1992:19). Also, census data lacks information on the relationship between changes of socio-economic conditions and changes to household structure and composition. This information would greatly enhance the understanding of the relative position of women and men within households (Evans 1992:19-20).

□ *Household categories and composition*

In the specific South African context, the lack of knowledge about household characteristics is very evident. Specifically in South Africa, due to a history of grave inequality over centuries and present dramatic political developments as has been described in detail in chapters 2.1.2 and 2.2.5, there are a wide variety of household forms and a high level of fluidity within households and also other more simple residential units. This affects the general situation of households dramatically. To

obtain more knowledge about the organisation of these households and the impact of organisation on food security, household composition needs to be investigated closely. Who are the people living together? What is the nature of relationship between them? Who is contributing? How is the household organised? How many young adolescents and children belong to the household, and whose children are they?

Therefore, in this study the variety of household categories, their conceptual content and composition are thoroughly investigated, with regard to the impact on the food situation of people cooperating in these households.

□ *Household size*

Household size is an important demographic indicator for household food security. The adjustment of household size to recurrent food insecurity is a common coping strategy. Members of stretched households move or are often being moved to where the resources are (Van der Waal 1996; Spiegel 1987). On the other hand, extended households are associated with a greater diversification of assets and income sources and are less vulnerable in cases of illness or death of their breadwinners (Frankenberger 1992:130).

The size of different household categories at different research sites (urban and rural) is also investigated. This should lead to conclusions on household size as an indicator for household food security.

3.3.3 Gender relations and decision-making – The concept of head of household

Family and gender relations are important indicators for household food security, as they determine decision-making in the household sphere that impacts on the food situation.

To investigate intra-household relationships, the concept of head of household is commonly used. The question who is indicated as head of household is strongly biased in favour of male members of the household (Evans 1992:20). As culture and ideology in almost all societies tend to privilege male status, headship in general is attributed to men, even if they are absent most of the time (as is the case in migrant households) and regardless of women's social and economic roles. This all too simple classification does not give any indication of the dynamics or decision-making within households that are fundamentally significant for the wellbeing of their members.

According to Evans, headship bias has made it difficult to determine the number and the composition of households headed by women, and whether they are *de facto* or *de jure* female-headed households. It has furthermore masked the question whether women-headed households are a reflection of increasing male migration or if the spatial fragmentation of households is due to economic hardship or other factors. Headship bias also obscures the crucial role women usually have in controlling and allocating household resources.

The important role gender relations play in the general wellbeing of members in black South African households, especially for women and children, has been described in a number of anthropological studies (Van der Waal 1996; Spiegel *et al.* 1996; Liebenberg 1997; Jones 1999). Although female-headed households, in general, are worse off with regard to resource endowment and access to income, land and property, they still seem to take better care of themselves and their children with the little they have. Several authors indicate that in the majority of conjugal relationships male dominance is still very prevalent and that there are conflicts within households, mainly about income and other resources (Bank 1997; Breslin & Delius 1996; Jones 1999; Liebenberg 1997). As a result, mistrust and deceit between partners is a common feature. Only when couples have been living together for several years, might they also share their resources and consult each other.

The implications gender roles have for the organisation and composition of households and food security are investigated. The term *female-headed household* is also clarified, in order to analyze variations that might occur in the sub-categories of these households due to household composition and power relations within them. Kennedy & Peters (1992:1083) and Breslin *et al.* (1997:282) have pointed out the variety of female-headed households and the different opportunities and constraints they are facing. The analysis into power relations entails an exploration of women's ability to make decisions that reflect on food security and an evaluation as to how their position affects the food situation of households. This will be done by correlating their influence with several indicators for food security, such as diversity of food and experiences of food shortage and hunger. Socio-demographic and socio-economic factors, such as household income, expenditure on food, as well as education and occupation of women will be used for this correlation.

Also, the subjective perspective of women is evaluated by asking the following questions: what are women's perceptions of their situation in the household? Would women make different choices, if they were in a better position to decide on issues that reflect on food security in the household?

3.3.4 Household income, resource management and expenditure on food

Income is seen as one of the most important determinants of food insecurity and hunger (Rose 1999). However, quantitative data on per capita income give no indication of the control or the use of that money. Also, no conclusions can be drawn from data on total household income regarding the wellbeing of the individual household member (Evans 1992). Increases in household income do not always directly contribute to improving nutritional wellbeing of all household members (Von Braun 1999:46). Therefore, total household income has to be seen in conjunction with decision-making, resource management and other socio-demographic indicators. The distribution of available resources within the household, ensuring food security for individual members, is a crucial issue. According to Evans (1992:144), household management in transitional economies has some specific characteristics, quite different from that of industrial market economies:

- household income is made up of a wider range of items than wages or income from investment
- Composition of domestic groups is more varied and so are patterns of authority within them
- Marriage may not be a joint arrangement
- Resources of a couple may be managed by relatives outside the partnership
- Cooperation between families living in different residential units may be as important as collaboration within a household, assuring members' ability to meet their basic needs

In the debate on intra-household resource allocation, one of the most important subjects is gender-differentials. One major finding in this context is that women and men have different expenditure patterns. There is strong evidence from different parts of the world, that women in female-headed households hold back less of their income for their own personal expenditure and contribute almost all of their income to the welfare of the family, while men use more of their income for their own purposes (Schulz 1999:27). In this regard, one has to be careful not to treat female-headed households as a homogeneous group and to generalise behaviour patterns, as was pointed out in chapter 3.3.3.

Another aspect that is very important in this specific cultural context is the "*general social principle of money*" (Bank 1997). This refers to the flow of money down the social hierarchy from men to women. Traditionally, although this is changing, men are still regarded as "breadwinners", and women as "housekeepers". Women are using this identity of housekeeper to intensify the pressure on men to

give them money. They regard men as not being able to manage money and wasting it in morally unacceptable ways – by using it on other women or alcohol - while as women they claim that they know how to handle money responsibly. Men on the other hand try to resist this pressure put on them by women. One strategy is that many men refuse to marry. Another strategy is that men withhold information about what they earn so that their partner cannot claim a right over “their” money. According to Jones (1999:25)

“Too little attention has been given to these aspects of domesticity by those concerned with the economics of households in South Africa and elsewhere.”

This intra-household distribution of resources is often masked. According to Young (1992), although research supports the contention that earning wives have more say in the allocation of household resources than non-earning wives, it does not follow that the higher the wife’s contribution to the budget, the greater her say over how the joint income is spent. Here, factors such as differences in the ages of husband and wife and ownership of other resources, including capital and land, also come into play. Young further argues that the possession of social resources can be critical, such as the prestige of certain occupation, the natal family’s social position and the social network surrounding the household. Another aspect pointed out by Evans (1992) that links up to these considerations is the ideals of marriage in a particular culture. This issue is crucial when investigating resource management. As a result of different marital relations in a society, the ways in which resources are managed vary widely, and in many of these relationships, the notion of economic partnership is absent.

The evaluation of expenditure for food in percent of total expenditure is an indirect measure for the evaluation of the nutrition situation. According to Engel’s Law, “*the proportion of income spent on food declines as income rises* (Dankwa *et al.* 1992:222). As measurement of income is less accurate than of expenditure, total household expenditure is normally used as dependent variable instead of income. Therefore, the proportion of expenditure on food of total expenditure declines as per capita income and saturation of needs rise (Henrichsmeyer *et al.* 1982:577). The UN even proposed using the percentage of expenditure on food of total expenditure as general indicator for measuring the living standard of people (Eigner 1995).

Based on the above insights, personal and total household income was assessed. The management of resources of different household categories is

investigated, with regard to gender and other intra-household dynamics and how this impacts on household food security.

3.3.5 Education

Information on education and literacy in developing countries reflects the level of human resource development and the potential for economic growth and development (Nuernberger 1994). Education can also indicate socio-economic wellbeing and is therefore a reflection of living standards (Evans 1992).

Although education is associated with higher earnings, lower fertility, better nutrition, better health care and better living standards of children, it is often perceived to have greater potential to 'solve' poverty than it in fact possesses (Budlender 2000:98). Education and training alone do not provide the opportunities, such as jobs. Still, education remains one of the most important conditions for economic development and is often viewed by the people themselves as basic need (cf. Sen 1995). In South Africa, the education system in providing for the overwhelming majority of the population is especially inadequate due to the legacy of apartheid (see 2.1.2). The huge backlog in education and training is still felt today, despite efforts to address racial disparities (UNICEF & NCRC 1993b).

Education levels are investigated and compared according to rural and urban areas (see 5.2.4). It is further investigated whether education influences gender relations within households, and whether education level impacts on the food situation (see 5.4.9).

3.3.6 Land, property, livestock and savings

Land ownership, land-use practices and possession of livestock are all indicators for food security (Frankenberger 1992). In the South African context, however, subsistence farming is of importance only in specific and limited areas (May *et al.* 2000b; Breslin & Delius 1996) and is therefore not always suitable as an indicator for food security (see 2.1.2). Most poor households in tribal areas are primarily dependent on purchasing food rather than their own production, which is likely to remain the case even in the event of successful land reform (Land and Agriculture Policy Centre 1994). Other sources indicate, however, that multiple crop farming systems are important for food security of many poor households in rural areas (May *et al.* 2000b).

In this research, possession of livestock and vegetable gardens are investigated, as indicators of additional food sources for improved food security.

Livestock is furthermore an asset that can be sold in times of shortage. As indicators for assets and personal insurance, interviewees were also asked whether they owned property and whether they were able to save money.

3.3.7 Loans and credit

Making use of credit and loans can give an indication of the necessity to rely on these forms of support in times of difficulty. It is a coping mechanism people activate to overcome shortage. One should differentiate whether people use these practices in case of sudden instances, such as drought or flood (Frankenberger 1992), or whether people use them on a constant basis.

In South Africa, it is very common to take small credits at local shops, especially at the end of the month when resources get limited. Also loans from money lenders are very common, often leaving people subject to exorbitant interest rates that can be as high as 80% (Buijs 1995). The loaning business usually prospers under the circumstances that poor people hardly have opportunities to get credit from banks: it is estimated that only 2% of credit from banks go to black South Africans (Buijs 1995). The significance of credits and loans as an indicator for food security is limited, though, as many people might have no access to credits due to being very poor and having no means of paying loans back, or due to the absence of networks that could help one overcome hard times. Other common forms of credit are so-called *rotating credit associations*, popularly known as *stockvel groups*. According to Buijs (1995), they have become part of a specifically African culture and one that has managed to combine western ideas of saving with the warmth and concern of traditional associations. Members of these associations are usually known to each other and belong to the same social group, which can be the neighbourhood, the church or the workplace. These groups operate within the female domain: men are seldom accepted and only if they are found to be reliable. These credit associations are a resort for women who still face difficulties with access to credit, as is the fact in general in developing countries (Evans 1992), and specifically in South Africa due to past discriminatory laws regarding land, property and other assets (see 1.3).

Buijs (1995) argues that in the context of poor, urban populations in an industrial, stratified society such as South Africa, rotating credit associations serve as an adaptive mechanism which provides an alternative to the mainstream that mainly excludes the poor. The most widely reported use for the money saved was for personal needs, most often daily expenditures such as clothing, food, shelter and payment of school fees. It has also been reported from South Africa as well as from

other parts in Africa, that large sums may be accumulated through membership of these associations.

This research investigates how many households rely on credit and/or loans and whether there is a difference between household categories and also between food secure and non-food secure households.

3.3.8 Social welfare

Social welfare programmes and safety nets are key components in reducing poverty or preventing poverty (Haddad & Zeller 1997:249). In South Africa, social welfare policies were in the past mostly oriented towards the need of the white minority and did not focus on the needs of the majority which was faced with conditions of mass poverty, inequality and underdevelopment (UNICEF & NCRC 1993a; see also 2.1.2). The new Welfare Policy aims to promote human capacity and self-reliance among all people (Mokaba & Bambo 1996). The size of the social security budget has been the second fastest growing budget line item over the period 1991-1995 (Haddad & Zeller 1997:267). As can be expected, the task of social development and redressing of past imbalances is difficult to achieve. According to Budlender (2000:125),

“Welfare provision still bears the marks of apartheid inequalities, with people in disadvantaged and rural areas having very limited access, or no access at all, to the services of either government or welfare NGOs.”

The social security system in South Africa has four major elements (Budlender 2000:126):

- *private savings*, whereby people voluntarily save for retirements and unexpected contingencies
- *social insurance*, which is also referred to as contributory benefits, entailing joint contributions by employers and employees
- *social assistance*, which refers to non-contributory and income-tested benefits provided by the state to vulnerable groups
- *social relief*, which refers to short-term, non-contributory and needs-tested assistance.

With regard to vulnerable groups and food security, the benefits provided through *social assistance* are briefly illustrated.

□ *Old age pensions*

Pension payments in South Africa were introduced by the government in 1943 and in 1965 extended to the rural areas. This was part of a strategy to discourage urbanization (Breslin *et al.* 1997:283). Still today, pensions provide incentives for people to remain in the rural areas and provide a regular income to a large section of the population. The old age pension is of a non-contributory, statutory, universal nature and is subject to a means-tested benefit with eligibility based on age, level of income and citizenship. This means test exists at least on paper (Haddad & Zeller 1997:267). From 1998 on, the maximum monthly amount of pensions was R490. Of the households receiving old age pensions 89% are black South African households and two-thirds of the pensions go to rural areas (Budlender 2000).

□ *Maintenance grants*

These are means-tested payments to single parents and children where the other parent is not able to provide for children. The maximum amount of the grant is R430 per month, with R125 each for up to two children.

□ *Disability grants*

Disability grants support people with physical or mental disabilities that render them unable to work. The grants are the same amount as old age pensions.

□ *Child support grants*

This grant is intended to support children in poverty and those poor households, particularly in rural areas that have never benefited from maintenance grants in the past. It targets children up to their seventh birthday, using a simple means test. Each child will receive R100 per month. Up to 1997, when this system came into operation, maintenance for children was only available for coloured, Asian and white children and not at all for African children. The new child support grant aims at “... reaching three million of South Africa’s poorest children” (48% of children under the age of seven) (SAHRC 1999b:46).

In this study, pension households were investigated in detail as this household type was assumed to be very common (see 5.1.3.5). Also, this kind of social assistance was picked up most frequently in this research.

3.3.9 Access to basic facilities: Water, sanitation, energy sources and housing

As was illustrated in chapter 2.1.2, former inequalities in South Africa resulted in poor living conditions, socio-economic imbalances and underdevelopment in infrastructure and basic services for a major part of the South African population. In the following, the specificity of infrastructure and basic services is illustrated.

□ Water and sanitation

Having access to clean drinking water and sanitation facilities is one of the basic necessary conditions for food security (Von Braun 1999). Poor physical infrastructure in communities such as lack of potable water, irrigation water and sanitation services directly impacts upon the health of people and on their ability to generate livelihoods (Stavrou 2000). In particular, small children are very vulnerable to diseases caused by lack of clean water and sanitation facilities. Improvements in water, sanitation and hygiene can reduce the incidence, severity and duration of common water- and sanitation-related diseases that contribute to high rates of malnutrition. Moreover, improvement of these facilities can reduce the potential for pathogen transmission at household and community level (Breslin 1998). Other factors influencing the food situation of households are labour and time. Women and children spend considerable amounts of time fetching water. Livelihood gains are likely to be made by releasing labour time normally spent on obtaining water, making this time available for production (Stavrou 2000). Also, saved time would be available for other responsibilities such as the care of children.

In South Africa, until 1994, ownership of water rights was concentrated in a small group of individuals, most of whom owned land. Furthermore, the previous structure limited most of capital development of water and sanitation services to the infrastructure of the mostly white population (Stavrou 2000). It has been shown that significant improvement of nutritional status and health cannot be achieved without sanitation. Therefore, any programme directed at water supply should also consider improvement of sanitation services (Breslin 1998).

□ Energy sources and electricity

The provision of secure and affordable energy is another factor that contributes considerably to the improvement of living standards (Stavrou 2000). Electricity furthermore enables people to participate in economic activities. On the one hand, there is more time available for productive activities instead of collecting alternative energy supplies, on the other hand, electricity enables small enterprises. These can

be the selling of food and drinks from home, which is possible only through the use of refrigeration. Moreover, activities such as sewing, baking bread, panelbeating and using power tools are all enabled through electricity. The energy sector in South Africa is divided into three sub-sectors: electricity, hydrocarbon fuels (coal, gas or paraffin) and biomass fuels (wood, dung and crop waste). The majority of poor people use a variety of sources, among which biomass fuels in combination with hydrocarbon fuels are the most common (Stavrou 2000).

□ *Housing*

Housing is a critical asset. It does not only provide shelter and space, but can be an important source of credit or a base for home enterprises. A house or rooms can also be rented out or as last resort be sold. A situation of insecure housing increases the vulnerability of people (May *et al.* 2000b). Housing is also a vital element in the improvement of health status (Mokaba & Bambo 1996). A lack of the above described infrastructural services, linked to poor housing conditions, as well as overcrowding, has a negative impact on the health and food situation.

3.3.10 Availability of food

Availability of food is achieved when adequate food can be obtained by the public (Gross *et al.* 2000). This availability is reached through markets and other channels, being a function of production, stock holdings and trade opportunities (Von Braun 1999). Official figures in the past indicated that on the national level South Africa is self-sufficient regarding most basic foods. Within the country, there are huge imbalances regarding supply between the centres and the periphery (Nuernberger 1999, see also 2.2.2 and 2.2.3). In rural areas, there is still a considerable lack of infrastructure. Therefore, availability of shops and other food sources and the type of food available are important indicators for food security in South Africa.

3.3.11 Access to food, dietary diversity, experience of food shortage and hunger and utilisation of food

□ *Access to food and dietary diversity*

Household food security depends on access to food as distinct from its availability (UNICEF 1998). Even if there is abundant food available on the market, poor families that cannot afford it are not food secure. Access to food is the ability of households to acquire available food (Von Braun 1999:45). It is ensured when households and individuals within those households have sufficient resources to obtain appropriate food for a nutritious diet (Gross *et al.* 2000). Secure access to enough food to meet

household food needs is a necessary but not sufficient condition for good nutritional status (Frankenberger 1992). The distribution of available resources within the household, ensuring food security for individuals members, is a crucial issue, depending mainly on intra-household relationships and resource management (see 3.3.3 and 3.3.4).

The purpose of this study was to obtain indications about the food people normally have in the household, as well as the food they have only sometimes, for example, on weekends or only once a month. This approach is similar to food frequency assessments described by Frankenberger (1992), where inquiries focus on the frequency of consumption rather than on the quantity. In-depth investigation into food consumption and nutritional status of individual interviewees was done by other researchers within the broader THUSA study, using a culture-sensitive quantitative food frequency questionnaire that was developed specifically for this survey (see also 4.2.2).

To assess the food and nutrition situation at household level, interviewees were asked what food they have always or most of the time in their house (basic or staple foods) and what food they have only sometimes or seldom (*'Sondagkos'*). At a later stage in the interview, food people buy during the month was listed again. In doing so, the list of food the interviewees had referred to earlier on could be checked. Interviewees were also asked specifically how much money they spend on meat, vegetables, maize meal, milk, milk products and others, as far as they were able to recall these items. In doing so, also food that is bought only once a month, as is sometimes the case for meat, could be captured. The two food lists were then compared.

Naturally, there will be food items that people forget to mention - such as oil, salt, and others – as they are regarded as basic ingredients. This could be a limitation, compared to closed questions where all the food items are listed, so that one cannot easily forget to name them. Using open-ended questions might in this case result in an incomplete account of the food list for some of the households. It is assumed, however, that by asking several questions in different sections of the interview around the issue of available and affordable food, food items people generally eat and use have been covered. The food list established here should be sufficient to give indications about the minimum supply of food of the people interviewed, as well as about their dietary diversity of food. Another possibility would have been to do a household inventory. The problem was that not all of the households could be visited so that this investigation would have been incomplete. Therefore, the “open list” was chosen.

There was an attempt to get an indication of the consumption of indigenous food. As in other countries that have been colonised, the knowledge of indigenous people is practically invisible in the official history of South Africa. Nowadays, development workers and others recognise the importance of indigenous knowledge (Mtshali 1999). Resource-poor women in rural areas obtain food from crops, wild plants, tree products and wild and domesticated animals. According to Mtshali (1999), their indigenous knowledge has a major stake in the food chain process and therefore contributes to household food security.

□ *Frequency of meals*

In addition, the number of meals eaten by interviewees and by children in the household was assessed, although this is not necessarily an indicator for food security (Frankenberger 1992:134). People might eat only twice a day because it is their (cultural) habit or a mode. The situation is different in the case of children: studies have shown that the caloric adequacy of children increases in proportion to the number of daily meals (Kennedy & Peters 1992:1083).

□ *Experience of food shortage and hunger*

Experience of food shortage and hunger are important indicators for assessing the state of food security in households. In research done in the United States, a comprehensive benchmark measure of the severity and prevalence of food insecurity and hunger was developed, through years of testing, fitting and validating of a measurement scale (Carlson *et al.* 1999). Earlier studies that fed into this measurement instrument confirmed the value and validity of self-reported survey data (Kendall *et al.* 1995).

In the current study, with no baseline data available on the extent and underlying causes of food insecurity and hunger, open-ended questions were preferred instead of a given scale. Interviewees were asked whether they and their children experience food shortage and hunger and how often this happens. These answers were combined with indications given on coping strategies referring to quantity and quality of food, as well as with indications of preferences of people, thus obtaining a set of indicators that allowed for determining households into different categories of food security/insecurity. Furthermore, the different indicators could be compared for consistency.

□ *Utilisation of food, energy sources used for cooking and storage facilities*

The utilisation of food within households, which is another important indicator for food security, includes the distribution of food and is an outcome of bargaining within the household (Maxwell & Smith 1996:44). This connects again to the issues of household organisation and intra-household-relations that are emphasised in this research (see also 3.3.4).

The storage of food and cooking both depend on available energy sources, which reflect on the living standards of people (Eigner 1995). Storage facilities are very important with regard to the safety of food. Access to electricity and refrigeration enables households to keep food safe and lasting for longer periods. This is especially critical in the hot areas of South Africa and during summer. Having no cooling facilities puts severe constraints on households in keeping or storing food such as meat, milk, vegetables and other fresh or perishable food.

Other factors linked to energy sources are safety and health: in South Africa, many lives and assets are lost due to fires caused by the use of paraffin stoves in crowded informal settlements (Bank 1997).

Time used is also an important issue in connection to energy sources: a lot of time is needed for providing biomass fuels such as wood or dung and also for cooking. These and most other household tasks are the sole responsibility of women (May *et al.* 2000a). The time necessary to perform these tasks is lost for other activities, such as generating income, care for children or education.

3.3.12 Caregiver and caring practices

The role and position of the caregiver is crucial for the development of children. Lack of care has been identified as the third underlying determinant of chronic malnutrition of children, besides insufficient household food security and insufficient health services and an unhealthy environment. According to UNICEF (1998:4),

“Care is manifested in the ways a child is fed, nurtured, taught and guided and is the responsibility of the entire family and the community.”

It is still mainly women within households who are responsible for child-care. Another important factor with regard to care is that in the specific social context of South Africa, children are often not taken care of by their mother or parents, but by one or several female relatives. The latter impacts on the food situation and development of children.

Due to the broad scope of this research, *care* as underlying determinant for the food situation of children could not be investigated in detail. However, caring practices also reflect on the situation and position of women in households. The unequal distribution of labour and resources in families and communities that favours men, jeopardizes the wellbeing of both children and women. Women are often the only ones responsible for fetching water, collecting firewood, washing and ironing, cooking, cleaning the house and tasks associated with agricultural production (May *et al.* 2000a:46). Women therefore often do not have enough time to adequately care for their children.

This research investigates who is responsible for looking after children in households. To get indications about the frequency of breastfeeding, weaning practices and infant feeding, female interviewees with children were asked whether they breastfed/breastfeed their children and for how long, and when they started to give them other food and what kind of food. These issues are described in chapter 5.4.6. Further investigation is made as to who is responsible for household tasks, which is illustrated in chapter 5.2.8.

3.3.13 Health and nutritional status

South Africa is in a process of rapid urbanization that is associated with a health or epidemiological transition with both detrimental and beneficial effects. In many developing countries, this transition is characterised by a decrease in infant mortality, fertility and most infectious diseases and an increase in life expectancy and chronic diseases of lifestyle (Vorster *et al.* 2000). As was indicated in chapter 2.1.2 and 2.2.2, economic circumstances do not necessarily improve with urbanization, but as is the case in South Africa, the transition for a major part of the population results in urban poverty.

In the THUSA study, the health and nutritional status of black South African women and men was investigated, with the aim to assess the impact of urbanization on health in this population group. The project and the methodology used are described in chapter 4.2.

For the purpose of this study, the following indicators, evaluated within the larger project, were selected to assess health and nutritional status:

□ *Anthropometric measurements*

Anthropometry is generally used to assess malnutrition among young children, using ratios of weight, height and age (see 2.2.3). Recently, greater attention has also been given to the use of anthropometry in measuring the nutritional status of adults,

notably through the body mass index (BMI). It is expressed as the ratio of weight/height squared and serves to indicate under- and overnutrition (Kracht 1999a).

Nutritional status has been one of the most popular indicators to measure household food security, with anthropometric measures being among the most commonly used indicators (Maxwell & Smith 1992). They are often perceived as 'hard objective' data when compared to socio-economic indicators, especially when the interest is to elicit response from donor organisations (Frankenberger 1992). There are a number of shortcomings in using anthropometric measurements to assess food security and also nutritional status, as poor growth is not simply the outcome of nutritional stress, but of combined stresses (Ulijaszek 1998). By the same token, acceptable anthropometric results do not necessarily demonstrate adequate food security, as for example risk levels may be high (Maxwell & Smith 1992). Nutritional status itself is a result of several factors in addition to food consumption, such as health status, sanitation, mother care and also the level of activity of an individual (Frankenberger 1992:98). If anthropometry is used in combination with other indicators, it is possible to interpret anthropometric data with respect to food security or nutritional status (Maxwell & Smith 1992). According to Vorster *et al.* (2000), using height as a proxy for socio-economic status is debatable, but it may reflect stunting and therefore chronic malnutrition and socio-economic deprivation during childhood. For further discussions on the use of anthropometric data the reader is referred to Maxwell & Smith (1992), Frankenberger (1992) and Ulijaszek (1998).

□ *Nutrient intakes*

Selected nutrients are reported to give indications about dietary intakes. Also, BMI is presented as it reflects the risk of chronic diseases and the double burden of under- and overnutrition in a transforming society (Vorster *et al.* 2000).

□ *HIV status*

In the THUSA study, it was at first not intended to test for HIV status. With South Africa having one of the highest incidence of AIDS worldwide and the problem being so urgent (see 2.2.4), after completion of the study approval was obtained to test anonymously for HIV status (see 4.2).

AIDS affects not only the person who is ill but the whole family and household resources and as a result, also the food situation. As the issue of AIDS is so pressing and concerns all spheres of life, private as well as public, it cannot be excluded from

any investigation that deals with health, family life or any other sphere. Therefore, also in this study findings on HIV status are reported, as an indicator of health status on the one hand and to give indications about possible consequences on food security and family life on the other.

□ *Consumption of tobacco, snuff and alcohol*

In this study, smoking and drinking habits are evaluated not with regard to health status but with the purpose to give indications and to draw conclusions regarding the use of resources, especially in poor households. Furthermore, social consequences of excessive alcohol consumption, for example on family life, are illustrated.

3.3.14 Coping strategies

Coping is an array of strategies adopted in response to crisis. The aim of coping is to maintain the various objectives of the household, with food consumption and health being more immediate objectives and livelihood security and status being long-term objectives (Adams *et al.* 1998). Coping strategies are pursued by households to ensure future income generating capacity rather than simply maintaining current levels of food consumption (Frankenberger 1992:90). One can further distinguish between “coping” and “adapting”. The former can be regarded as a short-term response to an immediate and inhabitual decline in access to food, and the latter as a permanent change in the mixture of ways in which food is acquired (Maxwell & Smith 1992:29). In this research, the term “coping strategy” will be used. It includes both concepts, as people have to react both immediately and permanently to sudden as well as to persistent times of food shortage.

The ability of a household to cope with times of food shortage is an important indicator of the level of food security of the household. Coping strategies can give an indication of the socioeconomic situation of the household, but more importantly, they give an indication of the functioning of social networks. These networks are often overlooked when only evaluating the socio-economic status of people. Furthermore, coping strategies give indications about livelihood strategies people use. According to Frankenberger (1992:90), coping strategies vary by region, community, social class, ethnic group, household, gender, age and season. Therefore, their use as indicator is location-specific and one cannot regard coping strategies isolated from other indicators for food security. If for example using credit is evaluated as a coping strategy, it can only be stated how many households are using credit, but it does not give any information whether households are able to get credit at all or not.

Along with the shift in the concept and understanding of food security, a shift has also taken place regarding coping and livelihood strategies. It is a priority to understand, “*how people gain access to food rather than how they fail to do so*” (Maxwell & Smith 1992:49).

The establishing and the dissolution (temporarily or permanently) of households are sometimes the only means of coping and are described as a “last resort strategy” in the different stages of coping (Adams *et al.* 1998). Households are established depending on where resources are, and dissolved again when the resources that sustain them fail. Also, moving of people, especially children, between households, is a very common coping strategy. These social mechanisms for survival have been very clearly described, among others, in the work of Ross (1993), Jones (1993) and Van der Waal (1996).

Evaluation of coping strategies should highlight the following main issues: what means of coping does a household/members of the household have when food is limited or when there is no food? Where/to whom can households go for help besides their relatives? What will households do first of all if there is no food? What are short-term, what are long-term strategies of coping?

Furthermore, findings on the functioning of social networks (contributions to the household in form of money or food; looking after children of relatives; caring for elders, and others) and the reason why people live together and on what basis they live together, will add to the picture on coping strategies and the role they play in households, of people trying to improve their food security.

3.3.15 Cultural beliefs and traditional eating habits – Possible implications for household food security

Cultural beliefs may influence eating habits and the distribution of food among household members (Muehlhoff & Herens 1997). This issue is specifically important if planning nutrition interventions, for example improving maternal diet and thus reducing low birth weight. Regarding pregnancy and childbirth, in most cultures bad outcomes for either infant or mother are often attributed to a failure to engage in appropriate behaviour during pregnancy. In many cultures, these behaviours often relate to food, particularly the avoidance of certain foods (ACC/SCN 2000a).

What might be called nowadays a “traditional diet” among rural black South Africans, has, however, undergone changes. The so-called “Western diet” was adopted with varying degrees (MacIntyre 1998, see also 2.2.3). Before the cultivation of maize in the mid 1880’s, sorghum was the most important indigenous crop.

Despite the shift in dietary patterns, maize nevertheless has remained the staple food, even in urban areas (MacIntyre 1998).

A number of questions in this study concentrated specifically on the issue of eating habits that are influenced by cultural beliefs and practices. Interviewees were for example asked what foods should or should not be eaten by certain people or at certain times, distinguishing between different age groups and different stages in life (children, unmarried/married/pregnant women, men, old people, sick people). The question is to what extent cultural preferences could possibly affect the food situation and food security of household members.

Due to the breadth of this study, the issue of cultural eating habits could not be dealt with in depth. For further information, the reader is referred to the works of Cassel (1957), Keyter (1961), Grivetti (1978), and Manning et al. (1974), to name but a few.

Findings are presented with the aim to add to the picture on household food security and to give indications for future investigations.

3.3.16 Perceptions and assessments of interviewees on their food situation and their general situation of wellbeing

Emphasis has been placed only recently on people's own perceptions regarding their food situation, as a result of the shift in the concept of food security that was described in chapter 1.2. According to Nuernberger (1999:57ff), there are three types of needs: *basic essentials*, *social expectations* and *personal wishes*. Of these, it seems as if *basic essentials* or *basic needs* can be measured to some degree, although also here differing concepts and ideologies exist (cf. Sen 1981; cf. Sen 1995). The *Basic Needs Approach* was the leading development strategy during the second development decade from 1970 to 1980 (Schulz 1999). It was used to identify and measure poverty, with the presence or absence of minimal basic human requirements for life as well as essential services indicating the degree of poverty or the level of standard of living (Burkey 1993). This approach has a number of weaknesses, for example the practice of food aid given by donors solely in order to ship surplus grain and meat to developing countries, and the fear of recipient countries that the basic needs approach will perpetuate their inferiority forever (Schulz 1999). As was pointed out in chapter 1.2, the emphasis has shifted, away from a basic needs approach to a debate on entitlements and the human right to food. According to Schulz (1999), the present debate, however, carries many elements of the basic needs approach, which has thus seen a partial resurrection.

Nutritional adequacy is itself problematic and subject to constant revision (Maxwell 1996; see also 3.3.13). Social expectations, priorities and perceptions of people that in the past have been neglected may at first sight seem more complicated, but lead to better and more accurate insights. This change in the understanding of the concept of food security led to the following conclusion:

“Perceptions matter ... food security must be treated as a multi-objective phenomenon, where the identification and weighting of objectives can only be decided by the food insecure themselves” (Maxwell & Smith 1992:4-5).

With regard to developmental programmes, people’s own perceptions of food needs constitute an important aspect (Frankenberger 1992). It is important to understand why people act in a certain way and sometimes not according to what is perceived from ‘outsiders’ as reasonable behaviour, as otherwise programmes will fail. In this regard, the cultural acceptability of food is critical (Eide 1999). According to Maxwell & Smith (1992), priority needs to be put on people’s own perceptions regarding food security and food insecurity, in order to remove the fear that there will not be enough to eat and to provide food with human dignity and in a culturally acceptable way. This can be described in terms of the quality of food entitlement.

Following these suggestions, in this research the subjective perspective of interviewees was evaluated: what are people’s perceptions of their food and their general situation? Would they – especially women who are in a minor position - make different choices if they were in a better position to decide on issues that reflect on food security? The perceptions of people in the sample studied on their food situation and their general wellbeing are illustrated in personal comments throughout the thesis and also in case studies in chapter 5.4.11. They give insight into people’s choices and actions in daily life.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research design: An exploratory, interdisciplinary approach

Little empirical research has been done on household food security in South Africa (see 3.1.1). Therefore, it was decided to conduct an exploratory study, using mainly qualitative methods. Qualitative methods are indicated if not much has been written yet about the topic or the population being studied, and moreover if the nature of the phenomenon is not suited to quantitative measures (Creswell 1994). The researcher seeks to listen to informants and to build a picture based on their ideas, thus exploring and describing the phenomenon and to develop theory. In the context of household food security, the focus cannot only be on *how* people act, but must also be on *why* they act in a certain way. According to Rubin & Rubin (1995:2) qualitative interviewing

“ ... is also a philosophy, an approach to learning. One element of this philosophy is that understanding is achieved by encouraging people to describe their world in their own terms.”

The intent of qualitative research is to understand a particular social situation, event, role, group or interaction. It is largely an investigative process where the researcher gradually makes sense of a social phenomenon by contrasting, comparing, replicating, cataloguing and classifying the object of study (Denzin & Lincoln 1994). One can also say that

“The focus of qualitative research is on participant’s perceptions and experiences, and the way they make sense of their lives. The attempt is therefore to understand not one, but multiple realities” (Creswell 1994:162).

In qualitative research, literature should be used inductively so that it does not direct the questions asked by the researcher, in contrast to quantitative studies, where literature is used deductively, as a framework to provide direction for the research questions or hypotheses (Creswell 1994).

One of the major differences between the quantitative and qualitative approach is that the qualitative investigator actively reports his or her values and biases, and thereby gives the reader insight into the possible influence these could have on the research process and results. By doing this, the researcher shares control and interpretation with the reader or later researchers. In contrast the

quantitative researcher, although he/she attempts to control for bias and be “objective” in assessing a situation, by possibly denying the influence of bias and subjectivity, may give less access to the process of research (Creswell 1994). The fact is that no research is totally objective, as the researcher always brings in a certain perspective and values. Admitting bias in qualitative research should not result in the believe that the investigation is subjective and not scientific, as in recognizing them the researcher tries to limit the extent of bias by allowing others to “see” the process and results within a certain framework. These issues are dealt with further in chapters 4.5, 4.7 and 4.8.

Another distinction between the two paradigms is the rhetoric or language of the research. While in qualitative research, the language may be first person and personal, in quantitative research the language should be impersonal and formal (Creswell 1994). Throughout this chapter, mostly the first person will be used, to “uncover” the people – interviewers and interviewees - who stand behind the results obtained in this study, without totally discarding the ideal of objectivity and distance necessary for acceptable research.

For data gathering, various methods are used in this study, in order to enhance both the breadth and the depth of the data, and to draw on the different methods of research (Frankenberger 1992). As this research was carried out within the framework of the quantitative THUSA study (see 1.1), parts of the quantitative data from the broader research project are correlated with the findings on food security. This interdisciplinary approach attempts to combine quantitative data and the comparability of conventional, structured interviews with the richness of case studies and in-depth data, illustrating that quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other. The advantage of this type of approach is to be able to make use of various sources of information, thus also employing methods for verification and triangulation. They will be dealt with in chapter 4.9.

In the following sections, the broader THUSA project is described and the place of the study on household food security within it, before illustrating the different means of data collection. For detailed information on qualitative research methods, the reader is referred to the relevant literature quoted in this chapter.

4.2 Setting of the research within the broader THUSA study

4.2.1 The THUSA study – Objectives and organisation

This research forms part of the THUSA study of the Nutrition Research Group at Potchefstroom University. In this project, the impact of urbanization and the resultant demographic transition on determinants and outcomes of physical and mental health of black South Africans in the North West Province is assessed, in order to inform health policy and programming. This was done by means of a cross-sectional comparison in terms of gender, age and five levels of urbanization. Of 1854 people who participated in the THUSA study, for 1785 participants complete data on health and nutritional status was available. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Potchefstroom University. The Department of Health of the North West Province was informed and approved the study and advised on the design and selection procedure (Vorster *et al.* 2000).

The THUSA project was conducted from 1996 to 1998. Research was carried out in 37 randomly selected sites in rural and urban areas, covering all the districts in the North West Province. To gain access to the communities, tribal authorities, community leaders, headmasters of schools, employers, mayors and others were approached and permission was sought to undertake the research in the various residential areas⁹. The research group was allowed to work either in the community halls, hall of tribal authority or in clinics. Various community-based organisations informed the residents about the project. In most of the research sites a large number of people was already waiting when we arrived. In other places people obviously had not been informed. In these cases, we drove around in the community to inform the residents about the study. By this means, it was no problem to gather enough people who wanted to participate. In some cases not all the people who were interested could be included in the study, due to limited time. A maximum of 52 people participated on one day.



Photo 3: People waiting in front of the hall of tribal authority to participate in the THUSA study



Photo 4: Volunteers are informed about the testing by the project leader Prof. Vorster (right) and Prof. Venter (in front)

Due to the nature of the THUSA study, recruitment took place by self-selection, as logistical considerations, such as taking blood samples and needing a period of six to ten hours to interview volunteers, prevented the selection of a true random sample (Vorster *et al.* 2000). Only those volunteers who were apparently healthy could be included. People who suffered from acute or chronic illnesses could not take part in the study. Volunteers who did not meet the inclusion criteria were screened for hypertension and diabetes mellitus. Participants were first informed about the aim and procedures of the study and had to sign a consent form. Illiterate people signed with a cross. Volunteers then underwent the different tests and questionnaires (see 4.2.2). For compensation, each participant received a small amount of money and a lunch packet, as the testing often lasted all day¹⁰. For some people, this probably was a motivation to participate in the study and this could mean that the selection was biased. But as is confirmed by the socio-economic data as well as by comments of participants themselves, the reason why many came was because they wanted to have their health checked. The research group provided some of the results immediately after the testing, like blood pressure, blood sugar, iron status, and clinical symptoms. Every participant was informed about his/her health status and given appropriate dietary advice. If participants had abnormal blood values or other indications, they were advised to go to the doctor or clinic for further checks and/or treatment.

4.2.2 Quantitative measures of health and nutrition in the THUSA survey

Table 4.2.1 shows the design of the THUSA study and the measurements made:

The THUSA study	
<i>Study population:</i>	Black South Africans in the North West Province
<i>Duration of research:</i>	1996 – 1998
<i>Study sample:</i>	1854 apparently healthy volunteers (women:57.3%; men: 42.7%) 37 randomly selected sites in all districts of the North West Province
<i>Stratification:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender (male/female) - Age: 15-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55+ years - Stratum of urbanization: deep rural, farms, informal housing, urban, 'upper' urban
<i>Data collected:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Demographic questionnaire:</i> Age; home language; occupation; income; education level; smoking and drinking habits; health history, also of close family members; type of house and ownership of property; type of toilet; access to electricity and water • <i>Dietary intakes</i> (quantitative food frequency questionnaire): Total energy; carbohydrates, fat, protein, minerals, vitamins • <i>Anthropometric measurements:</i> Height (stature); weight; skinfold thickness; body circumferences • <i>Psychological questionnaires:</i> Psycho-social variables, including general symptoms of psychopathology and negativity; positive indications of psychological wellbeing; perceived social support and perceived stress; degree of acculturation; degree of individualism versus collectivism • <i>Physical activity questionnaire:</i> Physical activity score • <i>Clinical examinations:</i> Oral temperature; blood pressure; signs of malnutrition • <i>Biochemical analyses:</i> Blood glucose, serum glucose and insulin level, serum proteins, minerals, electrolytes, lipids, serum vitamin A and E, iron, plasma fibrinogen and other values; HIV status

Table 4.2.1: Design of the THUSA study (adapted from Kruger 1999 and Vorster *et al.* 2000)

All questionnaires used in the larger THUSA study were designed or adapted for this study population and were validated with appropriate methods (Vorster *et al.* 2000). Some of the results of the quantitative measures are presented in chapter 5.4.7. For a more detailed description of the methods employed and for further results, the reader is referred to Vorster *et al.* (2000).

The following photographs show participants of the study during several tests:



Photos 5, 6 & 7: Participants being interviewed (left), measuring blood pressure (above right) and going through other test stations while waiting for the two-hour-blood-glucose test (below right)

4.2.3 Place of the research on household food security within THUSA

Research on household food security was carried out from March 1998 until May 2000. Of the total of 37 sites that were visited during the THUSA survey (see 4.2.2), research on household food security was undertaken in 15 sites. *Figure 4.2* shows the North West Province with the capital Mafikeng, adjacent provinces and the research sites.

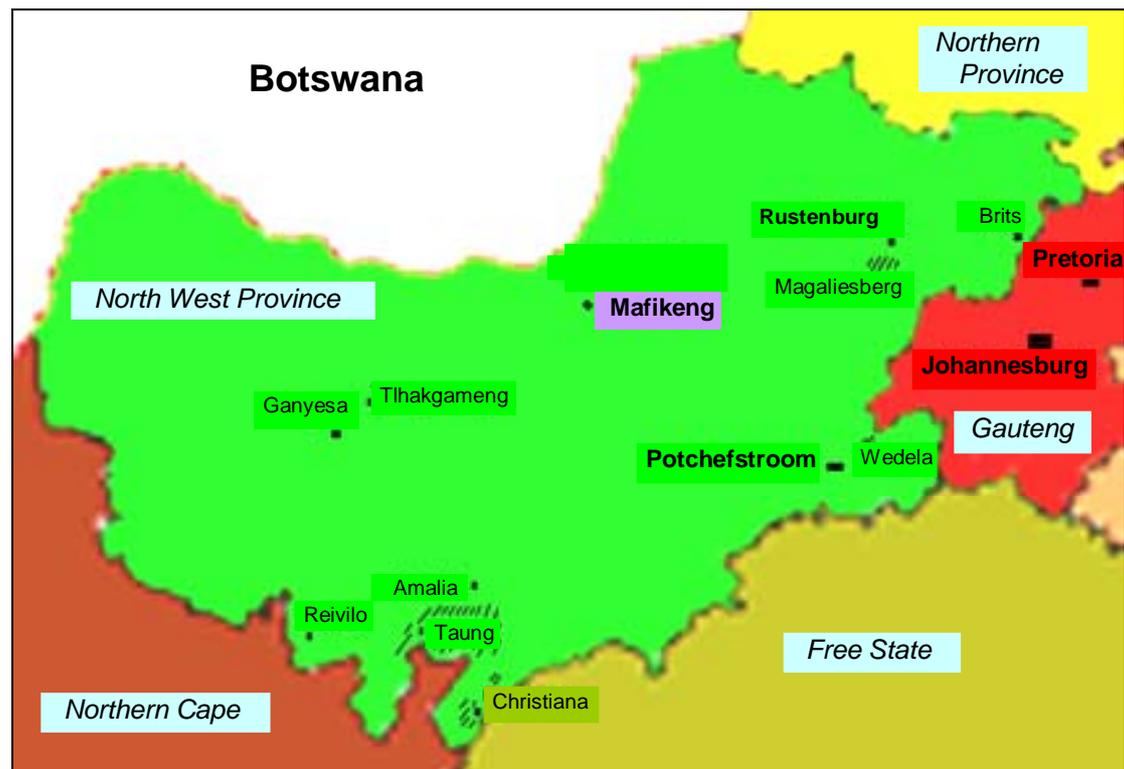


Figure 4.2: North West Province and research sites (adapted from Cartographic and GIS Services, Potchefstroom University. Scale: 1:2 600 000)

Research on household food security was undertaken in the following sites:

- University of the North West /Mafikeng
- Oukasië / Brits: Township and High school
- Magaliesberg District: Two nurseries
- Wedela (Mine town)
- Ikageng / Potchefstroom (Township)
- Christiana District: Utlwanang (Township) and Beefmaster (Cattle farm)
- Taung District: Tjokonyane, Mokgareng and Molelema (Rural villages)
- Reivilo (Township)
- Ganyesa (Rural village)
- Tlhakgameng (Rural village)

This is the only sub-study of a qualitative nature within the broader THUSA project. Therefore, naturally the concerns and approaches were different. The aim of the larger research group, which comprised mostly natural scientists, was to include a representative number of people in the survey. The aim of this study was in the first place to make a success of the interview, to such an extent as to build up a relationship of trust that would enable the interviewees to elaborate on personal issues. It should also enable the researcher to visit people again. Therefore, not the

number of interviews, but the quality and building up of trust were the decisive factors in this qualitative approach. It was further aimed at including a representative number of households in this research, to be able to make generalisations of the larger study population and of the population of the North West Province, without losing the depth necessary for this kind of research. This was also done with the aim to correlate the two data sets on certain variables. Of 965 people who participated in the THUSA study in 1998, a sub-group of 166 people (17.2 % of the 1998 THUSA population) was interviewed on household food security (see 4.3.2), of whom 154 (92.8%) were women and 12 (7.2%) were men. To work more in-depth, additional qualitative data was collected apart from the larger study group during follow-up visits to several of the previously visited residential areas (see 4.3.3).

4.3 Qualitative measures on household food security

4.3.1 Gathering views: Focus groups

In this research, several adapted focus groups were conducted as part of the pilot study (4.3.2), to uncover themes and concepts that had not been included at that stage of research.

In a focus group, the researcher calls together several people to talk about a concern held by the researcher or clients of the researcher. Focus groups are increasingly used with the aim to bring together a group of people who have experienced the same problem. The interviewer becomes a group leader or moderator who facilitates the discussion (Bernard 1994). The aim of focus groups is

“ ... to let people spark off of one another, suggesting dimensions and nuances of the original problem that any one individual might not have thought of” (Rubin & Rubin 1995:140).

In focus groups, the researcher cannot build a deep relationship. There is usually no time to get to know each other or to build trust. Instead, the researcher can try to create a comfortable atmosphere so that participants are willing to elaborate in front of others. There may be considerable effort to preserve front in these situations, with people being unwilling to express their opinions, especially about sensitive issues, in front of other people who are mostly strangers (Rubin & Rubin 1995).

Due to the schedule of the THUSA project, there was no time to get to know the participants of focus groups beforehand, which would have provided the

possibility of establishing some familiarity and trust. The possible reservation mentioned above could also be observed in the focus groups conducted in this research. For example, who of the women would like to admit that their children are sometimes not getting enough food, or elaborate on the relationships with their partner? Both are issues essential to food security. One can therefore state that focus groups are well suited for evaluating certain issues among participants with similar interests and concerns. Focus groups can furthermore reveal a different understanding of a problem that was not realised in the first place. Focus groups are in most cases not suited, however, when trying to investigate sensitive and very personal issues. People will normally only elaborate on these issues if there is an atmosphere of trust and mutual support within a group that has known each other for some time, as is the case for example in self-help groups or in other similar groups with a common interest. Focus groups might also be influenced by certain inner group dynamics, for example if a participant with leader abilities argues very strongly in favour or against certain issues or if group pressure arises which might not always be obvious (Creswell 1994). This might then favour certain biases.

The aim here was to evaluate broad aspects around the organisation of food and the food situation in general. Also, certain other aspects could be revealed, such as cultural beliefs regarding food consumption. The emerging themes from the focus groups were included in the final version of the structured interview, which is described in the next section.

4.3.2 Trying to get the picture: Structured interviews

A total of 166 people were interviewed face-to-face, using a structured interview with open-ended questions. Women were preferably chosen as interviewees, as they are still mostly concerned with domestic affairs, which include the organisation of food, cooking and the care for children. Although the sub-sample of men interviewed is small, their views and perceptions add an important facet to the understanding of the issues discussed.

Black South African women from the various residential units where the research was undertaken assisted with the interviews, in teamwork with two anthropology students in their third year and the researcher (see also 4.6). Therefore, interviews were always conducted in a team of two. The fieldworkers were trained before the phase of data gathering. All interviews were conducted in the native language of the population. The answers were written down in both Setswana and English during the interview by each of the two interviewers in one interviewer team,

so that a comparison of the answers would ensure that the meaning of the two sets of answers was the same (see 4.9). If necessary during the course of the interview, the questions were formulated differently, which was only seldom the case.

The decision to choose a structured instead of an unstructured interview is due to the fact that the researcher is not able to talk with the interviewees without the help of a local fieldworker. In formulating the questions beforehand and translating them into the native language, the aim is to ensure that the meaning of the questions is clearly understood between researcher, assisting fieldworker and interviewee. Keeping to a certain structure in the interview also needs to be done to ensure a high level of comparability, as the same substantive material can be covered in order to produce quantifiable data. If the interviews had been conducted in the language of the researcher, a semi-structured interview or an interview schedule would have been preferred, as this would have allowed for more spontaneity. However, probes and follow-up questions were asked whenever the interviewers felt that this was necessary or helpful for better understanding. According to Rubin & Rubin (1995:151), probes clarify and complete the answers, making them intelligible, and signal to the interviewee about the expected level of depth. They further show the interviewee that the interviewer is interested in what the interviewee is saying. The purpose of follow-up questions is to get the depth that is a hallmark of qualitative interviewing, by pursuing themes that are discovered, elaborating the context of answers, and exploring the implication of what has been said. Follow-up questions can be worked out in the period between two interviews with the same interviewee (see 4.3.3), but also during the interview itself. In either case, they cannot be prepared prior to the initial interview, as they will be based on the interviewee's responses to the main questions.

In using probes and follow-up questions, additional aspects that came up during the interview, or any aspect of interest to the topic, could be followed up, depending also on the candour of the interviewees.

After each day of fieldwork, interviews were discussed among the interviewer teams. If new ideas or topics emerged in one interview, these were followed up the following day and tested whether this specific phenomenon appeared more often. Adjusting the design of the interview is normal and an expected part of the qualitative research process (Rubin & Rubin 1995). This kind of flexibility that does not change the initial scope of the interview is much better than persisting in a design that does not allow for the pursuit of unexpected insights. As Young & Jaspars (1995) emphasize, the greater flexibility of qualitative methods makes it easier to take into account information that is highly context-specific.

Comparing interviews further gave an indication of the congruence or variance of the answers. This was at the same time a first evaluation of the collected data, as concepts and themes that should be used in the final analysis were revealed. The daily evaluation and supervision also helped to identify difficulties, which occurred during the fieldwork, and to discuss and clarify them (see 4.9).

The interview was designed according to the research objectives, grouping the different themes related to household food security into categories and formulating culture-sensitive questions. People from various fields were approached to seek advice on the framing of the questions before testing the interview in a pilot study, among them members of the black South African community, academics from different fields, fellow doctoral students, staff of the African Languages Department and others (see 4.9). The interview comprised 54 questions, following a psychological sequence. Questions about sensitive issues, such as experience of hunger and food shortage, differing opinions between household members and also the interviewees' perceptions about their situation were placed towards the middle and the end of the interview (*Appendix A*). Furthermore, sensitive issues were approached by framing a series of non-threatening questions that allude to sensitive subject matter without directly asking about it (Rubin & Rubin 1995:219).

The interview was first tested in a pilot study in March 1998 within the THUSA project. The pilot study comprised besides the described focus groups the conducting of more than 40 interviews. During the pilot study, issues that had not been included in the interviews at that stage could be revealed. For example, within the question on expenditure, if people indicated items among "other expenditures" that appeared more regularly, these were then included in the item list. Based on the findings of the pilot study, the interview was modified. Selected interviews from the pilot study, which provided reliable data, were included in the data analysis, using only those questions that had not been changed or re-phrased in the final interview. This results in missing data on some of the variables.

For data analysis, answers were coded to establish possible analytic concepts and categories. This phase of research took about one year due to the huge amount of interview data. Coding consisted of finding the most descriptive wording for separate sub-themes and turning them into categories (Miles & Huberman 1994). The interviews were re-read several times and investigated for meanings with the knowledge gained during the coding process, adding new categories and themes as they evolved from the interviews. As Rubin & Rubin (1995:226) put it,

“Data analysis begins while the interview is still under way. After completing each interview and then again after finishing a larger group of interviews, you examine the data you have heard and pull out the concepts and themes that describe the world of the interviewees ... After the interviewing is complete, you begin a more detailed and fine-grained analysis of what your conversational partners told you. In this formal analysis, you discover additional themes and concepts and build toward an overall explanation.”

In the final stage of data analysis, the categories were entered into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), and re-coded if necessary. Simple descriptive statistics were used, mainly frequencies, cross-correlation and means. As the sample is no true random sample (see 4.2.1), standard deviations were not calculated. Each answer was checked several times for accuracy and reliability before being included in the results. A number of interviews from the pilot study were excluded from data analysis, because the data seemed not to be reliable enough (see 4.5).

4.3.3 How people see their lives: In-depth interviews and life histories

In a second phase of research, that started in July 1998 and lasted until May 2000, more in-depth qualitative data was gained during fieldtrips separately from the larger study group. We visited eleven women and one man whom we had already interviewed on household food security for a second and some of them for a third and fourth time. During some of the follow-up visits I was accompanied by one of the anthropology students. At a later stage I went on my own, but always accompanied by one or two of the fieldworkers from the specific area. In this phase of research I purposefully selected my informants, a method used in qualitative research (Creswell 1994). If the purpose is to get more in-depth information it does not make sense to visit someone who is not open to talk about personal issues. According to Denzin & Lincoln (1994), choosing a case is weighted by considerations of access and hospitality. The primary criterion is the opportunity to learn, and not enough can be learned from inhospitable interviewees. The women we chose were those with whom we already had a good relationship in the first interview. When we came back about a month later, they welcomed us in friendly fashion and in most cases we could feel that we had reached a much better level of mutual trust.

Before visiting interviewees again, a number of follow-up questions were prepared. These questions evolved from themes, ideas, concepts and events that had been uncovered during the initial interview and addressed research concerns that should be explored more in depth. During these visits, we also collected life

histories. In life histories, the researcher investigates how people experience and understand life stages. Life histories can tell about life's passages, but they can also provide a window on social change (Rubin & Rubin 1995). For the life histories, an interview guide was prepared (Bernard 1994), with the list of topics and questions being divided into the following three main sections: the food situation during childhood; while growing up and when establishing one's own household; and the food situation after the political change (*Appendix B*). Perceptions of people regarding their food situation before and after the change of government were of especially great interest, as they reflect social processes. During these interviews, it often happened that people elaborated on themes other than the food situation. These issues were followed up during the conversation and included as comments throughout the thesis or documented as case studies, illustrating people's social situation and experiences.

A case, as a form of research, is defined by interest in individual cases (Denzin & Lincoln 1994). One can differentiate between instrumental and intrinsic case studies. In instrumental case studies, a particular case is studied to provide insight into an issue or for refinement of theory. The case itself is of secondary interest and plays a supportive role, facilitating the understanding of a particular phenomenon or problem. In contrast, intrinsic case studies are not undertaken primarily because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but because a better understanding shall be gained of this particular case, with the case itself being of interest. The case studies used here are instrumental, as they reveal similar patterns. They illustrate the concepts developed in the study and support the meaning of the material gathered, therefore enhancing the depth of this study further. One can further draw the conclusion that the case studies represent patterns of a large part of this study population. They can therefore be seen as a small step towards generalisation, or, as Rubin & Rubin (1995:90) put it,

"Credibility is increased when the researcher can show that core concepts and themes consistently occur in a variety of cases and in different settings".

Visiting people several times over a period of two years also gave me the opportunity to follow up on certain developments, such as changes regarding the composition of households. Each time we visited our interviewees, we asked again for all household members (present and distant). In doing so, I was able to draw conclusions on the

consistency or changes of the composition of some of these households (see 4.3.5 and 5.1).

4.3.4 Valuable insights: Interviews with key informants

The black South African fieldworkers who assisted with the research were our most important key informants, as they are members of the residential areas we worked in and often experience or observe the same problems as our interviewees. As I was able to work with some of them for a period of almost two years, we had developed a relationship of trust that enabled us to talk about personal and sensitive issues. The fieldworkers gave us valuable additional insight into the complex issue of food security.

We further interviewed other key informants, such as community health workers, asking about specific issues regarding the food situation, social support and the general situation in this area.

4.3.5 The picture gets rounder: Observation

In this research, due to time constraints, we were only able to do non-participant observation, where the researcher only observes without getting involved in the lives and activities of the people studied. Furthermore, safety considerations kept me from staying in the evenings or overnight in the research areas (see 4.8).

A fieldbook was kept during all fieldtrips and visits, to record observations within the larger research group and at the interviewees' homes. When people invited us into their homes, we also tried to record the interior, for example what kind of furniture people had, whether there was an electrical stove, a paraffin stove or both, and whether they had other electrical appliances. Other important observations were how people stored their food and also whether they had a vegetable garden or livestock. These observations were compared with the questions asked in this regard in the interview and in the socio-demographic questionnaire. The observations are used for interpretation and add to the overall picture gained through the various research methods.

One observation that is consistent with all interviewer teams is that in most houses, everything was very clean and tidy, despite the fact that we always came unexpectedly. It often happened that during the interview it was not possible to record all the impressions, as we intensely concentrated on our interviewees and on the conversation. However, we tried to memorize what we saw and wrote these impressions down immediately after the interview, or, if there was no time, in the evenings after fieldwork. It even happened that while going through the interviews

months later certain impressions came into my mind that I at first did not regard as being important, but which later popped up again due to a better understanding from my side. During fieldwork, through the daily consultation between the interviewer teams, we were able also to capture those impressions that one of us might not have regarded as being of importance, but that were still remembered.

Often people were busy doing things around the house when we came. In these cases, we asked whether we could talk or whether we should come another time. We also asked people to continue what they were doing. By doing this, we were not intruding too much and at the same time it gave us the chance to observe some of the activities taking place. *Photos 8 & 9* show interviewees being busy with certain tasks.



Photo 8: A woman, cleaning silkworm cocoons

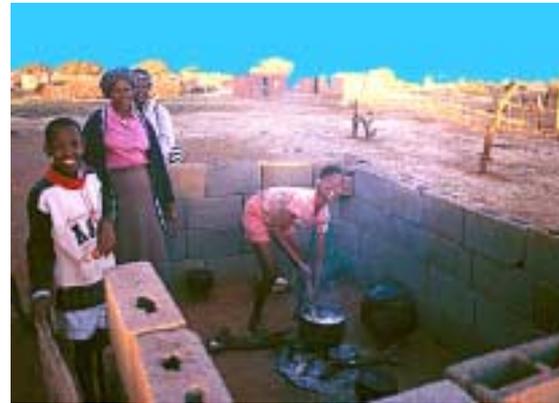


Photo 9: When Anna (left middle) comes home, her daughter is already preparing food

The following illustrations give examples of the situation and circumstances when meeting interviewees:

- *Miriam, living in an informal settlement with her daughter, a little grandchild and her son*

The second of four visits, July 1998. When we come, Miriam is sitting on a chair in front of her house, a corrugated iron shack, doing the washing in a tin bucket which is standing on a chair in front of her (see *Photo 18, p. 157*). We sit down beside her, while she continues with the washing, interrupting from time to time when she is thinking about the answers. During our talk, she sometimes shouts at her daughter. She looks like she has had a hard life and still has. Her daughter starts preparing the fire for cooking, lighting wooden sticks in a rusty bucket. Her son

comes out of the house after a while and listens to our conversation. At first, he is reserved, but later takes part in the conversation. The yard is very clean, also the house inside. It is a simple shack. There is a kitchen cupboard, a table and chairs. A blanket divides the main room, which comprises kitchen and living room, from what is probably the bedroom. I do not want to ask if I could have a look inside as I feel this is too intimate. At the end of our conversation, when I ask her if there is anything else that she would like to say or that is important to her, Miriam says that there is nothing else, but that she is happy to see us again. When she says this, she smiles. She does not smile often.

□ *Constance, living on a commercial farm with her husband who works here*

First visit, June 1998. Constance lives close to the farm school where the THUSA team is allowed to work that day. We accompany her home after the testings. She proudly shows us her house. In the room from where we enter the house, *biltong* (strips of red meat) is hanging from the ceiling to dry. The employer provides meat regularly in addition to the monthly salary. She gives some to my fieldworkers. In the kitchen, there is a cupboard and a TV with a colour screen. There are two bedrooms with a bed and a wardrobe in each. On the wall in the kitchen there are posters of several soccer teams – Constance is a soccer fan.



Photo 10: Constance proudly presenting her kitchen (in the room to the left one can see in the back the common tin box where dry food is kept; see also 5.2.8).

Constance also has chickens in her yard. She tells us that due to health reasons she must eat less meat and that she plans to grow vegetables.

Third visit, December 1998. When we come for a third time about half a year later, we are lucky to find Constance at the house as she has just returned from shopping – yesterday was payday! She proudly shows us her garden - the dry brown earth on her plot has turned into a green vegetable garden where she grows mealies, pumpkin, carrots, potatoes, cabbage, spinach, beetroot and zucchini. Of her chickens, only five are left.



Photos 11 & 12: Constance in her yard in June 1998 with her chickens (left) and in December 1998 when she had grown vegetables (right)

Before we leave, Constance asks when we are coming back, and tells me that she is going to keep a pumpkin for me¹¹.

Fourth visit, April 2000. Unfortunately, we do not find Constance at her house anymore. We are lucky to find a cousin who is a teacher at the school. We learn from him that her husband retired from work and she moved back to where her family lives. I am also able to give him the photos I have taken at our last visit.

□ *Anna, living in a rural area with her sister and three grandchildren*

First visit, June 1998: We visit Anna for the first time when we are in the village with the THUSA team. She and her sister participated in the study and we give them a lift home after the testings. It is already late afternoon, which puts everything in a warm light. The atmosphere in the little village is very calm and inviting. At the house, one of her granddaughters has already started preparing food outside on the fire (see *Photo 9*). Anna shows us a house she is building next door. Unfortunately, we cannot

stay for very long, because the THUSA team colleagues have almost finished their work and we have to leave with them. I would have loved to stay, and decide to come back and visit Anna again.

Second visit, July 1998: It is about a month later. When we come, Anna's sister is cleaning the veranda, and Anna is busy building a new floor for her fireplace beside the house, made out of clay soil. She interrupts her work to talk with us. After the 'formal' talk, Anna shows us the new house she is building from the inside. It is nice and spacious with large rooms. There is a kitchen, a bathroom, two or three bedrooms, and a garage. She continues building the house whenever she has money left, for example when she can sell a cow. She also shows us the wooden doors she has already bought for the house, and spare furniture, like wardrobes, that she wants to put into the house. Then Anna offers us tea and we are sitting outside on the veranda for about another hour. One of her nephews comes around. He wants to know what we are doing here, and Patricia, my fieldwork assistant, explains to him. I start feeling a bit uneasy, as he seems to have drunk alcohol, but I feel so well and comfortable at this place that this feeling quickly disappears. Also the grandchildren are coming back from school. Anna tells us that there are lots of family staying around in the neighbourhood. The nephew also seems to get more relaxed about us and tells one of the granddaughters to fetch something from the house next door where he lives. She comes back, giggling, with photos. They show his marriage, the traditional clothing, and some of the ceremony and the festivity. He does not speak English, so Patricia is translating what he says. Anna also gets photos, showing the marriage of one of her daughters. On some of the photos we can also see her late husband. He was working at a mine. One photo shows him shaking hands with probably the mine managers. He seems to have been a very nice man. I feel privileged that we are able to have this special meeting.

Third visit, December 1998: We are lucky: we find Anna again at home. She is sitting in the kitchen, eating soft porridge out of a bowl. She is pleasantly surprised and says that she is happy to see us again. We feel very welcome. I give her the photos I have taken last time, and fruits we have brought. Anna, her sister and the grandchildren look at the photos for a long time and enjoy them very much. She invites us to sit in the living room and tells her granddaughter to make tea for us. She pulls out a key from under her skirt and gives it to her. When I ask what the key is for she explains that she has to lock the food away, as otherwise the children will take too much. The following conversation takes place mainly between her and Patricia. Occasionally I ask something, for example about her cattle or about her daughters who live in Johannesburg. They chat as if they were good friends, and I have to

remind Patricia to translate for me. Anna tells us that she is mainly worried about money and that her daughters live so far away. She is looking forward to them visiting her and the grandchildren over Christmas. She then shows us the progress that has been made in her house. The fireplace she was busy building last time is finished and looks very nice. We give her a lift to the school where she has to attend a meeting. Before leaving, she tells her grandchildren not to eat all of the fruit, but to put them on the closet. During the ride, she says people often ask her about the white visitors- why are we coming, what do we want from her? She tells them, that we are her friends, and that she likes us. She says she feels that we both are thinking of each other, and that she hopes that I will come back. We have a warm farewell, and I feel that our visits get more and more informal.

Fourth visit, May 2000. It is more than a year later. Patricia and Meriath are visiting Anna on their own. The new house is almost finished. Anna is going to move into this house herself while one of her sons moves into her old house. She wants to build another house for her eldest daughter who is working in Johannesburg. Everything is well with her and she is content with her life, living in harmony with her children. She says that she is very happy that I still remember her.

4.4 Quantitative measures on household food security: Socio-demographic information

A quantitative socio-demographic questionnaire that had been used earlier in the broader project (see 4.2.2), was modified by the researcher to be of use also for the research on food security (*Appendix C*). Questions on the following issues were included, to obtain more information on the general wellbeing of those people covered in the research: access to drinking water, sanitation, access to electricity, cooking facilities and storage facilities. Data of the 1998 THUSA population, including the sub-sample of this study, was coded, computerised and checked by this researcher, in consultation with another researcher from the broader project.

Certain socio-economic and socio-demographic indicators, such as household income and household size, were covered both in this quantitative investigation as well as in the interview on household food security, with the purpose of comparing the results from the two different data sets. The comparison is illustrated in the next chapter.

4.5 A judicious mix: Combining qualitative and quantitative data

The debate on whether to use quantitative or qualitative research methods and whether both approaches can complement each other is regarded by many authors, some of whom originated from the quantitative paradigm, as not up to-date anymore and rather unproductive (Bryman 1988; Denzin & Lincoln 1994; Miles & Hubermann 1994). The significant growth of the literature on qualitative research methods in recent years reflects, in part, a wider acceptance of their “scientific” legitimacy within the academic community (Atwood 1998). According to Bryman (1988:127),

“The rather partisan either/or tenor of the debate about quantitative and qualitative research may appear somewhat bizarre to an outsider, for whom the obvious way forward is likely to be a fusion of the two approaches so that their respective strengths might be reaped.”

Miles & Hubermann (1994:41) argue in a similar way:

“ ... the quantitative-qualitative argument is essentially unproductive ... quantitative and qualitative methods are ‘inextricably intertwined’, not only at the level of specific data sets but also at the levels of study design and analysis ... the question then is not whether the two sorts of data and associated methods can be linked ... but whether it should be done, how it will be done, and for what purposes.”

In this research, having several data sources available, it was obvious that both quantitative and qualitative results should be used for evaluation. The challenge in this specific study was to fit a qualitative approach into a quantitative research setup. As was mentioned in chapter 4.2.3, there will be different concerns and aims of the two approaches. The contrasting paradigms were balanced by separating activities of the research on household food security from the larger research group and also continuing this research when the larger study had already come to an end.

The use of both quantitative and qualitative data from different disciplines contributes to the multidisciplinary approach of this specific study and helps to meet the requirements of the different disciplines (see also 4.1, 4.8 and 4.9). Furthermore, the qualitative data gained could also lead to a better understanding of the quantitative data gathered in the broader study. As Keesing (1981:4) states,

“This anthropological orientation, deeply humanistic, concerned with meanings rather than formal abstractions, remains valuable and even urgent in a world increasingly dominated by technocracy.”

The following examples on the evaluation of household income and household size illustrate how additional information is gained through in-depth investigation. These examples illustrate further to what extent the data that is gained by means of the different methods varies.

□ *Household income*

Personal and household income was investigated both in the interview on household food security (HFS) as well as within the socio-demographic questionnaire (SDQ), with the purpose of comparing the results from the two different data sets. In the SDQ, interviewees could categorise their own and their total household income into income categories. In the HFS sample, interviewees were asked about the amount of income and contributions of all household members, present and distant, as far as this information was available. At first, it was not intended to ask about incomes within the HFS interview, as this issue was already covered within the SDQ. Later it was decided to use it as an additional validation to the figures gained in the SDQ.

Of the total sample of 166 interviews, 66 were excluded from the calculation on household income, due to missing or questionable data. Missing data was the result of interviewees being daughters, sons or other dependants in a household, who were not able to give accurate information. Also, sometimes people did not want to reveal their true incomes (see 4.8). Where there was doubt as to accuracy, households were not included in this calculation. For validation, incomes were compared with the kind of occupation, since income levels are fairly standard for certain occupations. Still, these income figures should be regarded with a degree of caution, as accurate data on incomes is usually difficult to obtain.

Table 4.5.1 shows the comparison of incomes with the different methods of investigation.

<i>Income groups * (Rand per month)</i>	<i>HFSI</i>	<i>SDQ THUSA data</i>	
	<i>% of interviewees (n=100)</i>	<i>1998 THUSA population in % (n=955)</i>	<i>Total THUSA population in % (n=1 843)</i>
R0-500	36	46	49.8
R501-1 000	39	31.1	24.5
R1 001-2 000	16	15.5	14.7
> R2 001	9	7.5	10.9
Total in %	100	100	100

Table 4.5.1: Comparison of income groups, as evaluated from the HFS interview for the sub-group of 100 interviewees and evaluated from the SDQ for the 1998 THUSA population and the total THUSA population

* Originally, in the SDQ six income groups were given: R0-100, R101-500, R501-1 000, R 1 001-2 000, R2 001-3 000 and >R3 000. For better comparison, the income was re-grouped into fewer categories as presented here. In fact, the classification into the present income groups is not ideal. It would have been better to split them up further, for example R0-100, R101-250, R251-500, R501-750 and so on, as it makes a huge difference if a household that is placed in the income group R501-1 000 has for example R550 available or R1 000.

When the income categories are combined into only two, less than R1 000 and more than R1 000 per month, in the HFS sample 75% of the households have an income of less than R1 000 per month. In the 1998 THUSA population 78.1% and in the total THUSA population 74.3% of households are in this income category. Deviation appears in the income categories < R1 000. In both THUSA populations, more households are in the lowest income group (< R500 per month), while in the sub-sample of HFS fewer households are in this income group but more in the income group R501-1 000. The reason for this discrepancy is that often in low income categories people depend more on networks and smaller money contributions than in the higher incomes categories. Additional income earned through piece jobs considerably contributes to household resources. It becomes evident that as a result of in-depth interviews by means of the HFS interview, remittances and smaller money contributions could be revealed better and more accurately than within the SDQ. It can therefore be concluded that within the quantitative investigation, income earned in the informal sector often remains hidden. This is illustrated further in chapter 5.2.1.

□ *Household size*

Household size also was investigated both within the HFS interview and the SDQ.

	<i>Household members present</i> HFSI <i>n=166</i>	<i>Household members at distance</i> HFSI <i>n=84 *</i>	<i>Average household size (members present and distant)</i> HFSI <i>n=166</i>	<i>Average household size</i> SDQ ** <i>n=166</i>	<i>Average household size in black South African households</i>	<i>Average household size in South Africa (total population)</i> #
Mean	5.6	2.0	6.6	4.7	4.7	4.4
Min.	1	1	1	1	-	-
Max.	18	7	19	11	-	-

Table 4.5.2: Average household size obtained through the different methods of investigation, compared to national figures

* Only those households with distant family members

** Within the SDQ, there was no differentiation between present and distant household members

Anon 1998

The differences revealed in *Table 4.5.2* clearly highlight the different results obtained with the quantitative and the qualitative investigation. In the HFSI, household size and composition were among the most important issues investigated. Ample time was taken to ask for all the members present, for members of the household who were not present, for all the people contributing to household resources, for people visiting the household and also how often they visited. Follow-up questions were asked when it was not clear what relationship the interviewee had to other members of the household.

The time frame for the completion of the SDQ was comparatively short, due to the structure of questions and the purpose for which they were used. No in-depth questions were asked about household members and their involvement in resource management. Comparison of the two sets of data revealed that in the SDQ interviewees often did not extend their enumeration to the members who only come home at the end of the month, despite them possibly being the main providers of the household. Also, interviewees sometimes did not name all of the household members present, such as children or grandchildren. In quantitative questionnaires, it is often only asked who presently stays in this household. It is therefore not surprising that the quantitative investigation (SDQ) indicates an average household

size of 4.7 for the same sub-sample, almost two members less per household. This figure is identical with the national average household size in African households (4.7), as evaluated in the Population Census 1996 (Anon 1998). Although the figure of the Census reflects the situation of 1996, it can be assumed that this situation has not changed dramatically in 1998. Comparing the development of average household size from 1990-1996, the national figure has in six years decreased by 0.1, while average household size in the North West Province had the highest increase in average household size among the provinces: from 3.8 in 1990 to 4.6 in 1996, which is an increase of 0.8 per household in 6 years.

If only considering household members present, assuming that the information given could be identical in the two investigations, the figures still vary from 5.6 members per household in the HSFI to 4.7 members per household in the SDQ. Another discrepancy is the maximum of household members revealed in the two investigations. While in the SDQ-results, the maximum number of present members is 11, the in-depth investigation reveals a maximum of 18 members per household¹². Valid information on these variables is crucial if for example wanting to calculate per capita income and available household resources.

Both examples clearly illustrate that without in-depth investigation by means of qualitative methods, the true information on demographic variables often remains hidden and valid information on the economic situation cannot be obtained (see also 5.2).

4.6 Experiences from the field

Data was gathered both within and separately from the THUSA team. The first phase took place within the larger research team from March 1998 through October 1998. The interviews on household food security lasted on average 1.5-2.5 hours. During this phase of research, two anthropology students from Potchefstroom University in teams with black South African field assistants from the various residential areas we visited assisted with the interviews (see 4.3.2). Therefore, we were three interviewer teams of two people each.



Photo 13: The interviewer-teams (from right to left): Patricia Mmolawa, John van der Walt, Meriath Tau, Onica Dibebe, Joanne Grobbelaar and myself (two fieldworkers from another area, Elisabeth Mamogwa and Moira Mmereki, are not included on this photo, but on Photo 15).

The number of interviews we conducted in one day varied from 2-4 per team, depending on how much time interviewer and interviewees needed to complete the interview. As far as possible, we separated our activities from the larger research group and visited people at home. As was described in chapter 4.2.2, the process of numerous tests participants had to go through was very long and tiring and often tried their patience enormously. It was therefore more convenient to separate the interview on household food security from the other tests. Also, we wanted to meet our interviewees at home and see where they lived. This was not always possible, though. The THUSA team stayed in some residential areas only for one day, which then limited the possibility of visiting people, as they were busy all day within the larger research team. Due to these circumstances, interviews were also carried out within the larger study group. Besides these confining or relaxed circumstances, responses probably also depended on the specific personality, how someone felt in this specific situation, and also how open or reserved someone was. Considering these limiting circumstances, the interviews within the larger study group went quite well (see also 4.8).

Another advantage of separating our interviews from the larger research setup was that we could introduce ourselves to participants when they underwent the testings and ask them whether we could come to their house the next day. In doing so, we had “met” already, and it was then often easier to gain access into a conversation, for example by asking interviewees how they had experienced the tests within the THUSA study. *Photo 14* shows a typical interview situation when

visiting people at home, often taking place outside with other family members or friends gathering together.



Photo 14: Interviewing people at home

I never “pushed” for more interviews, but on the contrary had to prevent my field assistants from doing interviews faster, to try and reach a higher number. Within the larger research team a certain group pressure evolved, even if this was not intended. The larger group tested on average 30 people in one day, while due to the nature of the qualitative approach we “only” interviewed 2 to 4 people per interviewer team per day, which was a maximum of 12 interviews per day. For example, in the evenings after fieldwork members of the larger study group would ask us “*How many subjects did you see today?*” which I normally answered with something like “*We talked to ... people today*”. I knew that we could not “compete” with the numbers of the larger team, and this also was not the aim. The quality of the interviews would have been affected negatively if we had tried to do more interviews. According to my view, a successful day was when we had good, open talks to interviewees and felt that they trusted us, when we had gained new insights, and also when my fieldworkers felt at ease with the situation, as their condition was crucial for the quality of the interview.

As for our interviewees, the duration of the interview was in any case more than you can normally ask for, considering the duration of all the other tests within the larger research group. Often enough we felt bad when we observed that our interviewees seemed very tired. Still, despite these constraints, the atmosphere we could create with the majority of our interviewees was relatively relaxed and focused on the issues we wanted to talk about.

We as interviewers also had a limit. Conducting four interviews one after the other - which was the absolute maximum – with an average length of two hours per interview, sometimes longer, means talking and listening intensely for eight hours. The way we engaged with our interviewees requested a high degree of concentration. It was absolutely necessary to be “in that very moment” and to try to get a grasp on the general situation of the interviewee in this short time. If we discovered for example at a later stage in the interview that some household members had been forgotten or other issues had been missed out, we had to be able to remember what had been said earlier, sometimes going back to earlier sections in the interview.

Most of the time, we were able to move around freely in the communities to visit people at home. There were only a few occasions when we felt a tense attitude towards us. This was the case when doing research at the mines. The research team, especially the interviewers on food security, who wanted to visit people at home, did not feel comfortable. After the first day at the research site, they did not want to go to people’s houses anymore, as some of the men tried to stir unrest. These difficult circumstances of course also affected the course of the interviews, as it was not easy to create a relaxed atmosphere and to go in depth with some questions as usual. At some other sites visited during October 1998 and later, people sometimes regarded us as members of political parties who might want to influence people, as the date of the second democratic elections was approaching (June 1999).

Follow-up visits were carried out parallel to the THUSA project and exceeding the duration of the project, from July 1998 through May 2000. For the fieldtrips separate from the larger research team I was able to use a university car, as I had no car myself. I had a base at Amalia Gold Mine which was about three hours drive from Potchefstroom. From there, I went into six different areas which were at a distance of one to two hours drive (see *Figure 4.2, p. 75*). On some of the trips I was accompanied by one of the anthropology students (see 4.3.3). To reach some of the villages we had to drive up to one hour on gravel roads, which was quite stressful, especially when it had rained. We always arranged beforehand to meet with our local fieldworkers - not all of them had a phone, but they could be reached through neighbours or friends – so we picked them up at a meeting spot and went together to the villages concerned.

When doing follow-ups, we were not able to announce our visits to interviewees and had to try our luck whether we could find them at home. In most cases we were successful. Often neighbours helped us, mostly knowing where people were or when they would come home.

Some of the nicest events happened when we did not expect them. One time, a woman we had planned to visit was not at home. We had driven about two hours that day to visit her and another woman who also was not at home. There was nothing we could do and we had already decided to leave, when we met her daughter who lived opposite her in the road. We asked her whether we could talk to her instead of her mother, to which she agreed. Her boyfriend was also present. He wanted to leave us alone at first, but I asked him whether he would like to stay. In the end we had a very good conversation that gave me a chance to get additional information about the family relations and also on how a young woman and her boyfriend experience their life (see 5.1.3.2). On another occasion when doing follow-ups, we were able to visit one of my former fieldworkers in her new job. She had become a volunteer in a community project that looked after the elderly, and although she did not earn any money at that stage she very proudly announced to us: *“I am doing fieldwork again!”* When we came, a group of elderly people who regularly come to the centre for prayers and bible lessons was just about to leave, singing together. We were invited for tea and learned about the activities of the project. Findings we had made on pension households were confirmed by what the project workers told us (see 5.1.3.5). *Photo 15* shows some of the project workers:



Photo 15: Project workers in front of the community centre, with one of the project leaders, Ouma Sarah (left) and my fieldworkers Moira Mmereki and Elisabeth Mamogwa (back row from right).

These sorts of meetings only happen if one is open to whatever occasion comes along. I always tried to keep in mind what the social anthropologist at the University of Potchefstroom, Dr. Fanie Jansen van Rensburg, had told me in the beginning, *“Don’t chase the information, but let the information come to you”*.

4.7 Role of researcher

No research, whether qualitative or quantitative, is objective, although the quantitative discipline often presents itself as such, since it can hide better behind “objective” anonymity (Creswell 1994). Research will always be influenced by the personality of the researcher, what he intends to investigate and how he is doing it. It is important to comment on the researcher’s role, as

“Particularly in qualitative research, the role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions and biases at the outset of the study” (Creswell 1994:163).

My first encounters with South Africa were two visits lasting four to five weeks in August 1996 and April 1997. In April 1997, the plan developed to do research in the black South African community, after having met Prof. Este Vorster at Potchefstroom University who offered me to join in her research project. When I came to stay in South Africa in October 1997, my knowledge of the black South African population was still very limited. The same was true for the white society I was going to live in. The issue of food security appeared to be fundamental for a large part of the population, however, despite the issue of food security receiving great attention internationally, there was still very little information available in South Africa. I therefore decided to focus on this topic. In the first place, though, my personal interest was in how daily life really was and what the perceptions of people are. The possibility to join in the larger project where all the infrastructure was provided and the immense support I received from the Nutrition Research Group made this research possible.

When entering South Africa, one is very aware of the separate worlds that still divide the black and the white population, obvious in the infrastructure of towns for the white population and adjoining townships for the black population. My first real contact with ‘the other world’ took place in January 1998 when a researcher of the THUSA project and myself visited one of the townships close to Potchefstroom to meet some of the

fieldworkers engaged with the larger project. At that stage, a township was a foreign world to me. Also, I was not used to being among black people which caused a kind of culture shock at first, something that would happen in any other foreign culture as well. Still, I felt immediately “at home” and tried to “inhale” as much of the atmosphere as possible. I recorded this experience in my fieldbook¹³:

“Finally I get to see ‘the other side’ – the life of black South Africans. Even if it is only from the ‘outside’ this time. I like what I see: the small gardens around the houses are well cared-for, the atmosphere is very relaxed. Everybody is greeting. I would love to immerse into this world and live here, wash my clothes outside, cook...it is a strange feeling, as if all this is very familiar to me although it is foreign.”

Getting more familiar with the setting, I developed trust that I would be able to carry out this research. I could also build on six years of previous professional experiences as nutrition consultant and working with people, though they were gained in a different social context. I found that what I first saw as a limitation, being from another country and another society, could also be of advantage: being an ‘outsider’, who is not as deeply involved, and having a more detached perspective can possibly also lead to new insights. In addition, the interdisciplinary nature of my study of Nutrition Sciences and Home Economics Sciences in Germany, which included a sound basis in the social sciences, had prepared me for the kind of research I intended to undertake. Not least the fieldwork itself and interaction with my fieldworkers and interviewees helped that my concern prior to starting fieldwork, being a white person who is doing research in black South African communities, disappeared after a while. I rather often got the impression that coming from Germany and being an outsider was an advantage, maybe because I did not carry the burden of past politics¹⁴. When meeting interviewees for the first time, I greeted and introduced myself to them in Setswana, also mentioning that I was coming from Germany and wanted to learn something about their lives. This in most cases caused pleasant and unbelieving surprise and I could feel that most interviewees were kindly disposed towards me (see also 4.9). Of course, the good interaction would not have been possible without my fieldworkers, who through their friendly and open manner with our interviewees crossed over the inhibition threshold.

Rubin & Rubin (1995:17) express the general challenge to do research in a foreign setting as follows:

“Armed with an openness to new meanings and perspectives, researchers can confidently interview in many different domains”

I was very fortunate to be able to stay in South Africa for almost three years. This enabled me to get some deeper understanding and also to follow the general development in South Africa, instead of just getting a superficial impression, as would have been the case if staying only for a few months. I was able to get a more comprehensive view and to reflect certain biases and rather one-sided views I certainly had before coming to South Africa, as will always be the case when only getting information about a country from a distance. However, as I stated in the preface, my view will of course be biased with a European view.

I must admit, that I was not free of bias to see issues *from a woman’s perspective*. This was especially due to finding myself in a very male-dominated society in South Africa with patriarchal ideologies –within both black and white communities – as was described in chapters 1.3 and 2.2.4. I was aware of this bias, though, and tried not to fall into a trap of extreme subjectivity. Discussions with other academics and friends during all stages of research helped me to rectify my views and to limit the extent of bias (see also 4.9). Also certain readings (Ramphele 1993 “A bed called home”, Kotzé 1993 “In their shoes”, SABC report “Black men healing”; see also 1.3) which dealt specifically with the position of men who had suffered under the apartheid system, helped me to see things not only from a woman’s perspective, but from a human perspective. However, I find it very important to stress issues such as violence against women, as they are still not emphasised enough and negatively affect and hurt the society as a whole.

The issue of crime and rape affected me psychologically and caused anxiety and a kind of paranoia. At a certain stage, I could not read the reports on rape anymore because it got too close to me. As a woman, one is somehow used to living with an awareness of the danger of rape. In South Africa, however, rape seemed to be everywhere: young schoolgirls being raped by classmates, women being raped in their homes and at the side of roads when they had a car breakdown, even being pulled out of their car when stopping at traffic lights (I had heard this personally from a flatmate who told me that this had happened to one of his cousins). I had travelled in many parts of the world on my own, including the United States, but I never felt that my personal freedom to move was more limited than in South Africa. While during the first two years of research I travelled on my own to villages we had visited

earlier with the THUSA team, I did not dare to do that anymore towards the end of my stay. This was not because I was afraid of entering the townships or villages, where I met my fieldwork assistants and always felt safe, but because I was afraid that I might have a car breakdown. I also did not like to stay at home on my own anymore, no matter if during the day or at night, after we had been burgled ourselves one night while we were at home. Around the same time, two people were killed in our road a few metres from where we lived. We knew many people and friends who had been burgled, robbed, car hijacked and even murdered. To this might be added the numerous daily reports on crime in the news. The normality of crime and my increasing fear and anxiety were the reasons why I left South Africa. The fact that in South Africa so many people, especially women, are subject to crime and face extremely unsafe social and personal conditions, many of whom not being able to protect themselves, is most depressing and demoralising.

Decisive for this work was that I got into contact with the social anthropologist at the University of Potchefstroom, Dr. Fanie Jansen van Rensburg. He enabled me to have a deeper understanding of anthropological issues. He also encouraged me to present my work at the annual Conferences of the Association for Anthropology in Southern Africa in 1999 in Harare, Zimbabwe and in 2000 in Windhoek, Namibia. Here I had the opportunity to meet other anthropologists from whom I received valuable and constructive inputs. This helped me to evaluate my research process, as reflected in two conference papers (Lemke *et al.* 1999; Lemke *et al.* 2001b, in press).

At the weekly seminars of the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of the Witwatersrand I gained a lot of additional insights into anthropological issues and social phenomena in South Africa. I also presented my work in this seminar while still doing fieldwork, again receiving most valuable inputs.

With coming to Potchefstroom I entered a very Afrikaans culture. There could not have been more extremes than between the Afrikaans culture and the culture of black South Africans, which was often confusing. Looking back, I think I was very fortunate to exactly experience this diversity of cultures, learning very much of both.

The issue of migrancy that is described in detail in this research was also an experience I went through. Since 1996, I repeatedly had to endure long separations from my boyfriend, who went to South Africa in April 1996 to do his Ph.D. in geology. My social net of family and friends helped immensely during these separations. I can

only admire the countless black South African men and women who have to live separately for a lifetime, and then with no sound economic basis and with no other 'benefits' than being able to eat and to support their family.

4.8 Delimitations and limitations of the study

A way had to be found to adjust the qualitative approach to the framework of the larger quantitative research project (see 4.2.3). As was described in chapter 4.2.1, interviewees had to undergo numerous tests within the THUSA study. We could clearly observe that people were more relaxed when we visited them at home, which also allowed for more time to conduct the interview on household food security. Therefore, there were severe delimitations regarding available time when conducting interviews within the larger study group. However, the advantage of working within the THUSA team largely outweighs this delimitation. One of these advantages was access to many different areas, rural and urban, which would not have been possible otherwise. Also, I was able to use a given framework and structure and within it prioritize the research activities according to the specific aims of this study (see 4.3.2 and 4.6). Follow-up visits provided the necessary depth (see 4.3.3).

On the other hand, there was also an advantage to interviewing people within the broader research setup: here, people were mostly on their own, while when visiting them at home, there were often other family members around, in some cases their male or female partner. In this situation it will not be possible for most people to speak freely about issues such as who is making decisions over resources or different and possibly clashing perceptions regarding decision-making. The "space" and privacy needed was then not given and limited the candour of interviewees. In one case especially, it seemed very obvious that the woman we interviewed did not feel free to speak, as her boyfriend was standing next to us and listened to everything we were talking about. Also, she was much younger than him and seemed to completely depend on him and his mother. This clearly put her in a subservient position. Sometimes we would find the whole family sitting together, as was the case with a woman who was dependent on her two cousins, one of whom received a pension and the other one ran a *shebeen*. It was not possible in this case to get accurate information on monthly household income, as the responses of the interviewees were surely different than if we could have talked to them alone. This kind of setup occurred only seldom, though. In some other cases, the partner of the

woman arrived while we were talking, but immediately left again, whether it was for reasons of courtesy or possibly having no interest to engage with us. It also happened that the partners of women we interviewed treated us at first with caution and scepticism, but after we invited them to take part in the conversation they relaxed and opened up on certain issues themselves during the course of the interview. In fact, these were some of the best interviews as we were able to get a broader picture and also capture the position of the male partner.

Another limitation was that the available time-frame to plan the research and to prepare the interview was comparably short, due to the start of the second phase of the THUSA study in March 1998. However, after the pilot study there was enough time available to reframe questions or to shift the emphasis where it was found necessary. As qualitative studies, other than quantitative studies, allow for flexibility and can still be adjusted during the research process (see 4.3.2), this was done continually, within the framework of the research objectives.

Specific information on the position of women was not always easy to obtain. This is due to the fact that in the majority of cases, only one interview was conducted and therefore the time was too short to develop a relationship so that one can trust everything that is said, especially on sensitive issues (Rubin & Rubin 1995). It was tried as far as possible to create an atmosphere that would enable interviewees to elaborate on personal issues (see 4.2.3) and also by framing non-threatening questions (see 4.3.2). The depth of the information gained in many cases depended mainly on the personality of the interviewees. Some of them only opened up to sensitive issues during later visits. On the other hand, there were a number of women who opened up during the course of the first interview, and who seemed glad to be able to speak about their concerns and feelings. For these women, it might have been even easier to speak to a stranger, who has the necessary distance.

Incidences of tension and violence in households were picked up during this research, but were not investigated in depth. This was on the one hand not the focus of this research, on the other hand, I felt that in an interview of about two hours, it was not appropriate to try to cover these sensitive issues in a superficial way, unless people came out about it themselves. It was mostly during follow-up visits, when we knew each other better that interviewees elaborated also on these issues.

Due to the broad and interdisciplinary context this research covers and therefore the length of the interview, there is the limitation that the section on household resources could not be as accurate and detailed as would be the case in an investigation that deals specifically with expenditure patterns. Questions on income and expenditure were placed in different sections of the interview, so that interviewees were not able to easily “match” amounts. Therefore, household expenditure also serves as an additional validation for incomes. Expenditure was evaluated for 160 households, but only those 100 households that were included in the calculation of incomes (see 4.5) are used for investigations into resource management (5.3.1).

From the pilot study it was evident that the best possible way to get information on expenditure for food was to ask for expenditure on monthly groceries. As most people do one big shop per month (see 5.2.9), they were able to recall monthly expenditure for groceries. Some interviewees could give accurate amounts for almost all of the items they normally buy. Monthly groceries were split up in expenditure on separate food groups, such as maize meal, vegetables, meat, fish and milk. As this information is available only for some of the interviews and as it would require more in-depth research to obtain accurate data on single items, they will not be illustrated in detail. Items such as washing powder and soap are normally also bought on a monthly basis and are therefore part of the amount for monthly groceries. If one considers that these items constitute only a minor part of expenditure, the amount paid for them is “ignored” in this calculation. This “trade-off” is accepted, as otherwise it probably would not have been possible to evaluate monthly expenditure. Similarly, daily groceries were difficult to evaluate. By investigating the sources of food and frequency of shopping, an attempt was made to assess if and how often people buy daily groceries. These are mostly bread, milk and other fresh food like certain vegetables. As groceries such as washing powder and soap appear among groceries for food, and on the other hand daily groceries were difficult to be evaluated properly, it is assumed that these two items balance each other to a certain degree.

All other goods apart from food were covered following a list, to prevent expenditures being forgotten. From the pilot study it had become clear what expenditures people normally have. Burial societies for example play an important role in monthly expenditure, even if amounts are mostly not high. Expenditures interviewees indicated that were not on the item list were recorded as “other expenditures”. After this part of the interview was finished, time was taken to look at the list of expenditures again and to add items that had maybe been forgotten. With

regard to the described limitations, it is assumed that expenditure on food might in some cases be higher than was evaluated here.

However, the section on household expenditure formed a major part of the interview, regarding its importance, the time allocated to it and the depth of questioning. From the results presented here, even if there are limitations as to accuracy, trends and tendencies are evident.

In a few cases, insights gained during follow-up visits differed from the impression interviewees gave in the first interview. In one case, a female interview indicated in the first interview *"I don't have any complaints"*, while during the follow-up visit she indicated *"I have no one to go to if our food is finished ... I think things will get worse in the future because there is no food, no jobs and no money."*

There are two possible explanations: on the one hand this proves that people did not expect help from us, and would not in this event distort the truth because they expected certain benefits (see 4.9). Another explanation is that people might not have wanted to admit that they are in a difficult situation.

A limitation, which was due to myself, was that I did not stay overnight in any of the research sites, as had been my original intention. Participant observation or ethnographic fieldwork is the foundation of cultural anthropology (Bernard 1994). Details of daily life and activities can best be observed if the fieldworker totally immerses himself in the lives of people, which is only possible if living in a community for a certain period and also by speaking the language of the people. Only then can people become relatively indifferent to, and unabashed by, the presence of a foreigner (Pelto & Pelto 1978). Although I had established contact with one of my interviewees to stay and also with one of my fieldworkers, I did not do it in the end due to my rising anxiety that I described in the previous chapter. My fieldworkers were more concerned about the car and devised plans how to guard it. Once, we had to leave the car and walk a few hundred metres to the house we wanted to reach, as there was no road anymore. We were able to park the car in the yard of people living at the corner of the road where we left it. Moving around in a black residential area, coming with a nice car and being white draws a lot of attention. I want to stress, though, that there was never a bad situation and I mostly felt relaxed and comfortable when moving around in the communities. Another factor that kept me from staying and which played a definite role was that I worked in many different communities. If it had been only one or two research sites, I think I would have become more familiar and comfortable enough to stay.

If conducting a study such as this and moving between the disciplines, there is always the risk of being criticised from both sides: from an anthropological viewpoint, more depth would have been required for a study of this nature, while natural scientists seek to include a larger number of interviewees for a study to be more representative. As was indicated throughout this chapter, this study tried to find a balance between the two paradigms. These issues are also discussed in the next section.

4.9 Validity and reliability

In anthropology and the social sciences generally there is a lot of debate over the issue of validity. According to Pelto & Pelto (1978:33),

“Validity refers to the degree to which scientific observations actually measure or record what they purport to measure.”

Closely related to the matter of validity is reliability, referring to the repeatability of scientific observations. While in qualitative research it is acknowledged that no observations or interpretations are perfectly repeatable (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:241), there are several methods to enhance the validity of findings. One of them is triangulation, which in this context means to see things from different angles to avoid misinterpretation. According to Denzin & Lincoln (1994), triangulation has generally been considered as a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, thus verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation. One can also say that

“... triangulation is supposed to support a finding by showing that independent measures of it agree with it or at least, do not contradict it” (Miles & Huberman 1994:266).

Anthropological research and the social sciences have tried to maximize both validity and, to a certain extent, reliability through the use of a mix of research operations (Pelto & Pelto 1978). To enhance the validity and reliability of the qualitative data in this research, the following methods were employed.

□ *Internal validity*

- *Triangulation.* The following kinds of triangulation are employed in this study (Miles & Huberman 1994:267):

- by data source (a representative number of people, 15 different research sites both urban and rural, a research period of two years including follow-ups)
 - by method (as was described in 4.3 and 4.4)
 - by researcher (three interviewer-teams, see 4.3.2 and 4.6)
 - by data type (quantitative and qualitative).
- *Member checking.* This refers to a dialogue with the interviewee regarding the interpretations of the interviewee's reality (Creswell 1994).
 - *Peer examination.* A number of people were approached for advice continually throughout the process. Among them are academics from different disciplines, doctoral students engaged in various research fields, staff of the African Languages Department, and members of the African community themselves (see *Preface*). They provided an audit trail of the key decisions made during the research process and, in so doing, validated the decisions (Creswell 1994). At the annual conferences of the Association for Anthropology in Southern Africa (AASA) (see 4.7) the research could be discussed with several anthropologists. The research was further presented to several other audiences of scientists from the natural and social sciences, thus enabling to constantly reflect on the research process¹⁵.
 - *Feedback from key informants.* After each period of fieldwork and also continually during fieldwork, the core concepts that emerged were tested with key informants, thus evaluating the major findings (Miles & Hubermann 1994). Sometimes it was the in-depth information which key informants gave us about their lives that led to a better understanding and possible interpretation also of comments of interviewees.
 - *Supervision.* The interviews were discussed and compared after each day of fieldwork among the interviewer teams, to get an indication of the congruence or variance of the answers. It also helped to identify difficulties, which occurred during the fieldwork, and to discuss and clarify them (see 4.3.2).
 - *Translation and back translation of interview and checking of answers.* The interview questions were translated from English into Setswana by a member of the African Languages Department and translated back by another member of this department, both of whom were trilingual and had grown up with Afrikaans, English and Setswana. The back translation is done to make sure that nothing is lost in one of the two translations and that questions are phrased properly in the native language (Bernard 1994:275). During the interview, all answers were recorded both in Setswana and in English. After completion of the fieldwork, a

selection of interviews was compared to ensure that the meaning of the two sets of answers was the same.

As was mentioned in chapter 4.8, there is always the possibility that interviewees may distort the truth, especially when dealing with sensitive issues (Rubin & Rubin 1995:218). The feedback we received from our African fieldworkers indicates that most of our interviewees trusted us and felt open to tell us about their lives. Those who were not very open and co-operative may have been like this due to their personalities or personal worries. It was of advantage that I was able to recruit my fieldworkers from the communities we were working in, as they were familiar with the area and were therefore also accepted by our interviewees, other than being confronted only by strangers. It sometimes happened that interviewees at first, when they saw us, referred to us as “*makgoa*” which sounded very contemptuous. When I asked my fieldworkers about it later they explained that the word means “whites” and that some interviewees were at first very suspicious, but opened up when they learned what our intention was.

We tried to avoid bias from the side of the interviewees by explaining in the beginning that we were not able to help them in the short term, but that we wanted to learn how they lived and what they experienced, to report this to the institutions concerned with future programmes. When doing follow-ups, people never asked us when help is coming or whether they would receive anything. They might of course not have told us in any case. Still, from the impressions I gained during the two years of research I conclude that people accepted us as visitors and sometimes friends and that the information we received is reliable.

□ *External validity*

Due to the setup of the study and the methodology employed, it is assumed that the findings of this study can be generalised for the larger study population and to a certain extent also for the population of the North West Province.

While the uniqueness of this study, which took place within a specific context, militates against replicating it exactly in another context, describing all steps of the research process and the methodology makes it possible that the procedure might be replicated in another setting. Therefore, also *external validity* is provided (Creswell 1994).

5. RESULTS: FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY IN BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN HOUSEHOLDS IN THE NORTH WEST PROVINCE

5.1 Households and social relations: The basis for investigation on household food security

5.1.1 Black South African households: Concept, definition, categories and specific characteristics

5.1.1.1 What is a household? Concept and definition

The phenomenon of domestic fluidity that is so common among black South African families (see 2.2.5) makes it difficult to define a household. The concept of household used here is built around economic concerns, food security and also the social networks being used for economic survival and increased food security. Accepting this use of the concept, for the purpose of this study a *household* is defined as *all people who share income and other resources, possibly also certain obligations and interests, whether they belong to the same or different residential units. In most cases, members of these households are related along kinship links.*

This definition was inspired by the conceptualisation of Spiegel *et al.* (1996:11-13), who replaced the conventional term household with others that more precisely describe functional characteristics of households. These functions can be income-sharing, co-residential or commensal units. Within the southern African context of labour migrancy, the concepts were extended to the term “stretched domestic units”, which implies that members of a so-called household can often also not be co-residential or commensal for most of their lives. Murray (1976) in a similar way defined the household as a group within which are concentrated the flows of income and expenditure generated by the activities of its members. Despite the distances that separate them, the members share the responsibility towards the maintenance of the household. This study is based on the same definition and further extended to other resources and obligations, apart from income. Therefore, also all people who are not residents of a distinguishable residential unit, who either contribute a significant part to household income or contribute in other important ways, like supplying food on a regular basis or taking care of children, are regarded as members of the household.

5.1.1.2 (Re-)Organising social structures – Household categories

For purposes of research, the following household categories were established, as illustrated in *Figure 5.1.1*:

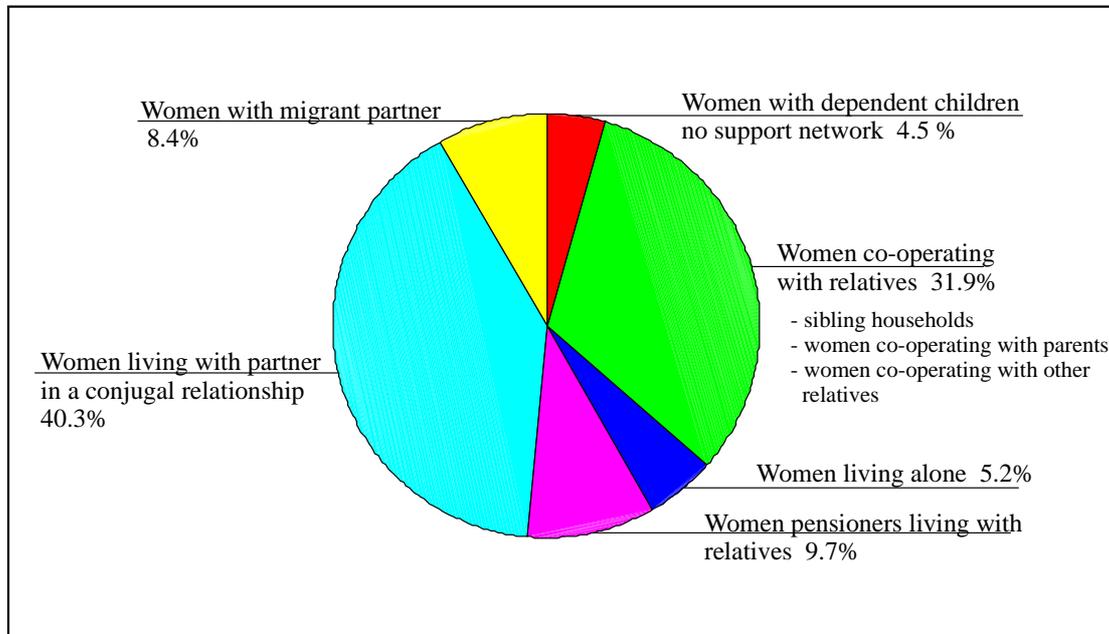


Figure 5.1.1: Household categories (n=154)*

* The sub-category of male interviewees (12 of the total of 166) is not included in this evaluation, as it would obscure how female interviewees are distributed in the different categories. The male interviewees are included in other evaluations.

The categories illustrate the variety of household forms people live in and co-operate. One criterion to determine these categories was the flow of resources into and within households. Another criterion was the characteristics of the person playing the role of head of household. One goal with the latter criterion is to determine the position of women in a household and how this affects the use of available resources and the food situation of households. Out of initially more than twenty possible categories, these six core categories were identified, to be able to correlate intra-household relationships with information on socio-economic variables and with indicators for food security. There are certain characteristics associated with each of the categories that help to assess and are crucial for the food situation, such as gender relations, inter-generation issues and other intra-household dynamics. These relationships are investigated in further differentiations of the above categories. The category *women co-operating with relatives* can again be divided into sub-categories *sibling households*, *women co-operating with their parent/s*, and *women co-operating with other relatives*.

The categories are characterised as follows:

□ *women with children, no support network (de jure female-headed, n=7)*

Women in this category live with their dependent, mostly young children, none of whom is considerably contributing to the household resources. There is no support network of relatives. With the exception of one case, incomes are below R1 000 per month. The women are either separated from their partner (n=3) or have never married (n=2). Two women actually have a partner, but are still classified in this category:

- one woman has a migrant husband who is away nine months of the year and does not contribute anything to the household. Therefore, according to the definition of household used here, the woman is classified as being single and her husband not regarded as member of this household.
- the other woman is a migrant worker and lives with two of her children, while her husband and two other children are staying behind at home. Of her salary of R490, she sends R100 home every month, where she goes only twice a year. As she lives most of the time on her own and does not get any financial support from her husband who is unemployed, she is also classified in this category¹⁶.

□ *women co-operating with relatives (n=49)*

This category comprises women who are living and co-operating with relatives. This can either be one or both parents, siblings, or uncles, aunts, cousins or other relatives. They have either never married (n=25), are widowed (n=10) or are separated from their partner. If there is no senior man in the house, women are head of household (n=22).

- 25 women live with either their parents or mothers who maintain them, 23 of them having children. Of the women who still live with their parents, only those who either have own children or are over the age of thirty are classified in this category. Women who have no own children and are under the age of thirty are classified as *daughters*. The household category will then be according to their parent/s. This categorisation takes into account that children often stay with their parents because they cannot maintain themselves. Therefore, economic dependency is a main factor for remaining at home.
- Nine women co-operate with their children who earn money and support them, in eight cases these are one or more daughters. In one case, money comes from a son.
- In 17 cases, the interviewees contribute money to the household, of whom 14 have a job, one woman gets a pension, one is renting out a room and one gets a

bursary. They are either the sole providers or other members of the household are also contributing.

- Twelve households (7%) are sibling households, where two or more siblings cooperate.
- Two women have a boyfriend who lives at some distance and contributes to this household. According to the definition, the boyfriends are therefore regarded as members of these households. In one case, a couple has separated, but the father gives food and some money for the child.

The composition and specific characteristics of these sub-categories are investigated further in chapter 5.1.3.

□ *women living alone (de jure female-headed, n=8)*

Seven women in this category are migrant workers who send money home to their children and /or other family. One woman receives a pension. Two women have a partner who lives at some distance and also contributes some money. According to the definition of household used here they would at first sight be classified as women with a migrant partner, being migrant workers themselves. As they are economically independent and also call themselves head of household, which clearly differentiates them from other women with a migrant partner, they are classified in this category. Specific characteristics of these women regarding remittances to family are described in chapter 5.3.4.

□ *women pensioners, living with relatives (n=15)*

These households consist of women pensioners who are either widowed (n=8), have never married (n=5) or are separated from a former partner (n=2). They live with their relatives, who are exclusively dependent children and grandchildren, depending mainly on this pension as the source of income. To point out the specific position of these women as main providers of income, they are described separately from the category of *women co-operating with relatives*. In 14 of these 15 households the pensioner is also head of household and makes decisions, either alone or with other family members. Therefore the households are regarded as *de jure* female-headed. Despite this, the pensioners do not always have full control over the decisions made in the household. Their specific role and position is described in chapter 5.1.3.5.

In one case the pensioner is living with her brother and his wife. The brother is regarded as head of household, although the pensioner contributes the largest amount of money to household income. This might be due to the fact that she is ill

and being looked after by her sister-in-law, and, as has been explained above, due to the fact that there is a senior man belonging to this household, although he is absent most of the time.

□ *women living with partner in a conjugal relationship (n=62)*

Women in this category live with their partner, either with or without children, and 38 of the couples are married, while ten are not. The other 14 interviewees did not answer the question on marital status. In six cases, the couple has left their children with grandparents. This can be due to the fact that both of them work and cannot take care of the children, or because the circumstances where the couple lives might not be good regarding access to schools, limited space, limited food and other circumstances.

□ *women with migrant partner (de facto female-headed, n=13)*

Women in this category have a migrant partner who is absent most of the time, working elsewhere. Therefore, women make most of the decisions in the absence of their partner. These households are classified as *de facto* female-headed. In the majority of cases (75%), women are dependent on the money their partner gives them. They can then to some extent decide over this money. Almost half of the women in this category state that they do not know how much their partner earns. They indicate the amount of money he brings home, but stress that his salary is in fact higher. The specific characteristics of migrant households and the issue of control over income are illustrated in chapters 5.1.1.4 and 5.3.4.

□ *Distribution of male interviewees according to household categories (n=12)*

In this sub-category, eight of the 12 interviewees are living with their partner or wife and are therefore classified in the category *women living with partner in a conjugal relationship*. One single male interviewee lives with his parents and was therefore according to his parents also classified in this category. Another single man is ill and being looked after by his mother and sisters. This household belongs to the category *woman co-operating with relatives*. Although there are only two men living alone, they are still classified separately to get an indication how these men budget their money and organise their food.

5.1.1.3 „If we marry, he will have other women and waste money“ - Singlehood for security?

As is obvious from *Figure 5.1.1*, more than half of women in this sample live in household forms other than in a conjugal relationship. Adding to this the daughters of the 154 female interviewees over twenty years of age who still live with their parents and are single, the number of single women would be even higher. Findings on marital status confirm that almost all of these women are single, as *Table 5.1.1* shows:

Household category	Marital status				
	Never married (Mean age:41)	Married (mean age:43)	Divorced (Mean age:48)	Widowed (Mean age:54)	Total
Women with dependent children, no support network	2	2	1	-	5
Women co-operating with relatives	25	7	-	10	42
Women living alone	4	1	-	3	8
Women pensioners, living with relatives	5	2	-	8	15
Women living with partner	10	38	-	1	49
Women with migrant partner	2	8	1	-	11
Total number	48	58	2	22	130
Percentage of total	36.9%	44.6%	1.5%	16.9%	100%
Female 1998 THUSA population (n=421)	48%	36.8%	1.9%	13.3%	100%

Table 5.1.1: Marital status of female interviewees

Of 130 women answering the question on marital status, more than a third state that they are not married. The majority of these women can be found in the age category of 35 years and above. This indicates that not getting married is no phenomenon of this particular time or only among younger women. Data of Niehaus (1994:122-123) confirms that single women and men are not concentrated in the lower age categories.

Of those who indicate that they are married, at least 21% do not live with their husband anymore. This has been evaluated through in-depth investigation into

household composition. In comparison, 48% of the female 1998 THUSA population state that they are not married, while 37% are. It can be assumed that probably not all of these married women live in a relationship anymore. As the number of divorced women in both study populations is very low (1.5% and 1.9%, respectively), probably not many women chose to undergo the legal process of divorce.

Of the widowed women, half of whom can be found in the age category 25-54, only *one* chose to live with a partner again, while it seems as if the others, at least at present, stay single. Women who indicate that they are single have no obvious partner and also give no indication of any contributions coming from a male partner. Therefore, being single is defined here as having no partnership relationship with a common goal, and that there is no sharing of resources or obligations. This of course does not mean that there might not be a male partner who is not mentioned by the interviewee. In some cases, women who mention a partner are still not classified as living with a partner, because they are either not married yet and do not share their resources or they live far apart from each other and also do not share resources. These cases were described within the specific categories in chapter 5.1.1.2.

The figures obtained here correspond with other investigations in South Africa. Koen (1994:16) gives the following national figures: 43% of black South African children are born to single mothers, and half of black South African women over twenty are single - they are either widows, or separated women, or have never married. According to figures of the October 1995 household survey, 46% of black South African children were only living with their mother, compared to 37% of coloured children and 10% or fewer of white and Indian children (CSS 1997). Jones (1999) found in a survey of 735 women that 67% aged 18 and older were not married or cohabiting with a partner. In the age cohort of 30 and older, within which marriage or conjugal partnerships might more reasonably have been expected, 55% of women were single. According to Jones (1999:17),

"...large numbers of women were opting either never to marry, or, if they had married, to remain single after dissolution of the union."

This trend to singleness is not new and has been noted by several authors already in the sixties in rural and urban areas throughout South Africa (Van der Vliet 1991). According to research done by Van der Vliet (1984), the conscious decision made by women to remain single was due to men often being unwilling to contribute financially. Also, women did not accept the submissive roles that were ascribed to

them especially within traditional marriage (see 1.3). Staying single for them meant to have greater independence and also to be able to control their own fertility. Jones (1999) uses the term *'singlehood for security'*, which implies that women often choose to be single rather than to live with a partner whom they regard as an economic liability. Excluding senior men seems to provide a number of economic advantages for some women. Bank (1997) distinguishes in his argumentation, that only financially independent women with secure, stable jobs aspire to staying single and maintaining their independence from men. He found that single women generally feel that they can gain more by manipulating men, in getting control over their income, than by rejecting them. Most of these women stressed that they were not living alone because they disliked men, but rather that they were still looking for the 'right' man, who should be somebody they could rely on in terms of providing money, not drinking and not having other women. Stadler (1993) found that it was young educated women who rejected marriage, because it would disrupt their life course designed around independence and employment, being aware that if they marry, they are subject to their husband's unreliable support and their mother-in-law's obstructions. These women often through parental support manage to achieve their aims, regarding education, independence and employment. No matter what the specific circumstances of women are, there is a clear pattern of reasons why they make the deliberate decision not to marry. All of these assumptions are confirmed in this study and illustrated in the following statements of key informants:

"I left him [my first boyfriend] because he had no responsibility. My [present] boyfriend wants to marry me, but I don't want it right now. I like to stay with my mother. She is my best friend. - I want to stay alone and independent. If we are married, my boyfriend will have many girlfriends, waste money and run away." (A woman who lives with her two children and her mother who gets a pension)

"I want a job and have my own place. I have a boyfriend since three years. Sometimes I get some money from him. But I don't want to marry, I want to find work and be independent." (A woman with one child, her partner left. She lives with her father who gets a pension, her two sisters and their four children)

"I don't have a boyfriend at the moment. It is not that I don't want a boyfriend, but there has not been the right one yet. Men here drink and smoke and waste money. Also I am very much afraid of AIDS. If I find a boyfriend, he must first go for the test." (A woman with a child of eight years, whose father left when it was nine months old. She has a regular job and supports her sister and her mother who is ill)

These statements come exclusively from women who already have had negative experiences, of either having been dependent on a man or having been left alone. Only one woman has a job. The two other women get support from their mother or father, respectively. All of them have very few resources, but still prefer to stay independent.

Often, young girls without these experiences get pregnant in the hope that the father of their child will marry them sooner or later or provide for them. This attitude is reflected, among other probable reasons, in the high incidence of teenage pregnancies among black South African women younger than 20 years, which in 1993 was 15.2% (Anon 1998). Young men, however, do not and often cannot take this responsibility. This is indicated by the large number of sons and daughters over the age of twenty staying with their parents, with most of the daughters having one or several illegitimate children (see chapter 5.1.3.4). As Niehaus (1994:122) found in his investigation into conjugal instability,

“...although informants considered the ideal age of marriage to be in the early twenties, this ideal was seldom realised in practice.”

The lack of responsibility of many men, but also wrong expectations of women towards men are expressed in the following comments of several key informants:

“Most of the time, they [men] don’t pay for their children. We [three sisters and our six children] live together because the boyfriends left. Most of the time they promise to marry you, but after the child is born, they leave us. There are few men who are different. First you should marry and then have children. You must only have two children. The men don’t want more children. They say they can’t pay for them. Women think, if they have more children, they can keep their husbands near to them, but it is not true.”

“Some men pay for the children, but most can’t afford to pay. The boyfriends say they will marry the woman if she will give him a child. When there is a baby, he just leaves.”

The observation that men often do not pay for their children is not only a fact of unwillingness, but in many cases most likely a fact of economic constraints. The lack of jobs and the obligation for young men to pay bride-wealth (see 1.3) puts them into a difficult situation because they simply cannot afford to marry. This assumption is also confirmed in the study conducted by Van der Vliet (1984). She found that the

decision for men to stay single was often the result of insufficient income and the real or perceived inability to succeed as providers. The payment of bride-wealth constituted an additional financial burden that precluded men from marrying. Stadler (1993) found that young men were opposed to bride-wealth because it meant a financial burden. Skhosana (1999:88) concludes in her research on female sexuality, culture and reproductive behaviour that many women

“...gambled that by bearing a child for the man and subsequently living with him, their chances for a permanent relationship with the man would increase. But, this strategy seldom worked out. Young men were seldom in steady employment and could not raise the capital needed for bridewealth. In general, young men were expected to come up with the bulk or all of the bridewealth as kinsmen found it harder to contribute to another’s brideprice.”

It is obvious, that with the high unemployment rate, the chances for young men to pay bride-wealth and establish their own homestead, let alone be able to provide for a family, are very slim. Even if men begin to pay, they might lose their job and might then not be able to continue with the payments. A young man (27) who supports his girlfriend with money he earns from piece jobs illustrates his situation as follows:

“I left the army three years ago because the contract was not extended. Now I do piece jobs at the mine. I also do plumbing ... I want to change my life. I want to stop drinking and smoking, if I would have work. But even now it would be better to stop. But my friend comes here, and then we go to drink something. And then my girlfriend and me argue. She doesn’t like it. It’s [that I drink and smoke] because I just sit around all day” (see 5.1.3.2, case study of *Sheila and William*).

The following example of one of my key informants, a woman in her mid-twenties, also illustrates the situation for young couples:

“I live with my mother, my two children and my uncle. My boyfriend lives at some distance. He comes once a month. I am going to live with him when we are married. But first he has to pay lobola. He hasn’t got enough money yet.”

They had been in a relationship already for several years when I met her for the first time in 1998. When I saw her last in April 2000, they were still together and still intended to marry. They visit each other regularly for longer periods during holidays. She probably stays with her mother because here she has more support. As has

been pointed out in chapter 1.3, not being married might put her in a position of insecurity when staying with her boyfriend, while she can rely on support from her mother. As Jones (1999:25) concludes,

“...the risks of dependence on a man were far greater than the risks associated with dependence, in women-led households, on other women.”

Another reason for this woman to stay with her mother might be not ideal living conditions at the place where her boyfriend works, regarding space, schools for the children or other factors. In many other relationships, where the male partner has no job, there is not even the option of getting married. A male key informant in his thirties elaborates on the issue of lobola and relationships between young women and men as follows:

“I believe lobola is good and useful. It strengthens the bond between the two families. In paying lobola, you are also more committed to your partner ... There is no responsibility nowadays. It used to be different, it wasn't always like this. In former times, if a girl got pregnant, the boy was expected to marry her. The parents of the girl would go to the parents of the boy and sort it out. Nowadays, girls want to tie the boys down in getting pregnant, because they think the boys will marry them. But the boys often leave, and then the girls sit alone with the children.”

It has to be added that this young man is financially well off and is able to afford lobola, while many others who are not in this position might argue differently.

Nuernberger sees the youth as most vulnerable to marginalisation and calls them the ‘lost generation’:

“The unemployed do not know where to invest their youthful energies and have no hope of a fulfilled life. A feeling of redundancy and futility evoked attitudes of violent self-assertion...countless youngsters have been traumatised by township violence” (Nuernberger 1994:34).

Bank (1997) points out another aspect that is attached to the inability to pay bride-wealth: male authority and power can be undermined, as women use this fact to let men know that they are not in charge and should first take the responsibility for paying bride-wealth and providing money for the family. Men, on the other hand, want to exercise their power ascribed to them through marriage, without taking on

financial responsibility. This is often one of the major sources of tension in conjugal relationships. Another aspect from the view of men that speaks against marriage is that, once they are married, they are expected to look after their family and to hand over their earnings to their partner. Bank (1997:168) describes it as the “general social principle applied to money”, which means that money should be transferred from men, who in theory are the main breadwinners, to women who are responsible for household maintenance. Womanhood in poor households is presented as being synonymous with motherhood. By emphasising this identity, women try to control the income of their partners in putting moral pressure on them to hand over the money.

Another important aspect with regard to the position of women in households are very high levels of domestic violence and violence against women and children (see also 5.1.3.5). As was pointed out in chapter 2.1.2, poverty, high unemployment and marginalisation of men increase the risk of violence. This might be another reason for women to stay single instead of ending up in abusive relationships:

“Poorer women are often ‘trapped’ in abusive relationships due to their dependence on partners for food, shelter and money” (Budlender 2000:133).

The fact that men in male-headed households keep considerable parts of their income for themselves instead of contributing it to household resources is consistent throughout a number of studies (Buijs 1995; Breslin & Delius 1996; Bank 1997; Jones 1999; Van der Waal 1996).

The following comments of female interviewees in this study group, living in different household categories document this:

"I don't get any money from my husband."

"The money should not be used for useless things like beer, tobacco - that is the case now."

"I worry because my husband is stingy. I don't get any money from him, I don't know how much money he earns."

"My husband gives me money only month's end."

These illustrations show the intensity of the gender struggle for income. Further indications are given in chapter 5.1.3.4 and 5.1.3.5. The decision or the necessity to

stay single is, besides the low incidence of marriage, reflected in the creation of alternative forms of household organisation. They are described in chapter 5.1.3.

5.1.1.4 Migrant households: The phenomenon of fluidity

In chapter 2.2.5, the significance and high occurrence of migrant households and underlying factors for the phenomenon of fluidity were outlined. *Table 5.1.2* shows the different categories of migrant households developed in this study:

<i>Type of migrant household</i>	<i>No of households</i>	<i>% of all households</i>	<i>% of migrant households</i>
Migrant women who remit money to their children and parents or other relatives	26	15.7	32.9
Migrant husbands/partners of one of the household members remitting money	19	11.4	24.1
Migrant parent/s who left children with grandparents or relatives (not always contributing)	12	7.2	15.2
Contributions from other migrant relatives	12	7.2	15.2
Left home to work elsewhere (not always remitting money to relatives)	10	6.0	12.7
Total number of migrant households	79	47.6	100
Non-migrant households	87	52.4	-
Total	166	100	-

Table 5.1.2: Categories of migrant households

Almost half of the households in this survey are migrant households, where one or several members have left with the aim to seek work elsewhere. This shows the significance of this household type also for this study group. Those households that receive or send smaller contributions through remittances have been included in this number. These small contributions are very important because many households, especially in the rural areas, heavily depend on them and are only able to survive on this multiple support system (see 5.2.2). Sometimes migrant workers leave children behind, but are not able to contribute to their livelihood. This affects the household

and the resources directly, because children have to be taken care of. At the same time, however, there are less mouths to be fed “at home”, but heavy expenses may also be incurred by those leaving “home”.

The categories of migrant households are characterised as follows:

□ *Migrant women who remit money to their children and parents or other relatives*

Apart from migrant husbands or male partners, women are also increasingly forced to leave their homes to work elsewhere. They are in fact the most visible group in this sample. Migrant women leave their children under the care of mostly their parents, mother, sisters or other relatives. The absolute number of migrant women is higher than reflected by the percentage here. This is due to the fact that often several women of one household work elsewhere and contribute to household resources.

□ *Migrant husbands/partners of one of the household members remitting money*

This category comprises women with a migrant partner (n=13) and also partners of other household members who work elsewhere and contribute to the household. In four cases, these are boyfriends of daughters. They either have children together and/or want to marry at some stage. In two cases, migrant men are brothers-in-law of the interviewee, with their wife and children also living here.

□ *Migrant couples or single parents who leave children with grandparents or other relatives, not always contributing*

In this category, children are left with relatives, in most cases the grandmother or grandparents who get a pension. The migrating couple or single parent might be able to contribute money if they find work. In a number of cases, people are not able to find a job and to contribute to household income. In other cases it seems as if parents escape the responsibility for their children, leaving them with their elders to start their own life.

□ *Contributions from other migrant relatives*

Relatives like brothers, sons, uncles, cousins and others support the household with money. It is not always clear if their children are staying in this household, which could be the reason for remitting money. These contributions do not form the main part of household income, but add to several smaller money contributions or contributions of kind, helping the household to survive.

□ *Left home to work elsewhere, not always remitting money to relatives*

This category consists mainly of interviewees working at one specific mine (9 out of 10 cases). Members of households are classified as migrant workers if it seems that they remit money to their family living elsewhere, and if they have lived here less than five years. Interviewees living here more than five years and not indicating that they visit their family elsewhere or remit money are not classified as migrant households. It is not always clear how many relatives interviewees have at a distance. Only two interviewees indicate that they remit money to relatives. Three other households are themselves recipients of remittances by other relatives.

Only four of the couples or only the man seem to visit other relatives regularly and maybe also contribute something, although this is indicated only in one case. If it is only the man who leaves to visit his family, he might have children and maybe even a wife at a distance, while the woman staying here with him could be a girlfriend or a second wife. This is of course very speculative.

The implications of migrant work on family life were described in chapter 2.2.5. The finding of other studies that women often do not know what their migrant partner earns can also be confirmed in this research. Several women commented on the issue of migrancy in the following vein:

“Men [migrant workers] pay for other women as well. It is not good to live here when the husband works far [away]. He gets a lot of money and only brings a little home. Sometimes when you go to Johannesburg, you will find that he is earning twice than what he tells you. It is better to live with your family where you work.”

“He [my husband] doesn’t tell me how much he gets. I think it is more, but he keeps it for himself. That is the main problem with the men here.”

In these cases, women have a problem with access to the earnings of their partner, with the men often not so concerned about the wellbeing of their family. The view of men on this issue could not be captured, as there were no migrant workers among the male interviewees in this sample.

The issue of control over resources and resource management is dealt with in more detail in chapter 5.3.4.

5.1.2 Gender relations and decision-making

5.1.2.1 “A man is always head” – Concept of head of household

For determining the position of women in households and the impact this has on the food situation, it was necessary to integrate the issue of head of household. As has been pointed out earlier, whenever there is a senior man in the house he will usually be regarded as head of household. This common, male-biased classification does not give any indication about the dynamics or the decision-making in the household sphere (Evans 1992). Therefore, the issue of head of household was addressed by a number of questions in interviews, such as: *Who is regarded as head of household and why? Does this person also make decisions? Are decisions made by this person alone or together with other members of the household? Who decides on issues regarding food and other resources?* Furthermore, if interviewees were not head of household, they were asked if they would decide differently if they were in the position to do so. Out of these criteria, *head of household* was determined and for the purpose of this research defined as *the person who is making decisions mainly regarding resources and directly influences other decisions taken in the house.*

Due to the complexity of gender relations and of relations between people living together, there will naturally be households that cannot be classified clearly into a certain category. These borderline cases have been investigated closely and are described within each category.

The categories are classified as follows:

□ *De jure female-headed: 34.9% (n=58)*

In *de jure* female-headed households, women are considered the legal and customary head (Kennedy & Peters 1992). Women live either alone or with relatives. There is no senior man in the household. This classification conforms to what Evans (1992) calls “female headship by household composition”. Women are called head of household and also make decisions, either alone or involving other household members. Although this classification seems quite clear, several other factors, such as inter-generation dynamics, determine what power the female head can exercise and how power is actually distributed in the household. If for example an elderly woman is head, she might not have enough power over grandchildren who might interfere with her interests of resource allocation, or she might have a lack of knowledge with regard to the needs of children under her care. These cases are investigated in chapters 5.1.3.2 and 5.1.3.5.

□ *De facto female headed: 14.5% (n=24)*

Half of the women in this category (n=12) have a male migrant partner who is absent more than 50% of the time. Of the actual 13 women in the category *women with migrant partner*, one is not classified in this category of *de facto female heads*, as she is living with the parents of her husband and decisions are made *jointly* between them. Therefore, the household was classified as *jointly headed*.

The other 12 women are *de facto* decision-makers despite living in a conjugal relationship or presence of a senior male household member:

- in seven cases, the women are the breadwinners
- in two cases, the husband/partner of the woman is jobless
- in one case, the husband/partner of the woman leaves decisions to her, both are contributing to the income
- in one case, the brother of the interviewee who is called head of household, is actually not present
- in one case, the interviewee is a pensioner who is contributing the main part to the household income. Still, she calls her brother head of household. As he is a migrant worker, with his spouse being *de facto* head, the household is classified in this category.

In contrast to *de jure* female heads, male partners or other male relatives play a more or less important role in decision-making, with the household often depending on their remittances. Still, women are to a certain degree able to decide over available resources in the absence of male partners or relatives. In cases where women are income-earners, the household has “female headship by economic responsibility” (Evans 1992).

Significance of the high percentage of female-headed households

The high percentage of *de jure* female-headed households (34.9%) corresponds with national figures: according to a document presented at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995), at least 35% of South African households are headed by women alone. Another survey of 402 households revealed that 38% of households were *de jure* female-headed (Jones 1999). As is the case in many other African countries, *de jure* and *de facto* female-headed households together form a major proportion of households in South Africa, in this sample almost half of all households (49.5%). Therefore, **Hypothesis 2**, “*Female-headed households form a major proportion among black South African households*” can be confirmed. These figures

are still increasing, especially in countries with strong migration, where up to 60% of households are female-headed (Schug 1998).

□ *Jointly headed: 36.7% (n=61)*

A household is classified as *jointly-headed* if women are involved in decision-making and also indicate that they decide on issues in consultation with their male partner or with another male household member.

□ *Male-headed: 12.7% (n=21)*

In this category, men make decisions mainly alone. Women do not appear in any or only in minor decision-making roles.

- Nine of the female spouses are totally dependent on their partner. They have no income and mainly or solely depend on the money of their partner or on the food he buys. The majority of them do not know what their partner earns.
- Four women have an income of their own, but seem still subordinate to their partner. Two of these partners are male interviewees. One states that "*women shouldn't take over*". He emphasises that he has the final say, indicating that his wife can decide on a few things, like what foods are bought, but not on other issues. Both of them work, but he stresses that he gets the bigger salary. The other male interviewee states that he is head of household and also decides, "*because it is me who had paid lobola for this wife*". Due to the clear tendency of these statements, and also due to the criteria applied to head of household, these households are classified as male-headed, although the women also bring money into the household. In the second case, it is the pension of the wife. Had the women been asked, of course the impression might have been a different one, if the women had claimed to be more involved in decision-making than it appears here.
- Women who have no partner are supported by male relatives. Head of household is either a brother, uncle, nephew or father. It seems as if these women are economically totally dependent. The following comments illustrate their position:

"I don't get any money from my brother. He just sends his son to bring me food."

"I don't know what my brother does with the money."

□ *Head of household not clear: 1.2% (n=2)*

Two interviewees state that there is no head of household:

- one is a woman living with her grown-up children. She gets support from her sister at a distance. Probably because of the absence of a male household member, and furthermore because she is totally dependent on others, she might feel that there is no head. This household was therefore categorised as *de jure female-headed* and the percentage in this category increases therefore to 35.5%.
- in the other case, a young couple lives together, but is not married yet. The woman states that there is no head of household. They seem to make some decisions together and also both herself and her partner seem to make decisions alone. The household was therefore categorised as *jointly-headed* and the percentage in this category increases to 37.3%.

Figure 5.1.2 shows the distribution of categories of head of household and highlights the high percentage of female-headed households.

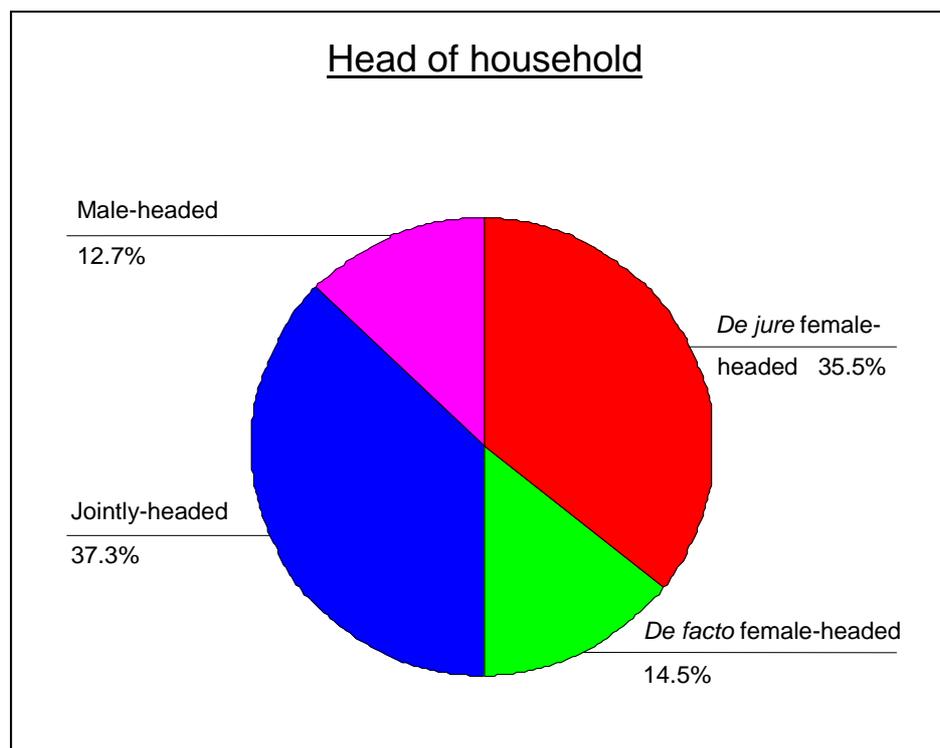


Figure 5.1.2: Head of household (n=166)¹⁷

Interviewees gave the following reasons for regarding someone as head of household¹⁸:

Reason for regarding someone as head of household	Number of answers / (in %)	Partner of woman is called head	Woman is called head	Another male household member is called head
"Man is always head – it's our culture"	45(28.0%)	36	-	9
"Works / gets pension / supports us"	36(22.4%)	26	3	7
"Responsible for everything"	22(13.7%)	6	14	2
"There is no one else" (no husband/partner)	35(21.6%)	-	34*	1
"Oldest in the house"	9(5.6%)	-	7	2
"Owner of the house"	9(5.6%)	2	3	4
Other reasons	5(3.1%)	4	1	-
n (total number of answers)	161(100%)	74	62	25

Table 5.1.3: Reasons for regarding someone as head of household

* These women are either widowed, divorced or separated from their partner

5.1.2.2 "I would not buy useless things" - Differing views and perceptions on household resources

Comments of interviewees stating that they would make different decisions regarding the use of resources give an indication of their position in the household. Only 32 interviewees answered this question, of whom 20 indicated that they would decide differently. It is assumed that in cases where other family members were present, interviewees did not feel free to elaborate on this issue. Some interviewees opened up to these issues only during follow-up visits. There were also a number of interviewees who seemed glad to be able to speak about their concerns and feelings.

□ Differing views on resources within male-headed households:

Six female interviewees in male-headed households state that they would decide differently on the use of resources. This is not surprising, as men clearly dominate in these households and make most of the decisions, with women being involved only to a limited extent.

Reasons for deciding differently on resources (number of answers):

- would use money correctly, not buy useless things; spend less ($n=3$)
- would buy different food to have different food every day ($n=1$)

- would keep children healthy ($n=1$)
- would try to save money ($n=1$)

□ *Differing views on resources within de jure female-headed households:*

Of five interviewees who answered with “*would decide differently*”, one is a son who is ill and depends on his mother and sister. In two cases, women are living with a female relative (cousin, mother) who is making decisions in the house. These interviewees do not always agree, but due to being dependent are not in the position to influence decisions on resource management.

In two other cases, women are recognised as head of household. However, their daughters are the income earners and make decisions about the budget. This gives an indication that also in *de jure* female-headed households there is not necessarily consensus on these matters. It depends on who earns the money and what preferences that person has.

Reasons for deciding differently on resources (number of answers):

- would use money correctly, not buy useless things, spend less ($n=4$)
- would try to save money ($n=2$)

□ *Differing views on resources within jointly-headed households:*

Two of three interviewees who disagree with decisions are daughters who still live with their parents and also depend on them. Therefore, they are not in a position to influence decision-making.

The other interviewee is a woman who stated at another stage in the interview that she and her husband make decisions together. She also contributes to household income. Still, she seems to disagree with certain decisions, indicating that she “*would not buy expensive things*” if she had the choice. As is obvious from their monthly budget, they pay high instalments and because of this comment, the household was classified as *male-dominated*.

Reasons for deciding differently on resources (number of answers):

- would not buy expensive things ($n=1$)
- would not use money for food, but save it to buy a house ($n=1$)
- would try to save money ($n=1$)
- would pay for burial society ($n=1$)

□ *Differing views on resources within de facto female-headed households:*

The six women indicating that they would decide differently are all partners of migrant men, five of them stating that they do not know what their partner earns.

Reasons for deciding differently on resources (number of answers):

- would buy more food/different food to have diversity every day ($n=5$)
- would use money correctly, not for useless things ($n=1$)
- would change life ($n=1$)
- don't know what relatives do with the money ($n=1$)

The different perceptions about decision-making in households give important indications about the position of women and also other members in these households, many of whom are financially dependent and have no own income. These dynamics that, according to Young (1992) are often masked, influence intra-household resource allocation. The implications for the distribution of resources and consequences for the food situation are illustrated in chapters 5.3 and 5.4.

5.1.2.3 Who really decides? A closer look at the distribution of power

To reveal power relations and the real nature of conjugal relationships, a closer look was taken into the issue of household head. From comments of interviewees on decision-making and power relations, the following underlying dynamics within each category of household head came to the fore, as shown in *Table 5.1.4*:

Household Head ($n=107^*$)	<i>Partnership</i>	<i>Men dominate</i>	<i>Although women contribute, men dominate</i>	<i>Women totally dependent on men</i>	<i>Despite presence of senior men, women dominate</i>	<i>Men living alone</i>
Male-headed ($n=21$)	-	29%	19%	43%	-	9.5%
De facto female-headed ($n=24$)	21%	17%	-	12.5%	50%	-
Jointly-headed ($n=62$)	40%	60%	-	-	-	-

Table 5.1.4: Household head and power relations

* *De jure* female-headed households ($n=59$) are excluded from this evaluation as in this category, based on the definition of *de jure* female head, women are the main decision-makers. Still, there are other dynamics very relevant for food security, which are investigated in chapter 5.1.3.

- In over 40% of *male-headed* households, women seem to be totally dependent on men. This implies economic dependency as well as not being included at all in

decision-making. From the following comments it becomes clear that these women have very little control over their lives:

“We have a shortage of food at all times [throughout the month]... I don't get any money from my husband.” (Husband has a regular income, the woman does not know what he earns)

“I don't have food when my husband is not sending money...he drinks hot stuff...If I could work, I would buy more food for the children and change my life...I can't do anything because I have no money.” (A woman with a migrant husband, she does not know what he earns. He sends R700 per month, but not always. This example actually belongs in the category 'de facto-female-headed', but is used here as it illustrates similar situations of women in male-dominated households.)

In other households in this category, women seem to be at least involved in some of the decisions. In 19% of the cases, however, men dominate despite the fact that women earn money and thus contribute to household resources.

- Of *de facto female heads*, in 17% men are dominant, in 12.5% women are totally dependent on money their partner provides and not included in decision-making at all. Most of these cases are to be found among women with a male migrant partner. In half of the cases in this category, women seem to be dominant despite the presence of senior men. Consequently, they have been classified as *de facto female heads*. These women are either breadwinners and/or their partner does not have a job.
- Although women in the category *jointly-headed* claim that they are involved in the decision-making and decide on issues together with their partner, in more than half of these households men seem to be more dominant and women are not on an equal level with men. This comes to the fore in contradictory comments of women at different stages during interviews such as

“I make decisions [...] my husband is the boss, he tells me what to do.”

“My husband gives me money only month's end.”

The examples show that decision-making for these women is often limited to what food is bought, depending on money made available by male partners. This

applies in those households where men are the main or only breadwinners. In households where women have an income, they are also more meaningfully involved in decision-making, although this is not always true. In one case, a woman is doing piece jobs and besides gets irregular remittances from a son. Although she is earning money, her husband, who does not have a job, decides how it is used.

It was also of interest whether there is a significant relationship of women having an occupation and their being involved in the decision-making. It was therefore investigated whether female interviewees in the household category *women living with partner* ($n=62$), after having been classified as *male-headed* ($n=11$), *jointly-headed* ($n=44$), *de facto female-headed* ($n=6$) and *de jure female-headed* ($n=1$), had their own personal income¹⁹. This correlation was not significant. Therefore, **Hypothesis 3b**, “*Women who have occupations will be more involved in decision-making and resource management*” cannot be confirmed if taking as measurement only the statistical correlation. As the data reveal, in male-headed households only 18% of female interviewees have a personal income, while these are half of female interviewees in jointly-headed households and two-thirds of interviewees in *de facto* female-headed households. One can therefore conclude that, although not statistically significant, there is the tendency that women are more involved in decision-making when having their own personal income, as could be shown for women who have a strong position in the household because they earn an income and are therefore *de facto* female heads.

It was decided that for further correlations it would be more useful to work with fewer categories, in order to be able to compare several indicators for food security in different settings. Out of the above sub-categories the following three main categories were therefore established:

- **partnership relationship** between household members, whether it is a couple or several female and male relatives co-operating ($n=30$, 18% of households)
- **men dominate** (sub-categories *men dominate*; *although women contribute men dominate*; *women totally dependent on men*; *men living alone*, $n=65$, 39% of households)
- **women dominate** (*de jure female-headed households*, *despite presence of senior men women dominate*, $n=71$, 43% of households)

Besides the underlying power relations in the household sphere revealed here - in these cases dynamics between men and women - other intra-household dynamics play a crucial role for the decision-making and climate in households. They are investigated in the following chapter.

5.1.3 Composition of households and extended families – Creative ways of dealing with changing circumstances

5.1.3.1 Household types

In chapter 2.2.5 and 5.1.1.4, the disruptive effects of the migrant labour system on family life were described. People have found creative ways of dealing with these circumstances and have constructed other forms of household organisation. Therefore, the composition of households needs to be investigated closely. Who are the people co-operating and in what relation are they standing towards each other? Who is contributing? How are households organised? How many young adolescents and children belong to the household and whose children are they? The following figures give an indication of the occurrence of household types:

- 73.5% of households consist of an *extended family* comprising kin other than parents or children
- only 20.5% of households consist of a *nuclear family* (a parent couple and their children)
- 6.0% of households are *couples without children* or *single individuals*

The small number of nuclear-type households has also been indicated in several anthropological studies (Bank 1997; Kotzé 1993; Van der Waal 1996; Jones 1999).

The following examples of household composition illustrate the wide variety of household types and the absence of fixed stereotypes:

- A young, unmarried couple and their child live with the woman's mother and brother. The couple does not have work and relies on relatives. The mother's pension is the main source of income. The brother contributes with small amounts from his regular income, but uses the major part for his own purposes.
- A woman lives with two sisters, a brother, his wife and child. One of the sisters gets a disability pension, the other sister works as a domestic servant, the interviewee herself gets a bursary. The brother works and contributes to the household with food (sibling household, see chapter 5.1.3.3).
- A couple lives with their four children and the grandmother. They both have work.

- A woman with a migrant husband lives with her parents-in-law, their three own children, two children of her sister-in-law who died (one of them has a one year old baby), two daughters of a brother-in-law who left his wife, after which she also left her children, three children of another sister-in-law whose boyfriend left, and the wife of another brother-in-law with their two children.

As the majority of the households in this sample could only be interviewed once, there is a limitation regarding comments on the specific time frame in which members of these stretched households co-operate. Households might exist only temporarily and change their composition if circumstances change. This can happen if a main contributor to the household income loses his/her job; if an elderly person, on whose pension many people depend passes away; if a single parent dies of an illness related to AIDS – which will be on the increase in the coming years - or if one of two partners dies and the other partner is not able to maintain the household anymore; if partners separate; if fathers abandon their partner and their children; if men or women are seeking migrant labour and have to leave children with grandparents or other relatives, and also other reasons which lead to new choices and compositions of households. The majority of households, however, seem to (co-) operate over longer periods of time, with high mobility between several residential units. This networking is one of the most important coping mechanisms people use for survival (see also 5.2.2, 5.2.9 and 5.4.10). The following case study of one of the key informants illustrates the life-long co-operation of these stretched households:

Angi used to work in the household of a family in Johannesburg for about 20 years. She had to support her mother, her four children and six grandchildren living in a rural area, about five hours drive from Johannesburg. She never spent Christmas at home with her family, as she always had to stay in Johannesburg to look after the house of her employers who travelled overseas during that time. She stopped working in 1999 when her mother became ill and returned home to look after her. Then her oldest daughter Patricia left the house in February 2000 to look for work in Johannesburg, leaving her three small children in the care of her mother and sisters. Patricia's husband also was a migrant worker for many years. They had been seeing each other only once a month or every other month. When Patricia came to Johannesburg, her husband was transferred to Durban, another six hours drive away. Patricia stayed with friends. Her hopes to find work were disappointed, as the job situation had worsened. After several months she returned home.

In the following sub-chapters, the various forms of household organisation are described. They illustrate the complexity of life of the interviewees and the social importance of human organisation.

5.1.3.2 Foster children – A feature of the disruption of families

As a result of the disruption of families and the necessary re-organisation of households, children often grow up without their parents. Foster children are a common feature in South Africa. According to national figures, 13% of young black South African children are living with neither parent, compared to 9% of coloured children and 4% of white and Indian children (CSS 1997). In addition, the high incidence of AIDS will in future leave more and more children without their parents (The Star 22 March 2001; see chapter 2.2.4)

Of the total of 166 households in this sample, 28 households (17%) are taking care of one or more foster children. Four of the households are fostering children due to a number of reasons. Therefore the number of cases (n=32) is higher than the number of households (n=28). In 14 cases, households take care of children and their mothers, whose partners/fathers have abandoned them. In 8 cases, children are taken care of because their mother has died. There seems to be no father to look after them. It is assumed that mothers were either single or that fathers did not support children anymore after the mother had died (see one of the cases below).

In 10 cases, children are taken care of due to the following reasons:

- A couple with own children took in the daughter of the woman's brother, to look after their small twins. The brother is not remitting any money for his daughter. It is possible that he 'gave' this child to the couple partly to alleviate the expenditure for her, and partly to assist the couple in looking after the twins and helping with household chores. Similar examples of foster children who have to earn their stay have been described by Van der Waal (1996) and Kotzé (1993).
- A couple with three own children looks after the daughter of the woman's brother. The brother gave his daughter to his sister when she did not have own children yet. Another reason might be that he was not able to support his child. Later the sister had three own children, but the niece stayed on with them and now has a child herself.
- A woman with a child lives with her mother. She also looks after the child of her brother who lives and works somewhere else. The brother sends R100 per month for the maintenance of the child.

- A woman with a migrant partner looks after (besides her own seven children) two children of a brother who was divorced. He gives R100 per month for the maintenance of the two children.
- The sister of a woman with a migrant partner left her child with the couple after her partner left her. This is one of two visible cases in this study sample where a mother abandoned her child and left it with relatives.
- A couple took in two foster children whose father abandoned them. It is not clear what happened to the mother.
- The brother of a woman who co-operates with her parents abandoned his child and left it here, after the mother of his child died.
- A woman with two own children took in two nieces, possibly daughters of her brother. He comes to the house from time to time to eat here, but does not seem to contribute anything. The nieces probably stay here because the brother cannot or does not want to look after them.

The described cases reflect the practice of fostering children and kinship support networks. In three cases, it is not clear why foster children are taken care of. The reasons might be similar to the ones mentioned above, often to reduce economic pressure in certain sections of the families, or because parents are not able or willing to look after children. This is for example the case if men refuse to accept responsibility for children of their partners that are from prior relationships, as has been described by Bank (1997). Women in these cases try to placate their partner by farming these children out of the house, in most cases probably to their matrikin. They know that the presence of these children undermines the moral claims they have on their partner's earnings. The following case study of a young woman seems to fit exactly into this pattern:



Photos 16 & 17: Sheila and William

When we meet Sheila (21) for the first time in July 1998, she lives in a tiny shack in the road opposite where her mother lives with her stepfather and their three children in a big house. Sheila's father had left when she was still a baby. When her mother engaged with a new partner, Sheila had to leave the house, because *"there were many problems"*. She does not get any support from her mother. William (27), her boyfriend, supports her with maize meal, potatoes, oil and washing powder from money he earns from piece jobs. Food is very limited: *"There is no food in the morning, only sometimes I eat soft porridge, maybe once a week. For lunch there is pap [stiff porridge] and potatoes, sometimes only pap with oil and salt. For supper I eat the same. Meat is there only once a month."* Inside the shack there is only a bed, one chair, a small cupboard with a few plates and cups and the paraffin stove underneath. Her school uniform is on a clothes hanger over the bed. When we visit Sheila again in April 2000, we find her at her mother's house. Sheila now has a baby. Her mother has taken her back into the house because Sheila had become very sick when she was pregnant. William visits her regularly and tries to support her. We cannot speak openly because both her mother and stepfather are present, but it becomes clear that there is still a lot of tension. Sheila leaves a very sad impression.

This example gives another indication of the intensity of the gender struggle for income that has been pointed out in chapter 5.1.1.3. This case is also an example for

the limited resources some people have to live on, which will be illustrated in detail in chapter 5.4.4.

Other reasons why children are moved to other kin include the provision of better schooling or safer and better living conditions for them. Several interviewees indicated that their children were staying with other kin because they were going to school there. In most cases, a certain amount of money is paid to meet their living expenses. Spiegel *et al.* (1996) also found that the desire to secure a good education for children is one of the factors that has served to create 'stretched' income-sharing units.

How the practice of the migrant labour system and the fostering of children affects the emotional bond between mother and child is illustrated in the example of a male key informant, who was sent to live with his grandmother from the age of six:

"My parents didn't want us to grow up in the urban area, where you can easily get to the streets and where there is violence. They both worked in Johannesburg. I remember this time as very hard, emotionally, although my grandmother was very nice to me. It was very difficult to leave my mother, because I felt very close to her. I saw her only during school holidays - it was too far and too expensive to travel on weekends. Still today, I can feel the distance to my mother, caused by this separation. I never felt close to her again."

This is one example of many where children grow up separated from their parents. Besides the illustrated negative psychological effects it has, the wellbeing of foster children also depends on the position they have in the household. If they are in a minor position compared to other children, they might be disadvantaged. This can also affect their food situation, as Van der Waal describes in several examples of children whose parents separated. In these specific cases, children had to stay with their father, because he had a claim on them through his bride-wealth payments (see also chapter 1.3):

"Children were left in the care of another, new wife. They then had reduced privileges, as their half-siblings gained primary access to food, emotional support and so on" (Van der Waal 1996:40).

Furthermore, if these children are deprived of care, they might also have severe disadvantages. In *de jure* female-headed households in Kenya and Malawi, with women heads often being grandmothers, it was found that children had a higher

prevalence of disease and lower proportion of caloric intake than in *de facto* female-headed households, where women were mostly the mothers of the children (Kennedy & Peters 1992:1083). Possible reasons are that grandmothers might not have the same authority or determination for children's wellbeing as mothers have. Therefore, in these cases the fact that a woman heads the household seems to be less important than the relationship between household head and children (see also 5.1.3.5 and 5.4.6).

Foster children often also have to fulfil several duties, as is the reality for most black South African children. This includes taking care of smaller children, helping with household chores or looking after livestock. In many cases, children at a very early age already have the obligations of adults. This excessive demand can lead to severe neglect of younger children, including negative effects on the food situation. In some cases it even leads to violence. Van der Waal (1996:44) describes this in one of his case studies of two foster children, who were sent to live with their mother's sister (Maggy) when their parents separated and their mother began working:

“Lucky (aged seven) herded Maggy's cattle and goats after school and four-year-old Violet often had to watch over them during school hours even though, at her age, she could hardly herd them at all. In April 1990 the children's 12-year-old cousin visited and was put in charge while Maggy was away on her business for some days. One day he sent Violet to herd the goats home from pasture. When they were not all back by sunset, he went to look for Violet and the goats. Fearing Maggy's wrath he assaulted Violet and left her lying in the veld, where she died.”

In several instances, we could observe very young children carrying around even younger children. In one of these cases, the child 'looking after' a baby was only about four or five years old. When the baby started crying, the child did not know what to do and put it down on a blanket in the sun. This might be a superficial observation, but it could still be an indication of the responsibility put on small children.

Also parents are emotionally very negatively affected by the separation from their children. The following is a comment of a woman who gave her child to her mother-in-law. She and her boyfriend live with her stepfather, her mother and the stepfather's brother's son and his wife. She made a very sad and tense impression:

“My child is one year and eight month old. It stays with the mother of my boyfriend. They want to make it ‘big’. They can take better care for my child. It is not a good situation where I stay, so I decided to give the child a better place to live.”

This comment illustrates that parents sometimes have no other choice but to give their children into the care of someone else, due to a lack of food or other resources or due to reasons such as tension or violence at home.

5.1.3.3 Sibling households: Places of mutual support

A sibling household is a household where two or more siblings co-operate in sharing resources and responsibilities. The formation and growing number of sibling households is an answer to changing social circumstances and a means of coping with these circumstances and conditions (Niehaus 1994). While absent in the 1970s, sibling-based-units comprised about 10% of households in certain areas of South Africa by the mid-1990s (Bank 1997).

In this sample, 7% are *sibling households*. In most of these households there are also one or more children. In other households, mothers, who are not main income earners and as a result also not (main) decision-makers, co-operate with several of their children. Therefore, these households are not regarded as matrifocal, but as *based on siblingship*. In total, sibling households then constitute 13% of households in this sample. Characteristics of households *based on siblingship* are:

- in four cases the mother gets a pension and one or several of her children have jobs and contribute to household income. As the women pensioners contribute considerably, seem to be involved in decisions and are moreover regarded as head, these households remain *de jure* female-headed households.
- in five other cases, women co-operate with daughters or sons who are earning the main income and also mainly make decisions. In three cases, these are daughters and therefore the households also are *de jure* female-headed. In one case a son contributes money, but the mother is doing piece jobs and claims to make most of the decisions. Therefore, this household was classified as jointly headed.

The following examples illustrate the organisation of sibling households:

Constance (27) is looking after six children, aged seven to sixteen, of her two sisters who work in Johannesburg. They bring R300 home every month when they visit. Also a brother sends R300 every month. He visits occasionally.

5.1 Households and social relations: the basis for investigation on household food security141

Catherine (22) lives with her two sisters and a brother, who stays with his wife and child in another shack in the yard. One sister gets a disability grant, the other sister is working as a domestic servant. Catherine gets a bursary. The brother also has a job and contributes with food. The oldest sister is regarded as head of this household, but the three sisters seem to make decisions together and share their resources.

Anna is in her mid fifties. Her husband died two years ago. She lives with her sister who gets a disability pension. Anna has cattle and sheep. They share their resources, in turn Anna is looking after her sister. She also takes care of three grandchildren, aged 11, 13 and 15. Their mothers work in Johannesburg and send R300 home every month. They see their children only during school holidays. Anna's brother took in two of her sons to attend school in Johannesburg.

These cases show the special bond of sibling households. Also the role of men in these households seems to be different and more co-operative than in conjugal relationships. In the case of Catherine, the oldest sister is regarded as head, although her brother is living on the same stand. Also, he contributes with food, which points to shared responsibility. In the case of Constance, the brother contributes money regularly although he lives at a distance. Still, decisions are made by the three sisters.

Niehaus (1994) argues that in domestic relations in Southern Africa, where conjugal bonds are exceptionally formal - husbands are considered providers and wives housekeepers - sibling relations in contrast are less hierarchical and much more relaxed. He found that numerically sibling ties occurred more frequently than conjugal bonds. Similarly, Bank (1997) found that moral bonds between siblings are usually strong and based on mutual support. The general approach to household resource allocation is one of shared responsibility. Usually the most senior woman or sibling, irrespective of gender, takes formal responsibility of the household. Niehaus relates the solidarity among siblings to the experience of childhood socialisation in the context of labour migration. As has been described previously, children are often sent to relatives or are left at home without being under the care of adults. The fact that many domestic and child-care tasks are transferred from parents to older children is also evident in this research. These conditions force children to develop great independence from their parents and to foster close bonds among themselves. As Niehaus (1994) also points out, it would be dangerous to 'romanticise' the nature of siblingship or to suggest that the relations between siblings are free of tension. He still suggests that this household type demands recognition because it often has advantages over conjugal relationship. The assumption can be confirmed here.

Strong bonds and sharing of resources is not always the case in sibling-based households, though: if mothers are financially dependent on their children and are not able to contribute, they are not or only marginally involved in decision-making over resources. Here, inter-generation dynamics play a role. This is illustrated by the comment of a woman who lives with her two daughters and their two children, both daughters are working:

“I would buy less things...It bothers me that I have no [own] money and that I don't have my own house.”

In another case, a woman whose husband died is supported by her brother. She lives in a nearby shack. It seems as if in return for being supported she is looking after two children of her sister who abandoned them. She is in a very dependent position, which she expresses as follows:

“I don't have work and I don't get a pension.... I don't get any money from my brother. He just sends his son to bring me food.”

In these cases, income earners do not include other household members in household decisions. There are different opinions regarding how resources should be used. On the other hand, in both of the cases support given by relatives enables these women to survive. This is another indication of existing social networks, where households take care of members who otherwise would probably not be able to sustain themselves. The functioning of social networks is described in more detail in chapter 5.4.9 and 5.4.10.

5.1.3.4 Grown up sons and daughters - Depending on their elders

In 44.6% of households, sons and daughters over twenty years of age are still living “at home”, either with their parents or with their mother, father, uncle, aunt or other elders. Most of them are financially dependent, except for 13 daughters and 4 sons, who contribute money or food, but are not main or sole providers. In most cases there are several dependent children in the household. *Table 5.1.5* shows how they distribute to different categories of household headship.

Household head	Number of households with dependant adolescents > 20 years	% of household head
<i>De jure</i> female headed n=59	32	54.2%
<i>De facto</i> female-headed n=24	11	45.8%
Jointly headed n=62	24	38.7%
Male-headed n=21	7	33.3%
total	74	-

Table 5.1.5: Households with dependent children over the age of twenty according to head of household

De jure female-headed households are the category with the largest proportion of dependent adolescents. Male-headed households have the smallest proportion, although dependent adolescents still can be found in one-third of all male-headed households. As this study sample consists mainly of women, those households where fathers are taking care of children have not been picked up, but this does not mean that they do not exist.

As was revealed within the socio-demographic questionnaire, quite a number of adolescents over the age of twenty still go to school. According to an investigation by Jones (1999), continued school attendance into their twenties accounted for 28% of unemployed adults. Budlender (2000) moreover points out that young women and men often stay at school because of high unemployment rates and the lack of alternatives (see also 2.1.2). Therefore, these figures also reflect the lack of jobs and hence economic dependency on parents or other relatives. The majority of adolescents in this sample were unmarried daughters with children whose partners in most cases left them. One of the reasons why some women want to stay at their parental home, apart from financial security, might be that they are then able to work or to continue with their schooling. This allows them to be more independent. The fact that parents are extremely supportive of their daughter's ambitions is confirmed by Stadler (1993). He found that parents in many cases offer financial support, provide accommodation for their unmarried daughters and foster their daughter's children conceived prior to marriage. These reasons make it understandable that women often prefer to co-reside with their parents instead of marrying, as was

described in chapter 5.1.1.3. For women, it is also more acceptable to stay at home and care for elders and children than for men (Brown 1996:150ff).

The underlying circumstances – mostly economic constraints – that force grown-up sons to stay at home were also described in chapter 5.1.1.3.

The specific position of grown-up sons and daughters in *de jure* female-headed households was further investigated. In 14 of the 32 *de jure* female-headed households 21 sons are living in the same household, with their age ranging from 20-45 (average age: 28.5). Only one of them contributes to household resources with money. In one case, the girlfriend of a son has a piece job and contributes. In seven of these households, the pension of a grandmother is the only or main source of income. In comparison, in 20 of the *de jure* female-headed households 25 daughters are living in the house, with the age ranging from 23-42 (average age: 29.4). Here, nine of the daughters are contributing with money, 16 of them have children. In four cases, the daughters also belong to the above-mentioned households where the pension is the only source of income.

An in-depth investigation into the role of subordinate men in female-headed households was done by Brown (1996). She found that young men are in a secondary position, due to still being students, having no incomes and not being able to set up a homestead on their own. Also Burnett (1999) found in her study on gang violence that unemployed young men often feel relatively powerless to exercise control over their lives. They can neither play the role of a provider nor contributor to the income of a household and therefore engage in “alternative economic activities” in gangs in order to gain access to material resources. In the eyes of many, the government has failed to provide jobs, and crime is the only business providing jobs:

“... we can't always depend on our parents. Many of them don't work. We end up being tempted (by crime)” (Mail & Guardian 1998a).

As a result of a subordinate position in the household, feelings of frustration, aggression and worthlessness arise, especially in the patriarchally organised African homestead (see 1.3). This can result in alcohol abuse and domestic violence. Still, these men are accepted or even wanted in female households for reasons of protection, because

“ ... there is no doubt that women living alone are very vulnerable in an area where rape, theft and other forms of crime are widespread” (Brown 1996:76).

Budlender (2000:134) also stresses the fact that there is often conflict within households, mostly over household resources:

“Conflict over food and money within the family often results in violence.”

Also in this research, there were indications of tension between members of the household over resources in several cases. The effect this can have on the food situation will be illustrated in chapter 5.4.9.

Examples of men holding back parts of their income for themselves were described in chapter 5.1.1.3. Still, there are many cases, where, apart from migrant husbands or partners, men take financial responsibilities towards their kin. These are mostly sons or brothers who have left home and still contribute money to their parents and siblings. Financial support is still traditionally expected of sons, especially when they are relatively well off (Van der Vliet 1991). This is illustrated in the following example of a male interviewee:

“I send my parents and my brothers and sisters, who are still living at home, R700 every month, because none of them has work. It is like this in our culture.”

5.1.3.5 ‘Granny households’ – Places of survival and conflict

A *pension household* is defined here as a household with the pension comprising more than 50% of the income of that functioning unit.

Table 5.1.6 shows the frequency of pension households in this sample:

<i>Households receiving pension</i>	<i>No of households</i>	<i>% of households</i>
Pension households (pension \geq 50% of income)	39	23.5%
Other households receiving pension (pension < 50% of income)	15	9%
Total number of households receiving pension	54	32.5%
Households without pension	112	67.5%
Total number of households	166	100%

Table 5.1.6: Pension households

Almost a quarter of households in this study are *pension households*, supporting the assumption that this is a very common household type as is also confirmed by other studies (Breslin *et al.* 1997; Jones 1999).

Besides definite benefits pension payments provide, there are a number of negative consequences. Pension households include large numbers of dependants, often grandchildren and great-grandchildren. According to Budlender (2000:127), 60% of black South African households with pensioners are three-generation households with children present. Roughly one-third of all children aged 4 or under are in households receiving pension, and the percentage of children living with pensioners is even higher in the poorer quintiles. The amount of such pension, however, is too low to help household members to really achieve economic amelioration. Some households are dependent on the pension as their only or main source of income. These households are very fragile and often dissolve when the pensioner dies. In the worst case, there are no other support systems and members of these dissolving households will fall deeper into poverty and destitution. This deterioration often very negatively affects young children and adolescents.

Another critical issue is the conflict that can arise over the pension money. It seems as if in some cases pensioners are exploited by their children and grandchildren. The situation is reflected in the following comments of female pensioners, whose pension is the only source of income in these households:

"I worry about my house, the rooms are too small. My children have no job, so they take space." (A woman with three children and nine grandchildren, none of them has a job)

"The children are on the streets and waste money. I even called the police to take care of them. Since my husband died, I am alone and afraid to look after them. I would like my children to obey me." (A woman with three children aged 19-27 years)

"I don't have enough money to buy all the food we need. I'm afraid my children will steal to get food if there's nothing left. If my children could get some work we could afford to buy more food." (A woman with two sons, the girlfriend of one son and their child. The girlfriend started a piece job and might be able to contribute some money)

"The children depend on me to provide for them. There is not enough money, and it's only me who buys the groceries. My boys should get jobs, that's all I want. When they get jobs they can help me." (A woman with four sons aged 23-28)

5.1 Households and social relations: the basis for investigation on household food security147

"I am worried because the children will become thieves. I am the only one who gets money at home. My children should get jobs and help us with money." (A woman with five children and two grandchildren)

From the comments it is clear that these women are very worried about their food and general situation. It also becomes clear, that although these households have been classified as *de jure* female-headed, and although the women pensioners are the main providers, they often struggle to have control over their money. In one of the above cases, a woman said that her pension money is finished on the day she receives it, after buying groceries and paying for everything. She is afraid that money will be "lost" or wasted by her children, so she rather buys food to have it in the house. While some of these elderly women still seem to have "final" authority over the money, others might not. These findings are confirmed in interviews with key informants of a community project under the auspices of the Welfare Department (see 4.6). They reported that one of the biggest problems in their community is that pensioners are abused by their offspring and have no control over their pension money:

"Many of the elderly have to struggle for their pensions. Often the younger household members take it away from them, sometimes by force. After collecting the pension, some of the pensioners are robbed of their money on their way home. We had one old woman whose arm was hurt. Her daughter tried to grab the money from her. We called the police and the daughter got arrested for six months. [...] We go to the community hall on pension day and do the shopping with some of the pensioners so that the money is used for food and can't be taken away from them." (Personal communication with project workers and chairperson, April 2000)

The report on 'Poverty and inequality in South Africa' confirms that robbery at pension pay points is a relatively frequent occurrence (Budlender 2000:127). The limited power of senior women was also described by Niehaus (1994:118) who found that

"Women such as pensioners or grandmothers may have little domestic authority or influence in decision-making processes."

Similarly, Brown (1996) found that elderly women who provided income through their pension were exploited and often physically abused, sometimes even killed by other members of the household. From one of the supervisors of Brown I learned that after

she had finished her research, one of her interviewees, an elderly woman, was killed by her grandson as a result of conflict that arose over her pension (Bujis, personal communication May 2000). In research carried out by Operation Hunger the issue of conflict between pensioners and other household members was consistently a topic throughout the discussion groups (Breslin & Delius 1996).

One of the problems the above project faces that undermines efforts to assist the elderly is that other household members try to create a bad reputation against the project. The chairperson described it as follows:

“The elderly are told not to come here, because we [the project people] will take their money. They are made to believe that there is witchcraft going on here. They don’t want the old people to be under our influence, because then they might lose control over them and their money.”

Mistrust and tension also occur in households with male pensioners, as is documented in this as well as in other projects (Breslin & Delius 1996). The volunteers reported several cases of male elders who were admitted to hospital because of an unbalanced diet. This was in one case due to a child taking away the pension. In another case the pensioner was too weak to cook and to look after himself, with none of the other household members caring for him. If volunteers find severe neglect, they report this to social workers. Some cases are handed over to psychologists or even to the police. If the elderly seem not to be able to help themselves and are not being helped by other members of the household, they are advised to move to old age homes, so that they can be looked after. In these cases, power relations within households are not an issue of gender, but of mere struggle about resources, the young taking advantage of the weakness and vulnerability of the elderly.

In this chapter, the variety of household categories and the stretching of households over several domestic units were illustrated. Therefore, **Hypothesis 1**, *“There is high fluidity of households and other residential units and a wide variety of household categories exist”* can be confirmed.

5.1.4 Overview

From the evaluation of the composition and organisation of households it is clear that there is a need for thorough investigation in this sphere. Households are not homogeneous entities as is still often assumed. There are a wide variety of

household organisations with very specific characteristics. The definition of household used here is based on anthropological work that takes into account functional characteristics of households. Organisation is then shifted to the sharing of resources with the aim of maintaining domestic units. This re-organisation is due to grossly unequal configurations of capital, labour supply, sectoral development and economic and political privilege during the colonial setup and the apartheid era. Nowadays several other factors add to the disruption and disorganisation of families, among them high or endemic unemployment, poverty and increasing societal violence.

The change of composition of families and households is a worldwide phenomenon (Moore 1994). What is specific in this study sample and in the South African context is that households on the one hand are constantly changing and very fluid and stretched over space, but on the other hand are quite stable over time. In this study population it is found that resources-sharing units often exist over long periods of time, if not sometimes life-long. This has also been confirmed by other studies. Very “loose” households as described by Ross (1993) occur only seldom.

The practice of migrant labour, increasing poverty and unemployment force large numbers of black South African men and women to live apart from their partners and families. As a result, there is a strikingly high occurrence of disrupted families. This situation negatively affects the food situation of many ordinary people, as will be shown in chapter 5.4. On the other hand, people have found amazingly creative ways of dealing with adverse situations. As studies of anthropologists indicate, people, despite their difficult circumstances, survive and live their lives in a meaningful way. Although this is true, these families still have to be regarded as disrupted and most likely live far from the ideals they have for family life. It can also be questioned whether people would not prefer to live in smaller, nuclear units. The small number of nuclear-type households has also been indicated in several other anthropological studies (Bank 1997; Kotzé 1993; Van der Waal 1996; Jones 1999). The reality is that the reliance on and fostering of social ties and networks that are linked to extended households is of crucial significance. Economic constraints do not allow most people to exist as independent, economically self-sufficient nuclear families, as is mostly the case in affluent societies (Kotzé 1993:57). Even most of the co-residing nuclear families in this sample have ties and links with family members at a distance and are engaged in various sorts of networking. Over 70% of the households investigated in this study consist of extended families, comprising kin other than parents and children. In general, kinship links were found to be very important. They entitle people to have access to resources of the household they

belong to. These findings are congruent with evidence from the African continent as a whole, suggesting

“...that people continue to make use of kinship and may do so specifically in the face of dislocation caused by economic and political disadvantage” (Moore 1994:138-39).

Also in Europe and especially in Germany, very similar household forms to those revealed here existed during and after the Second World War. With men being absent at war or imprisoned, women had to cope with extreme poverty and had to find other support networks. When the economic situation improved, nuclear household units were re-established (Lüsckha 1989).

In this investigation it was not always possible to clearly categorize households as migrant or non-migrant, and not all of the networks and relationships could be revealed. For that, one would have to observe households in depth over a longer period of time. The data obtained here, however, indicates the high occurrence of migrant households and the complexity of the migrant labour system, as well as the impact it has on family life and human relationships. The specific effects the migrant labour system has on issues such as resource management and the food situation are illustrated in chapters 5.4.3 and 5.4, respectively.

One of the consequences of the migrant labour system and the resulting re-organisation of households and disruption of families is the large number of foster children who grow up without their parents. In many cases, children are sent away for their own benefit, due to limited resources, and sometimes taken care of by relatives due to disruptions at home. In some cases it seems as if parents escape their responsibility for their children, by leaving them with their kin to give themselves the opportunity to be independent. In these desperate circumstances, leaving children and creating new opportunities might for some people seem to be the only way out of chronic destitution prevailing at home. The network of relatives available for fostering children is on the one hand a blessing for these children, on the other hand it often leaves them at the mercy of relatives. The wellbeing or suffering of foster children will always depend on specific circumstances and also on their position in the household. The negative emotional state of foster children and parents who have to give their children into the care of someone else came to the fore in personal comments of interviewees, but could not be investigated in detail. One must be aware of the

problems and the emotional deprivation this has for children and their mothers or parents, respectively.

Out of the situation of domestic fluidity and marital instability other forms of household organisation emerge. Some of them function extremely well, while others are very weak. Sibling households play an important role in this regard, being exemplary of strong family bonds and good cooperation. Niehaus (1994) suggests that in Southern Africa it is rather siblings who stay together while conjugal pairs are more easily dispersed. Sibling households can constitute a viable alternative principle for domestic re-organisation, and can moreover be important as a complementary source of solidarity and mutual assistance in support of existing conjugal bonds. Even male siblings seem to be more co-operative than is the case in conjugal unions, as was illustrated in this study.

Good co-operation was especially found if several female relatives co-operate with the aim of maintaining the household. These can be sisters, mothers and daughters, and also grandmothers looking after grandchildren with migrant daughters being away at work. Jones (1999) also supports the latter observation. Where there is a partnership relationship between a couple, there is also an attitude of support and co-operation within the household, which will reflect among other factors in the decision-making (see 5.3).

One of the alternative household organisations that is revealed here and in other studies as being very weak and vulnerable is the pension household. The pension system contributes to the emergence of so-called *granny-households*. They often include a large number of dependants, for whom the pension is often the only source of income. Due to inter-generation dynamics and the destitute state of these households, there is often conflict and tension, mostly over scarce resources. If the pensioner dies, this support base collapses and members of these households might be subject to abject poverty and destitution.

The high percentage of female-headed households and single women referred to, is partly the result of social forces that cannot be controlled by ordinary people, but also the result of choice by women as a feminist control mechanism. Staying single appears to be increasingly a coping strategy for some women. This is confirmed by several other authors (Bank 1997; Jones 1999; Stadler 1993; Van der Vliet 1991). According to Moore (1994), the growing reluctance of women to marry seems, among other factors, linked to their inability to control resources within conjugal unions. The advantage singleness provides for these women is often a better

economic situation and results in better resource management which will benefit their food situation and their situation of general wellbeing.

Whether women decide to live singly rather than in a partnership depends on several factors, most importantly on their economic situation. This was documented by the above authors. The case studies of women who choose to remain single in this study reveal that they are women who either have regular incomes, a network of siblings or other relatives or a mother or parents who support them. Also, all of these women have had negative experiences with conjugal relationships. In general, the tendency among most young women is probably still to find a partner and to found a family. The hope that once they are pregnant their boyfriends will marry them is in many cases not fulfilled. This is indicated by the strikingly large number of illegitimate children and young single mothers in the study area.

To young men, marriage is not attractive and is often delayed. This is based on evidence gained here and from several other studies. This attitude can be ascribed, besides the economic burden of marriage, to men's changing role as fathers and providers and a shift in authority and power relations within families away from men (Bank 1994). Still, it does not prevent them from fathering children, but also means that they are less likely to support these children. Little is known about men who have left their families. Anecdotal evidence indicates that they establish other conjugal units after abandoning their first families, whether formalised by law or not (Moore 1994).

Gender relations appear to be crucial for intra-household dynamics. At first sight, male dominance is still very prevalent. Investigations into the issue of head of household indicate that they are mostly male-biased. This is expressed by the fact that a man will in most cases automatically be regarded as head of a household. In-depth investigation into power relations reveals that it can also be women, despite the presence of senior men, who may act as head. In most cases, though, men are dominant. This is true also in the majority of conjugal relationships where there seem to be joint decisions on resource management. The real power women have within the household if they are the head or wage earner is debatable. As was shown in case studies, elderly women with a pension, who are classified as *de jure* female heads according to the criteria applied here - being the person who "earns" money, makes decisions and is called head - often do not have significant control over their pensions. The same restraint is also true for male pensioners, as has been revealed in several other studies. It also became evident that even if women are income earners, it does not necessarily mean that they are also equally involved in decision-

making. Still, although this is not statistically significant, a tendency can be seen that in conjugal relationships women are more involved in decision-making when they have their own personal income. Women without a male partner, if they are not cooperating with female relatives or siblings, often remain under the control of other male kin of the same household. All of these insights are congruent with other studies into household composition and dynamics undertaken in South Africa (Moore 1994).

Perceptions of interviewees regarding decision-making indicate different opinions regarding the distribution and use of resources mostly in male-dominated households. The fewer cases that are found in *de jure* female-headed households are household members who are dependent on income-earners and are not involved in decision-making. Considering intra-household resource distribution and food security, conflicts over scarce resources are important issues, as is illustrated in several examples and is also shown in other investigations (Breslin *et al.* 1997; Brown 1996; Bank 1997; Ross 1993). There are numerous indications of tension within households that can lead to violence. This is especially the case in pension households, with the elderly being too weak and vulnerable to maintain control over their money. The violent death of household members is one of the most severe shocks that can cause vulnerable households to become even more poverty-stricken (Budlender 2000:133). A study with a different approach should focus even more on these crucial and sensitive issues. The findings clearly show that only in-depth investigation that includes personal comments and perceptions of people can reveal underlying and hidden dynamics within households and give a true picture of the situation.

Apart from power relations between the genders, the general situation in households is shaped by inter-generation and other intra-household dynamics. Although gender relations are crucial for the balance and survival of households, it became clear during the research process that other dynamics are often even more important, depending on the organisation of the specific household. To what extent these dynamics in the different forms of household organisation impact on the management of resources and on the food situation is discussed in chapters 5.3 and 5.4, respectively.

It is obvious that gender relations and authority and power relations within families and households are changing. This goes hand in hand with the previously mentioned shift in the composition of families and could be one of its underlying

mechanisms, besides economic and other wider national and global factors playing a role. As Cock concludes in her study of domestic workers, black women in South Africa, other than their white mainly middle-class employers, developed

“ ... a much greater ‘feminist consciousness’ or insight into discriminations against women” (Cock 1980:116).

This consciousness translated into the deliberate decision not to marry or not to re-marry if widowed or divorced (Van der Vliet 1984). This could also be shown in this research. Women more and more choose other options than marriage, such as staying with their parents, mother or siblings. This has several advantages: they have a home, feel secure and also have a place for their often fatherless children. Furthermore, they are often able to continue their education or work and through this might achieve a state of financial independence. The situation is very different for men who are expected to leave the house, marry and put up a homestead. Considering these structures, it can well be understood that the motivation for young men to look after the household of their mother/parents will often not be the same as for women.

As Moore (1994) concludes, marital conflict and the break-down of conjugal relationships do not lead to the breakdown of kinship, but result in a significant realignment of kinship-based resource systems, producing new household forms.

In future investigations of underlying factors linked to food security, “alternatively constructed households” and the resultant wide networks must be taken into account. They give insights into the organisation of these households and how they manage their resources. No matter how complicated these networks might be - if they are not recognised, sound knowledge about households and social systems cannot be obtained.

5.2 Socio-economic situation, infrastructure and basic facilities

Part of the following data has been gained both from the qualitative interview on household food security and the quantitative socio-demographic questionnaire, evaluated for the sub-sample investigated in this study. As was already indicated in chapter 4.5, the abbreviations **HFSI** will be used for data obtained with the interview on household food security or **HFS** for this sample population, and **SDQ** for data obtained with the socio-demographic questionnaire. As far as data is available, figures obtained in this sample are presented in comparison with the THUSA population and with national figures.

5.2.1 “Jobs and money are too little” - Employment, income sources and total household income

□ *Employment and income sources*

Interviewees were asked what their original occupation was, whether they had a job at that moment and how regular their employment was. They were also asked whether there were other sources of income. Of the total of 166 interviewees, 57% indicate that they have a *personal income*. Of these, 28% indicate that they have a job, with only 16% of them having regular work. The others are working part time (5%) or have piece jobs (6%). The majority (over 60%) are doing some kind of manual work, such as domestic work, farm work or gardening. Of the interviewees who indicate that they have an income, but no job, 13% are receiving a pension. The remaining interviewees have other sources of income, such as selling of livestock or running small businesses such as tuck shops, making clothes or driving a taxi.

It has to be taken into account that the majority of interviewees in the sub-sample on household food security are women (93%). Also, the research was done during weekdays when most people who are working could not be reached. For the classification into income groups these circumstances still do not matter, because the important figure is *total household income*, which could be evaluated in the absence of other working members of the household.

In comparison, 41% of the THUSA population (n=1843) indicate that they have a job at the moment, with 28% of them having regular employment. Therefore, more people are employed in the larger study population. The gender distribution is 57% female interviewees and 43% male interviewees.

Several interviewees comment on the difficulties of unemployment:

“Life nowadays is more difficult than in the past. After the elections [in 1994] my husband lost his job. It has been four years that he is unemployed.”

“My husband had work before the elections. After them jobs got cut and my husband lost his job and could not find one since.”

“In the new South Africa, things got worse because my husband and me work for less money now, we are underpaid. Many people got retrenched, and now we suffer.”

“There used to be jobs everywhere – in the old days, when you were going to Jo’burg, you were sure that you could get work. Nowadays, you go there and come back without work.”

These comments illustrate the frustration of people and the limited prospects they have. This development is confirmed in the South African Participatory Poverty Assessment, where interviewees explicitly commented

“ ... that male access to regular formal employment had been reduced, and that this was threatening the survival mechanisms of households” (Tørres *et al.* 2000:82).

□ *Total household income*

The majority of households (75%) are in the low-income categories, having less than R1 000 per month. These figures correspond well with the 1998 THUSA population (78.1% with incomes < R1 000 per month) and the total THUSA population (74.3% with incomes < R1 000 per month) (see 4.5)²⁰. As was illustrated in chapter 4.5, as a result of in-depth interviews by means of the HFS interview, remittances and smaller money contributions through other sources of income could be revealed more accurately than with the use of the SDQ. These alternative incomes can be ascribed to the informal sector that was mentioned earlier. The economic contribution coming from informal sector activities is difficult to quantify, though. Mostly it is women who are involved in the informal sector (Jones 1999). The fact that income earned from piece jobs often remains hidden in quantitative investigations is illustrated in the following example:



Photo 18: Miriam, doing the washing for other people in front of her shack

When we interview Miriam in June 1998 on household food security, she indicates that she is doing the washing for other people in the location, while stating in the SDQ that she does not have a job or an income of her own. These contradictory statements might be due to the formulation in the SDQ, asking “do you have a job at the moment?”, as people do not regard a piece job as a proper job. When we visit Miriam for a second time in July 1998, she is busy doing the washing for someone else in front of her shack. When we come for the third time in December 1998, Miriam is not at home. Her daughter tells us that her mother is again looking for some piece jobs. When we see Miriam again in April 2000, she is not able to do washing because she broke her arm. She now depends on money earned by her two sons (see also 5.4.9)

So in fact, Miriam is frequently doing piece jobs. If she is doing the washing on three to four days per week, for R5 per washing load, she earns at least R15-20 per week. This would add up to about R65–100 per month. This additional income contributes considerably to household resources and enables her to buy food or other commodities. This example demonstrates that people manage to engage in various activities and find niches that enable them to adapt to situations of limited resources. This engaging in the informal sector is one of the explanations for expenses being sometimes higher than “formal” incomes (see 5.3.1).

□ *Household income according to household categories*

Comparing household categories according to total household income, the following figures are revealed:

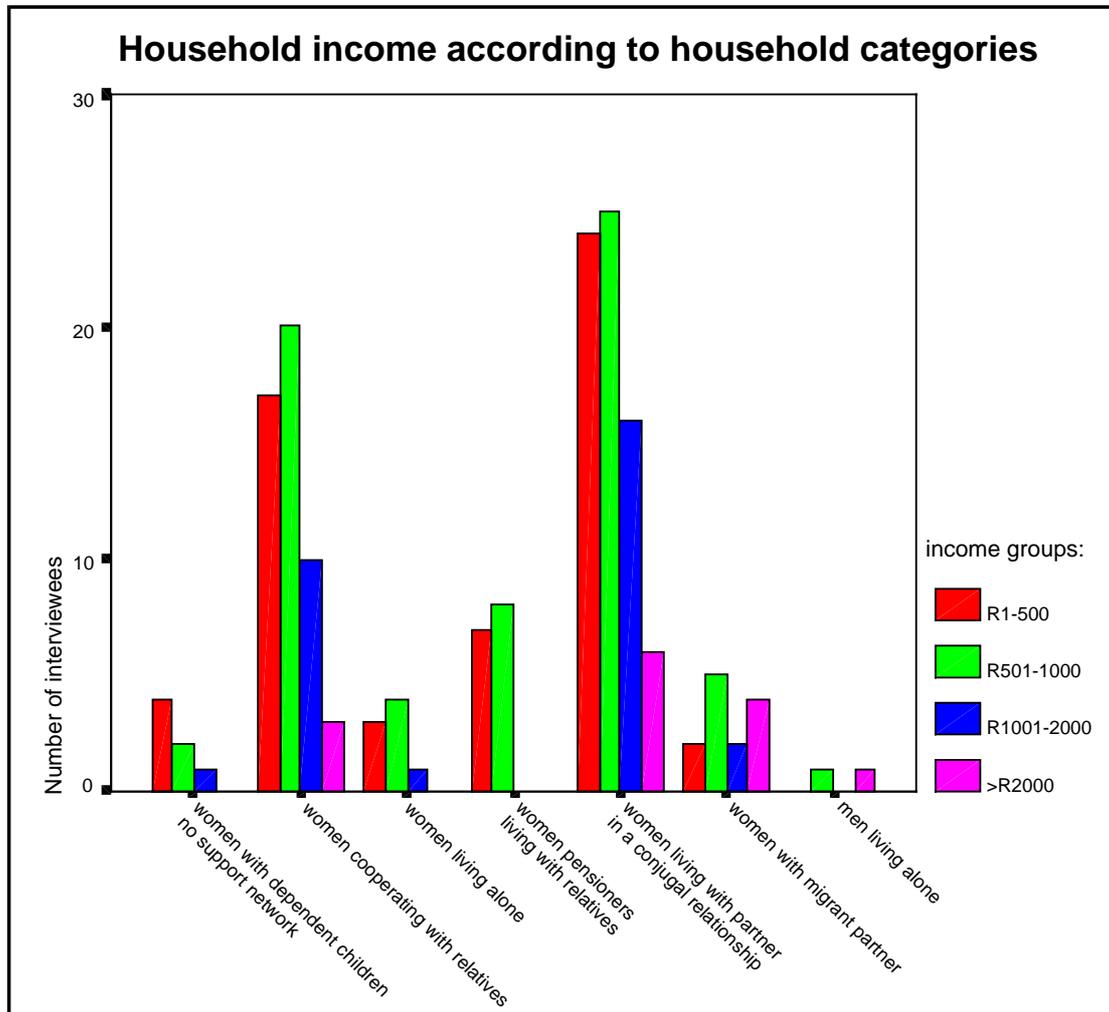


Figure 5.2.1: Household income according to household categories (n=166)

- Higher incomes, R1 001-2 000 and above R2 000 per month, are found in the categories of *women living with a partner in a conjugal relationship*, *women with a migrant partner* and *women co-operating with relatives*. In the latter cases, mostly a male relative like the father, brother, uncle or son is contributing to the household income.
- In the category *women pensioners* incomes are below R1 000 per month. In almost half of the cases, the income is below R500, which means that the pension is the only source of income.
- In the category *women with a migrant partner*, more than 50% of the interviewees indicate that they have “incomes” < R1 000 per month. Also about half of the women indicate that they would decide differently over resources, if they were in

a position to do so, and that they do not know how much their partner earns. This corroborates the assessment that some of these men are holding back parts of their income instead of contributing fully to the household. Therefore, the amount interviewees indicate is the *total contribution* to household income, but not the *true income* of their partner (see also 5.1.1.4).

- Women living alone and women with dependent children can be found in the income category < R1 000, except for one case observed in each category.

According to this data, women who do not live with a partner can be found in the lower income categories. Comparisons of mean household income and per capita income (total household income divided by present household members) shows, though, that per capita incomes are not always higher if women cooperate with men. Here, household size plays a role, as will be illustrated in the next sub-chapter.

<i>Household category (n=100)</i>	<i>Mean household income in Rand</i>	<i>Per capita income in Rand</i>
Women with children (n=5)	654	181
Women co-operating with relatives (n=26)	606	110
Women living alone (n=7)	668	248
Women pensioners (n=12)	578	127
Women living with partner (n=40)	1 292	294
Women with migrant partner (n=8)	1 379	155
Men living alone (n=2)	4 450	4 450

Table 5.2.1: Mean household income and per capita income according to household category

Comparing per capita income according to headship and power relations, the following picture emerges:

Head of household (n=100)	Per capita income in Rand
Male-headed (n=10)	1 243
Female-headed (n=40)	152
Jointly-headed (n=35)	237
<i>De facto</i> female-headed (n=14)	136
Power relations (n=100)	
Partnership relationship (n=14)	340
Men dominate (n=36)	466
Women dominate (n=47)	148

Table 5.2.2: Per capita income according to headship and power relations

The comparison reveals that income in households dominated by men is about three times the income of households dominated by women and also considerably higher than income in households characterised by a partnership relationship. This finding is congruent with national data: according to May *et al.* (2000a:34), average wage income in female-headed households is about one-third of the average wage income in male-headed households. Figures regarding poverty indicate that 37% of non-urban female-headed households were among the poorest fifth of households, compared to 23% of non-urban male-headed households. In urban areas, 15% of households headed by women were among the poorest fifth, compared to 5% of households headed by men (CSS 1997). This confirms the frequent assumption that female-headed households are economically worse off than male-headed households (Von Braun 1999; Jones 1999). To have some comparative yardstick, the Minimum Living Level (MLL) is used, which is set at R164.2 per month (Tørres *et al.* 2000). The MLL actually represents an individual rather than household poverty line and reveals whether the earnings of an individual from self-employment are sufficient to support the individual at a level above poverty. However, this figure shall be used here for comparison (see also 5.3.2). According to this reference figure, all female-headed or female-dominated households would fall below the MLL.

5.2.2 Extended networks for social support - Household size

The in-depth investigation into household size reveals that households in this sample consist on average of 6.6 members (see 4.5). According to the definition of household used here, this figure includes distant family members, who often contribute a significant part to the household income, as well as other family members depending on this household, but not necessarily living in the same house.

Furthermore, household size in different household types was investigated.

Table 5.2.3 shows the household size in pension households:

<i>Households receiving pension</i>	<i>Number of household members</i>			
	<5	5-7	8-10	>10
Pension households(n=39)	11	9	12	7
Other households receiving pension, with pension < 50% of income (n=15)	2	5	5	3
Total number of households receiving pension (n=54)	13	14	17	10

Table 5.2.3: Size of pension households

The average size of pension households is 7.23. This is well above the average household size of 6.6 of the total sample. The number of co-resident members in pension households is on average (with 7.03) also higher than the average of 5.6 of the total sample. Both figures corroborate the fact that more people tend to gather in households receiving a pension.

A look into the size of households fostering children reveals their extended networks:

Households taking care of foster children	No of household members and average size			
	5-7	8-10	>10	Mean size
Households taking care of children whose fathers left them and their mother (n=14)	2	6	6	10.6
Households taking care of children whose parents/mother died (n=8)	1	2	5	12.1
Household fostering children due to other reasons (n=10)	6	2	2	7.5
Total number of households (n=28)	9	10	9	-

Table 5.2.4: Number of members and household size in households with foster children

The average size of these households, including distant family members, is far above the average of the total sample (6.6). The average number of members who are co-residential is also far above the average of present members in the total sample.

These figures indicate that extended networks are of great significance. They are crucial for households struggling to survive and have an impact on the state of food security of households and its members. This will be illustrated in chapter 5.4.10 and also comes to the fore in several other sections.

5.2.3 Levels of Urbanization

Urbanization levels were evaluated within the SDQ. Participants of the THUSA survey were stratified into five levels of urbanization, using criteria based on mainly where people lived but also on the type of income or job they had (Vorster *et al.* 2000). *Stratum 1* consisted of people living in villages in rural areas with a tribal head. These villages were part of the former Bophutatswana homeland. *Stratum 2* were farm workers, who live and work on commercial farms²¹, mostly owned by white farmers. *Stratum 3* consisted of people living in informal housing areas, which are also known as “squatter camps” and are found adjacent to all major towns and cities. *Stratum 4* were people living in the established urban townships which form part of every town and city in the North West. *Stratum 5* consisted of professional people such as teachers, nurses, government employees, politicians, and businessmen and -women who mostly lived in affluent, westernised circumstances. Some of these “upper class urban” people also lived in the same circumstances as the people in stratum 1 and 4.

Table 5.2.5 shows the distribution of strata in the sample on household food security (HFS), compared to the 1998 THUSA population and the total THUSA population.

Levels of urbanization	HFS (n=166)	1998 THUSA population (n=955)	Total THUSA population (n=1843)
Deep rural tribal area (stratum 1):	31.9%	28.5%	27.4%
Farms (stratum 2):	13.9%	14.0%	14.8%
Informal housing areas or squatter camps (stratum 3):	21.7%	20.6%	17.4%
Established urban townships (stratum 4):	30.1%	35.2%	29.2%
“Upper” urban areas (stratum 5):	2.4%	1.7%	10.5%*
Missing	-	0.2 %	0.8%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Table 5.2.5: Distribution of interviewees in strata in the different study populations

* The high percentage of 10.5% for the upper urban stratum in the total THUSA population results from research carried out in Mmabatho in 1996 at the University of North West, the Health Department and several schools. Therefore, a high percentage of professional people were included in the survey year 1996, thus increasing the percentage of people from “upper” urban areas of the total THUSA population compared to the 1998 study population.

Except for stratum 5 (upper urban), the strata are distributed very similarly in the different investigations, which indicates that the sub-sample on HFS is probably a proper representative sample of the larger study group (see 4.1).

□ *Strata and household size*

Table 5.2.6 shows the total number of household members (including distant family members) and Table 5.2.7 shows the number of members who are co-residential, according to strata:

Stratum	<5	5-7	8-10	>10	No of households
Rural	6	13	16	18	53
Farm	6	15	1	1	23
Informal settlement	14	17	4	1	36
Urban	15	25	7	3	50
Upper urban	2	2	-	-	4
No of households	43	72	28	23	166

Table 5.2.6: Total number of household members according to strata

Stratum	<5	5-7	8-10	>10	No of households
Rural	9	21	12	11	53
Farm	14	7	2	-	23
Informal settlement	18	14	3	1	36
Urban	21	21	6	2	50
Upper urban	3	1	-	-	4
No of households	65	64	23	14	166

Table 5.2.7: Co-resident household members according to strata

The largest households are those in the rural areas. In the upper urban stratum, there are no large households, as was to be expected. It is assumed that this is the case because members of these households get much higher salaries and do not depend on others. They have changed their organisation from that of an extended household to that of a nuclear family. Of the four upper urban households, two consist of mother, father and two children. The assumption that wealthier households change their organisation from the extended family to a nuclear-type household (see 5.1.4) is confirmed here. As was indicated in chapter 5.1.4, people often prefer smaller, nuclear family units if they can afford to do so (Breslin & Delius 1996). According to Nuernberger (1994:23), urbanization, education and higher incomes lead to smaller families: in 1989, the birth rate among black South Africans in deep rural areas was 5.7 children per mother, in semi-rural areas 4.2, and in urban areas 2.8 children per mother.

On the big commercial farms there were only a few large households. This is due to the fact that people live on the farms only as long as they work there. Accommodation is supplied and owned by the farmer. Only a small number of farm

workers have their own house in other, mostly rural areas where also part of their family lives (see 5.2.5). Moreover, houses on farms are too small to accommodate many people. When people stop working, they have to move out. Those workers who still have a home base might retire there. Children of people working on farms often attend school elsewhere, staying with relatives. One reason is that on farms and the surroundings there is often no access to schools, also the space is too limited to accommodate many people.

□ *Strata and income groups*

Incomes were investigated according to strata to see whether there are clear patterns:

Stratum	Income groups			
	R1-500	R501-1 000	R1 001- 2 000	>R2 000
Rural (n=53)	37.7%	50.9%	7.5%	3.8%
Farm (n=23)	52.2%	26.1%	17.4%	4.3%
Informal settlement (n=36)	36.1%	41.7%	16.7%	5.6%
Urban (n=50)	24.0%	34.0%	30.0%	12.0%
Upper urban (n=4)	-	-	25.0%	75.0%

Table 5.2.8: Income groups according to strata

When the income categories are again combined into only two, less than R1 000 and more than R1 000 per month, it gives the following picture: only 11% of rural households have incomes of more than R1 000 per month, followed by farm households and households in informal settlements (22% each), and 42% of households in urban areas. All of the upper urban households have incomes above R1 000 per month. This shows clearly the differences in incomes between rural and urban areas. It has to be taken into account that large parts of the incomes earned in urban areas are transferred to the rural areas through remittances (see 5.1.1.4). Striking also is that more than half of the farm households have incomes below R500. Salaries paid for manual labour on farms are usually about R400 per month.

5.2.4 “I want my children to do better” - Education

The level of education was investigated within the SDQ and classified into common South African subdivisions. *Table 5.2.9* shows the comparison of education levels in the three study populations:

Education level	% of interviewees HFS (n=166)	% of interviewees in 1998 THUSA (n=952)	% of interviewees in THUSA (n=1810)
None	27.1	25.0	21.3
Less than standard 6	45.8	33.3	31.8
St 6-8, with/without trade	11.4	20.6	20.8
St 9-10, with/without trade	11.4	18.2	18.6
St 9-10/academic	4.2	2.9	7.5
Total	100	100	100

Table 5.2.9: Education levels in the three study populations

Education levels in the sub-sample on household food security are lower than in both of the other groups: 73% have education below standard 6, compared to 58% in the 1998 THUSA population and 53% in the total THUSA population. This is due to the fact that in the HFS sub-group the majority of interviewees are female. Stratifying the 1998 THUSA and the total THUSA population for gender reveals that on average the percentage of women with education levels below standard 6 is higher (62% and 54%, respectively) than among men (53.6% and 52%, respectively). According to national data, 54% of the black South African population are literate, with illiteracy defined as 'people aged 20 and more with no schooling or some primary schooling' (Anon 1998) This indicates a high illiteracy rate. In comparison with the national average, 66% of the total population are literate, with Gauteng being the province with the highest literacy rate (80.6%).

Comparing the level of education according to strata, the following picture emerges:

Stratum (n=166)	Education level % of interviewees				
	<i>None</i>	<i>Less than std 6</i>	<i>Std 6-8/with or without trade</i>	<i>Std 9- 10/with or without trade</i>	<i>Std 9- 10/acade- mic</i>
Rural (n=53)	41.5	37.7	11.3	5.7	2
Farm (n=23)	21.7	69.6	4.3	-	1
Informal settlement (n=36)	27.8	44.4	8.3	19.4	-
Urban (n=50)	16.0	48.0	18.0	18.0	-
Upper urban (n=4)*	-	-	-	-	4

Table 5.2.10: Level of education according to strata

* According to the definition of upper urban used in this research, all of the people classified in this stratum have high levels of education

The number of uneducated people or those with limited education in the rural areas is very high. Looking at education levels below standard 6, 91% of farm workers fall into this group. Although most farms provide schooling for children of workers through private farm schools, this education often does not go beyond basic educational levels. There are exceptions where bigger farm schools provide schooling up to matriculation and some form of practical training and skills training. In the North West Province, this is the case in two farm schools (personal communication with the principal of a farm school, May 2000). Due to this lack of opportunities on farms, workers often send their children to relatives in urban areas to attend school there.

It can therefore be stated that rural people and people living on farms are clearly disadvantaged in terms of education in general and higher education in particular. According to Integrated Market Research (1994) that classifies the total South African population into eight living standard groups, people in the lowest category of living standard, of whom 99.5% are black South Africans, all live in rural areas. Of these, 31.2% are illiterate, 33.5% are semi-literate (having some primary schooling) and only 35.2% are literate (8.2% with primary school and 23.7% having some higher education). In the second lowest group of living standard, comprising 97.5% black South Africans, 91.3% of whom live in rural areas, 22.4% are illiterate and 30.9% semi-literate. Only 10.3% completed primary school, 31.7% had some higher schooling and 3.7% completed high school.

The concern of interviewees about the situation in schools and the quality of education are expressed in the following comments:

“Our primary schools are not in good condition. There is a shortage of classrooms, chairs and desks for the pupils. The toilets are also dirty. Every Friday we give the children ten cents to buy polish to clean the school. The high school is even worse. Windows are broken and there is no water. There is a shortage of three teachers. There are no ceilings in some classrooms and sometimes there are holes in the floors. No one seems to care. The government promised us to help with the stationary at school but now there is only one handbook per class. If we want our children to have their own books we have to buy them and they are too expensive. The government hasn’t fulfilled any of their promises. We don’t have enough money to buy food, how can we buy books as well?”

“Children don’t finish school, the standard dropped immensely.”

“You see, there is no one running around outside in the schoolyard, they are all inside, there is discipline here. It is not like that in the township schools, there is no discipline, the pupils are not in the class.” (A mother who wants to put her child into the farm school she is referring to, but cannot afford the cost for transport)

Many interviewees point out that education is very important to them. They see it as the stepping stone out of poverty and as the chance for a better future for themselves and their children:

“I would like to go to the Technikon to take a secretary course, but I don’t have money.” (A 21 year old woman in her last year at school)

“I finished matric and would like to go to University, but I can’t afford it. I have to work and help my family – I am the only one to support them.” (A 25 year old woman with a child who is a domestic worker and supports her mother and her younger sister)

“I would like to have a business, but I can’t afford the school to be a businesswoman.” (A woman who lives with her husband and son, they are surviving on occasional jobs)

“If I could only get work I would like to send my children for higher education, so that they can get jobs.” (A woman with a husband who has work and their five children, looking also after four children of her sister who died)

“I want to prepare for our children’s life and send them to university.” (A former mine employee with five children who lost his job)

The importance of education that comes to the fore in this research reveals that education is regarded as a basic need.

□ *Women and education – does it influence household dynamics?*

As was mentioned in chapter 5.1.1.3, women’s education influences their perception about marrying or staying single. It was further investigated whether the educational level of women influences power relations in households. The largest number of women with higher education was found in *jointly-headed* households: 41% have education levels above standard 6, with 18% of them having standard 9-10 and 7% having a tertiary education, which could only be found in this group. In comparison, only 18% of female interviewees in *male-headed* households have education levels above standard six, in *female-headed* households these are only 12%. In *de facto*

female-headed households, 32% have education above standard 6. In those *jointly-headed* households that are *male-dominated*, women who have higher education (standard 9-10 with/without a trade or tertiary education) are either daughters or sisters living with senior male relatives. None of these women has a job and they are dependent on their relatives. In these cases, education level has no impact on power relations, but factors such as position within the household and employment do play a role.

In partnership relationships, almost half of female interviewees (47%) have education above standard 6, with 25% having matric and 3.6% having a tertiary education. This is far above the average of 27% of female interviewees of the total sample who have education above standard 6. In comparison, only 28% of female interviewees in male-dominated households reach education above standard 6. In those households of this category where women are totally dependent on men, only 17% of women have matric. In female-dominated households, education levels are also very low: only 16% have education above standard 6.

Therefore, a relationship between education and gender relations exists, apart from other indicators playing a role, and ***Hypothesis 3a***, “*Women who have better education will be more involved in decision-making and resource management*” can be confirmed here. This is supported by Van der Vliet (1991) who found in her research on “traditional” and “modern” marriages that among more educated people there is also a more balanced contest, although power relations also depend to a large extent on who earns the income (see 1.3). If women are educated but have no income of their own, they have in many cases also limited negotiating strength within the relationship.

The influence of education levels and other indicators on resource management and food security is investigated in chapter 5.3.4 and 5.4.9.

5.2.5 “I would bank money for some coming problem” - Property, livestock and savings

□ Property

In this sample, 51% of the households interviewed own a house that most people also inhabit themselves. According to social strata, people owning a house are distributed as follows: in rural areas these are 42%, on farms 13%, in informal settlements 75%, in urban areas 60%, and in the upper urban stratum 75%. What stands out here is the small number of people living on farms who own a house. This is not surprising, as they stay on the farm only as long as they work there, in accommodation provided by their employer (see chapter 5.2.3). Those farm workers

indicating that they own a house probably refer to a house situated in their home base. The majority of farm workers in this sample might have nowhere to go to when their job finishes. The South African Human Rights Commission has identified farm workers as an exceptionally vulnerable group regarding their need of housing (SAHRC 1999b).

Of the total sample in this study, 8% of interviewees indicated that they possess a car.

□ *Livestock and vegetable gardens*

Only 13% of the households studied possess livestock. Of these, two households are situated on a farm, one in an urban area, the others are all in rural areas. Of 9% of households having a vegetable garden, the majority are situated in rural areas, four on farms and one in an informal settlement. These figures suggest that only a small percentage of households in this sample have some sort of own food supply, which is lower than national figures estimate (see 2.1.2). This could be due to the fact that the areas visited were so-called marginal land of poor quality and with limited water supplies (see also 5.2.8). This is indicated by an interviewee in a rural area:

“Where we lived before the soil was better. We always planted vegetables ourselves. Nowadays, we don’t plant anymore – there are too many rocks here and we have to fetch water at a distance.”

On the big commercial farms we visited, water supply was not a problem and a number of people had vegetable gardens (see 4.3.5).

The fact that livestock might get stolen puts additional constraints on people’s choices. Livestock often is their only investment for the future. A woman in a rural area experienced theft of her livestock, which meant a great loss to her. Furthermore, she refuses to go on her own to look after her cows, as she fears assault and rape. This is an indication that crime has also increased in rural areas, as is illustrated in her comment that:

“Nowadays, you don’t know if someone comes to you what he wants – you don’t trust people anymore. They might steal something from you. People come to steal the sheep and goats ... it also happened to me. When the animals get stolen, I don’t have money to give for the study of my daughter, to take to the bank and to get

interest. The cattle are at some distance ... someone has to go with me, I am afraid to get assaulted or raped, it happens quite often around here."

This also reflects the importance of livestock as financial insurance, as is also expressed in the following statements:

"When I'm short, I sell a cattle or goat."

"We never sleep hungry ... my father sells a cow, then we can buy something to eat."

□ *Savings*

About a quarter (27%) of interviewees indicate that they are able to save money, of whom 74% are able to put money aside regularly, while 26% indicate that they save money occasionally. Although there is no information about the exact amount of savings, it is assumed that these households are able to rely on some savings in times of shortage.

5.2.6 "I would like to buy straight" - Access to loans and credit

Almost a third (32%) of households in this sample make use of credit regularly, and 10% have some kind of loan. People indicated this in different sections of the interview, relating to questions regarding coping strategies, resource management or others. This shows clearly the large number of people depending on this kind of support. In South Africa, it is very common to use credit at local cafes, tuck shops and spazas in the townships. The amount of credit will in most cases be quite low, so that it can be paid back by means of the next income. This still gives only a limited picture of the situation. A number of very poor people might have no access even to small credits at local shops because they are not able to pay the money back in time. Other reasons might be that shop owners do not give credit to people whom they do not know well enough. Therefore, one could assume that the number of people being in need of credit is even higher than indicated here (see also *Table 5.2.13*).

Rotating credit associations or *stockvel* groups appeared only very seldom in this study group. Interviewees were specifically asked if they belonged to such groups as it was expected at first that they may be quite common. The low occurrence might be specific to the areas visited, as in urban areas *stockvel* groups are a more common phenomenon (Buijs 1995). Also the high unemployment rate in this study group explains why there is little engagement in this sector, as credit

worthiness is an important condition for participating in these groups. According to research on rotating credit associations done by Buijs (1995), mainly women employed in the formal sector are engaged in these groups, as they meet daily and are therefore able to run such groups. The fact that these groups are a female domain is based on the fact that women claim to handle money better than men. Therefore, they do not accept men in these groups for reasons of stability. This 'gendered resource management' will be discussed further in chapter 5.3.4.

When comparing credit practices according to head of household and power relations, it reveals the following picture:

Head of household (n=166)	% of household using credit	% of households having loans	% in total
Male-headed (n=21)	24	14	38
<i>De jure</i> female-headed (n=59)	32	5	37
Jointly-headed (n=62)	29	11	40
<i>De facto</i> female-headed (n=24)	46	12	58

Power relations (n=166)	% of household using credit	% of households having loans	% in total
Partnership relationship (n=30)	20	3	23
Men dominate (n=65)	35	15	50
Women dominate (n=71)	34	7	41

Table 5.2.11: Frequency of using credit or loans according to head of household and power relations

Some interesting suggestions can be made from this evaluation. Households headed or dominated by men have the highest frequency of loans. Comparing only male- and *de jure* female-headed households, despite higher per capita incomes in male-headed households (see 5.2.1), the total number of households relying on credit and loans is slightly higher in male-headed households compared to *de jure* female-headed households. Striking differences appear in the sort of financial support relied on: while *de jure* female-headed households seem to rely more on credit, male-headed households rely more on loans. *De facto* female-headed households have the highest frequency of using credit and loans. This could reflect that women with a

migrant partner do not have sufficient control over money or that remittances are not reliable, respectively. Also, per capita incomes are the lowest in these households, even lower than in *de jure* female-headed households (see 5.2.1).

It seems as if it is women who through their interaction in local shops have easier access to credit, while men, on the other hand, seem to be the ones to get loans. It does not seem to be common or appropriate for men to ask for credit, as the comment of a male interviewee documents:

"I do the 'big' shopping. I send my wife to do the 'small' shopping at the spaza, because I don't like it. I also send her to get credit."

This observation is confirmed by Bank (1997:173):

"For credit sales, it is the wife's account which is debited. Likewise, when shop owners come to collect the outstanding credit in the neighbourhood, they do not approach men to cover the costs of ... bills."

Furthermore, women might even sometimes have the authority to have control over the credit given to men:

"... at some shebeens ... the proprietor does not allow married men to drink on credit unless they have prior permission to do so from their wives. These practices protect shebeen owners from the wrath of married women and serve to uphold the general moral principles concerning the distribution of money in the township" (Bank 1997:170).

This example supports the statement made earlier (see 5.1.1.3) that generally speaking money is often viewed as being 'more safe' when controlled by women. The following claims of women regarding their wise management of money seem to be widely accepted also by men:

"... men cannot manage money ... they have an inherent propensity to squander it, and ... they always 'waste' what they have in morally corrupt ways – by using it on other women or alcohol" (Bank 1997:169).

Although male-dominated households have the highest per capita and household incomes (see 5.2.1), they still have the highest frequency of using credit and loans, which is far above the frequency in female-dominated households. The number of

households relying on either credit or loans is the lowest among households characterised by a partnership relationship. These findings strongly indicate that although female-headed households are economically worse off than male-headed households they seem to have other ways of coping. This stands in stark contrast to the frequently made assumption that this household type is severely disadvantaged. Similarly, households based on partnership relationships, for also having lower incomes than male-dominated households, seem to compensate for this disadvantage through other strategies than relying on credit or loans. These issues are further investigated in chapters 5.3.4 and 5.4.9.

5.2.7 “If the food is finished, I wait for the next pension” - Social welfare

In chapter 5.1.3.5, the characteristics and high occurrence of pension households were described in detail. Besides pension payments, also disability grants and maintenance grants were recorded and added to household income. However, the number of households receiving grants other than pensions seemed to be very low in this study population. As Budlender (2000:128) states, there might be a number of people, especially in remote rural areas, who would be eligible for such grants, but have no access to services of government or grants from NGOs:

“In rural areas in particular, many potential beneficiaries do not know they are entitled to social security benefits”,

arguing further, by referring to social services in the sectors health, education, police and welfare that:

“ ... (apart from social security in respect of pensions) there are large numbers of people – black, rural, African, female and young people in particular – who are either not receiving services at all, or are receiving severely inadequate services” (Budlender 2000:138).

Generally, a high proportion of black South African households relies on welfare (see 5.1.3.5). Without this social assistance, especially old age pensions,

“ ... many households and communities would collapse” (Haddad & Zeller 1997:267).

As was pointed out in chapter 5.1.3.5, these households still have to be regarded as very vulnerable, especially if this support by means of social welfare is the only or

main income for the recipient household. According to the South African Health Review 1996 (Mokaba & Bambo 1996), a number of poor people nowadays get less assistance than they received during the apartheid era.

5.2.8 Access to basic facilities: Water, sanitation, energy sources, housing, cooking and storage facilities

□ Access to water

“Water is far from us. The government promised to provide us with closer water, but their promises weren’t fulfilled.” (An interviewee in one of the rural areas)

Table 5.2.12 shows the sources of drinking water households in the HFS sample and in the 1998 THUSA sample have access to:

Sources of drinking water	% of households HFS (n=166)	% of households in 1998 THUSA* (n=952)	% of black South African households in the North West Province **	% of households in South Africa **
Tap in house / dwelling	23	23	27	32.7
Tap on premises	39	45	-	-
Communal tap	37	29	-	-
Other	1	2	-	-
Total	100	100	-	-

Table 5.2.12: Access to drinking water

* ‘Access to water’ and the following indicators for general quality of life and for food security have been included by this author in the socio-demographic questionnaire of the broader study since the beginning of this research from 1998 onwards. Therefore, data of the total THUSA population is missing.

** Anon 1998

Not even a quarter of households in the sub-sample on food security have water in their house, with similar figures for the 1998 THUSA population. National data indicate that 27% of black South African households in the North West Province have water taps in their house, compared to 32.7% of the total South African population (Anon 1998). More than a third of households in this sample get water from a communal tap. These taps can be in the road close to the house, but also several

hundred meters away²². From the interviews it became clear that fetching water takes a lot of time for those women who have to walk some distance. According to May *et al.* (2000a:46), 80% of the time spent on water collection was carried out by women. Children also help with this chore. On several occasions, we could observe small children transporting water in canisters on wheel barrows. The load often seemed too heavy for the skinny children.

According to Integrated Market Research (1994), almost none of the people classified in the two lowest living standard groups, most of whom are black South Africans and live in rural areas, have access to water in the house. This corresponds with other figures estimating that among rural black South African households 74% need to fetch water on a daily basis, of whom 21% have to walk more than 500 metres (Stavrou 2000). On a national level it was estimated that in 1994 more than 12 million people did not have access to adequate potable water and that nearly 21 million people lacked basic sanitation. 90% of rural schools and 50% of rural clinics lacked adequate sanitation (Breslin 1998). It is not difficult to imagine what this means with regard to health conditions. Problems with collecting water from some distance are that clean water supplies from a tap can be contaminated during collection, transport and storage. Water is more likely to be contaminated when collected from communal taps, as more water needs to be stored (Breslin 1998). According to research done by Operation Hunger (Breslin & Delius 1996), communities pointed out consistently that an improved water resource is one of the many interventions required to improve the nutritional status of children.

One of the aims of the Government's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was to supply the formerly disadvantaged black South African population with adequate water and sanitation (Anon 1995). The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry reported in 1999 that it had provided water to three million people (SAHRC 1999b). Despite progress being made, there are severe setbacks regarding the sustainability of recently completed water supply and sanitation projects. This is partly due to communities being unable or unwilling to pay for their water system operation and maintenance, while the Department's ability to sustain such support is limited (Stavrou 2000). Therefore, there are legitimate fears that existing facilities will fail (Breslin 1998).

□ *Sanitation*

Both in the HFS sample (n=165) and in the 1998 THUSA population (n=952) less than 2% of households have no sanitation facilities at all. In the HFS sample, 43% of households have either outside or inside water flush toilets, in the 1998 THUSA

population households number 46%. The number of households with outside long drop toilets is 45% and 44%, respectively, which is almost equal in both study populations. Figures evaluated for the North West Province indicate that 5.5% of black South African households and 6.4% of all households are without sanitation. Compared to the total South African population, among black South African households 10.9% and 12.4% of all households have no sanitation, while over half of all households have either flush or chemical toilets (Anon 1998). What the figures do not reveal are the actual hygienic conditions of each of the systems. If for example flush toilets are not maintained and serviced, they can have a negative impact on the health situation, while long drop toilets and even the bucket system, if well serviced, can be a better alternative. In the HFS sample (n=165), 18% of households share a toilet with other households, while these were 25% in the 1998 THUSA population (n=740).

According to Breslin (1998), sanitation has lagged behind water supply in South Africa, as is the case elsewhere in the world. At the beginning of implementation of the RDP, this sector was in its infancy, as extremely limited national capacity and experience with community-based sanitation programming existed in 1994. In a Multi-Country Study it was found that sanitation improvements had the most significant positive impact on diarrhoea and nutritional status, while a similar positive health impact was not found for water supply when it was not linked to improved sanitation (Breslin 1998).

□ *Energy sources*

Table 5.2.13 shows the percentage of households having access to electricity, the percentage of households using electricity as main energy source and households having access to refrigeration:

Access to electricity/ electrical appliances	% of households HFS (n = 164)	% of households in 1998 THUSA (n = 950)	% of black South African households in the North West Province *	% of all black South African households *
Access to electricity	61	64	-	-
No access to electricity	39	36	-	-
Electricity main energy source	36	- **	36.0	42.1
In possession of electric stove	39	40	-	-
In possession of electric refrigerator	38	40	-	-
In possession of gas refrigerator	6	6	-	-
No refrigeration	56	52	-	-

Table 5.2.13: Access to electricity, use of electricity as main energy source and possession of electric stove and refrigeration

* Anon 1998

** The use of electricity as main energy source for cooking was only investigated within the interview on household food security.

Of the households in both study samples, more than 60% have access to electricity. However, only 36% of households in the HFS sample use it as a main energy source for cooking. As the percentage of households using electricity for cooking is below the figure of 39% of households having an electric stove in the same sub-group, as was assessed in the SDQ, some people still seem to use other energy sources for cooking despite having an electric stove. In those households that do not use electricity for cooking at all, interviewees indicate that they use electricity only for lights and sometimes for entertainment appliances such as television sets and radios. This is confirmed by an investigation into infrastructural services in South Africa, stating that the take-up rate of electricity has been significantly lower than expected and is in most households under-utilised and most often only used for lights (Stavrou 2000:157). According to figures from the Census 1996 (CSS 1997), electricity is used by 58% of the population for lighting, while 29% are using candles and 13% paraffin.

Paraffin is used for cooking by 59% of households in the HFS sample, for 33% it is the most frequently used energy source. Wood is used for cooking by 50% of households and by 21% as main energy source. Only 19% of the households use

gas, and 7% use it predominately. Coal is used by 5%, but only as a second or third choice. These figures indicate that it is very common to use a variety of energy sources alternately, depending on how much money and what sources are available. If for example money runs out at the end of the month and people are not able to pay for electricity or paraffin anymore, they turn to using wood for cooking. This practice is also known as 'multiple-fuel use' or 'fuel-switching' and is a phenomenon particular to households with low incomes (Stavrou 2000:152). Of the 88 interviewees who are using wood for cooking either predominately or occasionally, 57 have to collect it. This accounts for about a third of the women in this sample. Most of these women indicate that they have to walk several kilometres and therefore spend a considerable amount of time in fetching wood.

Although electrification is promoted through the *Accelerated Electrification Programme* – by the year 2000, 72% of all South African households should be electrified – this programme is running into a crisis because of high cost. Among the problems are continuing non-payment of electricity accounts and low take-up rates (Stavrou 2000). It also becomes clear from the figures obtained here that electricity is not as frequently used as could be expected. Important in this regard are the social meanings and values of energy sources, besides the financial aspect. Bank (1997) investigated this issue in a township in the mid-1990s, where over 90 per cent of the households used paraffin for cooking, despite the availability of other options such as gas and electricity. Serious safety issues such as frequent fires in the location caused by paraffin stoves and overcrowded conditions did not keep people from using it as main energy source. Paraffin is still perceived to be cheap and a stable energy source, while electricity is associated with "consumerism" and "selfishness" of women²³ (Bank 1997:161), and gas is perceived to be dangerous. Beyond these perceptions, Bank found that the use of paraffin was related to gender issues and to issues of social networks, control of resources and others, which makes it possible to understand why people use this source, despite the destructive and time-consuming effect it has. It is suggested here that another reason could be that the consumption of paraffin can be controlled more easily than electricity as it is "visible". Also, electricity cannot be obtained on credit, which emphasizes the close connection of paraffin to social networks as mentioned by Bank. The report on 'Poverty and inequality in South Africa' identifies paraffin as the most widely used commercial fuel in urban and rural areas - some 44% of households use it every day (Stavrou 2000). Also here the informal distribution networks and the fact that many small retailers of paraffin provide credit to customers are indicated. Therefore, people seem to accept or rather live with the danger of paraffin stoves and the social and financial disruption

caused by it. As a popular township saying goes “*we live in paraffin and we burn in it*” (Stavrou 2000:154).

□ *Storage facilities*

With regard to the safety of food, adequate storage facilities are very important. They enable households to keep food safe and for a longer period. As indicated in *Table 5.2.13*, of those interviewees who have access to electricity, in both study populations about 40% possess an electric fridge and another 6% possess a gas fridge. More than one half of households does not have any kind of refrigeration. Adding to this is the poor housing situation of those people living in corrugated iron shacks, as here the temperatures in summer are unbearable (see next section). According to Aryee *et al.* (1999), due to a lack of cooling facilities food is easily contaminated. It is for example common to leave food standing around for several hours and then feeding it to children without re-heating. Poor households often do not even have a cupboard to store food. The most commonly used storage item is a tin box with a lid where dry foods such as maize meal, sugar and salt are kept.

Photo 19 shows one of my fieldworkers from a rural area in her kitchen. It is a room of about 2x3 metres. Under the table is the tin box for storage of food. The house consists only of two rooms, besides the kitchen a bedroom which is separated by cloths, where Meriath, her husband and their three children sleep.



Photo 19: Meriath and two of her children in the kitchen

□ *Housing*

About 70% of households in both the HFS sample and the 1998 THUSA population live in brick houses, while about one quarter of people in both study populations live in shacks and only about 5% live in traditional dwellings. Data obtained in the Census 1996 (CSS 1997) indicate that 65% of the population live in formal houses, flats or rooms, while 18% live in traditional dwellings and 17% in shacks.

According to SAHRC (1999b), the housing sector is characterised by major inequalities, with only half of the black South African population living in proper houses. In many cases, houses are too small to accommodate large numbers of people. Often shacks are attached to small houses to provide additional space. The average floor area for black South Africans in formal housing is 9 square metres per person, in informal housing, it is only 4-5 square metres, whereas the white population has on average 33 square metres floor area per person available (May *et al.* 2000b). Measured in rooms per person, black South African and coloured people have 0.8 rooms per person, white people 1.9 rooms per person. In poor households, each room accommodates 2.3 persons. The richest households host 0.5 persons per room (SAHRC 1999b). The poor part of the population lives in a diverse range of shelter conditions, ranging from self-built traditional structures, hostels, backyard shacks, garages, spontaneous informal settlements, planned site-and-service schemes, state-owned rental housing, employer-owned housing and others. The majority of the poor live in informal settlements that are characterised by limited services, overcrowding and inadequate physical conditions. From a social viewpoint, this situation contributes to dissatisfaction and dysfunctional behaviour, including criminality and violence. May *et al.* (2000b:237) conclude, that

“overall, it is clear that the current housing situation in South Africa does not offer the poor an asset that can reduce their vulnerability and promote their socio-economic development.”

The National Department of Housing has identified the following groups as being vulnerable and in need of special measures: poor people; people with disabilities; people in female-headed households, children and the youth; elderly people; farm workers and residents in rural households (SAHRC 1999b).



Photo 20: Traditional house in a rural area



Photo 21: Brick house in a rural area

We could observe that in general houses in rural areas looked very well cared-for, while for example houses on commercial farms made a different impression, although they were brick houses. As was pointed out in chapter 5.2.3 and 5.2.5, housing is provided by the employer and farm workers live in these houses only as long as they work. This is probably the reason why people do not invest much in those houses. On the one hand they are probably not allowed to make any alterations, on the other hand they cannot take anything with them when they leave. These facts explain why houses on farms often appeared inconspicuous and rather sad.

In rural areas, one hardly finds corrugated iron shacks, while these are very common in informal settlements and also often seen in urban settlements adjoining towns. But also here we could observe that no matter whether people are poor and live “only” in shacks, these shacks are well cared-for, most of them also having small gardens that create a friendly atmosphere. Shacks that are in a bad condition belong to the very poor, some of whom might live there only temporarily or do not have the means to improve their housing conditions.

5.2.9 “Shops are too far” - Food sources, frequency of getting food, distance and means of transport

□ Food from outlets

With regard to the large number of people living in rural areas and in areas with a considerable lack of infrastructure, availability of shops and food sources are crucial issues for food security. It was investigated where people get food, how often they buy or get food from these outlets, how far they have to travel or walk and what are their means of transport.

Shops in next bigger town (in % of total sample, number of responses:160)*					
Frequency:		Distance:		Means of transport:	
1 / month:	44.6	< 10km:	60.2	Taxi, bus:	81.3
2-3/month:	16.9	10-50 km:	21.0	Walk:	6.0
1/week:	14.5	> 50 km:	12.7	Own car:	6.0
2-3/week:	3.6	Next door:	-	Get lift:	1.8
Every day:	0.6			Bicycle:	1.2
Sometimes:	3.6				
Café/supermarket in location (in % of total sample, number of responses:77)					
Frequency:		Distance:		Means of transport:	
1 / month:	12.7	< 10km:	19.9	Taxi, bus:	1.8
2-3/month:	3.6	10-50 km:	0.6	Walk:	39.8
1/week:	6.0	Next door:	11.4	Own car:	1.2
2-3/week:	10.8			Get lift:	0.6
Every day:	6.0			Donkey cart:	1.8
Sometimes:	2.4				
Spaza/tuck shop in location (in % of total sample, number of responses:65)					
Frequency:		Distance:		Means of transport:	
1 / month:	2.4	< 10km:	20.5	Taxi, bus:	-
2-3/month:	3.6	10-50 km:	0.6	Walk:	36.7
1/week:	6.0	Next door:	16.9	Own car:	0.6
2-3/week:	10.2			Get lift:	-
Every day:	4.2			Donkey cart:	0.6
Sometimes:	3.6				
Farmers/Indians who sell in location (in % of total sample, number of responses:44)					
Frequency:		Distance:		Means of transport:	
1 / month:	6.0	< 10km:	4.2	Taxi, bus:	1.2
2-3/month:	1.2	Stop at house:	18.1	Walk:	4.2
1/week:	3.6	Next door:	0.6	Own car:	1.8
2-3/week:	7.8			Relatives:	1.2
Every day:	2.4				
Sometimes:	1.2				

Table 5.2.14: Sources of food: frequency of buying food, distance and means of transport

* Interviewees were asked about all outlets where they get food. The number of total responses was 346. Interviewees did not always answer all of the questions. For example, 160 interviewees indicate that they buy food in shops in the nearest big town, but only 139 make comments on the frequency of shopping. Therefore, discrepancies appear in the number of answers between food outlet, frequency, distance and means of transport.

It is clear that almost half of the people in this sample do their main shopping only once a month. For a number of people, this means that they have to stretch their available groceries through the month, especially those who spend almost all of their income on food (see 5.4.2). To get to bigger shops in town, 21% of interviewees have to travel distances of 10 to 50 km, 13% have to travel more than 50 km. These are people living in remote rural areas. It also means that they have to spend a

considerable amount of money on transport. Taxis and less frequently buses are the main means of transport for more than 80% of interviewees. A considerable number of people have to walk to get to bigger shops, supermarkets/cafes or small shops in the location. Walking distance is often several kilometres, sometimes with heavy bags to carry. Some people cannot afford the money to take a taxi and rather walk, or there is no taxi within reach.

In addition, people buy food in *spazas* or tuck shops or from farmers who sell in the location. The disadvantages of buying food in these small outlets are higher prices, a lack of variety and also sometimes bad quality of food. Many of the shops have no cooling facilities, therefore no fresh food such as vegetables, fruit and milk or milk products are available. Also, temperatures are often too high to store even tins or dry food. A number of interviewees reported that they got sick from tinned fish that had probably either expired or had been stored under too hot conditions. On our visits to several shops we could observe that in several cases food was spoiled. In one shop, there were worms in bags of mealie rice. The issue of availability and quality of food will be dealt with again in chapter 5.4.7.

□ *Indigenous food*

It was further asked whether people get food also from the veld. Only in a few cases, interviewees indicated that they sometimes collect *morogo* or wild spinach. Often, we even specifically asked for the consumption of *morogo* as we assumed that it would be consumed quite regularly. In these cases, it happened often that interviewees looked at us with surprise, as if this question was quite unusual. A number of interviewees indicated, though, that they do eat *morogo* which they buy. Keyter (1961) indicated in the 1960s that *morogo* formed an important part in the diet of rural black South Africans.

Otherwise, no indications of indigenous food could be picked up in this research. Due to the broad scope, it was not possible to go more in depth into this issue. Otherwise, probably more indications of the use of indigenous food would have been found. The researcher is also aware that indigenous food plays a more or less important role in certain areas of South Africa as was pointed out by Mtshali (1999). It is nevertheless suggested that in this study population, indigenous food is of minor importance.

□ *Food from other sources*

Interviewees were also asked whether they get food from other sources than the outlets mentioned. Of the total sample, almost 60% of interviewees indicated that

they get food on a regular basis from the following sources (n=166, in % of cases, total number of responses: 149):

- family	56%
- neighbours/friends	32%
- livestock	21%
- vegetable gardens	15%
- employer	14%
- school	7%
- church	2%
- others	4%

It is clear that family support systems and also neighbourhood networks are of great importance. For 21% of respondents (13% of the total sample) livestock is an important additional source of food, 15% of respondents (9% of the total sample) have vegetables from their own garden (see also 5.2.5). For respondents who work on agricultural farms, in cafes, restaurants or households, food provided by their employer is often a regular allowance to their mostly low salaries (see also 5.2.3 and 5.4.10). On one of the big cattle farms visited, farm workers often received meat on a daily basis or several times a week. Therefore, the meat consumption of this specific group was exceptionally high.

These figures reflect only part of the existing social networks and strategies people are using to improve their food situation. In chapter 5.4.10, coping strategies are investigated further.

5.2.10 Overview

Demographic and socio-economic data reveal that unemployment rates in this study population are very high. In general, the job situation has worsened. Due to rationalisation in the labour force and other factors, many people have lost and still lose their jobs. The evaluation of household income indicates that about 75% of the households studied have incomes below R1 000 per month. People depend on multiple income sources and contributions, especially people in the income groups below R1 000 per month. In some cases, incomes might be higher, though, as not all piece jobs people engage in could be evaluated. What becomes clear from the data is that people use a multiple livelihood approach, thus finding niches and ways of adapting to situations with their limited available resources.

The effects of unemployment are mitigated by both social assistance, such as pension payments, and also kinship support systems, often in the form of migrant remittances (UNICEF & NCRC 1993b). Both support systems complement each other. A high proportion of black South African households relies on social welfare. At the same time, there is a debate about whether resources should be diverted from old-age pensions towards activities such as public works programmes that are perceived to be more development oriented (Haddad & Zeller 1997:267). According to Budlender (2000:127-128), the South African social security system does not exploit its potential, as fraud, theft and inefficiency absorb significant parts of the budget. Efforts are being made to improve the system. The money saved in this way will then again benefit the poor. What is clear, however, is that the growth of resources available to the social security programmes cannot match the growth in need (Haddad & Zeller 1997:249).

The frequent assumption that female-headed households are economically worse off than male-headed households is also confirmed by this research. Income in male-headed households is far above income in female-headed households and also higher than income in jointly-headed households. Female-headed households, however, have other ways of closing the gap between their income and that of other household types. This takes place through engaging in the informal sector and also by mobilising social resources, such as various networks, that are not uncovered by means of conventional statistical methods. These aspects are investigated further in chapters 5.3.4 and 5.4.9.

There is a general lack of basic facilities such as access to water and sanitation for many of the households studied. The rural poor have least access to these services. Regarding health, this puts severe constraints on communities, especially in the case of young children. Despite these known facts, the potential health impact of improved water supply and sanitation is not being realised in South Africa (Breslin 1998). Additional problems are caused by the failure of communities to pay agreed contributions to the cost of providing services. According to Stavrou (2000), there is need for more research into the reasons behind non-payment so that policies can be improved. He argues further that service levels need to be matched with income as much as possible. Also, local authorities need to be trained in understanding the importance of payment for services and engaging the communities directly in discussions towards the solution of these issues. It can be questioned whether all households need water-flush toilets that require considerable maintenance to be

hygienically efficient. This does not even allow for the availability of water and financial resources. Other systems that have proved viable, such as outside long drop toilets, could be more useful regarding maintenance, cost and saving natural resources. Sustainability has to receive first priority, as is emphasised by the private sector in implementing programmes that are community-oriented (Stavrou 2000:148). If this is not realised, well intended efforts are likely to fail, for example if people are not able or willing to pay for improved services.

Non-payment of accounts also affects the success of the electrification programme. In addition, people do not fully utilise established facilities, as could also be shown in this research. This means a mismatch between consumer demand and agent supply strategies. One of the reasons for this discrepancy is that energy-use patterns and survival strategies of low-income households are complex and not well understood by development planners and policy makers (Stavrou 2000). Moreover, electrification is not always implemented where it is most needed, but where it is easiest and cheapest to extend the grid. The consequence is that those households that do not fall into these areas – the most disadvantaged and isolated ones – are highly unlikely to receive electricity within the next few years. As a result, the majority of people in this research, as in general many of the poor people in both rural and urban areas, depend on biomass fuels in form of wood and paraffin. Bank (1997) assumes that with transformation, enforced electrification and with a change of values among the youth, also the significance and dominance of paraffin as a fuel will decline.

Another constraint is that a considerable amount of time has to be spent for collecting water and wood by about one-third of the women in this sample. This observation is confirmed by other studies (May *et al.* 2000a). The time could be used more effectively, for example for generating income that could translate into improved access to food. More time could also be devoted to the care and attention of children. This would be of great significance for the development of children, as was stressed in 3.3.12 (see also 5.4.6). Children themselves could use their additional time for educational purposes. Therefore, the social and health costs in this cycle of possible improvement concern primarily the lives of women and children. May *et al.* (2000a:46) conclude that time is one of the most important costs associated with many of the livelihood plans constructed by the poor.

The gross inequality in the housing sector will not be solved easily within the next few years, due to several constraints both on the supply side and on the demand side (May *et al.* 2000b). The housing situation is characterised by a lack of adequate

houses for poor people and a lack of space and privacy in general. Farm workers are especially vulnerable, as in many cases they have nowhere to go to when they retire. Also elderly people receiving pensions are vulnerable, as in many cases large numbers of children and grandchildren depend on these households. This leads to crowded conditions and tension between household members, as has been illustrated in chapter 5.1.3.5. In townships where infrastructure is already critical the situation worsens. Despite a lack of jobs large numbers of migrants flood into the cities, desperate to find work. This increases the number of unemployed people with no networks in towns, exacerbating an already high crime rate.

These difficult socio-economic circumstances, combined with other factors such as insufficient household income, a shortage of food and tension within households and the communities involved, cause severe constraints for the poor population, especially for women and children who are the ones mainly concerned with household chores. There is a strong relationship of these factors to malnourishment in young children: according to Richter (1993), malnutrition extends from deprivations associated with socio-political inequalities to the emotional unavailability of demoralised and stressed caregivers (see also 5.4.6 and 5.4.12).

The Reconstruction and Development Programme of the Government was aimed at equity in the development of health policy and the delivery of services. This programme was followed by the Growth, Economic and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR). Despite success being made, according to the South African Health Review 1996 (Mokaba & Bambo 1996) the expectations of poor people for better services continue to be tried.

Only a small percentage of the population in this sample has some sort of own food supply from owning livestock and vegetable gardens. The reason why the figures evaluated here are below national figures could be due to the fact that the areas visited were so-called marginal land of poor quality and with limited water supplies. According to May *et al.* (2000b), over one-third of rural households continue to engage in agricultural production, making it the third most important livelihood tactic used in rural areas after remittances and wages from low-skilled jobs. Poor women seem to value subsistence agriculture despite the fact that agricultural production makes only a small contribution to household income and even though they recognise that this is a high-risk activity and uses a lot of time. According to this source, multiple crop farming systems seem to be important for the food security of many poor South African households.

In contrast, Operation Hunger (Breslin & Delius 1996) found that both agricultural production and livestock were far from being at the top of people's own priorities for action. This raises significant questions about generalised strategies that imagine that the creation or recreation of production on the land is supported by popular priorities in the countryside. The other question is who within rural communities favours an emphasis on the support for agriculture? Evidence gained by Operation Hunger suggests

“ ... that while older men, or men who believe their wives should work the land, place considerable weight on agriculture, many women and younger people are far more sceptical about agriculture's importance and are fearful of the implications of agricultural initiatives for their own positions and prospects in society” (Breslin & Delius 1996:90).

One possible reason for the divergence reflected in the above findings could be that both sources build on different approaches of research and questioning. While Operation Hunger evaluated priorities of people without visible connection to future interventions and projects, other specific investigations such as enquiry into the land issue might also generate different results, not least because land is an emotional issue.

Educational levels in this study population are low, which is in line with national figures. Many interviewees regard education as being very important for the future of their children and express their concern about the present situation in schools. Difficulties within the education system have multiple causes: as a result of apartheid there are generally low standards that have to be upgraded. Another problem is lack of transport that does not enable many schoolchildren to reach better schools. Poor supply of basic facilities such as water, electricity and proper sanitation and a bad state of schools that results in broken roofs and windows worsen the situation for many black South African children. In addition, black South African children, in contrast to most white pupils, have to help with household chores at home to provide for basic needs. This time is lost for learning. Mothers who struggle with survival are often hardly in a position to encourage their children with their schooling, although there are numerous indications in this research that this is one of the priorities of interviewees. Further constraints for most black pupils are that there is a lack of schoolbooks, qualified teachers and space. Officials ascribe many problems to a

shortage of resources (Mail & Guardian 1999c), but as Nuernberger (1994:34) stresses

“ ... there was money for less worthy goals and the education of the future generation should receive top priority.”

Budlender (2000:98-99) points out, though, that it is not only education that can lead the way out of poverty, as it will

“ ... improve the opportunities of those who are reached but, without other interventions such as job creation and equal opportunity initiatives, [education] will not 'solve' the problems of poverty and inequality.”

Without doubt, education is one of the cornerstones of a modern and healthy society. According to UNICEF & NCRC (1993b), there is a need for integrated early childhood development programmes promoting the intellectual, health, nutritional, social and emotional development of children. This includes restructuring of pre-primary and primary education, as they are the necessary basis for any further education. Also quality of teacher training needs to be improved and active in-service-training support needs to be provided to teachers to improve educational standards. The present situation of the education system is unacceptable. Its inefficiency can even add to the rapid increase of AIDS. The key to lowering the infection rate is education of children, as most adults will not change their behaviour and attitudes. If today, in a modern school in an urban area, 20 year old boys still believe that they will not get AIDS if they believe in God, the situation is completely out of hand (personal communication with school pupils, March 1998). In this regard, statements of the government questioning the transmission of AIDS through HIV, do not help either in the fight against the pandemic (see also 2.2.4).

Education also influences power relations in households: in both jointly-headed households and within partnership relationships, the number of educated women is higher than in other households categories. This indicates that education influences power relations between men and women, with women who have better education being more involved in decision-making and resource management. It can be concluded that people in this study sample regard education as a basic need.

The socio-economic indicators evaluated reflect the poor living conditions of a majority of this study population. One of the advantages of participating in the larger

research group was that both rural and urban areas could be visited, making this study sample, although small, representative of the black South African population in the North West Province. This can be seen when comparisons are made with national statistics. As was to be expected, there are differences between rural and urban areas, and in case of intended intervention the specific situation needs to be looked at further. As Frankenberger (1992) points out, socio-economic variables mean different things in different contexts, as conditions might be very different. If socio-economic indicators are to be used for monitoring household food security, their locational specificity should be understood to prevent misinterpretation of data. It is therefore difficult to aggregate such information at a regional or national level. Frankenberger (1992) suggests that multiple indicators should be used if possible for monitoring household food security, to minimise inaccuracies derived from the use of socio-economic indicators. As could be shown in this research by comparison of quantitative and qualitative methods of investigations into household income and household size, without in-depth investigation into these and other issues, the true information on demographic variables often remains hidden.

The specific information obtained here provides the baseline information that forms the background for the food situation of people in the North West Province. All of these indicators to a greater or lesser extent impact on the food situation of households, which is dealt with in chapter 5.4.

5.3 Resource management and intra-household resource allocation

5.3.1 Income and expenditure

One of the determining factors for food security is the use and distribution of available resources within households. For the evaluation of resource management, income and expenditure were assessed, using different research tools (see 4.5).

Comparing mean incomes and expenditures reveals the following:

	<i>Household income per month</i>	<i>Household expenditure per month</i>
Mean	R1 022.39	R878.68
Minimum	R50	R40
Maximum	R8 000	R6 760

Table 5.3.1: Comparison of mean monthly household income and expenditure (n=100)

Mean household income is clearly higher than household expenditure. The comparison of income and expenditure for each household reveals, though, that in 32 households expenditure is above income, with a mean divergence of R161. If one allows divergence of up to R50, 24 households remain with expenditure above income. This difference in income and expenditure in these households has the following possible underlying reasons:

- *Using credit, loans and/or borrowing money from family, neighbours, employer and others increases available cash:*

12 interviewees indicate that they use credit regularly, 4 interviewees have loans. This means that 16 of the 24 households with expenditure above income rely on credit or loans (see also 5.2.6). Furthermore, 19 of these households regularly get help from their family, and 15 households can ask friends or neighbours for food or money. Some women might get money and/or food from boyfriends whom they did not mention during the interview. In two cases, the employer and in one case the church is asked for money. In one case, money was withdrawn from a bank account. All of these reasons explain why there is more money available for expenditure than the amount of income indicated for this period.

□ *Other income sources:*

In a number of cases, there might be other sources of income interviewees did not indicate. This is the case for occasional, irregular piece jobs which might not be regarded as a - and in fact are no - regular income source, as has been illustrated in chapter 5.2.1. Despite this, these irregular incomes often constitute an important proportion of household income and enable people to stretch their resources towards the end of the month, or to be able to afford “extras” that would otherwise not be possible.

□ *Difficulty of evaluating yearly or irregular expenditure:*

Clothes are often only bought once or twice a year (in winter and summer). These recorded amounts were divided by twelve and recorded as monthly expenditure. This will not always be an accurate indication of expenditure. Also, “clothes” money might be paid by others, for example by grandparents or other relatives.

□ *Monthly expenditure for instalments:*

Instalments for furniture and clothes are often paid on a monthly basis. Neither the total amount nor the time frame of payment is clear, though. Some instalments will be paid off after several months and then do not appear as expenditure anymore.

□ *Income is a sensitive issue*

Some interviewees possibly did not want to reveal their incomes. This was probably the case if for example other household members were present during the interview.

Accepting these possible explanations, the difference between incomes and expenditures is not surprising. Although in most of the cases there are possible explanations for the divergence, for some cases there is no visible explanation. Another assumption is that people might sometimes exaggerate expenditure and might indicate commodities they are in fact not able to buy, for reasons of social prestige. Income figures in general have to be dealt with a degree of caution (see 4.5). There is a clear pattern: the lower the income group, the higher the number of households with expenditure above their income, as is illustrated in *Table 5.3.2*:

<i>Income group</i>	<i>Number of households with expenditure > income</i>	<i>% of households of income group</i>
R0-500 (n=36)	20	54%
R501-1 000 (n=39)	9	23%
R1 001-2 000 (n=16)	2	13%
> R2 000 (n=9)	1	11%

Table 5.3.2: Expenditure above income according to income groups (n=100)

5.3.2 Expenditure on food

Table 5.3.3 shows mean income and expenditure and the proportion of expenditure on food of total expenditure, according to income groups:

<i>Income group</i>	<i>Mean income per month in Rand/ per cap inc</i>	<i>Mean expenditure per month in Rand</i>	<i>Mean expenditure on food per month in Rand</i>	<i>Mean proportion of exp. on food per month in %</i>	<i>Max. proportion of exp. on food per month in %</i>
R0-500 (n=36)	368.9/ 117.5	376	189	53.9	97.3
R501-1 000 (n=39)	735.3/ 155.9	670	331	50.5	97.7
R1 001-2 000 (n=16)	1 435.0/ 318.2	1 217	444	37.8	63.3
> R2 000 (n=9)	4 146.7/ 1 505.7	3 196	730	27.7	49.0

Table 5.3.3: Mean income, mean total expenditure and proportion of expenditure on food according to income groups (n=100)

It is confirmed that with higher incomes and higher total expenditure the proportion of expenditure for food is declining (see 3.3.4). A number of households in the lower income categories spend almost all of their income on food, indicated as *maximum proportion of expenditure on food*. This is the case if per capita income is very low, due to small income and/or many household members depending on this income. With higher income, maximum expenditure on food is consequently also declining.

Mean proportion of expenditure on food of this sub-sample of 100 households is **47,6%**. According to national figures, the poor allocate almost 60% of their total to food, compared to 16% in the case of the wealthiest 10% of households (May *et al.* 2000a:45). Integrated Market Research (1994) suggests that for the two lowest living

standard groups average monthly expenditure on food is R201 and R220, respectively. These two groups consist mainly of black South Africans, most of whom live in rural areas (see 5.2.3). These figures are slightly higher than the average expenditure on food evaluated here (R189 in the income group < R500). The 'Poverty and Inequality Report' uses a poverty line whereby households that spend less than R352.5 per adult equivalent are regarded as poor and households that spend less than R193.8 per adult equivalent are regarded as ultra-poor (May *et al.* 2000a). Other national figures evaluated by the Bureau of Market Research (BMR 1999) estimate that in black South African households on average 29.9% of expenditure is on food, while white South Africans spend only 13.2% on food. Therefore, the national average expenditure on food appears to be lower than the figures assessed in this investigation. This could partly be due to this sample being taken from the poorer sections of society and also due to different methodology used. What is congruent with the BMR figures is that food is the most important item in household expenditure of black South Africans (BMR 1999:44). Food is also the most important expenditure item (21.8%) if the total cash budget of all South African households in 1999 is analysed by main expenditure item, followed by housing (16.1%), income tax (14.3%), transport (8.9%), clothing, footwear and accessories (4.5%) and furniture and household equipment (4.3%) (BMR 1999:2).

5.3.3 Expenditure on other items

Expenditure on other items was evaluated according to income groups, as illustrated in *Table 5.3.4*:

Income groups & mean per capita income	Proportion of total expenditure in %							
	<i>Energy</i>	<i>Entertainment.*</i>	<i>Instalment</i>	<i>Educ. cat.*</i>	<i>Transport</i>	<i>Burial soc.*</i>	<i>Clothing</i>	<i>Rent</i>
R0-500/ R117.5 (n=36)	8.7	5.1	3.2	2.0	3.7	1.9	5.6	7.6
R501-1 000/ R155.9 (n=39)	11.6	2.5	6.2	1.9	3.6	3.8	5.6	6.7
R1 001-2 000/ R318.2 (n=16)	5.4	2.4	13.6	1.4	6.2	1.4	9.3	8.1
> R2 000/ R1 505.7 (n=9)	3.5	0.9	14.9	2.7	8.9	3.3	8.8	17.7
Mean	8.8	3.3	7.1	1.9	4.4	2.7	6.6	8.3

Table 5.3.4: Proportion of total expenditure on items other than food according to income groups (n=100)

* Entertainment/ Education/ Burial society

In this sample, the mean proportion of total expenditure is highest for energy, rent, instalments and clothing, followed by transport, entertainment, burial societies and education. With higher incomes, the proportion of expenditure for energy and entertainment declines, while the proportion of expenditure for instalments, transport, clothing and rent rises. As the proportion of expenditure on food declines with rising incomes (see 5.3.2), expenditure then shifts to other items that gain priority and indicate a higher living standard, with items such as furniture, clothing and housing. The proportion of expenditure for transport also rises with higher incomes as more people can then afford a car. The proportion of expenditure of total income on entertainment appears to be highest in the lowest income group. This expenditure item is difficult to evaluate, though, as many people probably would not want to give accurate information on their use of for instance alcohol.

The figures evaluated here cannot simply be compared to national figures, as the grouping into expenditure groups differs. For example, in the BMR survey (BMR 1999) *housing and electricity* constitute one group, another *fuel and light*, while entertainment is split up into *alcoholic beverages, cigarettes and tobacco* and *recreation, entertainment and sport*. The item *furniture and household equipment* is assumed to be similar to *instalments* used here, as furniture is the most frequent item paid off in instalment rates. Still, for orientation some selected expenditure items from

the BMR survey are compared with the figures evaluated in this sample (in brackets). Black South Africans spend on average 2.4% (1.9% in this study) on education, 7.0% (4.4% in this study) on transport, 6.2% (3.3% in this study) on alcohol and tobacco, 6.5% (6.6% in this study) on clothing, footwear and accessories, 10.7% (8.3% in this study) on housing and electricity, 1.4% on fuel and light and 5.8% (7.1% in this study) on furniture and household equipment. Looking at the general market share, white South Africans who represent only 10.6% of the population are responsible for 43.1% of total household expenditure. Generally, black South Africans are responsible for more than half of the national expenditure on fuel and light (86.4%), dry-cleaning and laundry (75.6%), support of relatives (75.1%), clothing, footwear and accessories (62.5%), alcoholic beverages (60.6%), washing and cleaning materials (59.3%), furniture and household equipment (58.8%), food (58.7%), personal care (53.2%), education (51.3%) and cigarettes and tobacco (51.0%). In contrast, white South Africans are responsible for more than half of all household expenditure on recreation, entertainment and sports (67.0%), servants (65.4%), savings (61.0%), insurance and investment funds (57.7%), income tax (55.3%), communication (54.2%), holiday (53.7%), transport (52.9%) and medical and dental requisites and services (52.3%).

In the next sub-chapter, expenditure patterns in the different household categories and regarding power relations are investigated.

5.3.4 Control over resources and intra-household resource allocation: Are there gendered patterns of expenditure and remittances?

In chapters 5.1.1.3, 5.1.3.4 and 5.1.3.5, the intensity of the gender struggle for the control of income and the importance of other intra-household dynamics in this regard were indicated. Here it is investigated, whether the general assumption that women tend to devote a greater amount of their earnings to the wellbeing of their children and the household than men do can be confirmed, and what are the indicators, apart from gender, influencing resource allocation in the household.

5.3.4.1 Expenditure on food according to household categories and gender relations

Comparing expenditure on food according to household categories, the following picture emerges:

Household category (n=100)	<i>Mean household income/ expenditure/ per cap. inc.</i>	<i>Proportion of expenditure on food & max. proportion of expenditure</i>	<i>Household size (members present/total)</i>
Women with children, no support network (n=5)	R654/ R508/ R181	57% max: 90%	4.8/ 5.4
Women co-operating with relatives (n=26)	R606/ R608/ R110	50% max: 93%	5.9/ 7.4
Women living alone (n=7)	R668/ R535/ R248	33% max: 69%	1/ 3.6
Women pensioners (n=12)	R578/ R551/ R127	63% max: 98%	5.7/ 6.2
Women living with partner (n=40)	R1 292/ R996/ R294	44% max: 89%	5.9/ 6.9
Women with migrant partner (n=8)	R1 379/ R1 490/ R155	49% max: 72%	9.3/ 10.5
Men living alone (n=2)	R4 450/ R3 694/ R4 450	32% max: 46%	1/ 3.5

Table 5.3.5: Mean household income, expenditure and per capita income, household size and proportion of expenditure on food according to household categories

In the categories *women with children* and *women pensioners* the proportion of expenditure on food is higher than in the category *women co-operating with relatives*, with the latter having higher total average expenditure. This is congruent with Engel's Law (see 3.3.4 and 5.3.2). This pattern seems to be consistent for all of the categories, taking into account household size. In both of the categories *women pensioners* and *women with children* the proportion of expenditure on food is far above average proportion of expenditure on food of the total sample in this income group (see Table 5.3.3). The proportion of expenditure on food of women pensioners is even higher than among the poorest in South Africa, with an estimated proportion of expenditure on food of 59.2% (May *et al.* 2000a:45).

Expenditure on food was further compared according to male- and female-dominated households. As incomes in female-dominated households are far below those in

male-dominated households (see 5.2.1), a comparison of mean total household expenditure and proportion of expenditure on food would not make sense as male-led households with higher overall expenditure will have lower expenditure on food. Mean total expenditure in male-dominated households was R1 084, in female-dominated households R576. Therefore, the two categories were stratified according to income groups and those households with similar household sizes (present members) were then compared regarding their proportion of expenditure on food. In the income group R1-500, with an average household size of 4.6 for male-led and 4.4 for female-led households, food expenditure was almost equal. In the income group R501–R1 000, the proportion of expenditure on food was higher in female-led households with 53% compared to 48% in male-led households, although in female-led households there were fewer members (5.6 compared to 6.6 in male-led households). In the income groups remaining, sample size was too small to make any meaningful comparison. It was further investigated how many women had their own personal income. The proportion of women in female-dominated households having their own income was far higher (71%) than in both male-dominated households (48%) and households based on partnership relationship (36%). This suggests that women in female-dominated households have easier individual access to income than do women in other households, enabling them to control the allocation of this money without interference from men.

In another comparison of male-headed, *de jure* female-headed, jointly-headed and *de facto* female-headed households, in the income group R1-500 male-headed households had no expenditures on food above 50% of total expenditure, while this was the case in both *de jure* female- and jointly-headed households. In both categories, a majority spent more than 50% of their budget on food. Household size was 3.7 in male-headed, 4.35 in *de jure* female-headed and 4.82 in jointly-headed households. These differences alone cannot explain the higher expenditure on food. In the income group R501-1 000, *de jure* female-headed households also show a higher proportion of expenditure on food than male-headed households.

The indication that in income group R1-500 expenditure on food is almost equal in male- and female-dominated households, but not in income group R501-1 000, could be explained by an observation mentioned by Evans (1992), although it was made mainly of northern industrial countries. In poor households, women are given the task of managing poverty and stretching the wage. They invest their own unpaid labour in 'shopping around' and establishing social networks that help overcome times of

shortage. When more substantial resources are available, men take over control and management. Evans (1992:142) therefore suggests that

“Greater affluence for the couple leads to greater inequality between husband and wife.”

Another aspect that can have an impact on the power a woman can exercise regarding decision-making about household resources is the relationship of a newly wed couple. According to Young (1992:152),

“In those cultures where men’s first loyalty is customarily to their own kin and wives move into their husbands natal home, a wife’s position may be too weak to claim on so-called conjugal resources”

In South Africa, in regions that still have a largely “traditional” or patriarchal character a woman who moves in with her husband’s kin has to work for and obey her in-laws. She has a subservient position in the household (Liebenberg 1997). The obedience of young wives towards their in-laws is illustrated in the following comments of interviewees:

“After my marriage I had to work for my family-in-law, it is our tradition. We had a one-room house but in the same yard as my parents-in-law. We ate all together and it was my job to cook all the time, because I was the new daughter-in-law. The family was dependent on my husband who had to buy everything. The living was not good. My life was much better when I moved to my own house.”

“After I got married my husband and I lived with my mother-in-law in a two-room house. My husband and I used to sleep in the living room on a bed. There were a lot of people living there and we had no privacy. I worked like a slave for them. I did everything, but it is in our tradition.”

In households of partnership relationships that are characterised by joint decision-making, only 36% of women had their own, personal income, this proportion being even lower than in households dominated by men. Therefore, shared decision-making in these households must also be based on other factors than earned income (see 5.4.9). As Bank (1997) points out, notable exceptions to the failure of partners to commit themselves to a moral economy and the sharing of resources appeared if couples had been living together for several years and had developed the level of

trust necessary for this kind of relationship. It is assumed that this is one of the factors applying here also.

According to Kennedy & Peters (1992), expenditure patterns of male-headed households and certain categories of female-headed households may also be similar at certain levels of income. They therefore concluded that it is not only female-headness *per se*, but also other intra-household relations playing a role in resource allocation. As this investigation into resource management so far indicates, this assumption can be confirmed here. Therefore, **Hypothesis 4**, “*In female-headed households, a bigger proportion of the budget will be spent on food*”, can be confirmed confidently for certain categories of female-heads and in certain income groups. Other intra-household relations playing a role will be dealt with in chapter 5.4.

5.3.4.2 Expenditure on other items according to household categories

Expenditure on other items was also evaluated according to household categories and is illustrated in *Table 5.3.6*:

Household categories (n=100) & per capita income	Proportion of total expenditure in %							
	<i>Energy</i>	<i>Entertainm.*</i>	<i>Instal-ment</i>	<i>Edu-cat.*</i>	<i>Trans-port</i>	<i>Burial soc.*</i>	<i>Cloth-ing</i>	<i>Rent</i>
Women with children, no support network (n=5) R181	4.8	1.5	1.5	3.6	3.4	0.1	7.5	5.5
Women co-operating with relatives (n=26) R110	13.9	3.5	6.3	1.2	5.3	3.0	8.9	3.7
Women living alone (n=7) R248	2.2	0.9	-	-	9.0	2.0	4.0	8.1
Women pensioners (n=12) R127	3.0	0.4	4.8	1.4	2.0	4.6	1.3	19.9
Women living with partner (n=40) R294	8.1	4.9	10.4	2.8	4.0	1.7	6.2	8.9
Women with migrant partner (n=8) R155	12.9	0.4	5.6	1.5	2.5	4.0	11.9	2.5
Men living alone (n=2) R4 450	8.5	-	9.6	-	7.4	9.0	6.4	13.5
Mean	8.8	3.3	7.1	1.9	4.4	2.7	6.6	8.3

Table 5.3.6: *Proportion of total expenditure on items other than food according to household categories*

* Entertainment/ Education/Burial society

Not all of the above categories can easily be compared, according to differences in average household size and therefore difference in per capita incomes and total household expenditure. Still, certain patterns do come to the fore:

□ Entertainment

In household categories where women live alone, the proportion of expenditure on alcohol and cigarettes is lower than in categories with men present. *Women with a migrant partner* indicate very little expenditure on entertainment. This could be due to

the fact that the household budget is separated from the budget of the male migrant partner. According to comments of female interviewees it seems as if migrant male partners often spend considerable parts of their income on alcohol. Generally, expenditure on entertainment has to be regarded with great caution, as it must be assumed that accurate information is seldom given (see 5.4.9).

□ Instalments

Women with a partner and also *men living alone* have considerably higher payments for instalments. This is an indication of priority, but also of a higher living standard, due to higher per capita incomes (see 5.2.1). In stark contrast, *women living alone* do not have any expenditure on instalments. One reason for this might be, apart from having other priorities, that all of these women except for two live in houses provided by their employer and might therefore not invest money in these houses, as was illustrated in chapter 5.2.8.

□ Education

Compared to other categories with comparable per capita incomes, *single women with children* spend more on education. This could be due to the fact that for them it is very important to enable their children to have a better future.

□ Transport

Women with a migrant partner report very low proportion of expenditure for travelling (2.5%). This is another indication that personal budgets of migrant men and household resources have to be regarded separately, as migrants definitely need a certain amount for travelling. *Women living alone* are (except for one case) migrants and therefore have higher proportion of expenditure on transport than all other categories (9.0%).

□ Burial societies/church

In the category *women pensioners*, not surprisingly burial societies seem to be more important than in other categories. The high amount indicated in the category *men living alone* stands for donations of one of the interviewees to his church.

□ Clothing

Comparably high proportion of expenditure on clothing in the category *single women with children* could be explained by the fact that they are the only ones providing clothes for their children, whereas in other categories money for clothes might

sometimes come from other relatives. Also, children, as they still grow, need more clothes than adults.

□ Rent

With higher per capita incomes, also proportion of expenditure on rent increases, as is obvious in the category *men living alone*. The high proportion of rent paid by *women pensioners* cannot be explained. Also, the amount paid for rent varies considerably according to area (urban/rural).

5.3.4.3 Gendered patterns of remittances of migrant men and women?

Remittance behaviour of migrant women and men was investigated to see whether there are gendered differences.

Migrant women are the most visible group among migrant workers in this sample, constituting one-third of migrant workers (16% of the total sample). In most cases, they have low paid jobs, such as domestic work or farm work. The average income that could be evaluated of only six women who are living alone, is R713, with a minimum of R440 and a maximum of R1 250. The percentage of remittances of their total expenditure is on average 53%, with a minimum of 31% and a maximum of 70%. It becomes clear, that despite low salaries these women send or bring large parts of their earnings home, often half or more than half of their income. The fact that most migrant women despite low wages still manage to send money home was also described by Cock (1980) in her research on black female migrant workers.

According to information from recipient households, in six cases remittances of distant migrant women are the only or main source of income for these households. The percentage of received remittance of total household income is 38%. The amount of remitted money is on average R269. Only two migrant women are not able to remit any money home. One woman lost her job and since then depends on her brother and other relatives with whom she stays. The other woman earns a salary that is too low to enable her to remit money.

In 8 of 19 households attached to migrant men, remittance constitutes the main or only source of income for the recipient household. The average percentage of received remittances of household income is 59%. This is more than the remittances received by migrant women (38%). The average amount of received remittances (R935) is also far above that of migrant women (R269)²⁴.

Although the monetary contribution of migrant women is lower than that of migrant men, there is another factor benefiting households attached to migrant women: they also often bring home food, as indicated by recipient households, while

only one of the migrant men contributed food. Jones made the same observation. He found that

“Whereas men almost invariably made only cash contributions, migrant women usually contribute in both cash and kind” (Jones 1999:20).

Households attached to migrant women and migrant men were further compared regarding the following characteristics:

Characteristic	Households attached to migrant women * (n=19)	Households attached to migrant men (n=19)
Mean household income	R495.6	R1 326.4
Mean household size	8.7	9.21
Number of households taking credit or loans	8	9
Number of households having networks with relatives	14	12
Number of households having networks with neighbours/friends	15	9

Table 5.3.7: Comparison of households attached to migrant women and migrant men

* Of 26 households attached to migrant women, in seven cases interviewees were migrant women themselves (six women living alone, one woman living with her two children). As there is no sufficient information on the households attached to them at a distance, regarding total household income, credit practices and other characteristics listed in the table, these households are excluded from this comparison.

The difference in mean household income revealed in *Table 5.3.7* is striking. Households attached to migrant men have about three times the income (R1 326) of households attached to migrant women (R496). Van der Waal (1996) found similar differences of incomes of migrant men and women. The general huge discrepancy of incomes of men and women was already indicated in the comparison of per capita incomes in male- and female-led households (see 5.2.1). However, the number of households attached to female migrants that are using credit is lower than in households attached to migrant men. One reason for this could be the above mentioned contributions of food that increase household resources, but these are not visible here. Another reason could be that households attached to migrant women seem to have larger networks of relatives and friends that help overcome times of food shortage. In this small sub-sample of migrant households, ‘accurate’ data on

income is available only for a limited number of households. Therefore, no valid information can be given about mean per capita income. Average household size is only slightly higher in households attached to migrant men.

Another benefit of contributions of migrant women Jones (1999) points out is that remittances of migrant women are more reliable and that therefore households relying on these remittances are able to budget more effectively and would be less likely to use credit at local retailers. What can be stated from the results obtained here is that half of the female partners of migrant men do not know what their partner earns and demand that they should contribute more, while there were no “complaints” of household members about contributions of migrant women.

5.3.5 Overview

The low level of living standard within this study population is, besides other socio-economic and demographic indicators, reflected in a high proportion of expenditure on food (48%). Both the findings of this research and national data are congruent in that for the black South African population food is the most important expenditure item. With higher incomes, the proportion of expenditure on food declines, while other items such as furniture, clothing, housing and transport gain in priority.

Expenditure patterns investigated according to household categories and gender relations show that women allocate a larger share of their budget to food and spend less on for example alcoholic beverages than do male-headed households. This is also confirmed by other studies (Kennedy & Peters 1992; Schulz 1999). It was furthermore shown in this research that women devote a greater amount of their earnings and also commitment to family relationships, other than men. Young (1992:139) states that it is

“ ... commonly believed that women spend a higher proportion of their resources on children than men do.”

One of the reasons, as was illustrated in chapter 5.1.3.4, might be that women also gain from this. In return they get protection and have several advantages if they stay either with female relatives or with their parents. Among the benefits are that these women are then independent from male partners and are also able to pursue their own education or career. The strong determination of women to provide for their kin can especially be seen in the cases of migrant women illustrated here: although they earn much less than men, they remit larger parts of their income to the households

they are connected to and live a very basic, simple life themselves. One of the motivations for these women might be that by supporting their kin now they provide for their own livelihood in the future when they stop working and return to their homes. It is then that they will be looked after by their kin.

Linking up to the above assumption of expenditure patterns of women, according to Kennedy & Peters (1992) the proportion of income controlled by women has a positive and significant influence on household caloric intake. Data from urban Brazil has also shown that maternal income effects on family health are generally 4 to 8 times bigger than paternal income effects, with the probability for child survival being almost 20 times higher (Maxwell & Smith 1992). The consequence of this is that mothers spend more money on health, education and the wellbeing of their children, while men spend more on alcohol, cigarettes, highly prestigious consumer goods and female companionship. These observations are also true for South Africa (Van der Waal 1996; Ramphele 1993). Furthermore, the notion that men in male-dominated households withhold part of their earnings from the household, and often hide the true amount of their income was mentioned by women throughout this research and is also documented in other studies. This is not only an observation made in this specific cultural context, but as Young (1992:153) points out there is some similarity between developed and developing countries:

“ ... culturally women are more firmly associated with the collective aspects of household/family consumption, while men are associated with the security or political standing of the family, household and kin group. This permits men to take a more self-centered approach to their own and family resources and to their own consumption.”

On the other hand, according to Kennedy & Peters (1992) gender of a household head is not the only determining factor for food security and wellbeing of household members. Data from Kenya and Malawi suggest that, while the aggregate of female-headed households allocate a higher proportion of their incomes to food, compared to male-headed households, at similar levels of income expenditure patterns of male-headed households and certain categories of female-headed households may also be similar. At very low-income levels, certain sub-categories of female-headed households were able to achieve equal or even better nutritional status than wealthier male- and female-headed households, whereas with increasing incomes, children seemed to benefit less than would have been expected, regardless of the

gender of a household head. It was therefore concluded, that it is not female-headness *per se* that leads to certain patterns of behaviour and to better nutritional status, but the interrelation between gender of head and income (Kennedy & Peters 1992). Young (1992:142) goes further in stating that

“ ... the connection between income-earning and power in the household is by no means a simple one.”

Although research supports the contention that income-earning women are also more involved in decision-making, it does not follow that the higher their contribution, the greater their control over how income is spent. There are other factors such as difference in the ages of husband and wife, ownership of other economic resources such as capital and land, number of children, possession of social resources such as social networks, social position and others. There are several examples in this research where women despite earning money are not at all or very little involved in decision-making (see 5.1.2.3). The observation made elsewhere (Evans 1992), that in very low income groups women are given the task of managing poverty through their ways of generating some forms of income and establishing social networks, while with higher incomes they have less say regarding household resources seems to be true also in this study sample.

The observation made in other studies that female-headed households are poorer than male-headed or jointly-headed households was also found here (see also 5.2.1). However, other factors come into place, in ‘weighing up’ economic disadvantages of female-headed households, such as extended networks, which contribute to the wellbeing and to a better general situation of certain categories of female-headed households. This could be shown with the examples of migrant men and women: although households attached to migrant men economically are far better off, households attached to migrant women compensate for at least some of the disadvantages of lower incomes with their larger support networks and other factors. The impact on the food situation in these households is investigated in chapter 5.4.9.

According to Bank (1997), there is considerable evidence that income in South Africa nowadays is being managed on a much more individual basis, when young men and women live together as unmarried couples. Bank also points out, however, that in most relationships there is a lack of trust and co-operation regarding

resources. The levels of trust necessary for jointly managing income is achieved only after couples have been living together for several years.

The decisive question remains: why are some households more successful in managing with their limited resources than others? The findings presented in the following chapter will try to advance the understanding of the differences between food-secure and non-food-secure households.

5.4 *“Sometimes there is only ‘pap’”* - The food and nutrition situation in households

5.4.1 *“I grew up with porridge and milk”* – Availability of food, access to food and dietary diversity



Photo 22: Woman in a rural area preparing food in the traditional way

To assess the food and nutrition situation at household level, interviewees were asked what food they have available most of the time (basic/staple food) and what food they have available only sometimes or seldom. Indications of 158 interviewees for whom the food list could be completed reveal the following:

□ *Maize meal, maize products, rice, bread and sugar:*

Maize meal is available in all households throughout the month. Other maize products are consumed far less frequently. About one-quarter (24%) of household regularly consume samp, while 8% have it only sometimes²⁵. Consumption patterns are similar for mealie rice: 22% of households have it regularly available, 8% only sometimes. Rice is regularly available in 38% of households, 42% have rice at least sometimes. Bread is regularly available in 37% of households, while 20% have it only occasionally. More than half of interviewees indicate that they have flour regularly available. Sugar is available in almost all households (89%) throughout the month.

□ *Vegetables:*

Certain vegetables such as onions, cabbage and sometimes tomatoes and spinach (morogo) are available in 74% of households throughout the month. A distinction was made between "cheaper" and "more expensive" vegetables. The latter, which only 19% of households regularly have available and 57% sometimes, includes carrots, beetroot, pumpkin, sweet potatoes and others. Most people consume these vegetables only on weekends or often even only once a month, when pensions or incomes are received or when relatives bring or send money home. Farm workers are found to have the lowest intake of vegetables. Potatoes are regularly available in 57% of households, 17% of households have them occasionally, while about one-quarter of households do not have them at all. Beans are also not available in the majority of households (84%).

□ *Meat:*

Meat is regularly available in one-third of households. These are households belonging to the upper urban stratum. Also interviewees who work on cattle farms consume meat regularly. They get it from their employer as a kind of allowance, sometimes on a daily basis (see also 5.4.7). A majority of households (63%) have meat only sometimes, with some of them being able to afford meat only once a month. These are mainly households in rural areas and informal settlements. There are also a number of households (5%) that seem to have no meat at all or very seldom have meat available. Meat products are available occasionally for 17% of households and for only 4% regularly.

□ *Milk, milk products and eggs:*

Fresh milk is regularly available in 60% of the households and in 13% of households sometimes, while 29% do not give an indication whether they have milk. About the same percentage of households (28%) indicate that they use creamer (a non-dairy product). One can therefore suggest that people who do not consume milk use creamer instead. More urban households (70%) than rural households (55%) indicate that they have milk every day. This might be due to the lack of cooling facilities in rural areas. The correlation of milk consumption and cooling facilities is highly significant : 77% of households indicating that they do not have fresh milk also do not have a fridge, while almost 80% of households with a fridge also have fresh milk available almost every day. In areas where there are no outlets with cooling facilities, there is also no fresh milk available, with only those people having milk who possess cattle, which is mostly the case in rural areas. Farm workers seem to have the lowest

milk consumption of all social strata: more than 50% give no indication about having milk available, which probably means that they do not consume fresh milk.

Milk products such as cheese are not available in the majority of households (80%). Eggs are regularly available in 23% of households, 17% have them occasionally.

□ *Oil and margarine*

More than half of households indicate that they have cooking oil regularly available. A number of interviewees might have forgotten to mention oil, as it is as standard an item in the households as salt. It is therefore likely that a higher percentage of households than indicated here will normally have oil. More than 20% of interviewees indicated that they use margarine regularly, 13% use it only occasionally.

□ *Fruit:*

The low consumption of fruit is striking – more than two-thirds of the interviewees (68%) do not mention fruit at all. Only 7% of interviewees, belonging to households of the upper urban and urban strata, indicate that they have fruit regularly available. One-quarter (25%) have fruit sometimes. These are households distributed over all social strata except for the upper urban stratum. There is a similar consumption pattern for fruit juice, with 7% of households having it regularly available and 6% only sometimes.

□ *Tea, coffee and cold drinks*

Both tea and coffee are frequently consumed: 71% of households regularly have tea available and 67% coffee. Cold drinks are regularly available in 10% of households, 17% indicate they have them sometimes.

□ *Other food items*

Powdered soup is regularly available in 20% of households (sometimes: 4% of households), tinned fish in 17% of households (sometimes:17%), tinned vegetables in 10% of households (sometimes: 9%). Other food such as peanut butter, cereals and sweets were mentioned by less than 5% of interviewees.

It is clear that maize meal is the staple food of the population in this study sample. Regarding the *nutrient* and the *social* value of available food and the very limited dietary diversity for the majority of households, the general food situation can be depicted as being *neither sufficient nor satisfying*. Consequences for nutritional

status are investigated further in chapter 5.4.7. Implications this situation has for household food security and also for social expectations are illustrated throughout the following chapters.

Several men comment on the food situation in the following way:

“Porridge with milk is good for the children, because I also grew up eating porridge with milk at the farm...it will build their bodies strong.”

“I eat only porridge and dumplings with meat, we grew up with this, the children too.”

“Porridge and milk because they [the children] can eat it the whole week without complaining, and they are satisfied.”

In all three households, food diversity is very limited. Especially vegetables and fruit are rarely available. These comments have to be seen in the context that there might be no means to get a variety of food. It reflects, however, also the perceptions of these men. This is not to say that men in general have wrong perceptions about the food situation or that they are not willing to admit that there is a shortage of food, as the following comments of male interviewees illustrate:

“We worry about jobs, because our children don’t have good food and clothes.”

“I worry to see my children hungry, and I have no money.”

“I have no food in the house and the children look at me if there’s no food.”

The comment of a key informant from a rural area confirms the very limited choice people often have:

“Many people eat only porridge, because of the lack of money.”

Sometimes there is hardly any food in the house, only maize meal and maybe some onions or other vegetables. This happens especially at the end of the month or before the payment of the next salary or pension, which can also be in the middle of the month, as the time of payments differs according to area. This observation is confirmed by household food inventories done within the *National Food Consumption Survey*, where it was found that

“... in many houses there was really nothing to eat” (Wentzel 1999).

□ *Indications interviewees give for having food on a regular basis:*

Interviewees were also asked, why they buy and eat the food they mentioned. For food people have on a regular basis, such as maize meal, sugar and certain vegetables, the most frequent answers are:

“These are the cheapest that I can afford.”

“We have too little money.”

“We use them a lot, it is our staple diet.”

“I can get them easy and buy them easy [have the money].”

Other quotes of interviewees are:

“This food lasts long [the whole month].”

“I get money only once a month, then I buy these foods.”

“To build the body and to give us strength.”

“To keep us alive.”

“I don’t want to be finished with them because I get hungry.”

“Because we like the food.”

The following comments come from interviewees who have a diversity of different types of food:

“I don’t want my children to have ‘papsickness’.”

“You should not only eat one kind of food, but different kinds.”

The term “papsickness” or “papsick” is mentioned frequently by interviewees, referring to kwashiorkor which is a result of protein deficiency. It seems to be commonly known that if children eat only maize meal (“pap”) they get a swollen stomach and dry skin.

□ *Indications interviewees give for having food only sometimes:*

Regarding food interviewees have available only sometimes or seldom, again the issue of money was the most frequently mentioned:

“We can’t afford these food every day, we buy them only if there is money left.”

When making this sort of remark, interviewees refer to food such as meat or more expensive vegetables, and also to food such as rice, fruit, sweets, fast food, and others. Other frequent comments are

"We only have these foods on weekends."

"Because I go to town only once a month, I can get fresh food only there."

"This food can wash the blood and build the body."

"You must have this food sometimes, we buy it for the children at the end of the month."

"We have these foods for enjoyment."

"We don't buy these foods always because we want to save money."

The explanation of interviewees why they have certain food and cannot afford others give indications of their food situation and also of coping strategies and livelihood strategies they are using. It becomes clear that a majority of people cannot afford certain food. Also, people often eat less of the preferred food, sometimes with the aim to save money for other purposes. Another aspect that comes to the fore is that a number of people do only one big shop per month (see 5.2.9). Therefore, people have to buy food that will last long. These are ideally maize meal, sugar, and vegetables such as cabbage, onions and also potatoes. Coping strategies affecting food consumption are dealt with in more detail in chapter 5.4.10.

5.4.2 "What we would like to eat" - Food preferences

"Next time you come, you must come with meat. Tomorrow is pay day, then we are going to have meat - but when you come in the middle of the month, you must bring meat." (Comment of a woman who lives in an informal settlement. On our visits, we usually brought different kind of fruits and avocados.)

Interviewees were asked what food they would prefer to eat more often and why, and what food they think their children should eat more often and why. Interviewees indicate that they would prefer the following food more often for themselves: meat (35%), rice (18%), fruit (19%), vegetables (15%), cold drinks (13%), stamp mealies (13%), maize meal (15%), fruit juice (9%) and milk (10%), among others. These figures illustrate people's preferences, especially for more meat.

For children, interviewees perceive the following food as more desirable: fruit (39%), vegetables (28%), meat (21%), milk (11%), eggs (11%), fruit juice (8%) and sweets (10%). According to these findings, interviewees perceive fruit and vegetables as more important for their children than meat. This, of course, reflects only the perceptions of the caregiver or other adults, while the children themselves might have different opinions on this. Interviewees frequently indicate that if they had enough money they would prefer to eat other food:

“If I had money, these foods should be there always.”

Cock investigated the living conditions of black female domestic workers. The following quotes are taken from her observations (Cock 1980: 34-35):

“The smell of their food makes me hungry.”

“I only get samp, but I cook everything and am not allowed to eat it. Everybody would like a piece of meat, specially if you have to cook it. The smell is enough.”

These comments of course reflect the experiences of black female domestic workers during the seventies, and access to food domestic employees had surely varied from one household to the other. However, as the first quote in this section illustrates, the situation of many poor black South Africans of today has not changed with regard to their access to food. On the contrary, the food situation has worsened for a significant number of people, as will later be described in chapter 5.4.11.

5.4.3 *“Every day I think what we are going to eat the next day”* – Worries about food, experience of food shortage and hunger

On the question whether they are worried about food for the next day, three-quarters of the interviewees answer ‘yes’. The same number of interviewees indicate that they sometimes experience problems in getting food. Reasons given for these problems are, among others (number of answers)

- *lack of money (n=84)*
- *lack of food (n=44)*
- *children won't have enough food (n=52)*
- *no work (n=32)*
- *food is too expensive in the location, other shops are too far (n=15)*

- *to be physically affected if there is not enough food, regarding health, body weight, not being able to work (n=9)*
- *kids will become thieves (n=6)*
- *no food if husband or relatives are not sending money (n=4)*

The reasons given reflect the circumstances and the main problems regarding food. These answers give no indication about the frequency or the seriousness of the food situation, though. Also, worries about food and problems in getting food in most cases, but not always, reflect on the situation of food security, as not all of the interviewees who state that they are sometimes worried about food for the next day are necessarily food insecure. Some interviewees might be worried about the situation in general in the country, such as the state of the economy, the insecurity of jobs, and possibly also having general worries regarding the future.

To get a more distinct indication of the occurrence of food shortage and hunger, interviewees were asked whether they go hungry and how often this happens. With regard to children, it was asked whether interviewees felt that there is sometimes not enough food for their children and how often this happens, and also whether they are still able to get food for their children when there is a shortage. More than one-third of the interviewees (37%) state that they experience hunger regularly. Of those interviewees with children (n=140), two-thirds (67%) indicate that sometimes there is not enough food for the children, but they still seem to manage to get food for them. Almost half of interviewees (49%) state that they are sometimes not able to give their children food. These figures already clearly indicate that a large number of households in this sample must be regarded as chronically food insecure.

5.4.4 Food secure? State and categories of food security

In the previous sections, the general situation of households regarding access to and availability of food was illustrated. To classify households according to their state of food security/food insecurity, four categories are established, taking into account indicators that are relevant for food security.

□ Very food insecure (16% of households, n=26)

In this category, food is not sufficient, regarding both quantity and quality. Households experience regular, often continuous times of food shortage. For a majority of households (84%), the food that is available is the most basic and often consists only of porridge and vegetables such as onions, cabbage or potatoes. A variety in the diet, like meat and other vegetables, occurs only seldom, sometimes

only once a month or if someone brings food or money. Only few households (12%) give indications of having some variety of food. In households that possess livestock (n=3), the diet consists mainly of milk and porridge. Households in this category exist on very limited or unpredictable incomes or solely on remittances and support from family and friends. It also occurs that there is a small regular income or a pension, with many household members relying on it (a high dependency ratio). Household size is on average 7.5 members. Access to credit and loans seems to be difficult, as only 19% of households can get credit and 8% have loans. Average per capita income is R57 per month. More than half (58%) of total household expenditure is on food, with some households spending more than 90% of their budget on food. Only one household has savings coming from a former job, on which the household now has to survive. More than half of those who are very food insecure (54%) are people living in rural areas (see also 5.4.9).

This is a state of *absolute poverty*, where income does not meet the level of *basic needs* (Nuernberger 1999:60-61). The following comments illustrate the situation as people in this category experience it:

"We eat only porridge and milk."

"We have a shortage of food at all times [throughout the month]."

"The children cry and there is no one to give them food."

The following case describes the situation of a single mother who struggles to look after her children:

Dinah works as a domestic servant and is the only one to take care of her three children. When she is at work, the twelve-year-old child looks after the two eleven-year-old siblings. They regularly have a shortage of food, but she sees to it that at least the children have something to eat: *"Sometimes I go hungry – the children must have food."* The only person to help her is her employer ('madam'), to whom she can go and lend money to buy food. She moved away from her mother because she didn't want to be a burden: *"My mother tries to help, but she also has many other responsibilities."* There is no father for the children. The situation is very difficult for her, also to explain it to her children: *"If there is no food, the children don't understand ... I tell them that they must accept what I can give."*

□ *Food insecure* (58% of households, n=97)

In this category, households have basic food supply during the month, but there are regular, often foreseeable times of food shortage towards the end or even middle of the month, before the household receives its next pay or pension. Food diversity in most cases is limited: only 36% of households indicate that they have a diversity of food, while almost half of households (49%) have no variation in their diet throughout the month, but only have some variation on weekends or once a month. Households where pensions are the only or main source of income are frequent in this category (that is 78%; or 72% of all pension households). Household size is on average 7.0 members, average per capita income is R159 per month. Almost half (46%) of total household expenditure is on food. Savings are indicated by 17% of households. Times of food shortage can partly be overcome with social support, mostly of relatives and/or neighbours, as well as by using credit at local shops (42% of households) or having loans (14% of households). This category has the highest occurrence of households using credit (77% of all households using credit) and loans (86%). Of the households in this category, 17% own livestock (which makes up 76% of all households owning livestock). This asset can add to the food supply, for example fresh milk might then be available or occasionally an animal can be slaughtered for the supply of meat. Livestock can also be sold and thus help overcome times of shortage. Also in this category people are living in *poverty*, as income can often not meet *basic needs*. The following comments illustrate the situation:

"It sometimes happens that there is no cabbage, onions, potatoes, rice and flour, and that there is only a little porridge left, because the money ran out. Then I wait for next week."

"It worries me if there is nothing left to eat for my children. This happens at the end of the month. Then I go to the neighbours to ask for some mealie meal."

"We can't afford some foods every day, we buy them only if we have enough money/if there is money left."

"We have certain food only on weekends."

In the last two comments, interviewees refer to food such as meat, certain vegetables, fruit, rice, sweets, cold drinks and other food that they would prefer to eat more frequently if they could afford it (see 5.4.1 and 5.4.2). Also, in this category,

there is often no possibility to use resources differently or to budget in another more creative way. Some households try to save money for future investments, for example to build a house or to add rooms to an existing house. These are livelihood strategies, where people are willing to sacrifice certain needs in favour of others that will benefit them in the long term. In these cases, the money available for food might be reduced (see 5.4.10). This is the reason why these households must be regarded as food insecure, while otherwise they could possibly also be placed in the following category of *relative food security*. In other cases, households are food insecure because they mismanage their resources (see 5.4.9).

□ *Relatively food secure* (21% of households, n=35)

In relatively food secure households, there is no food shortage or times of food shortage or experiences of hunger only occur seldom. These households can fulfil their needs. Food preferences can in some cases, but not always, be fulfilled. About two-thirds of households (69%) indicate that they have a diversity of food, while almost one-third (31%) have at least some variation in their diet and none of the households is restricted to very basic food. In households that have no great variety in the diet this is a matter of choice and not a matter of not having the means to be able to get certain food. The majority of households in this category have regular incomes. For five households, one or several pensions are the main income source. Average per capita income is R353 per month. Household size is on average 5.4 members. Of the total household expenditure, 39% is on food. Almost half of the households (43%) have savings, and two households own livestock.

This situation, where income meets basic essentials, but cannot always meet the level of *social expectations*, can also be described as *relative deprivation* (Nuernberger 1999). Extra or unexpected expenses can create problems and result in times of food insecurity, if there are no savings available or coping strategies to overcome bad times. This is illustrated in the following comment:

“We get short of money only when we buy things without thinking, like paying for instalments.”

In contrast to the previous category, only a limited number of households (20%) rely on credit if resources become limited. None of the households has loans. There are good social networks of mostly kin that enable households to cover short periods of food shortage, as expressed in the following comment:

"If I get short of food, I can always go to my mother."

Partnership relationships and good general intra-household relations are also frequent in this group: 40% of households are based on partnership relationships, which is almost half (47%) of all partnership relationships (see also 5.4.9). The following statements illustrate joint decision-making:

"If there is a shortage of food, we sit down and talk, and someone will get some money out of his pocket and buy some food."

"We decide together."

□ *Food secure* (5% of households, n=8)

In this category, food is always sufficient, regarding quantity and quality. There are no worries that there will not be enough food. All households in this category have food diversity, except for one household consisting of a single woman who is living alone and is sending remittances to relatives. In this case, it is a matter of choice and not of having no means to get certain food. Food preferences can mostly be fulfilled. Households in this category have regular and secure incomes (not based on pension/s). The average per capita income is R2 268 per month. Household size is on average 4.8 members. Of total household expenditure, 27% is on food. All households indicate that they have savings.

This situation can also be described as a state of *relative privilege*, where income meets basic essentials and *social expectations* but not all *personal wishes* (Nuernberger 1999). In cases of unexpected expenses, it is likely that households are able to cope because of their savings. The next higher category, defined by Nuernberger as *absolute affluence*, is a situation where the income covers the basic essentials, social expectations and all reasonable wishes. Surplus can be saved and invested or wasted. Three households in the "food secure" category seem to have reached this state. The following comments illustrate the perceptions of the food secure:

"I never worry about food for the next day."

"I never get short of food."

Figure 5.4.1 illustrates the different types of need and income-need relations as described above and the widening poverty and affluence gaps.

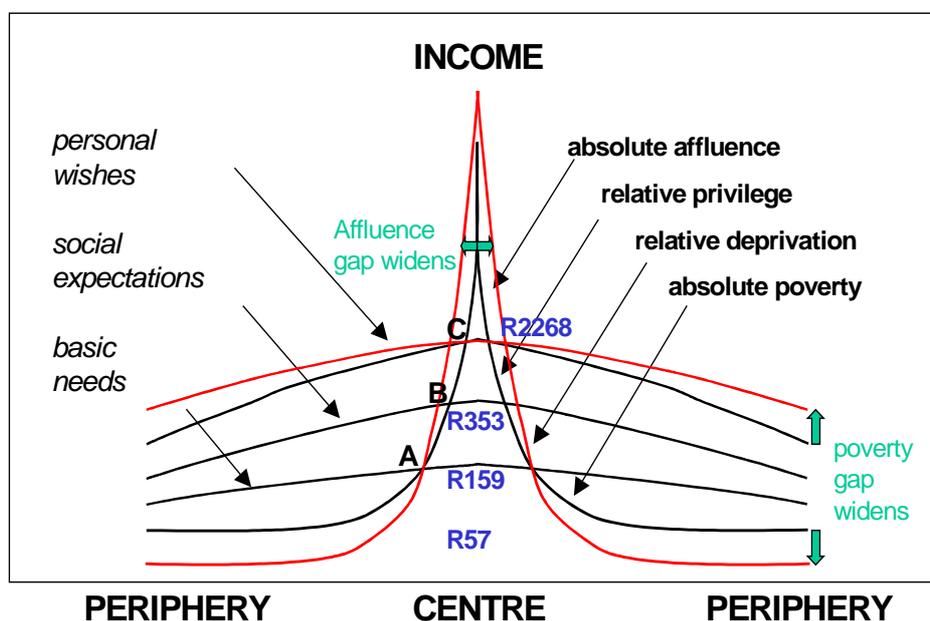


Figure 5.4.1: Types of need and income-need relations, with widening affluence and poverty gaps (adapted from Nuernberger (1999:60))

Income-need relations are shown as black horizontal lines. **A** indicates the basic needs curve, **B** characterises the curve of social expectations and **C** marks the curve of personal wishes. Per capita incomes in the four categories of food security/food insecurity are indicated blue. *Very food insecure* and *food insecure* people are in a state of *absolute poverty* or *poverty*, which is below **A** in the figure. Per capita incomes in both these categories (R57 and R159, respectively) are below the Minimum Living Level (MLL) of R164.2 per month (see 5.2.1). People in the category *relatively food secure* are in a state of *relative deprivation* which is below **B**, but they might sometimes reach or pass the line symbolised by **B**, with mean per capita income of R353. *Food secure* people with mean per capita income of R2 268 are in a state of *relative privilege*, which is below **C** in the figure, with some of them reaching a state of *absolute affluence*, which is above **C**.

The majority of people in this study sample are situated in the periphery and are caught in the poverty gap. What also becomes clear from the figure is that the poverty gap is widening towards the centre. Incomes are rising when approaching

the centre, yet needs rise faster than income because the cost of living is higher. According to Nuernberger (1999:59),

" ... as we approach the centre ...the poverty gap actually widens. This is the experience of many people who migrate from rural to urban areas in search of higher incomes. Although they might earn more money, they find themselves in greater financial difficulties than before. Only gradually the income curve catches up with the need curve until ... the poverty gap changes into an affluent gap."

Adding to this is that the needs generated in the periphery by the centre economy are all geared to goods which cannot be produced in the periphery because it lacks capital, technology, entrepreneurship and organisation. With decreasing production in the periphery the production in the centre increases, which results in widening poverty and affluence gaps, as illustrated by the red line in *Figure 5.4.1*.

In *Table 5.4.1*, the main characteristics of the four categories of food security are summarised:

Categories of food security	Very food insecure	Food insecure	Relatively food secure	Food secure
Characteristics				
% of households	16	58	21	5
Mean per capita income in Rand	57	159	353	2 268
Mean household size	7.5	7	5.4	4.8
% expenditure on food of total expenditure	58	46	39	27
% of households having savings	4	17	43	100
% of households owning livestock	12	17	6	-
% of households regularly using credit	19	42	20	-
% of households having loans	8	14	-	-
% of households having diversity of food	12	36	69	88

Table 5.4.1: Selected characteristics of the different categories of food security

The categories cannot always be separated neatly, also the boundaries are fluid. Households might move into the next higher or the next lower category, if circumstances change. If for example an income earner loses his/her job, this might

result in the household becoming less food secure. In another case, a household might save money for investments or is paying instalments. After a certain period this money might be available again and the household might then spend more on food and is able to achieve a better state of food security.

What becomes clear is that average household size is declining with increasing food security, confirming the earlier-made statement that wealthier households tend to move “back” to smaller, often nuclear household types as is the case in most affluent societies (see 5.1.4).

In chapter 5.4.9 a more detailed investigation will be undertaken to see why some households are more successful than others with regard to their state of food security.

5.4.5 Frequency of food preparation and meals

The number of meals eaten is not necessarily an indicator of food security for adults, but it is for children (see 3.3.11). This view can be confirmed in this study. No significant correlation was found for adults, although the number of interviewees eating three times per day instead of eating twice increases with better food security. There was a more obvious relationship of number of meals eaten by children with the state of food security of the household, although this is also not statistically significant. In very insecure households (n=23), 13% of children eat only twice per day and 65% eat three times per day, while in insecure households (n=84), only 1% of children eat twice per day, but 61% eat three times per day and 35% four times per day. In relatively secure households (n=25), the frequency of meals further increases: 44% of children eat three times per day and 44% eat four times per day. In secure households (n=5), the percentage of children eating four times per day is 80%. One also has to take into account that children might often eat something in between, which would then not be picked up as a “meal”. However, the above correlation allows for the conclusion that with increasing food security, also the number of meals eaten by children will increase. A positive correlation of nurturing behaviour and the quality of child nutrition is confirmed by Kennedy & Peters (1992), stating that a child’s caloric adequacy increases in proportion to the number of daily meals eaten/available.

Another indicator is the number of dishes that are usually prepared. In very insecure households (n=26) and in insecure households (n=83), a number of households (8% and 2%, respectively) usually prepare only one dish, consisting only of maize meal with either salt, sugar and/or milk, while this does not occur in the other categories. Also, the vast majority of households in both of these categories

prepare only two dishes (89% and 93%, respectively). In relatively secure households (n=26), 77% prepare two dishes and 23% three dishes, while in food secure households (n=5) the majority (60%) prepare three dishes. The correlation of number of dishes prepared with food security is highly significant.

5.4.6 "My daughters are working, the grandchildren stay with me" – Caregiver, breastfeeding and weaning practices

□ *Role of caregiver*

As was pointed out repeatedly, due to the disruption of families and the political and social situation in South Africa, black children are often fostered and taken care of by persons other than their mother (see 5.1.1.4 and 5.1.3.2). In this sample, at least in 47 households a person other than the mother looks after children, which is one-third of households having children living with them (n=145). In about two-thirds of the cases this is the grandmother of the children, in other cases it is a daughter, a sister or the mother of the spouse. Only in one case, a male partner looks after the child. Of those households where a grandmother looks after children, almost half are pension households with the grandmother being the only person responsible for the care of the children. From the evaluations of this household category (see 5.1.3.5) it became clear that pensioners are often not able to properly look after themselves, let alone after their grandchildren. Also, the negative emotional effect on a child who is separated from his mother was illustrated in chapter 5.1.3.2.

Regarding the general position of women as caregivers, Richter (1993) found that stress and frustration caused by social inequalities and poverty results in a poor moral and depressed emotional state of the mother or caregiver, which negatively affects child development. Mothers of malnourished children were found to be apathetic and dependent, with low energy levels and poor self-esteem. These are the effects, on a psychological level, of chronic stress caused by the unmitigated struggle to survive. It is assumed that these psychological consequences of poverty and the resulting extremely difficult social circumstances affect a large number of women also in this study group. With regard to the situation of care of pregnant women, according to UNICEF (1998), the elements of care that are most critical for women during pregnancy and breastfeeding include extra portions of good-quality food, release from certain types of labour, sufficient time for rest and skilled pre- and post-natal health care from trained practitioners. Many of these necessities are not available for a large number of black women in South Africa. These conditions and the environment women live in also have an impact on their ability to care for their children. Aryee *et al.* (1999) found that mothers of stunted children did not receive

extra and good quality food during pregnancy. Therefore, bad economic and social conditions provide unequal opportunities for children even before they are born, referred to as 'foetal malnutrition' (Vorster *et al.* 1999).

□ *Breastfeeding and weaning practices*

Of the female interviewees answering the question on breastfeeding (n=121), 90% indicate that they breastfeed or have breastfed their children, while 10% have never breastfed. Of those women giving an indication about the duration of breastfeeding (n=108), 8% state that they breastfed for a duration of one to five months, while 24% breastfed for six to twelve months and 48% for more than one year up to two years. 19% of interviewees indicate that they breastfed for more than a period of two years. To the question when they start giving complementary food or fluids (n=112), 12% indicate that they started below the age of two months, some of whom gave complementary food or fluids at one week. Over 20% of interviewees started giving complementary food when their babies were three to four months old (23%), 22% of women gave complementary food at the age of six to eight months. There are also a number of women who indicate that they started with complementary food only at nine to eleven months (5%), and 3% started only from one year on. The most frequently mentioned complementary food are soft porridge, infant formulas, mashed bananas, potatoes, pumpkin and carrots.

According to Budlender (2000), although data on breastfeeding prevalence is on the one hand encouraging, it reveals on the other hand that exclusive breastfeeding is rare, with mothers adding water and fluids at a very early stage and starting to add solids already by the age of three months. A possible explanation why some women breastfeed for only very short periods could be that in some areas it is believed that women should not cook when breastfeeding (see also 5.4.8). If there is no other female member in this domestic unit who cooks, the baby might get weaning food very early. This practice was confirmed by several female interviewees in this research. According to the earlier mentioned study of Aryee *et al.* (1999), which investigated the relationship between the stunting of young children and the quality of care practices, stunted children received complementary food already from two to six weeks on. Among the complementary food and fluids most frequently given, were soft porridge with cow's milk or non-dairy creamer, stiff porridge and gravy, black tea, bread, infant formulas, mashed bananas and others. They were also fed less frequently than non-stunted children even while breastfeeding continued into the third year. This confirms the finding made above that children with better food security also tend to eat more frequently than children who are less secure (see 5.4.5). In

another study which investigated differences between underweight and normal-weight rural pre-school children in terms of infant feeding practices and socio-economic factors (Steyn *et al.* 1998), results indicated a high risk of underweight when solid foods were introduced before five weeks of age. High risk of underweight was also evident when mothers had poor education, fathers were unemployed and when there were more than seven children living in the house.

5.4.7 The nutrition situation from a clinical view: Health and nutritional status

Selected indicators relevant for nutritional status are presented. The results are drawn from research undertaken within the THUSA study (Vorster *et al.* 1999, Vorster *et al.* 2000). As the sub-sample on food security was found to be representative of the larger study group (see 5.2), links can be indicated and comparisons can be drawn regarding health and nutritional status. For some of the indicators, the two sets of data can also be compared.

□ Energy intakes and selected micro-nutrients

Table 5.4.2 shows the distribution of energy % of macronutrients in the THUSA sample and the sub-sample on food security (HFS). The HFS sample was further divided according to categories of food security to see whether there are differences regarding energy distribution. In this evaluation, only data of female interviewees is used, as the sub-sample of male interviewees in the HFS is too small to make comparisons.

Energy distribution of diet	Female THUSA population (n=1022)	Female interviewees in HFS (n=152)	Very insecure (n=23)	Insecure (n=91)	Relatively secure (n=32)	Secure (n=6)
Mean total energy in kJ(kcal)	7986 (1909)	8242 (1970)	7060 (1687)	8251 (1972)	9146 (2186)	7827 (1871)
% from total fat (intake in g)	25.8	23.9 (53.2)	21.3 (40.7)	23.0 (51.3)	26.8 (66.2)	28.5 (60.4)
% from total carbohydrates (intake in g)	63.9	65.3 (316.6)	68.3 (283.9)	66.4 (322.2)	61.7 (331.8)	60.2 (277.2)
% from total protein (intake in g)	11.9	11.1 (54)	11.3 (47)	10.8 (52.6)	11.7 (62.7)	12.0 (55.2)

Table 5.4.2: Energy distribution of the diet of women in THUSA and in the sub-sample on HFS

Mean energy intake of women in the HFS sample is slightly higher than mean energy intake of women in the total THUSA sample. With increasing food security, mean energy intake also increases, except in the category *food secure*. Although the proportion of energy % from fat in this category is higher than in the other categories, absolute intake of fat, as well as absolute intake of protein and carbohydrates is lower than in the other categories. This could have several underlying reasons that could not be investigated here. Also, the sample size is very small (n=6). One assumption is that more urbanized and affluent women might deliberately limit the amount of food they are eating due to health reasons or to retain a certain weight, while at the same time they might eat food containing more fat (such as meat products and cheese), which would explain the higher proportion of fat intake. However, statements regarding mean energy intake only make sense when stratifying them for age. This is not possible for the HFS sample, as the sample sizes become too small.

When comparing mean percentages of energy of the macronutrients of the THUSA sample and the HFS sample, women in the HFS sample have lower fat and protein intake and higher carbohydrate intake than women in the total THUSA population. There is a clear relationship between state of food security and the distribution of energy percentages: with increasing food security, more energy % is consumed of fat and protein while energy % of carbohydrates decreases.

In the THUSA study, differences in dietary intakes between the strata were of great importance, indicating changing dietary patterns with urbanization. Vorster *et al.* (2000) found that the differences in percentage energy from protein of the total THUSA population are small but there is a significant increase with urbanization. The increases in percentage energy from fat are larger, accompanied by significant decreases in carbohydrates from the rural population to the more urbanized population. Mean dietary fibre intake increases with urbanization, and there are also increases in Vitamin A intake and serum Vitamin A, mainly because of enhanced fruit and vegetable intake. Therefore, the quality of the diet improves with urbanization, but also changes towards a more westernised diet, with the upper urban stratum taking more than 30% of their total energy as fat. There is a significant increase in height with urbanization for both men and women (Vorster *et al.* 2000).

The findings regarding changing dietary patterns with urbanization obtained in the larger THUSA study can be confirmed also in this research. When comparing food consumption in the HFS sample, evaluated through the qualitative investigation on access to and availability of food (see 5.4.1 and 5.2.9) according to strata, similar

patterns are found as those obtained in the THUSA study. Farm workers in the THUSA study, for example, are found to be nutritionally very vulnerable. They have the lowest mean intakes of Vitamin A, with the majority not reaching two-thirds of the recommended amount, which is also true for most of the other micronutrients (Vorster *et al.* 2000). In the HFS sample, farm workers are the group with the lowest intake across social strata, of the more expensive vegetables and fresh milk. Regarding cheaper vegetables, intakes are also very low, but slightly higher than those of people living in rural areas. Also fruit consumption is very low, again similar to that of rural people. Consumption of meat and eggs is higher than in the other strata, except for the upper urban stratum. In the HFS sample, the farm workers were differentiated further according to the type of farms they work on. Of 23 farm workers in the sample on HFS, 10 work on a cattle farm. Here, meat intakes are extremely high, with nine of ten interviewees indicating that they have meat available on a daily basis as it is given to them as an allowance in addition to their salary (see 5.4.1). This finding is therefore not representative of farm workers in general. About half of them also have milk and eggs available on a regular basis. On the other hand, consumption of vegetables and fruit is very low. The 13 other interviewees in this category are people working on flower farms. They only seldom consume meat, as might be expected. Consumption of eggs, milk and fruit is also very low in this group, while certain vegetables and also potatoes are consumed regularly. These figures show that diet can be very location specific, especially if people are working in certain settings such as on cattle farms.

Both the data obtained in the THUSA study and in the HFS sample show, that for large parts of the rural population and for the poor, food such as fruit and a number of vegetables, but also meat and fresh milk are only rarely accessible or available. Rural people make an exception with regard to fresh milk, potatoes and cheaper vegetables: they have the third highest milk consumption after the upper urban and urban strata and the second highest consumption of potatoes and cheaper vegetables, after the upper urban stratum. People living in informal settlements have the lowest meat and potato consumption and also a low intake of more expensive vegetables.

A key informant who is a health worker and counsels people on nutrition and AIDS in a rural area, comments on the situation of availability of food in the following way:

"In this area, it is difficult for people to find good food. They have to go about 10 to 15 km with donkey carts to get to shops. In the tuck shops, there is only tinned stuff,

mealie meal and potatoes, only few vegetables and no fruit. What can I tell people about eating good food, if they are not working and if it is too far to the shops? Many depend on the pensions of the old people. But now water is coming, and someone will teach the people how to plant, then they have their own fresh food. The advantage people have here is that there is cattle, so they have milk and sometimes meat.”

□ *The double burden of under- and overnutrition*

The mean body mass indices (BMI) investigated in THUSA shows that overweight is not a problem in men, but it is in women, despite low mean energy intakes. Almost half of women living in rural areas, on farms and in informal settlements and more than 60% of women in urban and upper urban areas have a BMI exceeding 25kg/m². Women aged 35 to 65 years have the highest mean BMI (Vorster *et al.* 2000). The South African Health Review (Anon 1998) reports that 34.4% of black South African women between 15 and 64 years of age have an BMI > 30, which is the highest prevalence of all population groups. According to data of the BRISK study (Bourne *et al.* 1993), there is a prevalence of obesity (BMI > 30) among 44% of black South African women, despite low mean energy intakes. This phenomenon could be ascribed to what is called ‘the thrifty genotype hypothesis’, assuming that populations exposed to inadequate or fluctuating food supplies genetically have a high level of efficiency in caloric utilisation or fat storage. This efficiency can lead to an explosion of obesity and/or diabetes as food supplies increase (Bourne *et al.* 1993). On the other hand, studies estimate that 39% of the population did not meet a 2000 kcal/day requirement. The co-existence of both over- and undernutrition could, according to Vorster *et al.* (1999), contribute to the ‘double burden of diseases’, implying that developing populations have an increased vulnerability because they experience a demographic and nutrition transition with increased risk of non-communicable diseases at a time when the battle against infectious diseases, including HIV/AIDS, is ongoing. There is accumulating evidence that in addition to a possible genetic contribution, foetal and childhood malnutrition contribute to this vulnerability. This refers to the ‘early malnutrition hypothesis’, indicating that foetal and childhood malnutrition bring about a higher susceptibility to the consequences of overnutrition when people are exposed to affluent conditions during adulthood (Vorster *et al.* 1999).

The following comment of a key informant from a rural area gives a subjective interpretation of the reasons for overweight in women:

“Women are overweight because they eat too much pap and gravy and vetkoek. Also they don’t have any exercise.”

Also in the above comment the lack of dietary diversity comes to the fore. At the same time, this comment indicates that high amounts of fat are consumed, in the form of gravy and as “hidden” fat in the popular vetkoek that is soaked with oil. Fat intakes might be underestimated as the amount of hidden fat is difficult to measure. Also mentioned in the comment is the lack of exercise. Kruger (1999) found that in black South African women participating in the THUSA survey inactivity was the best predictor of obesity.

According to Budlender (2000), sometimes not only the coexistence of under- and overnutrition in the same community, but also in the same household is observed, for example that caregivers are overweight while small children are underweight. In research carried out by Kleynhans & Albertse (1999), no relationship was found between obese mothers and underweight children.

□ *Access to infrastructure services as indicators for health and nutritional status*

Access to facilities such as clean drinking water, sanitation and energy sources was evaluated earlier (see 5.2.8). These are indicators for health and nutritional status. In this study, no comments can be made on the relationship between access to these facilities and for example the safety of food or the nutritional status of children involved. These issues must be the subject of other studies with a different focus. It was investigated, however, whether there is a general relationship between the categories of food security as evaluated here and having access to these facilities, as shown in *Table 5.4.3*.

Access to services	Categories of food security (n=165)			
	Very insecure (n=26)	Insecure (n=97)	Relatively secure (n=35)	Secure (n=7)
<i>Drinking water (p<=0.016)</i>				
- tap in house	4%	17%	23%	57%
- on premises	35%	38%	57%	43%
- communal tap	62%	41%	20%	-
- fountain, river	-	1%	-	-
- other	-	3%	-	-
<i>Sanitation (p<=0.005)</i>				
- inside waterflush	8%	12%	14%	29%
- outside waterflush	15%	23%	54%	57%
- outside longdrop	58%	52%	23%	14%
- bucket system	12%	12%	9%	-
- none	8%	1%	-	-
<i>Access to electricity (p<=0.001)</i>				
	46%	54%	83%	100%
<i>Energy sources for cooking (p<=0.000)</i>				
- electricity	15%	28%	62%	100%
- gas	-	10%	6%	-
- paraffin	31%	40%	27%	-
- wood	54%	21%	3%	-
- coal	-	-	3%	-
- dung	-	1%	-	-

Table 5.4.3: Access to infrastructure services and type of energy used for cooking according to categories of food security

As Table 5.4.3 illustrates, with increasing food security, the number of households having access to water on their premises or inside the house increases. Also, the quality of both sanitation facilities and energy sources improves. The correlations are significant and highly significant, respectively.

□ Consumption of tobacco, snuff and alcohol

In the THUSA sample, 60% of men smoke cigarettes or a pipe, whereas only 17% of women smoke. In the HFS sample, 12% of women smoke and 58% of men.

Snuff is taken more frequently by women: in the THUSA sample, 22% of women take snuff and only 3% of men. In the HFS sample, none of the men take snuff, but 29% of women did.

Mean daily alcohol intakes of the THUSA sample are substantially lower for women. Men living in informal settlements and in urban settlements have the highest mean daily intakes, of 29-35g. The mean gamma glutamyl transferase (GGT) values reflect the reported intakes. For the HFS sample, data on alcohol intake was not

evaluated separately, but it is assumed that mean daily intakes are similar to those of the larger study group.

□ *HIV status*

Of the total THUSA sample, 13.0% of men and 11.6% of women tested HIV positive. According to strata and age groups, there are huge differences: the highest percentages are seen in the 15-24.9-year-old women living in informal settlements (28.6% HIV positive), compared to "only" 7.3% boys and men in the same stratum and age group. The highest percentages in men are seen in the age groups 15-24.9 years and 25-34.9 years, living in urban areas (27.9% and 24.4% HIV positive, respectively). These figures are very similar to those quoted by Smith (2000; see 2.2.4), thereby concluding that younger women are often subject to rape and that therefore HIV is spread enormously especially among women in the age group 15-25 years. In general, men and women living in rural areas, on farms and in the upper urban stratum have lower infection rates than those living in informal settlements and urban areas.

In the HFS sample, 14.9% of women tested HIV positive, which is higher than the figure obtained in the larger study group. Among men, 8.3% tested HIV positive, with this sub-sample (n=12) being too small to give a meaningful indication of HIV status.

5.4.8 "When you are pregnant, you are not allowed to eat eggs" - Cultural beliefs and practices: possible implications for household food security

Interviewees were asked what foods they think should or should not be eaten by certain people or at certain times, distinguishing between different age groups and different stages in life (children, unmarried/married/pregnant women, men, old people, sick people).

Of the total sample (n=166), 18% of interviewees indicate that they do not believe that certain food should or should not be eaten according to cultural dictates, and also that these beliefs are simply wrong. Mostly, these interviewees are younger women, with for example the following statements:

"Older people say that children shouldn't eat kidneys, but I don't know why, I don't believe it."

"My mother says that pregnant women shouldn't eat eggs, but I don't believe in this."

Other interviewees give the following indications regarding food and cultural beliefs:

□ *Foods that should be eaten*

Among the food the interviewees mention that should be eaten by certain people are the following: porridge because it is the traditional food; vegetables and fruit because they build the body, especially for pregnant women to give the baby strength; meat because it gives energy and improves the body; fresh milk for children; special baby food for babies aged three to six months old; and soft food for sick and old people. In one case, an interviewee indicates that children should get soft drinks, because through the water one could contract flu and diarrhoea. This indicates health problems due to a lack of clean drinking water and knowledge of bacteriology. The answers given in this section are clearly not specifically connected with distinct cultural precepts.

□ *Food that should not be eaten at all by certain people*

Among the most frequently mentioned food that should not be eaten at all by children are kidneys and also other intestines that children should not eat unless it is given to them by their parents or grandparents. This is indicated by 11% of interviewees. The reason consistently given by the interviewees is that otherwise children are going to wet their beds. Interviewees stress that only old people and men are allowed to eat intestines. Some interviewees indicate that if women eat intestines, they are prone to have a crippled child.

Pork is indicated as being not good in general by 13% of the interviewees. Reasons given are that it can make the tonsils swell, can make one sick or can cause allergies, such as getting a rash. Also religious beliefs are mentioned as reasons for not eating pork.

Alcohol is mentioned by 15% of the interviewees as not being good for anyone and by another 12% as not being good for pregnant women. Reasons given are, among others, that alcohol makes one weak, causes aggression, that it will damage the lungs, that one will lose body weight, and that one can contract TB more easily because of this. Several interviewees indicate that alcohol causes trouble only if it is used by young people, and that therefore only old people should be allowed to drink alcohol because they drink in their houses and do not cause trouble.

For a number of people, tomatoes do not agree with them, as they give them heartburn, ulcers or swollen tonsils.

□ *Food that should not be eaten too much*

A number of people indicate that one should not eat too much sugar because of the resultant diabetes (18%) and also not too much salt because of resultant high blood pressure (16%). These are sometimes interviewees who already have diabetes or high blood pressure themselves, but in most cases interviewees have probably received this information from their clinic. Others indicate that one should not eat too much fat because this has negative effects for the heart. A number of interviewees indicate that one should not eat too much porridge because it can lead to 'papsickness' (kwashiorkor) and make the skin dry and swell. Soft drinks, for a number of people, cause ulcers. Other interviewees state that red meat can cause gout and cancer.

None of these statements refers to distinct cultural precepts, but to clearly medical and health reasons for not using certain foods.

□ *Food that should not be eaten at certain times or by certain people*

The most frequent issue in this regard, mentioned by 13% of the interviewees, is that pregnant women should not eat eggs. The reasons given can be classified as of a distinctly cultural origin, with in most cases the interviewees more precisely indicating that the labour will be difficult because of this. A number of interviewees mention that pregnant women should not eat meat in general, nor the meat of pregnant cows or sheep. Also food received from neighbours is by some interviewees perceived of as harmful for themselves and/or for the unborn child, because "*the child will become ill*" or "*it is going to like the street*". This issue is more clearly specified by some interviewees, indicating that they do not eat food from neighbours if they do not know who prepared it. These views could either refer to a possible contamination of food, based on bacteriological knowledge, but it could just as well be based on beliefs in contamination related to the supernatural and evil sorcery, which is still a significant and widely-held belief (cf. Booyens 1984).

Also fatty food is indicated by some interviewees as being not good for use during pregnancy. Intestines are mentioned by some interviewees as causing a long umbilical cord for the baby and, in the case of male babies, a long penis. In one case, a woman said that one should not eat ice cream when pregnant "*because the baby will get cold*". A number of interviewees indicate that during pregnancy some food made them sick while they preferred others, due to their personal experience, and therefore, these effects can be explained from a physiological point of view.

According to 10% of the interviewees, women who are menstruating should not drink milk, indicating that it makes the menstruation flow stronger and the

duration longer, and also that the consumption of milk during this time can cause a bad smell. These experiences also relate to physiological effects rather than to cultural beliefs.

In one case, an interviewee indicates that unmarried people should not eat eggs or sheep liver, because according to their cultural beliefs they will not be able to have children when they marry.

Several interviewees report that they became sick after eating certain food. Among these were tinned fish or other tinned food, causing either sickness or skin reactions. Apart from the possibility of allergic reactions, in some cases these experiences could also be due to old or spoiled stock, as the tins are often kept in hot shacks. Some interviewees complain about having been sick when eating leftovers. This could also be related to improper hygiene and unsatisfactory safety of food due to a lack of cooling facilities. A number of interviewees indicate that they became sick when eating food at funerals. These interviewees often could not explain why this happened, but the following statement made by one interviewee could be a possible explanation for the underlying belief:

“If there is a death in the family, those people that are hurt very much should not eat meat because it can damage their heart.”

This phenomenon might be due to the fact that times of death are times of danger and possible pollution in a supernatural sense, especially for the closer family, but also for others involved (cf. Booyens 1984).

Several women comment on the issue of cultural perceptions regarding food that reflect some of the existing beliefs:

“I grew up with the saying that pregnant women should not eat eggs, but I don’t know why.”

“In the old days it was believed that women shouldn’t eat meat, eggs, but nowadays people can eat anything.”

“When I was pregnant, I ate food from neighbours, had delivery problems and got a caesarean ... now, if I eat food from neighbours and I don’t know who prepared it, I vomit.”

"If I cook too much food and I take some to my sister, her children are not allowed to eat it – it is in our culture, the food may be poisoned, then only the owner of the house should die."

Interviewees were furthermore asked whether men should get the best or biggest share of food. Of 154 female interviewees, 42% agree to this, 41% do not agree, while the above mentioned 18% of interviewees who do not believe in restrictions of food according to culture did also not answer this question. Most of those women who think men should get the best share, state that this is because he works and supplies the house with money and food. The second most frequently mentioned reason is that this is according to culture and because the man is the head. Some women also ascribe it to the physical condition of men, pointing out that naturally men eat more. The remaining interviewees indicate that the man is the owner of the house or that he makes decisions. Although this issue could not be investigated in more detail, from these indications it is assumed that men often get the best or biggest share. In times of food shortage, this means that women and children get less or no food, as has been observed in other developing countries (FAO 1998).

Vorster *et al.* (1997:30) in their summary on traditional eating patterns and taboos regarding food mention that women were not allowed to eat eggs because it was believed that it would either make them infertile, or let them acquire extra lovers. "Impure" women, as during menstruation or after a miscarriage, had to avoid milk and milk products. During the last trimester of pregnancy, women should eat as little as possible to avoid big babies and difficult deliveries. According to Vorster *et al.* (1997), it is not known how many of these customs still influence eating patterns. As the findings of this research indicate, the influence of cultural beliefs on food intake is diminishing, at least in certain sections of the black South African population, while other beliefs still exist.

With regard to nutrition interventions, the understanding and knowledge about cultural beliefs and practices is essential, as a nutritionist illustrated with the example of existing cultural beliefs around breastfeeding (Rasekhala 1998). In some areas, women are not allowed to cook when breastfeeding, because if some of their milk drops into the food it would be spoiled. If there is no other woman in this domestic unit who does the cooking, the woman might stop breastfeeding very early, although knowing full well that it would not be good for her child. Also in this research this cultural belief does occur (see 5.4.6). With regard to nutrition interventions, if in this

case only the woman is counselled, without including her husband or other male household members who have to understand why breastfeeding is so important and give the woman “permission” to breastfeed *and* cook, the chances that she will change her behaviour are very slim, if not non-existent (Rasekhala 1998).

5.4.9 Why are some households more successful than others?

After determining the state of food security/food insecurity in households, the important question is: why are some households more successful than others, despite similar or even worse economic conditions, and what are the indicators contributing to a better state of food security in these households, apart from income?

□ *Worries about food, experience of hunger and power relations*

The power relations described earlier on were investigated to determine how these influence the daily experiences and actions of people. Worries about food and experiences of hunger are indicated in *Table 5.4.4*:

Power relations (n=166)	Worried about food		Going hungry Yourself		Children going hungry	
	yes	no	yes	No	Yes	no
Partnership relationship (n=30)	48%	52%	17%	83%	25%	75%
Man dominates (n=65)	81%	19%	40%	60%	60%	40%
Woman dominates (n=71)	80%	20%	44%	56%	49%	51%
Significance of correlation	p<=0.001		p<=0.033		p<=0.017	

Table 5.4.4: Power relations, worries about food and experiences of hunger

What is striking about these correlations is that, in households where men dominate, there are more worries about the food situation than in households with partnership relationships and in households where women dominate. This is despite the fact that per capita incomes in male-dominated households are higher (R466) than in both of the other categories (R340 in households with partnership relationships and R148 in households dominated by women; see 5.2.1). In households with partnership relationships, the incidence of experiencing hunger on the part of both interviewees and their children is lower than in the other categories. In households with men dominating, the number of interviewees indicating that they go hungry is lower than in households where women dominate, but 60% indicate that there is sometimes not

enough food for children. This is much higher than in households with partnership relationships and also higher than in households where women dominate.

□ *Food security and power relations*

Linking the state of food security/insecurity according to power relations, the picture as shown in *Table 5.4.5* emerges:

Power relations (n=166)	State of food security			
	Very insecure	Insecure	Relatively secure	secure
Partnership relationship (n=30)	7%	33%	47%	13%
Man dominates (n=65)	19%	66%	12%	3%
Woman dominates (n=71)	17%	62%	18%	3%

Table 5.4.5: State of food security according to power relations (p<=0.001)

It is very clear that households based on partnership relationships are the most food secure: 60% of households achieve a state of relative food security or food security. This is despite the lower per capita incomes that exist in these households when compared to male-dominated households (chapter 5.2.1). In the latter category, the percentage of very insecure and insecure households is the highest of all three categories, despite the even more striking difference regarding per capita income from households dominated by women. The correlation of power relations and state of food security is highly significant.

Both the evaluations of experience of hunger and the state of food security according to power relations strongly indicate that the state of food security is better in households with partnership relationships and also if women dominate, despite lower per capita incomes that exist compared to those in male-dominated households (see also 5.2.6). Therefore, **Hypothesis 5**, "The state of food security will be better in households headed by women, although female-headed households seem to be poorer than male-headed households" can comfortably be confirmed.

□ *Food security and income earned by women*

It was described earlier (see 5.1.2.3), that in jointly-headed households, those women who have an income are also more meaningfully involved in decision-making, although this is not true for all cases. It is also of interest to know whether the

personal income of women, through their being more involved in the decision-making, influences the state of food security of households.

Of 154 female interviewees, only 29% indicate that they have a ‘proper’ job at the moment, but more than half (56%) indicate that they have their own, personal income. With better food security, more female interviewees indicate that they have a job at the moment (food secure: 50%; relatively secure: 38%; insecure: 25%; and very insecure women: 26%). This picture is contrary to personal incomes: very food-insecure female interviewees are those who have the highest percentage (70%) of personal incomes. However, the majority of these incomes (63%) comprise only R0-100, 32% reach R101-500 and only 6% have incomes of R501-1 000. This confirms the assumption made earlier that poor people depend for their survival on occasional, low paid jobs or micro-enterprises with little benefit (see 2.2.2 and 5.2.1). In categories with better food security, the percentage of female interviewees having personal incomes of R101-500 or more is significantly higher. It is therefore assumed that the revealed relationship of food security to the amount of income earned by women influences the food situation. Furthermore, it could clearly be observed that women who are working are more self-confident than women who are not working. This comes especially to the fore when comparing women who live alone and work on the flower farms with women who live with a partner who works at a mine (see 4.2.3, Research sites). While most women besides their work on the flower farms have their own, small businesses and seem content and independent, although their life is hard, none of the female partners of mine workers work or have their own business and on the whole seem to be passive, without any aspirations.

□ *Food security according to household categories*

Household categories were compared regarding their state of food security, taking into account per capita incomes:

Household category (n=100)	Per capita income in Rand	State of food security			
		Very insecure	Insecure	Relatively secure	secure
Women with children, no support network (n=5)	181	20%	60%	20%	-
Women co-operating with relatives (n=26)	110	19%	69%	12%	-
Women living alone (n=7)	248	-	14%	72%	14%
Women pensioners (n=12)	127	25%	58%	17%	-
Women living with partner (n=40)	294	20%	50%	23%	8%
Women with migrant partner (n=8)	155	-	88%	12%	-
Men living alone (n=2)	4 450	-	-	50%	50%

Table 5.4.6: Food security according to household category

In the categories *women living alone*, *women with migrant partner* and *men living alone* none of the households is *very food insecure*. In the categories *women with children and no support networks*, *women co-operating with relatives*, *women pensioners* and *women with migrant partner* none of the households reaches a state beyond *relative food security*. Combining the categories *very insecure* and *insecure*, the highest percentages of households represented in these categories can be found among *women co-operating with relatives* (88%), *women with migrant partner* (88%) and *women pensioners* (83%). These categories also have the lowest per capita incomes. *Women with children and no networks* also have to be regarded as very vulnerable, with 80% of households being *very insecure* or *insecure*. Comparing the categories *women with partner* and *women living alone*, *women with partner* despite their higher per capita incomes are more insecure (70% of households being *very insecure* or *insecure*) than *women living alone*, of whom 86% are *relatively secure* or *secure*. In the latter category, per capita incomes could even be lower than indicated here, as the number of people attached to these women and living at a distance is not known. These findings indicate that *women living alone*, some of them co-operating with household members at a distance, seem to manage their resources

well, have better control over their resources and therefore have better food security than *women living with partner*. Of course, nothing can be said about the state of food security of the households attached to *women living alone*. It shows, however, that most of these women, despite limited resources are able to be *relatively food secure* or even *food secure*.

□ *Food security in households attached to migrant men and women*

In addition to the comparison of households that are attached to migrant men and women regarding certain socio-economic characteristics (see 5.3.4.3), the state of food security in both categories was also investigated, as indicated in *Table 5.4.7*:

Mean income & state of food security	Households attached to migrant men (Number/percentage)	Households attached to migrant women (Number/percentage)
Mean household income	R1 326.4	R495.6
Very insecure	-	7 / 37%
Insecure	14 / 74%	10 / 53%
Relatively secure	4 / 21%	2 / 10%
Secure	1 / 5%	-
Total	19 / 100%	19 / 100%

Table 5.4.7: Food security in households attached to migrant men and migrant women

Households attached to migrant men are more food secure, as was to be expected as a result of much higher household incomes available to them. One would expect, however, that these households would be even more food secure, while the findings indicate that almost three-quarters are still food insecure. As was illustrated in chapter 5.1.1.4, women with a migrant partner often do not know what he earns. In these cases, women have a problem with access to the earnings of their partner, with the men often not so concerned about the wellbeing of their family. This directly impacts on the food security in these households. Only one of the households attached to migrant men enjoys food security, and this household is based on a partnership relationship. Of the four households that are relatively food secure, three are based on partnership relationships and only one is male-led. Of the two households maintaining relative food security in households attached to migrant women, one is female-led, the other one is based on a partnership relationship.

These findings again support the assumption that power relations influence the food situation of the households studied to a great extent.

□ *Food security and level of education of women*

In very food insecure households, the lowest education levels of women are found: 96% of female interviewees have education less than standard 6, with 57% having no education at all. With increasing food security, this ratio shifts: in food insecure households, 75% of female interviewees still have an educational level below standard 6, while in relatively food secure households these are 63%, with the percentage of women having no education at all also diminishing in this category. In food secure households, all of the female interviewees have education, with only 33% of them having an education below standard 6. In chapter 5.2.4, education was correlated with power relations. It was found that education levels of women are higher in partnership relationships. One can therefore conclude, that food secure households are characterised by high occurrence of partnership relationships and higher levels of education of women, with partnership relationships and higher levels of education for women also correlating with each other.

□ *Food security according to social strata*

It was evaluated how people comprising the different strata are distributed in the categories of food security, as shown in *Table 5.4.8*:

Stratum	Food security category			
	<i>Very insecure</i>	<i>Insecure</i>	<i>Relatively secure</i>	<i>Secure</i>
Rural (n=53)	26%	74%	-	-
Of food security categ.	54%	40%	-	-
Farm (n=23)	4%	52%	39%	4%
Of food security categ.	4%	12%	26%	13%
Informal settlement (n=36)	14%	61%	25%	-
Of food security categ.	19%	23%	26%	-
Urban (n=50)	12%	46%	32%	10%
Of food security categ.	23%	24%	46%	63%
Upper urban (n=4)	-	25%	25%	50%
Of food security categ.	-	1%	3%	25%
Total (n=166)	16%	58%	21%	5%

Table 5.4.8: State of food security according to social strata ($p \leq 0.001$)

The rural population is the most food insecure, with over one-quarter being *very food insecure* and almost three-quarters being *food insecure*. The rural stratum also constitutes more than half of the *very food insecure* and about 40% of the *food insecure* of the total sample. None of the households in this stratum reaches a state of *relative food security* or *food security*. Among interviewees living on farms, more than half are *food insecure* and almost 40% are at least *relatively food secure*. Of those interviewees living in informal settlements, three-quarters are *food insecure*, with 14% being *very insecure*, while one-quarter reaches *relative food security*, but none of the households in this stratum is *food secure*. In the urban stratum, still more than half of households are *food insecure*, with about one-third being *relatively food secure* and 10% being *food secure*. As could be expected, interviewees in the upper urban stratum are *relatively food secure* or *secure*, but surprisingly one household is *food insecure*. This case shall be illustrated in more detail:

The interviewee is a 29-year-old woman who lives with her sister, the sister's husband and their seven children at a mining complex. She is working part-time as a secretary, earning between R101-500. Due to her occupation as secretary, she was categorised in the "upper urban" stratum, while the household as such would not be regarded as upper urban. The sister's husband is a mineworker. He also seems to make main decisions (*male-dominated*), while decisions on food seem to be made

partly by his wife. Total household income is R1 001-2 000. Total household expenditure is about R1 900. There seems to be some diversity in their diet, but vegetables, rice, fruit and eggs are rare or missing. The interviewee further indicates that she would prefer to have more meat and also vegetables for the children and herself. She also indicates that she worries about whether the children will have enough food and that there is a shortage of food regularly. In case of shortage of food, she can go to friends, or they can use credit. They also have high loans.

This case is another example of a male-dominated household that despite two income earners and reasonable income, is still food insecure, probably due to having other priorities than food and/or not being able to budget better for food.

- *"I want my children to be like other children" - social deprivation and 'reasonable' budgeting*

In the categories *very food insecure* and *food insecure*, households have to budget very carefully to survive. In this situation, people do not always act "reasonably". For example, parents who have very limited resources might give their children money to buy certain foods at school (for example chips or fruit), so that they can have the same lifestyle as other children. Sometimes this behaviour is important to feel socially accepted. According to Nuernberger (1999:61),

"In real life situations the three types of need [basic essentials, social expectations and personal wishes] are not so neatly stacked one on top of the other. People in absolute poverty also try to keep up with richer people and have intense personal wishes for which they may be prepared to go hungry."

The comments of several interviewees illustrate this tendency:

"My children like food that I cannot afford."

"I want my children to be like other children and have the food they want."

"If I have certain food, I feel like a person."

From these comments, the social value of food comes to the fore: it is connected to social status, feeling entitled to have certain food and the pleasure of eating nice food. Nutrition security is not only about having enough food. As was shown earlier,

households in these categories cannot afford a number of foods and often eat less preferred foods. Bank (1997:158) states that

“ ... it is clearly necessary to move beyond the limitations of neo-classical economic models of consumer behaviour and to explore the specific, situated meanings attributed to [any] commodity ... it is here that recent anthropological debates on commodities and consumption provide useful insights.”

Beyond the need to fulfil basic essentials and social expectations is the desire to fulfil certain personal wishes, characterised by Nuernberger (1999:60) as the third category of needs (see 5.4.4). To fulfil personal desires can become a psychological obsession, which can translate into a financial burden of the first order. For example, household members might allow children to starve for a television set or a car, because they are unwilling to go without these luxuries. Feelings of social deprivation and the need to achieve a certain social status or to fulfil personal wishes can therefore negatively affect resource management and the food situation of households. This is illustrated in the following comment of a key informant:

“ ... social and cultural systems make it impossible to budget, because social acceptance is more important than having enough to eat.”

This statement refers for example to overspending on clothes to ‘show off’, which according to several key informants seems to occur more frequently in urban areas. Another example is money that is invested in burials and burial societies: as Rebel (2000) found, it is very important to please the ancestors and to have a decent burial, where often considerable amounts of money are spent. Another important aspect of burial societies is that they constitute social networks for mostly women, sometimes replacing kinship networks that are not as strong anymore (Rebel 2000).

As is evident in this research, a number of households, if they would budget differently or if resources would be shared equally among household members, would be able to achieve a better state of food security. In certain households it is frequently the recurring tension (see 5.1.3.4 and 5.1.3.5) that impacts on the food situation because of the struggle about scarce resources and different priorities of household members. In the following example, the different perceptions about resources come to the fore:

[The case of Miriam was mentioned already in chapter 5.2.1, as an example for income earned in the informal sector.] She lives with her 18-year old daughter, the daughter's four months old baby and her son. Miriam is doing the washing for other people, earning only little, while her son seems to have contract work. When we ask what her son contributes to household income, she becomes very angry and states that he does not give them enough money. Her daughter, who is also present, tries to "protect" her brother and says "*he looks after us, we are ok*". To a later question on what could improve the situation regarding food, the daughter says "*we must buy more food, so that there is more food in the house – there is enough money, we can do it.*" [These comments indicate that from the point of view of both Miriam and her daughter more money should be spent on food.]

When we visit Miriam again about a year later, another son has moved in. Miriam is not able to do the washing anymore because she broke her arm. She now totally depends on support of her sons who both have contract work. She does not know what they earn, but assumes that it must be about R1 000 per month. Both herself and her daughter just get little money from them to buy food which only lasts to get them over a few days. Then Miriam regularly has to seek help from another daughter who lives in the same location and also seeks assistance from neighbours.

This example reveals the tension and the unequal distribution of resources within this household. Miriam and her daughter must be regarded as *very food insecure*, because they have no access to the household income that could enable them to have relative food security or at least to have sufficient food throughout the month.

The following example similarly reflects the limited access of a woman to the resources of her migrant partner:

"I don't have food when my husband is not sending money...he drinks hot stuff...if I could work, I would buy more food for the children and change my life...I can't do anything because I have no money."

In research done by Operation Hunger, participants of group sessions depicted people with similar characteristics as those documented above as '*employed but poor*', stating thereby that the poverty of these people is caused by the lack of proper financial management in their homes. They further stated that men play a strong role in controlling household finances, often spending this money on alcohol and tobacco instead of food and clothes. They argued that therefore, the poverty of this group is caused by those people themselves (Breslin & Delius 1996:25).

The following comments of female interviewees in this study on how male relatives handle money indicate that these households, all of whom are food insecure, could achieve a better food situation if these men would contribute more money to the household resources:

"My brother contributes only little and drinks a lot."

"My uncle is drinking a lot and wasting money. He gets a pension, but he doesn't give my mother money, only sometimes."

"My father gets a pension, but he gives only R200. It would be better if he would leave the alcohol, but I don't know how."

The use of alcohol plays an important role with regard to social deprivation. No matter in what society or social system, people drink alcohol to forget about their hopeless situation and problems, trying to escape to a different reality for that moment. As was mentioned in chapter 5.3.3, expenditure on alcohol is difficult to evaluate, as is stated by a key informant:

"... most people won't say that they drink alcohol, they are ashamed."

On the other hand, there were also people who elaborated freely on the use of alcohol. The following comment of a key informant from a village in the former homeland of Boputhatswana reflects on the use of alcohol in general and also among young people in this specific area:

"Under the old government, there was not much alcohol, but today it is a lot. Many taverns opened, they are open 24 hours. Schoolchildren go there, boys and girls. Girls often get money from their boyfriends, boys take it maybe from their parents or get it somewhere else. At the end of the month, people like to drink. They say 'I want to free myself for all the month's work'."

Other comments of interviewees give an indication of the social problems alcohol causes:

"Alcohol causes trouble if drunken by young people, only old people need to drink alcohol, they drink in their houses and don't cause trouble."

"Alcohol can cause difficult things like war in the home. Often too much money is spent on it, which could have been used for something more important."

Volunteers of a community project looking after pensioners (see 5.1.3.5) reported several incidents of alcohol abuse:

"The old lady is a pensioner. The blankets are dirty. We find her drinking beer early in the morning."

"The old man is a pensioner. He drinks too much. [There is] no mattress on the bed, only springs."

"One woman complained about her mother and father who are pensioners. They drink so much when they get their money, they don't even come home when they are drunk."

□ *Success of different households categories: case studies*

Case 1: *A married couple, 54 and 59 years old, with their four children, aged 17-26 and five grandchildren, aged 1-11. The household is de facto female-headed, per capita income is R91 per month. The household was classified as food insecure.*

The interviewee is the husband, who is unemployed. He calls himself 'head' but indicates that his wife mainly makes the decisions. Therefore, this household was classified as *de facto* female-headed. The wife gets a pension and one daughter works, these two also make decisions in the household. Possibly other children also sometimes contribute food, as the husband indicates: *"The children support the house and supply it with food."* They can buy with credit at the local supermarket and also have loans. There is no hunger or food shortage, but the food diversity is very limited: vegetables and meat are very rare, and it does not seem as if they eat fruit at all. Therefore, this household was categorised as being 'food insecure'. Expenditure on food is about 60% of total expenditure, expenditure on entertainment is 11% of total expenditure. All in all, this household seems to manage with the limited resources available. This might be based on the fact that the women manage resources and also get credit to overcome times of shortage. Furthermore, there seems to be a good relationship between the household members, as the interviewee expresses it: *"I have been staying here since being out of a job on the farms. I took my money and came here to build myself a house with my wife and children. I stay with my people because they help me to take care of my household ... what worries me is that I'm unable to help my children and myself with money,*

because I have no income whatsoever, because of unemployment and my illness.” Regarding the fact that this household has a considerably lower per capita income than the average per capita income in this category (R159), it can be regarded as ‘successful’ under the circumstances, as household members at least experience no hunger or food shortage.

Case 2: *A pensioner-couple, both 65 years old, with three children, aged 17-23. The household is jointly-headed, per capita income is R188 per month. The household was classified as food insecure.*

Both of the elderly get a pension. They do not seem to make use of credit nor do they have loans. They regularly have a shortage of food in the middle of the month and also experience hunger: *“Sometimes we sleep hungry.”* Food diversity is very limited: vegetables, potatoes, meat, milk and fruit are very rare. Expenditure on food is about 40% of total expenditure. They spend a considerable part of their income on clothes (17% of total expenditure) and cigarettes (18% of total expenditure). In comparison to the household illustrated in *Case 1*, their food situation is worse despite higher per capita income. ‘Unwise’ budgeting surely plays a role, as well as the fact that it is often more difficult for the elderly to manage their resources, due to their age and weakness. This vulnerability possibly also includes not having control over their money as well as not doing the shopping in cheaper shops because they are probably too far. This household is therefore regarded as ‘not successful’.

Case 3: *A married couple, the husband is the income-earner. The household is male-dominated, per capita income is R200. The household was classified as food insecure.*

The husband gets a salary of R400, which does not seem consistent. They experience food shortage and hunger: *“... when work is scarce for my husband.”* Food diversity is very limited: potatoes, meat, vegetables, milk and other foods are very rare. The proportion of expenditure on food is about 50%. It is not clear how the remaining money is spent. They rely on credit and loans in times of shortage. Their three children stay with their grandmother, probably because the couple lives here only as tenants and might not be able to provide enough space and food for their children. The grandmother looks after the children, as the parents are not sending any remittances. The children come to visit only during holidays. There are no other support networks except for the grandmother who sometimes also helps with clothes. The couple struggles, due to the insecure job situation and missing support networks as present in *Case 1*, that besides support from several people in cash and kind also

help by morally supporting each other. This household is therefore regarded as neither 'successful' nor 'not successful' but struggling due to aggravating difficult circumstances.

Case 4: *A young woman and her boyfriend, both in their twenties, and their three-year-old child, living with her in-laws and three nieces and nephew, aged 2-16. The household is jointly-headed, household income is R1 001-2 000 (max per capita income: R200). The household was classified as relatively food secure.*

There are several income earners: the mother-in-law gets a pension and makes clothes; the father-in-law works building houses for the Reconstruction and Development Programme; her boyfriend also has a job, she herself tries to do piece jobs. There is never a shortage of food. In case food gets limited, they can buy with credit at the local shop. The proportion of expenditure on food of total expenditure is 35%. There is a diversity of food, with vegetables, meat, milk, rice, and fruit on a regular basis. Members of this household seem to manage their resources well and also seem to have a good relationship with each other, which is expressed in the following comment: *"When there is a shortage of food, we sit down and talk about it – my mother-in-law, my boyfriend and myself. Then someone takes some money out of his pocket and buys food, or we take credit from the shop."* These three persons also seem to make decisions jointly. The mother-in-law is regarded as head, but includes her son and her daughter-in-law in the decision-making. The young woman can also go to her father and to her aunt if for example, she needs money for medical treatment. This household constitutes a good example for household members being 'successful' in managing with limited resources.

These cases highlight that intra-household relations and reasonable budgeting to a great extent influence the food and general situation in households, with the existence and support of larger networks of kin playing a decisive role.

5.4.10 Coping strategies – Means of ensuring greater food security

In the previous chapters the wide range of coping strategies the people in this study population are using already came to the fore. As was pointed out in chapter 3.3.14, one has to distinguish between short-term and long-term coping strategies. They often mix, as some strategies are short-term, such as doing occasional work (*piece jobs*), but are used repeatedly and therefore also become long-term strategies.

□ *Coping strategies used by people in this study group*

Among the most important long-term coping strategies people in this study group are using are migrant work and the movement between different residential units of people who belong to the same household. These strategies were already described in chapters 2.2.5 and 5.1. To get indications of coping strategies people use in case of food shortage, whether chronic or occasional, interviewees were asked the following: How do you manage to get something to eat if food is scarce? What do you do to solve problems regarding food? Who are the people, besides your family, you can turn to in times of shortage? (Total number of responses: 410, n=156, expressed as percentage of cases):

- support from family	78%
- support from neighbours/friends	61%
- credit	34%
- limit food consumption	22%
- support from employer	14%
- eating less preferred food	13%
- loans	11%
- skip meals	10%
- doing piece jobs, having small business	8%
- support from church	7%
- savings	4%
- selling livestock	2%

Clearly, seeking support from family and neighbours/friends is the most frequent coping strategy. Making use of credit comes in at a third place. Doing piece jobs and having small businesses is indicated only by 8% of the interviewees. This figure has to be understood as an expeditious strategy if food is lacking, while a large number of interviewees engage in either piece jobs or micro-enterprises regularly. Therefore, the figure indicated here does not properly reflect the use of this strategy. Interviewees who indicate that they get support from their employer are in most cases people working on farms, people working in cafes or restaurants and also domestic workers who can turn to their employer in times of food shortage. In most of these cases, employees get food on a regular basis as an allowance in addition to their salary. In some cases, interviewees can ask their employer to lend them some money or to give them some food. The occurrence and frequency of receiving food from other sources was described in chapter 5.2.9.

Regarding quantitative and qualitative changes of the diet, almost a quarter of interviewees indicate that they limit their portions of food, 13% eat less preferred food and 10% skip meals.

□ *Coping strategies according to state of food security*

In the different categories of food security, certain patterns regarding coping strategies can be observed, as shown in *Table 5.4.9* (total number of responses: 410, n=156, expressed as percentage of cases):

Coping strategy	Very food insecure (n=26)	Food insecure (n=96)	Relatively food secure (n=30)	Food secure (n=4)
Support from family	81%	79%	67%	100%
Support from neighbours/friends	65%	62%	60%	25%
Credit	19%	43%	23%	-
Loans	8%	16%	-	-
Support from employer	4%	19%	13%	-
Savings	4%	4%	3%	-
Support from church	4%	9%	-	25%
Doing piece job or having small business	15%	5%	10%	-
Selling livestock	4%	2%	-	-
Limit food	39%	21%	17%	-
Skip meals	23%	8%	3%	-
Eating less preferred food	27%	14%	-	-

Table 5.4.9: Coping strategies according to state of food security

As can be expected, the need to use coping strategies such as support from family and neighbours and also using credit, decreases with improved food security. Interviewees in the category *food secure*, who indicate that in times of shortage they would get support from their family or neighbours, have to be regarded differently. They do not refer to real times of food shortage, but in case a shortage would occur these interviewees could turn to their family. One of the interviewees could also imagine the possibility of approaching his church for help. Therefore, none of the interviewees from the category *food secure* actually uses any coping strategies. Among the *relatively food secure*, 86% of interviewees indicate they use coping

strategies, while among the *food insecure* almost all interviewees (99%) and in the category *very food insecure* all interviewees (100%) indicate they use coping strategies. It is assumed that those interviewees who did not respond to these specific questions are also not in need of coping strategies due to their relatively safe situation regarding food, or because they did not want to give indications.

What becomes clear is the importance of social networks: 81% of the *very food insecure*, 79% of the *food insecure* and still a remarkable 67% of the *relatively food secure* depend on or use support from their family. A number of people in the categories *very food insecure* and *food insecure* would not be able to survive without this support. Examples were given in chapter 5.1.3.3 where in one case a mother and in another case a sister were taken care of by the daughters and the brother, respectively. Through this support they are at least able to survive, although they have a minor position in these households. Another indication for existing networks of kin, besides indications given by interviewees, are remittances. Besides the remittances from migrant relatives that often form a major part of household income (see 5.1.1.4 and 5.3.4), also smaller remittances of other relatives such as brothers, sons, uncles, cousins and others were recorded. It is not evident whether some of their children are staying in this household, which could then be the reason why they are sending money to the household. These contributions do not form the main part of household income, but add to several smaller money contributions or contributions in kind that help households to survive. The average amount of these remittances, which can be calculated only for 6 of the 12 households, is R95.83, with a minimum of R25 and a maximum of R150. This is on average 11% of the total income of the recipient household.

Also, networks with neighbours and/or friends are important in all categories except for the food secure, with more than 60% of households in each category making use of these supporting relationships. The importance of these networks comes to the fore in the comment of a key informant living in a rural area:

"The social support here is very good ... you can't have everything in life, but this is very important."

The following comment comes from a woman who lives on her own. Her husband died and she gets a small pension from his employer. Her family seems to live far away:

"I worry when I am ill, because there are no friends around, and when I have no food."

In this and other cases where women and also men are living alone, not having networks of friends or family, it also means not being able to get something to eat if a shortage of food occurs.

Women who belong to social networks are often able to help one another and might get food on a regular basis, for example at social gatherings at church or in the neighbourhood. This is reflected in the comment of another key informant:

"Sometimes women go to visit someone and also get some food there."

Apart from neighbourhood relationships, also communal cooking groups might exist as mentioned by Bank (1997). These groups are a female domain that provide women with social space of their own and allow them to establish relationships based on sharing and reciprocity. Within these networks, paraffin, food such as maize meal, sugar and salt and other items are exchanged. Regarding the common circumstances of little available resources, people in most cases can only get the most basic food items, as is expressed in the comment of a key informant:

"You can go to your neighbours or make credit. But you can't get much, because no one has a lot himself. Sometimes my neighbour comes to ask for food, but I can only give her some mealie meal."

Also children and adolescents make use of neighbourhood networks. Older children can play with children of neighbours where they also might get some food. This is illustrated in the following comment:

"My neighbour is an old lady who has many children. The children come to my house to play with my children, and maybe they can get food also."

Adolescents can establish networks with friends. For girls this will often be boyfriends from whom they might be able to get food or money and also unemployed boyfriends will try to get resources from girlfriends (Jones 1999:18). According to Ramphele (1993), in a number of cases, relationships are established and maintained with the mere aim to profit from them in terms of having access to food, shelter and possibly other resources.

Quantitative and qualitative dietary changes, such as limiting food, skipping meals and eating less preferred food, concern mainly the *very food insecure* and to a lesser extent also the *food insecure*. Those interviewees in the category *relatively food secure*, who indicate that they limit food or skip meals stress that this happens only very rarely.

The finding of chapter 5.2.6 that very poor people often have no access to credits at local shops and also not to loans because they are not able to pay the money back (in time) is also confirmed here. It is demonstrated in the higher occurrence of credit and loans in the category *food insecure* and of credit in the category *relatively food secure* in comparison to the category *very food insecure* (see also 5.4.4).

A number of interviewees indicate their practice of using savings in times of shortage. Usually, savings are regarded as a form of security or insurance, respectively. However, in the case of the interviewee in the category *very food insecure* who indicates to use savings, the income earner lost his job and the household now lives on the savings. Therefore, these savings are only a short-term strategy for improved food security, which enables the household to survive for a limited period.

5.4.11 “*My food situation was better before the ‘New South Africa’*” - Perceptions of people on their food situation and on their general situation of wellbeing

Interviewees commented in life histories on their food situation and also on their general situation of wellbeing. They were also asked how they experienced their food situation before and after the change of the political system, to get an indication about the change in living conditions of people. The following comments are excerpts from these life histories.

□ *A woman (29) living with her boyfriend (30) on a cattle farm where he is employed:*

“We used to eat meat a lot, and vegetables which we bought in town. We didn’t eat porridge every day, we would change it between rice and potatoes. We never went hungry, we always had enough to eat ... I came to live here with my boyfriend [who works here]. I have no one to go to if our food is finished. When I was young my sister or my father would buy more food. It was much better when I was at home, but I will stay here because I love my boyfriend ... since the election, my food situation is worse than before. The food now is too expensive, we can’t buy so much food. We

can only buy a little bit of vegetables, not like before. I think things will get worse in the future because there is no food, no jobs and no money. We will die of hunger."

- *A married woman in her fifties with six children, aged 14-28 and two grandchildren, living in a rural area:*

"When I grew up, every day had its own food and fruit. We had porridge, flour (bread), rice and different kinds of vegetables. The vegetables and fruit (apples, pears, grapes, peaches and apricots) came from my grandmother's garden. She lived on a farm some 15km from here. My father had cattle, sheep, and goats, we had meat four times a week. We always had milk ... Now, I buy all our food from the shops. I buy even vegetables, if I haven't planted, or before the harvest, unless there is some carrots, beetroot, spinach and beans in my small garden. The difference in today's life is that we buy all the food. My food situation was better when I was a child because we didn't have to pay for it. Things are very expensive nowadays in the new South Africa although they say we would live a better life but nothing changed for the better. My husband lost his job after the elections. Right now I suffer more than in the past ... life nowadays is more difficult."

- *A married woman in her fifties, with nine children, aged 10-27, living in a rural area, she is the income earner:*

"When I was a child we ate porridge and fresh milk most of the time. During the end of the month we ate meat (goat and sheep) which came from my father's kraal. During the year we lived on maize, pumpkin and beans from our garden. We lived on a farm. The farmer always provided us with food so we never went hungry. When I was young, clothes weren't so expensive and we didn't need so many ... Today, the cost of living is too high and everything is more expensive, like food, clothes and the lifestyle of today. We eat rice and different vegetables today and there are a lot more spices we can use ... The food now is better, it is healthier and there is a bigger diversity. I don't have the money to buy them all. My husband and children have no jobs, I am the only one who works. This parliament is not good for the people because it takes more tax money from the peoples' salaries. The difference I can see that is positive of this parliament is only the fact that we can say anything that we please without them taking any steps against us. It is very difficult now to get enough food, because prices are high and only I work."

□ *A pensioner couple living in an informal settlement:*

“We moved away from the farm because we were not happy there. Now I think life on the farm was better – we had money, food, everything. Some people on the farm were cruel, others not.”

□ *A woman living in a rural area with her sister who gets a pension, they are both in their fifties, and three grandchildren, aged 11-15, whose mothers work in Johannesburg. They have cattle, goats and sheep:*

“When I was child, there was plenty of food. Food was not so expensive, and we planted our own food, like on a farm. At that time, everybody had many sheep and goats. We brought wheat and maize to the shop and got flour and porridge for it. We also had more vegetables. There was always enough to eat. When I married, I came here, that was in 1964. There was still plenty of food because my husband was working [at a mine] and he had also cows, sheep and goats. When my husband died, things changed. There was little money. Also I have to pay school for the children. I also need money for that. With the change of the government, things changed, it’s now worse than before. Children don’t finish school, the standard dropped immensely. There are no jobs, therefore there is no money.”

□ *A woman in her fifties, living with two children, aged 18 and 22 and a grandchild (1) in an informal settlement. They live on piece jobs and support of relatives and neighbours:*

“I was growing well [as a child]. I had enough to eat. There was lots of food, enough meat, and milk. We lived on a farm. We got the food from the farm. My parents were both working there. We had also cabbage, pumpkins, carrots, tomatoes and watermelons. We ate three times per week meat, a lot of chicken, also beef. We also had peaches, strawberries and apples. We also ate sour porridge which we still eat today. I grew up on a farm and married a man who worked there. I worked in the town as a domestic servant. Every night I came back to the farm - I could walk to town, it was not far. At that time there was always enough food, because I was working and also staying on the farm.

My life changed when I had children. I couldn't live the life I lived before. I had to be responsible for the children. I had eight children, but one passed away.

1984 we left the farm. Life there was not nice. The farmers were rude, and we had to work all hours. We came here to this location. Life was okay. We could do piece jobs. But here there was less food. At the farm, I could eat what I liked. Here,

we had to buy everything. We had meat twice per week, when we had money. It happened also that we didn't have enough to eat.

My husband passed away in 1991. Of the eight children, two daughters still live on a farm with their husbands. The other five children live in the location, one of them is married. They all work [probably piece jobs].

Since Mandela is in power, there are changes: the RDP-houses are built. We don't get a house, only people who moved here recently. At school, children get books free from the school and don't have to buy them anymore. Nowadays, food is more expensive. The most important thing for me is to work, to live well. I have temporary work - I do the washing for people in the location - but I want a permanent work, to build a house.

- *A woman from a rural area in her twenties, she and her partner (33) had to leave home in search of work and stay with relatives. Their children are with the grandparents to whom they remit R100 every month from their small salary:*

"We used to eat porridge with milk, mealie rice with tinned fish, rice with meat and dumplings with cabbage. We ate till we were full. We never had a shortage of food. We never went hungry, we always had enough to eat. My grandfather had goats where we got the milk from. We sometimes slaughtered a goat to eat the meat. My grandfather's brother had a vegetable garden, he sent us some every week. As I grew up, food became scarce, especially when I had my own family. Times were still better then than now.

In the new South Africa, things got bad, because my husband and me work for less money, we are underpaid. Nothing big changed after the political change. Nothing positive. Most people got retrenched, and now we suffer. My food situation was better before the change. I miss my children a lot now that I see them only at the end of the month. After I finish this course, I want to go and teach at a farm school. It will be better to work than to sit at home doing nothing. My food situation will be better when I work and get money. If I look into the future, I see our country suffering and being poor for the next years."

5.4.12 Overview

Investigations into access to and availability of food show that a majority of households in this sample have a very limited dietary diversity and cannot afford some types of food. As food consumption data and also perceptions of people reveal, food such as meat, vegetables and fruit, but also milk, eggs, beans and rice are often limited or even missing in the diet. Maize meal is the staple food for a majority of

households in this sample. More than one-third of interviewees indicate that they experience hunger regularly, two-thirds of the interviewees with children state that their children sometimes go hungry, and in three-quarters of all households there seem to be worries and problems in obtaining food regularly. Taking all indicators to assess the state of food security into account, three-quarters of households are chronically food insecure. This picture is congruent with previous studies on dietary intakes, indicating deficiencies in energy intake and limited dietary diversity for large parts of the population (see 2.2.3).

The different investigations of the THUSA study and the HFS study into dietary intake both reveal that with increasing urbanization, if accompanied with increasing affluence, dietary diversity improves. According to Vorster *et al.* (2000), the dietary pattern of the THUSA participants is changing towards a more westernised diet during urbanization, characterised by higher fat intake and lower intake of carbohydrates. The diet of the urban groups, however, can still be regarded as prudent and is more adequate than among rural people regarding micronutrients. The fact that dietary intakes of the rural population are lacking micronutrients is confirmed by UNICEF & NCRC (1993b), which regards poverty and a lack of suitable land for farming as causes for a diet deficient in essential nutrients. Across strata, rural households are found to be the most food insecure, but also among people living on farms, in informal settlements and those living in urban areas, more than half have to be regarded as food insecure. Farm workers are found both in the THUSA study and the HFS study to be nutritionally very vulnerable.

The high prevalence of obesity found in women increases with urbanization, but high rates are found also in rural groups. As Vorster *et al.* (2000) assume, this could be due to factors such as inactivity and possibly also foetal malnutrition and childhood stunting. Increasing heights with urbanization indicate childhood stunting. Therefore, poor people are experiencing a high risk of the double burden of diseases associated with undernutrition on the one hand and overnutrition on the other. The physiological data obtained in the THUSA study confirm that people who are not undernourished or who are even overweight are not necessarily food secure. The people concerned might eat considerable amounts of certain foods while others are missing and are therefore malnourished. They might also be in constant fear whether they will have something to eat the next day, something that cannot be revealed by data on nutritional status. They might have to live in chronically difficult social circumstances and with tensions caused by intra-household dynamics or environmental factors that make obtaining food an every day struggle. According to Budlender (2000), more investigations into the sometimes observed phenomenon of

the co-existence of over- and underweight in the same households or community, for example the overweight of mothers and underweight of children, as well as differences within communities are needed. Possible explanations for the complex phenomenon of overweight in women that are revealed here could be, apart from the above stated foetal malnutrition, that the unbalanced diet often contains considerable amounts of fat. Furthermore, women often have access to specific feminised social networks where they might be able to acquire food. Another factor playing a role could be that food for some women might be the only available means to fill 'emotional holes' and to overcome the chronic feeling of frustration and deprivation for the moment. According to Kruger (1999), also physical inactivity plays a major role.

The investigation into cultural beliefs regarding eating habits reveals that certain cultural perceptions regarding food still exist, but that the importance of these traditions is diminishing. This comes to the fore in comments of younger interviewees, stating that they often do not know why certain traditions are held up, and some of them also indicating that the old people say so, but that they do not believe in this anymore. Certain foods seem not to agree with a number of people. A key informant indicates that in the case of pork this might be a genetic problem, with some people reacting and others not. The most significant rules of restriction are that pregnant women should not eat eggs and (less frequently indicated) also meat, while menstruating women mainly are restricted in drinking milk. This confirms the fact that in most cultures, there are cultural beliefs about the avoidance of certain food during pregnancy (ACC/SCN 2000a).

As was pointed out, the broad scope of this research did not allow in-depth investigation into these issues. The issue of cultural habits and practices must be subject to a different investigation with this specific focus. Nevertheless, the findings give indications on traditions related to food. If planning for nutrition programmes and interventions, it is essential to address and understand the issue of cultural beliefs. According to ACC/SCN (2000a), public health professionals have so far focused mainly on the role of beliefs and practices as determinants of food intake, for example during pregnancy, but it is also necessary to understand the effect of existing beliefs on the ways in which individuals and groups respond to interventions.

Figures on nutritional status of children in South Africa indicate that they are especially vulnerable to food insecurity. The food situation and nutritional status of children was not the focus of this investigation. The limited endeavour is to comment

on the general situation and position of children in households and to uncover possible underlying determinants that have implications for their food situation. In this study, the relationship between household food security and number of meals eaten by children is not significant, but there is an increase in number of meals eaten with increasing food security. There is also a highly significant correlation between household food security and the number of dishes that are prepared. The observation made in other studies that babies often receive complementary food or fluids at a very early age is confirmed here.

Care includes, besides feeding, also nourishing and cleaning and the cognitive and psycho-social development of children. Studies have found that malnourished children who were given verbal and cognitive stimulation had higher growth rates than those who were not (UNICEF 1998). According to Richter (1993), mothers of malnourished children are socially isolated and frequently lack the consistent support of a husband or a partner. Richter further stresses that the social network or support system available to a mother or caregiver determines the quality of care she is able to give to a child. Therefore, malnourishment and undernutrition of children cannot be viewed without the psychological and social context in which income is generated and in which childcare takes place. As Haddad (2000) points out, the provision of care to children, primarily feeding, hygiene routines but also interaction with the child, takes time, and poor people have little non-work time. Mothers, who live under economically and socially unsafe conditions, as is the case for a majority of black women in South Africa, struggle to provide basic needs for their children and their families. Under such conditions, they lack the time and energy necessary for caring practices. The psychological consequences of poverty and difficult living conditions affect a large number of women in this study group.

In this regard, it is necessary to comment on the extremely high incidence of HIV/AIDS and rape in South Africa. The percentage of participants in the THUSA study who tested HIV-positive is alarmingly high, especially in certain social strata and age groups, and considering that for this study only apparently healthy people were recruited. Vorster *et al.* (2000) suggest that HIV infection could reflect in most instances unsafe sex because of a lack of knowledge, not understanding the available information or taking risks regardless of possible consequences. However, as was pointed out in chapter 2.2.4 and as differences in HIV infection rates of women and men suggest, the influence on HIV infections through rape must be considered seriously. As Smith (2000) emphasises, there is a direct correlation between HIV and rape, with rape figures of girls rising from the age of 11 and having

their peak between the ages 13–25. This leads to the assumption that the high infection rate is not only due to unsafe sex practices as is mostly assumed, but largely due to the increasing rape of girl children, because men wrongly believe raping virgins will cure them of HIV. Furthermore, women, because of their biology, are naturally more vulnerable than men to the virus, which is especially marked in girls whose genital tracts are still not fully mature (Mail & Guardian 2000c). According to the World Bank, six times more girl children than boys in Africa are HIV-positive. The fact that in the THUSA population men and women living in rural areas, on farms and in the upper urban stratum had lower infection rates than those living in informal settlements and urban areas (Vorster *et al.* 2000) could possibly confirm this assumption. Rape is more likely to happen in densely populated and less safe areas such as informal settlements and some urban areas where living conditions are dismal, while rural areas and farms can still be regarded as more 'quiet' and safe and upper class urban people are better able to protect themselves. Also other factors probably play a role, such as social deprivation and as a result of deprivation, an attitude of indifference and taking risks regardless of the possible consequences. It also has to be taken into account that women are often not in a position to negotiate for safer sex because of poverty, gender inequalities and the ideologically accepted subservient position of women in some communities, as was pointed out in chapter 1.3.

The situation described is abhorrent especially for poor black women, whose rights are violated in every respect. They often have no means of self-protection and if they have been raped there is mostly also no medical help (in the form of anti-retroviral drugs) available, which puts them at even higher risk of contracting HIV. This extremely difficult social situation must be born in mind when discussing the situation of women and their role as mothers and caregivers.

In the specific South African context, children are often sent to relatives (see 5.1.3.2 and 5.1.4). The social networks that exist for the fostering of children on the one hand enable especially mothers to work and generate an income and also help people having limited resources to mitigate shortages by sending children to relatives. On the other hand, children are separated from their mother or parents and as a result often suffer emotionally. Whether a child stays with his mother or with other people, the position and wellbeing of the caregiver is very important for child development. In most of these cases, it is grandmothers who are caregivers. As was described in chapter 5.1.3.5, they are often too weak to even properly take care of themselves. In general, the elderly are among the most vulnerable groups with

regard to food security and quality of living standard in South Africa, as is documented in other projects as well as in this investigation (see 5.1.3.5 and 5.4.9). They often have no control over their money and it frequently happens that they are either neglected or not looked after and as a result do not eat properly or do not even have food. In this position, they probably cannot devote the care the children would need. According to Kennedy & Peters (1992), studies from Kenya and Malawi document that the health and nutritional status of children in households headed by grandmothers are not as good as in other categories of female-headed households. In these cases, the fact that a woman heads the household may be less important than the relationship between the household head and the children in this household (see also 5.3.5). There are many problems with the fostering of children to which, in pension households, might be added intergenerational conflicts over the value of modern health and nutrition practices that limit their adoption. All these factors, in combination, may adversely affect the wellbeing of children. As Kennedy & Peters (1992:1083) conclude,

“ ... household food security and child nutrition are influenced more by the complex interactions between gender of household head and income, rather than strictly one or the other.”

This research confirms the findings of Kennedy & Peters (1992) and also other studies that often not only household income, but rather distribution and control of income and power relations within households are crucial for food security. Rose (1999), referring to data of a population survey from 1995 in the United States on economic determinants and dietary consequences of food insecurity and hunger, points out that although there is a strong relationship between income and hunger indicators, a one-to-one correspondence between measures of food insecurity and measures of poverty does not exist. The use of indirect indicators such as poverty would identify a large percentage of households being affected by hunger. On the other hand, many households that are not in poverty are food insecure. The same is confirmed by Evans (1992:143) who states that

“ ... assessment of poverty based only on household income may conceal much hidden poverty.”

This is, besides other factors, due to the unequal allocation of money within households. Nuernberger (1999:57) sees the state of wealth and poverty not as depending on relative income, but on

"... the discrepancy between ... income and ... needs ... we can say that people are affluent when their income is higher than their needs, and poor when their needs are higher than their income."

The investigations and comparison according to household categories and power relations with regard to the state of food security support the assumption that households led or headed by women despite more limited economic resources, are not as disadvantaged as one would expect. They often even achieve a better or an equal status as those households headed or led by men. Households led by women have several ways of closing the gap between their income levels and that of other more privileged household categories. Women, for instance, engage in the informal sector which enables them to support their household better, as was described in chapter 5.2.1. Women also have social resources, such as various networks, that are not uncovered by conventional statistical methods. Examples are better access of women to credit at local shops, social networks women establish in their neighbourhood and also networks with female relatives. According to Bank (1997:175),

"Feminised social networks built around spaza shops, borrowing and lending in women's names ... allow women to force open social spaces of their own beyond the dominant patriarchal ideology ... the creation of these feminised social spaces is absolutely vital to the survival of many woman-headed households which depend heavily on neighbourhood-level networks and invest a great deal of time and effort keeping these restricted circuits of exchange open."

Jones also highlights the importance of co-operative alliances for women in female-headed households among their co-resident kinswomen and also with related women in other female-headed households, giving women in female-headed households relative economic security. While these women could rely on intra- and inter-household relationships,

"... women in conjugal households often had neither" (Jones 1999:24).

It is confirmed by this research that women living in conjugal relationships where there is no partnership relationship and also women co-operating with other (male) relatives are in many cases more vulnerable to food insecurity than women who have social networks of female relatives or women who are financially independent. Jones (1999:25) comes to the conclusion that

"In a context where conjugal relations were ephemeral and men prioritised their own needs ahead of those of their partners and children, it is easy to see why some women instead opted for the more assured security of partnerships with like-minded and like-situated kinswomen."

Households based on partnership relationships are found to be the most food secure, having higher per capita incomes than households led by women, but lower per capita incomes than households led by men. In the latter category, the percentage of very insecure and insecure households is even higher than in female-led households, despite the even more striking difference regarding per capita income. The correlation of power relations and state of food security is highly significant.

The investigation into why some households are more successful than others, despite similar difficult socio-economic circumstances, reveals that this question cannot be answered in a simple way. However, certain characteristics come to the fore: households manage more successfully with limited resources if (a) there are several income earners and therefore also several decision-makers; (b) women are managing resources, which often includes that they also have access to credit; (c) the household has access to networks of relatives and neighbours; and (d) the relationship between a couple is based on partnership. In some cases one, in other cases several of the above characteristics apply.

In contrast, households manage less successfully if (a) they are male-dominated households; (b) intra-household relations reveal struggle and tension about household resources; (c) household members are totally dependent on others due to illness or having no income; (d) there is 'unwise' budgeting; (e) the household head is a pensioner; and (f) single mothers with children who lack social networks form a household.

With rising living standards and better food security, household size declines and there is a tendency away from large extended families to smaller domestic units and nuclear-type households, as is the case in most affluent societies (see 5.1.4 and

5.2.3). This finding is confirmed by other research projects. Operation Hunger found that people described a "proper" household as consisting of a married couple with children, secure jobs, a house and the provision of facilities such as water, sanitation, and always enough food in the house (Breslin & Delius 1996). With increasing affluence, social networks of relatives and neighbours become less important. This can also mean a loss of social values for the broader society because: it "encourages" the development of a more egocentric society where support systems are bound to break down and more deprived people will fall through the social net. On the other hand, those people who aim at achieving a higher living standard or certain other goals sometimes might have better opportunities if they have to show less consideration for larger networks of relatives who might prevent them from doing so. In this regard it should also be pointed out that social networks formed by kin that in general have to be regarded as very important, entail both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, these support systems enable people to survive and are one of the most important coping mechanisms available. This comes to the fore throughout the findings of this research project. According to the South African Participatory Poverty Assessments (May *et al.* 2000b) and research done by Operation Hunger (Breslin *et al.* 1997), people who have no access to social networks are regarded as being poor, such as old people isolated from kin, or young single mothers without the support of older kin. On the other hand, rapid social, demographic and economic change as it is presently taking place in South Africa, can undermine the basis for trust and reciprocal relationships:

" ... the *ubuntu* notion of what constitutes 'good behaviour for Africans' fails to take account of the current social and political context of poor communities in South Africa. The overarching issue that arises from these realities is one of crime ... the incidence of crime against the poor is of direct relevance to the accumulation and erosion of social capital ... a much higher proportion of those in the lowest income-brackets reported being the victims of violent crimes" (May *et al.* 2000b:254).

As Breslin & Delius (1996:90) critically remark in their report on poverty and malnutrition in South Africa,

" ... while people were in practice involved in, and importantly dependent on, extended networks of kinship and residence, the elements of mutual support they afforded went hand in hand with high levels of conflict and suspicion."

High levels of conflict within support networks are also revealed in this study group (see 5.1.3.4 and 5.1.3.5). The conflict is brought about by feelings of frustration and the social deprivation that prevails when being poor. Levels of aggression especially among men are high. In this regard, alcohol plays an important role, as is revealed in numerous comments of female interviewees in the investigation on HFS. Within the investigation of the larger THUSA study, alcohol intakes are found to be high in men, with a mean daily alcohol intake of 30.2g in male drinkers (Vorster *et al.* 2000). Besides the detrimental effects of alcohol on health, there are severe social consequences to be considered. As can be indicated, with regard to food security this means that less money is available for food, besides the increased tension among household members due to the struggle over resources, and the tension sometimes leading to violence.

There are signs that the support nets of family and friends that people can appeal to are shrinking (Breslin & Delius 1996). Therefore, in future even more people might be in need of social assistance because of the unavailability of the support of social networks (see 5.2.10). In the present social context in South Africa and as findings obtained here also indicate, social networks of relatives living together and practising mutual co-operation still enable people, especially the more vulnerable children as well as women to have a better development and future, regarding all aspects of life.

Food insecure people have to balance competing needs for asset preservation, income generation and present and future food supplies in complex ways (Maxwell & Smith 1992:49). It is confirmed in this research that food insecure people implement highly complex livelihood strategies in which food security seems to play an important, but not always predominant role. Besides the mentioned essential social networks of kin and neighbours and the movement of household members between residential units, one of the most frequently used coping strategies is the search for migrant labour opportunities. Other frequently used strategies are to do occasional jobs or establish micro-enterprises. Also, receiving of old-age pensions and other state benefits have to be regarded as survival strategies, as many people depend on social security systems. Agricultural production is not found to be significant in this study population which could be due to the selection of the study sample (see 5.2.5). According to May *et al.* (2000b), agricultural production in rural areas is the third most important livelihood tactic used after remittances and wages from low-skilled jobs. Making use of credit is very common for large parts of the study population, but the very poor often have no access to credit because they are not able to pay the money

back. Among the strategies of coping with sudden or chronic food shortages regarding quantitative and qualitative dietary changes are eating less preferred food as well as limiting food and skipping meals. The very food insecure often have no other choice, while some people go hungry up to a certain point to meet other objectives. These livelihood strategies come to the fore in personal comments of interviewees.

Perceptions of people reveal, in addition to the data obtained through the interview, that a large number of people in this study sample cannot meet their basic needs and a majority cannot fulfil their preferences and social expectations. This needs to be taken into consideration when talking about food security. It is not only about how to fill the stomach, but also about choice and the freedom of acting according to one's preferences. Numerous examples are given of people who are confronted every day with food and commodities that they will never be able to afford, while in the first place they are worried about their basic needs and would be satisfied if they could fulfil only those. These people see their children with too little food and other basic essentials for living, growing up in uncertainty and often in an environment of violence and tension, with poor prospects regarding education and other essential conditions for a better life. As was illustrated in chapter 5.2.4, education is perceived by people in this study sample as a basic need (cf. Sen 1995).

With regard to food security/food insecurity, another factor comes into play: human dignity. If people are not free to choose what they want to eat, at least to a certain extent, there can also be no self-respect and self-esteem. This issue is especially crucial in a social context such as South Africa, where the gap between the rich and the poor is steadily getting wider. The number of people, black and white, standing on the streets and begging for food is increasing. It is also revealed in this research that living conditions for a number of people in South Africa have not improved over a number of years, but worsened. This comes to the fore in the comments and the perceptions of many people. A number of people, especially those previously living and working on farms, had more food security when they still lived on the farms. Some of those who left the farms to start their own, independent life found themselves having less than before due to the lack of jobs and opportunities. Others lost their jobs or have to migrate even longer distances to look for work. If poverty and food insecurity are chronic with no options for change, the lack of perspective leaves many people frustrated and disillusioned, the more so if affluence is possible for others in the same society. It has to be mentioned in this context that increasingly also certain sectors of the white population feel that they are being left

behind. It is for this and other reasons, at the forefront the high crime rates, that many people leave the country looking for chances elsewhere (ARD/Weltspiegel 2001b).

The importance of this information is that ordinary people can give us some insight into their perceptions. These perceptions are formed by everyday experiences in their struggle for existence and the way these perceptions have become salient for them. The salience of their worries about food will also influence the decisions they make from day to day. Whatever the perceptions of people, issues of efficiency and cost-effectiveness arise at national and household level. According to Maxwell & Smith (1992:49), these are legitimate issues to pursue, especially with regard to production decisions, but also with regard to risk avoidance and entitlement protection. In any case, these issues will always be subject to bargaining between individuals with different interests.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This interdisciplinary study investigates composition, socio-economic characteristics and intra-household relations of black South African households and the effects these complex indicators have on their food situation. The research forms part of a broader project that studied the impact of urbanization on the health situation of black South Africans in the North West Province. For the investigation on household food security, 166 people, mainly women, were interviewed, using qualitative and quantitative methods.

In South Africa, hunger is not as widespread as in some other areas of Southern Africa, but the findings of this research suggest that for the majority of the black South African population, chronic food insecurity persists, as well as an insecure social environment. In this study sample, three-quarters of households are food insecure. This picture is congruent with previous studies on dietary intakes, indicating deficiencies in energy intake and limited dietary diversity for large parts of the population. The prospects for those who are food insecure are destitution and a daily struggle to meet their basic needs. With rapid social, demographic and economic changes presently taking place in South Africa and the poverty gap widening, it must be taken into account that large numbers of recently impoverished people live precariously on the margins of subsistence. There are often no savings or other valuables that would enable people to overcome times of shortage. Household income for the majority of households (75%) is less than R1 000 per month (R1 000 equalled approximately 143 US \$ at the time of June 2000, with 1 US \$ being equal to R7). This makes it understandable that three-quarters of the households in this study sample state that they are worried about the availability of food for the next day, as they live under unsafe social conditions and constantly face the possibility that there might be no food. These households must be regarded as extremely vulnerable to external influences, which can easily reduce their food consumption further and thus make them food insecure.

Among the people who are most vulnerable to food insecurity as identified in this research are people living in rural households, the elderly, children, and also farm workers are found to nutritionally very vulnerable. As is revealed by the impact of urbanization on the health situation, a high prevalence of obesity is found in women, increasing with urbanization. As Vorster *et al.* (2000) assume, this could be due to factors such as inactivity and possibly also fetal malnutrition and childhood

stunting. At the same time, these women are undernourished regarding certain micro-nutrients. Therefore, poor people are experiencing a high risk of the double burden of diseases associated with undernutrition on the one hand and overnutrition on the other. This highlights once more that food insecurity is not always visible and entails far more than an obvious state of undernutrition, with the principal meaning of food security referring to the absence of risk relating to adequate food consumption (Kracht 1999a).

The economic gap in South Africa between the rich and the poor illustrated in this research is also widening in other affluent countries; it is a global phenomenon. Food security is not just a crucial issue in poorer countries. Due to a rapid expansion of the capitalist system there are impoverishment processes all over the world, with more and more people living on the margins of subsistence and becoming subject to food insecurity (Schwefel *et al.* 1999).

It is confirmed in this research that food insecure people implement highly complex livelihood strategies in which actions to assure food security play an important, but not always predominant role. It would therefore be misleading to only interpret malnutrition as signalling the failure of coping strategies, while it is on the contrary often one of its costs (Adams *et al.* 1998). As a consequence, food security should always be studied in the context of livelihood security (Maxwell & Smith 1992).

Social networks of kin and neighbours and the movement of household members between residential units are among the most frequently used coping strategies, as well as the search for migrant labour opportunities. Other frequently used strategies are occasional jobs or micro-enterprises. Also old-age pensions and other state benefits have to be regarded as survival strategies, as many people depend on social security systems. Agricultural production was not found to be significant in this study population, while according to other investigations in some rural areas this is the third most important livelihood tactic used after remittances and wages from low-skilled jobs (May *et al.* 2000b)²⁶. Using credit is very common for large parts of the study population, but the very poor often have no access to credit because they are not able to pay back the money. Among the strategies of coping with sudden or chronic food shortages regarding quantitative and qualitative dietary changes are eating less preferred food as well as limiting food. The very food insecure often have no other choice, while some people might go hungry up to a certain point to meet other objectives. Only for the very food insecure does food become the overriding preoccupation. They have to employ survival strategies at the

expense of long-term livelihoods. This, for example, is the case if a household has to sell or slaughter livestock, thereby losing a valuable asset and future investment, for the purpose of short-term gratification of hunger. These people are trapped in a vicious circle. In the worst cases, when an extended period of crisis results in complete destitution and the dissolution of the household, individuals are left only with their weakened labour power to keep themselves alive.

Another aspect in the context of coping strategies concerns 'acquiring food in socially acceptable ways'. This raises the question, what is acceptable? Hamelin *et al.* (1999:528) proposed a number of guidelines for the assessment of the social acceptability of practices related to food security. According to these guidelines, means of food acquisition and food management should contribute to sustainable household food security, not be at the expense of other household members, conform to laws and regulations and not represent an eventual threat to harmonious life in a community. In this study population, although people might for example have become used to using credit regularly to obtain food, this practice does not contribute to sustainable household food security but perpetuates a cycle of dependence. As is also shown in this research, the distribution of resources is often at the expense of other household members who are in a weak position. Furthermore, if resources are scarce and poverty is increasing, this will have negative effects on community life, for example if in communities where social networks are usually strong and based on support and sharing of resources some people can afford more than others. Further destructive of both family and community life is the high percentage of people who have to leave in search of work, due to high unemployment and increasing poverty. Apart from migrant husbands or male partners, women also are increasingly forced to leave their homes to work elsewhere. They are in fact the most visible group in this study sample. Migrant women have to leave their children in the care of either the grandparents or other relatives.

This research investigated in detail the various forms of household categories, revealing a wide variety of household organisations with very specific characteristics. The practice of migrant labour, increasing poverty and unemployment force large numbers of black South African men and women to live apart from their families. This results in a strikingly high occurrence of disrupted families, with only few couples being able to maintain a stable relationship through this situation. Out of the situation of domestic fluidity and marital instability other forms of household organisation emerge. Extended networks of mostly kin are the predominant household type, constituting

over 70% of households in this study sample. Half of households are female-headed, and more than half of female interviewees are single.

Observations made in other studies, that certain categories of female-headed households, though at first sight economically worse off than male-headed households, achieve an economic situation which compares favourably to that “managed” by men and also manage better with the resources they have available, are also confirmed by this study. Households led by women have several ways of closing the gap between their income levels and that of more privileged household categories. Women have social resources, such as various networks that are not uncovered by conventional statistical methods, for example better access to credit at local shops, social networks with neighbours and also networks with female relatives. Furthermore, women engage in the informal sector.

Another category of households that proves to be successful in achieving better food security are households where relationships between men and women are based on partnership and mutual trust. The latter bases of co-operation also apply to households where siblings co-operate. Households based on partnership relationship are the most food secure, with higher per capita incomes (R340 per month) than households led by women (R148 per month), but lower than those led by men (R466 per month). In spite of male-headed households having the highest mean per capita incomes of these three categories, the percentage of insecure and very insecure households is found to be even higher than in female-headed households. The correlation of power relations and state of food security is highly significant. This confirms the findings of other studies that often not household income, but the distribution and control of that income are crucial for food security. Education also influences power relations in households: in households with partnership relationships, the number of educated women is higher than in other household categories. This indicates that education influences power relations between men and women, with women who have better education being more involved in decision-making and resource management. In general, educational levels in this study population are low, which is in line with national figures. However, it comes to the fore that people in this study sample regard education as a basic need.

It can be stated that households manage more successfully with limited resources if (a) there are several income earners and therefore also several decision-makers; (b) women are managing resources, which often includes that they also have access to

credit; (c) the household has access to networks of relatives and neighbours; and (d) the relationship between a couple is based on partnership. In some cases one, in other cases several of the above characteristics apply. In contrast, households manage less successfully if (a) they are male-dominated; (b) intra-household relations reveal struggle and tension about household resources; (c) household members are totally dependent on others due to illness or having no income; (d) there is 'unwise' budgeting; (e) the household head is a pensioner; and (f) single mothers with children who lack social networks form a household.

The realisation of women's exemplary position and their crucial role for food security is well known and is emphasised once again in this research, as well as women's often disadvantaged position of access to power and resources. The empowerment of women was included in the 1996 Rome Declaration on World Food Security, acknowledging the fundamental contribution to food security made by women, particularly in rural areas of developing countries, and emphasising the need to ensure equality between men and women (FAO 1996). However, this knowledge still needs to be transformed into practice. This applies also to South Africa, where women in marginalised areas remain neglected. "Gender blindness" and "invisibility" of women's roles in and contributions to food security still exist, despite an increasing supply of gender disaggregated data and studies of women's roles in agricultural production and food security (CSS 1997). As Waldmann & Ntsedi (1997) point out, development initiatives must start in understanding women's basic needs and must, in addition, challenge male oppression, if women are to redress their present disadvantaged position of access to power and resources.

However, as this research also reveals, black South African women have developed a great feminist consciousness and independence. This was observed by Cock (1980) and Van der Vliet (1991) already in the 1970s. Staying single increasingly appears to be a coping strategy for some women, which seems to be linked to their inability to control resources within conjugal unions. Whether or not women deliberately decide to live singly rather than in a partnership finally depends on their economic situation and on the availability of alternative social networks.

It can be stated that a large number of women in this study sample live under economically and socially unsafe conditions and struggle to provide basic needs for their children and their families. Under such conditions, they often lack the time and energy necessary for caring practices, with the psychological consequences of poverty and difficult living conditions negatively affecting themselves and their children. Adding to this is the high incidence of rape and HIV infections in South

Africa. Especially poor black South African women are extremely at risk of being raped. There is mostly no medical help (in the form of anti-retroviral drugs) available, which puts them at even higher risk to contract HIV. Furthermore, women are often not in a position to negotiate for safer sex because of poverty, gender inequalities and the ideologically accepted subservient position of women in some communities. This extremely difficult social situation women are facing must be born in mind when discussing the situation of women and their role as mothers and caregivers.

The change of household composition documented in this research is not confined to South Africa, but is a worldwide phenomenon (Moore 1994). What is specific and special in this study population is, that although households are on the one hand constantly changing and very fluid, they often stretch over space and are in fact quite stable, with members of these households cooperating over long periods of time, sometimes life-long. According to Moore (1994), within the African context, the breakdown of conjugal unions does not lead to a breakdown of kinship, but results in a significant realignment of kinship-based resource systems. This stretching of households over several domestic units and existing networks of kin and to a lesser extent also of friends were shown to be among the most important and essential coping mechanisms for better food security and survival. This was illustrated in numerous examples of single mothers with children, but also other single people; young and older men and women without jobs and also the elderly and disabled, relying on the support of kinship networks. It is therefore crucial to fully understand "traditional" coping mechanisms for better food security and survival. This could also lead to a cultural revitalisation within the scope of the 'African Renaissance', emphasising functioning indigenous social mechanisms. As Nhlapo (1991) stresses, the fundamental value of strong kinship ties and collective responsibility for the welfare of the group that enriches African communities would be strengthened even further if inequalities would be removed. This refers for example to the problem that a woman's personhood is lost in the group much more than that of a man, which is subsumed under the so-called community principle. According to Nhlapo (1991) this is not to be misunderstood as an argument for western-style individualism, it is an argument for individualisation.

Social networks based on kinship are something most western societies have lost. While for example in Germany during and after the Second World War social ties were of great importance and similar household forms to those in contemporary South Africa existed, with growing affluence a shift took place towards nuclear households and also

towards individualism and egoism. Economic growth and consumerism became the leading values, at the expense of social values and human relationships. This trend to individualism in many western societies leads among other things to increasing isolation, often resulting in desperation, feeling useless and depression. To take Germany as an example, the society furthermore relied too much on support mechanisms supplied by the state. This support is dwindling, with no other structures in place to rely on. One example is the weakening pension system, with an increasing percentage of elderly and fewer young people who cannot keep up the economic balance. A sad development in this regard is that the elderly are often shunted into old-age homes instead of being cared for in the family. People with an extremely individualised life style need to re-discover networks of families and friends that would help overcome this isolation and the negative effects it has, among them impoverishment. The “large family”, with several generations under one roof, including possibly friends, with enough space provided for privacy, could be an example of the future. The elderly would be included in the life of the young and become important role-models instead of being treated disrespectfully. Children in larger kin groups would naturally have a circle of friends to play with and learn from different models instead of just their parents, who also would not be as isolated anymore.

All these benefits of extended social networks are to a great extent still alive in traditional African communities, although these values are in danger of being destroyed by current social and economic problems. While people actually depend on extended networks of kinship in the struggle for scarce resources, mutual support goes hand in hand with conflict and suspicion. This is true especially in households headed by pensioners. Due to inter-generation dynamics and the destitute state of these households, which in most cases include large numbers of dependent adolescents and children, there is frequently conflict over scarce resources that can also lead to violence. While in rural communities that still have a largely “traditional” character, the elderly, especially elderly women, are respected and have a strong position in the household (Van der Vliet 1991; Liebenberg 1997), in other areas, especially where in addition grave social problems are encountered, the weakness of the elderly and their being a regular source of income is being exploited. As May *et al.* (2000b) state, the *ubuntu* notion of what constitutes ‘good behaviour’ fails to take account of the current social and political context in South Africa. There are signs that support nets of family and friends are shrinking, in future putting even more people in need of social assistance (Breslin & Delius 1996). A shift towards nuclear families can also be

observed in South Africa, as was documented among wealthier households in this study sample and also in other investigations.

Many communities increasingly face another problem, which concerns the AIDS crisis. According to the South African Participatory Poverty Assessment, the poor section of the population particularly fear the social isolation that AIDS leads to, as this undermines one of the critical ways in which they survive – the use of kin and social networks (Budlender 2000). People infected with HIV who disclose their HIV status have to fear to be excluded from the community, in some cases they are even killed.

The youth are most vulnerable to marginalisation. Nuernberger (1994) calls them the 'lost generation'. With a lack of perspectives, there is often no goal the young generation can strive for and role patterns are missing. One of the consequences of the migrant labour system and the resulting disruption of families is the large number of foster children who grow up without their parents, as is illustrated by numerous examples in this study. According to the Children's Rights Centre (The Star 22 March 2001), 9% of children live in households with neither their parents nor their grandparents. In addition, more and more children will be orphaned because their parents have died of AIDS. The Children's Rights Centre (The Star 22 March 2001) estimates that by 2010 there will be between 3.6 million and 4.8 million orphans in South Africa, with orphans constituting between 9% and 12% of the population. Also, more and more children will be infected with HIV. There are no social security systems in place yet to cushion these children. The government's current poverty alleviation grant (child support grant) is only available to children up to the age of seven, of whom only 33% receive the grant.

Under these circumstances, children and adolescents, many of whom have no home any more or leave to escape the devastating circumstances at home, look for a second home in gangs, practising violence for survival and self-assertion.

Parallels can be drawn with other countries and societies, no matter how different the social systems and cultures may seem. The problems South Africa is presently encountering are multiple and very complex, but they are not phenomena specific only to this country. They are extreme in their outcome as many negative factors compound and aggravate the situation – past as well as current national and global economic developments, leading to an ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor²⁷.

The focus in this study is on how households manage to cope with adverse circumstances. The ways in which people are able to adapt, for example in forming other household types and establishing multiple networks, show their creativity and ability to cope. In the planning of social development programmes, the functioning of households and the maximising of existing multiple networks have to be taken into account and could even be used to spread resources and mobilise the poor, those already depending on each other and sharing with each other. As Maxwell & Smith (1992) stress, vulnerable human livelihood systems are often best understood as highly resilient and adaptable, in situations where uncertainty is the norm. This is in line with Adams *et al.* (1998), stating that successful coping is a reflection of the household's baseline resilience. Interventions by developers should support this flexibility.

With regard to food-insecure people's actions and strategies, Maxwell & Smith (1992) further state that "perceptions matter as much as objective reality". The importance of perceptions of people regarding their food situation and their situation of general wellbeing comes to the fore in the numerous comments by participants in this research. Perceptions of people reveal that a majority cannot fulfil their preferences and social expectations, being confronted every day with food and commodities that they will never be able to afford, while in the first place they are worried about their basic needs. It also comes to the fore that for a large number of people, living conditions have not improved but worsened over a number of years, due to the loss of jobs, earning less, having to migrate even further away and having less to eat than before. Lacking jobs and opportunities leads to a vicious circle, leaving many people disillusioned and frustrated, the more so if affluence is possible for others in the same society. The inevitability of events sometimes results in a lack of initiative, and it is suggested that this is also likely to create an attitude of indifference and also sometimes "unreasonable" behaviour.

Knowledge about people's perceptions reflects why they act the way they do, which is the crucial basis of understanding. From the practice of nutrition counselling we know that if perceptions and personal circumstances of clients are not taken into account a change in behaviour will not take place – evaluations on low acceptance regarding dietary advice from all over the world confirm this. One of the lessons of past experiences with development aid is that programmes are bound to fail if planned without acknowledging people's perceptions (Schwefel *et al.* 1999). In the worst case, development programmes exacerbate inequity and undermine the capacity of people to help themselves. There is growing awareness that efforts in

development are more sustainable and constructive if they are more sensitive to the origins and dynamics of crises and supportive of what communities and households themselves do to minimise risk and cope with crisis (Adams *et al.* 1998). While previously situation analysis and assessment were based on the information needs of outsiders and therefore on their perceptions on how to judge the severity of food security, involving local people forges a more equal relationship, with both sides bringing their experience and expertise to the situation (Young & Jaspars 1995). According to Rist (2001:333), researchers and consultants need to see the development of traditional living and production from the view of the actors. At the same time, they need to be aware of their own values and perceptions on which their knowledge and skills are based. Development cannot only focus on technical and economic problems, but must be based on an “intercultural dialogue”, where development workers learn from the communities they are working in and accompany processes through participatory fieldwork and counselling.

The introduction of a human rights dimension to food security and development in the 1996 Rome Declaration on World Food Security, with its new ethical imperative, has potentially profound implications for national and international development efforts. In terms of this view, co-operation in development then becomes a question of responsibilities, duties and accountabilities as opposed to voluntary, non-accountable “basic needs” strategies approached previously (Kracht 1999b:642).

This research indicates the complexity of human life and the social importance of human organisation, which directly impacts on food security. This necessitates a move away from and beyond mechanical views of human existence and food security. This study furthermore indicates the importance of gender relations and intra-household resource management for everyday food security for the poorer sections of South African society. Further research on these issues in this specific cultural context is shown to be essential. In future far more multidisciplinary work should be done in this field. In-depth investigations are urgently needed to shed light on and lead to a better understanding of the issues discussed here. Anthropologists and sociologists, with their experience of qualitative research, should be more often involved in the planning of studies of a broad scope and a necessary quantitative approach. From a methodological point of view, there is no conflict in using both qualitative and quantitative methods, as shown in this interdisciplinary approach - on the contrary, one should get the best possible insights from a judicious mix of the

two. As Young & Jaspars (1995:34) conclude in their evaluation of nutrition assessment with regard to malnutrition and food security,

“ ... the use of qualitative and quantitative methods in combination is a considerable more powerful tool than using either in isolation. Together, they provide nutritional statistics, coupled with penetrating descriptive analysis of the underlying causes and review of potential solutions.”

It furthermore becomes clear that the more a researcher is working in depth, the more complicated social phenomena become. However, this should not prevent the researcher from exploring these issues in detail. Without sound knowledge of the organisation of households and the flow of resources within and between households, like the system of remittances and other support networks, valid information on the economic and social situation of a major part of the South African population cannot be obtained. It was shown that households are not homogeneous entities as is still often assumed. Within households, as well as within communities, there are different categories of people with specific interests. These different categories, as well as the specifics of local situations need to be uncovered when wanting to identify needs or implementing programmes. The research findings prove that this information is the essential basis for a better understanding of the issue of household food security. If not recognized, development efforts and economic planning might fail and resources be wasted.

Achieving food security is not only crucial but also fundamental for social development – no development can take place, let alone be sustainable if this is not taken into account. At the same time, people can only take matters actively into their own hands if they also experience sustainable social progress.

NOTES

¹ THUSA is the acronym for *Transition and Health during Urbanization in South Africa*.

² For a further illustration of the different concepts of *food security*, the reader is referred to the detailed descriptions of Maxwell & Frankenberger (1992) who reviewed the large number of concepts and definitions of food security, and also to Maxwell (1996). Kracht & Schulz (1999) in their review give a response to recent advances in the understanding and conceptualisation of food security and nutrition problems and their underlying food and non-food causes. For a comprehensive overview on food insecurity in Southern Africa, the reader is referred to the vast literature, compiled for example in the bibliographies of Hutchinson and Frankenberger (1992), Geldenhuys (1994), and Laier et al (1996).

³ Some of the issues concerning black South African women also concern white South African women. But here the focus is kept on the history and present experiences of black women.

⁴ In the specific area referred to in this TV programme, girls are told not to engage with a man, as this is the best way not to contract HIV. While this could on the one hand be regarded as a safety and survival mechanism, one has to ask what does the 'code of conduct' suggest if a girl wants to engage in a partnership and then eventually marry? What if she is forced into a relationship, or is raped, as is so common in South Africa (see 2.2.4)? Is she also taught to demand a HIV test from her male partner? Does she have the power to do this? Does she further have the power to demand that the man, if he does not agree to the test, uses a condom? Apart from these questions, the boys and men seem to be 'absent' in this whole procedure, at least there was no reference in the specific programme referred to above, and therefore one could ask: where is the code of conduct for boys and men?

⁵ 'Tannie' Sarie Scholz, who lived with her husband on a farm near the small town of Amalia in the North West Province, was a friend of ours we knew since 1996. She was murdered in June 2000 by two young black men, aged 17 and 18, whom she had employed for a piece job. They shot her to get her rifle. This was one of numerous farm murders that have taken place mainly in the North West Province, Mpumalanga and the Orange Free State in recent years.

⁶ Since the journalist Charlene Smith was raped in April 1999 and went public with her ordeal, there has been wide coverage and discussion of rape in the media. For her engagement with the problem, Smith received the South African Courageous Journalism Award that is made annually by the Ruth First Memorial Trust (Mail & Guardian 1999a). She acts as voluntary

counsellor for governments, numerous organizations, pharmaceutical companies, lawyers and not least also many rape victims and survivors.

⁷ At the latest stage of writing, the government at least agreed to the treatment of HIV-infected pregnant mothers with anti-retroviral drugs at limited clinical trials, although this was never publicly announced and the government also did not officially change its policy stance on the treatment of HIV/AIDS (Mail & Guardian 2001a). The treatment of pregnant mothers can decrease the danger for the unborn child to contract HIV about 50%.

⁸ The Native Urban Areas Act later underwent major amendments in 1930, 1937, 1944, 1952, 1957, 1964 and 1971, as well as consolidation in 1945, and grew into one of the most complex pieces of control legislation ever devised anywhere (Davenport 1988:340).

⁹ The infrastructure of the broader research project, which included the establishing of contact to the communities and the carrying out of the activities of the larger research group, was organized by the study leader of the Nutrition Research Group of Potchefstroom University, Prof. Este (H.H.) Vorster.

¹⁰ The principle of compensation is in line with the *Ethical Guidelines for Southern African Anthropologists* (Association for Anthropology in Southern Africa 1987:4), which states that participants should get a fair return for their help and services.

¹¹ I did not manage to visit Constance in February as I had intended, but called one of the teachers of the farm school to inform her and to give my regards to her.

¹² Comparison of distribution of household members in the different interview approaches reveals this discrepancy of information gained from the two sets of data:

Household size (No of people)	HFSI		SDQ	
	<i>No of households</i>	<i>% of households</i>	<i>No of households</i>	<i>% of households</i>
1	3	1.8	14	8.4
2-4	40	24.1	67	40.4
5-7	72	43.4	67	40.4
8-10	28	16.9	16	9.6
11-13	17	10.2	2	1.2
14-19	6	3.6	-	-
Total	166	100	166	100

Table i): Comparison of the distribution of mean household size in the different investigations

The SDQ-results indicate more single person households and more households with the size of 2-4 persons than is indicated in the HFSI-results, while the household size of 5 persons and more occurs more frequently in the HFSI-results.

¹³ Of course, I had met black South Africans earlier in different circumstances, but never at their homes. This was the first chance I had to enter a township with the intention to meet someone.

¹⁴ These impressions confirmed what Prof. Este Vorster had told me in the beginning, reaffirming me that my being from Germany would be of advantage.

¹⁵ The research was further presented to the following audiences: at a seminar of the Department of Socio-economics of Households, Technical University of Munich-Weihenstephan, July 1999; at the Pretoria-Wageningen Symposium to academics and students of the Universities of Wageningen/Netherlands, Pretoria, Cape Town, and Potchefstroom, August 1999; at the symposium "Sustainable Social Development - Critical Challenges", Potchefstroom University, February 2000 (Lemke *et al.* 2001a); at the weekly seminar of the Department of Social Anthropology, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, March 2000; and at the Nutrition Congress 2000 in Durban, South Africa, August 2000.

¹⁶ This example shows the difficulty of categorising certain households: from the perspective of the husband, his wife belongs to his "household", as she provides money regularly. From the perspective of the woman and decision-making, she is regarded as single. One can therefore say that the household consists also of the husband and the two other children, but

that the woman acts and has the status as if she were single, as she stays on her own most of the time. Her answer on who is head of household fits into this categorisation: "*Here it is me, at home my husband*".

¹⁷ *Head of household in the sub-category of male interviewees*

All of the categories of head of household can be found in the small sub-sample of male interviewees:

<i>Household categories</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>De jure female</i>	<i>Joint</i>	<i>De facto female</i>	<i>Total</i>
Women co-operating with relatives	-	1	-	-	1
Women living with partner	2	-	5	2	9
Men living alone	2	-	-	-	2
Total number of households	4	1	5	2	12

Table ii): Head of household in the sub-group of male interviewees (n=12)

¹⁸ Although the generalisation that a man is always called head is mostly true, in four cases women are regarded as head, despite the presence of a senior man: In one case, the wife of a migrant worker calls herself head of household, "*because I decide on everything*". This household was classified as *de facto female-headed*. The other three female heads are mothers of interviewees or of the interviewees' partners, who seem to have a strong position in the household, due to the fact that they contribute a main part to the household income through pension and/or small businesses. They are called head because "*she is responsible for everything*" or because "*she is the oldest in the house*". In these households, female heads involve others, mostly senior male family members, in decision-making. Therefore, they were included in the category *jointly headed households*. This is the reason why the total number of women as head of households here adds up to 62, instead of 58 who have finally been categorised as *de jure* female headed. One of the *de jure* female heads – she has been mentioned earlier within the category *women with children, no support network* - states that her husband is head although he is away nine months of the year. She is the only one supporting herself and her children, without getting any contributions from him. This example shows how deeply the perception of a man being head is rooted.

¹⁹ This last household mentioned was classified as *de jure* female-headed, because a young woman with her spouse lives with her mother whom she calls head of this household and who also seems to make the main decisions. Her pension constitutes the main income of the household. Also the son-in-law contributes money sometimes and another daughter. As the young woman is at least involved in the decision-making and does the shopping as well as

the cooking, the household was categorised as *woman living with partner* and not as *woman pensioner living with relatives*.

²⁰ R1 000 was equal to approximately 143 US \$ at the time of June 2000 (1 US \$ was equal to R7).

²¹ On the farms that were visited within the THUSA survey, the following types of farming were represented: dairy, cattle, sheep, maize, sunflowers, cut-flowers and mixed farming.

²² An effort was made to estimate the distance interviewees had to walk to the tap, but it was too difficult to get accurate figures. Therefore this data is not presented.

²³ Concerns of informants, many of whom were women, regarding the use of electricity largely related to the perception that it is expensive and could force them into a cycle of consumerism that might impoverish their household. They feared that using electricity would lead to borrowing money or over-committing themselves in savings clubs and hire purchase-schemes in order to acquire new appliances such as kettles, stoves and refrigerators. The adoption of electricity is also said to lead to excessive 'selfishness' among women, meaning that they would become arrogant and selfish and forget about their friends (Bank 1997:161).

²⁴ The proportion of remittances to relatives of their total expenditure could be assessed only of the two men who are living as single. In both cases, remittance to distant households constitutes only a minor part of their total expenditure (10% and 13%, respectively).

²⁵ 'Sometimes' or 'occasionally' can indicate once a week, several times a month or only once a month. If items were reported not at all, it is assumed that the household normally does not have them available, or that the household has these food items only very seldom.

²⁶ Especially with regard to agricultural production and subsistence farming it is crucial to obtain valid information on people's perceptions. This factor is on the one hand very location specific, depending on the quality of land and access to water, on the other hand it might be influenced also by emotions. As was pointed out in chapter 5.2.10, differing perceptions of people regarding the importance of agriculture revealed in different investigations can be based, besides the location specificity, on different approaches of research and questioning. If for example priorities of people are evaluated without visible connection to future interventions and policies (Breslin & Delius 1996), this might generate different results than an enquiry into land issues (May *et al.* 2000b), not least because land is an emotional issue.

²⁷ In Germany for example, an increasing trend to violence, racism and Neo-Nazism can be observed among smaller sections of the younger generation. This development has its roots partly in high unemployment rates and therefore a lack of future perspectives and orientation.

This phenomenon can be observed all over Germany, but especially among the younger generation in former East Germany. Here, unemployment rates are above national average and role patterns and life prospects are missing. The parents of this young generation grew up under a totalitarian system that changed or had to be changed overnight after the Berlin wall came down. In addition, West German politicians and big business condemned and looked down on everything formerly existing in East Germany, thus further demoralising people from the East. However, high unemployment and lack of prospects can be no excuse for increasing racism: fear and rejection towards foreigners and dissenters are socially learned through imparting stereotypes and prejudices. Therefore, the value that must be promoted over and above in every country and constitution must be to respect the dignity of all human beings.

Instead of looking at South Africa with a Euro-centric and judgemental view, we in western and extremely individualistic societies could learn, especially from the existing African social networks. We might then rediscover some of the values in our own culture that have long been lost. Western societies also seriously have to question the so-called free market economy and the values attached to this system, in which everything is geared towards an increase of consumption. Furthermore, we must become aware that we cannot go on living at the expense of poorer nations – the problems we are creating, such as economic dependency and increasing poverty, will come back to us one day.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Household Food Security Interview



Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys

Introduction

We are part of the Nutrition Research Group from the University of Potchefstroom, that is doing this study about and for the people of the North West.

My name isand I am from Germany/Potchefstroom. I am doing this study/(I am helping Stefanie Lemke, who is from Germany and doing this study) to find solutions for future programmes that shall help the people in the North West Province. With me is.....(name of local fieldworker) who is from.....(name of location) and assisting me.

We would like to learn something from you about your situation concerning food - what are the things that you experience, what are the things you have to deal with, and what should be done about it.

Everything that we will be talking about is confidential. We are not going to use your names in any ways, so that your identity will not be revealed.

There are no "right" or "wrong" answers! The way you experience things is most important to us! Therefore, please feel free to say whatever comes into your mind on the following questions. If things are to be changed, it must be based on your personal experiences!

If you are unsure about anything, please feel free to tell us!

We are not able to help you in the short term. What this study aims at doing is to make information available to policy-makers and people who are making nutrition programmes, so that they can make decisions which are more in line with what it is that people really experience, and with what they need.

Thank you very much for your help in talking to us!

1. Who goes to get food most of the time?

2. Where do you buy or get food from?

(note: if people say just one place, like "shops", ask follow-up questions on the following: shops in town, tuckshop or Spaza in township, from the farm, stands on the streets, own garden, others...)

3. If you get food from shops in town,

a) how often do you go there (in a week/month)?

b) How do you get there?

c) How far do you have to go to get there?

4. Do you sometimes get food from other sources? If yes, please specify
a) Where from or from whom *(note: for follow-up questions, please keep the following categories of people/institutions in mind: relatives; friends; employer; from the church; from governmental programmes, such as school feeding scheme or others; from the field; others...)*

b) How regular?

5. Who decides, what kind and how much food is bought?

6.a) What kind of food and something to drink do you always or most of the time have in the house? *(note: referring to staple/basic foods. Follow-up questions might be necessary to give the people enough time to recall, for example "anything else?" In any case, ask "What do you eat with your pap?")*

b) Can you say why you have these kinds of food most of the time in the house?

7.a) What kind of food and something to drink do you have only sometimes or seldom in the house? *(note: referring to 'luxury food', food that is not available every day, for example only weekends, for special occasions)*

b) Can you say why you have these kinds of food only sometimes or seldom?

8.a) Who prepares food most of the time?

(note: here you can also ask a follow-up question, i.e.: anyone else, sometimes?)

b) At what times is food usually prepared?

c) How many dishes do you/the person who is cooking usually prepare?

d) If you have no water tap in the house or on the premises, how far do you have to go to fetch water?

9. In the old days, people believed that certain foods should only be eaten by some people.

a) Do you think there are foods or something to drink that should be eaten/drunk only by certain people? If yes, please say what foods / something to drink! *(note: for questions 9-12 please keep the following categories of people in mind for possible follow-up questions: infants/babies- children- youngsters- unmarried women/married women/pregnant women- men- old people- sick people)*

b) Can you say why they should eat these types of food?

c) Do you think, according to culture, that the man in the house should always get the biggest share of food/meat?

10.a) Are there foods or something to drink that should not at all be eaten/drunk by certain people ? If yes, please say what foods/something to drink!

b) Can you say why they should not eat these types of food?

11.a) Are there foods or something to drink that one should not eat/drink too much? If yes, please say what foods/something to drink!

b) Can you say why one should not eat too much of these types of food?

12.a) Are there foods or something to drink that some people should not eat/drink at times or when something has happened to them ? If yes, please say what foods/something to drink! (*note: examples can be pregnant women, menstruating women, children, death in the family...*)

b) Can you mention these instances and say why these people should be careful of certain foods/something to drink at certain times?

13. Did it ever happen that anyone in this household got sick because of food? If yes, can you say what was the reason or what food it was?

(note: keep the following possibilities in mind, for follow-up questions: tin food, left overs, food from shops/cafes, ...?)

14. When do your children/the children in this household eat during the day?

(note: ask for all times from morning till night: breakfast, at school / creche, lunch, in the afternoon, supper, in between, i.e. mageu, others...->with this question, be careful of getting answers that people think you want to hear)

15. If you have a baby/ies, do you breastfeed? Or, if children are older, did you breastfeed them? If yes,

a) for how long?

b) When do/did you usually start giving the babies solid food?

16. What do your children/the children in this household usually eat and drink for the above mentioned meals and between the meals?

(note: let describe the type of meal, drinks - not exact amount - how does the food differ from that of the adults?)

17. What do you usually eat, at what times?

(note: like above, let describe type of food/something to drink)

18. Do you feel that there is sometimes not enough food for your children/the children in this household?

19. Does it happen that you feel that your children/the children in this household are hungry and you are not able to give them food?

(note: try to get an honest answer, without the woman feeling guilty!)

If answer is "yes", ask:

Can you say how often or usually when this happens?

20. Does it sometimes happen that you go hungry?

If answer is "yes", ask:

a) Can you say how often or usually when this happens?

b) If you experience times of sufficient food and then again of too little food, how does it affect the way you eat? For example, do you sometimes overeat when there is plenty of food, to have some reserve for the times when there won't be enough food available?

21. If food is scarce, how do you manage to get enough to eat?

22. Do you think your children/the children in this household should get certain kinds of food or something to drink more often? If yes,

a) can you say what kinds of food or something to drink?

b) Why do you think they should get these foods or something to drink more often?

23.a) Are there foods or something to drink that you would prefer to eat more often? If yes, what kinds of food?

b) Can you say why?

24. Whose responsibility is it to look after the children in this household, like giving them food, watching them etc.?

25. Are you ever worried if there will be no food for the next day? If yes, what makes you worry?

26. Are there sometimes problems to get food or certain kind of food? If yes, what are the problems? *(note: if people mention the lack of money/having no job, please also ask follow-up questions on accessibility to shops in town, availability of food/certain kind of food in the township, high prices...encourage the people to say everything that comes into their mind on this issue)*

27. If you have problems getting food, what will you do first of all to solve this problem?

28. Who are the people you can go to if you are hungry and if you don't have food? *(note: let people tell first, then maybe ask a follow-up question about the following categories of people, if they didn't mention them already: family, friends, employer, church, others...)*

29. To whom are you willing to give food on a regular basis if they come and ask for it?

30. What do you do if there's no money left, besides going to your family?

31.a) What kind of energy do you usually use for cooking?

b) Do you sometimes get short of energy sources to cook your meals? If yes, does this happen often?

c) If you use wood for cooking, how far do you have to go to collect it?

32. What do you think could improve your situation regarding food for your family? *(note: like with question 26., if people mention lack of money/job, please again keep the accessibility to shops and availability/prices of certain food in mind, maybe ask follow-up questions on these or other issues, that could possibly improve the situation - i.e. "can you think of anything else that could improve your situation, other than having more money?)*

33. When do you or the person who goes to work gets paid or pension?
Please specify (monthly, fortnightly, weekly, daily), for all members of this household, as far as you can!
(note: if paid monthly: ask qu. 34, otherwise: qu. 35!)

34. If you get the money monthly, do you still have money
(note for questions 34+35: tick answers, or, if answers are different from the ones below, write them down under 'further remarks')

	pers.1	2	3	4	5
- after a few days?					
- after the first week?					
- after the second week?					
- after the third week?					
- is there still money left in the last week?					
- are you able to save money?					
<i>(note: try to get information if always, sometimes, seldom, never)</i>					
- further remarks:	_____				

35. If you/other members of the household don't get money monthly, but otherwise,

pers.1 2 3 4

- is the money finished within a few days? _____

- is there still money left when you get your next salary? _____

- are you able to save money? _____

(note: always, sometimes, seldom, never?)

- further remarks: _____

Questions 36-38:

<p>RESOURCES:</p>	<p>36. Please try to estimate how much money you are spending every month/week on each of the following items:</p>	<p>37. Who decides, how much money is going to be used for each of these items?</p>	<p>38. If this person is not here, who's the second in charge?</p>
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<p>1. House rent/bond payments/monthly paym.</p>			
<p>2. Food + Groceries (maybe it will be easier to list the different items and what amount you are buying every month/week /day) <i>(note: ask specifically for meat, fish, maize meal, vegetables, or other items that are bought seperately)</i></p>	<p>- - - - - - - -</p>		
<p>3. Energy (electricity, fuel, wood, gas, paraffin, car batteries, others...)</p>			
<p>4. Clothes (incl. school clothes, credit cards, like Edgars, others...)</p>			
<p>5. Remittances to family/ children who are living in the same location or somewhere else</p>			
<p>6. Education for children (school fees, books, other...) or creche</p>			
<p>7. Transport (for all members of household)</p>			
<p>8. Doctor, medication, medical care (average amount/month)</p>			
<p>9. Entertainment (alcohol, tobacco, gambling, others...)</p>			
<p>10. Instalments (furniture, fridge, TV, others...)</p>			
<p>11. Burial society</p>			

RESOURCES:	36. Please try to estimate how much money you are spending every month/week on each of the following items:	37. Who decides, how much money is going to be used for each of these items?	38. If this person is not here, who's the second in charge?
12. Stockvel			
13. Small Loans-Instalments (Matshonise)			
14. Others			

note: ask the next question only, if the person you talk to is not the one who makes the decisions:

39. If you were in charge, would you decide differently on some of these items/resources? If yes, can you explain how?

I would like to learn something about the people that are living with you in this household or in this yard, to get a better understanding of your family/ this household.

40. Who is the head of the household?

41. Why is this person the head of household?

42. Does this person also make the decisions in the house? If no, who makes the decisions most of the time?

43. Is the head of the household sometimes away for a few days?

note: If the person you talk to is the head of household, ask:

Are you sometimes away for a few days?

44. If yes, how often in a month?

45. What is the reason to leave the house at certain times? (like working somewhere else, looking after property elsewhere, family responsibilities, discussing family problems, going to funerals, other reasons...)

46.a)Who is living in this household or in this yard? <i>(note:use kinship-table to get the right rel)</i>	46.b)how long have you / they been living here?	47.a)Why are you/the other members of the household living here?	47.b)on what basis? <i>(note:on what kind of agreement people stay here, if they are not direct fam)</i>

(continue for more household members)

48.	49.
Who of the people that live in this household or in this yard also eat at the house? <i>(note: try to get information on the frequency: every day/ often/ sometimes/never)</i>	Do the people that live in this household or in this yard contribute to the household resources? Who? Please specify in which ways! <i>(note: anything someone does for the household or for members of the hh: like contributing with money, food, energy sources, labour - like watching/caring for children, collecting wood; others...)</i>
Person:	Contribution:

53. What is the most important issues for you at the moment, what is bothering you most?

54. What are the things that you personally would like to change, if you could, to improve things for you or for this household? *(note: this question refers to internal issues that concern the household/the members of the household, their social relationships - referring to possible misuse by certain people of household resources - , not external issues like getting a job - encourage the person you talk to to say anything that comes into the mind on this issue!)*

We have come to the end of our talk - is there anything that we have forgotten, that is important to you and that you would like to mention?

Thank you very much for talking to us and sharing your experiences with us!

APPENDIX B

Interview Guide Life History

Life history

(Interview guide – possible questions)

When you were a child, can you remember how the situation was concerning food?

- did you have enough to eat, or did you sometimes not have enough?
- did it sometimes happen that you went hungry and could not get food?
- what foods did you eat, other (more or less?) than today?

How was your food situation when you grew up, and later, (if you have own family) when you had your own family? When were “good times / bad times” concerning your food situation?

Did your food situation change after the political change – with the new South Africa?

- what are the things that changed in your life?
- how did these changes affect your food situation?
- can you say when your food situation was better – before or after the change?

APPENDIX C

Socio-Demographic Questionnaire



Potchefstroom University
for Christian Higher Education

Subject number			
Date	D	M	Y
Place			
Interviewer			

Home address _____

Sex	Male	1
	Female	2

Age			
Date of birth	D	M	Y

First Language	Tswana	1
	Afrikaans	2
	English	3
	Xhosa	4
	Zulu	5
	Other	6

Second Language	Tswana	1
	Afrikaans	2
	English	3
	Xhosa	4
	Zulu	5
	Other	6

What is your marital status?	Never married	1
	Married	2
	Divorced	3
	Widowed	4

Do you suffer from:	High blood	Yes	1
		No	2
	Diabetes	Yes	1
		No	2
	CHD	Yes	1
		No	2
	Stroke	Yes	1
		No	2

Does anyone in your family suffer from:	High blood	Yes	1
		No	2
	Diabetes	Yes	1
		No	2
	CHD	Yes	1
		No	2
	Stroke	Yes	1
		No	2

Do you take medicine regularly?	Yes	1
	No	2
If yes – what do you take?		

Do you snuff?	Yes	1
	No	2
Do you smoke?	Yes	1
	No	2
If no – have you smoked regularly before?	Yes	1
	No	2
If yes – what do you smoke?	Cigarettes	1
If other – describe		
	Tobacco/pipe	2
	Other	3
How much do you smoke?	per day	
	per week	
For how long have you been smoking (years)		
<i>Calculate pack years</i>		

What is your highest qualification?	None	1
	< Std. 6	2
	Std. 6-8	3
	Std. 6-8 + trade	4
	Std. 9-10	5
	Std. 9-10 + trade	6
	Std. 9-10 + academic	7

What is your occupation?

Do you have a job at the moment?	Yes	1
	No	2

If yes – what kind of job?

On which days of the week do you work?	Irregular (piece work)	1
	Part time (1-4 days)	2
	Full time (5-6 days)	3

How much money do you earn per month?	R0-100	1
Is it between	R101-500	2
	R501-1000	3
	R1000-2000	4
	R2000-3000	5
	R3000+	6

What is the source of this income?

Do you receive any additional pensions?	Yes	1
	No	2

How much pension do you receive per month?

Interviewer - Re-evaluate final income category	R0-100	1
	R101-500	2
	R501-1000	3
	R1000-2000	4
	R2000-3000	5
	R3000+	6

Who else contributes money to your household? How much?

Yes	1
No	2

Where do you get your drinking water from?	Fountain, river	1
	Communal tap	2
	Tap on premises	3
	Tap in house	4
	Other	5
If other specify		

Do you have access to electricity inside your house?	Yes	1
	No	2

What type of stove do you have?	None	1
	Coal/wood	2
	Gas or paraffin	3
	Electric	4

What type of fridge do you have?	None	1
	Paraffin	2
	Gas	3
	Electric	4

How long have you been living here? (years)	
---	--

Where did you live before coming here?	Rural area	1
	Farm	2
	Squatter camp	3
	Township	4