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**EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AKEHLULWALUTHO PINEAPPLE AND
VEGETABLES COOPERATIVE TOWARD SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Candidate: Nokuthaba Xolile Zikhali

Student Number: 201501869

Supervisor: Mr N.R Mofokeng

DECLARATION

STUDENT:

I, NOKUTHABA XOLILE ZIKHALI, hereby declare that, this study titled “Evaluating the Effectiveness of Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Cooperative Toward Socio-Economic Development” is my own work and effort. Where other sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged. It is submitted in fulfilment of the degree of Master of Arts in Development Studies to the University of the Zululand, Empangeni (Kwa-Dlangezwa Campus).

Signature... 

Nokuthaba Xolile Zikhali


University of Zululand, Department of Anthropology & Development Studies

Date...13/08/2023.....

SUPERVISOR(S):

I am satisfied that I have given the candidate the necessary supervision in respect of this dissertation and that the supervision of the dissertation was in accordance with the university requirement in respect of postgraduate research dissertation.

I have read and approved the final version of this study; it's submitted with my consent.

Signature... 

Mr NR Mofokeng

University of Zululand, Department of Anthropology & Development Studies

Date...6 May 2024.....

ABSTRACT

The uMkhanyakude District, which consist of KwaNibela area, where people were subjected to forceful evictions, by colonial, imperial and apartheid regimes of the pre-democratic era in South Africa, which is the focal problem of the study. Living in KwaNibela, people established agricultural cooperatives as a means of fighting unemployment and poverty through the land restitution process. This study took place in KwaNibela area of the uMhlabuyalingana Local Municipality to assess the effectiveness of the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative in contributing to KwaNibela's socio-economic development.

The study uses participatory evaluation to explore the effectiveness of the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative to pursue socio-economic development, women empowerment, and building a sustainable land-based living. Participatory evaluation is an approach that involves consulting the stakeholders of a development intervention in the evaluation process. Furthermore, the Organisation of the Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) criteria for evaluations were used for the evaluation. These were used in conjunction with the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) to measure the success of the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative by assessing the rural livelihoods of the cooperative's members and community.

The key findings of this study such as outlining the initial aim of establishing the cooperative were able to elicit a wide range of people's perspectives and experiences in assessing the cooperative's success in promoting socio-economic development in KwaNibela area. The findings further reveal that the cooperative is trying to ensure gender equity, in its operations. However, it appears that the cooperative is still headed by women, with women bearing more responsibility. While, the cooperative is having insufficient market to sell the products due to the lack of land to perform agricultural activities.

Therefore, the study recommended that Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables cooperative should successfully contribute to socioeconomic development in the

KwaNibela region by presenting opportunities and taking corrective action in response to problems, which would increase the rate of employment and market. This study suggests that the government and the banking industry help cooperatives financially so that they can expand and diversify their business operations in rural areas. Hence, Future studies should focus on researching the effective ways that the agricultural cooperatives can develop to attain good working relationship with SMEs. Overall, the study recommends that the same study be conducted and constructed in a new context, location, and theoretical framework.

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my heroic mother, Gcinekile Patricia Thwala, for all her sacrifices in ensuring the success of my research project, as well as her unwavering support during the difficult times I've faced. This woman gave me a reason to live, and I'm thankful for the life (Myself) she gave me. To my sister, Sthandiwe Nomfundo Mthethwa, for all the encouraging words she has shared with me, and to all my family and friends who have supported me from the beginning.

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Every time I felt like giving up, a phrase like "impossible is nothing" brought me back and motivated me to keep trying. This research project marked a successful milestone in my life; however, I would not have been able to achieve this milestone without the individual contributions of some people, so I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who contributed from the beginning to the end of this research project.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CO-OP	Cooperative
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICA	International Cooperative Alliance
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LED	Local Economic Development
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NDA	National Development Agency
NDP	National Development Plan
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SLF	Sustainable Livelihood Framework
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
PC	Primary Cooperative
SC	Secondary Cooperative
TC	Tertiary Cooperative

CHAPTER ONE: ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Cooperatives are the form of business that are globally recognised, they are described as group-based organisations that stress the interconnected social and economic aims of their members in most cooperative literature such as Borzaga; Bodini; Carini; and Deperi, (2014). Cooperatives are a widely used form of organization that may be found everywhere in the world, in almost all systems and domains of activity, though with varying degrees of exposure, intensity, and success (Mabunda, 2017).

A major component of the global economy, especially in emerging countries, is agriculture. Agriculture serves as the primary source of food, income, employment, and other basic requirements around the world. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that 67% of the world's population works in agriculture. It represented 39.4% of the GDP, while 43% of all exports were made up of agricultural products. Which led countries like China, the United States, Brazil, India, and Russia to provide proof of hosting highly successful cooperatives on a worldwide scale (Admin, 2020).

Cooperatives have been crucial in the fight against poverty and the country's high unemployment rate. However, the big African countries that demonstrate strong and effective cooperatives in organic farming include Uganda, Tanzania, and Ethiopia, placing South Africa at number eight out of the top 10. In Africa, Sierra Leone had the biggest contribution of the agricultural sector to GDP as of 2021, at approximately 60%. Agriculture, forestry, and fishing contributed roughly 54 percent and 38 percent of the GDP in Chad and Ethiopia, respectively. Djibouti, Botswana, Seychelles, and South Africa, on the other hand, were the African nations with the lowest percentage of GDP produced by the agricultural sector (Saleh, 2022).

In the South African context, Mbohwa and Thaba (2015) stated that the democratic government of South Africa is supporting the development of cooperatives among historically disadvantaged groups as a method to eradicate poverty and create jobs uplift

the underprivileged and level the playing field between the first and second economies are established as a means of eradicating poverty and unemployment through fairness.

Therefore, the initial development need of the Cooperatives was to redress unemployment and prevalent poverty rates, contributing to Local Economic Development (LED). As a result, the cooperative was established in 2012 to combat the rising unemployment that leads to poverty. Women became a focal point in this study due to the background of the Cooperative, which revealed that the priority was to expose women to job equity and the battle against gender inequality.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

European cooperatives were viewed as social and economic alternatives to the effects of emerging industrial capitalism when they first emerged (Borzaga; Bodini; Carini; & Deperi, 2014). However, the government will remember the 1913 forced eviction of thousands of African families from their land by the apartheid regime in June 2013. The centennial presents an opportunity for the country to reflect on the negative effects that this act has had and continues to have on our population (Admin, 2020).

This is evidenced by the country's grand plan for development, the National Development Plan Vision 2030 (National Planning Commission, 2012), holds these organizations in high regard in its pursuit of economic development (National Planning Commission, 2012). According to Dube and Mhembwe (2017), the cooperative model is perceived as a model that combats the extreme socioeconomic challenges in both developing and developed countries. The current nature of cooperatives as businesses started in Europe and spread to other industrializing countries during the early 19th century as a self-help technique to address conditions of poverty. Cooperatives were established as a reaction to re-establish economic power for the powerless. They were structured in a way to protect the interests of the less powerful members of society—workers, consumers, farmers, and producers (Zimbelman, 2007, National Planning Commission, 2013).

Cooperatives in South Africa are perceived as the drive to economy, however, some cooperatives are faced with challenges. Mbohwa & Thaba (2015) stated that the democratic government of South Africa is supporting the development of cooperatives

among historically disadvantaged groups as a method to eradicate poverty and create jobs uplift.

Part of the uMkhanyakude District, which includes the KwaNibela area, experienced the forceful removal of the local people, due to colonialism and apartheid laws such as the Group Areas Act of 1950 promulgated by the National Party regime. During apartheid era (1994) the south African government initiated land reform in south Africa as the promise of "land restitution" to empower farm workers (who now have the opportunity to become farmers) and reduce inequality (Makhado & Rudzani, 2012).

The Land Reform Process was detailed by Makhado & Rudzani (2012) and focuses on three issues: restitution, land tenure reform, and land redistribution. Restitution can be characterised as financial compensation offered by government. To compensate vulnerable communities affected by forced removal under the apartheid regime. In the past two decades of democracy land restitution rural and peri urban communities has been a resounding failure. To redress the failure of land restitution the post-apartheid government has focused on land redistribution to those communities. Furthermore, Makhado & Rudzani (2012) explained that this system acknowledges the evicted communities/people land, to authority over it is known as land tenure reform. One of the most crucial element of land reform in South Africa is redistribution. The government initially purchased land from its owners (willing seller) and redistributed it to preserve public confidence in the land market (Admin, 2020).

However, Mtshali (2023) stated that the primary goal of the post-1994 land reform initiative was to correct past inequities in the ownership of land. The land reform program has been criticized for underbudgeting, failing to implement the willing-seller-willing-buyer method of land redistribution, and other issues.

Therefore, Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Agricultural Cooperatives was initiated as a way of compensating the victims through the process of land restitution. According to Simkins (2011) and Mtshali (2023), spatial segregation was at the heart of the colonial and apartheid projects. Faced with enhanced urbanization and political formation within the black population, the colonial and apartheid regimes created a system of about ten ethnically distinct homelands (zulu homelands, transkie and sanskie,

Ndebele, Mangwana, tsonga, venda, Spedi, sotho, Tswana) KwaNibela is part of the Zulu homelands (Mbuli Traditions) to divide the black opposition and promote tribal identity and allegiances. Under the rhetoric of separate development, some 3.5 million black South Africans were forcefully relocated from 1960 to 1980 in what has been referred to as the ultimate apartheid experiment (Abel, 2016).

The National Development Plan (NDP) Vision 2030 (2013) is an entity of social development states that cooperatives, although some of them have been successful, still struggle to access the mainstream economy, especially through supplying big retailers with produce. Fuyane et al. (2016) recently confirmed that cooperatives can enter high-value markets to advance their members' standards of living. However, agricultural cooperatives frequently encounter several challenges in reaching better-paying markets, arising in part from institutional factors and the development of complex supply chains in agriculture, and that hinders the cooperatives' socio-economic development.

However, the Oman Observer (2013) outlined the solution to solve these situations by encouraging sustainable agriculture for rural development and food security and the development of agricultural small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Al Habsi *et al.* (2017) furthered the research and supported Oman Observer (2013) by ensuring that the Sultanate of Oman devotes particular attention to the development of the agricultural sector as a mechanism to increase the sector's contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), create employment opportunities for Omanis, improve food security, and sustain socially cohesive rural communities and community welfare, amongst others.

Prior to the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative being formed to address the dispossession of land. The farm was established and developed by white farmers who continued to provide mentorship, after the handover of the farm in 2015. The mentorship consisted of business acumen and agricultural production know-how, to ensure that farming enterprise continues to be financially viable.

Furthermore, the National Development Agency (NDA) in collaboration with the Department of Social Development (DSD) was tasked with the responsibility of facilitating community-based projects and programs that contribute toward the eradication of poverty with the aim of improving social-cohesion, in KwaNibela area. The NDA's intervention

assisted the cooperative to commence pineapple and vegetable farming activities that created jobs for the surrounding village and the selling of products targeted to work with the small and medium enterprises. Such as local stall markets and tourism markets frequenting the area (Nsibande, 2015).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Agriculture continuous to the backbone of rural economies throughout the uMkhanyakude District, with many households solely dependent on primary agriculture to sustain their livelihood (Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries, 2012). In spite of this rural areas show a decline in agricultural performance and activities. In a bid to implement land redistribution and increase the local economic development of rural economies .The post-apartheid government initially promoted cooperatives to increase cooperative members' production, and income, create job opportunities, promote self-reliance, and contribute overall social cohesion (Mabunda, 2017).

In its early stages the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative Farming was able to provide much needed employment and livelihoods stability. To individuals and community member at large, however in the past 10-12 years from its establishment the KwaNibela area is considered one of the most poverty stricken areas in the uMkhanyakude district (Nsibande, 2015). This is despite mentorship by the previous owners, government intervention and facilitation by the National Development Agency (NDA) and Department of Social Development in KwaZulu-Natal. Twalo (2012) adds that the success potential of agricultural cooperatives in South Africa has decreased. There have been many registered cooperatives in the agriculture sector, yet there are more reported failures than success stories (Erskine, 1991; & National Planning Commission, 2013). Therefore, this contributed to the phenomenon under investigation as the study clearly outlines the failure of agricultural cooperative caused by lack of management and poor planning, hence the study seeks to outline effective ways to contribute towards the socio-economic development.

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following sub-heading will articulate the main aim of the study of the phenomenon under investigation.

1.4.1 The Aim of the study

The study aims to investigate the effectiveness of Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables cooperatives on the socio-economic development in the KwaNibela area.

1.4.2 Objectives of the study

- To investigate the influences of Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Agricultural Cooperative on employment and job creation
- To examine the strategies adopted by Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Agricultural Cooperative towards working with SMEs.
- To understand the contribution of Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Agricultural Cooperative towards alleviating household food insecurity amongst its members and the community of KwaNibela.
- To explore the nature of gender equity in Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Agricultural Cooperative.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions are critical in this study as they aim to answer the core question of the study.

1.5.1 Primary Research question

How effective is the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Agricultural Cooperative on the socio-economic development of rural people in kwaNibela?

1.5.2 Secondary Research Questions

- What are the influences of Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Agricultural Cooperative on employment and job creation?
- How does the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Agricultural Cooperative impact boost the SMEs?
- How does Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Agricultural Cooperative contribute to alleviating household food insecurity?
- What is the nature of gender equity in Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Agricultural Cooperative?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The establishment of Cooperative structures has been regarded by government as a tool to unlock the potential of Local Economic Development of rural economies. Therefore, integrating them into agricultural cooperative would not have been a huge transition, as many household practice subsistence agriculture. The study seeks to understand some of the challenges that have rendered the agricultural cooperative ineffective. In completing the mandate of combating the factors that hinder rural people's standard of living, such as poverty and unemployment (Dube & Mhembwe, 2017).

In that sense, this study aims to give the first-hand accounts of some of the challenges faced by the existing cooperative members and the community at large. Furthermore, investigate whether the current cooperative structure has had an impact on household food security. There is insufficient literature that investigates the effectiveness of cooperative in providing adequate household food security. The insight and recommendation from the study may have the potential to improve small-scale cooperatives' ability to reach a sustainable market forces. Aiding development agencies and government sectors in developing similar projects take into consideration the local circumstances of the individuals they aimed to assist for example looking at the entire production value chain to maximise the socioeconomic impacts of the project.

Thus, the study should encourage the holistic approach in investigating social, economic and environmental issues that contributes towards the breakdown/ineffectiveness of cooperative structures in rural communities. The study highlighted the importance of using the Sustainable Livelihood Framework and OECD-DAC criteria in the study to answer the main research question of the study, this contributed to the body of knowledge as created that new way of researching the problem using the linked theoretical framework.

1.7 CHAPTER DIVISION

Chapter 1: Introduction to the study

This chapter provides a general overview of the study, including an introduction and rationale for the study. The research problem, questions, purpose, and methods employed in this research are outlined.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter two reviews literature on agricultural cooperatives and socio-economic development, the strategy the cooperative use to work with small-medium enterprises, and further looks at the contribution of the rural cooperative towards combating household food insecurity and then discusses the nature of gender equity and unemployment in the selected agricultural cooperative.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework of the study which is the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework which include natural, financial, social and human capital and for OECD-DAC criteria, sustainability and effectiveness is used in this study.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

This chapter is informed by interpretivism as a research philosophy as it explains the steps followed to collect data for the study. This chapter focuses on the study's research design and methodology. It discusses in detail the process followed to collect the data for this study, the research techniques applied, the process of analysis and the methods applied as well as the limitations that were encountered during the data collection period.

Chapter 5: Data presentation and discussion

Chapter five presents the findings of the study that is informed by the research question, objectives and the aim of the study. In this chapter, the researcher outlines the initial aim of the establishment of the cooperative, employment opportunities by Akehlulwalutho Cooperative, gender equity in Akehlulwalutho cooperative, the impact of poverty and unemployment rate in KwaNibela, poor planning and management of the cooperative, issues of water scarcity, the socio-economic development in KwaNibela Area and the plans for Akehlulwalutho Cooperative. Hence, this chapter leads to the next chapter that presents the in-depth findings of the study. This chapter further provides an interpretation and analysis of the findings that are based on the presentation chapter. The chapter gives a detailed explanation of people's experiences towards socio-economic development in the KwaNibela area and thus, leads to the recommendation chapter.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations

This chapter provides a conclusion as well as recommendations for further research, government, and possible considerations for Akehlulwalutho and other agricultural cooperatives that may learn from the study.

1.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the work and the structure shaping the study, such as an introduction and background of the study; a statement of the problem; research aim; research objectives; research questions; the significance of the study; and the description of the study area, to essentially recognize the fact that there is a huge gap between studies conducted specifically on the effect of agricultural cooperatives in rural areas based on infrastructural development and the cultural landscape in South Africa. The next chapter discusses the literature review used by this study in ensuring that its objectives are achieved.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the primary research issue posed by the study, which is how effective the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Agricultural cooperative is on the socioeconomic development of rural people, while taking into account the global, African, and local contexts. As a result, this chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the research on cooperatives' contribution to the socioeconomic growth of its members. The circumstances of cooperatives and how agricultural cooperatives contribute to socioeconomic development are covered in this chapter. The literature evaluation for this study places it within the larger body of research on rural and agricultural cooperatives in developing countries. Additionally, it includes lessons on how to advance rural economic development across the globe, in Africa, and in South Africa.

Furthermore, the literature here is reviewed and organized thematically, and that is informed by the research questions of the study. Thus, the literature review focuses on the following themes: the contexts of agricultural cooperatives, the influences of agricultural cooperatives on employment and job creation, agricultural cooperative strategies for working with SMEs, agricultural cooperative contributions to alleviating household food insecurity, and the assessment of gender equity in agricultural cooperatives.

2.2 DEFINITIONS OF CONCEPTS

Defining the concepts enables the researcher to have a clear understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

2.2.1 Cooperatives

The International Labour Organization (ILO) (2012) defines a cooperative as a group of people working together voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise. Cooperatives are guided by a set of ethical values which include honesty, openness,

social responsibility, and caring for others (ILO, 2012). This study adopted the International Labour Organization (2012) along with Dube & Mhembwe's (2017) views on the rural comparative definition of cooperative because the focus of this study is on Akehlulwalutho Cooperative that is based in the rural area, and this cooperative was established by a group of people joining voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs through a jointly owned enterprise.

2.2.2 Agricultural Cooperative

Agricultural cooperatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, cooperative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility, and caring for others (Mohlala, 2020). Agricultural cooperatives are different from other cooperatives because it produces processes or markets agricultural products and supplies agricultural inputs and services to its members. Cooperatives act of 2005 outlined that Farmers pool their resources in commercial associations called agricultural cooperatives. Depending on the form of cooperative, farmers can do this to raise their incomes, cut costs, or share risks.

2.2.3 Primary Cooperative

Primary cooperative are defined as a co-operative created by at least five natural individuals with the purpose of promoting community development and offering its members jobs or services (ILO, 2012).

2.2.4 Secondary Cooperative

Secondary cooperative, is a type of cooperative made up of two or more primary cooperatives that offers its members sectoral services and may contain legal entities (ILO, 2012).

2.2.5 Tertiary Cooperative

Tertiary Cooperative has secondary cooperatives as members, and whose purpose is to lobby for and work with government agencies, the business sector, and other stakeholders on behalf of its members (ILO, 2012).

2.3. THE CONTEXT OF AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES

Cooperatives are not a new phenomenon in rural communities; they have been part of human life in many rural areas for many years. Since the cooperatives' long existence in rural communities, they have played an important role in defining and sustaining the lives of the communities (Dube & Mhembwe, 2017). According to Candemir, Duvaleix, and Latruffe (2021), cooperatives play a non-negligible role in farm economic sustainability and the adoption of environmentally friendly practices, suggesting that both public policies and private initiatives in cooperatives may be complementary. As regards to social sustainability, there are few existing ones on the role of agricultural cooperatives.

This relates to the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) adopted in this study. For the cooperative to contribute toward socio-economic development, livelihood must be sustained, and it must be one that can withstand and recover from pressure and shocks. Therefore, there is a connection between the nature of the agricultural cooperative and the SLF because the SLF is people-centered, holistic, dynamic, and built on strengths, macro-micro links, and sustainability, whereas the nature of the agricultural cooperative is about enhancing the standard of living for the rural people by ensuring that they have access to food and employment opportunities.

Hence, the SLF identifies that households and livelihoods are continuously changing in response to shocks, stresses, and seasonality. The agricultural sector holds an important key to the socio-economic role in the sustainability of rural populations. Many governmental authorities aim at assisting and developing the agricultural sector to attain sustainable and long-term contributions to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The sustainability of the agricultural sector of cooperatives worldwide guarantees its contribution to food security, employment creation, poverty alleviation, and improvement of the standards of living for the rural populations, which are part of the country's strategic plans (Dyalvane, 2015).

Worldwide, cooperatives that contributed to socio-economic development fall within Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are Zero hunger (SDG 2), Gender Equity

(SDG 5), and Decent work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), because cooperatives are enterprises directly committed to sustainable development due to their dual nature—economic and social (Castilla-Polo and Sánchez-Hernández, 2020). The study put more focus on food security and gender equity (Harelimana & Mukarukaka, 2020). According to Rani & Yadeta (2016) conducted the study that looks on zero hunger and gender equality it depicted that Hunger looks like a woman. Women are more likely than males to report food insecurity in about two thirds of the world's countries. Sub-Saharan Africa has the worst food insecurity in the world, which affects half the population. However, 10% of women in the UK, a somewhat larger percentage than for males, cannot rely on getting adequate nutritious meals.

In the South African context, the government is promoting the use of cooperatives as organizations that could help enhance the development of small-scale farmers and other disadvantaged communities in the country (King & Ortman, 2007). Hence, ILO (2022) outlined that sustainability is one of Social and Solidarity Economy's (SSE) core values, defined as 'we do things responsibly to add long-term value'. The SDGs have four 2030 corporate targets that are in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and are committed to becoming operationally net zero by 2050 (SDGs).

2.3.1 A perspective on developing countries' challenges faced by agricultural cooperatives

Looking at (Develtere, pollet and Wanyama, 2008; ILO 2010; Schwettmann 2014) in Mabunda (2017), outlined that, since the colonial era, cooperatives have been encouraged in developing countries with the intention of reducing poverty. The British, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Germans, and Belgians brought their ideas of cooperatives to their respective colonies at that period, according to Develtere et al (2008). As a result, it is claimed that the cooperative sector did not develop as a native or spontaneous movement. Through localization of foreign concepts and ideas, nations like Ethiopia, South Africa, and Namibia created their own indigenous cooperative traditions (Schwettmann 2014).

There are approximately 100,000 farmer cooperatives in Jamaica (Government of Jamaica (GOJ), 2011), but over the years, these cooperatives have faced many challenges to their sustainable operations. The challenges include lack of management, particularly leadership, lack of adequate financing, poor cooperative integration, and an unwillingness to offer mutual support for the common good (Dube, 2016).

The Jamaican case is like that of South Africa because there is an increase in the number of cooperatives that are registered in South Africa (GOJ, 2011), this is the historical similarity which is currently affecting South African cooperatives. However, only a few are still operating. Jankie (2018) outlined that the state of cooperatives has historically been poor in South Africa. At the end of apartheid, workers' and many other cooperatives made up a negligible number of cooperatives in the country. By 2003, worker-members earned an average of R133 a month from their cooperatives (Philip, 2003).

The greatest barrier to the success of these cooperatives has largely been due to a lack of access to capital, credit, skills, and market share (Phillip, 2007). These findings are supported by Dube (2016) who found that the challenges facing cooperatives in developing countries include a lack of financial assistance, education on the advance of technology and lack of market, thus this link to barriers that Philip (2007) mentioned above hinder socio-economic development. What Dube (2016) and Phillip (2007) did not address is what causes the cooperatives to struggle after they are constituted. A lack of literature focusing on the causes has left a research gap.

Considering what Ortman (2007) in Al-Habsi *et al.* (2017) outlined, the agricultural sector is perceived as a driver of socioeconomic development, and Ortman (2007) declares that this cooperative will contribute effectively to food security, job creation, and poverty alleviation to increase the standard of living of the people. However, as much as the aim of the agricultural cooperative can be to contribute to socio-economic development, there are still problems that are not taken into consideration in the agricultural sector, such as attaining agricultural inputs and materials required to ensure that the cooperatives achieve their stipulated goals.

Crawford (2011) and Bjornlund, Bjornlund and Van Rooyen (2020) all agreed that there is insufficient information on agricultural cooperatives, however, historically, excessive inequity in land ownership in Jamaica has been the major cause of social discontent. The problem of land distribution represented a potential source of future discontent and argued that an urgent reorganization of the agricultural sector was central to improving social and economic conditions (Mnwana & Bowman, 2021).

Hence, cooperatives were for marketing crops to overseas markets, not for the improvement of the home market or the home-grown food sustainability of Jamaica. Ishemo and Bushell (2017) also concurred with Crawford (2011) that severe inequality in land ownership in Jamaica contributes to social unrest. In many ways, Jamaican women are important to small-scale farming, especially when it comes to marketing agricultural products.

According to Gregory (2022), Jamaica has been employing a cooperative strategy with small farmers cooperating, with varying degrees of success. The outcomes are clear to see. However cooperative action has a long history in Jamaica. Cooperative action refers to a group of individuals working collaboratively to solve a problem. Crop insurance requirements, financial access issues, and input expenses, such as those associated with fertilizer, are among the main issues that farmers encounter. The method that is just focused on making a profit has not worked and will never be effective or cost-effective.

The study compared the cooperatives of South Africa and Jamaica because they share many similarities and differences and are both developing countries. To that extent, both the Jamaican and South African agricultural cooperatives are struggling to reach the market. However, there is a difference in the drive that leads to their cooperatives reaching a market force. The Jamaican focus is not on improving the livelihoods; they focus more on the outside market than on growing the local economic development and contributing to household food security and employment creation (Okem & Tshishonga, 2016). Therefore, both cooperatives contribute towards the sustainable development goals as they both aimed at contributing towards local economic development.

Hence, in the South African context, many cooperatives fail due to some difficulties in reaching the market. The problem could also be like what Jamaican cooperatives have been going through, which is to prioritise the markets outside the country rather than grow the local economy. However, South African cooperatives are all about enhancing the livelihoods of rural people, which contributes to socio-economic development.

Mohlala (2020), supported the abovementioned argument and further stated that cooperatives can represent a resilient, vibrant, and viable economic alternative in bringing people together to work towards a common goal and meet their shared needs through cooperation. However, while most of the cooperatives in South Africa are largely weak or failing, there remain a few strong and vibrant cooperatives able to provide an economic boost to their communities. Hence, the study conducted by Rena (2017) found that developing and promoting cooperatives in South Africa creates a sound platform that is useful, especially in the development of rural and semi-urban areas of the country. The role of cooperatives, especially in the agriculture sector, provides momentum for rural development. Furthermore, cooperatives contribute significantly to business development in South Africa and make contributions to the country's social protection.

Dlamini (2010) further stated that the research conducted outlined that some of the cooperatives in South Africa have not been effective, successful, and functional. Mabunda (2017) confirmed that cooperatives play a significant role in the country's economic growth, job creation, and poverty reduction, and the number of registered cooperatives in South Africa has been growing very fast. However, the main challenge is that most of these cooperatives are underperforming. However, small-scale cooperative farming has led to small-scale agricultural development in South Africa as a result of the drastically increased formation and registration of agricultural cooperatives. Ngwamba (2017) confirms that some cooperatives function without proper management and evaluation techniques even though they manage to contribute to the local food nets and local economy, they are under poor management.

In summary, regarding the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD, 2011) and Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA, 2007), it is essential to

note that small farm cooperatives were not developed because of the perceived needs of the people. Agricultural cooperatives were mainly promoted as part of the government program rather than as organizations that could assist in developing the sector, thus Mtshali (2023). Hence, the abovementioned account verifies that the agricultural cooperative movement has not had a successful history in Jamaica. This can have a negative impact on your ability to reach the market easily. The researcher understands that not all cooperatives have the same goal; some are aimed at achieving different goals.

In the South African context, Mbohwa & Thaba (2020) stated that the democratic government of South Africa is supporting the development of cooperatives among historically disadvantaged groups as a method to eradicate poverty and create jobs uplift the underprivileged and level the playing field between the first and second economies are established as a means of eradicating poverty and unemployment through fairness. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focus on equity, specifically identifying those who are excluded because of their age, gender, race, ethnicity, disability, or migrant status, and their lack of opportunities, resources, and influence. Regarding South Africa, the SDGs find expression in the African Agenda 2063 and national monitoring targets, with a focus on the most vulnerable and the extremely poor through cooperatives and other sectors (StatsSA, 2017).

However, cooperatives are established for dissimilar purposes in human societies. As such, they can sustain the livelihoods of rural communities in many ways. Mabunda (2020) perceives that the main purpose of a cooperative is to permit individuals to unite and pool their resources to achieve a common goal, which would be difficult for them to achieve as individuals. Furthermore, cooperation, in most cases, happens when external factors impact a certain number of individuals. Hence, cooperatives are the best possible means of resistance against the worsening social and economic conditions affecting a section of the population. In this way, cooperatives are enterprises that aid their members to cooperate in solving social and economic problems they share.

In line with global development agendas for more than two decades, South Africa has sought to address poverty and inequality with a wide range of initiatives (World Bank,

2018). As stated in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (1994) and reiterated in the National Development Plan (NDP) (2012), "no political democracy can survive and flourish if the mass of our people remains in poverty, without land, without tangible prospects for a better life." "Attacking poverty and deprivation must therefore be the priority of a democratic government." For example, the "social wage" has been used as a redistributive mechanism of the government budget deliberately aimed at improving the lives of the poor and reducing their cost of living (Plaherson & Mthembu, 2019).

However, this study recommends that the government redefine its relationship with the cooperative sector by focusing on creating an environment that nurtures the growth of cooperatives rather than being at the forefront of the formation and support of cooperatives. This dissertation argues that the nature of the government's relationship with cooperatives is essential in changing how state institutions perceive cooperatives.

2.3.2 International policies/programmes on cooperatives

The National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA, 2005; Mabunda, 2020; and Mbohwa & Thaba, 2020) explains that cooperatives are formed by their members, particularly when the market fails to provide the much-needed goods and services at affordable prices and of acceptable quality. Considering these ideas, one can note that cooperatives empower people to improve the quality of their lives and to enhance their economic opportunities mainly through self-help projects.

Hence, ILO (2018), sees cooperatives as crucial for enhancing the living and working conditions of both men and women around the world as well as for making necessary services and infrastructure accessible even in regions overlooked by the government and investor-driven businesses. Cooperatives have a track record of generating and maintaining employment; as of today, it is estimated that they support at least 279 million jobs. They also support the advancement of sustainable development goals and the promotion of decent work.

Rena (2017) also states that the major reason why cooperatives are formed is to reinforce the trading powers of their members, help them in maintaining access to comparative

markets and capitalize on new market opportunities. As such, they can easily obtain the much-needed products and services on an economical basis, whilst at the same time, they improve income opportunities, reduce costs, and manage risks of the members.

In Zimbabwe, rural cooperatives were promoted by the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) and the NGOs in the early 1980s (Mhembwe & Dube, 2016). The scope of such launch of rural cooperatives back then was to assist people to cope with the economic, social, and environmental problems. Dubell (1981) further emphasizes that with the establishment of rural cooperatives, most governments in Africa were able to introduce new farming and marketing techniques to rural farmers.

According to Dube and Mhembwe (2017), rural cooperatives are successful in economic development because they are viewed as commercial organizations that function by a broader set of values, than those associated with the narrow pursuit of profit alone. Thus, cooperatives have been taken as business initiatives, whilst they practice economic justice by ensuring equal access to markets and services among open and voluntary membership base (Mhembwe & Dube, 2017). Therefore, this section is informed by objective one and two of the study that is aimed to understand the nature of cooperatives and its contribution towards socioeconomic development.

2.4 THE INFLUENCES OF AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT AND JOB CREATION

Globally, in countries where the cooperative movement is dynamic, cooperatives have been potential stimulators of socioeconomic development of their members and the countries where the cooperatives operate. The agricultural cooperatives have been established and promoted as part of promoting the agriculture sector in Africa. The groups of agricultural cooperatives perform various activities, like the supply of agricultural inputs, joint production, and agricultural marketing. The input supply includes the distribution of seeds and fertilizers to farmers. The cooperatives in joint agricultural production assume that members operate the cooperative on jointly owned agricultural farms. Also, there is collective agricultural marketing of producer crops, where members mobilize resources

for the transformation, packaging, distribution, and marketing of one or more agricultural products (Anania & Rwekaza, 2016).

Unemployment is one of the major challenges that limits development globally. In the African context, youths are the most affected by unemployment. In the global context, governments have failed to effectively meet the employment needs of youths. Hence, private sector intervention in job creation, such as by cooperatives, is needed. The cooperative has become one of the most viable organizations to promote employment for youths (Anania & Sambuo, 2017).

According to Stats SA (2020), the official unemployment rate increased by 1.0 percentage points to 30.1% in the first quarter of 2020 compared to the fourth quarter of 2019. COVID-19 has a major impact on the increase in unemployment. Thus, the number of employed people decreased by 38,000 to 16.4 million and the number of unemployed people increased by 344,000 to 7.1 million in Q1: 2020 compared to Q4: 2019, resulting in an increase of 306,000 in the labor force.

According to Stats SA (2022), the number of unemployed persons increased by 132 000 to 8, 0 million in the second quarter of 2022 compared to the previous quarter. The number of discouraged work-seekers decreased by 183 000 (4, 9%) and the number of people who were not economically active for reasons other than discouragement decreased by 452 000 (3, 3%) between the two quarters resulting in a net decrease of 635 000 in the not economically active population. The above changes in employment and unemployment resulted in the official unemployment rate decreasing by 0, 6 of a percentage point from 34, 5% in the first quarter of 2022 to 33, 9% in the second quarter of 2022 – The unemployment rate according to the expanded definition of unemployment also decreased by 1, 4 percentage points to 44, 1 % in Q2:2022 compared to Q1:2022.

The agricultural sector is the second largest sector that is affected by the high rate of unemployment since Stats SA (2020) outlined that the largest employment decreases were observed in the formal sector (50,000), followed by the agricultural sector with 21,000 in Q1: 2020. This has not only resulted in a declining employment rate in the

agricultural sector but has also harmed food security. This was because many rural communities were experiencing an increase in poverty, which resulted in the standstill operation of cooperatives.

Nefale (2016) outlined how the agricultural sector contributes to poverty reduction and the creation of job opportunities and employment. As a result, rural development and socio-economic development are aided. However, challenges encountered by the sector can potentially hinder the creation of jobs and employment. The social and economic decline in many African countries is indicated by high unemployment rates, hunger, and school dropouts in rural areas. These conditions have forced people to pursue economic activities such as cooperatives to recover rural economies. (ILO, 2016).

According to Donkor (2021) unemployment is closely connected to poverty in those countries with high rates of poverty because they are less developed and, therefore, they are not able to create employment. The living standards of people are extremely low because of the high level of unemployment in rural areas. Cooperatives are there in poor communities to contribute to the alleviation of unemployment and poverty and eventually to the improvement of living standards. This is true for SA (StatsSA, 2020) as well. However, many researchers, like Cloete (2015), and Tshishonga and Matsiliza (2021) conducted their studies to address the issue of unemployment and poverty, from which they obtained that the nature of unemployment in South Africa is closely related to poverty.

This study outlines the importance of self-reliance of rural people in agricultural cooperatives and the surrounding community to enable them to face and combat challenges that they come across. That will reduce the cost of the rural agricultural cooperatives and the direct interference of government, thus increasing the level of literacy among rural people. The cost will be saved, hence contributing to the local economic development. Hofisi et al (2013) agree that economic development policies in Africa must focus on issues of local self-help and community self-reliance so that both the community and the community members will be able to physically adjust and combat

issues such as droughts, welfare and the failure of top-down strategies which have forced a large percentage of African people to look inward to their resources.

2.4.1 Impact of Unemployment on the Livelihood of rural communities

A livelihood is defined as "the activities, resources, and access that jointly determine the living gained by an individual or household" (Wang, 2018). A livelihood for an individual is the ability to obtain the necessities of life, which are food, water, shelter, and clothing. Therefore, all activities involved in finding food, searching for water, shelter, clothing, and all necessities required for human survival at the individual and household level are referred to as a livelihood.

However, Mbatha, Mnguni and Mubecua (2021) clearly outlined livelihoods as a means of earning a sustainable living characterized by working, growing vegetables, vending, and fishing, among others. This brings about the fact that cooperatives are enterprises that offer employment through which rural people earn income to meet their needs and other means to some social, economic, and cultural ends. However, Theron (2008) suggested that to appreciate the employment impending in agricultural cooperatives, one must first acknowledge the intense decline of formal employment opportunities in the South African economy since the 1970s.

Hence, Admasu; Dامتie; Taye (2022) outlined that livelihood diversification could be determined by complex and diversified factors. Yet, unlike the rural areas, the situation is unexplored in the case of towns of developing economies. This is a result of the fact that there was a lack of updated information on cooperative performance and registration, as noted by Theron (2008) and Admasu et al (2022) in the cooperative growth in South Africa since the democratic era in 1994. This humiliated the Department of Trade and Industry. Since it combines findings that point to the performance of cooperatives as feedback to the government, it assigns cooperatives with job creation and employment.

Hofisi *et al.* (2013) showed that in the Amathole District, small-scale farmer's cooperatives employ 1413 people who are worker members and that the cooperatives fall short of employing managers, as happens to cooperatives in other countries. According to

Amathole Master Agri-park business plan (2015), the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD) program was created to assist formerly underprivileged members of the Indian, African, and Coloured communities in purchasing land or agricultural equipment expressly for farming.

The government offers the LRAD grant as a non-refundable kind of funding or financial assistance to aid potential farmers in purchasing land. The study has confirmed the government's assumption that cooperatives as self-help projects create employment for rural job seekers. The researcher identified a gap in terms of employment in all-districts in KwaZulu-Natal, as much as small-scale farmers proved capable of employing worker members.

2.5 STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES TOWARD WORKING WITH SMES

Globally, Oman's agricultural sector contributes significantly to the socioeconomic and developmental viability of rural areas. Various governmental entities have made several attempts to promote and expand the agricultural sector in order to generate sustainable and long-term contributions to the country's gross domestic product (GDP). Hence, the cooperatives working with Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) contribute towards socio-economic development (Al-Habsi et al, 2017).

Kongolo (2010) stated that SMEs have historically played a vital role in contributing to the economic development of many countries around the world. Chladkova and Formankova (2016) argued that to analyse the appropriate strategies of cooperatives to work with SMEs, it is necessary to first analyse the external environment and to reveal opportunities and threats that influence business in the industry. Hence, to understand strengths and weaknesses, a set of agricultural businesses are examined, and their production efficiency is evaluated.

Chladkova and Formankova (2016) further argued that creating a business strategy can be regarded as one of the most significant processes in business management, irrespective of the company size and focus of the business. The goal of a good strategy

and its implementation is to make sure that the company in question prospers and thrives in the ever-demanding competitive environment while allocating its resources effectively. A good and well-applied strategy demonstrates itself by the company's reaching profit (short-term) and increasing its value (long-term).

SMEs have made significant contributions to developing Asian countries in terms of employment and GDP growth. The importance of SMEs to developing countries has been well documented and studied. The study of SMEs, particularly in the rural economy, by numerous researchers, is a testament to the relevance of SMEs. Agrawal, Desai and Eskeseni (2014) suggested that SMEs make up 80-90% of all enterprises and generate about 50–80% of total employment in developing countries.

Small and medium-sized businesses (SEMs) are notably the forces behind economic growth. Enterprises create jobs, employ people, pay taxes, and contribute to the GDP, making up over 90% of businesses in both developed and developing economies (GDP). However, SMEs in Africa suffer a variety of difficulties in addition to their important and constructive roles, such as inadequate information, corruption, and a lack of finance, inadequate managerial skills, and a lack of access to power. It is noteworthy that the majority of African governments provide very little support to SMEs, ignoring a crucial economic driver that ought to be one of the foundations of progress (Murithi, 2017).

Therefore, the life and work of a cooperative business depend on several values and some major principles that empower cooperatives to be viable (Kumar, Wankhede & Gena, 2015). These are the principles of voluntary and open membership; the principle of democratic member control; the principle of member economic participation; the principle of autonomy and independence; the principle of education, training, and information; the principle of cooperation; and the principle of concern for the community. The principle of voluntary and open membership indicates that cooperatives are open to all people that can use their services and are willing to accept the responsibilities of membership without gender, social, racial, political, or religious discrimination.

The principle of autonomy and independence views cooperatives as autonomous, self-help organizations that are controlled by their members. Thus, if cooperatives are to enter into agreements with other organizations, for instance, to raise capital from external sources, they should do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members to maintain the autonomy of the cooperative (National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, 2016). The principle of education, training, and information, as noted by Tchami (2007), is the fifth principle and highlights that cooperatives should provide education and training to their members.

Mabunda (2020) viewed rural cooperatives as a traditional method of passing and discussing agricultural information in most agricultural societies. Such information assists farmers in their agricultural activities. As observed by Barton (2000), most of the farmers formed cooperatives to create greater profits by obtaining inputs and services at lower costs than they could obtain elsewhere. The farmers also formed cooperatives to market their products at better prices and in new markets that were previously not accessible. It is also argued that cooperatives, especially in rural communities, assist rural farmers in securing up-to-date machinery and farming technology.

Evidence has shown from Kongolo (2010) and Chladkova and Formankova (2016) that SMEs represent a huge portion of businesses in developing countries, including South Africa. In South Africa, SMEs account for about 91% of the formal business entities, contributing to about 51% of GDP and providing almost 60% of employment. The main challenges affecting SMEs in South Africa include lack of management skills, finance, access to bank credit, access to markets, appropriate technology, low production capacity, recognition by big companies, lack of interest, long bureaucratic processes, and support for the roles that small businesses can play in economic development (Kongolo, 2010).

2.6 THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES TOWARDS ALLEVIATING HOUSEHOLD FOOD INSECURITY

In the global context, agriculture and rural development are regarded as the core of socio-economic development in many developing and developed countries in the world. That being stated, the lack of strong agricultural productivity growth causes persistent rural poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa (Bjornlund, Bjornlund & Van Rooyen, 2020). While many developing countries in other regions have successfully raised their agricultural productivity, Sub-Saharan Africa lags behind. Yet, boosting agricultural productivity in Sub-Saharan Africa would not only raise the incomes of farm households, which make up more than half the region's population, it would also lower food costs for the nonfarm population and promote the development of agro-industry. That in turn would promote broader economic growth by stimulating demand for nonfarm goods and services. Higher productivity would also free up resources such as labour for the growth of other economic sectors.

For these reasons, improving agricultural productivity in Sub-Saharan Africa remains an important strategy for reducing poverty, enhancing inclusive growth, and promoting structural transformation in the region (Goyal & Nash, 2016). Rural communities have a lot to benefit from cooperative programs. Rural communities that continue to exist without cooperatives are likely to find themselves entangled in high levels of poverty. As such, Mhembwe and Dube (2017) found that cooperatives were established as a strategy to sustain the livelihoods of rural communities. People in rural communities were able to generate employment, increase food production, empower the marginalized, particularly women, and promote social cohesion and integration using cooperatives, thereby improving their livelihoods and reducing poverty. This statement supports that rural communities without operational cooperatives are likely to be affected by high levels of poverty.

Cooperatives are established for various purposes, including economic development; empowering marginalized members of communities; addressing market failures; as a defense against adverse socio-economic conditions; accessing cheap transport and

storage facilities; and purchasing inputs at affordable prices. The major roles of the cooperatives in rural communities include poverty reduction and employment creation (Dube & Mhembwe, 2017).

The Sultanate of Oman has devoted particular attention to the development of the agricultural sector as a mechanism to increase the sector's contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), create employment opportunities for Omanis, improve food security, and sustain socially cohesive rural communities and community welfare, amongst others (Al Habsi et al., 2017). To promote sustainable agriculture for rural development and food security, the development of agricultural small and medium enterprises (SMEs) has been recently encouraged (Oman Observer, 2013). This implies that there is a linkage between SMEs and rural development because SMEs prioritize the creation of job opportunities that will enable rural people to use the income, they earn to combat household food insecurity.

2.6.1 SMEs as a strategy for alleviating household food insecurity

According to the World Bank (2022), a vigorous and healthy lifestyle requires access to enough nourishing food to be food secure. Nearly a billion people worldwide struggle with food security. This could be because individuals do not however always have access to good food in their communities, they cannot always afford it, or they do not eat a wide enough range of meals to keep healthy. Food security advocates are working with government programs, non-profit groups, and local communities in the United States and around the world to enhance food security, including numerous Peace Corps Volunteers.

Small-scale agriculture is viewed as an approach that can be adopted by the poorest rural households to meet their food and nutritional requirements. The practice of small-scale subsistence agriculture is a basis upon which poor households can enhance their household food security through increased incomes and food supply, ultimately generating extra income for other household needs (Mashanaite, 2014). The study conducted showed that participation in small-scale subsistence farming by households in rural areas can have a positive impact on food security situations. The issue of food security has been critical in many parts of the developing world (Sowman and Cardoso,

2010). Food security describes a situation in which people do not live in hunger or fear of starvation within and outside their households.

Furthermore, According to the 2022 Global Hunger Index, food systems' vulnerabilities have been revealed by converging crises, and efforts to end hunger around the world have mostly stagnated in recent years. The effects of ongoing regional conflicts, COVID-19, the conflict in Ukraine, supply chain disruptions, and high and fluctuating food, fertilizer, and fuel prices, among other factors, have further damaged the world's already insufficient, unsustainable food systems. The upshot is that the world is going through its third major food crisis in less than 20 years. South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, which are regarded as serious, have the highest index scores (World Bank, 2022).

According to FAO (2010) and Kepe and Tessaro (2012), food security exists when all people have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food always to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. As food poverty levels rise, household food insecurity is worsening. Food insecurity exists when individuals do not have adequate physical, social, or economic access to food (FAO, 2010). Households with the financial resources to escape food poverty rarely suffer from chronic hunger, while poor households not only suffer the most from chronic hunger but also are the segment of the population most at risk during food shortages and famines (FAO, 2003).

The most significant aspect of the empirically and theoretically driven advancement of the concept of food security is the awareness that food security is no longer seen as a failure of agriculture to produce sufficient food at the national level but the failure of livelihoods to guarantee access to sufficient food at the household (Mohlala, 2020) Candemir, et al. (2021) note that achieving food security at the national level does not necessarily guarantee food security at the provincial, district, or household level and emphasize the disparities. Therefore, there must be a policy in place that will ensure that household food security is achieved by measuring per province rather than looking at the national level.

Therefore, poor households need to have access to economic opportunities and resources such as land, technology, credit, education, and health care if food security is

to be achieved at the household level. FAO (2003) indicates that over 850 million people around the world are classified as chronically hungry due to the prevalence of food insecurity. According to FAO (2006) and FAO (2010), the number of people without food continues to be high, especially in developing countries, accounting for 98 per cent of the undernourished. Hence, Stats SA (2022), also mentioned that there's an increase in unemployment and poverty rate in South Africa.

New evidence continues to signal that the number of hungry people in the world is growing, reaching 821 million in 2017, or one in every nine people, according to The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2018. Hunger has been on the rise over the past three years, returning to levels from a decade ago. This reversal in progress sends a clear warning that more must be done urgently if the Sustainable Development Goal of Zero Hunger is to be achieved by 2030. The situation is worsening in South America and most regions of Africa, while the decreasing trend in under nutrition that characterized Asia seems to be slowing down significantly (WHO, 2018).

Therefore, cooperatives must ensure that they strengthens their working relationship with SMEs so that they combat the high level of poverty that is drastically affecting the world, of which South Africa is one of the leading countries. Poverty is a global pandemic, and it largely affects rural communities. Hence, Mashanaite's (2014) suggestions must be taken into consideration to reduce the increasing level of poverty in developing countries.

2.6.2 Agricultural sector towards alleviation of household food insecurity

Low- and middle-income countries all over the world, particularly those in the tropics, struggle with issues including food insecurity, malnutrition, and environmental degradation (Schipanski, MacDonald, Rosenzweig, Chappell, Bennett, Kerr, Blesh, Crews, and Drinkwater & Lundgren 2016). In 2017, there were over 800 million undernourished people, and 1/3 of them were from sub-Saharan Africa (UNDP, 2020). Women and children are disproportionately affected by food instability and malnutrition, making them high-risk individuals who are also more likely to contract various diseases globally (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2020).

The agricultural sector is regarded as the largest contributor to the economies of most African countries and accounts for over 35 per cent of the continent's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as well as approximately 70 per cent of employment (Nyange et al., 2011). Despite these contributions, agricultural production on the continent has declined by more than 2.3 per cent over the last two decades (Nyange et al., 2011). As such, agriculture is regarded as one of the key sectors of the economy in most developing countries. The role of agriculture in the rural economy is generally acknowledged. However, there is still no consensus on whether small-scale subsistence agriculture is the most appropriate way to fight food insecurity in most developing countries (Mohlala, 2020, and Mbatha et al., 2021).

Hence, Praburaj (2018) emphasized that the agricultural sector contributes strategically to a country's economic growth. It has already greatly assisted the economic development of industrialized nations, and its contribution to the economic growth of less developed nations is crucial. In other words, the focus is on agriculture and other primary industries in areas with low real per capita income.

Mashamaite (2014) elaborated on what Machethe (2004) argued and indicated that small-scale subsistence agriculture can provide for food security through the increased food supply, employment creation, and increased farm income, as well as provide for household consumption. The Forum on Food Security in Southern Africa (FFSSA) (2004) argues that agricultural small-scale is an appropriate growth driver with important effects on food security and market expansion. Moreover, expanded cash crop production by small-scale subsistence farmers could contribute to the growth of rural areas through consumption, labour demand, etc., and to household food security by generating extra income to buy household food or other external farm inputs to maximize production.

The importance of the small-scale subsistence agricultural sector is acknowledged based on the contribution of the sector to the well-being of small-scale subsistence farmers through poverty alleviation, household food security, and employment at local, regional, or international levels. Mashanaite (2014) emphasizes that small-scale subsistence

agriculture is the key to food security in many parts of the developing world by reducing food prices, creating employment, improving farm income, and increasing wages.

Therefore, the agricultural sector is a large contributor to the alleviation of household food insecurity because it is mainly used for subsistence or commercial farming. Hence, in this study, the researcher agrees with Mashanaite (2014) who emphasized that small-scale subsistence agriculture is the key to food security in many parts of the developing world by reducing food prices, creating employment, and contributing to the Gross Domestic Product.

However, according to FAO (2012), experience from other countries indicates that a comprehensive approach to the provision of support services to achieve growth in the smallholder subsistence agricultural sector is essential. As a result, in the absence of appropriate farmer support programs, smallholder subsistence farmers would have little chance of escaping food poverty, and agriculture's role in creating livelihood opportunities would be limited. Furthermore, the notion that agriculture is one of the sectors that can play a significant role in household food security is also supported by Mbatha et al. (2021).

2.7 THE ASSESSMENT OF GENDER EQUITY IN AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES

Cooperatives are autonomous associations of people who join together to meet their common economic, social, and/or cultural needs through jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprises. Cooperatives can promote economic and social development because they are commercial organizations that follow a broader set of values than those associated purely with the profit motive. Because cooperatives are owned by those who use their services, the decisions taken by cooperatives balance the need for profitability with the wider interests of the community. They also foster economic fairness by ensuring equal access to markets and services for the membership base, which is open and voluntary (ILO, 2018).

Half of the world's population is made up of women. That alone constitutes gender equity. However, women in Ethiopia have less access to land, education, and financial income compared to men. Hence, their active involvement in socioeconomic development

activities is very imperative (Rani & Yadeta, 2016). Investing in rural women has the potential to accelerate growth as they represent a significant share of the workforce, manage resources wisely, and invest in children. Rural women in Ethiopia represent a remarkable productive resource in the agricultural sector. They are major contributors to the agricultural workforce, either as family members or as heads of households.

There have been recent policy initiatives to strengthen the position of women in the agricultural sector. In 2005, the Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) was launched to maintain rights such as access to land, credit, and other productive resources and to protect women from other deprivations, such as longer working days, violence, and discrimination; and in the same year, the Federal Rural Land Administration Proclamation took strides to secure women's landholding rights (Rani & Yadeta, 2016).

Bushell & Ishemo (2017) conducted a similar study to that of Rani & Yadeta (2016) with different study areas. According to Bushell and Ishemo (2017), Jamaican women play an essential role in small-scale farming, particularly in marketing farm produce. They are more highly educated than men, and gender-wise, women farmers are highly self-reliant. However, their socio-economic strength is not fully capitalized through cooperative endeavours to foster productivity on their farms. The research suggests that the potential of women farmers in rural Jamaica has not been well utilized to foster their farming cooperatives.

As of 2014, the female adult literacy rate reached 91% (UNESCO, 2017). This trend of women's supremacy in informal education attainment has been evident in urban areas as well as in the rural farming populations (Ishemo, 2005). These factors have led to a point of social and economic independence, which may be why today, women farmers in Jamaica play an important and independent role in the agriculture sector (Momsen, 2017). As much as Jamaican women can be highly educated and highly self-reliant, they experience the same problems as Ethiopian women since their socio-economic strength is not fully sustainable.

The result of the study conducted by Rani & Yadeta (2016) on the factors that determine women's participation in primary cooperative societies and access to basic resources in cooperative societies indicated that the system of male dominance in society and socio-cultural hindrance are perceived as the major stumbling blocks for women's participation in agricultural cooperatives (Rani & Yadeta, 2017). Despite the increase in women's educational attainment, they are still excluded from many upper management positions and there are high rates of domestic violence and rape, beginning with young girls at home molested by male relatives (Samms & Cholewa, 2014). Hence, it could be suggested that the occurrence of violence against women continues to contribute negatively to the level of agricultural activity in Jamaica (Rani & Yadeta, 2017).

However, despite these current initiatives, a combination of economic constraints, cultural norms, and practices continues to limit women's contribution to household food security and, to a lesser extent, impede the commercialization of the sector. Gender roles and relationships influence the division of work, the use of resources, and the sharing of the benefits of production between women and men. In particular, the introduction of new technologies and practices, underpinned by improved service provision, often neglects the gendered consequences of market-oriented growth and many benefits bypass women.

Bushell & Ishemo (2017) emphasized that, along with other small farmers, women farmers have suffered from a prolonged inequitable land tenure system, which has negatively impacted their cooperative's farming operations. Furthermore, because of their multiple activities and the vulnerable location of most of their farmland, especially on hilly terrain, women farmers cannot take immediate action in response to environmental hazards such as landslides and flooding (World Bank, 2021). Such hazards prove prohibitive for consistent and productive farming, and by implication, reduce the cooperative spirit. Importantly, the efforts of women's cooperatives in Jamaica have not been fully assessed as very limited research attention has been given to them.

Recently, agricultural cooperatives have come under dark clouds as a result of heavy competition and the pressures of open market economic systems. The challenges faced

by women's participation in the agricultural cooperative is that they are expected to meet challenges they had never expected before. Their business methods remain traditional, and they expect government support in the form of protection and subsidies. These are no longer available and will not be available soon.

In many countries, agricultural cooperatives have either been uneven or are under massive reorganization. To overcome these and other related problems, agricultural cooperative organizations, being social development agencies, should play an active role in advocating for gender equality since women have played an active and central role in development work. However, in terms of the ratio of membership of women in agricultural cooperatives, the percentage is rather low, but they have a strong influence on them through the heads of households. Certain noticeable barriers restrict their direct and formal entry into agricultural cooperatives (Rani & Yadeta, 2016).

In developing countries, the agricultural sector is an important source of economic growth, employment, poverty reduction, and food security. Women play a vital role in agriculture, yet there is little research focusing on the impact of rising investment in the agricultural sector on the role of women in this sector and on gender equality. Neglecting gender issues in agriculture can be costly, socially, and economically. Closing the gender gap by ensuring gender equality in access to productive resources would increase agricultural output in developing countries and help reduce hunger.

The research adopted some of the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 5: Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, which aligns with the African Union's Agenda 2063 goal of full gender equality in all aspects of life. Agriculture and women's empowerment are critical components of the new sustainable development goals. The goal was to address the growing issue of gender disparity in the agricultural sector. While some cooperatives provide employment, the bulk of agricultural employment is informal and/or unpaid, according to the ILO (2018), and the number of women working in the informal sector, including subsistence agriculture, is high. In Africa, a substantial percentage of women who work in agriculture do so on a part-time basis (World Economic Forum, 2015).

In the African context, inequality has always been at the centre of everything since inequalities continue between women and men in terms of access to and control over social, political, and economic resources and opportunities for participation. In employment, women dominate more than men in informal and risky work, with particularly pronounced imbalances in some sectors. Concerning agriculture, women are expected to produce up to 80% of the food in Africa. Yet, when it comes to agricultural inputs and services, the share going to women is inadequate: they receive only 7% of agricultural extension services, less than 10% of the credit offered to small-scale farmers and own only 1% of the land (Coop Africa, 2012).

Hence, the study used the Sustainable Livelihood Framework and OECD-DA Criteria as they are interrelated, and both impact the study positively. The SLF prioritizes people and the agriculture sector by improving the livelihoods of rural people by ensuring that the livelihoods outcomes meet the OECD-DAC criteria. Considering the diversity and dynamics of rural livelihoods, agriculture's importance for pro-poor growth, increasing productivity, improving market access, promoting diversified livelihoods, and reducing risk and vulnerability (DAC, 2011).

Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that there's no gender inequality because that not only conflicts with the full realization of women's human rights but is also an ultimate obstacle to poverty reduction, which is widely recognized. The latest report on the state of the food and agriculture organization of the United Nations (FAO) shows, for instance, that if women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20–30%, raising total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5 to 4%, which could, in turn, reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12–17%. 2 (Coop Africa, 2012). The study is centered on woman so objective 5 informed this theme in the study.

2.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed the importance of agricultural cooperatives, highlighting the multidimensional aspects attached to them. The impact of the Akehlulwalutho cooperative socio-economic development and livelihood of people, which is central to this study, was

analysed with its causes divided. The different rights and policies of cooperatives, women in agriculture, and their livelihood endeavours were analysed.

Furthermore, the assessment of gender equity, household food security, and socio-economic services offered by the cooperative was elaborated. The chapter ended with a discussion on gender equity in the agricultural sector. It outlined that in developing countries, the agricultural sector is an important source of economic growth, employment, poverty reduction, and food security. Women play a vital role in agriculture, yet there is little research focusing on the impact of rising investment in the agricultural sector on the role of women in this sector and on gender equality. The next chapter will discuss the theoretical framework which guided the study.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework of the study, which is the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) criteria. The sustainable livelihood framework is important in the development debate, and the OECD-DAC Criteria provide an important framework for undertaking project effectiveness evaluations. This chapter outlines a sustainable livelihood framework for analyzing the sustainability of the livelihoods of people, including the members of the cooperative and the beneficiaries who are directly connected to the cooperative. The SLF is informed by five indicators (physical, financial, social, natural, and human capitals). The framework shows how, in different contexts, that sustainable livelihoods are achieved through access to a range of livelihood resources (natural, economic, human, and social capitals) which are combined in the pursuit of different livelihood strategies (agricultural intensification or extensification, livelihood diversification, and migration) (Tham-Agyekum, 2015).

Hence, this chapter consists of OECD-DAC as a criterion that works with SLF to evaluate the effectiveness of the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative by assessing its objectives. OECD-DAC criteria measure the success or failure of a development project to assess the livelihoods of the people in KwaNibela, evaluate the objectives of the agricultural cooperative so that they align with the livelihoods of the people, and develop the socioeconomic development of the people by combating unemployment and household food insecurity and ensuring gender equity as the whole conceptualization of initiating the agricultural cooperatives.

3.2 THE NEOLIBERAL ROOTS OF OECD/DAC AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD FRAMEWORK

According to Ferguson (2012) and Mbatha et al. (2021), a livelihood consists of the capabilities, assets, and actions required for a means of living, it includes what people

need. Therefore, a sustainable livelihood can withstand and recover from pressure and shocks (pressure or shocks are things that hinder people from reaching the desired livelihood outcomes). These include shocks like drought and infertile land while sustaining or improving its capabilities and assets thus providing sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation. Ward and King (2017) stated that, they believe that life can be referred to as a job or even relate to the source of income for households. This is supported by the example they outlined that communities in rural areas depend on agriculture to reflect their work.

Therefore, Tambe (2022) outlined that the sustainable livelihood framework is a mode of thinking that offers a conceptual framework for analysis and is based on several fundamental concepts. In the 1990s, participatory bottom-up planning, a new development framework that posed a challenge to the prevailing economic growth-led development paradigm, and the concept of sustainable livelihoods arose.

3.2.1 Sustainable livelihood framework's neoliberal roots

The theoretical framework used in this study is the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) and the OECD-DAC criteria for evaluations. The SLF was introduced by Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway in 1991 as the framework that can be used as a tool or checklist to understand poverty in responding to poor people's views and their understanding of poverty (Karki, 2021). It is developed as a strategy to alleviate poverty, and it is still used by various agencies to design policies, projects, and programs in this area (Hategekimana, 2011; Ferguson, 2012).

Furthermore, Kristjanson et al. (2010) stated that the SLF includes the significance of resources, marketplaces, and further organizations. This framework aims to identify people's strengths, assets, livelihood activities, and opportunities that people have, as well as those factors that shape those livelihoods Natarajan, et al. (2022). The scholar's further states that the SLF is a wide-ranging method that attempts to catch and make available a means of understanding the essential sources and forms of poverty as it attempts to draw up the relations among various features of poverty, allowing more efficient prioritization of action at a functioning level.

To this extent, the Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development was informed by neoliberalism, and the same commission introduced the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, which makes the SLF valuable in this study. The term "sustainable livelihoods" refers to a wide set of issues that encompass much of the broader debate about the relationships between poverty and the environment. Yet in the existing literature, there is often little clarity about how contradictions are addressed, and trade-offs are assessed. According to Tham-Agyekum (2015), sustainable livelihoods are often unclear, inconsistent, and relatively narrow. Without clarification, there is a risk of simply adding to a conceptual muddle.

Considering Tham-Agyekum's (2015), this study argues that Krantz (2001) provided a helpful definition of SLF, which is also adopted in this study. Krantz (2001) argues that the concept of "sustainable livelihood" (SL) is an effort to go beyond the conventional definitions and approaches to poverty eradication. These were too narrow because they focused only on certain aspects or manifestations of poverty, such as low income, or did not consider other vital aspects of poverty, such as vulnerability and social exclusion. It is now recognized that more attention must be paid to the various factors and processes that either constrain or enhance poor people's ability to make a living in an economically, ecologically, and socially sustainable manner. The SL concept offers a more coherent and integrated approach to poverty.

Therefore, in this study, the SLF expands our understanding of the livelihoods of the poor. It categorizes and illustrates the factors that limit or improve livelihood opportunities. It can assist in planning development activities and assessing the contribution that existing activities have made to sustaining livelihoods (Serrat, 2017). Furthermore, Serrat (2017) indicated that the SLF is a method of thinking about the objectives, scope, and significance of development activities. It is based on developing thinking about the way the poor and vulnerable live their lives and the significance of policies and institutions. It aids in the formation of development activities that are people-centred, responsive, participatory, multilevel, conducted in partnership with the public and private sectors, dynamic and sustainable.

The Sustainable Livelihoods framework is relevant in understanding poverty, socioeconomic development, and the set of actions and principles that can be adopted to address the issues of poverty; and it assists in the understanding of poverty and appropriate strategies that can be employed in improving the lives of the poor (Gambe, 2015). Guided by this framework, the study contextualized cooperatives as a potential strategy to alleviate poverty and the understanding of women participating in the agricultural cooperative using the SLF in its implementation.

There are many different views of SLF, such as Cortes (2014), who defined the Sustainable Livelihood Framework as an unbiased distribution of the capital generated by economic activities, either formal or informal, which therefore results in income and food security, dignified work, and improving living conditions based on the principles of growth with equity, empowerment of the most disadvantaged people, and environmental sustainability.

Thus, Tham-Agyekum (2015) identified the gap in the implications of the sustainable livelihood framework for rural development where many households did not have enough resources to exchange for food to meet their food needs. This led to a shift from national food security to a concern with the food security and nutritional status of households and individuals. Farming systems research also provided a new perspective on the way to view the production and consumption decisions of households. Researchers then began to widen their perspective from food security to a livelihood perspective.

Therefore, the SLF in this study is used to improve South African communities since the context of Britain's initiating the approach was to fight against a similar situation to which South Africa is currently facing. Mathebula, Mawila, and Ncube (2017) argued that South Africa's rural economy is underpinned by land usage and agriculture as a tool to expand the economy and household economy. Mathebula et al. (2017) perceive SLF as Perret et al. (2005) when they view livelihoods as a source of income, and they believe livelihood diversification as having multiple platforms for attaining different incomes.

The sustainable livelihood resources (natural, economic, human, and social capitals) in the context of this study advance a neoliberal to have connections with, for example, neoclassical economics. Land, capital, entrepreneurship, and finance are the four factors of production discussed in Business Economics/Studies. New forms of capital such as social and natural were created as development studies split from neoclassical economics. Natural, social, and human capital are expanding on the original understanding of the factors of production. Land use, water use, and finance, on which agricultural cooperatives depend, once guided the factors of production (Bansard & Schröder, 2021).

3.2.2 OECD-DAC's neoliberal roots

The OECD-DAC is informed by neoliberalism as it chases development through neoliberal ends, and evaluation has been a major subject in the DAC's work. In the first Chairman's Report in 1962, DAC Chair James Riddle Berger said that Member Governments would be well advised to devote more attention to critical evaluations of the results of their aid operations and exchange experience in this field (OECD, 2013). However, Mahon (2019) stated that for those in the North, social investment provided a new rationale to counter neoliberal attacks on the welfare state, while in the South, the idea caught on in the form of conditional cash transfers. The World Bank and the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD) played key roles in the development and diffusion of the social investment agenda beginning in the mid-1990s. While hewing to a common core, their interpretations of social investment differed in important respects.

The OECD sought to grapple with the emergence of more flexible, post-industrial labor markets, marked by growing precarity, dualization, and feminization, and focused on work-family balance as a solution, while the Bank, focused on the South, emphasized social investment in very poor children to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Therefore, OECD-DAC criteria in this study measure the success or failure of a development project (Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative) to assess

the livelihoods of the people in KwaNibela and evaluate the objectives of the agricultural cooperative.

The mission of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is to promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world. The OECD provides a forum in which governments can work together to share experiences and seek solutions to common problems. Considering the DAC requirements For Nonprofit Government Organizations or countries that received international aid, Australian Aid and other tools were mostly utilized as reporting tools. The Economics of Development programme clearly highlighted the goals of these foreign countries. The OECD-DAC criteria are turned into yet another neoliberal gimmick by structural adjustment programs and poverty reduction strategy documents that donor recipient or loan recipient countries were required to provide along with other conditions. In Tanzania, the Soviet Union, China, and other socialist nations, cooperatives were thus founded to further a socialist goal, but OECD-DAC assessments attacked cooperatives and other statist projects (OECD, 2012).

3.3 THE ORIGINS OF THE UN AND THE OECD IN THE NEOLIBERAL ORGANIZATIONS

The theoretical framework underpinning this study is guided by a critique of neoliberalism. The Sustainable Livelihood Framework and the OECD-DAC Criteria are informed by the Neoliberal Theory of Economic Development. Therefore, the researcher used the above-mentioned framework to evaluate the effectiveness of Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Agricultural Cooperatives toward the socioeconomic development of people in KwaNibela.

Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway established the Sustainable Livelihood Framework in 1991 as a framework that may be used as a tool or checklist to comprehend poverty in response to impoverished people's opinions and understanding of poverty (Karki, 2021). Neoliberalism, however, hampered the cooperative's socioeconomic development because it forced the government to reduce spending on things like water,

electricity, health care, and other social programs. It also implies that the state should just not prioritize funding cooperatives by providing for instance R350 000 in the form of cooperative incentive programs and financing cooperative capacity-building incubators like SEDA, Ithala, and NYDA.

Thus, the critique of neoliberalism that impacted the study contributed towards the cooperatives capacity since the cooperatives took ownership of the success of their cooperatives despite government not intervening. However, all of these are structural adjustment of the World Bank and the IMF. However, the Sustainable Livelihood Framework was developed through neoliberal thinking as a strategy to alleviate poverty and it is continuously used by different agencies to design policies, projects, and programs relevant to such (Hategekimana, 2011; Ferguson, 2012). Furthermore, Kristjanson, Iliopoulos, and Cook (2010) state that the SLF integrates the significance of resources, marketplaces, and further organizations. This framework aims at identifying people's strengths, assets, livelihood activities, and opportunities that people have as well as those factors that shape those livelihoods (Mazibuko, 2013).

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework is used to determine how development can be pursued by communities using the various forms of capital available to them while using OECD-DAC criteria for measuring success or failure in a development project (Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative) to assess the livelihoods of the people in KwaNibela, evaluate the objectives of the agricultural cooperative so that they align with the livelihoods of the people, and develop the socio-economic development of the people in the KwaNibela area by combating unemployment and household food insecurity and ensuring gender equity as the whole conceptualization of initiating the agricultural cooperatives. The underlying reason the researcher chose this framework is that the sustainable livelihoods approach prioritizes people's daily wellbeing, and this study is based on improving the livelihoods of people in the KwaNibela area.

The role of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in shaping global and local education policies is influencing development in many countries of the South, such as South Africa. . According to Kofod, Louis, Moos, and van Velzen

(2012), the OECD has become one of the most influential transnational organizations in education. Hence, OECD-DAC criteria are the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, program, or policy in its design, implementation, and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability (OECD, 2013).

Neoliberal thinking increased engagement with concepts of globalization, sustainable development, post-development, grassroots approaches, and right-based development. Therefore, the Sustainable Livelihood Framework is informed by neoliberalism. Theorists such as Deepak Lal (1983) and Bela Balassa (1971, 1981) focused on the classical economic theories of Adam Smith and others regarding the invisible hand of the market.

According to neoliberal theorists, the path to greater economic growth and, consequently, higher levels of well-being for all was achieved by reducing state intervention and allowing the market to set prices and wages. In this view, neoliberalism is thought of as an entirely new paradigm for economic theory and policymaking: the ideology behind the most recent stage in the development of capitalist society and, at the same time, a revival of the economic theories of Adam Smith and his intellectual heirs in the nineteenth century (Lie & Thorsen, 2014).

The SLF has various features (Krantz, 2001; MacFadyen and Corcoran, 2002; Morse, McNamara and Acholo, 2009; DFID, 2010). Firstly, as a framework for analysis, it draws attention to the full range of assets that people draw upon to compose a livelihood, namely:

Human capital represents the skills, knowledge, ability to work, and good health that together enable people to pursue different livelihood strategies and achieve their livelihood objectives. At a household level, human capital is a factor of the amount and quality of labour available; this varies according to household size, skill levels, leadership potential, health status, etc.

Natural capital is the term used for the available natural resources and services like nutrient cycling and erosion protection that are useful for livelihoods. However, for this

study, natural capital that is considered is land, water and soil to ensure economic development took place through agricultural cooperative.

Financial capital represents the financial resources that people use to achieve their livelihood objectives, like the availability of cash or equivalent, which enables people to adopt different livelihood strategies.

Physical capital comprises the basic infrastructure and producer goods needed to support livelihoods. This involves the infrastructure of the physical environment that helps people meet their basic needs and be more productive. For instance, the following components of the infrastructure are usually essential for sustainable livelihoods: affordable transport; secure shelter and buildings; adequate water supply and sanitation; clean, affordable energy; and access to information (communications).

The irrigation system is the physical capital that the cooperative is using. Water scarcity is a problem for many agricultural cooperatives. However, production of dry land crops is restricted in the majority of South Africa due to the water shortage brought on by low and irregular rainfall and high evaporative demand. In these circumstances, irrigated agriculture offers a desirable substitute. Irrigation is the process of applying water to a surface artificially in order to increase plant growth. It lessens or eliminates water shortage as a constraint on plant growth, enabling the cultivation of crops in climates where doing so would be impossible and boosting crop yields in conditions where plant-available soil water limits yield for part or all of the growing season (Averbeke, Denison & Mnkeni, 2011).

Averbeke et al. (2011) also noted that in terms of land area and farmer participation, the 302 smallholder irrigation schemes discovered in South Africa and knowledge on South African smallholder irrigation schemes produced by the Water Research Commission (WRC) over a period of close to 20 years are of secondary importance.

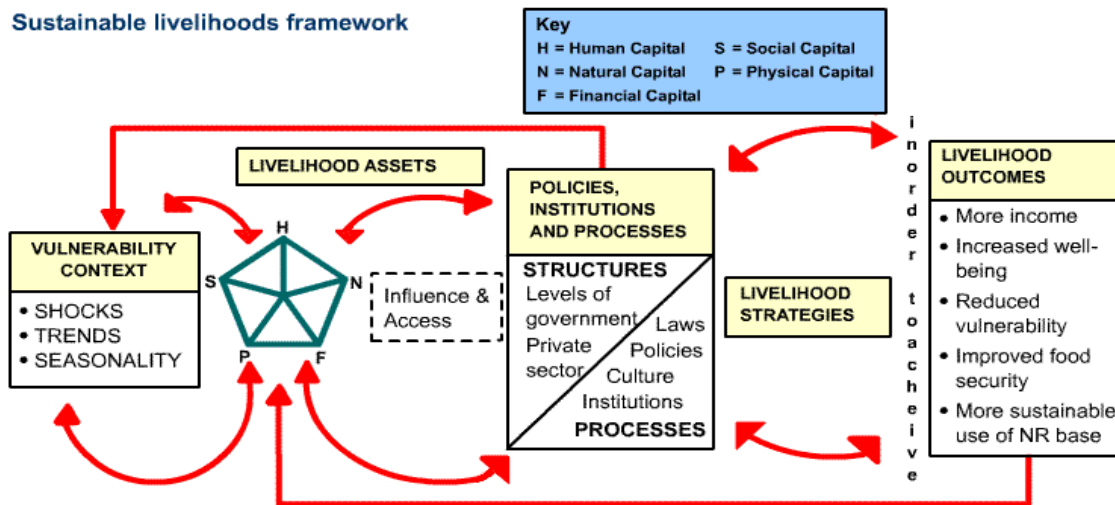
Social capital, in the context of the sustainable livelihood framework, is taken to mean the social resources upon which people draw in pursuit of their livelihood objectives. These are developed through networks and connectedness that increase people's trust and

ability to work together and expand their access to wider institutions, such as political or civic bodies. These are the SLF's most significant features that helped analyze the effectiveness of the cooperative under investigation. Considering the study's natural, financial, and social capital as an illustration, consider the cooperative's access to agricultural machinery, water (irrigation scheme), and energy.

The Native Land Act was passed in 1913, although the history of White colonial land dispossession dates back to the growth of Dutch colonial settlements in the Cape. Dispossession of land and livestock led to battles between the colonial settlers and the Khoikhoi, San, Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, and a number of other ethnic groups (Moore, 2018). Hence, agricultural land act in this study is considered as it refers to a separate unit of land with its own cadastral description as registered in the deeds registry. The Act was aimed at preventing agricultural land from being rendered economically unviable for the purpose of farming, as a result of uncontrolled subdivision. To achieve this, the legislature curtailed the common-law right of landowners to subdivide their agricultural property (Moore, 2018).

Since, the SLF prioritises the livelihoods of people land act and water act are very essential in this study as it is people centred. Looking at the water act, it aims to provide fundamental reform of the law relating to water resources, repeal certain laws; and provide for matters connected with. Hence, the framework below was established to make the understanding of livelihoods much easier. The sustainable livelihood framework was adopted by the British Department for International Development (DFID) (Moore, 2018).

Figure 3.3: The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework



Source: DFID (2000)

The diagram above is the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework that is informed by five indicators, namely, human, social, natural, physical, and financial capital. This diagram consists of the livelihood assets, livelihood strategies, and livelihood outcomes, which simultaneously play a vital role in each other. Hence, there are policies such as institutions and processes that are undergone to ensure that the SL outcomes are achieved, and the vulnerability context is taken into consideration as outlined in figure 3.3.

This framework impacts this study positively because this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Cooperative in improving the socio-economic development of rural people. The framework is made up of five types of capital as outlined in figure 3.3, and the livelihood outcomes of the SLF are aligned with the objective of this study. Therefore, this framework impacts the study positively since it aids in achieving the objective of the study, thus enabling the researcher to contribute to the recommendations that develop and enhance the socio-economic development of people in KwaNibela. With the fact that SLF determined how the development could be pursued by the communities using the various forms of organizations available to them thus contributing towards socioeconomic development.

Small-scale cooperatives are initiated by the poorest households in South Africa as a strategy to combat poverty, enhance self-reliance and contribute to local economic development (LED). However, these cooperative members and the community face many challenges in their efforts to increase income and reduce food insecurity (Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries, 2012). This appeared to be insufficient to fulfil their attempts, which led to the establishment of formal income-generating projects (cooperatives) and their implementation with the use of the Sustainable Livelihood framework as the strategy for poverty reduction.

The women are key part of the study. The reason for focusing on this target group is that Maleko and Masuya (2015) stated that women's contribution to economic development has been an effort that has been given the credit it is supposed to be awarded, and women's role has been downgraded to the passive responsibilities of domestic tasks. These authors further state that such incidences occur because men understand the significant part that women play in food production, the generation of income, and control of assets both locally and nationally.

Since financial assets are in the form of State subsidies, there is a strong relationship between the SLF and cooperatives. One example is the R350 000 cooperative incentive program that the Department of Small Business Development has given to cooperatives. The province Department of Agriculture and Rural Development oversees irrigation water access, and the Department of Water and Sanitation implements it. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is providing cooperatives with tractor services while they are engaged in cultivation while evaluating cooperatives using the SLF.

While, there are irrigation system that the cooperatives are using to combat water scarcity. The department of rural development and agriculture assisted in maintaining the livelihoods of rural people through the irrigation schemes. Since South Africa experienced irregular rainfall and high evaporative (Averbeke et al, 2011). Therefore, the SLF is used in this study as assessment tool of cooperatives. SLF is essential to the development of cooperatives because it places more emphasis on the crucial capitals (social, financial, and natural) to ensure that cooperatives' livelihood outcomes more income, more

wellbeing, and less vulnerability—are attained, enhance food security and utilize NR base in a more sustainable manner. Consequently, SLF have the strongest connection to cooperatives.

3.3.1 The approach is people-centred and participatory

The sustainable livelihoods framework is about people, so livelihoods analysis is grounded in understanding how people make their living. It uses participatory methods to gather data and helps as a framework to choose which participatory livelihoods assessment (PLA) methods to use at the appropriate time and how to frame key questions (Natarajan; Newsham; Rigg & Surhaediman, 2022). Social development's efforts and value are to focus on people and their involvement in issues that affect them. Mazibuko (2013) states that addressing poverty reduction should focus on what people have, their strategies, environment, and abilities to adapt. While at that point, Tao, and Wall (2009) confirm that the SLF is a people-centred paradigm because it puts more focus on individuals' abilities and information systems.

Hence, concentrating on the rural people's perceptions and experiences of involvement in the Akehlulwalutho cooperative to reduce poverty is important. The study used a sustainable livelihood framework to understand their experiences, challenges, and recommendations on facilitating factors based on the sustainability of cooperatives. This will benefit them and maximize their profits and long-term goal attainment. This principle reveals that owners of the means of production should focus on identifying issues that affect them (Mazibuko, 2013; DFID, 2010); and they should participate by challenging the accountability of cooperatives because cooperatives need to be responsive to the needs of the general membership who are the owners of the production.

In that regard, cooperatives are viewed by different scholars in both developed and developing countries as the main strategy and activity for poverty reduction as it contributes to the countries' economies and local economic development (LED). Furthermore, Khumalo (2014) adds that the establishment of cooperatives is a necessary business strategy that would meaningfully contribute to local economic development and

employment creation, among others. The sustainable livelihood approach acknowledges that the disadvantaged themselves are usually more familiar with their conditions and desires; hence, the poor should be included in the structuring of policies and projects aimed to develop their livelihoods (Krantz, 2001; Macfadyen & Corcoran, 2002; Perry & Grace, 2009; Kristjanson et al., 2010). Below are the SLF approaches that relate to this study.

3.3.2 Holistic analysis leads to targeted interventions

The approach promotes holistic analysis, with a focus on identifying factors within and outside of households that have a positive or negative impact on livelihoods. However, it does not assume that one must address all issues at once. Rather, based on an analysis of the most important influences on livelihoods, one can select specific, focused interventions while understanding how these relate to other issues that are not being addressed. The livelihoods framework can be useful to organizations that focus on specific sectors like health or natural resource management, and it also creates opportunities for organizations that have different sectorial focuses to work together in cooperation or partnership. This helps to increase the impact of development interventions. The holistic analysis allows us to identify the most strategic interventions in a situation to achieve the best result (Escandon, 2020).

3.3.3 The Approach is Sustainable

Gambe (2015) emphasizes that it is significant to analyze any livelihood activity concerning its ability to sustain the lives of the people over some time. The SLF allows people to move out of the poverty line through participation, by using their capital and responding to what they need for their development (Mazibuko, 2013). Cooperatives as a sustainable livelihood strategy when implemented according to co-operatives' principles are important in addressing poverty situations in households. For instance, cooperatives are not only restricted in dealing with individuals but also communities and sustaining the human, social, financial, and physical capital of their members as well as the community (Raniga, 2016).

The literature in support of this study further points out how the empowerment of women is informed by the activities which are adopted by women in response to their vulnerability; and by how they direct their intervention in creating a sustainable life with the available capital within the community (financial, social, human, natural, and physical) women have access to (Hategekimana, 2011). In support of this statement, the SLF (Macfadyen & Corcoran, 2002) provides a conceptual framework that allows the main factors that affect people's livelihoods to be considered in the context of developing policies for poverty reduction. The SLF aims to empower the poor and help people achieve long-lasting improvements when assessing impacts using self-defined indicators.

According to DTI (2012) engaging in an integrated change with all local entities participating in the country's battle to develop strong, self-sustaining cooperative movements. As a result, the foregoing debates are important to this study since they define how to employ the sustainable livelihood framework while also connecting it to the Akehlulwalutho cooperative and the study's goal. The sustainable approach, for example, is concerned with goals one and three. The holistic analysis leads to intervention relating to objective two, and the people-centred approach relates to objectives one, three, and four of the study.

3.4 THE ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE) CRITERIA FOR EVALUATIONS

OECD-DAC criteria are the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, program, or policy, its design, implementation, and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability (OECD, 2013). The study uses an OECD-DAC criterion as a framework to evaluate the effectiveness of the Akehlulwalutho cooperative objectives towards achieving socioeconomic development for its members and beneficiaries in KwaNibela.

The OECD-DAC criteria are the internationally accepted standard/best practice, and they are used to measure the success or failure of the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and

Vegetables Cooperative. Hence, the OECD (2013) stated that the OECD development assistance committee is a unique international forum of many of the largest providers of aid, including 30 members. It is also at the forefront of efforts to understand and help governments respond to new developments and concerns, such as corporate governance, the information economy, and the challenges of an ageing population (OECD, 2010).

This study used the OECD-DAC criteria to evaluate whether the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Agricultural Cooperative is succeeding or waning toward achieving the socio-economic development of its members and beneficiaries. The OECD-DAC criteria are considered when the researcher evaluates whether the objectives of the cooperative were effective in enhancing the socio-economic changes in the Kwanibela area. This is done by checking whether the Akehlulwalutho objectives align with the state the KwaNibela community is currently in by evaluating its relevance and effectiveness. To obtain the effectiveness of the cooperative, both relevance and efficiency are considered.

The OECD-DAC criteria also aid in evaluating the agricultural cooperative during its implementation and monitoring process to answer the main research questions of this study, which is whether the selected cooperative is succeeding or failing in the socio-economic development of the KwaNibela people. The OECD-DAC ethics are ensuring quality and accountability. The study, therefore, uses the OECD-DAC criteria principle to track the viability and functionality of the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Agricultural Cooperative towards the socioeconomic development of the cooperative members and the surrounding communities. This is done by checking the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Agricultural Cooperative's effectiveness (relevance and efficiency) towards its objectives.

According to the Department Assistance Committee (DAC) (2011), the OECD is a unique setting where the governments of 30 democracies work together to address the economic, social, and environmental challenges of globalization. The revised evaluation criteria, OECD (2019), outlined that the Organization for Economic Cooperation and

Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) first laid out the evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability) in 1991 OECD-DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance, and later defined the terms in the 2002 Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management.

These five criteria have come to serve as the core reference for evaluating international development and humanitarian projects, programs, and policies. Beyond development cooperation, evaluators and commissioners also use the criteria in other areas of public policy. Therefore, the importance of using the OECD in this study is that it is the baseline to understand and assist the government in responding to social, economic, and environmental challenges. Thus, promoting pro-growth through the agriculture sector is a must. The organization provides a setting where governments can compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practices, and work to coordinate domestic and international policies.

Figure 3.4 OECD-DAC Criteria



Source: OECD-DAC 2009

The diagram above illustrates the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria component. However, the focus of this study is on the effectiveness component. This criterion is about measuring the success or failure of the development project. In this case, which is the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Agricultural Cooperative, this is achieved through measuring the objectives of the project.

3.4.1 Relevance

According to OECD-DAC (2022) relevance is the extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries, global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change. Therefore, the researcher analyses the objectives of the cooperative to determine the level to which the objectives are in correspondence with the needs and significance of the cooperative members, surrounding communities, and the relevant stakeholders.

The Austrian Development Agency (2009) further explained the importance of relevance and stated that the extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities, and partner's and donor's policies. Samoff (2022) supported The Austrian Development Agency (2009) and outlined that the review of the relevance criterion begins with Sida's specification: "The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries' global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change. That specification itself creates several immediate application challenges. First, Sida, understands relevance as "doing the right things.

3.4.2 Efficiency

This criterion offers the chance to determine whether an intervention's resources can be justified by its outcomes, which is extremely important from both a practical and political standpoint. For various stakeholder groups, including governments, civil society, and beneficiaries, efficiency is important (OECD-DAC, 2022). The study used efficiency to determine whether the Akehlulwalutho cooperative used the appropriate resources to achieve the objectives a measure of how effectively resources and inputs (such as funds,

expertise, time, and so on) are converted to results (Austrian Development Agency, 2009). According to Palenberg (2011), the literature on the economic concepts of efficiency is extensive and can be consulted by evaluators to decide on which methods and tools are most appropriate given the evaluation at hand.

3.4.3 Effectiveness

Effectiveness helps to determine how well an intervention is or has performed in reaching its goals. It can shed light on whether an intervention achieved its intended goals, how this was done, what components were important in this process, and whether any unexpected consequences occurred (OECD-DAC, 2022). The researcher used effectiveness to track the progress of the cooperative by ensuring whether the resources used produced the expected outcomes and if the objectives were achieved. The extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance, is used as an aggregate measure of (or judgment about) the merit or worth of an activity, i.e. the extent to which an intervention has attained, or is expected to attain, its major relevant objectives efficiently in a sustainable approach and with a positive institutional developmental impact (Austrian Development Agency, 2009).

Furthermore, OECD-DAC (2022) emphasised on what ADA (2009) outlined that evaluating effectiveness may involve establishing observable changes in the target group or environment over the intervention's implementation as well as establishing causality of the observed changes at different levels, i.e. showing that the changes were caused by the intervention or that the intervention contributed to the changes as opposed to other environmental factors or, alternatively, another intervention.

3.4.4 Sustainability

Noltze, Euler & Verspohl, (2018) explained that sustainability allows evaluators to determine if an intervention's benefits will last financially, economically, socially and environmentally. While the underlying concept of continuing benefits remains, the criterion is both more concise and broader in scope than the earlier definition of this criterion. Sustainability encompasses several elements for analysis financial, economic, social and environmental and attention should be paid to the interaction between them.

Therefore, for the success of cooperatives in South Africa sustainability elements (financial, economic, social and environmental) must be considered to ensure that cooperative contributes towards socioeconomic development.

The Austrian Development Agency (2009) outlined that sustainability is the continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed. The probability of continued long-term benefits. The resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time. Therefore, at this point, the researcher will outline the extent to which the benefits of the cooperative can or will continue beyond the life span of small-scale cooperative farming. Hence, the study put more focus on economic (financial) and social (organizational, institutional, members, and community) sustainability, wherein in the economic aspect the focus is on the availability of financial and other resources beyond the project's funding, and in the social aspect the focus is on the functionality of the cooperative even when some members decide to resign or the environment changes, or when the cooperative changes the patterns of social behaviour.

3.4.5 Impacts

The impact addresses the ultimate significance and potentially transformative effects of the intervention. It seeks to identify social, environmental, and economic effects of the intervention that are longer-term or broader in scope than those already captured under the effectiveness criterion. Beyond the immediate results, this criterion seeks to capture the indirect, secondary, and potential consequences of the intervention. It does so by examining the holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms and their potential effects on people's well-being, human rights, gender equality, and the environment (OECD, 2019). This study, therefore, added equity as the criterion in the OECD-DAC evaluation component specific to this study. It is used in this study to outline the role of women's participation and their importance in the agricultural sector by promoting gender equity.

Equity is therefore associated with objective number four of this study because it aims to find out the nature of gender equity in Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable

Agricultural Cooperative. The extent to which a project targets the most marginalized and disadvantaged "without discrimination, bias or favouritism" (UNICEF, 2010). For instance, taking into consideration people with disabilities and women who have been oppressed to assess the level of equity in the cooperative.

The above ideas are used in this study to shape the study and achieve the objectives of the study. Hence, all these criteria impact the study positively as they relate to the objectives of the study and answer the questions of the study using the OECD-DAC criteria. South Africa is part of the OECD countries, thus bound by its resolutions. Moreover, the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative's objectives were consistent with how the OECD defines and pursues development. Therefore, it is significant to evaluate whether the cooperative was able to achieve what it set out to achieve by using the standards it wants to achieve for each of the objectives.

3.5. THE VALUE OF USING THE OECD/DAC CRITERIA AND SLF TOGETHER IN THIS STUDY

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework and the OECD-DAC criteria underpinning this study are interrelated and both impact this study positively because the SLF prioritizes people and the agriculture sector by improving the livelihoods of the rural people by ensuring that the livelihood outcomes mentioned in figure 3.2 are achieved. On the other hand, the OECD-DAC criteria understand the diversity and dynamics of rural livelihoods; agriculture's importance for pro-poor growth; increasing productivity and improving market access; promoting diverse livelihoods; and reducing risk and vulnerability (DAC, 2011). The SLF and OECD-DAC are aligned with all the objectives of this study and the aim of the study because both the SLF and OECD-DAC criteria are people-centred criteria that are all about improving the livelihoods of the people.

Since then, the research has focused on determining the effectiveness of the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative in terms of socioeconomic development. In this study, both the OECD-DAC standards and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework are crucial. As stated in section A, the study used the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2 and 5 to track the cooperative's performance in terms of socioeconomic development in connection to the topic under consideration. As a result, the use of this theoretical framework and developmental criteria in this study is essential since it will aid in the achievement of all the study's objectives.

Thus, guided by the Sustainable Livelihood Framework and the OECD-DAC Criteria as a method of evaluating the effectiveness of Akehlulwalutho Cooperative to alleviate poverty in KwaNobela. KwaZulu-Natal is one of the provinces that is largely affected by poverty. The sustainable livelihood framework assists this study by assessing the factors that pressurize or enhance livelihood opportunities and illustrating how they relate to one another. The essential view is that different households have different access to livelihood assets, and the SLF expands the explanation by using the OECD-DAC five evaluation criteria to assess the Akehlulwalutho interventions towards household food insecurity and sustainable development.

3. 6 CONCLUSION

From the above review of relevant literature, it is evident that various authors and different policies view cooperatives in general as the best initiative currently that is community-based and has the greatest chance to uplift vulnerable and poor communities above the poverty line, thus contributing to socio-economic development. This is evident in different contexts, starting from the local to the global level. With regards to the policies and legislation that are in place in South Africa to guide the implementation of cooperatives as a poverty reduction strategy, self-efficiency, self-reliant, democracy, equity, and equality are emphasized as this permits all members of the community to be/take part in economic development strategies and initiatives that are put in place without any discrimination. The establishment of cooperatives, according to the literature, encourages collectiveness and cohesiveness within the community rather than individualism. Both SLF and OECD-DAC are the appropriate strategies used to evaluate the effectiveness of

Akehlulwalutho Cooperative towards socio-economic development. This chapter takes us to the method that was used in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Bahati (2021), research methodology is the scientific study of research methods. As such, the Research Methodology chapter focuses on explaining the philosophy and scientific exposition of research methods guiding the study that researchers must follow to do their research. It shows how these researchers formulate objective, as well as how they present their conclusions based on the data gathered during the research period. To evaluate the effectiveness of the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperatives on the socio-economic development of individuals in KwaNibela area, this study adopts the qualitative research approach. The qualitative approach is linked to the theoretical framework of the study described above, as this approach prioritizes people's experiences and seeks to bring out the voices of the participants.

The qualitative approach is used to address “why” and “how” questions of human behaviour to deeply understand people's thoughts and experiences. This approach then is appropriate for this study as it seeks to understand the views of Akehlulwalutho cooperative's members and the community within which they work (Bhandari, 2020). This chapter comprises the study's methodology, research design, the context of the population studied, sample techniques, data collection instruments, data analysis, the study's limitations, and ethical considerations. The researcher begins by briefly explaining the research paradigms; the rationale of the methodology; research designs; data collection instruments; sampling methods; sampling sizes; data presentation; and data analysis.

4.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA

The Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative is situated in Hluhluwe (KwaNibela area) in the Big Five Hlabisa Local Municipality. The Big Five Hlabisa Local Municipality is one of the 4 local municipalities (Mtubatuba, Jozini, uMhlabuyalingana and

Big Five Hlabisa) constituting the uMkhanyakude District Municipality of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. The municipality was named after the Big Five animals that are found in the game reserves that are in the area, for example, the Hluhluwe Game Reserve, Mfolozi Game Reserve and the Phinda Game Reserve (The Big Five Hlabisa IDP, 2020/2021)

The KwaNibela area is deeply rural, with almost its entire population living in traditional authority areas. Several nature reserves are located within the municipality, including the Isimangaliso Wetland Park, which is a World Heritage Site. During the construction of the above park, some of the community members were relocated from their place of origin to develop the area. This led to people in KwaNibela to lose their sense of belonging, according to Ferguson (2012), these displacements were informed by apartheid era right after ending the colonial period of the British government in South Africa

Longley (2021) defined Neoliberalism as a political and economic policy philosophy that emphasizes the importance of free market capitalism while attempting to shift economic power from the government to the private sector. As a result of excessively empowering corporations and expanding economic inequality, neoliberalism has influenced the displacement of KwaNibela residents. The free market, on the other hand, is founded on the principles of economic liberty and little government intervention in private economic transactions. As a result, the study's research problem is influenced by neoliberalism. Broadly, looking at game reserves they are owned by the government however Akehlulwalutho cooperative is owned by people since the cooperative was granted to them through the process of land restitution.

As much as the state owns these game reserves, their main objective is to attract tourists, which is more market-oriented, rather than to share benefits with the communities that paved the way for their establishment. With the exception of Hlabisa Mpembeni, some of these communities do not own or utilize these game reserves. However, in this case, the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative is owned by the group of people which was established to alleviate the high unemployment rate in kwaNibela and fight against poverty. Yet, this area is still regarded as a poverty-stricken area, which is the

case in this study. This raises the question of whether this cooperative is an effective strategy in ensuring that its aim and objectives are achieved or not achieved.

Figure 4.2 Map of the Study Area



Source: The Big Five Hlabisa Municipality IDP (2020/2021)

4.3 RATIONALE FOR THE METHODOLOGY

Research Methodology refers to the study of the tools (methods) in research. The nature and use of these tools are determined strongly by the research philosophy and paradigm of the researcher Gannon, Taheri, & Azer (2022). This study is qualitative. As this study is social constructivist, understanding people's thoughts and experiences are key. As such, their tools and designs include interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. This study took a qualitative stance because qualitative research is naturalistic; it attempts to study the everyday lives of different groups of people and communities in their natural settings.

Therefore, qualitative is taken into consideration in this study because the researcher is interested in thinking data extracted using interviews and focus group discussions. Members of the cooperative shared with the researcher their knowledge of the restitution projects, how the cooperative is managed, its effectiveness according to each of the components of the DAC criteria as well the various assets (SLA) they possess in order to be effective. All of these narratives were not possible to extract using questionnaires but became possible using interviews and focus group discussions.

Hence, Trent & Cho (2020) supported the above-mentioned statement and pointed out that qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter; it attempts to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. According to Tenny, Brannan and Brannan (2022), "qualitative research aims to explore and to discover issues about the problem at hand because very little is known about the problem." As a result, the qualitative approach is appropriate for this study because the researcher was able to explore the effectiveness of the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative.

Thus, the use of qualitative research in this study offers a unique advantage as opposed to quantitative inquiry. The biggest advantage is the ability to probe into responses as needed and obtain more detailed descriptions and explanations of experiences, behaviour, and beliefs. This is how the why and how questions are answered. Hence, the qualitative analysis enables the researcher to follow up with a subsequent probe as the data collection proceeds with our line of inquiry, more and more details about the participants' perceptions and research further into specific helpful solutions are obtained (Mohajan, 2018).

As a result, the qualitative research method used in this study focuses on describing individual experiences and beliefs, with the goal of the study being to assess people's honest opinions on the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable cooperative's contribution to KwaNibela's socio-economic development. Hence, in-depth interviews and focus groups were considered in this study to enable the open-ended questions. As a result of these methodologies, the study gained a degree of flexibility, allowing it to

achieve the study's main aim and objectives, including adapting to the changing context in the data collection site.

4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

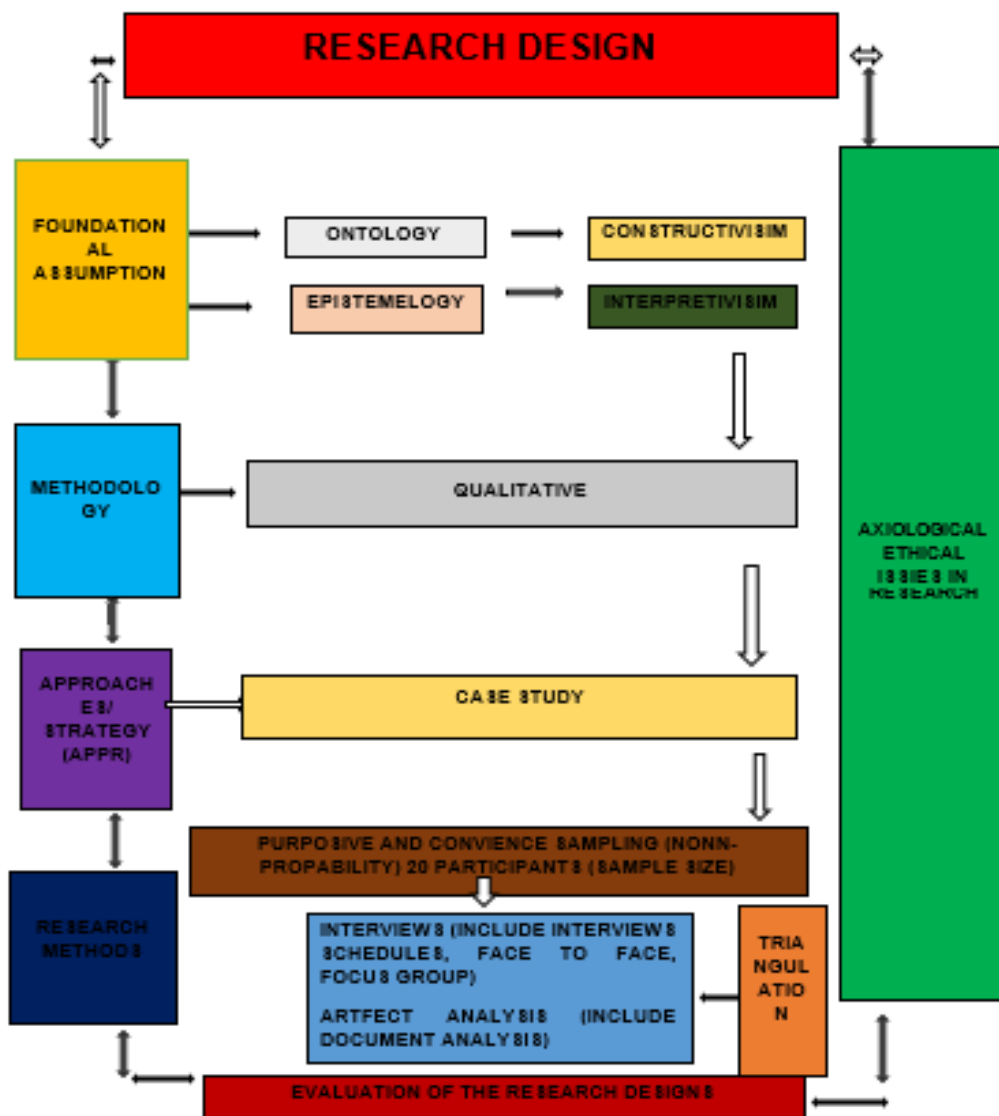
The research design aims to establish a suitable framework for a study. The decision to be made about research is a crucial one in the research design process since it determines how relevant information for a study will be gathered. The research design process, on the other hand, entails a slew of interconnected judgments. This chapter demonstrates how the final research result is acquired following the study's objective. As a result, it goes over the research methods that were used during the study. It covers the entire study's research technique, from the research strategy to the dissemination of results (Sileyew, 2019).

The study uses a descriptive and exploratory designs since McCombes (2022) outlined that descriptive research aims to accurately and systematically describe a population, situation or phenomenon. It can answer what, where, when, and how questions, but not why questions. Hence, descriptive together with exploratory is used in this study to investigate the effectiveness of agricultural cooperatives in assuring the social and economic development of rural people in KwaZulu-Natal (KwaNibela), thereby contributing to the community's long-term sustainability. The study took a qualitative method because it is based on the interpretivism paradigm, which states that objects are socially constructed and that various people have diverse perspectives on occurrences. Because it examines a phenomenon in its natural setting, this study used a descriptive design. As a result, to investigate it in its natural setting and accurately describe the situation in Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Cooperative as it is, this study is informed by social constructivism and interpretivism.

Since collecting a variety of participant viewpoints was the major aim, qualitative data collection techniques like interviews, document analysis, and focus groups were employed (Yin, 2003). The research design, which the researcher created, is shown below with a thorough explanation of the techniques employed in this study and how they influenced it as a whole.

Furthermore, McCombes (2022), defined exploratory design as the study of what is not well known in terms of literature. Hence, the study outlined that there is insufficient literature that investigates the effectiveness of cooperative in providing adequate household food security. In the explanatory design, concepts such as primary, secondary and tertiary cooperatives were explained. This include the expansion of the DAC criteria and assets (SLA) which has been clearly explained in chapter 1 and 2 of the study.

Figure 4.2. *The research design framework designed by the researcher.*



4.5 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

This research is grounded on underlying philosophical assumptions about what constitutes valid research and outlines the appropriate research method to be used to advance the level of knowledge in this study. To conduct and evaluate any research, it is therefore important to know what these assumptions are. The philosophical assumptions and the design strategies underpinning the research study were reviewed and presented; the interpretive paradigm was identified for the framework of the study.

According to Gannon, et al. (2022), the research paradigm has three major dimensions: ontology, epistemology, and methodology. The researchers further outline that a research paradigm is an all-encompassing system of interrelated practice and thinking that defines the nature of inquiry along these three dimensions. This is why Kivunja & Kuyini (2017) perceived the concept of research paradigms as the most commonly used tool in research because the research paradigm is a basic belief system based on ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions.

Therefore, the researcher have to be able to understand and articulate beliefs about the nature of reality, what can be known about it, and how the study will go about attaining this knowledge. These are elements of research philosophy. A philosophy is a basic belief system and theoretical framework with assumptions about 1) ontology, 2) epistemology. In other words, it is the researcher's way of understanding the reality of the world and studying it. The researcher will look closely at the two components of a research paradigm in this study to ensure that the objectives of the study are achieved through the mentioned philosophy, paradigms and theoretical framework (Reham and Alharthi, 2016).

4.5.1 Ontology

Ontology is a branch of philosophy concerned with the assumptions we make to believe that something makes sense or is real in the very nature or essence of the social phenomenon we are investigating (Scotland, 2012). It is the philosophical study of the nature of existence or reality, of being or becoming, as well as the basic categories of

things that exist and their relations (Neuman, 2013). Ontology concerns the issue of what exists or the fundamental nature of reality. Hence, the qualitative approach is the approach the study took into consideration to give a clear picture of the nature of the problem that exists within the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative because it is socially constructed. Thus, Neuman (2013) stated that ontology helps to conceptualize the form and nature of reality and what you believe can be known about that reality.

Philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality are crucial to understanding how you make meaning from the data you gather. These assumptions, concepts, or propositions assist the researcher to orientate your thinking about the research problem, its significance, and how you might approach it to contribute to its solution. Ontology is an essential philosophy because it assists in providing an understanding of the things that constitute the world, as it is known (Scott & Usher, 2004).

It addresses an understanding of the world as others experience it, this study is subjective, and the ontology that shaped this study. Hence, the goal of this research is to determine the success of the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative, which can be accomplished by gathering information from people's perspectives and experiences. The constructivist method can be traced back to Edmund Husserl's philosophy of phenomenology (the study of human consciousness and self-awareness) and Wilhelm Dilthey's philosophy of hermeneutics (hermeneutics is the study of interpretation; Martin Heidegger and Max Weber built on it later) (Eichelberger, 1989; Neuman, 1997).

Therefore, the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative is the reality of the study as the main objective is to investigate the cooperative effectiveness towards socioeconomic development in KwaNibela. Hence, epistemology described below outlined how the researcher arrived at the truth and how knowledge is constructed. As a result, the ontology (reality / truth) is reached by asking participants to share their firsthand experiences of managing and leading this cooperative, as well as the incubators who

provided financial and other support from the viewpoints of the municipality and DARD. In this study, ontology/reality is defined as this diversity of viewpoints.

4.5.2 Epistemology

Neuman (2013) defined epistemology as the view of how we know the world around us or what makes a claim about it truthfulness. That is, how we can learn about or know the world is rooted in our ontological assumptions. Scientific knowledge includes what we need to do to produce knowledge and what scientific knowledge looks like once we have produced it. Hence, this study took an interpretivism stance as a method of obtaining knowledge in Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative, which corresponds with the ontological assumption of this study because social constructivism is interconnected with interpretivism. Interpretivism often addresses important features of shared meaning and understanding, while constructivism encompasses this concern with knowledge as shaped and interpreted. In the context of this study, individuals construct their knowledge within a social-economic context influenced by their prior knowledge and understanding, and therefore, the researcher positions herself as a researcher within the limitations of a constructivist epistemological discourse.

As a result, Cooksey, and McDonald (2011) explained that in research, epistemology is used to describe how we come to know something; how we know the truth or reality. It is concerned with the very basis of knowledge; its nature, forms, and how it can be acquired and communicated to other human beings. It focuses on the nature of human knowledge and understanding that you, as a researcher, can acquire to be able to extend, broaden, and deepen your understanding in your field of research. However, Schwandt (1997) defines it as the study of the nature of knowledge and justification. The views of the members of the cooperative are compared with the views of the extension officers of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and LED officers. This triangulation assist with ensuring the credibility of the data. This is the practical meaning of social constructivism. The truth is arrived at, by interviewing and conducting focus group discussions amongst the participants. Their subjective views constitute the truth.

4.6 RESEARCH PARADIGMS

The study is based on two paradigms which is social constructivism and interpretivism that are informed by the research philosophy (Ontology and Epistemology) informed this study.

4.6.1 Social constructivism

The socially constructed view enables the researcher to examine the underlying belief system and philosophical assumptions of the researcher about the nature of being, existence, and reality. Thus, the researcher used the semi-structured interview as a form of data collection method to access the underlying information of the researched matter. Philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality are crucial to understanding how you make meaning from the data you gather. These assumptions, concepts, or propositions help to orientate your thinking about the research problem, its significance, and how you might approach it to answer your research question, understand the problem investigated, and contribute to its solution.

Hence, the researcher adopts constructivism as the epistemology of foundational assumptions since there are numerous realities in the constructivist context. Reality can be discovered and constructed through human interactions and expressive actions. Understand how people make sense of their social worlds in the natural setting in the form of conversations and writing while interacting with others around them. Text and visual images could be used in the writings. Many social realities exist due to changeable human experiences, including people's knowledge, views, interpretations, and experiences. Thus, this enables the researcher to attain enough data to complete the study by relating the research problem to the way KwaNibela people make sense of their social worlds.

4.6.2 Interpretivism

Gannon, et al. (2022), defined research paradigms as a basic set of beliefs or worldviews that guide research action or an investigation. Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) define paradigms as human constructions that deal with first principles or ultimate, indicating where the researcher is coming from to construct meaning embedded in data. This study adopted the interpretive paradigm since the nature of this study depends on the experience and perspective of people. This contributes to the study's feasibility and also contributes to the body of knowledge in that it will add the knowledge of research to the participants for them to improve and fight against the issues they face, such as high unemployment and household food insecurity.

Intgryt (2016) outlined that interpretivism leans towards qualitative research. Precise, systematic, and theoretical answers to complex human problems are not possible. They assert that every cultural and historical situation is different and unique and requires analysis of the uniquely defined contexts in which it is embedded. The findings cannot be generalized due to the specific social, political, economic, and cultural experiences underpinning each study; however, they do provide greater clarity on how people make sense of phenomena in a specific context, thereby aiding greater understanding of the human condition.

Human life can only be understood from within. Human activities cannot be observed from the outside world. Interpretivism, therefore, focuses on people's subjective experiences; how people "construct" the social world by sharing meanings; and how they interact with or relate to each other. Social constructions such as language (including text and symbols), consciousness, and shared meanings are used to gain access to and understand reality (Intgryt, 2016).

Interpretivism emphasizes that social reality is viewed and interpreted by the individual according to the ideological positions that she or he holds. Therefore, knowledge is personally experienced rather than acquired from or imposed from outside. The interpretive paradigm believes that reality is multi-layered and complex, and a single

phenomenon can have multiple interpretations. In studying a phenomenon, research techniques are used that will help us understand how people interpret and interact within their social environment. The social context, conventions, norms, and standards of the person or community are crucial elements in assessing and understanding human behavior (the truth is relevant and subject to these subjective elements); therefore, there are parallels with hermeneutics and phenomenology (Intgryt, 2016).

According to Intgry (2016), interpretivism pays attention to and values what people say, do, and feel, and how they make meaning of the phenomena being researched. Interpretivism foregrounds the meaning that individuals or communities assign to their experiences. Patterns, trends, and themes should therefore emerge from the research process, and the role of the researcher should be to understand real-life situations from the point of view of the insider (the members of the target group for the research). This study is interpretivism in nature because it relied on data gathered from people, articles, and books. If we know the truth, then this approach is called rationalist epistemology or logical knowledge.

The researcher believes that reality involves people's subjective experiences of the outside world; hence, they may adopt an inter-subjective epistemology and the ontological belief that reality is socially constructed. Walsham (1993) argues that in the interpretive tradition there are no correct or incorrect theories, and Antwi & Hamza (2015) supported Walsham (1993) and stated that Interpretivist are researchers who believe there is no single correct path or method to knowledge. However, they should be judged according to how thought-provoking they are to the researcher as well as those involved in the same areas.

The underlying reason is that actions are understood through the conceptual processes of interpretation that are influenced by interaction with social contexts. Those active in the research process socially construct knowledge by experiencing real-life or natural settings more personal, interactive mode of data collection. Hence, this creates a sense of flexibility for participants, thus contributing to the completion of this study on time with the

imperative data collected to make viable recommendations. As a result, participants provided richly detailed responses.

4.7 TARGET POPULATION AND SAMPLING

This study used non-probability sampling using judgmental sampling commonly known as purposive sampling (Creswell, Klassen, Clark & Smith, 2011). With this type of sampling, participants are chosen to be part of the sample with a specific purpose. For this study, identification of the sampling unit relied on their knowledge and employment as agricultural extension systems, farming systems and interactions with smallholder farmers. This study used the documents as a sample method and non-probability approach to sampling, thus selecting the participants through purposive sampling methods which is the main sampling method the study used.

However, convenience sampling was used in assessing the participants that were at close proximity since the study was conducting during Covid-19 era. The word "purposive" indicates that the sample is chosen for a particular purpose in this case, they are part of the Akehlulwalutho cooperative, and others are beneficiaries or community members served by the cooperative. While the convenience sampling is the non-probability sampling that involves the sample that are drawn from the population close by, convenience sampling was helpful in finding participants who were able to avail themselves as the study was conducted during lockdown. The researcher targeted a specific group, knowing that the group does not represent the wider population; it represents itself (Bertram and Christiansen, 2015).

Purposive sampling in this study was used to purposively select participants that were presents before and during the implementation of the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative, this was done by considering the management of the cooperative to assist in the selection. The participants were selected within the Mbuli Traditions specifically people within the cooperative. Agricultural extension officers, NDA and Department of Agriculture and Rural Development were purposively selected as they

informed the study. The study is based on the effectiveness of the cooperative. Therefore, the focus is within the cooperative and the wards surrounding it under the supervision of Mbuli tradition authority (Alkassium; Etikan & Musa, 2016).

The study was conducted during the lockdown caused by COVID-19 in 2020, which resulted in a change in data collection methods. This was accomplished by first visiting the study area to become acquainted with it and the people that live there before national lockdown resulting from Covid-19. During the site visit, the researcher encountered people who were present during and after the implementation and were eager to participate in the study, as well as those who could refer the researcher to other people who could participate in the study. In this study, the purposive sampling strategy was helpful since it allowed the researcher to collect data rapidly in COVID-19 scenarios with the rightful participants that have the immense knowledge about the cooperative. Due to that, the data collection was efficient, resulting in the collection of sufficient data to answer the study's questions.

4.7.1 SAMPLE SIZE AND RATIONALE

The sample had 20 participants consisting of both were men and women. Within the sample unit, 15 participants formed a part of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were identified as key informants and 5 were part of the in-depth interviews, Each FGD had five participants which the focus was on gender equity, influence of Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative on household food security and also the creation of jobs to combat unemployment and poverty.

The sample drawn from the part of the population that was available during data collection. However, there is a criterion that is taken into consideration, such as the target people that were present from the initiation of the cooperative up until the study took place. This sampling method was also necessitated by the national lockdowns that took place due to the Corona-virus, where some potential participants were not available, while the ones who are in the study availed themselves. There were no criteria used to select

cooperative members, selection depended on availability and identification by cooperative officials.

The in-depth interview participants were chosen because of the focus group discussion by identifying the participants who had in-depth knowledge regarding the effectiveness of the cooperative. Participants in the in-depth interview included community members, this assisted the researcher in answering the how effective is the cooperative towards jobs creation through the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Another in-depth interviews included current and former Akehlulwalutho cooperative officials. The study consisted of 4 community members, 6 former members, and 7 cooperative members and 3 NDA members.

4.8 THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Before applying the integrated research instrument, approach and conducting the study, a preliminary visit to the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative took place to present the research proposal for this study to Mbuli Traditions and cooperative officials. This step, assisted in gaining the necessary contacts, support and information that made the study possible, in KwaNibela. Therefore, in gathering the data, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews and focus groups, used IsiZulu and English to conduct the interviews, to create a convenient and clear understanding and get as much information as possible since the study area is in a rural area.

Semi-structured interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and the document review approach were the research tools employed in this study. These methods are briefly outlined below. The interview questions informed the following themes: the contexts of agricultural cooperatives; the influence of agricultural cooperatives on employment and job creation; agricultural cooperative strategies for working with SMEs; agricultural cooperative contributions to reducing household food insecurity; and the evaluation of gender equity in agricultural cooperatives.

Themes were used to group the interview questions, with each theme containing four to ten questions that were divided into three groups (Questions for the NDA, Community members and Cooperative members). There were 34 questions in all, including focus

group discussion questions, in this study. Some Questions during the data collection process led to follow-up inquiries, which produced emerging themes.

4.8.1 Semi-Structured interviews

According to Dalko (2015), the semi-structured interview is a valuable data collection method applicable to qualitative research. This study adopted semi-structured interviews to obtain in-depth information without being limited by the specific format. The researcher used interviews as a research method because interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences. The advantage of interviews is that the interviewer can pursue in-depth information on the topic. Interviews are useful as a follow-up to certain respondents to further investigate their responses (DeBose, 2015). This was done by ensuring that the researcher asks open-ended questions to allow the study to tackle and answer the in-depth research questions. The researcher flexibly constructed research questions to allow for follow-up questions.

Since, most of the interviews were conducted telephonically each interview took approximately one hour and 30 minutes. Interviews were conducted in different areas which is KwaNibela, Durban and through a phone during Covid-19. The themes that were covered during interviews is the influence of agricultural cooperatives on employment and job creation; agricultural cooperative strategies for working with SMEs; agricultural cooperative contributions to reducing household food insecurity, IsiZulu was the primary language used to conduct the study.

4.8.2 Focus group discussion

A focus group is a qualitative technique for data collection. A focus group is, "a group comprised of individuals with certain characteristics who focus discussions on a given issue or topic" (Flynn, Albrecht, & Scott, 2018). According to Derrick, Mukherjee, Nyumba, and Wilson (2018), focus group discussion is frequently used as a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of social issues. The method aims to obtain data from a purposely selected group of individuals rather than from a statistically representative sample of a broader population. Furthermore, a focus group interview provides a setting for the relatively homogeneous group to reflect on the questions asked by the interviewer. The focus group discussion is conducted to enhance the semi-structured interviews as a distinct research instrument widely used in a qualitative research method with people in an informal interaction (Neuman, 2011).

In this study, the researcher conducted the focus group discussion specifically with women in Akehlulwalutho Vegetable and Pineapple cooperative who assisted the researcher to answer both objectives 3 and 4 of this study. The community members that have been present since the initiation of this cooperative until now assisted the researcher to answer objectives 1, 5, and 3 of this research. Together with the five people that benefited from the cooperative that assisted in achieving objective 3 of this study, the overall sample size of the focus group discussion is 15. The reason this study focused on women is that this study prioritizes more women in the agricultural cooperative.

In the process of conducting the focus group discussion, the researcher provides participants with background information about the aim of the study to reduce implicit assumptions (Bolderston, 2012). Therefore, the researcher used focus groups as a data collection technique, as Flynn, et al (2018) outlined that focus groups provide "a more natural environment than that of the individual interview because participants are influenced and influenced by others—just as they are in real life." Focus group discussions are aimed at collecting high-quality data in a social context (Patton, 2002), which mainly helps understand a specific problem from the viewpoint of the participants in research (Flynn, et al, 2018).

Focus group discussion provides "a rich and detailed set of data about perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and impressions of people in their own words" (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Hence, the focus group discussion targeted both community members that are not members and the members of the cooperative some community members. Focus group discussions, however, were challenging to conduct during data collecting because COVID-19 had a significant impact worldwide. People's flexibility was hampered as a result of their fear of COVID-19.

However, the process of focus group discussions triggered a lot of unanswered questions for both the research participants and the researcher. The questions were about the functionality of the cooperative and how they will generate income and use cooperatives for their subsistence needs since the country is hit by the global pandemic and the cooperative is not sustainable currently. The COVID-19 regulations were adhered to in such a way that the focus group discussion was conducted through a telephonic method (conference call). However, the study maintained the ontology and epistemology adopted in this study by conducting the researcher in its natural setting.

Therefore, since, focus group discussion were separated into three groups the FGD interviews each took approximately one hour and 30 minutes. FGD were conducted in KwaNibela with the first group which was based on gender equity in Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative, whereas the two groups were conducted telephonically due to covid-19 restrictions. The FGD covered gender equity in Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Agricultural Cooperatives theme in ensuring employment equity within the cooperative, IsiZulu was the main language used in conducting the study as it is based in a rural area.

4.8.3 Document Review method

Document review is a systematic method for reviewing and evaluating documents both published and electronic material. Like other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Bretschneider, Cirilli, Jones, Lynch & Wilson (2017). The researcher collected data using Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and

Vegetables Cooperative's document to answer the objectives of the study. The document used was the achieve business plan of Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Cooperative.

The document assisted with outlining the cooperative's irrigation resources, ploughing equipment and the water consumption of the cooperative. It also entails that the cooperative was working incorporation with the Local Economic Development (LED) and members of the cooperative that depicted an indication that the cooperative is in line with the social capital aspects of the effectiveness. Apart from document review method, observation of pineapple and vegetable field was useful during document review methods.

As a result, the study's archived document revealed that the proposal/business plan of Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables cooperative was funded, however the cooperative was largely affected by water scarcity and not enough market; nonetheless, they are using it to implement the business plan and correct the faults committed, resulting in the creation of a market for Akehlulwalutho cooperative. Hence, the cooperative members established a report to document the progress of the cooperative over time so it answers it main objectives.

4.9 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Eldridge (2023), the process of data analysis begins with the categorization and organization of data in search of patterns, critical themes, and meanings that emerge from the data. It is concerned with how the data will be analyzed to answer the research questions. Therefore, the data and findings in this study are analyzed thematically, which is the process of generating key themes from the findings that address critical areas of the study, particularly the research objectives.

Thematic analysis offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analyzing qualitative data, locating it with other qualitative analytic methods that search for themes or patterns and in relation to different epistemological and ontological positions (Kiger &

Varpio, 2020), the researchers further stated that one of the benefits of thematic analysis is its flexibility. Qualitative analytic methods can be roughly divided into two camps. Within the first, there are those tied to, or stemming from, a theoretical or epistemological position.

As a result, the data in this study are presented and analyzed thematically in order to emphasize, examine, and record the main themes of the study and to describe the findings associated with specific research questions in the study. The study is qualitative, therefore the data in this study is analyzed through content analysis and presented through appropriate themes due to the nature of the study, which contains a lot of content. Elo & Kyngas (2008) described content analysis as a method that may be used with either qualitative or quantitative data and in an inductive or deductive way.

Thematic analysis is firmly in the second camp and is compatible with both essentialist and constructionist paradigms within psychology. Thematic analysis, due to its theoretical freedom, provides a flexible and useful research tool that has the potential to provide a rich and detailed yet complex interpretation of data. Given the advantages of the flexibility of thematic analysis, we must be clear that we are not trying to limit this flexibility. However, the absence of clear and concise guidelines around thematic analysis means that the "anything goes" critique of qualitative research may well apply in some instances.

In this study, thematic analysis was taken into consideration. Thematic analysis is used as a method that works both to reflect reality and to unpack or unravel the surface of reality. For instance, this study reached a thematic analysis by capturing some important data related to the research question. Furthermore, the Keynes of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures but in terms of whether it captures something important with respect to the overall research question. For example, in Victoria's research on representations of lesbians and gay parents on 26 talk shows (Clarke & Kitzinger, 2004), she identified six key themes.

Therefore, the researcher applied the same strategy of presenting data (major to minor) in analyzing the data, this study used Atlas TI to a tool that can be used for coding and

analyzing transcripts & field notes, building literature reviews, creating a coherent themes that aligns with the objectives of the study.

4.10 RIGOUR AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Research rigours are important when the data has been collected so that the researcher can check whether the data collected is trustworthy and credible. The study ascertained the quality of the data as described below. Trustworthiness simply means that the study findings provide evidence from the results of the participants and demonstrate the soundness of the results and that the argument made based on the results is strong (Solutions, 2017). The study sustained high trustworthiness by using a triangulation of methods (Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion).

The researcher ensured that participants were flexible and position in their comfort zone so as to create that sense of trustworthiness between the researcher and the participants, during data collection the researcher ensured the participants responses were captured accurately through records and taking of notes. Therefore, the trustworthiness of interpretations and findings is dependent on being able to demonstrate how participants were reached.

4.10.1 Credibility

This study ensures that no relevant data was intentionally systematically omitted and that no irrelevant data was included. Credibility is defined as the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings Polit and Beck (2012) while Macnee and McCabe (2012) also refer to credibility as the truth of the data or the participant views and their interpretation and representation by the researcher.

4.10.2 Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency and reliability of the research findings and the degree to which research procedures are documented, allowing someone outside the research to follow, audit, and critique the research process (Brown, 2020). Therefore, the study maintained the consistence and reliability of research findings in this study by

ensuring that people perceptive are rightfully documented, it was also external edited to ensure it dependability.

4.10.3 Confirmability

In qualitative research, confirmability refers to how easily the findings could be verified by other individuals. The qualitative researcher's equivalent of objectivity is the idea of confirmability (Brown, 2020). Therefore, the research findings of this study are based on the participants narratives, these findings are shaped by research participants than the researcher.

4.10.4 Transferability

According to (Mahler, Hadfield, and De eyto, 2018), the capacity of the findings to be used in various situations or contexts is referred to as transferability. Given that qualitative research is context-specific, the reader can decide whether or not it is applicable to their circumstance by reviewing the research context. Therefore, this study is going to be published creating accesses to any researcher that finds it applicable in their research.

4.11 LIMITATIONS/ DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

4.11.1 Limitation of the study

Data collection in this study was undertaken during one of the less severe lockd.owns resulting from COVID-19, which affected the study negatively. This resulted in some of the interviews being conducted telephonically, focus group discussion were conducted telephonically and this was done through conducting conference calls. Since the process was not as smooth and easy as anticipated, COVID-19 has been a stumbling block towards data collection, and it negatively impacted the study as it limited the researcher to some extent in terms of data collection approach.

The researcher mitigated these challenges by conducting some of the interviews telephonically to reduce the rapid spread of COVID-19 and keep the participants safe as they preferred telephonic interviews. This data collection strategy was drawn from Carr and worth (2001) who describe telephonic interviews as a versatile data collection method

to collect rich and high-quality data. The loudspeaker function was used so that the interview could be recorded with another device, and the interviewer could listen and take notes simultaneously. The consent forms were distributed, explained and signed during data collection. Despite the challenges in data collection, the researcher was able to have detailed and clear interviews.

4.11.2 Delimitation of the study

Delimitations refer to what the researcher is not going to do/has not done (Leedey and Ormond, 2005). The study focused on the KwaNibela community, not other communities that have agricultural cooperatives as a strategy to combat poverty and unemployment. This study is about the effectiveness of the cooperative. For this, the relevance (as defined in chapter 3) is important as it gives the context for effectiveness to be studied and considered closely. Qualitative research is another delimitation in the study.

4.12 ELIMINATION OF BIAS

According to Finch (2017), qualitative research is a type of scientific investigation that aims to provide answers to a question without bias. It uses predetermined procedures such as interviewing participants to collect information and produce findings. Therefore, in this study bias were eliminated by understanding the limitations of the sample group, ensure that the research participants are independent and treated with respect so that they are protected from exploitation. Thus, allowing the research participants enough time to answer the questions. The researcher was aware of errors in data collection and measuring processes, ensuring that the results of the research are accurately recorded in literature to avoid reporting bias.

4.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher collected data after obtaining permission from NDA, Big Five Hlabisa Municipality and the Cooperative's officials in the KwaNibela area. Therefore, the participants were informed that they could withdraw from participating in the study at any time without citing reasons for their withdrawal. Furthermore, they were informed that their identities would be kept confidential.

4.13.1 Confidentiality

Protection of confidential information given by the participants is essential in every social research conducted. In this research study, the issue of confidentiality is taken very seriously as all information discussed before, during, and after the interviews is kept between the researcher and the participant. During the interviews, permission was granted before recordings were taken, as some people didn't want to be recorded, but their personal information remained confidential.

This is important to consider during data collection because this study is focused on people's experiences and lives. The reason for treating data confidentially is more for people's safety than it is only for trustworthiness. Hence, Camiller, Dewing, and Petrova (2014) stated that all strategies begin with the researcher's awareness of the value of confidentiality, which turned out to be an important part of enhancing quality in this study, in common with most research. Values associated with confidentiality include autonomy, privacy, and keeping a commitment. Achieving the principle of confidentiality, however, requires the researcher to possess certain personal and professional attributes such as honesty and respect for the participants in the study.

4.13.2 Informed consent

Informed consent is about letting the participants know of the risks and dangers involved when participating in a study. The participants participate voluntarily without being forced. In this study, the participants were made aware of the risks and they wouldn't be forced to participate. Shah; Thornton; Turrin & Hipskind (2021) looked at informed consent from a medical perspective, which is the same as every other informed consent application. This is what they said. Informed consent is the process in which a health care provider educates a patient about the risks, benefits, and alternatives of a given procedure or intervention. The patient must be competent to make a voluntary decision about whether to undergo the procedure or intervention. Informed consent is both an ethical and legal obligation of medical practitioners in the US and stems from the patient's right to direct what happens to their body.

Therefore, in this study all participants signed the informed consent forms which are kept safe for the period of five years after the study has been conducted. During data collection

there were no participants that withdrew from the study after they initially granted consent to participate in the study. The importance reflection of data collection in the field is that participants were fully committed and engaging in the study which made the study to be successful.

4.13.3 No harm to participants

The researcher ensured that the interviewees understand the researcher's role as a researcher, not a government official; that participation is optional; that they were allowed to stop at any point; and that they fully understood the reason for conducting the study, as well as the methods used in the study (Jones and Kottler, 2006). Therefore, the study did not cause any harm to the participants. The services of a social worker were secured to do any debriefing if participants felt stressed as a result of participation in a study.

4.13.4 Participant emotions

The questions were asked in the most appropriate and friendly way. No participant was embarrassed or forced to answer questions that made them too emotional or uncomfortable. The participants had the right to withdraw at any stage of the interview when they felt they could not continue. Research ethics means that the researcher should be considerate when it comes to the respondents' feelings. This study adhered to ethical principles of studying human subjects and issues of anonymity, confidentiality, and respect. Therefore, by avoiding these uncomfortable questions that may cause discomfort and anxiety to the participant, Rahman (2017) indicates that the researchers depend only on the respondent's voluntary cooperation.

4.14 CONCLUSION

This chapter is the core of this study, as it focuses on the research methodology and methods employed in conducting this study. Furthermore, this chapter covered, for instance, the outline of the research techniques used in this study to collect the data. These include one-on-one interviews guided by an interview schedule; the focus group discussion is utilized to achieve the goals and objectives of the study. It has also covered

an outline of the sampling size of the study, indicating how many people participated in this study. Thus, mentioning the limitations and delimitations faced during data collection is sufficient. The next chapter presents the findings obtained during data collection using the methods mentioned in this chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains the results and discussion of findings. The data is presented in both IsiZulu and English so that anyone with an IsiZulu or English-speaking background can understand it. According to Mafeje (1997), allowing research participants to use their vernacular allows them to expose local histories that must be understood by anyone who participates in the research process. Monyela (2017) agrees with Mafeje (1997), noting that employing the vernacular allowed participants to provide the researcher with true access to more relevant data that helped the researcher fulfil the study objectives. The isiZulu quotations appear first because they represent the participants' direct words, followed by their English translation.

Participants are given pseudonyms in the study as an ethical consideration for confidentiality regarding the participants' identities (Gerrard, 2020). However, their experiences are not fictionalized in any way. The researcher represents the participants' experiences as they are described by them. Furthermore, the researcher uses themes that emerged from the interviews to convey data from major to minor themes. The researcher established the major and minor themes by examining the themes that are most closely related to the study's theoretical framework, objectives, and research questions.

The data assisted in answering the study's research questions. The findings are based on one-on-one interviews, document analyses, and focus group discussions, which are detailed in Chapter 4. The themes emerging from the data are as follows: The initial goal of establishing the cooperative; employment opportunities arising from Akehlulwalutho Cooperative; gender equity in Akehlulwalutho Cooperative; the impact of poverty and unemployment rate in KwaNibela area; water scarcity and lack of market; poor cooperative planning and management and KwaNibela Area socio-economic development.

5.2 ISSUES IDENTIFIED AND FINDINGS LINKED TO LITERATURE REVIEW

The study identified issues that affected the socio-economic development in Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative. Therefore, the triangulation of the literature review, results and current reality is briefly explained below.

5.2.1 AKEHLULWALUTHO PINEAPPLE AND VEGETABLE COOPERATIVE DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

To address some of the objectives in this study, the researcher gathered data from the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Cooperative's archive document, the draft business plan. This method was utilized in the study to determine the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Agricultural Cooperative's objectives using the OECD-DAC criteria to assess the cooperative's effectiveness on rural people's socioeconomic development.

This assists triangulation and is in line with OECD-DAC evaluation approaches because it allows for the inclusion of historical data in evaluations. Furthermore, it enhances SLF by allowing to see how the cooperative has fared in the face of adversity (Shah; Thornton; Turrin; & Hispskind, 2021). Since this study is focused on people's experiences and lives, pseudonyms were employed to protect people's identities. This is vital to keep in mind while presenting results. The rationale for treating data with confidentiality is more for people's safety than for data collection credibility.

The study discovered that in the draft business plan used to assess the information of Akehlulwalutho Cooperative it was largely affected by water scarcity; however, the cooperative is revising the draft business plan so that it can provide possible mitigation, allowing the cooperative to enter the market and contribute to KwaNibela's socio-economic development and Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This was determined using a research method known as document analysis mentioned in methodology chapter. The document analysis assisted the study by depicting that the proposal was funded by NDA, which assisted the cooperative through the cultivation of pineapple and vegetables. However, KwaNibela is still regarded as the poverty stricken area.

Hence, the researcher collected data using the draft business plan archive document of Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Cooperative, and NDA annual reports to help answer some objectives. This method is used in the study to obtain the objectives of the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Agricultural Cooperative using the OECD-DAC criteria to evaluate the cooperative impact on the socio-economic development of rural people. This method is helpful with triangulation and is consistent with OECD-DAC evaluation approaches because it allows for historical data to be available for evaluations. Moreover, it helped SLF to see how the cooperative has survived certain shocks/how it has progressed.

According to the draft business plan of Akehlulwalutho cooperative and the NDA annual reports, the study found that the cooperative aimed at improving the livelihood of the people in KwaNibela by ensuring that poverty and unemployment are combated through social and economic development. Such an aim coheres with Gordon-Nembhard's (2014) view that cooperatives can alleviate community's poverty for they are located and owned by communities. He further stated that cooperatives are community businesses representatives, disseminate, improve and multiply local knowledge and economy within the community.

Cooperatives, as discussed in Chapter 2, can be used to generate profit and employment, provide services, and promote human, social, and economic objectives. According to Tesfay and Tadele (2013), the purpose of cooperatives is not solely economic, but also social, in that they provide tools through which members of the community can seek common goals rather than limited self-interests. Because of the document analysis, the researcher established the first aim of forming Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative, which is explained in section 5.3.

5.2.2 THE INITIAL AIM OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THIS COOPERATIVE

To begin, this study used the International Labour Organization's (ILO) definition of a cooperative, which defines it as a group of people who come together voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly

owned and democratically controlled enterprise. The International Labour Organization (ILO), 2012, stated that cooperatives are led by a set of ethical norms that include "honesty, openness, social responsibility, and care for others". As a result, the focus of this research is on the Akehlulwalutho cooperative, which is in the rural area and was founded by a group of people who came together voluntarily to address their mutual economic, social, and cultural needs through a collectively held business. Baba Shezi (Durban [April], 2021) (Former Cooperative member), MaNdlovu (KwaNibela, 2021) Baba Shezi and Mama Ndlovu (Former cooperative member), Zodwa (Telephonic interview, 2021) (Cooperative member) gave a background of Akehlulwalutho. This is what they said the cooperative was established,

“Umfelandawonye wasungulwa ngo 2012. Noma babe nayo ababenayo eThekwini ngoba babesuka lana eThekwini, kodwa-ke anginalo ulwazi ukuthi babenzani lana eThekwini kodwa nje ukuxhumana kwabo noHulumeni kwakuvele kukhona kusukela cishe ngabo 2010. Kodwake iphele phambi kwami ngingazike ukuthi mhlawumbe bashitsha indawo kodwa ngasekhaya lana eyayikhona akusena lutho ngenkathi kusungulwa lena ngo 2012.”

The above quotation is translated into English: [Even though they had another cooperative in Durban because Akehlulwalutho was the product of that cooperative, I have no idea what they were doing here in Durban, but their contact with the government has been there since 2010. However, in terms of agriculture, Akehlulwalutho is currently not operational]. In answer to objective 1, what does the cooperative undertake to try to generate chances for young people and aid them in finding work? Mama Ndlovu, Simangele and Baba Shezi agreed that;

“Umbuzo onzima lona ngoba u Baba Shezi wapheliswa umsebenzi ngo 2011 kuthe ngo 2012 wasungulwa lomfelandawonye. Bamazisa naye uthi uBaba’ uNxumalo okunguyena wasungula le nhlangothi wathi kukhona umuntu ozobasiza. Lowumuntu owaziwayo kubantu, wathi kuzovela umsebenzi ozoba yinzuzo nasezinganeni zethu uma esho.

Izinhloso (Aim) zenhlangano yokuthi uba njalo vele umfelandawonye isikhathi esiningi ngoba ungasungulwa manje kutshalwa bese uzala omunye owenza into eceleni bese lokho kuphinde kudale elinye ithuba labantu abayingxenywe yomphakathi. Lapho iyangokukhula inhlangano nami ngavumelana nalezozinhloso ngoba vele ngangigasebenzi” (Bab’Shezi)

The above quotation is translated into English: Since Bab’Shezi stated that “he lost his job in 2011, and the cooperative was formed in 2012, this is a difficult question to answer. This cooperative aimed to create various generational opportunities so that their children can have something to hold on to most of the time because the cooperative can now be established as a vegetable patch, which also creates another opportunity for people in the community as the cooperative grows, and I agree with those goals because I was already unemployed”. As one participant put it,

“Bab’Shezi further stated that “Laphoke saqala ngezinhlelo kwabizwa amakhosi, izinduna, namakhansela ngenkathi sizonikwa indawo lena esasizosebenza kuyo. Umphakathi wavele wazi ukuthi into yomphakathi le nokwawushitshelake uma usuthola ukuthi akunjalo”.

The above quotation is translated into English: “Then we started with plans and called for chiefs and councillors when we were given a place to work. The public knew that this was a public project). Zodwa said:

“Izinhloso zale nhlangano ukuthuthukisa umphakathi ngayoyonke indlela esingakwazi ngayo ukusiza, ngoba senza ezolimo kanye nokuthuthukisa umphakathi kwezenhlalakahle”.

The above quotation is translated into English: This organization aims to develop the community in every way we can to help because we are working with Agriculture and social development. However, Both Simangele and Dumisani (KwaNibela, 2021) outline the aim of implementing Akehlulwalutho, they said:

“The main objective was to find a way to give back to the community in terms of creating job opportunities and helping in terms of food security”.

This is related to the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) used in this study, which states that in order for a cooperative to contribute to socio-economic development, its livelihood must be stable and able to withstand and recover from pressures and shocks. As a result, there is a link between the agricultural cooperative's nature and the SLF because the SLF is people-centred; holistic; dynamic; built on strengths; macro-micro links; and sustainability, whereas the agricultural cooperative's nature is about ensuring that rural people have access to food security and employment opportunities. According to the findings of the focus group discussion, all of the participants, both cooperative members and community members, who are all women, agreed that the cooperative was founded by a group of women and has been directed by women.

Karki (2021), supported the above statement and further stated that, a livelihood consists of the skills, possessions, and pursuits necessary for a means of subsistence. A way of life is sustainable if it can withstand stresses and shocks, recover from them, and retain or improve its capacities and resources both today and in the future without compromising the natural resource base. In response to impoverished people's views and their own understanding of poverty, the SLF used can be seen as a tool or checklist to comprehend poverty. Hence, participants outlined that

“The cooperative's initial goal was to develop work opportunities and combat household food insecurity”.

The agricultural sector of cooperatives world wide's sustainability ensures its contribution to food security, job creation, poverty reduction, and development of rural populations' living standards, all of which are part of the country's strategic plans. As a result, the SLF framework recognizes that households and livelihoods change throughout time as a result of shocks, pressures, and seasonality. The agriculture sector has a critical socio-economic role in the rural population's long-term viability. Many government agencies worked to aid and expand the agricultural sector so that it might contribute to the national Gross Domestic Product in a sustainable and long-term manner (GDP). Evidence has shown from Kongolo (2010) and Chladkova and Formankova (2016) that SMEs represent a huge portion of businesses in developing countries, including South Africa. In South

Africa, SMEs account for about 91% of the formal business entities, contributing to about 51% of GDP and providing almost 60% of employment. Zwelakhe, on the other hand (Telephonic conversation with a participant, 2021) said:

“Noma ngabe le nhlango yakwazi ngempela ukunikezela emphakathini kodwa sikhuluma njengamanje khona izinhlelo ezingasasebenzi kule nhlango ngenxa yokungakwazi ukuhlela kahle inhloso ye mfelandawonye. Inhlango ikwazile ukungenelela emphakathini kodwa njengo mphakathi angeke sithi mhlampe lezinhloso zokusungulwa kwe mfelandawonye zafezeka ngokuphelele”

The above quotation is translated into English: Even though this cooperative was able to give back to the community but currently there are some of the programs that are no longer working in the cooperative due to the inability to plan properly the purpose of the Cooperative.

This research used the Akehlulwalutho (Draft Business Plan) archive document to gain a better understanding of the cooperative's initial goals and contributions to socioeconomic growth. The cooperative's mission, according to the document, is to combat household food insecurity by creating jobs and eradicating poverty (Akehlulwalutho Coop, 2010). Despite the financial crisis and drought that Akehlulwalutho is now experiencing, the cooperative expanded its agriculture sector and added home-based care as a strategy to meet the cooperative's core goal. Therefore, this section aimed to achieve objective 1 and 3 of the study.

During data collection, the researcher observed that the home care base was implemented as the extra component within the cooperative since the cooperative is situated in a rural area, where the area is dominated by old people. Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative established this component as a way of giving back to the community through the process of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Whereas, the researcher observed that pineapples and vegetables are not growing on it normal ratio due to water scarcity that is affecting the functionality of the cooperative.

According to Mohlala (2020) cooperatives are a resilient, vibrant and viable economic alternative in bringing people together to work towards a common goal and meeting their shared needs through cooperation. Hence, Bab'Shezi (Durban, 2021) MaNdlovu (KwaNibela, 2021) and Zodwa (Telephonical, 2021) gave the background of Akehlulwalutho, this is what they said the cooperative was established for.

The documents analysis and participant answers led to the cooperative's initial reason of establishing the cooperative. The researcher looked into Akehlulwalutho's draft business plan to have a better understanding of the cooperative's initial goal and contribution to socio-economic development. The cooperative was founded by a woman, according to the draft business plan Akehlulwalutho cooperative goal is to combat household food insecurity by creating jobs and eradicating poverty. As Mohlala (2020) stated Agricultural cooperatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, cooperative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility, and caring for others.

As a result, the study discovered that the cooperative is contributing to socio-economic development. Based on participant responses and the Akehlulwalutho document, the cooperative's objectives are shifting as the agricultural sector becomes less functional. Despite the financial crisis and drought that Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative is presently experiencing, the cooperative expanded its agriculture sector and added home-based care to meet the cooperative's core goal.

Since the initial goal of the Akehlulwalutho cooperative was to create job opportunities, work with SMEs, alleviate household food insecurity, and explore the nature of gender equity in Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative has the draft business plan outlined. Therefore, this finding confirm the views of scholars like (Nefale, 2016; Anania and Sambuo, 2017; Dube and Mhembwe 2017; Muriithi, 2017; and Mohlala, 2020). That cooperatives plays a vital role in developing countries and that it establishment contribute largely towards social and economic development in rural areas, the detailed explanation of the cooperative's contribution to job creation is explained below.

5.2.3 EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES PRODUCED BY AKEHLULWALUTHO COOPERATIVE

This question resulted from objectives 1 and 4, which asked about the procedure, effort, and methods employed by Akehlulwalutho to generate employment possibilities for the surrounding communities, as well as the cooperative's contribution to KwaNibela Area's socio-economic development. This question (What are the implications of Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Agricultural Cooperative on employment and job creation?) elicited a variety of responses. What are the alternatives to creating jobs for young people (women) through an Akehlulwalutho cooperative enterprise? For example, Zodwa (a cooperative member) was certain that the cooperative provided jobs. She went on to say:

“Le nhlango inohlwa oluhluka hlukeno ngaphansi kwayo manje sibe nesiqiniseko sokuthi siqasha abantu abanolwazi olunzulu ngomkhakha esibaqashela wona ngoba lento ingoMphakathi manje siba ne thimba eliqwashisayo elisebenzisana nezohlalakahle, ababhekene nengadi, sibe naba nakekeli abahambela umphakathi wonkana ukubona isimo senhlalo somphakathi nanokuthi inhlango ingangenelela kanjani,

Ngoba siyizwe sibhekene nesifo Covid-19 njenge nhlango sidlala igalelo elikhulu sathi ngeke sibone abantu empahakathini esisebenza ngawo bangabi nalo ulwazi nezinsiza kuvikela zale sifo, sibe sesisebenzisana no sonhlalakahle sihlanza abantu kakhulukazi uma kuhola izalukazi ezikhungeni”.

The above quotation is translated into English: “The cooperative has a diverse portfolio under which we now make sure that we hire people who are knowledgeable about the field we are hiring because this is a community based project. So, when we hire, we a team that will be responsible for agricultural activities, caregivers that will visit different families to check the state of living so that as a cooperative we will know how and when to intervene. Since there’s a global pandemic (Covid-19) as a cooperative we played a key role and said we will never see people in the community we work in without knowledge

and resources to prevent this disease, then we worked with SASSA to sanitize people especially when it comes to older people in the community during social grant payments”.

Therefore, this was determined during their annual returns that it is important to add home based care as a way to increase employment opportunities in KwaNibela. Hence OECD (2017), outlined that in developing countries, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have made a significant contribution especially in developing Asian countries in terms of employment and GDP growth. Testament to the relevance of SMEs, particularly in the rural economy, is their study by numerous researchers. Agrawal, Desai and Eskeseni (2014) suggested that SMEs make up 80-90% of all enterprises and generate about 50-80% of total employment in developing countries. Furthermore, Muriithi (2017) mentioned that Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are notably the engines that drive economic development. The businesses account for almost 90% of businesses in both leading and developing economies through job creations, employment, tax provision and contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Zodwa added that “Noma ngabe le Nhlango ilwa nendlala kanye nokwanda kwabantu abangasebenzi KwaNibela kodwa khona ezinye izinhlelo iAkehlulwalutho edinga khona abantu abanolwazi olunzulu oluzokwaiz ukukhulisa nhlango bese lifeza izidingo zomphakathi manje uma siqasha siqasha wonke umuntu ikakhulukazi oyilunga lwakwaNibela nakwa Mkhanyakude”.

The above quotation is translated into English: “Although this organization is fighting against the scourge and increase in unemployment in KwaNibela but there are other programs that Akehlulwalutho need people with the required skills that will be able to grow the cooperative and meet the needs of the community now if we hire, we make sure we include everyone especially KwaNibela and Mkhanyakude members”. However, as much as the ultimate aim of the agricultural cooperative is to contribute to the socio-economic development, there are still problems that are not taken into consideration in the agricultural sector. These problems include attaining agricultural input; materials required to ensure that the cooperatives achieve their stipulated goals. However, Baba uShezi stated that;

“Yayiqasha abantu abazotshala uphayinaphu, abazowuvuna nabazowudayisa konke lokho kwakwenziwa abantu abahlukahlukene”

The above quotation is translated into English: “It hired people to plant pineapple, harvest it, and sell it”. But further argued that despite all that happening and the cooperative creating opportunities but there were issues faced by the cooperative, this is what he said:

“Yimina okwakuthiwa angiqashe abantu uma kwakukhona umsebenzi odinga ukwenziwa kodwa khona abantu ababegcine besebenza kodwa abazange bahole kuze kube namhlanje ngenhlanhla bantu bendawo ababesazi isimo ukuthi kwenzakalani”.

The above quotation is translated into English: “I was the one who was told to hire people if there was a job that needed to be done but there were people who ended up working but did not get paid until today fortunately those people were locals they knew the situation of the cooperative”. The cooperative was affected by drought and financial crises and what was going on, the lack of access to capital, credit, skill and market share are the challenges faced by cooperatives in developing countries. Hence, Murithi (2017) emphasised that in Africa, besides their critical and positive role, many SMEs face numerous challenges ranging from power shortage, lack of capital, poor management skills and competencies, and inadequate information and corruption, this is the point of concern in Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative. Moreover, *Bab’Shezi responded and said:*

“Ngokwe mfelandawonye akufanele kuthiwe kuyaqashwa kufanele kuthiwe wonke umuntu oyilunga lomphakathi abeyinxenye kube umsebenzi wakhe naye kodwa manje kwakungenjalo kwakuwuthi sekufana nekampani eqasha abantu.

Yebo ngiyavuma inhloso kwawuthi kube khona into etholwa abantu kodwa kwakuba yinkinga uma kufika abantu abafana nezonhlalakahle ababesebenzisana ne NDA. Babe fika khona bazo hlola, babemangala ukuthi abantu bakhona bangabaqashwa and abantu babenganalo izwi, izwi lalililodwa kulona owayiqala inhlango”.

The above quotation is translated into English: "According to the cooperative, it should not be said that it is a job, it should be said that everyone who is a member of the community is part of the cooperative but now it was not the case. Yes, I agree, the purpose was for people to gain something, but it was a problem when people like DSD came in to check the progress, they were shocked that there are people who are so called employees and that they have no say in anything because there was one vocal person in the cooperative". In response to question number 4 from objective 1 which required how the cooperative chose people to employ, Mama uNdlovu said;

"Babesebenzisa izihlelo zokucosha iphepha ngoba ushlalo wayefike ememezele emphakathini ukuthi kuzoqashwa abantu kumele bancoshe iphepha, iphephake liyakuqasha futhi alikuqashi ngoba kwakushiwo ukuthi kudingeka abantu abangaka impela ligcoshwe iphepha kuthathwe abathathwayo njengenani elidingekayo".

The above quotation is translated into English: "They were using paper picking systems because the chairperson had come to announce to the public that people would be hired through the pick up paper method, the paper could hire or not hire you since it was said that it was necessary for so many people to be put on paper and take what is considered a required number". In line with the above understanding, the role of cooperatives, especially in the agricultural sector, provide momentum for rural development, as big business development in South Africa and contribute towards social protection in the country. Scholars like Dlamini (2010), stated that the research outlined that some of the cooperatives in South Africa have not been effective, successful, and functional. A participant stated how they advertise for the posts and she said:

"Kwakubalula ngoba sasiqasha abantu bendawo sasimemezela, inhlango impela yayibaqasha abantu kodwa inkinga yayiba ekukhokheleni okwakungafanele kubekhona nokwakungafanele kuthiwe abantu bayaqashwa. Into eyayifanele bayenze kwakumele besho kubantu ukuthi abeze bazosebenza kodwa batshelwe ukuthi inhlango yomphakathi lena uma kukhona inzuzo bazoyithola".

The above quotation is translated into English: "It was simple because we hired local people we were announcing through the word of mouth, the organisation was actually hiring people but the problem was in paying what should have not beng said was telling people that they were being hired. What they had to do was tell people that they were working and that the cooperative if for the entire community if there was a profit they would have got it". Some cooperatives function without proper management and evaluation techniques even though they manage to contribute to the local food nets and local economy but they are under poor management (Dube and Mhwembe, 2018). A response from a participant stated;

“UBaba uShezi wathi inhlango iyabheda ngokuthi abantu bendawo ayibaqashi ngoba abantu bazolinda ukuhola ngesikhathi abathenjise ukuthi bazohola ngaso”

The above quotation is translated into English: “Baba u Shezi said that the cooperative made a mistake by saying that people were employed because they expected their wages at the time, that they were promised”. Dumisani acknowledged the problems faced by the cooperative, he said ‘despite the crisis that affected the cooperative which we do not have control over the situation as a community but the cooperative did and it is still fighting the high unemployment rate at KwaNibela, he further stated that ‘the cooperative do employ the surrounding community members especially those who do not have any qualifications and are regarded as low skilled people, the cooperative has those programmes that assist such people’.

Dumisani further stated that the procedure used in locating people who do not have any qualifications. This is what he said “we work with the NPO (the NPO is about home base care) which is also registered under Akehlulwalutho, we identify people from the community as the beneficiaries of the cooperative in that way we find them easily and for the fact that we worked with the community in most cases doing door to door at some point depending of the focal point at that time, but we do have the procedure of identifying beneficiaries. The researcher discovered that the NPO's sole business model was home care, and that it cooperated with the cooperative to serve the needs of the KwaNibela People.

In developing countries, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have made a significant contribution especially in developing Asian countries in terms of employment and GDP growth. The importance of SMEs to developing countries has been well documented and studied (OECD, 2017). Testament to the relevance of SMEs, particularly in the rural economy, is their study by numerous researchers. Agrawal, Desai and Eskeseni (2014) suggested that SMEs make up 80-90% of all enterprises and generate about 50-80% of total employment in developing countries.

Muriithi (2017) mentioned that Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are notably the engines that drive economic development. The businesses account for almost 90% of businesses in both leading and developing economies through job creations, employment, tax provision and contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, in Africa, besides their critical and positive role, many SMEs face numerous challenges ranging from power shortage, lack of capital, poor management skills and competencies, and inadequate information and corruption, this is the point of concern in Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative, however, the cooperative ensured that it remain functional to contribute towards boosting rural people's livelihood.

In many countries, particularly in OECD countries, governments are facing the challenges of low-income growth, weak trade and investment, and rising, or persistently high inequality (OECD, 2016). Furthermore, OECD (2020) stated that developing countries are facing a unique health and economic crisis, with potentially extreme economic, social and sustainable development consequences that may reverse decades of development progress and further jeopardise efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The study depicted that Akehlulwalutho cooperative has a diverse portfolio since the agricultural sector is currently not fully functional, this was mentioned by all participants, and this is what they stated. However, many participants outlined that the cooperative still prioritises employing local people in other sectors that are within the cooperative. Therefore, the OECD in this study assisted the researcher to track the progress and effectiveness of the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative considering the effectiveness OECD-DAC Criteria to analyse the findings.

Since, the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative is part of the SMEs. It is therefore important in rural communities because they not only create employment opportunities but cater for the social needs of people. SMEs are key players in the economy and the wider ecosystem of firms. Hence, Fiseha and Oyelana (2017) findings of their study suggested that SMEs play a vital role in local economic development in South Africa. SMEs contribute to employment creation, wealth creation, poverty alleviation and income generation. The involvement of all sectors is also necessary for the establishment and sustenance of support for SMEs. Hence the study used SLF as it improves the understanding of the livelihoods of the poor by considering the capital assets (social, human, physical, natural and financial) thus using effectiveness as the DAC criteria.

Fiseha and Oyelana (2017), further stated that throughout the world, SMEs play a crucial role in addressing the impediments of poverty, inequality, and job creation in rural areas. Therefore, since Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative is part of the SMEs it is an important source of employment, particularly for women, low skill workers and the youth. However, enhancing SME potential for participating in and reaping the benefits of a globalised and digital economy depends to a great degree on conducive framework conditions and healthy competition. As a result, the cooperative tried to create a digital economy for people in KwaNibela by ensuring that it extends the cooperative to home care based sector to create sufficient job opportunities for everyone.

However, it is noted that unemployment is one of the major challenges that limit development globally. In the African Context Youths is the most affected part by unemployment. In the global contexts, governments have failed to effectively meet the employment needs for youths, hence private sector intervention in job creation, such as cooperatives is needed. The cooperative has become among the most viable organization to promote employment for youths (Anania and Sambuo, 2017). The study showed unemployment is global pandemic. However, Akehlulwalutho is trying its best in creating employment opportunities for the rural people in KwaNibela.

MamNdlovu confirmed that and stated the procedure used by the Akehlulwalutho to employ people. Analyzing the current situation of the Akehlulwalutho cooperative,

participant responses, Akehlulwalutho document and the NDA annual report. The study concluded that the cooperative is sustainable in terms of job opportunities, but that progress is slow due to the financial crisis and a lack of market. Despite its support to socioeconomic development, cooperatives facing problems is a global pandemic in and of itself. This has been mentioned by authors such as (Nefale, 2016; Anania and Sambuo, 2017; Dube and Mhembwe 2017; and Muriithi, 2017).

The Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative's employment opportunities are limited due to challenges that the cooperative is presently facing. The limiting of job development in the Akehlulwalutho Cooperative, however, did not fully eliminate the percentage of people employed in the KwaNibela area. Hence Nefale (2016), stated that the agricultural sector contributes to poverty reduction as well as job creation and employment.

As a result, rural development and socio-economic growth are supported. However, the agricultural sector is confronted with several problems that could impede job creation and employment. High unemployment rates, starvation, and school dropouts in rural areas are all signs of social and economic collapse in many African countries. People have been driven to undertake economic activities such as cooperatives in order to revive rural economies as a result of these circumstances (ILO, 2016). Hence, countries such as South Africa are experiencing gender disparity due to a lack of access to education. Since the cooperative indicated the creation of employment, the next theme explained gender equity in Akehlulwalutho below.

5.2.4 GENDER EQUITY IN AKEHLULWALUTHO COOPERATIVE

The findings under this section from participants on gender equity in Akehlulwalutho cooperative, responded to the question that enquired about gender equity in Akehlulwalutho (women in leadership), and this is what they said:

“Mama UNdlovu stated that: “babenza isiqiniseko ukuthi uma beqasha, baqasha ubulili obulinganayo. Futhi sasinalo lonke uhlobo lwabantu abasha, abadala, abafana, amantombazan, obaba, Kanye nomama

ngokulinganayo ngoba uma kwakuzoqashwa kwakuba nezinduna futhi kwakungasiyona into eyifihlo”.

The above quotation is translated into English: “They made sure if they hire that they were hiring all gender groups equally. We had all sorts of people like youth and all adults who were equally employed because if it was going to a period of hiring there were headmen involved and it was not a secret”. It is no doubt that half of the world’s population is made up of women that alone constitutes gender equity. Furthermore, Zodwa said:

“Le nhlango ihlanganisile ithatha kakhulu abantu abasha, nomama kanye, nobaba into okusamele siyilinganisise kahle ngoba sesingenelele nakwezenhlala kahle emakhaya kumele sithathe nabantu abakhubazekile bese lokhu okwasemasimini kuzodinga laba abanga khubazekanga bese lokhu okwe zenhlala kahle zasemakhaya abantu abakhubazekile bangasisiza ngalokho”.

The above quotation is translated into English: “This cooperative has focused a lot in employing young people, but not neglecting adults. They are major contributors to the agricultural workforce, either as family members or as women heading households. Thoko (Telephonical, 2021) made it clear that this cooperative was under the supervision of a woman, this is what she said:

“I-Akehlulwalutho ekuqalweni kwayoyasungulwa abantu besifazane ngehloso yokulwisana nesimo sendlana kanye nokwakha amathuba omsebenzi. Kodwa ngisho kunjalo le mfelandawonye ayicwasi muntu ngoba sikhuluma nje kule nhlango kuqashwa noma ubani uma nje inhloso yakho ifane neye mfelandawonye ukulungele ukusebenzisana nale nhlango ngoba silwela ukufeza izinhloso ezifanayo endaweni yangakithi”.

The above quotation is translated into English: “Akehlulwalutho was originally started by women with the aim of combating poverty and creating jobs. However, this cooperative does not discriminate against anyone, as it employ any gender and anyone, as long as your aim is the same as the cooperative’s aim and you are willing to work with the cooperative in achieving the same goals in our area”. The participants responded to the

question that required to see if the cooperative was considering employing youth. Simangele (Community member said, and all participants agreed with this said)

“Yebo, le nhlango ibasizile abantu abasha Kant futhi ibaqasha ngobe vele inhloso yale nhlango ukudala amathuba omsebenzi azodlulela nakubantu abasha”.

The above quotation is translated into English: “Yes, the cooperative valued young people, especially women and hired them because the purpose of this cooperative was to create job opportunities that would extend to young people”. *Baba uShezi*, emphasised by saying:

“Yebo, babeqashwa. Kwaze kwaba yibona abantu ababona ukuthi ayikho lento kodwa nje babekhona sasinabo impela abantu abasha nabo abadala nabo babekhona”.

The above quotation is translated into English: “Yes, they were hiring them, until people saw that this was not the case but just as they were there, we really had young people and old people were also there”.

5.2.4.1 The gender difference in terms of employment in Akehlulwalutho (objective 4)

According to Rani & Yadeta (2016), women in Ethiopia have fewer access to land, education, and financial income than men. However, their active participation in socio-economic development activities is critical. Since this is the point of concern in South Africa and gender equality is an issue that affects the entire world, as women account for half of the world's population. The study aimed to explore the nature of gender equity in Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Agricultural Cooperatives. Therefore Bab'shezi said:

“Inhloso kwakuwu 50/50 kodwa babebaningi abesifazane ngenxa yokuthi abesilisa abakholelwa ekuthenini bangasebenza ezintweni zasemakhaya. Bavele babone kungenampumelelo lokhu”.

Nhlanhla and Tholakele (Telephonically, 2021) outlined that the cooperative was not promoting gender inequality, but someone would think otherwise because of the domination of the specific gender this is what they said:

“Kuhle ngoba asithathi cala kodwa siqale ngokusho ukuthi iAkehlulwalutho impela ayiyiseki ukulingalingana ngokobulili, kodwa uma sibuka inani labantu abaqashiwe abesifazane likhulu kunelabesilisa. Akumangazi ngoba kodwa vele inkulu indima edlala abantu besifazana kulomfelandawonye ngoba sazi awugcini ngokutshala kodwa ubhekela umphakathi ngokwezenlala kahle”.

The above quotation is translated into English: “it is good because we do not take sides but let us start by saying that Akehlulwalutho really does not support gender inequality but when we look at the number of people employed, women tend to be many than men, but we agree that women plays a big role in this cooperative because we know that it is not only focusing on the agricultural sector but also home based care”. As a result, the gender equity theme in this study will aid in determining the following theme, which will assess the impact of poverty and unemployment in KwaNibela, by determining if the cooperative is promoting gender equity in combatting poverty and unemployment and it is informed by objective 1 and 3.

This finding implies that women in cooperatives yields much more than men, hence Maleko & Msuya (2015) and Rani and Yadeta (2016) emphasised that ‘women’s participation in the agricultural sector is visible. However, they have limited assess to land, education, and financial income than men, both in global, African and local contexts’.

Gender equality is an issue that affects the entire world, as women account for half of the world's population. In Ethiopia, however, women have fewer access to land, education, and financial income than men. As a result, their active participation in socio-economic development activities is critical (Rani and Yadeta, 2016). Women's participation in the Akehlulwalutho cooperative is generally apparent, but I agree with Rani and Yadeta (2016) that women have less access to land and education, which is a problem that primarily affects women in Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative.

In terms of employment, however, this study showed that the Akehlulwalutho cooperative was supporting gender equity; all participants stated that the cooperative was founded by women, but that when they hired, they used equity as a hiring consideration. The data revealed that, while this cooperative does not discriminate, which means more jobs for women, KwaNibela culture still views women as the ones who bore the burdens of labour. As a result, this implies that there is a gender divide in terms of who should do what; it's more along the lines of "the women's place is in the kitchen." This was explained by Thoko, who made it apparent that the cooperative was managed by a woman.

Looking at the factors that determine women participation in primary cooperative societies, accessibility to basic resources in Akehlulwalutho cooperatives indicated that the system of male dominance in society sociocultural hindrance is perceived as the major stumbling block for women participation in agricultural cooperatives because men in KwaNibela still perceive agricultural activities as women section of work. Hence, the number of women in Akehlulwalutho is much bigger than that of men as much as the cooperative promotes equity.

Inequality has always been at the heart of everything in Africa, because inequalities persist between men and women in terms of access to and control over social, political, economic resources and participation opportunities. In the workplace, women outnumber men in informal and high-risk jobs, with particularly evident disparities in several industries. In terms of agriculture, women are predicted to generate up to 80% of Africa's food. This is the study's starting point since the fact that women outnumber men in agricultural activities is seen as a form of violence against women because men tend to force the heavier work to women.

Hence, Nhlanhla and Tholakele outlined that the cooperative was not promoting gender inequality, but someone would think otherwise because of the domination of the specific gender (Women) in performing activities in KwaNibela. Historically, and still today the role played by women in the development of the agricultural sector is significant. Apart from sustaining the household, planting, weeding, and harvesting of crops on their farms, women play an important role in marketing and selling of farm produce. Hence there is a

growing need to strengthen the capacity of their cooperatives for increasing agricultural productivity and by implication, enhancement of their household living standards.

However, despite these current initiatives, a combination of economic constraints, cultural norms and practices continue to limit women's contribution to household food security and, to a lesser extent, impede the commercialization of the sector. Gender roles and relationships influence the division of work, the use of resources, and the sharing of the benefits of production between women and men. Specifically, the introduction of new technologies and practices, underpinned by improved service provision, often neglects the gendered consequences of market-oriented growth and many benefits bypass women.

The feminism theory assisted in answering the study's fourth objective, which was to investigate the nature of gender equity in the Akehlulwalutho cooperative. As Brunell (2023) outlined that feminism is the belief in full social, economic, and political equality for women. Feminism largely arose in response to Western traditions that restricted the rights of women. Therefore in this study, feminism assisted in ensuring that Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative promote gender equity through social and economic development. Therefore, this align with the SLF capital assests as they prioritese the livelihoods of people. Therefore, the cooperative is trying to ensure gender equity, according to the research. However, it appears that the cooperative is still headed by women, with women bearing more responsibility. As a result, the subject below was developed to analyze the contribution of the Akehlulwalutho cooperative to the eradication of poverty and unemployment.

5.2.5 THE IMPACT OF POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN KWANIBELA AREA

The theme that informed the question that require the initial reason of the implementation of the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable cooperative in KwaNibela and this is what the participants . For instance, Bab'Shezi (Durban, 2021) said:

“Kahle kahle iqala icooperative yayizimisele ukulwisana nendlala bese ikhiqiza amathuba omsebenzi empakathini kodwa izinto azibanga njalo ekuhambeni kwesikhathi. Kahle kahle kwaku hlotshisiwe Ngami

njengomuntu wendawo nowaziwayo nasebukhosini ngoba nje isasungulwa inhlangotho saqala sayofuna indawo ebukhosini bakwaMduku samukelwa kahle ngoba kwakuqhamukwa nami sanikezwa indawo esingayisebenzisa kwatholakala ukuthi ngendlela engakhona ayinayo ingqalasizinda”.

The above quotation is translated into English: “Well, when the cooperative started, it was determined to fight poverty and create jobs in KwaNibela community, but things did not go well as time goes by. It seems like I was used as a fronting person as a local and well-known person in the royal family. As soon as the organization was formed, we started looking for a place in Mduku to start with agricultural activities but unfortunately the place had no infrastructure”.

“Mama UNdlovu further said: Ngasikhathi iqala kahle inhlonso kwakuwukusiza umphakathi ngokuvula amathuba omsebenzi endaweni yakwaNibela. Nangempela avuleka amathuba ngoba kwabakhona abantu abasebenzayo kwakuhle kodwa kwathi ngokuhamba kwesikhathi izinto zabhedwa kodwa khona kukhona izinto abantu abazizuzayo”.

The above quotation is translated into English: “When it started well, the aim was to help the community by creating jobs in the Nibela area and it opened opportunities because there were working but over time things changed for worse. However, there were things that people gained”. Third Participants (Zodwa) said:

“Lomfelandawonye wasungulwa ngoba sabona isimo esibhekene noMkhanyakude ngoba sazi ukuthi lesisifunda sihlaselwe kakhulu isomiso kanjalo nendlala. Sabona ukuthi uma kuthiwa siyangenelela sicele emakhosini ukuthi kube khona into esiyenzayo singabantu ababumbeni abesifazane futhi sizame sithuthukise umnotho nathi ngokuthi silime sitshale nezithelo. Izitshalo nezithelo sazinikezela emphakathini ikakhulukazi laba abagulayo ngoba sizama ukulwisana nedlala”.

The above quotation is translated into English: This cooperative was established because we saw the situation in UMkhanyakude District because we knew that this district was suffering from severe drought and poverty. We then saw a need to intervene by asking

the royal family for the guidance and permission to occupy the land and we wanted to ensure that there is something we are doing as black women for our community to fight against poverty and high unemployment rate. We then contributed to economic development by farming pineapples and vegetables. We donated vegetables more especially to those who were sick because we are trying to fight hunger and diseases". The participant, Simangele supported Zodwa by emphasising that this cooperative indeed contributed towards the poverty reduction and unemployment rate, this is what Simangele said:

"Le nhlango yayidlala kakhulu indima ekufezeni izimfuno zomphakathi, ngikhuluma nje ngiyilunga lomphakathi ebelingasiyo igxeny yale nhlango kodwa ngizuze okuningi ngokuba igxeny yomphakathi. Le nhlango yakwazi ukuvula amathuba omsebenzi kumphakathi wonkana kanti futhi yayiqikelela ukuthi siyakuthola nokudla".

The above quotation is translated into English: "This organization played a major role in fulfilling the needs of the community, I am currently a member of the community who was not part of the organization but gained a lot by being part of the community. The organization was able to create jobs for the whole community and ensured that we also had food".

The focus group participants outlined that the cooperative aimed at fighting against unemployment and poverty that was largely affecting the KwaNibela Community. The cooperative members Mama u Khululiwe and Zanele (KwaNibela, 2021) who are both cooperative members said:

"Ngoba sihlange lana khona abangakaze babe yingxeny yale nhlango kodwa bayingxeny yomphakathi. Sikhuluma ulimu olulodwa lokuthi impela le nhlango ilwisene nobuphofu kanye nokuntuleka kwemisebenzi. Noma ngabe le nhlango ibisibekene nezinkinga kodwa yasenza isiqiniseko ukuthi izimfuno zomphakathi ziyafezeka. Impela u Gugu, u Jabu Kanye no Mama UDube bavumelene namalunga enhlango baqiniseka ukuthi le nhlanganano iyawunakekela umphakathi, nabo bazuzile yize bebenge yona igxeny yalenhlango".

The above quotation is translated into English: “As we are gathered here some of us have never been part of this cooperative, but they are part of the community, and we speak the same language that indeed proved that the cooperative is against poverty and unemployment even though this cooperative is still in trouble but made sure that the interests of the community are catered for. Indeed Gugu, Jabu and Mama Dudu (KwaNibela, 2021) (Community members) have agreed with the members of the cooperative who posits that the cooperative cater for the community, and they have benefited even though they were not part of the cooperative”.

However, Zanele emphasised that despite the cooperative fighting the increasing unemployment and poverty rate in KwaNibela area led to the decline of economic growth, since the cooperative is faced with many challenges that reduced the speed to contribute to the social and economic growth in KwaNibela. However, the cooperative truly catered and still caters for the community even though it is affected by the shortage of water and unstable market.

To overcome the related problems of poverty and unemployment, agricultural cooperative organizations, being a social development agency should play an active role in fighting against poverty and high unemployment rate. Hence, Dube and Mhembwe (2017) explained the core initial reason of the existence of cooperatives in rural areas, they outlined that Cooperatives are not a new phenomenon in rural communities, they have been part of human life in many rural areas for many previous years, the South African (SA) government is promoting the use of cooperatives as organizations that could help enhance the development of small-scale farmers and other communities in South Africa.

However, the finding of this study depicted that Akehlulwalutho cooperative has not yet fully achieved some of their objective which is to combat poverty through creating employment opportunities due to market failure of the cooperative. This fail is not deliberately because the participants of this study outlined it causes and that Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative has been creating job opportunities, however, the growth has been slow.

Bab'Shezi supported the above statement and further stated that the Akehlulwalutho cooperative was initially determined in combating a high levels of poverty and

unemployment rate through the creation of jobs opportunities however, this cooperative growth is slowly which limit the rapid contributions to cater for the needs of the community member. While, Dube and Mhembwe, (2017) made it clear that the cooperative's long existence in rural communities plays an important role in defining and sustaining the lives of the communities. Therefore, this depicted the slow-motion in terms of combating poverty and unemployment rate in KwaNibela.

In the South African context, Mbohwa and Thaba, (2015) stated that the democratic government of South Africa is supporting the development of cooperatives among historically disadvantaged groups, as a method to eradicate poverty and create jobs. To uplift the disadvantaged group and equalize the first and second economies. The use of the Sustainable Livelihood Framework in this study aid in understanding the contribution of Akehlulwalutho cooperative towards fighting the unemployment rate and poverty.

Sustainable Livelihood Framework acted as a strategy of understanding the Akehlulwalutho cooperative towards poverty alleviation. This was done through understanding the livelihoods of the people in KwaNibela, and that assisted the researcher to organize the factors that constrain or enhance livelihood opportunities in KwaNibela and shows how they relate. Thus, that depicted the contribution of Akehlulwalutho cooperative have made to sustain the livelihoods of people in KwaNibela. This was one by using the SLF capital assests and looking at the livelihood outcomes to ensure that Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Cooperative use sustainable natural resources and contribute towards household food security.

Despite the challenges faced by the cooperative, but both the cooperative and community members attest to the contribution the cooperative is having towards the community of KwaNibela. For instance, Simangele and Zodwa emphasised that this cooperative indeed contributed towards the poverty reduction and unemployment rate.

Thus, this depicted that as much as the cooperative can be exposed to different crisis and challenges, but it ensures that it gives back to the community in any way. Furthermore Dube (2016) elaborated on the challenges that are face by south African cooperatives which is but not limited to lack of management, particularly leadership, lack of adequate financing, poor cooperative integration, and an unwillingness to offer mutual support for

the common good. According to this study, Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative is affected by a number of crises that in a way hinder the functionality and effectiveness of the cooperative. However, I support both GOJ (2011) and Dube (2016) on the challenges that are faced by the cooperative which in a way leads to the early failure of the cooperative. Nevertheless, the study showed that despite the challenges the cooperative may face but it is aimed at achieving its aim and objective and the participants supported that.

Henceforth, the Focus Group Discussion participant made it clear that as there are gathered here some of them have never been part of this cooperative, but they are part of the community, and they speak the same language that indeed proved that the cooperative is against poverty and unemployment even though this cooperative is still in trouble but made sure that the interests of the community are catered for. Indeed Gugu, Jabu and Mama Dudu have agreed with the members of the cooperative to ensure that the cooperative cater to the community, and they have benefited even though they were not part of the cooperative.

In this study, participants argued that for the cooperative to not effectively meet the needs of the community it is as a result of the cooperative being located in a rural area. For instance, Zanele emphasised that despite the cooperative fighting against the increasing unemployment and poverty rate in KwaNibela area, but since the growth is slow in the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative it therefore, reduces the speed to contribute to the social and economic growth in KwaNibela. However, the cooperative truly catered and still caters for the community.

Indeed, this study portrayed the imbalance of responses towards poverty and the unemployment rate in KwaNibela. However, Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative contribute to poverty reduction and unemployment, even though the process is slow.

The Sustainable Livelihood Framework acted as a strategy in assessing the livelihood outcomes of people in KwaNibela to ensure that there is an adequate household food security. According to this research, the cooperative is attempting to attain study objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4. However, water shortage and financial assistance have had a

significant impact on Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Cooperative, resulting in a lack of market. The next theme delves deeper into the factors that impede cooperative.

5.2.6 WATER SCARCITY AND LACK OF MARKET

This theme resulted from objective 2 which required the strategies used by Akehlulwalutho cooperative in working with SMES a few questions were asked and this is what the participants said: Regarding the cooperative working with SMEs in selling of pineapples

Sthembiso (Telephonically, 2021) (Cooperative member) said:

“Enye yezinto eyayinkinga enkulu ikakhulukazi uma kufika ukutshala izithelo. Izithelo uma uqala uzitshala zivele zivuthwe kanye kanye uthole ukuthi abathengi asinabo. Enye yezinto le eyayiba yinkinga enkulu ukuthi ngenkathi siqala sitshala sasinabo abathengi sasingenawo umthamo owanele ngenxa yobuncane bendawo yokutshala, kodwa umkhiqizo wethu wawuze wonakale, ungathengwa. Kwakuzoba ngcono ukuba sasinabo abathengi abanele noma, umthamo wawungaphezulu kuka Zamimpilo owawuvame ukuza kothenga lana ngaphandle kokuthi kusuke thina siye kubo.

(One of the things that was a big problem when it came to pineapple, is that when you plant pineapple it grew at the same time which resulted in a loss of profit in the first products since it ended up being rotten. It was necessary that when we started planting, we had a market which would also be a problem because if we were talking about the market, we would not be talking like Plaza we would not have a large number of pineapples to sell to big companies because of the small hectares of land we had, but if we had a market, it would be better. The market I would say we were having is Zamimpilo and there were people coming outside the market to buy here). Mama Ndlovu supported what Sthembiso said,

“Kwakunzinyana ukuthola abahwebi abancane ngoba lenhlangano yayixaswe uNDA kodwa le Nhlangano yagcina isidayisela abantu

abangebona abahwebi abasakhulayo. Abathengu ogcine umfelandawonye usubathola abe Zamimpilo, abathenga umthamo omkhulu womkhiqizo”.

It was difficult to find small businesses because the cooperative was funded by National Development Agency (NDA) but the cooperative ended up selling to people who did not own businesses (Subsistence business), but our main market was Zamimpilo and they became our customers and the cooperative generated a lot of money). However, Zodwa outlined the problem that prohibited the cooperative to reach a market this is what she said:

“Yebo, bakhona abahwebi abasakhulayo abavame ukuthenga imikhiqizo yethu. Inselelo enkulu ungabibikho kwamanzi. Noma u Spar wawuzimisele ukusebenzisana nathi ukungabibikho kwamanzi anele yikhona okwaphazamisa kakhulu. Ukuthola ukuthi singawagubha kanjani amanzi esiphethu akuphumelelanga. Sagcina sesithengisela umphakathi ngoba izitolo ezinkulu zazilindele ukuthi sikwazi ukuba nemithamo emikhulu yemikhiqizo. Saphoqeleka ukuthi sifune abazothenga imikhiqizo yethu ngaphandle kwemibandela. Lokhu kwaholela ukuthi sisebebzisane no Zamimpilo. (Yes, there were small businesses who were coming in and buying but, then with the cooperative was affected by drought, we were asking for water drills unfortunately it was Late, at that time we were still advertising the business to work with Spar but due to water scarcity and that was our stand still. We were selling to the public because the big market was looking for big tunnels and we couldn't supply them due to water scarcity).

Dumisani (Cooperative members) said the cooperative did have the couple of few SMEs but they were not based in Hluhluwe because we had to sell our products to other places. He further named the few SMEs that the cooperative worked with, he said “The cooperative had Indlalifa Trading Enterprise, another cooperative Ubuza Zethu and Zamimpilo market.

Menzi (KwaNibela, 2021), is the community member and Sihle is the cooperative member, however they both replied to the question that aroused from objective two requiring whether the cooperative is having a successful interaction with other SMEs. They both said:

“Lomfelandawonye ngabe ukude kabi uma ngabe awubhekananga nezinkinga obhekene nazo. Okokuqala inani labathengi lincane kakhulu. . Loku kubangelwa ukuthi indawo okulinywa kuyo incane kakhulu. Lokhu kube nomthelelo omubi ngoba kuya sikalela ukuthi kumele sitshale ngoba asifuni ukuthi kugcine sesonakalelwa izinto bese silahlekelwa inzuzo”.

“This cooperative would have gone too far if it had not faced the problems it is facing. First, this cooperative had a very small market, not because it couldn't reach out to other big markets, the problem is that they had very limited hectares”. That has a negative impact on the cooperative because we are now limited to plant as many pineapples as we can because we do not want to end up ruining things and losing profits. Sihle (KwaNibela, 2021) (Cooperative member) further supported other participants on the lack of market and water scarcity crisis that is affecting the cooperative, he said:

“Le mfelandawonye yayilekelelwa kakhulu njengoba isemakhaya futhi vele indawo yaKwaNibela ihlaselwe yisomiso manje kwahamba isikhathi sagcina sangaba nandlela esizolwisana nesimo sesomiso njenge lunga le nhlango kanye nomphakathi ngizokusho kugcwale ukuthi ukungabi nomthombo wamanzi ozolekelela iAkehlulwalutho yenza sagcina salahlekelwa yilabo bahwebi abasinika usizo, ngoba sasingasakwazi ukukhiqiza sidayise. (The cooperative was largely neglected as it is situated in rural area and the KwaNibela area has been hit by a drought and over time we have had no way of coping with the drought. As a member of this cooperative and the community, I would like to point out that the lack of a water source to support the cooperative resulted in us losing the SMEs we had because we could no longer produce and sell to them).

Worldwide cooperatives are faced with different challenges which in a way affect the functionality of all cooperatives in the same way, some cooperatives lack skills, fail to cater for the surrounding communities, water scarcity and lack of market and financial assistance negatively affect the cooperative aims and objectives. Looking at the case of

Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative, the cooperative is driven by its objectives to meet the growing demand of people in KwaNibela Area. However, the cooperative is currently affected by water scarcity and lack of market which is the globally affecting most cooperatives.

Igamba (2022) explained that South Africa is already a water-scarce nation receiving insufficient and unreliable rainfall. The country receives a mean annual precipitation of 497mm/year, almost 50% less than the global average of 860mm/year. However, the country and its government try to solve this water insecurity problem by engineering dams and 'importing' water through inter-basin transfer schemes. On the other hand, due to poor access to agricultural markets, rural farmers have for so long depended on subsistence farming living other participants (traders, consumers, intermediaries) benefiting more. Poor access to markets by these rural farmers is attributed by poor road infrastructure, lack of transporting means, and broadly by lack of agricultural market information.

However, the study depicted that the cooperative had numbers of SMEs that was willing to work in corporation, but due to water scarcity that heavily impact the cooperative negatively was the stumbling block for Akehlulwalutho cooperative to access the market forces. This was as a result of lack of financial capital as the SLF indicated the importance of all capital to achieve the livelihood outcomes of the community. Moreover, the major problem that led to a lack of access to water scarcity it because South Africa is largely affected by the drought which result in less rainfall (Igamba, 2022).

Looking at some cooperatives in KwaZulu-Natal Akehlulwalutho is not the only cooperative that is faced with problems. However, all cooperatives are affected differently. Hence, Dube (2016) emphasised that the study he conducted in Amajuba Districts in KZN has also identified external challenges such as lack of training and skills, lack of access to land, lack of finance and lack of monitoring and evaluation of their initiatives. These challenges affecting agricultural cooperatives in Amajuba Districts are an example of challenges that impact cooperatives in developing countries thus, they relate to what Akehlulwalutho cooperative is currently going through.

Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative has poor marketing strategy, for a business to attract more customers a business strategy needs to be in place. Hence, the cooperative lack a marketplace due to having poor marketing strategy to cater for bigger markets, this is due to lack of management, lack of skills, and lack of finance. This is supported by the evidence shown from Kongolo (2010) and; Chladkova and Formankova (2016) depicted that SMEs represent a huge portion of businesses in developing countries including South Africa.

Thus Dlamini (2010) further stated that the research conducted outlined that some of the cooperatives in South Africa have not been effective, successful, and functional. Hence, Mabunda (2017) confirmed that as much as cooperatives play a significant role in the countries economic growth, job creation and poverty reduction and the number of registered cooperatives in South Africa has been growing very fast. However, the main challenge is that most of these cooperatives are underperforming.

In South Africa, SMEs account for about 91% of the formal business entities, contributing to about 51% and 57% of GDP, providing almost 60% of employment. The main challenges affecting SMEs in South Africa include lack of management skills, finance, access to bank credit, access to markets, appropriate technology, low production capacity, recognition by big companies, lack of interest, long bureaucracy processes, and support for the roles that small businesses can play in economic development (Kongolo, 2010). Hence, this study suggests that cooperative in rural areas must be prioritised since they are of importance and government must consider intervening in rural cooperatives in making sure that SMEs have and never-ending marketplaces, cooperative members are provided with relevant skills to enhance their level of knowledge and the community members' benefit socially and economically.

Therefore, that will portray a visible contribution towards socio-economic development. Although this cooperative is fighting against financial and water scarcity it also also fighting the scourge and increase in unemployment in KwaNibela. Hence, the cooperative introduced other programs that are able to grow the cooperative and meet the needs of the community. The theme intended to achieve the study's objective 2; however, due to variables impacting the cooperative, the Akehlulwalutho cooperative is unable to work

with SMEs. The following theme elaborated on the influence on the Akehlulwalutho cooperative.

5.2.7 POOR PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF THE COOPERATIVE

The participants answered how Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Agricultural Cooperative contributes towards alleviating household food insecurity amongst its members and the community of KwaNibela. Participants argued in this extent because Mama u Ndlovu emphasised that

”inhlango yayisebenza ngempela kodwa uma kwakuthiwa abaphathi bayo babezimisele ngabe ikude kabi kodwa wawubona nje ukuthi imali ngathi iyona ehamba phambili”. (The organization was really working but if its management was determined it would be very far from where it is, but the aim of the management was driven by money).

This is not the only participant that outlined the poor management that is affecting the cooperative, Baba u Shezi also stated that when they were looking at the place for developing agricultural activities they encountered the following:

“Yimi lo engangena phakathi ehlathini ngagawula ihlathi kungekho lutho, ngagubha izihlahla phansi ngenhloso yokuthi kufanele kulinywe vele nangempela leyonto yenzeka yaba impumelelo kwagcina kwaze kwabiywa, bathola uxaso olwaluvela kwa NDA. Nakhona lapho ngoba ngisho ukuthi ekugcineni ngabona ukuthi ngisebenza ngedwa kakhulu, kanti futhi lento yayingahlelwanga kahle ngoba kwakuba khona izinto ezenzakalayo kodwa zenzeka ngingaziboni mina”.

(“I was the one who went into the middle of the forest and cut down the forest with nothing, I dug down the trees with the intention that it should be ploughed and in fact that was a success. However, there were things that happened behind my back”)

Kodwa ngoba nganginenhloso yokuthi kuzosetshenzwa umhlabathi bese ngibona ushitsho uma umhlabathi ukhiqiza izitshalo nezithelo. Ngalokho futhi impela ngingaqinisekisa ukuthi ngasebenza.

(But because I had the intention that the main goal we have, is to work the soil and see the change when the soil produces its own things and I really worked. Mama u Ndlovu said:

”Ukungahleleki kahle, ngokubona kwami lento iqalwa yayigenalo uhlelo, izithelo nje engaqala ngazozabolela ezihlahleni singenabo abantu abazozithenga. Kwaba into engabonakali nje kahle kwasekwathi sesitshala okwesibili batholakala abantu abasezamimpilo esasibadayisela. Into engiyibonayo ukuthi umnikazi we nhlango owahluleka ukuthi le nhlango ihambe ngendlela eyiyona ngoba ukube waba nezindawo esasizodayisela kuzo singakatshali kwakungeke kugcine ngokubola kweithelo zethu. Kwakumele uma sekuzovuthwa izithelo athinte abamabhizinisi amamncane namakhulu bathenge kithi”.

(Poor planning, in my opinion this start-up had no plan, the first pineapple we planted rotted in the trees without any market to sell to, it was a bit of a hassle and then we pulled up the game in the second wave, we found the market and people to sell to. What I see that the owner of the cooperative failed to operate the cooperative before the plantation.

Therefore, the researcher depicted that some of the cooperative members’ believed that the cooperative belongs to the chairperson, while they have explained the initial development of the cooperative which was to combat the high unemployment and poverty rate in KwaNibela. Furthermore, the cooperative was supposed to contact small business owners to pick up pineapple after ripping it). Simangele confirmed that the cooperative was established under a poor planning, this is what she said:

“Njenge lunga lo mphakathi impela le nhlango kuyasho ukuthi yasungulwa izihlelo zayo zingacacanga, njengo mphakathi sazibona impela izihloso ze nhlango ukuthi lomfelandawonye wawufisa ukulwisana nobubha nokusweleka kwamathuba omsebenzi endaweni yakwa KwaNibela. Nangempela lokho kwenzeka abantu abaningi baqashwa”.

(As a member of this community, this cooperative shows that it was implemented under poor planning, as a community we have seen the organisation's intentions that this

cooperative aimed to fight poverty and unemployment rate in KwaNibela Area, and that is exactly what happened when many people were hired).

“Inkinga ukungahleleki nokungaphathwa ngendlela kwalomfelandawonye ukuthi kwasheshe kwashitswa imicabango yabantu ekucabangeni ukuthi angeke inhlango isakwazi ukubhekelana nezimfuno zomphakathi kodwa uma kwabakhona ukuhlela kahle ngabe kwabakhona izinyathelo zokulwisana nezinkinga ababhekene nazo”.

(The problem is that the poor planning and management of the cooperative quickly changed people's minds to think that they could no longer cater for the needs of the community but if the cooperative was well planned it would have potential measures to combat the problems they face).

Many cooperatives worldwide come across different challenges that affect them differently hence many fails at an early phase. This study depicted the core reason that limited the effectiveness and functionality of Akehlulwalutho Cooperative. In that case, the study strongly agrees with GOJ (2011), as they stated that there are approximately 100,000 farmer cooperatives in Jamaica (GOJ, 2011), but over the years these cooperatives faced many challenges for their sustainable operations. The challenges include lack of management, particularly leadership, lack of adequate financing, poor cooperative integration, and an unwillingness to offer mutual support for the common good (Dube, 2016). Many participants argued about poor planning invested in this cooperative which led to poor management. This study showed that the Akehlulwalutho cooperative was poorly planned as it still struggles to encounter its financial crisis

Thus Dlamini (2010) further stated that the research conducted outlined that some of the cooperatives in South Africa have not been effective, successful, and functional. Hence, Mabunda (2017) confirmed that as much as cooperatives play a significant role in the country's economic growth, job creation, poverty reduction and the number of registered cooperatives in South Africa has been growing very fast. However, the main challenge is that most of these cooperatives are underperforming.

Participants outlined the poor management that is affecting the cooperative is associated with failing to adequately Plan, organise, lead and control (POLC) the cooperative effectively. As Goljic (2021) stated that managers should set a plan, then set up sources based on the plan, lead staff to work in the direction of the plan, and finally, control every little thing by monitoring and measuring the effectiveness of the plan which is what the cooperative fails to achieve. Due to poor planning Baba Shezi also stated that during the establishment of developing agricultural activities there were no proper planning he was the only one to cut down the forest.

The management functions described by Goljic (2021) includes finance, marketing, human and natural assets which they play a vital role in this study. As a result, this creates a linkage to the SLF and DAC criteria as the study adopted the effectiveness DAC criteria to assess the livelihoods of people in KwaNibela through assessing the SLF capitals to ensure it contributes towards socio-economic development. However, the study showed that the cooperative is lacking poor planning due to inadequate marketing strategies. However, as a cooperative it is important for a business to craft a strategic plan and ensure its execution.

According to the response of the participants and the current state of the cooperative, the cooperative was not initially planned properly. As much as cooperatives always aimed at combating unemployment, poverty and contributing towards Local Economic Development (LED). Hence, Nefale (2016) outlined that the agricultural sector is contributing to poverty reduction and in the creation of job opportunities and employment. Thus, contributing to rural development and socio-economic development

However, several cooperatives tend to fail in the implementation phase because they fail to outdo the planning phase. This study disclosed the Akehlulwalutho cooperative potential it has towards combating the increasing rate of unemployment and poverty in KwaNibela as the cooperative is still existing and provide potentially measures to combat the above-mentioned factors which is what Goljic (2021) delineated in the POLC management functions .

However, as much as the Akehlulwalutho cooperative was poorly planned and under poor management many participants outlined that even the cooperative is poorly planned but

the main objective of the cooperative fighting against poverty and unemployment is progressively happening since the cooperative attempt towards alleviating poverty and unemployment rate and its mark was recognised and visible, hence its ultimate plan is to continue catering for the community.

Some participants such as Simangele, stated that had the cooperative was properly planned and managed, the cooperative would have had the potential measures to mitigate the crisis it facing nevertheless Zodwa emphasized that even in this presence. This was also assessed through the SLF by checking the planning, organising, leadership and control to establish management, SLF assisted in establishing assets such as capital, human resources, natural and social capital.

The cooperative is still intervening in community matters wherever they can, and this is supported by the plans of the cooperative which is to continue fighting unemployment and rural communities have a lot to benefit from undertaking cooperative programs. Rural communities that continue to exist without cooperatives are likely to find themselves entangled in high levels of poverty. The above-mentioned theme intended to meet the study's aims. As a result, the theme below will bring together all of the study's objectives in order to answer the study's core question, which is the evaluation of the Akehlulwalutho cooperative's contribution to KwaNibela's socio-economic development.

5.2.8 EFFECTS ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN KWANIBELA AREA

This theme roused from the follow up question that was summative to the study, the first question was 'looking at the time you serve at the cooperative, were the cooperative aims/objectives achieved'? Baba u Shezi said:

“Angifuni ukuthi zafezeka noma ngithi azifezekanga ngoba kuningi nami engangikubona kungahambi ngendlela kodwa ngikhona ngaphakathi manje uma ngizothi zafezeka ngizobe ngifana nomuntu oqamba amanga ngangikubona okunye lokhu akusesikho lokhu mina ebengazi ukuthi inhloso yayo yiyo manje futhi zikhona nezinto ezinhle ezenziwa yi le nhlango manje angikho esimweni esihle ukuthi ngithi yebo noma cha”.

The above quotation is translated into English: “I do not want to say they were fulfilled or to say that they did not happen because there are many things that I saw that were not going well and also there are good things that this cooperative, so am not in any position to state otherwise since am not with the cooperative currently”.

He further stated that *“imali yophayinapha yimina lona engagcine ngiwuthengisa, engangifika nemali ngifike ngibanike kodwa angeke ngikutshela ukuthi yaphelelaphi leyo mali. Ubhatata kwathi uma usulungile bagcine sebezidayisela bona bodwa angiyazi namanje imali yayo ukuthi yaphelelaphi manjeke uma ngizothi izinhloso zakhona zafezeka ngizobe ngingalikhulumi iqiniso. Nganginayo inhloso enhlizweni yami kodwa ukuthi ibonakale ukuthi nansi kwakungenzeki”*.

The above quotation is translated into English: “The pineapple money that I ended up selling, I do not remember getting a cent out of it I came with the money and gave it to them. After the vegetables failed the starting with the plantation of sweet potatoes and when they are ready, they end up selling them on their own. I still don't know where the money went. I had a purpose in my heart, but it seemed that this was not going to happen”. Thus, Zipho (Telephonical, 2021) (Community member) said:

“Njengomhlali waKwaNibela obekhona isaqala lemfelandawonye kuze kube manje, ngingasho nje ukuthi yona impela le mfelandawonye yazama ukunikezela emphakathini yize nje ukuthi manje ibhekene nenkinga ngoba ayimile siyethemba ekugcineni sizobe sesithi impela ibenempumelelo ekunikezeleni kwabantu”.

The above quotation is translated into English: “As a KwaNibela resident who was present at the beginning of the cooperative until now, I can only say that the cooperative really tried to give back on the community even though it is now facing problems, but because it still operational we hope in the end we will be saying that it was really successful in the giving back to the community”. The researcher then asks Baba Shezi if he was also not getting paid. He said:

“Kukhona isikhathi lapho i-NDA yayithi abantu abathize ngokwehlukahlukana kwabo ikakhulukazi abasekomidini bese kuze kwehlela kubantu abasebenzayo bazonikezwa imali yokugibela. Kodwa kwathi i-NDA eseshiye izintambo yilapho abantu baqala khona ukungakhokhelwa kodwa imali ikhona”.

The above quotation is translated into English: “There was a time when the NDA said that certain people in their various positions especially those on the committee, and to those working they would be given a Stipend. But since the NDA stopped funding Akehlulwalutho people began not to get paid but the organisation had money”. The second question was according to you (participant) would you say this cooperative contribute to the socio-economic development,

Baba Shezi said:

“Kunzima ukuwuphendula kahle lowo mbuzo ngoba mhlampe ungaphinduleka kubantu labo abasuke bathi ithina esisebenza lana bese bazisholo bona ukuthi kuisizile ngoba besingatholi lutho kusizileke ngoba sekukhona esikutholayo. Kodwa mina uma ngingawuphendula ngithi kwaba nomthelelo kumnotho endaweni yaKwaNibela ngizobe ngikhulumela into abantu abazothi abayazi”.

The above quotation is translated into English: “It is difficult to answer that question correctly because it can probably be answered by people who would say that we work here and gained something since we were not getting anything. But if I can answer it by saying that there was an economic contribution to the KwaNibela area I will be talking about something that some people will say they do not know” He further stated that:

“Kodwa iqiniso ukuthi labobonke abake baba khona ngaphakathi kwakhona abakutholayo abebelumelene ngakho bangazisholo bona futhi abantu engingasho ukuthi basizakala ilababantu abahambelwa abanakekeli bomphakathi ngoba uma kwakutholakala ukuthi kukhona abantu abanjalo babezobikwa enhlanganweni babenikezwa imifino. Yilezo zinto engingasho

ukuthi inhlangothano yazenza ukubonelela umphakathi kodwa ukuthi ngithi kwaba khona ushitsho kuzokhuluma labo bantu ababethola izinto”.

The above quotation is translated into English: “But the fact is, that all those who have ever been part and parcel of the cooperative got what they have agreed on so they can say that the cooperative contributed to socio-economic development and the people I would say are the beneficiaries are those who were visited by CCGs (Community Care Givers) because if it was found that such people would be reported to the organization they would be given Veggies. These are the things that I would say that the organization did to provide for the community but that I say there was a change will speak for those people who were getting things”.

However, Zodwa said:

“Yebo ikwenzile ngoba ngokwami umphathi we nhlangothano ubezithobile noma ngabe uyafika uthi awunawo umfaniswano uyakwazi ukuxhumana nezinhlangano ezingakwazi ukusiza kule sosimo, inhlangothano iyakwazi ukusiza labantwana esebeqedile esikoleni ukuthi baqhubeke nezimfundoo zabo. Noma sibe nenkinga yokuphelelwa wuxhaso sangakwazi ukusiza emphakathini kodwa ngoba umphakathi ubukwazi ukuthi uma udinga usizo uyaphi awuphelanga mandla ubulokhe uza yingakho nje nathi sesizamile ukubuyela enhlanganweni. Ngikhulume ngento yanamhlanje (12 Feb 2021) abantu bakwazile ukulala bedlile ngenxa yale nhlangothano. Impela le nhlangothano iyangenelela emphakathini ngingeke ngisho ukuthi uwusiza 100% umphakathi kodwa lapho isandla esifinyelela khona siyasiza”.

The above quotation is translated into English: “Yes the cooperative did contribute to socio-economic development because personally the director of the organization was humble, and she assist everyone who seek for assistance. Some people would come and say they do not have a uniform she could contact organizations that could help in this situation, the cooperative help graduates to continue with their education. Even though we had financial crisis we could not help the community but because the community knew where to go if they needed help, they did not give up and that is why we have tried to return to the cooperative. As of today (12 Feb 2021) people have been able to sleep and

eat because of this cooperative. Certainly, this organization is intervening in the community I would not say that they are helping 100% of the community but where the hand reaches out it helps”.

Mama Ndlovu further argued that: *“Inhloso yale nhlangano vele kwawukusizakala komphakathi washo nasezihlosweni zeNhlango ukuthi ufuna ukusiza abantu abaphila nesandulela ngculazi ukuze bakkwazi ukuthola ukudla kodwa imali sagcina sesingayiboni kodwa yayingena kwagcine sekunengxabano yaphela kanjalo”.*

The above quotation is translated into English: *“The purpose of the cooperative was to benefit the community and to the cooperative's goals that it wants to help people living with HIV/Aids so that they can get vegetables, but we did not see the money that was generated through selling it caused a lot of commotion and the cooperative was on pause for quite some time”* Baba u Shezi:

“Kodwa le nhlangano yayingenelela emphakathini ngoba kule nhlangano kwaku nonompilo abahambela emakhaya babona. Abantu abagulayo bahanjiselwa ama imifino nezitshalo, indaba yonakala lapha inhlango isixhasiwe kwaphuma izimali izinto zashitsha. Abantu ababeqashiwe bagcine sebengasaholelwa”.

The above quotation is translated into English: “But the cooperative was intervening in the community because there were care givers the things went bad when the cooperative was funded, and money came out and things changed”. People who were hired eventually lost their jobs). The participants answered the question of what did Akehlulwalutho did to Contributions to the community of KwaNibela? (Follow up question for objective 3).

Simangele said:

“Sinaba nakekeli bomphakathi abaneqhaza elikhulu ngoba uma bethola abantu abahlezi emakhaya uthole ukuthi bayagula abadli maphilisi bayangenelela. Uma bethola abantu abaziwa ndawo ukuthi kukhona abantu abagulayo, futhi abanye babo uma kukhona into okufanele banikezwe yona efana nakho ukudla bayahlela. Ngokungenelela konompilo

bekuzanywa ukuthi lezozinto zenzeke emphakathini banikezwe amaphilisi nokudla abangenakho. Impela bezikhona izinto ezithile ebesixhaswa ngazo singumphakathi”.

The above quotation is translated into English: “We have Community Care Givers (CCGs) who play a key role in finding how people are living at home and finding those that are sick and the food they have so that the cooperative can know where to stand in terms of assisting the community. In fact, the cooperative is indeed assisting the community at large”. Dumisani said, the cooperative is fighting against poverty reduction and unemployment through preventing food insecurity by having stipend for the employees and also the cooperative had the food security scheme that would cater for people, this was benefiting everyone in a sense because cooperative members had something to do and get stipend and the cooperative give back to the community in a form of food parcels. The question arose which is the cooperative still operating?

Mama Ndlovu said:

“Ulwazi anginalo kahle kodwa ngicabanga ukuthi isasebenza kodwa lokhu okwakuqasha abantu nokwenziwa kwengadi akusenzeki njenge jwayelo. Njengamanje akusenziwa lutho akusekho ngisho abantu abaqashwayo sekusele lokhu owayekwenza okuhlangene nayo inhlango le”.

The above quotation is translated into English: “I do not have much information, but I think it still operating but there are no longer hiring and practicing sufficient agricultural activities”. However, Dumisani specified that the cooperative currently is doing both the agricultural sector and home base care but what has been happening is that where the cooperative is currently located in terms of agricultural the cooperative is faced with some problems in previous years.

So what the cooperative has been doing currently is the sourcing for other places even though the cooperative still have the initial place that is operational but there are some places that we are still trying to establish in other communities around uMkhanyakude District to extend the cooperative and farm variety of vegetables and pineapple.

Answering the question that drew back to the before and after the implementation of the cooperative, that do you see the gap of its existence?

Mama Ndlovu said:

“Ngingasho ukuthi isikhala sayo sabakhona ngoba ngalesikhathi sisacosha okuncane esasikuncosha khona kwathi sekuphelile kwaqala ukubonakala usizo abantu baqala bagcinga amathuba omsebenzi”.

The above quotation is translated into English: “I would say that there was a space because while the cooperative was still operating, we benefited a lot but after the cooperative faced financial difficulties, we started to see a gap”. However, Dumisani said this cooperative has indeed achieved its objectives especially with skills development and even with the pineapple were quite good for the market and looking from where the cooperative started we started I would say we come a long way, it is clear that the cooperative can be sustainable in few years but I can say we have achieved the lot from where we started.

In the global context, agriculture and rural development are regarded as the core of socio-economic development in many developing and developed countries in the world with that being stated, the lack of strong agricultural productivity growth causes persistent rural poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa (Bjornlund, Bjornlund and Van Rooyen, 2020). Worldwide, the cooperatives that contributed to the socio-economic development used five Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are Goal (2 & 5), because cooperatives are enterprises directly committed to sustainable development due to their dual nature—economic and social (Castilla-Polo and Sánchez-Hernández, 2020). Hence, this study adopted five SDG (2 & 5) towards evaluating the effectiveness of the Akehlulwalutho cooperative towards socio-economic development.

Therefore, goal number two, "Zero Hunger," is linked to the social component of the KwaNibela community since participants described how the cooperative is doing everything it can to ensure that households have access to food security in order to combat poverty. However, because women predominate in Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative, gender equality is still a minor issue there. The conclusions

imply that the cooperative was motivated by economic development. As a result, the two sdgs used in the study helped determine how well the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative combats the high unemployment and poverty rates.

In the African context, inequality has always been the centre of everything since inequalities continue between women and men in terms of access to and control over social, political and economic resources and opportunities for participation (Shimles & Nabassaga, 2017). In employment, women are dominated more than men in informal and risky work, with particularly pronounced imbalances in some sectors. Concerning agriculture, women are expected to produce up to 80% of the food in Africa. Yet, when it comes to agricultural inputs and services, the share going to women is inadequate: they receive only 7% of agricultural extension services, less than 10% of the credit offered to small-scale farmers and own only 1% of the land (CoopAfrica, 2012).

The study clearly portrayed that the cooperative is lacking social capital for people to have equally access to the cooperative so they can work together to effectively achieve a common goal. Thus, whether it is gender inequality or inequality, in general, its impact is slightly towards the cooperative. As much as this cooperative was promoting gender equity but it created gaps between employees which caused social tension and that resulted in low socio-economic development because of the segregation within the cooperative.

However, the study depicted that the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Cooperative contribution towards the community was largely felt. The participants emphasized the additional sector within the cooperative that was aiming at ensuring that sick people in the KwaNibela area are taken good care of was social capital. Hence, Dumisani said, the cooperative is fighting against poverty reduction and unemployment by preventing food insecurity by having a food security scheme that cater for people, this was benefiting everyone through social capital. Looking at the financial capital, the cooperative was having financial challenges which resulted in the slow growth of socio-economic in KwaNibela. This financial challenges impacted the cooperative negatively since the

cooperative failed to provide irrigation schemes to combat the water scarcity (natural capital) in Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative.

The Akehlulwalutho cooperative was not well established because it was all over the place it first started in 2012 planting pineapples and vegetables due to water scarcity, financial constraints and poor management of the cooperative it has to change from planting pineapples with vegetables to planting pineapples with sweet potatoes. Hence, this shows that the cooperative was poorly planned and managed.

However, in terms of socio-economic development in KwaNobela. Akehlulwalutho cooperative brought about some changes in this area because it impacted the community positively since the participants acknowledge the fact the cooperative was largely affected by financial crisis while the cooperative was initially sponsored with approximately 2 million. However, the participants made it clear that despite all the crises faced or still facing the cooperative is giving back to the community, it is fighting against poverty, unemployment, and household food insecurity. Thus, this implies that the socially and economically cooperative is contributing towards socio-economic development. The cooperative contributed towards socio-economic development by creating job opportunities for people in KwaNobela, ensuring household food security is adequate to everyone and the employ local people to advance their skills.

Therefore, this study showed that this cooperative is still operating both the in-home base care sector and agricultural sector. However, the agricultural sector has been affected and disturb by water scarcity and an unstable selling market. Thus, cooperative members outlined that the cooperative plan of action that there are currently implementing in boosting the agricultural sector. The participants outlined that the cooperative is in the process of sourcing the cooperative to other areas under uMkhanyakude District that is not affected by water scarcity in that way the cooperative is still aiming to achieve its objective of fighting against poverty and unemployment thus contributing to socio-economic development to the surrounding community and other community under uMkhanyakude district.

5.3 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the following key points were noted from the analysis and interpretation of the findings. The researcher noted that the Akehlulwalutho Cooperative was largely affected by water scarcity and financial crisis due to poor planning and poor management in place. Another arose matter that the research pointed out was the insufficient market to sell the product due to the lack of land to perform agricultural activities. The problem experienced by this cooperative financial crisis, lack of land and financial crisis which most of the causes the study argued to be the lack of proper planning and having standby solution to mitigate the problem at hand.

According to the study, the cooperative's agriculture sector is currently inactive. The cooperative, on the other hand, developed a new sector that deals with home-based care, which currently meets the community's needs while it seeks to solve its difficulties. As a result, the study revealed that the cooperative is doing everything possible to contribute to socioeconomic development, as the participants acknowledged. The following chapter offers a recommendation and a conclusion to the study's problem.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the conclusion and recommendations by synthesising the objective and findings of this study. This is done by revisiting the methods employed to achieve the main objectives of the study thereby addressing the problem of the study. Therefore, in concluding the report, the researcher provides a summary of the key findings and analyses, and then finally submits recommendations on how to address the current issues faced by Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables cooperative to restore its effectiveness in the KwaNibela area.

The introduction and implementation of the suggested recommendations would assist Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative in contributing effectively towards socio-economic development in the KwaNibela area. These recommendations are influenced by authors such as Balezenetis; Morkunas; Ribasauskiene; Streimikiene; Sumyle; and Volkov (2019) who stated that the creation of a sustainable agricultural sector involves boosting the cooperative activities as these contribute to the societal and economic development of the farms, farmers, and rural societies. This chapter contributes to the literature on the analysis of the drivers and obstacles of cooperation development in agriculture.

6.2 BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND MAJOR FINDINGS

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative towards socio-economic development in the KwaNibela area. This was achieved by analysing and interpreting the data collected from the major to the minor important themes. Thus, giving recommendations of the study.

The researcher explored various causes and solutions to address the problem for the study and contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of contributing towards rural livelihoods, thus strengthening the local economic development in KwaNibela. The researcher, outlines people's experiences and perspectives about the Akehlulwalutho cooperative and its contribution towards socio-economic development thus using people's experiences, perspectives, and suggestions in providing recommended

solutions to ensure that sustainable livelihood is achieved in a form of combating poverty and unemployment rate in KwaNibela.

This is why Krantz; Scoones; Wolmer and Frankenberger (2020) emphasised that livelihoods in Southern Africa are in a crisis. One of the worst major food crises has hit the region, with over 14 million reported to be at risk. Hence, they have attempted to examine how various rural development and governance initiatives, concerning wild resources, land, and water, have played out in practice in a series of rural areas in three southern African countries: Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

By looking empirically and in detail at what has and has not happened on the ground, questions are raised about the nature of the current livelihoods crisis, its origins and potential solutions, which is what resulted in this recommendation chapter. Thus, addressing the problem that informed this study. Therefore, according to the perceptions and experiences of the participant's responses the researcher provided the recommendations that are informed by the research questions and objectives of the study. The study depicted the following in relation to answering the main research questions and the objectives of this study.

6.2.1 How effective is the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Agricultural Cooperatives on the socio-economic development of rural people in KwaNibela?

The study portrayed that the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative is affected by major challenges that include the lack of management, particularly leadership, lack of adequate financing, poor cooperative integration, and an unwillingness to offer mutual support for the common good. Many participants argued about poor planning invested in this cooperative which led to poor management. This study showed that the Akehlulwalutho cooperative was poorly planned as it still struggles to encounter its financial and water crisis. Despite the challenges the cooperative is facing, the study also showed that this cooperative is still operating both in home-based care sector and the agricultural sector. However, the agricultural sector has been affected and disturbed by water scarcity and an unstable selling market. Thus, cooperative members outlined that

there's a cooperative plan of action that they are currently implementing in boosting the agricultural sector.

The cooperative is in the process of introducing the irrigation scheme to fight against water scarcity in Akehulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative in that way the cooperative is still aiming to achieve its objective of fighting against poverty and unemployment thus contributing to socio-economic development to the surrounding community. Therefore, the above mentioned showed that the cooperative is showing its effectiveness towards socio-economic development since it achieves and still achieves its basic objective of the establishment of Akehulwalutho which is to cater for the needs of the community through poverty eradication and creation of employment.

6.2.2 What are the influences of Akehulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Agricultural Cooperative towards employment and job creations?

The study depicted that this cooperative has a diverse portfolio since the agricultural sector is currently not fully functional. However, the cooperative still prioritises employing of local people in other sectors that are within the cooperative. Many participants outlined that the cooperative is creating employment opportunities that not only benefit the KwaNobela community but the communities under uMkhanyakude District. Many opportunities aroused from Akehulwalutho Cooperative despite the challenges it currently faces. Several participants agreed that since there is a global pandemic (Covid-19) the cooperative played a key role in assisting the community with providing them with knowledge and resources to prevent this disease

In overall, the cooperative is creating job opportunities as this is its primary objective of its existence. Normally, people work interchangeably in the cooperative in order to accommodate everyone in the community, the cooperative employs people on a regular basis to carry the work for the stipulated time frame. However, as much as the cooperative is creating job opportunities for people but it certainly does not guarantee their long involvement as the process of employment regularly took place.

6.2.3 How does the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Agricultural Cooperative impact boosting the SMEs?

The study depicted that the cooperative had numbers of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) that are willing to work in corporation with, but due to challenges that affecting the agricultural activities impacted the cooperative negatively as it was the stumbling block for Akehlulwalutho cooperative to access the market forces. However, the study depicted that the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Cooperative contribution towards the community was largely felt. The participants emphasized the additional sector within the cooperative that was aiming at ensuring that sick people in KwaNibela area are taken good care of was social capital.

Despite the challenges faced by the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative, the cooperative showed that it prioritise working with the SMEs (Zamimpilo Market) as they are both primary cooperatives. Hence, the cooperative introduced another sector to the cooperative to boost the SMEs. Therefore, since the cooperative is having difficulties to have viable market forces the membership of a secondary cooperative or local chamber of commerce and business should assist the cooperative in social networking thus contributing towards social capital. In this way, the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative will have an effectiveness corporation with the SMEs thus contributing towards socio-economic development in KwaNibela.

6.2.4 How does Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Agricultural Cooperative contribute towards alleviating household food insecurity?

In the South African context, the democratic government of South Africa is supporting the development of cooperatives among historically disadvantaged groups, as a method to eradicate poverty and create jobs, to uplift the disadvantaged group and equalize the first and second economies in the developing countries. In understanding the Akehlulwalutho cooperative towards poverty and household food insecurity alleviation the researcher organised the factors that constrain or enhance livelihood opportunities in KwaNibela and it shows how they relate. Thus, that depicted the level of contribution Akehlulwalutho cooperative have made to sustain the livelihoods of people in KwaNibela.

However, as much as the Akehlulwalutho cooperative has not yet fully achieved some of their objective which is to combat poverty through creating opportunities, but the cooperative ensured in contribute towards eradication of household food insecurity by introducing the home base care that caters for the needs of the community. Participants argued that for the cooperative to not effectively meet the needs of the community it is as a result of the cooperative being located in a rural area.

For instance, Zanele emphasised that despite the cooperative fighting against the increasing poverty rate in KwaNibela are the growth is slow in the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative it therefore, reduces the speed to contribute to the social and economic growth in KwaNibela. However, the cooperative truly catered and still caters for the community. Indeed, this study portrayed the imbalance of responses towards poverty rate in KwaNibela. However, Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative contribute to poverty reduction even though the process is slow.

6.2.5 What is the nature of gender equity in Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Agricultural Cooperative?

This study portrayed that whether it is gender inequality or inequality in general its impact is huge on the cooperative. As much as this cooperative was promoting gender equity but it created gaps between employees causing social tension and that resulted in low socio-economic development because of the segregation within the cooperative.

In terms of employment, this study showed that the Akehlulwalutho cooperative was supporting gender equity; all participants stated that the cooperative was founded by women, but that when they hired, they used equity as a hiring consideration. The data revealed that, while this cooperative does not discriminate, which means more jobs for women, KwaNibela culture still views women as the ones who bore the burdens of labour. As a result, this implies that there is a gender divide in terms of who should do what; it's more along the lines of "the women's place is in the kitchen." This was explained by Thoko, who made it apparent that the cooperative was managed by a woman.

6.3 DRAWING LOGICAL CONCLUSIONS FROM THE DATA THAT WAS INTERPRETED

The study depicted that the cooperative is faced with many challenges that results in the slow development of social and economic in KwaNibela. However, the main objective of the cooperative was to contribute towards socio-economic development through job creation and eradication of poverty. Poor management and lack of adequate financing is perceived as the problem in Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Cooperative as this hinder the effectiveness of the cooperative towards socio-economic developmet.

Another issue the study identified is the lack of irrigation scheme in Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Cooperative, it is essential for every cooperative to have an irrigation scheme in place has South Africa is currently experiencing water scarcity. This will assist in ensuring that the business as usually is operating without any interference. Due to water scarcity affecting the cooperative, the study showed that the cooperative has introduced another segment within the cooperative that is home base and cater for the needs and wellbeing of the community.

In overall, the cooperative showed that it has their community at best interest as it still employ people regardless of the challenges it face. The researcher clearly outlined that the cooperative is slowly contributing towaeds socio-economic development, as much as the cooperative is creating job opportunities for people but it certainly does guarantee their long involvement as the process of employment reguraly took place. Looking at the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) plays the huge role towards contributing towars socio-economic development.

However, the study showed that Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Cooperative is having difficulties to wrok efficiently with the number SMEs, however, the cooperative is working with the local SME that is called (Zamimpilo) and the surrounding people in order to grow the loca economic. In a nutshell, the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative depicted that they contribute towards combating household food insecurity even though the cooperative is not fully eradicating poverty but the study depicted that is it trying.

In terms of gender equity, according to the study it is still a bit of an issue as this showed that more work is yielded by women than men. This therefore implies that the cooperative is dominated by women and more work is expected to be done and delivered by women. However, in terms of employment, this study showed that the Akehlulwalutho cooperative was supporting gender equity and ensuring that when employing they employ both genders.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

6. 4. 1 Recommendations for Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables cooperative to contribute effectively towards socioeconomic development in the KwaNibela area.

In order for Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative to contribute effectively towards socio-economic development the study recommends that the cooperative must ensure to create job opportunities that align with the skills of people in KwaNibela this will be done by firstly ensuring that the lack of management, particularly leadership, lack of adequate financing, poor cooperative integration is mitigated to enhance socio-economic development.

Thus, this will ensure that the cooperative ensure it prioritises employment and combating poverty as its initial aim is stipulated. This can be achieved if the cooperative first adheres to the recommendation above. This will also help to boost food production, empower the marginalised, especially women, and promote social solidity and integration, thereby improving their livelihoods and reducing poverty.

Therefore, this study recommends that the government and the banking sector provide financial support to cooperatives in rural communities to allow the cooperatives to develop and diversify their business operations; constant training on leadership and ensure management skills is provided to cooperatives' members. There is also a need for cooperatives in the agricultural sector, to form some producer associations to easily market their produce.

The study recommends that the cooperative must seek government assistance that will assist in supporting primary, secondary and tertiary cooperatives in KwaNibela in order

to create a bigger market. In addressing the issue of water scarcity, the Akehlulwalutho must consider creating an irrigation scheme in that way the issue of water can be addressed. Thus, this study recommends that social impact assessments (SIA) be conducted in KwaNibela to assist in terms of assessing social consequences that are likely to follow from policy actions.

The study showed that Akehlulwalutho Cooperative is people-centred, so it fights against gender equity. However, the study also showed that there is an employment inequality among employees. Therefore, for the cooperative to function effectively towards socio-economic development the employment equity act must be implemented on the day-to-day work that will create transparency and trustworthy thus creating a conducive environment for everyone. That will also be led to the effective functioning of the cooperative.

6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Since this study was conducted during the global pandemic (Covid-19) it has slightly limited the study to further explore the effectiveness of Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Cooperative towards socio-economic development. Therefore, the researcher recommends that the Future studies should focus on researching the effective ways that the agricultural cooperatives develop a good working relationship with SMEs. Overall, the study recommends that the same study be conducted and constructed in a new context, location, and theoretical framework. Also other studies should focus more on the community's responses and support to cooperatives. Moreover, comparative and longitudinal studies of cooperatives can be undertaken.

6.6 CONCLUSION

This study concluded that cooperatives are not a new phenomenon to exist in rural communities, as they have been part of human life in many rural areas for many previous years. Because of the cooperatives' long existence in rural communities, the study also concluded that cooperatives play a significant role in defining and sustaining the lives of the communities. Therefore, rural communities have a lot to benefit from undertaking cooperative programmes.

Rural communities that continue to exist without cooperatives are likely to find themselves entangled in high levels of poverty. The study further concluded that cooperatives are established for various purposes, including economic development, empowering of marginalised members of communities, to address market failures, as a defence against adverse socio-economic conditions, to access cheap transport and storage facilities and to purchase inputs at affordable prices. The major roles of the cooperatives to the rural communities include poverty reduction, employment creation, improved food security, women empowerment and human capital development. It was also the study's conclusion that the running of cooperatives' programmes is a cumbersome activity.

This is so because apart from the significant role played by rural cooperatives in sustaining the livelihoods of the rural communities in the uMkhanyakude District, most of these cooperatives face several challenges which prohibit them from operating at full capacity. Such challenges need to be effectively dealt with so that there is a smooth running of cooperatives in rural communities. Lastly, the study concluded that cooperatives would continue to be part of rural life, as such cooperatives have a propensity to sustain the livelihoods of many rural communities. As a result, the study met all of the study's objectives. However, some objectives disclose cooperative-related issues that have impacted the cooperative's ability to function. In that case, this chapter offered suggestions for resolving the issues raised in the study.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: LETTER TO STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Dear study participant

My name is Nokuthaba Xolile Zikhali. I am a Masters' degree student enrolled at the University of Zululand within the Department of Anthropology and Development Studies. I am conducting a study on the evaluation of akehlulwalutho pineapple and vegetable cooperative towards socioeconomic development in KwaNibela area. The project is funded by Moses Kotane Institute (MKI).

The research focuses on the socioeconomic development looking at the household food insecurity and employment creation through Akehlulwalutho cooperative level. In the context of KwaNibela area, the researcher will view the area in terms of their agricultural sector policies on the institutional, provincial and local level to ensure that the cooperative achieves the objective of the study and cooperative's objective.

Your participation will involve answering a set of specific questions that I would have formulated specifically for your category of informants. The outcome of your participation and findings will form part of my research report which will be used for academic purposes. You shall be interviewed for a maximum of an hour depending on your interaction with the researcher. Should you wish to interrupt an interview for whatever reasons, you are welcome to make follow up appointments with the researcher.

All the information you provide will be held strictly confidential and will not be made available to anyone else except my research supervisor and me. This study is confidential and your name will not be revealed, unless if you request to. Even if you reveal your identity, I (the researcher) will protect you by giving you a pseudo name.

The reason for this is that it is my duty as a researcher to protect and do no harm to 20 of my study participants. I will further keep your identity for my personal/ research record purposes. I would also like to tape record our conversations. If you do not feel comfortable being recorded, you may simply ask the researcher not to. There is no reward in

participating in the study. However, your participation in the study will help the Akehlulwalutho cooperative and the community at large to better govern their services.

The study is voluntary and you are welcome to withdraw at any time. If there are things that may be unclear to you, please feel free to ask questions. If you wish to contact me, I am available at 079 831 7477 or email me at xolilethaboew@gmail.com alternatively you may also contact my supervisor Mr. N. Mofokeng at 072 663 1733 or email him at mofokengN@unizulu.ac.za

Do you agree to participate in the study?

Yes

No

APPENDIX B: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT

I..... hereby voluntary consent to participate in a research project conducted by Ms. Nokuthaba Xolile Zikhali from the University of Zululand. I understand that the research is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable cooperative towards socioeconomic. I will be one of approximately 20 people being interviewed and who will participate in a focus group discussion for this research.

1. My participation in this research is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I decline to participate or to withdraw from the study, no one in my school environment will be told.

2. I understand that most interviewees in this research will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the focus group discussion and interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.

3. Participation involves being interviewed by the researcher who is from the University of Zululand. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes to 1hour. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio tape of the interview and subsequent dialogue will take place. If I do not want to be taped, I will only allow notes to be taken in order to capture the information I will be providing.

4. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by my real name in any reports using information obtained from the focus group discussion and interview session, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain protected. Subsequent

uses of the records and data will be subject to the standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.

5. I will not disclose any information regarding my participation in this research project.

6. I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of Department of Anthropology and development studies at the University of Zululand involving Human Subjects.

7. I have read and understood the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

8. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

My Signature

Date

My Printed Name

Signature of the Investigator

For further information, please contact me Nokuthaba Xolile Zikhali on 079 831 7477 or my supervisor, Mr. Neo Mofokeng on: 072 663 1733

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT

Ng Khona-ke imvume yokuzithandela ukuba iqhaza kuphrojekthi yocwaningo eyenziwe nguNksz. Nokuthaba Xolile Zikhali waseYunivesithi yaseZululand. Ngियाqonda ukuthi ucwaningo lwenzelwe ukuhlola iHlangano yozokulima ebizwa nge Akehlulwaluttho ekubhekeni umnikelo ekuthuthukisweni komnotho womphakathi. Ngizoba omunye wabantu abangaba ngu-10 abaxoxwa nabo futhi ngubani ozobamba iqhaza kwingxoxo yeqembu lokugxila kulolu cwano.

1. Ukuzibandakanya kwami kulolu cwano kungukuzithandela. Ngियाqonda ukuthi ngeke ngikhokhelwe ukubamba iqhaza kwami. Ngingahoxisa futhi ngiyeke ukuhlanganyela nganoma isiphi isikhathi ngaphandle kwesijeziso. Uma ngiyeka ukubamba iqhaza noma ukuhoxisa esifundweni, akekho ozokwaziswa endaweni yami yesikole.
2. Ngियाqonda ukuthi abanengi abaxoxwa nabo kulolu cwano bayothola ingxoxo ezithakazelisayo nezicabangela ukucabanga. Uma kunjalo, ngizizwa ngingakhululekile ngandlela-thile phakathi kwengxoxo yeqembu kanye nengxoxo yokuxoxisana, nginelungelo lokuncipha ukuphendula noma yimuphi umbuzo noma ukuqeda ingxoxo.
3. Ukubamba iqhaza kuhilela ukuxoxwa ngumcwano ovela eNyuvesi yaseZululand. Ingxoxo izohlala cishe imizuzu engama-45 ibe ngu-1hour. Amanothi azobhalwa ngesikhathi sokuxoxisana. I-tape audio yocwaningo kanye nenkhulumomphendvulwano elandelayo izokwenzeka. Uma ngingathandi ukuthengiswa, ngizovumela kuphela amanothi okufanele athathwe ukuze athathe ulwazi engizolunikeza.
4. Ngियाqonda ukuthi umcwano angeke angibone ngegama lami langempela kunoma imiphi imibiko esebenzisa ulwazi olutholakala engxoxweni yeqembu lokugxila kanye nengxoxo yokuxoxisana, futhi ukuthi imfihlo yami

njengomhlanganyeli kulolu cwaningo izohlala ivikelekile. Ukusetshenziselwa kokusetshenziswa kwamarekhodi kanye nedatha kuzobe kuncike kumigomo ejwayelekile yokusetshenziswa kwedatha evikela ukungaziwa kwabantu ngabanye kanye nezikhungo.

5. Angiyikudalula noma yiluphi ulwazi mayelana nokuhlanganyela kwami kule phrojekthi yokucwaninga.
6. Nginyaqonda ukuthi lolu cwaningo lokucwaninga luye lwabuyekezwa futhi lwavunwa yiKomiti Yezokuziphatha yoMnyango Wezemvelo Nokuthuthukiswa Ucwaningo eYunivesithi yaseZululand ezibandakanya iziNtu zeziNtu.
7. Ngiyifunde futhi ngiyiqonda incazelo enginikeziwe. Ngiphendule yonke imibuzo yami ekugculisweni kwami, futhi ngizimisele ngokuzithandela ukuthi ngihlanganyele kulolu cwaningo.
8. Nginikezwe ikhophi yale fomu yokuvuma.

My Signature

Date

My Printed Name

Signature of the Investigator

For further information, please contact me Nokuthaba Xolile Zikhali on 079 831 7477 or my supervisor, Mr. Neo Mofokeng on: 072 663 1733.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

AN EFFECTIVENESS EVALUATION OF AKEHLULWALUTHO PINEAPPLE AND VEGETABLES COOPERATIVE IN THE SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN KWANIBELA AREA.

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

How effective is the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Cooperatives on the socio-economic development of people in kwaNibela?

Ngabe isebenza ngempumelelo kangakanani i-Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Cooperatives ekuthuthukisweni komnotho nomnotho wabantu kwaNibela?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Apply to all participants

1. To investigate the influences of Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables cooperatives towards employment and job creation

what the co-op does to try and create opportunities/assist young people towards getting employment?

Yini eyenziwa yi-Co-Op ekuzameni ukudala amathuba omsebenzini/ ukusiza abantu abasha ekutholeni imisebenzi?

What are the influences of Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Agricultural Cooperative towards employment and job creations?

Yimiphi imithelela ye-Akehlulwalutho Cooperative kwezolimo maqondana nomsebenzi nokudala kwemisebenzi?

Is there any documentation that show that you've posted about the vacancy/ or the set of interviews used the time conducting the interviews?

Ngabe ikhona imibhalo ekhombisa ukuthi wabhala mayelana nezikhala zemisebenze/ noma uuhlu lwemibuzo enayisebenzi ngesikhathi nenzi izingxoxo?

Interview questions for the cooperative members

- Why the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable cooperative was established?

Kungani kwasungulwa cooperative ye-Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable?

- What are the objectives of Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative?

Ngabe yini Izinhloso ze-Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and vegetable cooperative?

Have the objectives of establishing the Akehlulwalutho pineapple and vegetable cooperatives achieved?

Ngabe izinhloso zokusungulwa kwe Akehlululwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable zafezeka

- Does the Akehlulwalutho pineapple and vegetables cooperatives contribute to job creation?

Ngabe i-Akehlulwalutho inomthelelo ekwakhweni kwemisebenzi?

- If so, how is Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative create job opportunities?

Uma kunjalo, i-Akehlulwalutho cooperative bawakha kanjani amathuba emisebenzi?

- How does it affect (Negative/positive) the community at large?

Ngabe lokho kunomthelelo onjani kumphakathi wonkana?

Interview questions for the community members

- Does the Akehlulwalutho pineapple and vegetables cooperatives contribute to job creation?

Ngabe i-Akehlulwalutho inomthelelo ekwakhweni kwemisebenzi?

- If so, how is Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative create job opportunities?

Uma kunjalo, i-Akehlulwalutho cooperative bawakha kanjani amathuba emisebenzi?

- How does it affect (Negative/positive) the community at large?

Ngabe lokho kunomthelelo onjani kumphakathi wonkana?

2. To understand the strategies adopted by Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Agricultural Cooperatives towards working with SMEs.

Does the Akehlulwalutho co-op works with SMEs?

Ngabe i-Akehlulwalutho co-op iyasebenzisana nama-SME

How does the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Agricultural Cooperative impact towards boosting the SMEs?

Ngabe i-Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative inomthelela muni ekufukuleni ama-SME?

Interview questions for the cooperative members

- What are the SMEs that are working with the Akehlulwalutho pineapple and vegetables cooperatives?

Yimaphi ama-SME asebenza ne-Akehlulwalutho pineapple and vegetable cooperative?

- How does the Akehlulwalutho impact (negative/positive) the SMEs?

Ngabe i-Akehlulwalutho iwathinta kanjani(Amabi/aqondile) ama-SME?

- On your own opinion, how do you rate the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperative is it serving the needs of the community or is it not?

Ngokubona kwakho, uyilinganisa kanjani i-Akehlulwalutho ngabe iyakwenza ubulungiso ekunikezeleni izidingo zomphakathi noma akunjalo?

- What do you think are the factors that lead to your above answer?

Ucabanga ukuthi yiziphi izinto eziholela empendulweni yakho engenhla?

Interview questions for the NDA

- What procedure does the Akehlulwalutho pineapple and vegetables cooperatives take into consideration when working with SMEs?

Iyiphi inqubo I-Akehlulwalutho pineapple and vegetables cooperative eyiyisebenzisayo ukubekisisa lapho isebenza nama-SME?

- What are the SMEs that are working with the Akehlulwalutho pineapple and vegetables cooperatives?

Yimaphi ams-SME asebenza ne-Akehlulwalutho pineapple and vegetable cooperative?

3. To understand the contribution of Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Agricultural Cooperatives towards alleviating household food insecurity amongst its members and the community of Hluhluwe (KwaNibela).

How does Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Agricultural Cooperative contribute towards alleviating household food insecurity?

Ngabe i-Akehlulwalutho ineqhaza kanjani ekuphephiseni ukungavikeleki kokudla kwasekhaya?

Interview question for the NDA, community and members of the cooperative

- How does the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Cooperative contribute to food security both to its members and the community large?

Ngabe i-Akehlulwalutho inikela kanjani ekuvikelekeni kokudla kumalunga ayo nakumphakathi wonkana?

- What activities are carried out by the Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable Cooperatives to meet their objectives?

Yimiphi imisebenzi eyenziwa yi-Akehlulwalutho ukufeza izinhloso zayo?

- What are the possible interventions that could be implemented by government to boost agricultural cooperatives in the rural districts?

Yikuphi ukungenelela okungenzeka okwenziwa nguhulumeni ukukhulisa imifelandawonye yezolimo ezifundeni zasemakhaya?

4. To explore the nature of gender equity in Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Agricultural Cooperatives.

What is the nature of gender equity in Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Agricultural Cooperative?

Ngabe lunjani uhlobo lokulingana ngokobulili ku-Akehlulwalutho cooperative?

Focus group discussion of women in cooperatives

- Is the potential of women farmers in KwaNibela has been well utilised to foster their farming cooperatives

Ngabe amandka abalimi besifazane KwaNibela asetshenziswe kahle ukukhuthaza imifelandawonye yabo yokulima?

- What is the alternative approaches of employment creation for the youths (women) through an Akehlulwalutho cooperative enterprise?

Yiziphi ezinye izindlela ezenzelwe ukudala amathuba omsebenzi entsha (yabesifazane) ngenhlangano ebambisanayo ye-Akehlulwalutho?

- Is there any gender differences in Akehlulwalutho pineapple and vegetable cooperative in terms of leadership?

Ngabe bukhona umehluko bobulili ku-Akehlulwalutho pineapple and vegetable cooperative ngobuholi bale imifelandawonye kwemifino?

Focus group discussion of Community members that have been present during the establishment of this cooperative

- What is the contribution of Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetables Cooperative in achieving the socio-economic development of household in kwaNibela area?

Ngabe yini i-Akehlulwalutho ekwenzayo ekufezekiseni ukuthuthuka kwezenhlalo nezomnotho zasendlini KwaNibela?

- What is the history of this cooperative i.e. when was it started, when was it registered, who started it and why was it established?

Uyini umlando we-Akehlulwalutho i.e. Kwaqalwa nini, kwabhaliswa nini, ngubani owaqala futhi kungani kwasungulwa?

- Are there any constraints affecting successful creation of youth employments in this cooperatives?

Zikhona yini izingqinamba ezithinta ukudala ngempumelelo ukuqashwa kwentsha kule Cooperative?

APPENDIX D: REFLEXIVITY ON DATA COLLECTION

Finding the cooperative

The difficulties I faced when searching for my study area (KwaNibela- Akehlulwalutho Pineapple and Vegetable). The people I've come across asking for this cooperative had no idea what I was talking about the only thing they kept saying was directing me to other well-established and well-functioning cooperatives around Hluhluwe. This process was very draining to such an extent that I thought of giving up my study because I thought it was not doable.

That time I've completely out of options because I called almost everyone I thought I knew and asked everyone I thought they had an idea of where will the cooperative be possible allocated. In that very moment my mom came home from where she works, she told me that she was helping someone who was looking for a place. Later that night a woman called my mom asking the whereabouts of the person she helped and my mom explained that she left him in town because she didn't know what else she should do. The lady said that guy was looking for a place called KwaNibela.

That was a way to me finding the cooperative cause my mom asked the lady if she know the cooperative called Akehlulwalutho pineapple and Cooperative and she said yes.and she gave us the directions that was a relief to me the next morning (16/03/2020) we head to KwaNibela searching and looking for a place. Initially we know who we were looking for (Mr Mbongiseni Nsibande) but we were told that he now reside in Durbant was a bit of disappointment but I told myself I will look for this cooperative irregardless of anything.

So my mom accompanied me, first of all that area have no transportation we have to walk an hour before we can get a transport, the place is in deep rural areas where theres no water and electricity in some areas. While working a long distance we came across three women and my mom had to ask if they know something called Akehlulwalutho and someone called Mbongiseni Nsibande and they agreed and told us that his not home but they said Mr Nsibande was only a manager and the owner of the cooperative was Thobile Msezane Mbokazi and they shared their numbers with me I called she said she was in

the workshop she will only be available on Thursday that how we then make our way home.

During Data Collection

According to Creswell (2005), every study has a set of limitations or potential weaknesses within the study identified by the researcher. Therefore, this study was first limited by the global pandemic (Covid-19) which affected the study negatively. The impact of Covid-19 was major on this study since it resulted in the short span of time allocated to each participant and almost half of the interviews were conducted telephonically. This experience created a lot of emotions, since the process was not as smooth and easy as anticipated, Covid-19 has been a stumbling block towards data collection and it impacted the study negatively as it limited the researcher to some extent in terms of data collection approach.