

The livelihood challenges posed by the commercial Sex Industry to  
Christian concern for poor women in Pietermaritzburg

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24<sup>th</sup> of March 2005

**DECLARATION**

I, Beatrice Okyere-Manu hereby declare that this thesis, unless specified in the text, is my original work. I also declare that I have not submitted this research project for any other purpose at any other institution or University.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Beatrice Okyere-Manu

24.3.05

As supervisor, I agree to the submission of this thesis

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. S. M. de Gruchy

24.3.05

**ABSTRACT**

This dissertation focuses on the contribution that Christians in Pietermaritzburg can make to empower poor women in the city. It is clear that Christians have made and continue to make many opportunities available to help poor women, including relief work and skills training. However, this seems to have little effect. At the same time a growing number of poor women are choosing Sex Work as a livelihood strategy. Thus the question posed by this research is: what exactly is pushing these women into Sex Work and can the Christians learn anything from these women?

To answer these questions, the thesis examines the lives of twelve Sex Workers in Pietermaritzburg, making use of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, which is a tool that will help us understand the livelihoods of poor women. It is argued that the main factors pushing poor women into this work are poverty which stems from the patriarchal nature of African culture, some policies, processes and structures, as well as women's desire to work and feed their dependants. The thesis then looks at sustainable livelihoods from a Christian point of view, and argues that though sex work is sustainable in the short term, it is unsustainable and deleterious in the long term.

However, Christians need to learn the following key lessons from the livelihood strategies of Sex Workers as they seek to empower poor women in the city, namely, the depth of poverty, the influence of patriarchy, the power of the market, the importance of women's agency and women's dedication, commitment and creativity to work.

Finally, some strategic options to enhance poor women's livelihoods are proposed. These are: Conscientizing and encouraging the education of girls, empowerment through sex education, and training in variety of skills, encouraging women's cooperative groups, and identification of markets for women in small-scale businesses, helping women with access to financial capital and credit and lastly encouragement of stable home-life.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Finally, I thank my pastor Craig Botha and the wife, Shannon and my friends Georgina Arthur, Esther Yirenkyi and Christina Oduro-Adjei for the interest and the encouragement given to me in making this work a success.

**DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my late sisters: Comfort and Mary for their contribution towards my education and to my family: Benson, Ebenezer, Gifty and Emmanuel for their encouragement and support. May God bless them

**ABBREVIATIONS**

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CSW	Commercial Sex worker
DFID	Department for International Development
FBO	Faith Based Organisation
HIV	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
ND	Not Dated
PMB	Pietermaritzburg
SLF	Sustainable Livelihoods Framework
STI's	Sexually Transmitted Infections
SW	Sex Work (Worker)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter, which introduces the thesis, provides an overview of the study. The study looks at the livelihood challenges that sex work poses to the Christian contribution to the sustainable livelihoods of poor women. In this chapter, the background to, and the motivation for this research will be given and the preliminary literature study and the location of the research within the existing literature is done to facilitate the identification of the research problem. Having identified the problem at hand, a hypothesis is put forward, with a theoretical framework for the research. The research methodology is given and the chapter concludes with a summary.

### 1.1 Background to the research

Pietermaritzburg is one of the cities in South Africa with a growing level of unemployment among men and women. In view of this, it is exciting to note that Christians in the city are doing their utmost to help arrest the situation. This, as David Bosch puts it, is the realisation (among Christians) that mission is a ministry by the whole people of God to participate in the work of God.<sup>1</sup> In these attempts, the aim has been for the people of God to bring *shalom* to humankind, as they try to empower people, especially women and girls, with skills to help sustain their livelihoods. This step is in the right direction in working with God to address the plight of women. They understand that it is their Christian duty to do so and as such they are concerned with the material well-being of these women. Jose Miguez Bonino draws our attention to the fact that “God is not a ruler who, by thwarted chance, determines the way of his World or magically directs it from above. He is the Sovereign who guides, encourages, accompanies his people. To believe, in Christian terms, means to enter society with that God in order to work with Him.”<sup>2</sup> God expects Christians to participate in His plan to bring *shalom* to humankind.

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<sup>1</sup> David J. Bosch. *Transforming Mission*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books. 1999.) Pg 467

<sup>2</sup> Jose Miguez Bonino. *Room to be people*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1979) p 31

The *Shalom* that God expects us to bring into the life of people suggests “material well-being and absence of physical threats, war, diseases, poverty and famine.”<sup>3</sup> Steve de Gruchy notes that *Shalom* is the same as “the ‘abundant life’ that Jesus speaks of (Jn10:10); it means enjoying relationship with God, with neighbours and strangers, and with nature. It finds expression in households and neighbourhoods but it is also a wider social vision of peace with justice, in which those who are excluded and marginalized are important guests at the feast.”<sup>4</sup> This is in line with Amartya Sen’s secular vision of development, which is to improve human life by expanding the range of things a person can be and do. He also says “achieving this aim requires the removal of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive states.”<sup>5</sup> For these kinds of reasons and in order to be relevant in the community, Pietermaritzburg Christian Fellowship, (my local church), through a project called Project Gateway, has been empowering young girls and women in the church as well as the communities around. The training includes cooking, sewing, knitting, bead making, soap making and many other activities. Many minor projects in the city have also been training young girls and women in such activities as hairdressing, fabric painting and designing. Their aim is to help such people rise out of poverty. There are other Christians who are also involved in charitable work, where many poor people receive basic needs such as food and clothes.

Despite these opportunities in the city, in recent times a walk down some major streets in the city at night bears witness to quite a number of women and girls involved in prostitution. In a recent article in the *Natal Witness*, police uncovered two major centers for prostitution in the city, and it was reported that Pietermaritzburg is one of two cities in South Africa with a high level of prostitution.<sup>6</sup> In another article that appeared in the same paper in 2002, Bheki Ka Mncube reported that the council is aware of the increase of sex workers in the city and wants to reduce street-walking and protect sex workers

<sup>3</sup> Perry Yoder. *Shalom* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Publishers. 1987). Pg. 13

<sup>4</sup> Steve de Gruchy, *A theological appreciation of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework*. An unpublished paper given at the inaugural meeting of the Society for Urban Mission, hosted by the Institute for Urban Mission, Pretoria, South Africa, July 2004, Pg 1

<sup>5</sup> Amartya Sen. *Development as freedom*. (New York: Anchor Books. 2000) Pg.1

<sup>6</sup> Craig Bishop, “Police probed after brothel bust” *Natal Witness*, Saturday, January 17, 2004. Pg.1

against attacks. This has led to the formation of a taskforce to look into this issue as part of the anti-crime drive of the Pietermaritzburg-Msunduzi Anti Crime Network.<sup>7</sup>

In 2003, another article in the same paper revealed that residents in Chase Valley, a suburb in Pietermaritzburg complained that the numbers of sex workers who stand by the National road (N3) in that area have increased dramatically and that place has become a well recognized and patronized prostitution spot. They have identified about forty seven sex workers in that area. The male residents complained that their wives could no longer go for walks without someone “harassing them or someone trying to pick them up” and mistake them for sex workers.<sup>8</sup> During discussions with a few people in an attempt to find out why sex working is on the increase in Pietermaritzburg, most of the people reiterated that these women in the city do not have anything else to do.

This research will be an attempt to find out what exactly is pushing these young girls and women into sex work and also whether Christians, as they seek to empower these women can learn and incorporate the reasons into their plans to help make a more significant contribution to poor women’s livelihoods.

## **1.2 Motivation for the research**

The main motivating factor for carrying out this research is to be able to use my research findings to assist individual Christians as well as churches in Pietermaritzburg to empower women appropriately with a strategy that will help sustain their livelihoods.

I always wonder why many Christians and individuals in Pietermaritzburg have been trying to empower women with skills so as to sustain their livelihoods and yet the rate at which the number of women and girls involved in sex work continues to increase on the streets of Pietermaritzburg.

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<sup>7</sup> Bheki Ka Mncube. Council to tackle city Prostitution. *Natal Witness*, 20<sup>th</sup> June, 2002. Pg 3

<sup>8</sup> Christi Naude. That’s no whore, it’s my wife. *Natal Witness*, November 8, 2003. pg 3

Given the devastating rate at which HIV/AIDS has and is still claiming many lives in Africa, and its relation to sexual promiscuity of people, one then wonders why many women and girls flock into this type of work which is unsustainable and unhealthy. The number of people living and even dying from this disease in Pietermaritzburg (and for that matter KwaZulu-Natal) has increased drastically. A research conducted in 2001 by South Africa's leading medical journal, *the South African Medical Journal (SAMJ)* revealed that:

Hospitals in South Africa's most AIDS prevalent province, KwaZulu-Natal, are being overwhelmed by a growing number of AIDS patients, Urban and Rural clinics in the province are stretched to 'breaking point', with HIV-positive patients filling 80 percent of beds in some rural clinics. In some hospitals patients were forced to share beds, and in some instances compelled to sleep under beds, because of shortages. Most AIDS patients were women between the ages of 24 and 35, many of whom had contracted the disease in the last 10 years.<sup>9</sup>

If the above report about hospitals in KwaZulu-Natal was published in the year 2001, then one should expect a major increase in the statistics by now. In an interview with Lulu Khumalo, an elderly citizen in Imbali, a suburb of Pietermaritzburg, she confirmed that Saturdays used to be days for shopping, cleaning of her home and visiting friends and family members, but these days they are filled with funerals because of the rate at which people, especially young girls and women between the ages of 19-35, are dying.<sup>10</sup> A recent visit to the Mountain Rise cemetery also confirmed this judging by the number of new graves which have been used within the last few months. This does not serve as a deterrent to the young girls and women involved in this work.

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<sup>9</sup> IRIN HIV/AIDS weekly. South Africa: Hospital face AIDS crisis. *The South African Medical Journal*. May 2001; 91 (5): 364- 368. Also published on the internet <http://www.mrc.ac.za/aids/jul2001/contents.htm>. Date accessed 26-12-2002

<sup>10</sup> Lulu Khumalo. Interviewed by Beatrice Okyere-Manu on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2004 in Pietermaritzburg.

There are also terrible stories of abuse and violence that women involved in sex work face, yet on a daily basis we see women on the streets, so there is the need to find out whether these stories are true or not and what exactly is pushing them into this work.

Also “despite the Constitutional Court ruling that prostitution is a crime, there is an on going debate around the decriminalization of sex work”<sup>11</sup> It is interesting that among the number of crimes, sex work is the only one that people still prefer to be decriminalized. Therefore there is the need to research and find out why a number of people are interested and strongly support this work.

Another issue to be investigated is that of exploitation by pimps and whether or not these women really make money to sustain their lives. In the article quoted in the *Natal Witness*, there have been problems between the local girls and foreigners in the business. It is alleged that the foreigners get more than five times the earnings of local girls for the same service.<sup>12</sup> This suggests that there is competition whereby local girls do not really make money, so the question that needs to be answered is why then are so many women flocking into it?

One function of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians is to encourage women to research and write about issues in their cultures and societies that are affecting African women. So seeing that sex work is on the increase I found it fitting to research and hear the women’s stories, the factors that are leading them into this work and the challenges this raises so that Christians can help meet these challenges as they empower poor women.

Lastly the choice of this topic has come about primarily because of my concern about the wrong attitude Christians and the church as a whole and also the entire society have towards prostitutes: they look down on them. An article written by Sharen Thumboo in which she interviewed people from Chatsworth in Durban KwaZulu-Natal confirms this. Most of the people from that community say that “Prostitution is pathetic and

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<sup>11</sup> Nalini Naidoo. The big Teaser. *Natal Witness*. 11<sup>th</sup> November 2002. Pg 9

<sup>12</sup> Craig Bishop “Police probed” Pg1

disgusting...it demoralizes the women as well as the community.” Others think the women who are involved in this industry do not fear God that is why they are able to sell their bodies to different men.<sup>13</sup> In a personal interview with Mr. Smith, an elder of a church, he argued that prostitution is immoral and against the will of God and therefore God will punish those who practice it.<sup>14</sup>

I am hopeful that the findings of this study may enable Christians both locally and internationally to critically assess their attitude towards sex workers. Again I hope through this study that Christians can learn something from the stories of these women to help them make a more significant contribution to the livelihoods of poor women.

### 1.3 Preliminary literature study

Since the last decade, a number of writers have begun writing articles around the issue of prostitution, or what we will call “sex work”. In my preliminary search, I observed that most of the studies done do not deal directly with the livelihood challenge posed by commercial sex work to the Christian’s contribution to the sustainable livelihoods of poor women in Pietermaritzburg; or bringing out lessons to help Christians make a more significant contribution to poor women. The following are some of the works that I have identified:

1. “The sex market in the inner city of Durban: The economic and social effects of criminalizing sex work, and the search for alternatives.” by Dori Posel. In this work, Posel looked at the public and feminist debate over prostitution. She also looked at prostitution and the law in South Africa. She again looked at the sex market, specifically, the categories of prostitution namely, the supply and demand, the effect of repression, decriminalizing and legalizing prostitution.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Thumboo Sharen. Sex work: A community speaks. In Janine Moolman (ed) *Agenda: Empowering women for Gender equity*. No 56, 2003, Pg 107-110

<sup>14</sup> Smith Robert. Personal interview by Beatrice Okyere-Manu on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 2004 in PMB.

<sup>15</sup> Dori, Posel *The sex market in the inner city of Durban*. Economic research Unit University of Natal, Durban. 1993. occasional paper No 28, Pg 19

2. Ted Leggett wrote about “Rain-bow Vice: the drugs and sex industries in the new South Africa.” In this work he interviewed a number of sex workers and established some basic facts about the work like demographics, background and origins, relationships, income and clients, street work versus brothel work and HIV/AIDS.<sup>16</sup>
3. Christine and Pat Stilwell’s work was on “The information and legal needs of Pietermaritzburg-Msunduzi sex workers.” This work provided information on 35 sex workers who were interviewed. It also looked at whether or not sex work has to be legalized.<sup>17</sup>
4. “Prostitution as livelihood: Work or crime?” by Geetanjali Gangoli which looks at livelihoods issues within the sex trade. This was a study conducted in Sonagachi, Calcutta with about 450 sex workers. Almost all those interviewed agreed that prostitution is not a crime but work, though given a better option they would willingly quit it.<sup>18</sup>
5. Njoki Karuoya from Kenya wrote about “Poverty leading to Prostitution” in an article in which she interviewed 10 women. They all confirmed that they were in this job as a result of poverty, despite the threat of HIV/AIDS. They had been searching for better jobs in order to increase their quality of life, but because they were unsuccessful, they had to resort to this trade to support their children and their extended families.<sup>19</sup>
6. “Ministry to Persons in Female Prostitution” written by Depaul Geneska, O.F.M is an evaluation of Genesis House, a house of hospitality and nurturing for women in female prostitution in Chicago.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ted Leggett.(2001) *Rainbow Vice: the drugs and sex industries in the new South Africa*,(Cape Town: David Philip. 2001). Pg 96-121

<sup>17</sup> Christine Stilwell and Pat Stilwell. “The information and legal needs of Pietermaritzburg- Msunduzi sex workers: an exploratory study.” University of Natal Pietermaritzburg.(UNP). Pg 22.

<sup>18</sup> Geetanjali Gangoli. *Prostitution as livelihood: work or crime*. A paper presented at the conference Livelihoods and Poverty reduction :Lesson from Eastern India. 25<sup>th</sup> -27<sup>th</sup> September 2001 at <http://www.anthrobase.com/txt/G/GongoliG01.htm>. Date accessed 13-11-2003

<sup>19</sup> Njoki Karuoya. Poverty leading to Prostitution. *The Nation (Nairobi)*, 18 December 1999: <http://www.hartford-hwp.com?archives?36?178.html>. 4-12-2003

<sup>20</sup> Depaul Genska. O.F.M. “Ministry with persons in female prostitution.” In Susan B. Thistlethwaite and George F. Cairns *Beyond theological tourism: mentoring as a grassroots approach to theological education*.(Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994). Pg 92-108

7. In the book *The Will To Arise*, edited by Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro, Bernadette Mbuy Beya wrote about the African Woman and Prostitution, looking at the causes, consequences and what could be done about it.<sup>21</sup>
8. “70,000 brothel workers back on the streets” was written by Hanti Otto for *Daily News Paper* in October 10<sup>th</sup> 2002. In this article, Otto wrote that, as a result of the legalization of prostitution, a number of women are back on the streets of South Africa. He also interviewed leaders from different faiths such as Hinduism, and Christianity as well as people from the police department and some brothel owners for their views on the legalization of prostitution.<sup>22</sup>
9. “Backstreet: Prostitution, Money and Love” written by Cecilie Hoigard and Liv Finstad is about studies done in Norway in which 42 people were interviewed. The reality of the daily lives of prostitutes, why they are in this work, how they operate, the kind of clients they get as well as the benefits from this work was outlined. They conclude that prostitutes suffer a lot from deep emotional stress that destroys their lives.<sup>23</sup>
10. “Transnational Prostitution: Changing Global Patterns” edited by Susanne Thorbek and Bandana Pattanaik. In this book, a detailed picture of prostitution, sex tourism and Alien labour across national was revealed from prostitutes and their clients. The book also looks at the innovative policies on Prostitution that have been introduced by Netherlands and Sweden.<sup>24</sup>
11. “Gender, Trafficking and Slavery” was edited by Rachel Masika. The book looks from a gender point of view the extent and complexity of trafficking, child prostitution, sex crimes, abuse of human rights and other forms of abuse that can be described as modern day slavery.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Mbuy Beya, Bernadette. “Human Sexuality, Marriage, and Prostitution” in Oduyoye Amba Mercy and Kanyoro R. A. Musimbi *The Will To Arise*. (New York: Orbis Books 1995). Pg 166- 179

<sup>22</sup> Hanti Otto. “70,000 brothel workers back on the streets.” *Daily News*. October 10 2002: <http://www.sweat.org.za./Articles%20and%20Conference%20Papers>. 4-12-2003

<sup>23</sup> Cecilie Hoigard and Liv Finstad. *Blackstreet: Prostitution, money and love*. (Norway: Polity Press, 1992)

<sup>24</sup> Sussane Thorbek and Bandana Pattanaik (eds). *Transnational Prostitution: Changing Global Patterns* (New York: Zed Books, 2002).

<sup>25</sup> Rachel Masika (ed). *Gender Trafficking and Slavery*. (Oxford: Oxfam 2002)

12. “The Contribution of Universities to Sustainable Livelihoods” is a draft paper written by Steve de Gruchy. In this paper, he looks critically at the Sustainable Framework and brings out the practical contribution Universities can make to Sustainable Livelihoods.<sup>26</sup>
13. “Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: Practical concept for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” by Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway offers a detailed practical analysis of Sustainable Livelihood.<sup>27</sup>
14. The Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance sheet by Department For International Development (DFID), brings out the origin, objectives of Sustainable livelihoods. It looks at the Framework, its uses, methods, policy reforms and also Sustainable livelihoods approach in Practice.<sup>28</sup>
15. David Korten, a secular development theorist in his book “Getting into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century brings out his concern about spiritual development. He argues that the use of power, love, brotherhood, peace and the ability to live in harmony is the primary role of the church and religious teaching must address them.<sup>29</sup>
- 16 “Beyond charity: the call to Christian Development” by John M. Perkins is about the need for Christians of today to move from giving charity to the poor to what he call the true mission of the church which is to see that all races, nations and tongues are reconciled and worship God together<sup>30</sup>

#### 1.4 Research Problem

This research has sought to investigate and establish the challenges which sex work raises for the contribution of Christians, the Church and Faith Based Organizations (FBO’s) in sustaining the livelihoods of poor women. The questions posed as a result of the problem have been:

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<sup>26</sup> Steve de Gruchy. “The Contribution of Universities to Sustainable Livelihoods.” Draft Paper.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway. Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: Practical Concept for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Institute of Development Studies Discussion paper 296. ((University of Sussex, Brighton: IDS Publication, 1992)

<sup>28</sup> See DFID guidance sheet

<sup>29</sup> David Korten. *Getting into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Voluntary action and Global agenda*. (Westhaven: Kumarian Press, 1990).

<sup>30</sup> John M. Perkins. *Beyond Charity: the call to Christian Community Development*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999).

1. What are the livelihoods factors that lead poor women into sex work?
2. How seriously are Christians, the church and FBO's taking these factors into account when seeking to help poor women?
3. How can Christians, the church, or FBO's revise their contribution to the livelihoods of poor women in the light of these factors?

### 1.5. Research Hypothesis

This study is based on various hypotheses, which have guided its basic arguments. In seeking answers to the questions above, the research assumed that charity deeds and the faith-based skills development programmes are not really helping poor women. This assertion is based on a further assumption that women who are trained in skills development need more resources both material and human to be able to acquire those skills. Furthermore, after production they have to compete with the big industries for a market, thereby leaving their products unsold for a long time. Therefore out of desperation to feed their families and pay their bills, some of them resort to sex work, which seems to be a quicker way of making money despite its numerous risks. In agreement to this, Posel quoted Symanski, that "A presumably healthy body and the ability to engage in sexual relations without emotional attachment is all that one needs to engage in sex work."<sup>31</sup>

It would seem that many of the African women have nothing to enhance their livelihoods. They do not have the necessary education and qualifications to enable them to get decent employment, therefore, they see sex work as an easy way of making money. This is because no capital is required, and no training is involved. Human resources and a ready market that are a problem to most businesses are already available. Leggett is right when he says "Sex work is one area where there is always work available, no experience necessary, no start up cost. Just find yourself a stretch of sidewalk in the right area of

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<sup>31</sup> Dori Posel. *The Sex Market in the Inner city of Durban: The economic and social effects of criminalizing sex work, and the search for alternatives*. (Durban : University of Natal, Economic Research Unit. Occasional paper.(ND) No 28. Pg 21.

town for business to roll in.”<sup>32</sup> Christine and Pat Stilwell also add that “Sex work requires neither a considerable capital outlay, nor an investment in human capital.”<sup>33</sup> In an article that appeared in *Mail and Guardian*, David Macfarlane, and Glenda Daniels reported that the sex workers interviewed revealed that there is no need of curriculum vitae before becoming sex workers, no education is needed and only a little skill is needed. One does not have to be under any boss but they are their own bosses and as such are able to do whatever they want: work at your own pace, your own hours, drink whilst on duty, and also there is no fear of being retrenched.<sup>34</sup>

## 1.6 Theoretical framework

The main theoretical position, from which the research has been conducted, is the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework. This is a tool to help us understand and think about livelihoods, especially those of the poor. It explains the main factors that make up as well as those that affect livelihoods. This framework can be adapted to meet the needs of any poverty situation. The framework will be examined in detail in the thesis.

The theological framework from which this thesis has been written is the “Human integrity” stemming from the fact that humankind is made in the Image of God (Gen1:26). Therefore there is the need for us to preserve the dignity that comes with us being made and created in the image and likeness of God. Jose Miguez Bonino writing about the Image of God says “But when God completed his work and placed human beings in the centre of creation, entrusted with duty and conferred with dignity, it was said that ‘everything was very good,...The first thing that can be said of human beings is that they are made ‘in the Image and likeness of God’ in the shape and proportion of the creator”<sup>35</sup> Since the creator was happy to make humankind in God’s image, we need to honour God by preserving this Image and not to defile it.

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<sup>32</sup> Ted Leggett. *Rainbow vice-The drug and Sex Industries in the New South Africa*. (David Philip: Cape Town 2001). Pg 96

<sup>33</sup> Christine and Pat Stilwell. “The information and legal needs of Pietermaritzburg- Msunduzi sex workers: an exploratory study. University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. (UNP).(ND) Pg 22

<sup>34</sup> David MacFarlane and Glenda Daniels. *Mail and Guardian*. “One day I’ll get a proper job.” 2001. April 12-19. Pg 6

<sup>35</sup> See Miguez Bonino, *Room to be people*. PP13

## **1.7 Research design and Methodology**

Several methods were used to generate the primary data in this research. The method used includes oral interviews with individuals as well as a focus group, and then library research.

### **1.7.1 Oral interviews**

This was the primary method of data collection. Face to face unstructured methods of interviewing were used instead of questionnaire methods. This is because I found it more interactive and revealing. Where questionnaires were given out, I still had to organize a face to face in-depth interview. Since this was an investigative study, the questions asked were open-ended, using oral history strategies. In all 12 sex workers were interviewed.

### **1.7.2 Focus Group interview**

During the research, I managed to do a group interview with five ladies who are all involved in sex work. This proved to be a very effective strategy of interviewing, because it was less tense and it really helped in the building of a rich picture and understanding of sex work.

### **1.7.3 Secondary Data**

In addition to these oral interviews, I used both published and unpublished documents relevant to the study from different libraries and locations. These included periodicals, articles and newspapers as well as the Internet.

## **1.8 Limitations**

My research was limited to 12 sex workers in Pietermaritzburg. Though sex work is practiced worldwide and also by the different races and sexes, the research only focuses on 12 African women in the limited area of Pietermaritzburg. However, references were

made to examples drawn from investigations done on the topic from other parts of the country and the world as a whole. As sex work is not respected by society, and especially by most faiths, it was not easy for most of them to speak out freely on their lifestyle to a stranger. Friendship and trust was built first before the interviews.

The issue of language is another limitation to this research. This is because the researcher is working from a different language setting. Language was a big problem and as such the interviews concentrated on women who can speak English.

Due to time limits, the interviews focused on African Sex workers. Future research would be extended across all races.

### **1.9 Research Ethics**

Knowing that this research deals with very sensitive issue and important topic about women and their lifestyles, the interview was conducted in private and the information gathered is considered highly confidential. Therefore, trust was developed between the interviewees and myself. The sex workers and I had to sign a release form similar to the one used in the “Retrieving Oral Memories in the Christian Communities” course offered at the University of KwaZulu Natal, assuring the interviewees that no one can release or use any of the information they give without their permission. Everything was kept confidential including their names. For the rest of the research, I have acknowledged all sources quoted, and I have not plagiarized any information from any sources.

### **1.10 Structure of the study**

This first chapter has given the introduction to this research by proposing the general idea and the motivation behind this study.

Chapter two evaluates the ways Christians have been empowering poor women through charitable deeds and skills training. This will be done in detail to see if these ways actually take the livelihoods of poor women into consideration. This will lead me to

introduce the sustainable livelihoods approach which will also lead me to introduce and analyse the Sustainable Livelihood Framework.

Chapter three looks at the stories from 12 sex workers in Pietermaritzburg. The aim is as follows: to find out what actually is pushing young girls and women into sex work. The study looks at questions such as what benefits and dangers there are in this work; whether it is true or not that “Pimps” exploit and abuse them; and what they expect Christians to do to help them leave this lifestyle.

Chapter four explains the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework and it is used to analyse the livelihoods of poor women in Pietermaritzburg. This enables us to see what assets they have, what their vulnerability context is, and policies and processes that influence the poor women. This will help us to really understand why some of them choose sex work as a strategy to survive on. I will then look at their livelihood outcomes.

Chapter five suggest strategies that will enhance the livelihoods of poor women. To help me do that, I will first establish the sustainable livelihoods in a Christian perspective. Then I will move on to see if Sex Work, the strategy for some poor women in Pietermaritzburg, is sustainable or not. I will look at lessons coming through the use of the SLF with Sex Workers. Finally possible strategies for Christians, churches and FBOs wanting to help empower poor women stemming out from their stories will be outlined.

Chapter six serves as the concluding and the summary of all the chapters.

## **CHAPTER TWO: FROM CHARITY TO ENHANCING LIVELIHOODS**

### **2.0 Introduction**

From the previous chapter, it is clear that Christians in Pietermaritzburg are concerned about the poor and the marginalized in the city, especially women. Therefore to help the poor survive, many Christians have made opportunities available for them to be empowered. Some of the opportunities include charity work and skills training in various fields. Yet more poor women take to the streets daily to sell their bodies as a means of survival. The question is, why then are poor women choosing sex work as a means of survival in spite of all the opportunities available to them? In this chapter, I will discuss these opportunities for assisting the poor and marginalized women in the city. This will help to assess whether the livelihoods of these poor women are actually taken into consideration in the above mentioned approaches.

### **2.1 Charitable deeds**

Traditionally, the Christian's response to helping the poor survive has been that of doing charitable deeds. For example, if people lack water and food, then it means water and food must be provided for them; if people are desperate and do not have employment then any kind of job that the Christian sees fit must be created. If poor people have nowhere to sleep, then shelter must be provided for them. The background to these compassionate acts stems from the understanding and obedience of the example, teachings, miracles and the parables of Jesus. For example in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus teaches that there is the need to help our neighbours through action (Luke 10: 25-37). Similarly, Jesus said that anyone who gives a cup of water in his name because he or she belongs to Christ will receive a reward (Mathew 10:40-42, Mark 9:41; Ps 41: 1). As a result even the first Christians, being obedient to Jesus, portrayed an attitude of caring and sharing (Acts 2: 44-45; 4:32-35). James 2:17 says faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. So the Christians' conviction and faith in God compels them to respond to the needs of their neighbors in action, just as the Bible

teaches them to. For it is Christians that God will use to continue the task of reaching the poor and the marginalized in His name.

It is clear from the above that Christians see doing charity as their Christian duty, in order to uplift the living conditions of the poor, whom they see as among those for whom Christ died. It is the love of the neighbor for Christ's sake that compels them to do such acts. In the same line speaking of emergency relief, Douglas E. Millham says "It is a matter at the heart of the kingdom of God striking at the core of who we are as Christians in the one church of Jesus Christ responding to situations of human need"<sup>36</sup> This is evident in the city of Pietermaritzburg where a number of individuals as well as churches have and are still involved in charity work. For example Project Gateway has a shelter where poor people who are destitute come for overnight shelter; Boshoff Methodist church also has a programme where members of the church provide a 'Soup Kitchen' to the poor and hungry in the city.

This approach of helping the poor temporarily has been helpful especially in emergencies such as war, natural disaster and tragic situations. But more and more we are made aware as we look closely at this approach of some drawbacks that are associated with it, when it becomes the only means of meeting the needs of the poor who are not in emergency situations. It is clear that it cannot solve the problem of poverty.

Drawing from class discussions in the Theology and Development Programme at the University of KwaZulu Natal, I wish to argue that there are 3 factors in the exercise of charity which hinders livelihoods. They are as follows:

### **2.1.1 It sees people as objects**

This approach of helping the poor usually sees people as objects but not subjects of their own situations. As objects, they develop a negative attitude and mindset of themselves. We also see that when people see themselves as objects, it affects their dignity and they

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<sup>36</sup> Douglas E. Millham. "Training for relief in development" in Edgar J. Elliston *Christian relief and development: developing workers for effective ministry*. Dallas: Word publishing. 1989 Pg.263-267

develop low self worth. They lack confidence in themselves and so they feel powerless and meaningless as well as being trapped in a situation where they cannot help themselves. They regard themselves as non important and cannot do anything. When Christians respond through charity, they reinforce the fact that people are objects rather than subjects of history.

### **2.1.2 It creates dependency**

It is evident that this approach of helping the poor creates a dependency syndrome. This is a situation which makes the poor believe and think that their livelihoods depend upon being a client as well as consumers of services provided by others. In this way, if there are problems in a household or a community, they need to be solved by others, preferably professionals who know best. Outsiders or professionals are seen as the main actors in bringing about an improved lifestyle for the poor, because the poor themselves cannot help themselves. This dependency syndrome also creates a spirit of laziness in the poor where they find it difficult to do things for themselves, as well as use their gifts and talents for their own good. John M. Perkins says that “In fact charity can be dangerous because givers can feel good about actions that actually accomplish very little, or even create dependency. The result is that their sense of satisfaction takes away any motivation to seek more creative long range development strategies.”<sup>37</sup>

### **2.1.3 It is not sustainable**

Charitable work to help the poor survive is not sustainable. This is because most of the time, those who offer charity depend on funding from outside the community, so when funding runs out, then the support system is cut off. For example, the Community Care Project under Project Gateway, a ministry of Pietermaritzburg Christian Fellowship, started as a mercy ministry where poor people came for food parcels and clothes etc. Because this faith based organization relies on funding from outside the church, when the funds were not coming anymore, the workers had to stop the charitable deeds. In the

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<sup>37</sup> John M. Perkins. *Beyond Charity: The call to Christian community development*. (Bakers Books: Grand Rapids 1993). Pg 23

same way there are a number of Christians offering charity who could not continue because they do not have enough resources to provide on a long-term basis.

From above it is clear that charity is not the answer to uplifting the lives of poor women in the city. In fact it does not take the livelihoods of the poor into consideration. For this reason, many Christians have moved from this approach to skills training. They have moved from situations where the poor were passive, to encouraging them to be active. It is also important to look critically at this approach too, to see if it is actually helping them. This is crucial when we want to know the factors that are pushing many poor women in the city onto the streets.

## **2.2 Skills Training**

There is a saying that “If you give fish to someone, you would feed the person for a day, but if you teach that person to fish, you would have fed the person for life” It was evident from the previous section that because charity work does not really solve the problem of poverty, another way Christians are helping poor women in the city is through empowering them with skills training such as sewing, baking, gardening, beadwork etc. We see a lot of such skills training schools in the city. Yet it is also clear that this approach has a number of weaknesses. This section critically looks at some of the skills training to see if it takes the livelihoods of these poor women into consideration.

### **2.2.1 It is costly**

Research I undertook in this area revealed that skills’ training is not free; one needs to pay and also find money to buy the equipment needed. After the training one is left alone to compete with the big industries for a market, which often leaves these women poorer. As a result, most people who have gone through such training have packed away their equipment. Thando, a graduate from one of such training schools, confirms this that she has packed her sewing machine away because she cannot cope with the fashion market. A lot of people wanted to buy her things on credit, because they have no money to pay,

so it is better to pack the sewing machine.<sup>38</sup> Leah Mcwabe revealed that apart from the fee she paid, her training in fabric painting took about 8 weeks. After which she had to struggle for a market within and even outside the city. She sometimes had to travel long distances to sell her product which added more cost to her business. In the end she had to give the business up because she was not making any profit.<sup>39</sup>

In most cases the learners in these skills training schools, do not own the necessary equipment and as such are not able to put their skills into good use. For example in the study I undertook in one sewing school, it was revealed to me that there are four different courses, and a course lasts 4-8 weeks. The cost of the eight lessons course, held once a week for about three hours, costs R200. In addition, the learner will have to provide her own dressmaker's scissors, tape measure, dressmakers pins and about 2-3 marking pencils. This means that for one to complete the four courses, she needs about R1, 000 in fees.

So for the poor woman to be able to know how to sew a simple garment, it will take about 8 months. In most cases, the women come from the township which means they also need transport money, which may be around R7.00 a trip. After all these expenses she has to purchase her own sewing machine, and will need money to buy materials and other accessories. Then comes the time spent to make garments, the cost of electricity and above all this, she will have to sell these garments which usually take a long time because the competition out there is very strong. At times people even buy on credit and never pay; meanwhile during this time she needs money to feed her family, pay school fees, pay for hospital and other bills.

An interview with Irene Stevenson and Edith Stevenson, facilitators of the home industry training in Project Gateway revealed that most of these poor women who came for the training, do not even own sewing machines at home so after the training they cannot

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<sup>38</sup> Thando Ncgobo. interviewed by Beatrice Okyere-Manu in Pietermaritzburg on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September 2004.

<sup>39</sup> Leah Mcwabe. Interviewed by Beatrice Okyere-Manu on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2004 in Pietermaritzburg.

make use of their skills. They have been training a number of women but a number of them are not using their skills.<sup>40</sup>

### 2.2.2 It does not deal with structures

Empowering women with skills training does not deal with the structures that dehumanize humankind. We see that our world today is characterized by elements of oppression, tyranny, injustice and the like. The dominant global powers have instituted policies and have put systems and structures in place, which disregard cultural, social, religious and even ecological aspects of humankind. These systems have put the wellbeing of humankind at risk. There is sexism as well as racism in most parts of the world. Ulrich Duchrow and Gerhard Liedke confirm this by saying that today the situation for most people is suffering and oppression.<sup>41</sup> Not only are governments oppressing its people, even people are also oppressing their fellow citizens. There is greediness on the part of politicians.

When Christians use the approach of skills training, it becomes difficult for them to confront structures that put people in poverty situations. These structures are what Amartya Sen describes as causing “Unfreedom.” In his view, to achieve proper development “requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: Poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive state.”<sup>42</sup> This suggests that they are the elements that prevent real development from happening. They fight against development, so development is about removing these obstacles to what a person can do in life. L. Magesa says “Development means ‘liberation’. Any action that gives them more control over their own affairs, is an action for development...Any action that reduces their say in determining their own affairs is not development”<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Irene and Edith Stevenson. interviewed by Beatrice Okyere-Manu on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2004 in Pietermaritzburg.

<sup>41</sup> Ulrich Duchrow and Gerhard Liedke. *Shalom Biblical perspective on creation, Justice and Peace* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989) Pg 73

<sup>42</sup> Amartya Sen. *Development as Freedom*. (New York: Anchor Books, 1999). Pg 1.

<sup>43</sup> L. Magesa. “The Theology of Integral development in Africa.” In *Church contribution to Integral Development*. (Eldoret, Kenya: AMECEA Gaba Publications 1989) Pg 117.

It is clear that in skills training there are geographic, environmental and economic structures that affect it. For instance we see that empowering poor women in gardening may not be the best option because it is labor intensive and many poor women live in areas where water is a problem. Thabani Ndlovu, a garden developer at Community Care Project in Project Gateway, agrees that in most of the communities, gardening is a challenge for women because in some areas people have to travel long distances, climbing or descending hills, to draw water from rivers and streams for household purposes. Therefore to travel such a distance for water for gardening becomes a big challenge. Another factor is that most of the poor women live very close to commercial farmers; and as such marketing of products becomes a big issue.<sup>44</sup> Some times too the knowledge of gardening is so limited that once crops are infested with insects or diseases, the women loose interest.

Some poor women who have been employed by some individuals also talk of the fact that their salaries are not able to sustain them. Dora Cele, who works as a shop attendant is paid R600.00 per month. She looks after two grandchildren, pays rent and school fees. From the above we can clearly see that even those women who have been empowered through skills training are struggling to make ends meet and though some Christians are trying to help, they lack tools or the model that can help them actually enhance the livelihoods of poor and marginalized women in the city.

In view of the above, I see focusing on enhancing the livelihoods of poor women as a powerful way of empowering them.

### **2.3 Focusing on Livelihoods**

From the above, it is clear that the way development has been done has often removed people's confidence and made them more government and aid-dependent and also powerless and voiceless. It has also very often prevented people from participating in the decision-making processes about their own lives. These shortcomings have seriously

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<sup>44</sup> Thabani Indlovu. Interviewed by Beatrice Okyere-Manu on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October in Pietermaritzburg.

affected socio-economic and cultural development. Therefore there is a need for a model that will take their livelihoods into consideration and tackle their poverty from the root cause.

### 2.3.1 Definition of livelihood

Robert Chambers defines livelihoods as “the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living.”<sup>45</sup> The United Nations Development Programme also gives a similar definition of livelihoods as follows:

The assets, activities and entitlement which people utilize in order to make a living, and these assets are said to be Natural and Biological, (land, water, resources) Social, (community, family, social network), political, (participation, empowerment), human, (education, labour, health and nutrition), physical, (roads, clinics, markets, schools and bridges), economical, (jobs, savings and credit).<sup>46</sup>

We therefore say that a livelihood is anything that people in communities and households do on a daily basis to survive.<sup>47</sup> A look at various groups of people shows that even the poorest of the poor have a strategy of living; every human being has a way of making a living at the end of the day or they will die. So the question that needs to be answered is how do we enhance people’s livelihoods and make them more sustainable.

### 2.3.2 Christian role in enhancing livelihoods

In order to maintain the “human integrity” accorded by God, Christians must be concerned about enhancing livelihoods of poor women. To do this they must ensure the following:

<sup>45</sup> Robert Chambers, “Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: “A key Strategy for people, Environment, and Development” in C. Conroy and M. Litvinoff, *The Greening Aid: Sustainable Livelihood in Practice*. (London: Earthscan Publications, 1988), Pg.10

<sup>46</sup> United Nations Development Programme. “Sustainable Livelihoods: Overviews”. At <[http://www.undp.org/sl/Overview/an\\_Overview.htm](http://www.undp.org/sl/Overview/an_Overview.htm)> (10 February, 2003).Pg 4

<sup>47</sup>Steve de Gruchy. “The contribution of Universities to sustainable livelihoods” Draft paper, Pg 4.

### 2.3.2.1 People become the agents of their own change.

The Christian role in enhancing the livelihoods of the poor is that by the end of the day the poor people, whether young, old, male or female, disabled or illiterate, all become agents, actors and producers, and not consumers, clients or patients waiting for services to be provided by an outsider. Each one has something to offer, and need not just wait to be a client of what others have produced. This approach helps people move away from a deficit based-development approach to an asset-based approach.<sup>48</sup> I see this as a means to create in people a sense of ownership.

When people become agents of change, they contribute what they have to the upliftment of themselves as well as their community. This strength brings unity and togetherness in the community as each one participates in decision making. They are able to explore and evaluate their own actions, weaknesses, strengths, capacities and assets and bring about changes in the community. Moreover people are able to own the change for it helps change mindsets and attitudes in the community. All that has been reflected above is to me the principle from the word of God, where he calls us who were made in God's image to work as a body and not as individuals, even as we see in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12: 12 – 27.<sup>49</sup>

### 2.3.2.2 People become the centre of development

In enhancing the livelihoods of the poor, we put them at the centre of our development. This suggests that people, as well as the environment they live in, are to be key whenever we think of implementing any given development approach. This is because the concern for humanity is also basic to God, as we see in the word of God, where Jesus declared that he came that He came so that people might have life and have it more abundantly.<sup>50</sup> The mission of Jesus was primarily based on people's well-being and not on profits and other things. Therefore as Christians if our approach to development is not people-

<sup>48</sup> John Kretzmann and John McKnight. *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A path Towards Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*. Centre for Urban Affairs and Policy Research. Northwestern University, (Chicago: ACTA Publications, 1993). Pg 1-11.

<sup>49</sup> We see in Paul's letter that we are all as one body and are to work together as one, and not as individuals.

<sup>50</sup> John 10: 10, "I have come that you may have life and have it to the full."

centred, then we become less sensitive to the situation of the people and more sensitive to the conditions of the donors. In considering the livelihoods of the poor, we are drawn into addressing the needs of the present generation as well as the future of what they will survive on.

### **2.3.2.3 It builds on what people have**

In enhancing the livelihoods of the poor, we appreciate that God has given each person skills, gifts and talents to be used in community building for the common good of their lives and their neighbours. Therefore our role is to enhance whatever knowledge or skills people have, and not to disregard it. When people realize that what they have is important and worthy, they are moved from a sense of dependency to having a sense of dignity. They are able to use their gifts, talents and assets in the building of their own lives and even the lives of their neighbours. This to me is a great strength of focusing on livelihoods in that it does not see the poor as empty, foolish and without knowledge but acknowledges the fact that for them to survive in whatever situation they are in proves that they have knowledge which needs to be tapped for development. In the same way, it suggests that they are not lazy but are capable of doing something with what they have. I believe God has given people wisdom and we need to build upon it to bring about a better change. Even sometimes children's knowledge can be useful.

### **2.3.2.4 It addresses structures that put people in a poverty situation**

In enhancing the livelihoods of the poor, Christians become aware of structures, policies and processes that have put people into poverty situations; and are therefore able to challenge and confront these structures be it on the local or the government level. We see that the problem of poverty is a huge one and working to eliminate it will be too difficult on a single level. Therefore by enhancing the livelihoods of the poor, we are able to link these two levels towards poverty alleviation. Sizani Ngubane's interview with nine focus groups in the KwaZulu-Natal midlands confirms that there are some structures, policies and processes that are in place around the acquisition of land by women, these include: giving the chief a gift of about R300.00 secretly which they cannot afford; the fact that

inheritance laws forbid girls to own land and also the demand for women to produce a membership card of some specific political party before their petition would be granted.<sup>51</sup> Such are a few structures which can be addressed as we attempt to enhance the livelihoods of poor women, because we see that if confronted, it can alleviate their poverty as well as generate income.

### **2.3.2.5 People are able to respect their culture and religion**

For any development approach to receive attention from indigenous people, it must touch all areas of their lives. I personally believe that any developmental program that does not consider the culture or the religion of the people needs to be rejected. Bradshaw adds that “Development practitioners have in recent times discovered that indigenous people are less committed to projects that do not support or affirm their basic assumptions.”<sup>52</sup> For example, in some parts of Ghana fishermen do not go to sea on Tuesday, the bottom line is that it is a way of resting where they can mend and do repairs on their equipment for fishing. It has become a culturally accepted rule that if one disobeys and goes fishing, the god of the sea will be angry and kill the person. In the same way in most farming areas, it has become religiously accepted that one does not go to the farm on Sundays. So for any development approach to be embraced by the indigenous fishermen or farmers in areas like these, the approach must consider all these beliefs for it to be accepted in Africa. Indeed “religion and traditional culture plays a huge role in the life choices of people”<sup>53</sup>

## **2.4 Conclusion**

In this section we have looked at the various approaches that Christians in Pietermaritzburg have been using to empower poor women. In doing so we immediately see that though these approaches have been helping, yet because they do not actually take poor women’s livelihoods into consideration, they have not been able to meet their needs. Therefore we need to choose an approach that looks at their livelihoods because not only

<sup>51</sup> Sizani Ngunane. “Title to the Land” in *Agenda*. No 42, 1999, Pg 9

<sup>52</sup> Bruce Brashaw. Tapping into Indigenous Technical Knowledge. *Together*. October-December, 1997. pg9

<sup>53</sup> See de Gruchy. *A theological appreciation of the SLF*. Pg. 15

will they be empowered to be agents but also they will be able to use their talents and assets for their own upliftment. They will be able to appreciate the approach because it respects their culture and religion. Such an approach will also help Christians to confront structures, policies and processes that trap these women in poverty situations.

## CHAPTER THREE: STORIES OF 12 SEX WORKERS

### 3.0 Introduction

In recent times, a walk through the city at night shows an increase in number of women standing on the streets and working as prostitutes or sex workers. The classified section in the *Natal Witness*<sup>54</sup> entitled “Adults only” takes more than one column. It also carries daily adverts of new sex workers in town. A study of the paper from January to August 2004 portrays an average of about 4 new sex workers in town each day. For example on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> of May, the number of new sex workers in town was 6 and on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> of August, 2004 there were 4 new sex workers. There is also an average of about 2 adverts of first timers daily.

This chapter looks at the stories from 12 SW interviewed over a period of about 5 months in Pietermaritzburg. The actual names of the interviewees have not been used for confidentiality purposes. This research does not claim to be comprehensive, because it did not concentrate on moral issues, but it does raise and elaborate on some important themes around the links between sex work and livelihoods. As noted above (1.9), owing to concerns for confidentiality, the names of the sex workers are fictitious to protect their identity.

### 3.1 Interview One: “Zodwa”<sup>55</sup>

Zodwa is 24 years old and comes from a family of seven, and they all live with their mother in the township. She matriculated in 1997 and got a job because she passed very well. She has been involved in sex work for the past 3 years. She said the factors that pushed her into this lifestyle are as follows: Poverty and naughtiness or pressure from peers. She maintains she is a Christian who goes to the Catholic Church every Sunday with her mother. However, the church is not happy about her lifestyle, but since they

<sup>54</sup> The *Natal Witness* is the oldest daily News paper established in 1846 serving the whole of KwaZulu Natal, one of the provinces in South Africa.

<sup>55</sup> Sex Worker 1, “Zodwa”, Interviewed by Beatrice Okyere-Manu on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2004 in Pietermaritzburg.

cannot provide what she wants she will continue. She further said that going to the church to listen to the priest is not enough; the church should go beyond providing for spiritual needs by providing for physical needs as well. This is because most of the people that go to church are the poor and most of them go home after church to an empty house without food and the church has no clue what these people do to survive. She continues that the church wants the presence and the money of the poor but is not concerned about how they survive.

On the question of whether her family agrees to this lifestyle or not, she said that they are not happy to see her in this lifestyle but since they expect her to support them they have overlooked how she is getting the money. They all benefit from this lifestyle she is involved in because she is able to support them. She says that not all her friends support her in this. According to her, a few good ones do not agree with this lifestyle but just like the church they cannot give her what she needs. Her neighbours seem not to be happy as well. They are jealous because, in her view, they see her prospering.

She listed a number of benefits that she enjoys in this lifestyle; they include: expensive things like clothes, cell phones, pleasure from different men, and also to be part of what everybody is doing. She further said that despite the benefits there are some dangers involved in this lifestyle' they include: having lots of enemies, one can be stabbed or even killed, people can use "Muti" to destroy one's life and also one can easily get diseases such as STI's and HIV/AIDS.

On the issue of HIV/AIDS, she said she is aware that there is no cure but that does not scare her. In fact she maintained that it's a win or lose game. If one does not get the disease she has won, but on the other hand if one gets it she has lost, just like gambling. She agreed that she is taking chances but then she stressed the fact that proper use of condoms can help prevent someone from getting the disease. She continued that the female condoms is better because they (Sex Workers) have more control over it than the male condom. She further emphasized that one has to be strong in protecting her life because most of the clients do not like the idea of condoms.

On the question of what she expects from the Christians, the church or the government to help her change her lifestyle, she said she expects them to provide more jobs, take away poverty from South Africa, teach sex education in schools, check the programmes that are shown on TV and also for the government officials to be good role models, because in her view these are the things that push young people into this type of lifestyle. From the church too she expect it to stop giving many rules and for ministers to be good role models as well.

She mentioned that given a job she will quit this lifestyle because it is very dangerous. She will never allow her daughter to choose this lifestyle and she will do everything she can to prevent that.

### **3.1.1 Interviewer's observations and reflection**

The interview took place in Zodwa's home and because the interview was dealing with a sensitive area of her life we had to sign a release form supplied by the Sinomlando Project<sup>56</sup> (See appendix for a copy). During the interview process there were a few interruptions. The first was the intruding of her friends and the second was her boyfriend. They left after she had warned them of the privacy of the interview. This confirms what Phillipe Denis said that "In South Africa, people are rarely interviewed individually, and if they are, other members of the community have an influence on the outcome of the interview. They often insist on being physically present during the interview. Family members interfere, and neighbors arrive unexpectedly."<sup>57</sup> The behavior of her house mates as well as boyfriend showed that they were concerned for her because she mentioned later that sometimes they are harassed by the police so they always have to watch out for one another.

In the course of the interview, it was evident that Zodwa became very emotional but she suppressed it until after the interview when she broke down and cried. She mentioned

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<sup>56</sup> Sinomlando Project is an Oral history project of the School of Theology, University of Kwa Zulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

<sup>57</sup> see Denis, "Oral history in a wounded Country".. Pp216

that she had never thought someone could ever be interested in listening to her story. This is in line with what Philippe Denis wrote in his article “Oral History in a Wounded Country,” that “Many people to whom we spoke had never been interviewed before. They did not know that their stories would be of any interest to anybody. This is particularly true of women who are culturally conditioned to let their husbands, boyfriend, employers or ministers speak on their behalf. Speaking for them is liberating.”<sup>58</sup> So with this background knowledge it was not surprising that the interview had an effect on her, for she had never been interviewed before.

Zodwa’s narration was straightforward and clear. This may be because there was a free atmosphere as well as a good relationship. Moreover the fact that she was contacted before the interview gave her the opportunity for her to think about the interview. She was interviewed on a tape.

### **3.2 Focus group interview**

On another occasion after Zodwa’s interview, she introduced me to her friend who was also a sex worker. I booked an appointment with her to have the interview in her house. On arrival that day I found out that she was sharing a room with four others. They became interested and joined in the interview. The group interview went on well but none of the five ladies wanted to be interviewed on the tape. They just wanted a face to face interview without any equipment present. The following people took part in the interview:

#### **3.2.1 Interview Two: “Rose”<sup>59</sup>**

Rose is an African lady of about 27 years of age. She comes from Harrismith in KwaZulu Natal. She was brought up in a Christian family. Her mother used to take her every Sunday to church, but in their house she used to watch pornography with her brothers and

<sup>58</sup> Philippe Denis, “Oral history in a wounded country”, in J. Draper(ed.), *Orality Literacy and Colonialism in Southern Africa*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2003, pp 213

<sup>59</sup> Sex Worker 2 “Rose”, interviewed by Beatrice Okyere-Manu on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2004 in Pietermaritzburg.

their friends. Sometimes they practiced what they saw in the books with her in exchange for money. Her brothers used to encourage her because she gave them part of the money. According to Rose this abuse continued for a long time. The money she got from this was used to buy nice food at school as well as drugs for her brothers. Four years later her mother died and she was asked to stay with an uncle in Umthatha. Even there too the abuse continued but it was not as frequent as it used to be. An auntie took her to therapy when she acknowledged these exploitations at about grade nine. Unfortunately she could not finish school because she became pregnant. After having the baby, the auntie chased her from the house because she could not feed an extra mouth. She stayed with some friends for a while but life was tough. All the friends were involved in sex work especially with truck drivers and though her child was still small, she had to do something which could generate a bit of income to feed that child. She used to clean the house and cook food for her friends.

She later realized that the government was giving a child grant of about a hundred rands per month and because of this she forced herself to become pregnant again in order to get more money from the government because the more children one has the more grants they will receive. So after some time she had three children. However, life became much more difficult than she had thought. The friends could not support her and the three children.

Another friend who had migrated to Pietermaritzburg came back and reported that there are many clients in Pietermaritzburg. So Rose took all the children to her grandmother in Harrismith and came to Pietermaritzburg. For her the reason why she was in this work is survival. She needed money to take care of the children and herself as well as the grandmother.

On the question of whether her extended family agreed and approved of this lifestyle, she said that since her mother died no one was prepared to take her and her brothers on, so whatever she and her siblings do is their own choice. None in the family can stop her as they cannot give her what she wants in life.

For Rose, the following are some of the benefits she derived from this lifestyle. She charges between R50 -R80 per one round which can last about 15-25 minutes. So if the market is good she can get between 10 clients and earns between R500- 700 per night. With this money she is able to pay all her bills: cell phones, rent, upkeep of her grandmother and the children and sometimes she supports her brothers as well. She claims she is doing very well because she can buy and wear expensive clothes. She has the opportunity to enjoy life. She has been in this lifestyle for a long time but officially two years in Pietermaritzburg and now she can advertise herself in the news paper which is one step ahead for her. Her aim is to become like one of the top people in this lifestyle.

On the dangers she says she had been threatened twice. For her, it is dangerous to be alone standing on the street so it is important to be associated with a pimp who will offer security at night but she has grown past that stage and now she is her own boss. Sometimes some men do not pay after having sex with her; she has even been raped several times. She has had STI's on different occasions. She has had many abortions which she knows have been a danger to her health. On the issue of HIV/AIDS, she believes that the correct use of the condom will protect her. She is aware that many people, including some friends, have contracted the disease and others have died. She says she is too clever to get the disease. Even if she should contract it now, she knows she has enjoyed life.

Rose strongly believes that this is the only source of income which can help meet her needs. Unless she is able to get decent work which can either pay her more or exactly the same amount she cannot quit this lifestyle because her standard of living has really changed. She thinks it is too late for her to learn a trade because she is established in this work. She says she cannot stop her daughter from doing the same thing if that is what she wants in life.

### 3.2.2 Interview Three: “Amanda”<sup>60</sup>

Amanda is a 35 year old woman who has been in this lifestyle for the past four years. She is a mother of 5: three girls and two boys. The children are aged 16, 14, 13 10 and 7. Her story is that she has been divorced twice and she decided never again to go into marriage. In all the previous marriages she was abused by her husbands physically, emotionally and economically. The first husband used to work in Johannesburg but he never provided for the family as he used to spend all his money on women and beer. She had to struggle before she could put food on the table. It became too much, so in the end there was divorce and she had to move out with the three children.

After the divorce she found another man who was helping her with food in exchange for sex. They were not married but were living together. He was also abusive but because he was providing food for her she decided to endure. There was always fighting in the house. On one occasion she was almost killed by him. He hit her hard in the eye and pulled out a knife because he suspected she was having an affair secretly. In the heat of the fight, she also poured hot cooking oil on him. It became a police case and he was in hospital for a very long time. Meanwhile she had two children with him, and she had to move out this time with five children. She took all the children to her mother in Nongoma and worked in a shop where they sold fruit and vegetables. She had to work seven days a week but was paid very little. Her employer was also mean and abusive. A kind regular customer saw her predicament and decided to help her after she narrated her story. She was a business woman who is involved in fabric painting and designing T-shirts.

This was better than the shop but more and more as her kids grew their demands became greater and she could not cope with the money she was earning. An old friend invited her to Johannesburg and introduced her to this lifestyle. She was surprised because she saw that for the first time she could earn a lot of money, much more than she was doing in Nongoma. She did not have to struggle much to get “big bucks.” She was working for a bar owner but later she saw that she was being cheated so she teamed up with her best

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<sup>60</sup> Sex Worker 3, “Amanda”, interviewed by Beatrice Okyere-Manu on 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2004 in Pietermaritzburg.

friend and migrated to Pietermaritzburg where they work for themselves. She claims her mother is aware and because she is a Christian she does not support her and is praying for her daughter to stop this lifestyle.

For Amanda, the benefits from this lifestyle are numerous. She does not have to be in any abusive relationship anymore. She is more independent, she does what she wants, she is a free woman and does not have to work for people and be at their mercy anymore. She did not need any training. In fact she has all that it takes for this lifestyle. Two of her children are in high school, though their fathers do not have money to pay maintenance they get whatever they need: T.V., nice clothes and shoes, school fees are paid, food and nice things.

Amanda believes that proper use of condoms, especially the female one, is very effective. She is scared of AIDS and as such refuses men who do not want her to use the condom though some can be very tough and brutal and can leave her hurt for days. "Sometimes one gets men who want to take advantage so it is always good to get married men, they are gentle and more responsible," she said.

Amanda thinks that training people in trade, for example fabric painting, sewing or baking cannot solve people's problems because looking for start-up capital is a big issue and also the competition in the marketing of products is high and individual poor women cannot cope. Maybe if the church or government can help poor women in this type of work with the sale of their products that can be better. She is afraid of HIV/AIDS so if she gets a better job that can pay her well, she is likely to stop because she says sex work is slavery. According to her she will not encourage her children to get involved because it is deadly, dehumanizing and dirty.

### 3.2.3 Interview Four: “Cindy”<sup>61</sup>

Cindy is a 19 year old girl, who comes from a family of 8. She has one child: a boy who is 2 years old who is being looked after by her mother in the township. Cindy lives in Pietermaritzburg and only visits home once every month. She has been in this lifestyle for about two years. According to her, she was introduced into it by a friend who has been doing this for a while. In grade 12 Cindy became pregnant and so had to stop school for a year to deliver. She managed to complete her matric but did not pass. She is the 3<sup>rd</sup> born in the family; the first born is a male who was in jail at the time of the interview. The second, a girl is in an abusive marriage outside Pietermaritzburg, so she was faced with the responsibility of caring for her self, her son and the rest of the siblings.

It was in the midst of these problems and confusion at home that a friend invited Cindy to town to visit a woman who is helping young and desperate women to find a job. This is how Cindy joined this lifestyle. According to her, she suspects her mother knows but she has never asked her in detail what she does. She is happy that Cindy, the third born, is able to help the family out of their predicament.

Some of the benefits from this lifestyle, Cindy said are as follows: she is able to contribute to her son as well as her sibling’s children’s school. She has bought an electric stove for her mum so they do not use firewood or paraffin any more. She buys groceries, toys and clothes every month end for the family. She buys herself nice clothes and shoes. She is of the view that this lifestyle has really blessed her family. Having said that, she also listed the following as the dangers she has faced in this lifestyle: STI’s and she was almost beaten to death by a client last year. She also said that society discriminates against them, which is so sad because they think all those involved in this lifestyle are crazy and dirty.

In February this year she got very sick and she thought she was dying so when she got well, she suspended this lifestyle for a while. Life was not the same. In fact she found a job with a local Hairdresser where she was paid R600 per month but this was not enough as she had to work every day of the week from 7.30 in the morning to 5pm except

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<sup>61</sup>Sex Worker 4, “Cindy” interviewed by Beatrice Okyere-Manu on 2 May 2004 in Pietermaritzburg.

Saturdays and Sundays where she closed around 3pm. She had to take a bus from her home to the work place and pay R7 bus fare daily. Therefore, she decided to get back to this lifestyle but this time because she has experience, she works for herself.

On the issue of HIV/IDS she said that she has not been for the test but because she is healthy, she believes everything is alright. She also emphasized that condoms will protect her.

Cindy also feels that this is not a good way of surviving yet no job can pay her more than this. If she happens to get something more than this lifestyle she can settle for that, otherwise she has no intention of stopping because she does not want to live in poverty any more. To her, all the empowering programmes that the church has been introducing do not help but rather make women poor and miserable. For example, learning how to sew is a waste of time because not only does one have to spend a long time in training but also it is costly and the market is not good. She knows a lot of ladies in the township who have been trained by the church and are still living in poverty. Those who were encouraged to do gardening also do a lot of manual labour but the profit is not much to even pay their children's school fees. She does not think she will encourage her daughter to join this lifestyle because it is too dangerous.

### **3.2.4 Interview Five: "Ayanda"<sup>62</sup>**

Ayanda is originally from Swaziland and has been in this lifestyle for about a year. She is about 18 years old. She was introduced into it by her elder sister after losing both their mother and grandmother in the year 2001. When their mother passed away, no one in the family was prepared to take them because she died of HIV/AIDS. Her elder sister ran away and an uncle took her on and everyone in the house was abusing her. They took away all the things their mother left. As a result of the abuse, she was not doing very well at school. After sometime, she also ran from home and stayed with her boyfriend. The boy also started abusing her so she joined her sister who was already experienced in this

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<sup>62</sup>Sex Worker 5, "Ayanda" interviewed by Beatrice Okyere-Manu on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2004 in Pietermaritzburg.

lifestyle and also all the other girls around were all involved in sex work so she had no choice but to join in and make money. Her extended family do not care whatever lifestyle they decide to chose. She migrated to Pietermaritzburg in January 2004.

To Ayanda, she has enjoyed her life as a sex worker so far. This is because she gets whatever she needs: cell phone, nice clothes, good food and also she enjoys having fun with different men, her rates range between R80-R100 per half hour to R100 -R120 an hour if massage, teasing and toys are required. On good days, she gets up to about 10 men. She operates 24 hour a day, so she is on call day and night. Ayanda gets her skills from watching adult movies.

Despite all the fun and the material benefits, Ayanda agrees that there are a lot of dangers in sex work as there are in any other job. She said most guys take advantage of her in that after the sex act they do not want to pay, so what she has started doing is to collect her money before the act. If the government, the church or anyone wants to help her out, they must give her money and sponsor her to a nursing school. All her life, she had wanted to be a nurse, her dreams were shattered when her mother died and now she claims that she had no regrets in what she is involved in, yet given an opportunity she will go to a nursing school. She added that though the nursing school will not solve her emotional needs, she can then think of one stable relationship because she knows after the school almost all her needs will be met if she is working.

On the issue of HIV/AIDS, Ayanda says she is aware because she had to nurse her own mother for sometime. Though she saw how she suffered, this does not scare her because our destinies are not the same. The fact that her mother died of AIDS does not mean she too will die from the same disease. She mentioned that she started using condoms long ago and though in this work sometimes she gets guys who do not want to use condoms; the mature men always want to use condoms so her focus is now shifting from young guys to mature men, and preferably married men. She also claimed that most of the men are very rough especially the gangsters. Some of them even strangle you when they are excited. Most of them come drunk and they also stink. Others too come after they have

been on drugs and they can be very aggressive. “When it happens like that they can treat you like dirt and ask you to do all sorts of things. If you refuse you are in trouble.”

Ayanda’s dream is to get married in future and have children and be a good mother to them. She stressed that she would not want her children to be involved in sex work because it is a dangerous work. When Ayanda was asked how she sees her future in this work, she said “Though I want to settle down in marriage and have children, for now, I think the future is bright in this work. Since they want to make Pietermaritzburg the capital, demand is going to go up. If it does happen, I will stop work at night and only concentrate during the day. I am planning to advertise myself in the Natal Witness and also raise the rate. I am planning on advertising for executive men only because I think I have the experience now. One thing that I am afraid of is maybe in future I cannot settle down with one man.”

### **3.2.5 Interview six: “Elizabeth”<sup>63</sup>**

Elizabeth is a 23 year old who comes from Zululand. She claims she is not an official sex worker who either stands on the street or works for a pimp, but her strategy is that she has six men in her life. These are men that she has fun with and they are permanent. She is expected to have sex with them any time they need it. She took this strategy because standing on the dark streets of Pietermaritzburg can be dangerous and, more so sees familiar faces which tend to increase discrimination against her. She mentioned that there is always tension between girls who work for themselves and those who work for agents or pimps. Again, she is aware that sex work is a shameful and a dirty work so by taking steady men one is safer. According to Elizabeth, each of the six men has a function. The first man pays for her cell phone, the second pays for her accounts in the clothing shop, the third pays for groceries, fourth gives her pocket money, the other two are young, one is in school and the other is unemployed. “These days no one sticks to one guy, but among all you will really love one. I love the two young ones especially the unemployed. He knows he is not the only one in my life but he understands. I try so that I am not

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<sup>63</sup> Sex Worker 6, “Elizabeth”, interview conducted by Beatrice Okyere-Manu on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2004 in Pietermaritzburg.

caught, if I do, I am dead. If they need me, they phone and I make time for each. ” she said. Four of her men are married men who see her alternatively usually in the afternoons. Most of her family members know she’s been seeing some men but they don’t know their number and who they are. Her mother knows the two single guys and sometimes makes up stories to protect her.

To Elizabeth another reason for choosing six steady boyfriends is that she does not want to get HIV/AIDS by sleeping with lots of men. At the same time her needs are so much that one or two men cannot satisfy her. She does not want to go through the shame of being classified as a sex worker. She goes to church and she is aware that such behaviour is contrary to the teaching of the Bible. She believes that using the condom as well as being faithful to a few men, especially married men, is the safest strategy though she is not aware of her status and she does not want to know either. If it should happen that any of these men break up with her she will look for another one who wants a stable relationship. Apart from the benefits mentioned above that Elizabeth enjoys, from time to time she supports her mother and her two young boy friends.

For her the danger in this game is to become HIV positive yet she mentioned that from her viewpoint, is better to enjoy sex and get the disease than to abstain and be raped by a gangster. She spends most of the money making sure that she stays healthy. She is living in constant fear that these men will one day find out about what she is doing, but until then she just wants to have fun. Her dream is that she will have fun, go places and in future settle down in marriage. She does not encourage anyone to do as she is doing because she strongly believes it is a dangerous game.

She feels the church should teach its members to have stable homes where they can bring up their children in love and in the fear of the Lord. She feels the church should encourage families to have a few children so that they are able to provide all that they need, especially the girls in the families. Again she believes the government should bring back the teaching of sex education in school so that the girls will have skills to live with and not to rely on men for their livelihood.

### 3.2.6 Observations and reflections on focus group interview

On the whole, the focus group interview was very interesting: the group was familiar with one another, so the discussions were open and frank. The interview took a very long time as the questions had to be answered by each one. They also showed knowledge of each other's stories and filled in any left out information. There were several interruptions from their clients. But all in all I felt it was a good interview and I managed to get the information I needed.

Rose was very strong and defensive of her choices throughout the interview. I think the presence of her friends contributed to this. She was very open and frank.

Ayanda was emotional when telling her story. She was sad as well as angry when she spoke of the treatment given to her by her relatives.

Amanda, on the other hand acted so strangely. She laughed throughout her interview even on issues that did not demand laughter. She was moving backwards and forwards in her chair and rubbed her palms throughout the interview. She could not look at me most of the time; in fact she had to bend her head down. There was every indication that she was trying to cover up by the laughter. So it was not surprising when after the interview, she mentioned that she tried hard to control her emotions during the interview because she did not want her friends to laugh at her.

Elizabeth's interview had to be cut short and continued later because she had to meet a client. She seems to be the toughest of the five ladies. She was strong throughout both sections. She drifted off the topic repeatedly and I had to remind her of the question at hand. From this I deduced that she found some of the question sensitive and was avoiding giving answers to them.

Cindy was also emotional, she repeatedly mentioned that she had never been interviewed around her work before and she does not even think people will be interested in her story.

She was defensive of her choices and strong at the beginning of her narration but could not control herself towards the end and her friends had to push her repeatedly.

### 3.3 Interview seven: “Kate”<sup>64</sup>

Kate is a 37year woman with three children, aged: 14, 13 and 10. Her original home is Umtata. She has been in this work for a long time now. She says that “I think this is the lifestyle for me, because I am happier being a sex worker than to settle in an abusive marriage. I always wanted to be independent, I had never settled down to marry because of the abusive marriage my mother was in and some of the women in our neighbourhood. I think it will be boring for someone to control your life for the rest of one’s life.” All Kate’s three children are from different men, as she wanted children and not marriage. Apart from the fact that she wanted to be independent, Kate mentioned that she is in this work because she needs money to care for her children. She wanted to explore the world, so she ran away with her boyfriend to Johannesburg to look for a job. In Johannesburg she found a job in a bar as a cleaner. She was not making enough money so later she joined the other girls who were in the bar as sex workers because she realized they were making more money. They worked for the owner of the bar who cheated them and paid them only a little, though they were making more money for him. They tried to negotiate with him but rather he threatened them, so two of them ran away to Pietermaritzburg. They wanted a place far from where the owner of the bar could reach her.

In Pietermaritzburg she tried hard to look for a job but she was unsuccessful. She tried fighting against what most women without a job like her do, but after a year she gave up the search and began selling her body. Since she has experience it did not take too long for her to realize the fruits. Now she has made Pietermaritzburg her base from where she operates into other areas. She travels a lot, selling her body to men especially in Durban. Sometimes she travels with some of her clients to other places as well, especially tourists showing them around.

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<sup>64</sup>Sex Worker 7, “Kate”, interviewed by Beatrice Okyere-Manu on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2004 in Pietermaritzburg.

When asked whether her family members are aware of what she is involved in, she revealed that all her children are aware of what she is involved in. Her extended family knows but they cannot say anything because they cannot help care for the children if she does not work. She has a serious boyfriend who does not mind the work she is involved in because he is unemployed and Kate has to support him. On the average she gets about 10 men a day and charges R100 for half an hour and R150 for an hour. If an ultimate pleasure is required including massage and toys, then the price goes slightly higher which in most cases is negotiable. Kate does not need any training except to watch porn movies for new skills. As a coping mechanism, Kate has to get drunk with alcohol or get high before each act. Her clients are businessmen, tourists, taxi drivers etc. Kate prefers married men to single young guys.

On the issue of the benefits, Kate agreed that it has really made a difference in their lives. They have moved from the cramped and congested conditions that she grew up in and her children are being brought up in town. They are in good schools; they can also wear nice and expensive clothes. She revealed that their living standard has gone up because of this lifestyle. Despite all these benefits Kate has been sick with gonorrhoea, syphilis and others infections. She does not want to get AIDS so she uses female condoms. Kate has not been tested for HIV/AIDS, because she does not want to know. She is of the view that everyone will eventually die but she wants to enjoy life with her children before that day comes. Kate uses her money on good food, alcohol, drugs, medication and cosmetics to make her look good. Kate is aware of all the dangers which include being beaten by clients, rape and also clients demanding their money back because they are not satisfied. Some clients stink and others have sores but sometimes she has to ignore all these things. Given a chance with a good job which can either pay more or same as she is making now, she will stop this work. Kate's dream is to educate her children and for them to prosper in future. She does not want any of her children to get involved in this lifestyle.

### **3.3.1 Interviewer's observations and reflections**

Kate's interview was an interesting one. It took about 5 appointments before it could happen, this was because on each appointment day, she happened to be busy somewhere.

Even when I finally got hold of her, we had to cut the interview short and continue some other time because she was called to duty in the middle of the interview. She was strong throughout the interview process. She also did not want to have the interview on tape, but allowed me to take notes.

### **3.4 Interview eight: “Sibongile”<sup>65</sup>**

Sibongile is a twenty four year old lady who comes from Polokwane. Her father was in jail when they were growing up so she did not have any relationship with him. She was brought up by her mother. They were seven in number, so life was difficult. There wasn't enough to eat. After grade seven she dropped out of school because she was too old for the class and she was not doing well. After some time, she ran away from home and followed some friends to Johannesburg; this is where she was introduced to this work. She worked for someone for a long time, until last year, when she met a guy who fell in love with her, and they migrated to Pietermaritzburg.

Early this year, she broke up with the boy because she had no job and life became very difficult. She tried to find something to do but because she has no formal qualification, she has not been successful. She worked for an Indian in his shop but the money was not enough to feed her and also pay her part of the rent because she is sharing an apartment with a friend. She said that “I needed a lot of things but I could not afford them. All my friends wear the latest clothes, shoes and carry expensive cell phones. Some of them go to the Casino to enjoy themselves and since I had done this before, it was very easy for me to go back.” Sibongile revealed that she is a Christian who goes to church but is not a regular member. According to her, though she phones home once in a while, none of her relatives know she is in Pietermaritzburg.

For Sibongile, going back to this work has made a big difference in her life though she has not stopped working for the shop owner. She works in the shop during the day and does the sex work only up to 12 midnight. She claims she takes at most 3-5 men per night

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<sup>65</sup>Sex Worker 8 “Sibongile”, interviewed by Beatrice Okyere-Manu on 2<sup>nd</sup> May in Pietermaritzburg.

for about three times in a week. For her, this is one of the easiest ways of making money because it does not require any schooling or training. One does not need to struggle because the market is always there. She charges R50 per round which can last up to about 30 minutes. She learns new skills from her friends who are full time sex workers. On the benefits, she emphasized that it has made her who she is because after breaking up with her boyfriend, she had nothing and no one to help her. She was desperate. That is why she decided to go back, but this time on a part time basis. Through this work, Sibongile is able to go to the Casino and many other places. She has secured a very good cell phone and is able to pay her part of the rent as well as buy good clothes.

Despite all these benefits Sibongile is not content. She mentioned the following as the dangers that she has faced in this night work: she recalled one time when a condom got stuck in her and she had to see a private doctor which cost her more money than she made that day. She mentioned that she had been beaten several times by men who did not want to pay her for the services she rendered. She continued that she has become an alcoholic as a result of this work and most people have to use drugs to be able to cope. She has attempted to commit suicide twice; she continued that most of the men treat them like objects and not human beings. She has had STD's several times and has gone through three abortions this year. She mentioned that full time sex workers see them as a threat and this causes fights among them.

On the issue of HIV/AIDS, Sibongile mentioned that she is aware that it is killing a lot of people and some of her personal friends who were once in this work have lost their lives; yet she has no choice but to be involved so she can survive. She believes that condoms will protect her as long as she can convince her clients to use them. She also mentioned that she normally uses the female condom to protect herself.

Sibongile's dream is to get enough money to go home and start a business. On the question on what the church or individuals could do to help change her situation, she mentioned that if she can get a lot of money to start a business and also to help her family in Polokwane she will quit this work. She mentioned several times during the interview

that she will not let her children take this route because it is slavery and addictive. Once you are involved, it is difficult to get out.

### 3.4.1 Interviewer's observation and reflection

Sibongile sounded desperate to get out of this work. Though it has made a difference in her life, she knows it is not morally right for a Christian to be involved in sex work. She wept most of the time during the interview which prolonged the interview to more than 2 hours.

### 3.5 Interview Nine: "Ruth"<sup>66</sup>

Ruth is a 32 year old lady, she also sees herself as a part time sex worker, who only does it when she is in need of money. She is a house-keeper who works three days in a week and as such does not earn enough to support her family. She has two children: 15 and 11 year old boys. Her strategy is that anytime she needs a huge sum of money for example to pay school fees, rent etc, she will go and stand by the street at night and wait for clients. "I cannot go more than three men per night. It is not easy, some men can be very rough, that is why once I get the money, I do not go again until I am in need again" she said.

None of her children knows her secret. She waits for them to sleep before she goes. She goes to church and is aware that Sex Work is a sin but she has no choice because she has to survive and her children's fees have to be paid. She recalled one night when she was spotted by a neighbour who reported her to her employer. The wife of her employer came and took her from Church Street to her home and made her promise not go there again. The employer offered to loan her money anytime she is in need but Ruth's problem is that it leaves her with huge debt all the time which she cannot settle.

Ruth knows the dangers associated with her decision to be involved in sex work which includes harassment from clients who do not want to pay after the act and turn on her to

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<sup>66</sup>Sex worker 9, "Ruth", interview conducted by Beatrice Okyere-Manu on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2004 in Pietermaritzburg.

beat her. She is aware that it is a humiliating and embarrassing job, because clients have learned to take women for granted and treat them as objects. “I want to stop doing this, it is not safe, it has no dignity and it is not worth the money. I am praying that after sometime I will get enough money to open up my own business and stop this hide and seek business. For now I need to sacrifice for my children”, she said sadly. She does not want her children to see and she says it is a lifestyle she wants to abandon but for the sake of her children’s well being it has become necessary at this point in her life. Ruth has lost two sisters and a brother through HIV/AIDS and her mother is looking after eight orphans whom she helps from time to time.

Ruth thinks if the church can give her money, she may not have to go on the street again because her children are constantly under pressure at school and she is afraid if she does not do anything for them, they will join bad company and be on drugs. She has no savings to help them in future. She is also of the view that without education one cannot make it in life so the church should encourage the young girls in the congregation to take their studies seriously. They must also support parents who are struggling to educate their children.

### **3.5.1 Interviewer’s observations and reflections**

At the beginning of the interview Ruth was uneasy and shy. She became relaxed as time went along. She was also emotional and cried for a time. For her too, this was the first interview done about the work she is involved in and it was evident that real circumstances beyond her control were the reason why she got involved.

### **3.6 Interview ten: “Zanele”<sup>67</sup>**

“I am a lonely lady who always wants company and fun, I want to see new places, eat new food, taste new men and enjoy myself, I want adventure. I do not really care about money because I know so far as I am able to go out there I will definitely get what I

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<sup>67</sup>Sex Worker 10, “Zanele”, interview conducted by Beatrice Okyere-Manu on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2004 in Pietermaritzburg..

need,” Zanele said proudly. She is about 22 years old and she has been involved in sex work for about three years now. She is the only daughter of her mother but since childhood she has observed her mother change men frequently, though her mother was a nurse who was earning a decent salary. Her mother was too strict on her yet she was not a very good example so after matric Zanele started sleeping out. When the mother could not bear it any longer she sent her to her father in Johannesburg and that is where she got into this job.

She could not find any job and became very bored staying all day at home. Her step-mother was not good for her so she used to visit some of her friends who were working in bars as attendants whenever her dad goes out to work. Later on she also got a job in one bar and sometimes the men took advantage of them by sleeping with them. When the father became aware of her behaviour, he started abusing her physically so she ran away from home and stayed with some friends.

Zanele came to Pietermaritzburg last year to escape from her father. Her story is that she does this willingly because she wants fun and ultimate pleasure is her aim. She advertises herself in the Natal Witness and her clients are executive older men. “There is a lot of abuse in this game especially from young rascal boys but the elderly men are cool. Cleanliness and condom is what I want.” says Zanele.

To her there is no job that can match with sex work in terms of money. She prefers this to being a housekeeper, a sales girl or selling fruit and vegetables. Zanele has a private doctor and she goes for regular check ups. She charges slightly higher because cleanliness is her aim. In addition, she offers wine, music, massages etc. Zanele refuses those who will not use a condom, and that is why she goes for executives only. She is not very sure whether she can abandon this work or not. Deep down in her heart she wishes to stop but “it looks like I am addicted to sex work, I don’t think I can stop, I am afraid I will not be satisfied without different men in my life though my dream is to get married and have children but I do not think that can ever happen. Maybe it can one day but not now,” she said. For her, if any one wants to enjoy life and have fun this is the way to go.

According to her, she has encouraged most of her friends to join her in this lifestyle and not to sit and continue in poverty. “I take them to my room and show them the things I have got and they get jealous and want to join, so I tell them what to do” she said proudly. She makes between R8 000 and R10 000 per month. Her mother is aware of what she is involved in but has kept quiet over it. She sometimes sends her money. She has no savings but a funeral cover. The rest of her money is used in accommodation, medication, expensive clothes, shoes and make-up. “To provide services for executives one needs to appear neat and smart,” she said.

She thinks the church and the government should encourage young girls to pursue their education and for parents to take good care of their children, especially the girls; and also be good example because she blames her mother for the lifestyle she is in. The government should make education free for black girls so that they can go far and be important people in the future. This she believes will prevent them from turning to sex work for their livelihood. “Black girls need to be educated to become professionals but because of poverty, our parents cannot afford to give us those opportunities so we have to struggle to survive.”

She did not want to disclose her HIV/AIDS status but kept saying that as long as she uses condoms and goes for regular check ups she is sure there will be no danger. She is aware of a number of friends in the same job who have died from this disease yet that does not scare her. She strongly believes each one has their own destiny. She also mentioned the dangers she has come across. These includes STI’s, she has undergone several abortions to make her free to go about her job, and she has received threats from men who do not want to pay after the sex act and also men who treat her like an object but not a human being.

### **3.6.1 Interviewer’s observations and reflections**

Zanele’s interview was the most difficult among the twelve women. She kept on changing the dates of our appointments until I decided to give her questionnaires which she kept misplacing as well. Finally the interview took place at a coffee shop in town as

she had suggested. This was to prevent disruptions from her friends and clients. I observed that she was not very comfortable at all during the interview process, and she was aggressive and defensive. During the interview I tried to exercise active listening, I did this to show her that I was interested in what she was saying. I was sensitive and showed empathy during the interview process. I think in Zanele's case, she was also aware of the attitude of the society towards her work which was why she was defensive.

### **3.7 Interview Eleven: "Dora"<sup>68</sup>**

Dora is a 19 year old Mosotho young lady who has been in this work since the beginning of the year. Her story is that she does not know her father and her mother died about two years ago. An auntie took over to look after her but started maltreating her so she ran away from her to a male cousin who is also unemployed. The cousin has many children and he is also a drunkard. He found her a job with a business woman who is also a friend to the cousin. What the cousin did not know was that the lady was a pimp. Life was so hectic for Dora because if she does not bring enough money, she was beaten up by the lady and some of the girls. She was made to promise not to tell anyone. This went on for sometime until she ran back to the cousin but was unable to tell him what she was going through. The cousin refused her to stay with him and bought a ticket for her to go back to the rural area where the auntie is. For her to go home was not the best idea so she decided to be on the street and fend for herself. She soon got some friends who agreed to share their flat with her in Harrismith. Later on they decided to move to Pietermaritzburg, so for her there is no home to go to and there is none in the family who cares, so she has to make life happen for her. She had five siblings and two passed away shortly after the death of her mother.

Dora was coached to be a sex worker by the lady she stayed with and she continues to watch movies and also learn from her friends who seem to have more experience in the game. She also learns from her clients. She even mentioned that she is teachable and open to learn new skills. That is what she tells her clients. So far some of the benefits she

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<sup>68</sup> Sex Worker 11, "Dora", interview conducted by Beatrice Okyere-Manu on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2004 in Pietermaritzburg..

has enjoyed are that though she is new and does not make very much, at least it has been able to sustain her up till now. She is now free to do whatever she wants; she does not have to work for people for them to abuse her, she now has a cell phone and a few expensive clothes. She charges around R50.00 but even when a client pays R40. 00 she accepts. Her day's work starts as early as 9am up to about 1pm when she parades the drinking bars and gets up to 3 clients before her lunch break. She goes again at about 5pm- 8pm, and she gets between 2-5 clients, because this is when most people have closed from work and need to release the tension from work. She goes home for a break and the night shift runs from 10pm-3am, most of the time she gets between 3- 5 clients. Her clients are taxi drivers and ordinary workers. Once in a while she gets clients who are unemployed.

Dora sees this work as physically, psychologically and emotionally stressful because there is a lot of abuse: from pimps to clients. She has suffered from STI's, and she has been threatened by clients who were not satisfied and wanted their money back. Once a client stole all the money she had made because he was not satisfied with the services she offered. She has been threatened by the police and other sex workers who have been in the work for a long time because they see the young ones coming in the work as a threat. She has had two abortions.

Dora's dream is to get money and either go to school or do business but she is not sure whether she can quit this work now or not, though given the best opportunity she would prefer that to sex work. The best opportunity may include: the government supporting her and her siblings at school and providing free accommodation, being employed in a well paying job.

To Dora the church may not do much to those who are already in the work but counsel young innocent girls at school. They have to teach them sex education and also encourage them to take their studies seriously because without education they cannot make it in life. The church must advise young people and if their parents do not have money or they are orphans the church can support them in school. Parents should give their daughters all that they need so that they do not get it from men who will take

advantage of them. She also thinks the government can provide night schools for adults like herself to be trained in skills like computers, accounting, secretarial etc. She does not want to be trained in sewing or catering because there is big competition in the market and most people who have been involved in it have wasted a lot of money. “My Auntie has put her electric sewing machine she got from her boss away because people do not have money to pay for the things she makes. They only want to get it on credit. People in the township have no money. They are struggling for food and they want everything for free not in exchange for money,” she said.

In fact she describes sex work as a nasty experience. She has not been tested for HIV/AIDS yet but thinks that proper use of condoms will protect her. She mentioned that there have been many clients who refuse to use the condom and she has to charge a higher rate for that. She is aware of the dangers of not using the condom yet she had to sacrifice because her siblings want nice things and she has to provide because there is no one else. To help her cope with the trauma that comes with sex work she has started smoking and drinking.

### **3.7.1 Interviewer’s observation and reflections**

Dora’s interview was emotional. It was evident that she had never thought of her life the way the interview had caused her to. After the interview she cried and was introspective, and mentioned that the higher rates she charged were not worth risking her life for.

### **3.8 Interview Twelve: “Thobile”<sup>69</sup>**

Thobile is a 23 year old lady who works as a cleaner for a company. She has been working for about four years and earns R1,200 a month which is not enough because she has a lot of responsibilities. She comes from a family of three children: two girls and a boy. They do not know their father, and were brought up by their mother alone. She was also a cleaner who went on an early retirement because she suffered from diabetes and

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<sup>69</sup>Sex worker 12 “Thobile” Interview conducted by Beatrice Okyere-Manu on 8th of August 2004 in PMB.

high blood pressure. Her younger sister died of HIV/AIDS and left a seven year old girl. Her elder brother is a handy man. He got married and left home; he is also struggling with the wife to make ends meet. In addition to working for the company, she used to work part time on Saturdays to supplement her income. "We managed to buy a sewing machine for my mother. She learnt how to sew track suits and is able to sew only during winter, even then she does not make much profit."

Thobile found a boyfriend and soon got pregnant but the boy refused to be responsible for the baby so she had to shoulder it all. She had to take care of her niece, her mother and her baby. As if that is not enough, the owner of the house where they are renting wants to sell his house. "Meanwhile, we put down our names down for a house in Oribi but we had to earn up to about R2,000 before we could get a house so I decided to do this on a part-time basis to help, otherwise my mother will die of poverty and desperation. So we found a cheaper house in one of the townships nearby." During the week Thobile stays in town with a friend and only goes home over the weekend. The mother does not know what she is involved in. "She is a serious Christian and will not like this idea at all but we will die of hunger if I do not do this. I do not work all day but work up to midnight for about three days in a week. I do not want to stop the cleaning job so I do this as part time. I am desperate to help my family so I charge between R50 and R80 per round. I am not expensive, serving only those clients who use condoms. I am also not very experienced so I get hurt and tired easily," she said.

Thobile's dream is to find a better job that can pay her about R2, 000- R3, 000 per month so she could stop this lifestyle, but up till now she has not been successful; unfortunately she did not finish school so she has no skills which could help her find the right job.

She thinks what the church and many other Christians are doing to empower poor women is very good, but she thinks it is not enough to just train someone and leave them to compete with the outside market, including gifted rich dressmakers. She thinks these women must be helped to market their goods if possible to the outside world. She also thinks women must be trained in jobs that will help them because these days people get cheaper clothes from China and many other places that are cheaper than the ones people

sew. All women who want to further their education must be given the chance by providing night schools for them so that they can also be trained as professionals. There should be free education for children, especially black girls, because they are the unfortunate ones. "I know a lot of older women who are studying and are doing very well but without a lot of money you cannot study," she said.

On the issue of HIV/AIDS, Thobile knows a lot about it and has even seen her sister suffer and die but she believes condoms can protect her. She does not know her status but she thinks she is negative. Some of the dangers she has encountered include threats from some clients who were not satisfied and wanted their money back, clients treating her like an object and not human being. She also mentioned that it is emotionally and even physically degrading and she will try and do all she can to quit by the end of this year.

### **3.8.1 Interviewer's observations and reflections**

Thobile's interview was also emotional and it was evident that real poverty and the fact that she wanted to help her siblings was the main motivating factor. It was evident that she felt she was in the wrong work because even as she spoke, there was fear and pain in her tone of voice.

### **3.9 Summary of interviews**

The following are the issues that arose out of the interviews conducted with 12 sex workers in town. Six are between the ages of 18 and 20 and the rest are between 22 and 37.

All of them are in SW because of poverty and the fact that they cannot find any alternative job to do, while confronted with the huge responsibility of caring for themselves, their children, their siblings as well as their parents and in some cases their grandmothers.

Another reason given was peer pressure coming from the desire of commodities on the market. One of the SW's says she is following her mother's example. Another reason given for the entry into this work is as a result of domestic violence. These women have run away from their homes and as such have nothing to survive on except this work. One of them mentioned that she has to do SW in order to enable her siblings to survive because she has no qualification and as such no other alternative job to help her look after her siblings. Only one of the interviewees, Zanele, mentioned that she is in this work willingly in search for adventure.

The educational status of the interviewees ranges from at least basic primary educational background to matric.

On the issue of benefits, they all see it as a work just like any other work and livelihood strategy which is helping families to survive and children to go to school. There have been material gains such as cell phones, expensive clothes and shoes. Most of them are able to remit to their mothers, grandparents and siblings every month.

The rate ranges from R40 to about R150 depending on demand: massages, beer, wine etc increases the price. Special treats like no condom and toys also increases the price.

One round can last up to about half an hour. Some make up to about R12,000 a month and the lowest is about R4,000 a month.

The working hours for those interviewed range from 3 hours per day to 24 hours per day. Some work during the day and others at night, where others are available 24 hours in a day. Most of them do not stand on the street at night but have created strategies that seem to be working for them. All those interviewed are not working for pimps but for themselves. Two sex workers claimed that they do it on a part time basis to supplement their salaries.

It came out in all the interviews that sex work is dangerous. Health and abuse are the major problems they have. Most of the Sex Workers have been beaten by unsatisfied men who want their money back. Some of them have been raped, some have been threatened.

Almost all of them have suffered from STI's at least one time in their life. Some of them have had several abortions and some have been seriously sick. They are all aware of HIV/AIDS, but have not been tested. They all know people who have suffered and died from HIV/AIDS. Most of them confirmed that it is addictive, they want to stop but they cannot. It was evident that sex work is closely related to alcoholism and smoking and they all confirm that it helps them to cope. It is also degrading because most of the clients treat them not as human beings but as objects

It was clear from the interviews that their main support system is their fellow sex workers. Most of them are in this work without the knowledge of their family members

From the interviews, the following places are where their clients are contacted: Shabeens; on streets like Burger, Chapel, and even on the N3; Hotels; the Casino and eating places. It was evident that some of them advertise themselves in the *Natal Witness*, the local newspaper.

The following are what they expected from Christians or the church as a whole: that when they empower women through training in sewing, gardening or even baking, it must help them market their products as there is high competition in the market and this leaves these women poorer. The Church should help women with jobs that can pay them well. Women must be trained in computers, etc. but not in the old jobs that do not pay. Women willing to be educated must be encouraged to do so with free education. Night schools for elderly women must be encouraged.

The church must teach its members to have stable homes and responsible parents. There should be sex education for all children in the schools. The church should encourage parents to take their daughters' education seriously. They must provide all that they need so that they do not depend on men for their needs.

It is interesting that some of them either go to church regularly, or their mothers are active church goers. Some of them felt that the church is only concerned about their spiritual but not their physical well-being. Zodwa mentioned that the church should stop

giving many rules and for ministers to set good examples. Others also said that the church is only interested in their money but is not concerned about how they survive. In fact most of them know that sex work is morally wrong.

### 3.10 Conclusion

These were the most challenging interviews I have ever conducted. After failing to get sex workers who would agree to be interviewed from the streets and the newspapers, I met one in a hair salon and a relationship was built which made her agree to be interviewed and even introduced me to the rest. The question that helped to introduce the interview is for them to tell me their life stories. This question had real impact on some of them.

Most of them were tense at the beginning but became more relaxed as the interview proceeded. Having learnt from our class discussion that the relationship between an interviewer and the interviewee is very important and that the success of the interview depends largely on that,<sup>70</sup> I tried to respect their views. I did not argue or judge or condemn them but allowed them to talk freely. I tried to treat them as a narrator of their own story; I tried not to manipulate them to my own gains so even in cases where they did not give a straightforward answer, again I did not push them but just allowed them to tell their stories as Chase and Colleen S. Bell put it that “by conceiving of women as narrators, we treat them as active subjects in telling and interpreting of their stories, even when the narrative itself includes experiences of subjection.”<sup>71</sup>

The questions asked were clear, simple and straightforward and open-ended but because English was the second or even third language, I had to repeat the questions and rephrase them to its simplest term for some of them to understand. Most of their answers were simple and clear except for a few instances where they drifted off but I always tried to bring them back to the subject.

<sup>70</sup> Class discussion which took place in the Retrieving Oral History in the Community Class in March 2004

<sup>71</sup> Chase and Colleen S. Bell, “Interpreting the Complexity of Women’s Subjectivity”, in Evans McMahan and Kim Lacy Rogers (eds), *Interactive Oral History Interviewing*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994, pp. 79

A critical theological evaluation of these stories reveals that these women seek to work, and so to be active in the world and not to go about begging for food and other physical needs for themselves and their dependants. They see the importance of work as vital to their survival. However, while they are ready to do anything for survival, this work may not promote their sense of self, and may do a lot of harm to their bodies later on in their lives. It must be noted that though God's intention is for humankind to work, whatever work we are involved in must not only provide food and money but it must also be fulfilling and must bring dignity to the one involved. As Dorothee Soelle and Shirley A. Cloyes have observed, "It is a healthy sign that today people are refusing to do some kinds of work, because they do not believe that just any work is good work."<sup>72</sup> Yet to these women in this study, any work is work provided it gives them what they wanted. They do not care if the work is morally acceptable or not, nor whether it is enhancing their dignity and integrity. To me this is where the challenge to Christians lies. They have to help deal with condition that puts women into such desperate situation.

So far in this chapter we have looked closely at the narration of 12 Sex workers, we now move on to the next chapter to look at the SLF. This will help us to understand the livelihoods of poor women and why some of them in Pietermaritzburg have chosen this work.

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<sup>72</sup> Dorothee Soelle and Shirley A. Cloyes. *To work and to love: a theology of creation*. (Philadelphia:Fortress Press, 1986). Pp66

## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS FRAMEWORK**

### **4.0 Introduction**

In chapter two, after we examined the weaknesses of traditional Christian responses to poverty (See 2.1 and 2.2) we recognized the importance of choosing a model that concentrates on the livelihoods of poor women (See 2.3), Now we need to take this further, so in this section we look at the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) which is a tool that helps to understand the livelihoods of the poor. In order to do this, it will be helpful to look first at the sustainable livelihoods approach, so as to help us understand what it takes for a livelihood to be sustained. This approach is recommended by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and a range of other institutions as the most appropriate approach towards development. Then we will use the SLF to understand sex work which is a strategy used by some poor women in Pietermaritzburg. This will help us know the livelihoods factors that have been pushing them into this work, so that Christians can make a more significant contribution to the livelihoods of poor women when seeking to empower them.

### **4.1 The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach**

The sustainable livelihoods approach is a way of thinking about the aims, extent and main concern of development. This approach puts people at the centre of development, in that way it increases the success of development support. The sustainable livelihoods approach, unlike other approaches, seeks to ensure the sustainability of the livelihood upon which people depend for survival and has therefore been accepted by a number of development organizations. Steve de Gruchy lists the following as some of the developmental organizations that support the sustainable livelihoods approach: The British Department for International Development (DFID), the People Centered Development Forum (PCD Forum), and Oxfam. He continues that since 1995, UNDP has

the authorization to promote SL as a way of combating poverty as well as promoting sustainable human development.<sup>73</sup>

Many authors who have written on sustainable livelihoods say a livelihood is said to be sustainable when it is able to withstand or recover from stress, and shocks, and also maintain and enhance its capabilities and assets, and still provide sustainable livelihood opportunities to people of the next generation; thereby contributing to other livelihoods to people at the local or global level for short or long periods.<sup>74</sup> The Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) document also says that a:

sustainable livelihood is the creation of conditions that are self-supportive of sustainable development in human, natural and economic systems, which, whilst safeguarding resources and opportunities for future generations, provides individuals with a means to provide themselves with food, shelter and an acceptable quality of life<sup>75</sup>

So it becomes evident from these definitions that a sustainable livelihood is anything individuals in the household and the community at large do for survival which can last for a long time and is able to withstand the test of time. This suggests that any livelihood strategy that proves to be a challenge to the resources that people depend on either now or in future cannot be described as sustainable. With this in mind, the British government's The Department for International Development (DFID) says that a livelihood is environmentally sustainable when it is able to:

Maintain or enhance the local and global assets upon which a livelihood depends, and has net beneficial effects on other livelihoods. Also a livelihood can be said to be socially sustainable when it is able to cope and

<sup>73</sup> Steve de Gruchy, *A theological appreciation of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework*. An unpublished paper given at the inaugural meeting of the society for Urban Mission, hosted by the Institute for Urban Mission, Pretoria South Africa, July 2004, Pg 1

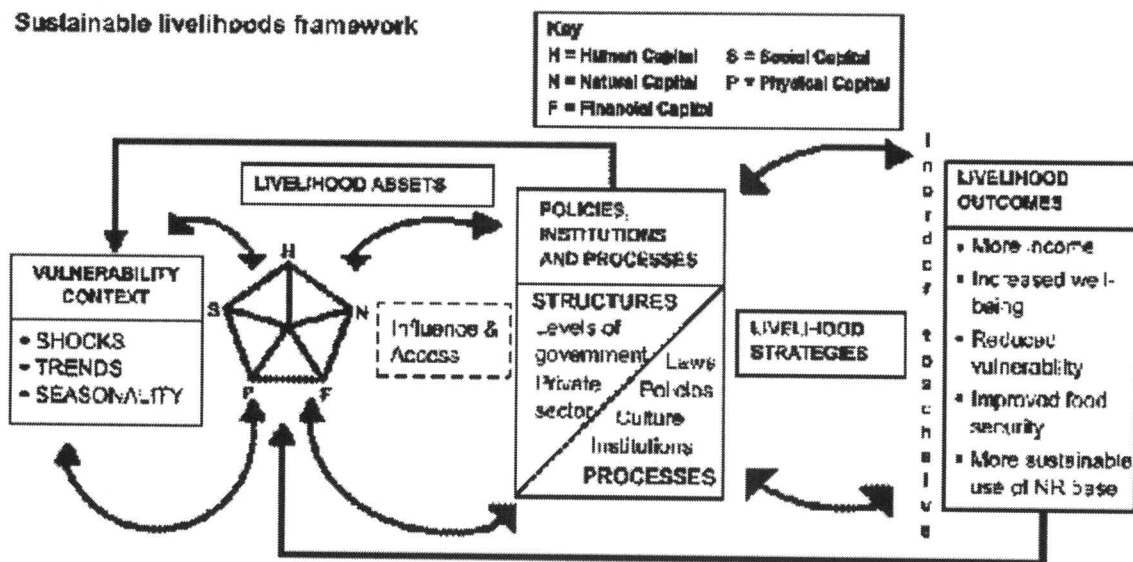
<sup>74</sup> Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway. *Sustainable Rural Livelihood: Practical Concepts for 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Institute of Development Studies Discussion Paper 296. (University of Sussex, Brighton: IDS Publication, 1992), p. 7, See also UNDP, p. 4 – 5.

<sup>75</sup> 5 Stockholm Environment Institute. [Http;www.york.ac.uk/inst/sei/sustainability/livelihoods/def.](http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/sei/sustainability/livelihoods/def.) (2-03-03)

recover from stress and shocks, and at the same time provide for those in future generations.<sup>76</sup>

In seeking to pursue sustainable livelihoods approaches, scholars have developed what is known as the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF). This, as has already been indicated above, is a tool for understanding the livelihoods of the poor. It can be used as both a descriptive and prescriptive tool.

#### 4.2 Overview of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework<sup>77</sup>



The diagram of the framework, though seen as a linear representation, must not be read in a linear way, or as having a starting point or a point of finishing.<sup>78</sup> As a result of this concern, De Gruchy proposes a diagram (See appendix 1) that gives a clear picture of a holistic and circular presentation of the Framework.<sup>79</sup> The SLF has six main elements of which five are represented by the boxes and the sixth by the arrows which show that the

<sup>76</sup> Department for International Development, *Livelihoods Connect*, at <http://www.livelihoods.org/Sidefn.html>. (18-09-2004)

<sup>77</sup> This version of the SLF is taken from [http://tumi.lamolina.edu.pe/pps/SustainableLivelihood/sect2/3/3\\_01.htm](http://tumi.lamolina.edu.pe/pps/SustainableLivelihood/sect2/3/3_01.htm). (12-11-2004).

<sup>78</sup> Koos Neeffjes. *Environment and Livelihoods: Strategies for Sustainability*. (Oxford: Oxfam, 2000) Pg 88.

<sup>79</sup> See Steve de Gruchy. *The contribution of Universities to SLF*. Pg 8

five boxes are interrelated.<sup>80</sup> We now briefly introduce the elements of the SLF, as we shall examine each in greater detail when we use the framework to analyse poor women's livelihood options in Pietermaritzburg.

As can be noted above, the first element of the framework is the Vulnerability Context. This reminds us that we are dealing with people whose livelihoods are at risk because of circumstances beyond their control. The second box represents the second element of the framework which is the Livelihood Assets and these are: Human capital, Natural capital, Financial capital, Physical capital and Social capital. These assets describe what the people have that helps them to survive. We need to realize that these five assets work best together and have a significant relationship one with another, and this relationship involves "both sequencing and substitution"<sup>81</sup> which means that, priority can be given to some assets, and again one asset can replace another as a livelihood strategy.

Next to the Livelihood Assets is the box that represents the various structures in the society and culture that influences the assets that people have and it is called Policies, Institutions and Structures. The next box represents the Livelihood Strategy which is the strategy people use in order to achieve their livelihoods goals by using their assets in the face of policies, institutions and processes in the society as well as the vulnerability context they find themselves in. Livelihood Outcomes is the last box and it represents the outcomes of people's livelihood strategies and it can either be positive or negative. The final element is the arrows which indicate the inter-relationship between the elements. We turn now to examine these with the livelihoods of poor women in Pietermaritzburg.

### **4.3 Analysis of Sex Work using the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework**

Having seen that SW is the strategy that poor women choose in order to survive, and also having looked closely at the SLF, above, we proceed now to use the SLF as a descriptive tool to help us see how this job option works as a livelihood option for poor women. This

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<sup>80</sup> See Steve de Gruchy. *A theological appreciation of the SLF*. P. 5

<sup>81</sup> Mark Butler and Ran Greenstein, *Sustainable livelihoods: Towards a Research agenda*. (Community Agency for Social Enquiry, November 1999), p53

will help stimulate the critical thinking of Christians and development practitioners to understand why poor women choose this strategy as well as to know whether it is sustainable or not. It will also help us take a second look at our approach to empower poor women, so as to come up with more appropriate ways in an attempt to make a more significant contribution to their livelihoods. The following livelihoods analysis will be carried out mainly with the women interviewed in Pietermaritzburg but references will be made to books and articles and reports on sex work written from other places. It must be noted that although the entry point for this analysis is the vulnerability context it may be possible to start with other elements (e.g. human or social capital) of the SL framework.

#### 4.3.1 First Element: Vulnerability Context

As we look at the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, we see that assets are held within a vulnerability context in which people find themselves. Here we see that people and their livelihoods are always at risk because of influences over which they have no control. In most cases these determine the choices and opportunities people have for their livelihood strategies. According to the DFID guidance sheet, the vulnerability context is the external factors that influence our livelihood that we have limited or no control of. These have been put under three headings, which are:

**Trends**, For example, Population trends, Resource trends (including conflict), national/international, economic trends, trends in governance, (including politics), technological trends.

The second is **Shocks** in the form of human health shocks, natural shocks, economic shocks, conflict, crop, livestock and health shocks.

**Seasonality** refers to changes in prices, production, health, and employment opportunities.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> See DFID guidance sheet Pg 17

All the above-mentioned factors affect the household in one way or the other. It must be noted that facing this vulnerable context, each household draws on the assets available to it. A critical look at the vulnerability context portrays that they have effects on the assets of each household as they labour to achieve their livelihood goals. For example shocks like floods and conflict or wars can force people to move from their home to areas of safety as a coping strategy. This is evident in many parts of Africa: as a result of famine in Somalia there are many people who have migrated to Ethiopia and neighbouring countries in an attempt to get on with life. At the same time, as a result of the prolonged war in Liberia many Liberians have moved from their homes to the neighboring countries so that they will be able to cope. It must be noted that these are factors that have affected the households and the community over which they have little or no control..

It is clear that the vulnerability context for most women in Pietermaritzburg is poverty conditions. Looking at the problem of women and poverty, Beverly Haddad calls our attention to the fact that “statistics reveal that African women consistently earn the lowest incomes, have the least wealth, and have far worse jobs than men, and women of other races.”<sup>83</sup> David T. Williams notes statistics compiled by the United Nations which show that two-thirds of the work in the world is done by women, and yet they only earn one-tenth of the world’s wages and also own less than one-hundredth of the world’s assets.<sup>84</sup> So it’s not surprising that the women in this study experience the kind of poverty that pushes them into sex work to make ends meet, despite the risks involved.

Being a woman and growing up in Africa, I have been a witness to real poverty among African women to the point where there is absolutely nothing to rely on. A document by Joy Aghatise Evbuomwan, who is the Program Director – Gender and Governance, for the African Network for Environmental and Economic Justice (ANEEJ), Benin attests to the fact that:

Women comprise 70% of the world’s 1.3 billion absolute poor. They bear the brunt of economic and financial transition and crises caused by market

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<sup>83</sup> Berverly Gail Haddad; Poverty, Development, And Gender. *African Womens Theologies of Survival, Intersecting Faith, Feminism and Development*. (PhD, University of Natal, 2000) pg 98-99

<sup>84</sup> David T. Williams. *Capitalism, Socialism, Christianity, and Poverty*. Pretoria: J. L. van Schalk Publishers.pg 238

forces and globalization. Within every unit, that of family, community and sect, the weakest and the most vulnerable are women and girl children due to their life long deprivation in education, protection, shelter, skill learning and development, access to resources and rights.<sup>85</sup>

It must be noted that women's poverty in the South African situation is aggravated as a result of "the apartheid legacy which denied women a formal education. The literacy rate of women in rural areas is estimated to be a mere 50%."<sup>86</sup> Survival for these women then becomes a challenge and they resort to anything that can put food on the table and I believe this is the main reason why, for example in Hillbrow, Gauteng, there are between 5000-10,000 sex workers.<sup>87</sup> There are a number of factors that contribute to women's poverty situation and the section below gives a detailed overview to some of the causes.

#### 4.3.1.1 Inequality of access and control of assets

A major contributing factor to women's poverty coming from the interviews is the loss of families; most of the families are headed by women. In most African cultures married women depend on their husbands for their livelihoods and this contributes to women having limited access and control of assets, so whenever the husbands are not on the scene, then survival becomes a problem. Muntamba and Blackden add that, "Inequality in the area of access and control of assets is a concern for women."<sup>88</sup> An example of such an asset is land. Though most people depend on land for their livelihood, in Africa a woman's right to land is minimal. I agree with Abuom that "often a woman's right to land is put at risk by widowhood or divorce, and lack of land jeopardizes women's income and economic well-being."<sup>89</sup> In the Ghanaian culture where I come from, there is

<sup>85</sup> Joy Aghatise Evbuomwan. Poverty, Prostitution and the Girl Child. At <http://www.econdad.org?Prostitution.htm>. (!2-11-2003)

<sup>86</sup> See Haddad. *Poverty, Development and Gender*. Pg 99

<sup>87</sup> Plus News. Sex workers get free health care in *Agenda Empowering women for gender*. No. 60 2004 Pg 96

<sup>88</sup> Shimwaayi Muntenba and C. Mark Blackden, "Gender and Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa" in D. Belshaw, R. Calderisi and C. Sugden (eds) *Faith in Development: Partnership between the World Bank and the churches of Africa*. (Oxford: Regnum, 2001) pp .91

<sup>89</sup> Agnes Abuom. Women's Issue in Health and Education. In *faith and Development: Partnership between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa*. Deryke Belshaw, Robert Calderisi, Chris Sugden(eds) (Oxford: Reguum Books 2000). pg 127

the belief that when a woman owns land, eventually it will be given to the husband, which means transfer of family inheritance. Therefore until recently women could not own land, and they were only allowed to farm on their father's, brother's or husband's land. The argument here is that until recently women were not the breadwinners of their families.

This has changed greatly, especially in Southern Africa, as more and more we see women being single parents and having to look after a number of children. This puts a lot of stress on these women as they seek to provide livelihoods for their children. Haddad reveals that "41% of all African households are headed by women in South Africa today." Even though there is an increase in female headed homes, "customary laws severely limit land and inheritance rights of women resulting in land often being handed over to male relatives on the death of a husband in rural areas."<sup>90</sup> Julian May also says "70% of South Africa's rural households are considered poor, with most of these households headed by women."<sup>91</sup> Most female-headed households do not have anything apart from their house and a small piece of land around it so they are not able to depend on farming as a means of helping them survive. For this reason it is clear why female-headed families are poorer than male-headed families, and the women sometimes have to struggle to make ends meet.

#### **4.3.1.2 Sibling's Survival**

Among the numerous social impacts of the world today is the problem of HIV/AIDS. The numbers of people who are infected with the disease and progressing to full blown AIDS is also growing at a frightening rate. Not only is the number of those infected with HIV/AIDS growing but also the disease is sweeping away families and communities and leaving behind a considerable amount of orphans; and this makes the AIDS epidemic one of the greatest challenges facing the whole world in this century. In every corner of the world today, there is the issue of Aids and orphans. Most of such children have no one to

<sup>90</sup> See Haddad Pg 99

<sup>91</sup> Julian May. *Poverty and Inequality in South Africa*. A summary report prepared for the office of the Executive Deputy President and the inter- Ministerial Committee for Poverty and Inequality. <http://www.gov.za/reports/.1998/pirsum.htm>. Date accessed 26-12-2002

care for them except their bigger siblings which in most cases are girls in their teens. This huge responsibility of caring for younger siblings forces big sisters into selling their bodies.

### **4.3.2 Second Element: Livelihood Assets**

The SLF argues that every household has differing degrees of access to five key assets, which help them to survive and also reach their livelihoods outcome. The five assets are as follows:

#### **4.3.2.1 Physical Capital**

This has to do with the infrastructure such as water, sanitation, energy, transport, communication, shelter and other producer goods such as tools and equipment, which the household requires to support their livelihood.<sup>92</sup> We see that physical capital available for poor women to support their livelihoods is limited. A look around the areas where most of the poor women are found makes it clear that they have little access to infrastructure. In some areas access to water is a problem, similarly, even shelter is a problem as the houses that most of them live in are “shacks.” In terms of equipment and tools that they can depend on for survival, it is evident that the poor women have little access.

Yet, there is a lot of infrastructure that one can depend on if she chooses to be a SW, which is why some of the poor women choose that strategy. There are many eating places, pubs, bars and hotels, for example the Imperial, Royal, Hilton and many others. There is also the ultra-modern Casino where these ladies can go and wait for clients. There are many adult shops where they go to watch pornographic videos as well as learn new skills for their work. There are also many bed and breakfast places where they can operate from. Talking to Mary Fisher, a Bed and Breakfast owner, she revealed that “I do not only get travellers and visitors but from time to time, I get SWs who bring their clients to the Bed and Breakfast for a few hours and are prepared to pay the same rate as

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<sup>92</sup> Development Services. At [Http://www.deserve.co.za/sustainable\\_livelihoods.htm](http://www.deserve.co.za/sustainable_livelihoods.htm). (5-10-2004)

those spending the whole night.”<sup>93</sup> A number of private people advertise for accommodation in the local newspaper, the *Natal Witness* for such purposes only, where clients pay between R40 per half hour to about R100 per hour. There are many parks where sex workers take their clients (those who are not prepared to pay for accommodation) to have sex in their car. An article in the newspaper revealed that some residents in Chasedene have put barbed wire around their azalea bushes because some sex workers and their clients were using it as a bed.<sup>94</sup> This suggests that there are a lot of physical assets that even those women without enough money can make use of if they choose sex work as a strategy.

Pietermaritzburg, being a provincial capital, has a good supply of water, electricity and housing. Though houses are becoming more expensive, most sex workers share rooms with their friends to reduce the cost of the rent. There is a good transportation system in the city where many people own cars and also mini buses. In this age of technology where different cell phones can be found on the market, sex workers are not difficult to reach. All of them have access to cell phones and as they advertise themselves in the local news paper, they leave their cell phone numbers for clients to contact them easily.

There are three hospitals in the city where these women can go whenever they have an infection or any other diseases. There are a number of government as well as private clinics so access to medical facilities is very easy. It must be noted that to help them in their work, condoms are available in all public places, even at the police station. There are a number of pharmacy shops too where they can purchase medication and obtain condoms.

There are many streets with street lights but most sex workers who choose to stand on the streets, tend to choose the dark streets where they cannot be seen by familiar faces. For example most of them stand on Burger street, and the corner of Prince Alfred street and Commercial street. Some also prefer to stand on the N3 to wait for their clients. Another factor that helps these SWs in terms of physical assets is that there are major routes where

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<sup>93</sup> Mary Fisher 4<sup>th</sup> July 2004 Personal interview with Beatrice Okyere-Manu in Pietermaritzburg.

<sup>94</sup> Christi Naude. That's no whore, it is my wife. *Natal witness*. November 2003 Pg.3

trucks pass from the Durban port to go through to the neighbouring countries with goods, and the drivers are potential clients to these workers.

One thing that must be noted is that there are many potential clients in the city. They range from school boys and the unemployed, to married and business men who drive in Mercedes Benz, and BMWs etc. Clients also cut across all racial groups. So it is clear that while there is little physical infrastructure available for poor women in general, once they consider SW, they are in a position to access a considerable number of physical assets.

#### 4.3.2.2 Social Capital

These are the social resources upon which people in the household or the community depend as they pursue their livelihoods. It includes networks, more formal group memberships and trust, as well as relationships within the household and the community. A look at poor women reveals that they have little social capital for example most of them are members of church groups, some have their own networks. They have no support groups and as such their voices are not heard.

Interesting enough, from the interviews it came out that most of the Sex Workers get their support from fellow sex workers just like the saying that “Birds of a feather flock together.” Most of the sex workers interviewed are in the work without the knowledge of their parents or their relatives. T. Leggett writing on *Rainbow Vice: the drugs and sex industry in the new South Africa* also says that “They may invariably be estranged or hiding their work from their families and have fewer support networks.”<sup>95</sup> Most of them depend on their friends for everything: help with childcare, borrowing money when they are in need and even assisting when a SW is sick. The interviews in the previous chapter revealed that friends are the most important support networks for the majority of the SWs. Michael O’Donnelle, Selina Madendo and Mary Khozomba confirm this with a

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<sup>95</sup> T. Leggett, *Rainbow Vice: the drugs and sex industries in the new South Africa*. (Claremont, David Philips. 2001). Pg 120

similar story from an interview they conducted with SWs from Binga in Zimbabwe. They were told of how four sex workers were abandoned by their families when they became chronically ill and lost their income. So their fellow SWs had to take over and care for them until they all passed away.<sup>96</sup>

“Sex workers in a mining community in South Africa served as each other’s social support networks, lending money and advice, and providing care during illness. Women worked in groups of three and four and were largely responsible for each other’s safety.”<sup>97</sup> It also came out that though their friends are their source of support networks, there is always competition among them. Fisher shares a similar idea from her interview that as a result of the competitive spirit in sex work, most of them see their relationship with their best friends as good as well as competitive and full of jealousy.<sup>98</sup> For some too, their permanent boyfriends are their source of safety and emotional support. This was evident when I was interviewing Rose. Her boyfriend came in to verify my mission and to make sure that all is well and that she is not in any danger from the police.

It is interesting to note that some sex workers get the full support from their families. For example an article which appeared in *Mail and Guardian* entitled “Strangers in a new land”, Vicki Robinson, reported of a “Lady Lisa” who lives in the Suburban Vanderbijlpark, a microcosm of white economic distress, saying she gets her support from her husband and kids because, “It gives them a house of their own and a higher standard of living.”<sup>99</sup> Even in the interviews conducted in this study, it came out that some parents are aware of what their daughters are involved in but have turned a blind eye to it because that is their only source of livelihood.

In general then, for poor women there is little access to social capital, and although SW does not provide greater access, it does offer a support- network for the SW’s.

<sup>96</sup> Michael O’ Donnell, Selina Madendo, Mary Khozomba. *The livelihoods of Commercial Sex workers in Binga*. [http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/temp/scuk/cache/cmsattach/1367\\_csw](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/temp/scuk/cache/cmsattach/1367_csw). (5-09-2004)

<sup>97</sup> See Regional HIV /AIDS program Southern Africa. At <Http://www.rhap.org.za/resource/163.pdf> (5-09-2004).

<sup>98</sup> See Wendy Fisher. *Zambia Cross boader Initiative*. Pg 9

<sup>99</sup> Vicky Robinson. “Strangers in a new land”. *Mail and Guardian* July 9-15 2004 Vol 20 No 28

### 4.3.2.3 Human Capital

Human assets comprise the following: skills, knowledge, ability and potential for labour, and good health that are available in a household to help them achieve their livelihood outcomes. It is evident that in the households of poor women in Pietermaritzburg, they do not have enough of human capital to earn a positive livelihood outcome. In most cases, they are “drop outs” from schools without the necessary knowledge or skills to enable them get jobs, and therefore an easy option for them is SW. Where they have good health too, we see that there is a lack of job opportunities available to uneducated as well as unskilled women. So in general, poor women lack the human capital that enables them to find decent work.

It is clear that this is one of the main reasons why some poor women choose sex work. It can be noted from the interviews conducted that the ladies have what it takes to do the work: the human asset is already available. When they all decided to join in the work, there was no need to struggle as they themselves are the ones to do the work, there was no need for training. They all had a bit of background knowledge about sex. Some were from families where they have been abused as children, others were divorcees. About 25% were abused as little girls, and 2 out of the 12 women are divorcees.

They are all young and energetic ladies who possess the ability to work: the youngest is 18 and the eldest is 37. All the ladies interviewed had at least a basic educational background. About five completed their secondary education, others are drop outs. Some have been trained in skills like sewing, and designing of T-shirts. Some have jobs, but are in this work as part timers to supplement their salaries.

From the interviews, it also emerged that since there are no formal schools to be trained as sex workers they have developed their own ways of improving their skills to meet the demand on the market. They do this from watching pornographic movies; also from time to time they learn new skills from one another and also learn new skills from their clients. Some go to strip shops to copy skills.

On the issue of good health, it emerged that one can be in this work only when in good health. So they do all that they can to be healthy: they eat good food and keep themselves clean. In a research paper presented by Josephine Malala at a conference for Social Anthropology Department, on *The perception of The body illness and Diseases Among Sex workers in Hillbrow*, she noted that most of the girls she interviewed believe in cleanliness. They see illness as contamination to themselves and their clients so they held good health in high esteem.<sup>100</sup> In fact some of the ladies I interviewed expressed the same sentiments. They are very careful about their health, weight and cleanliness. Some have their own private doctors who attend to them from time to time to make sure that they are fit for the work. A number of them have joined the local gym club to keep themselves fit at all times.

#### **4.3.2.4 Natural Capital**

This refers to the natural resources available to a household or community such as atmosphere, rivers, mountains, trees and plants for survival. We see that poor women in and around the city have little access to natural resources, and this is not a factor in the choice of sex work strategy.

#### **4.3.2.5 Financial Capital**

The fifth key asset to enable the household achieve their livelihoods outcome is financial capital. This denotes an available stock such as people's saving, be it in cash or in the bank, social security, pensions or even in items like jewelry, livestock etc. Most poor women in Pietermaritzburg have little financial capital. In a recent interview with about twenty church women in a group from Esigodini, it was noted that none of them have savings. Ten of the women are old enough and receive pensions from the government, and the rest live on foster grants of about R500 per month. They have no other income.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Josephine Malala. A research paper presented in a conference by Social Anthropology Department on *The perception of The Body illness and Diseases amongst Sex workers in Hillbrow*

<sup>101</sup> Church women's group interviewed by Beatrice Okyere-Manu on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2004 in Pietermaritzburg

However, in terms of financial assets, the sex workers interviewed receive a lot of money daily. Some earn as much as R12, 000 per month, but it was interesting to note that none of them mentioned that they have savings accounts, though a few of them have funeral cover. Fisher in her interviews in Zambia, quoted two Sex Workers as follows, “I have to feed the children and buy my self clothes so I can’t save. (26yrs. Livingstone)” and “This money never lasts. It’s like the devil’s money (25yrs. Nakonde).”<sup>102</sup>

Most of them have access to credit in some clothing stores in town because they have accounts with them. Others are involved in “lay By.” The ready access to quick money is a very significant reason why SW presents itself as a livelihood option to poor women, as this is one of the great weaknesses that poor women face in life.

#### 4.3.3 Third Element: Policies, Institutions and Processes

The third element of the SLF is what is called policies, institutions and processes. “These are the institutions at various scale levels from the macro to the micro that mediate the impacts of the external environment on particular individuals or groups, including organizations, policies, legislation, customary laws, social norms etc. that govern or influence those who have assets.”<sup>103</sup> These structures can either work in a positive or a negative way for livelihoods because mostly they determine the people who should gain assets and also which type of assets. The difference between this element and the vulnerability context is that policies, institutions and processes can be changed through human action, as people organize to change these laws and policies and structures. For example Judy Scott- Goldman gives an example in South Africa that “Apartheid laws were designed to racially skew access to educational resources. Current policies such as land restitution, housing, credit schemes and the skills levy are all policies intended to give people access to assets.”<sup>104</sup>

<sup>102</sup> See Fisher. *Zambia cross boarder initiative*. Pg 32

<sup>103</sup> Mearns, R. *Environment Strategy: Notes on natural and social capital linkages and the sustainable livelihoods approach*. At <http://wbin0018.worldbank.org> Date accessed 14<sup>th</sup> September 2003.. Pg. 3

<sup>104</sup> Dr. Judy Scott- Goldman. *Literacy Programmes and Sustainable Livelihoods*. At <http://www.khanya-mrc.co.za/document/Literacy%20and%20SL%Feb%2001.doc>. (5-12-2003)

From the framework, it was evident that these policies, institutions and processes can influence the household positively or negatively. In fact De Gruchy refers to them as “Intentional structures, institutions, formations and contracts that are set in place to regulate social and communal life.”<sup>105</sup> Some of the policies, institutions, processes and cultural laws that are affecting the women interviewed are as follows:

#### 4.3.3.1 Women’s voices are not heard

One of the major examples of policy, institution and processes that affect women is that women’s participation is not enabled and their voice are not heard. Abuom agrees by saying that “women are mostly not represented in institutions at the local and national levels, and have little say in decision-making.”<sup>106</sup> On the local level, most often African women are not allowed to participate in decisions concerning their own life and that of their families. In serious family meetings or business, women and children are not consulted. So all their wisdom and ideas are not developed or tapped into. It also contributes to the inferiority complex many of them have. It is clear that the male dominated African culture has something to do with that. Snyder and Tadesse have observed that, “This idea has created an attitude of discrimination against women.”<sup>107</sup> As a result there are a number of practices that suppress women, practices like female circumcision among girls, cleansing of widows, wife inheritance, sexual abuse and division of labour etc. Fr example writing about *Child marriage and child prostitution*, Susanne Louis B. Mikhail says “Girls are not given the opportunity to give their consent or otherwise in a decision that will affect their entire life”<sup>108</sup>

As I was growing up as an African girl, I was made to understand that as a result of our culture, even in the home, there is a division of labour whereby boys or men are not supposed to cook, clean the house or fetch water. Even today, a closer look at most countries reveals very few women in political leadership. The argument here is that most

<sup>105</sup> See de Gruchy. *The contribution of Universities to Sustainable Livelihoods*. Pg 9

<sup>106</sup> See Abuom. Pg 99

<sup>107</sup> Margaret Snyder and Mary Tadesse. *African women and another development: A history*. (London: Zed Books 1995). Pg 34

<sup>108</sup> Susanne Louis B. Mikhail. *Child marriage and child prostitution: two forms of sexual exploitation*. Rachel Masika (ed). In *Gender Trafficking and Slavery*. (Oxford: Oxfam 2002). Pg 46

women have little education and therefore do not qualify for that position. But I have observed that even where they have education and qualifications; the opportunities always go to the men. Ogudinpe-Leslie agrees and adds that, “women are naturally excluded from public affairs; they are viewed as unable to hold positions of responsibility, rule men or even be visible when serious matters of state and society are being discussed.”<sup>109</sup>. This also contributes to the poverty situations that women find themselves in.

#### **4.3.3.2 Little investment in terms of formal education and skills**

Another concern that contributes to the poverty situation women find themselves in, is that there is little investment in women’s capacity building in terms of formal education and even skills. Being an African woman I can identify with this point. Until recently, most people in Africa believed that it is a waste of money and resources to educate a woman who will end up being a housewife. This means that all the resources and money invested in a girl will not pay off in future. That is the background for the saying that ‘The woman’s office is the kitchen.’ A look around the world today makes it clear that a lack of education has put most women in severe poverty situations, especially women who have never had the chance to develop the skills needed to earn a living.

#### **4.3.3.3 Lack of access to credit facilities**

In comparison to men, women in Africa have less access to credit than men. This is another factor that puts women in poverty situations. It is clear from the stories of the Sex Workers, that most of the “skills training” available to them is very demanding in terms of finances, not only the cost of training but also starting up one’s own business after the training. This is because access to credit, even through private loaners in town, is not easy. “It is difficult for a small business to gain the help of financial institutions because;

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<sup>109</sup> Ogudinpe-Leslie Molar. *Recreating Ourselves: African Women and Critical Transformations* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1994) Pg. 30

smaller businesses have less credit worthiness. Interest and bank charges can also be costly.”<sup>110</sup>

#### 4.3.3.4 Domestic Violence

I believe that domestic violence is a growing global issue. This problem affects people of all nations and races. In South Africa, this is a growing social problem. It cuts across race, class and colour. Mananzan quoted the definition produced by the U. N. declaration on violence against women as, “any act of gender based on violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.”<sup>111</sup>

According to the Domestic Act No. 116 of 1998, violence against women refers to:

Physical abuse; emotional, verbal and psychological abuse; economic abuse; intimidation; harassment; stalking; damage to property; entry into the complainant’s residence without consent, where the parties do not share the same residence or any other controlling or abusive behavior towards a complainant, where such conduct harms, or may cause imminent harm to the safety, health or well-being of the complainant.<sup>112</sup>

When we look at the above Act, we see that though the law is clear on the definition of violence against women, yet according to their daily experiences, women continue to face physical, social, economic, psychological, and emotional violence.

Current studies on the above stated problem do not show the exact statistics regarding this issue, but it is roughly reported that in South Africa roughly more than 1,000 women are raped every day; one partner regularly assaults 1 in every 6 women; and at least 4

<sup>110</sup> W. Naude. “SMMEs and Economic Development in South Africa.” In *Insight* .Vol28 No3/4. Pg136

<sup>111</sup> Mananzan J. Mary (Ed). *Women resisting Violence*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books. 1996) Pg 69

<sup>112</sup> Anna V. Hoven “Domestic Violence in South Africa” in *Acta Criminologica* Vol. 14 (March 2001) Pg.13.

women are forced to flee their homes because of life threatening situations.<sup>113</sup> The South African Police put the figure higher, estimating that at least one rape occurs every 17-19 seconds and that more than one million rape cases take place each year here in South African community.<sup>114</sup> It was clear from the interviews that most of the SW's have been abused sexually in their childhood, so relying on this work for survival was not difficult or anything new for them.

Zondi Mkhize, an elderly citizen of Imbali, attributes the high rate of violence against women in the black communities to some cultural practices such as the payment of *Lobola* (bride price). He has observed that lately the price has risen so much that something which is supposed to be a token of appreciation has become a business, where one has to pay about R15, 000- R20, 000 to get a wife. So in the end the wife becomes personal property and the woman is supposed to be quiet and endure everything that comes her way in the marriage.<sup>115</sup>

Zondi is not the only one who has this concern. Rajuili quoted Khuzwayo by saying that "Over the years however, *Lobola* degenerated into a commercial transaction. Husbands tell their wives that they are a purchased commodity to be used ( and abused) as such"<sup>116</sup> Clearly it can be seen that once the *Lobola* transaction has been made, the wife becomes vulnerable to any kind of violence in the home and as such instead of being partners as God has decreed, she becomes property. So when she cannot bear it any longer she gets a divorce but because she has always depended on a man for survival, a strategy available for her is prostitution where she is not officially committed to any man, yet she will get money to survive.

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<sup>113</sup> Padayachee, A. and Singh, D. *Breaking the Silence: A Manual for Crisis Interventionists Incorporating the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998.* ( Resevior Hills: Advice Desk for Abused Women,1998) p.6.

<sup>114</sup> Clarke, Liz. "Rape victims call for information about Aids drugs". *Mercury*, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2002.

<sup>115</sup> Zondi Mkhize . Interviewed by Beatrice Okyere-Manu on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September 2004 in Imbali.

<sup>116</sup> Moshe Rajuili. "Commodification of Ilobola" in *Outlook.*( Rondebosch: Outlook Publication and Rcsa. 1999. Pg 7

#### 4.3.3.5 Peer pressure

Another factor that seems to be coming out of the interviews as the reason why these women are in sex work is the influence from peers. It was fascinating when Rose in her interview mentioned that sometimes she calls her friends over to her room and shows them the material things she has got through sex work, and even convinces them to leave the life of poverty and join her. By this she is able to convince and win many friends into sex work. Many girls are not given proper sex education both by their parents or teachers and this affects them adversely as they grow.<sup>117</sup> Such girls lack skills to resist their friend's invitations if they are confronted with challenging situations like this. Quoting from a report on the largest– ever survey of South African teenagers aged between 12 and 17, Paul Germond noted that “most teenagers first learnt about sex from television and their friends. Peer pressure and coercion play a significant role in adolescent sexual behavior.”<sup>118</sup> This provides an important reason why poor women can drift into SW.

#### 4.3.3.6 Migrant husbands

Another structure that puts women in vulnerable situations is the lack of remittances from husbands who are migrant workers. Douglas Webb, explaining the causes of poverty amongst the women he interviewed, said: In many families in South Africa, the husbands are migrant labourers who work in cities and towns far away from home. This suggests that they have moved from their families to live closer to where they work and only come home once in while to visit the family. While away many of these men get involved in drinking and with other women and forget to send money home to wives and children. As a result some wives are forced to involve themselves in SW to be able to feed the children and themselves.

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<sup>117</sup> Bernadette Mbuy Beya. “Human Sexuality, Marriage, and Prostitution” in Oduyoye Amba Mercy and Kanyoro R. A. Musimbi *The Will To Arise*. (New York: Orbis Books 1995). Pg 168

<sup>118</sup> Paul Germond. Sex in a Globalizing World: The South African Churches and the crisis of Sexuality. *Journal of theology for Southern Africa*. No 119(July 2004) Pg 49.

#### 4.3.4 Fourth element: Livelihood strategies

To overcome the vulnerability context and its threats upon livelihoods, households implement livelihoods strategies. These livelihood strategies involve the use of their asset portfolio available to them in the light of the policies and institutions that govern their lives.. For example in cases of vulnerability crisis like floods, or epidemics, we see people adopting coping livelihood strategies. So we can say that, as a result of the vulnerability context that affects the households and communities, they draw on strategies that help to enhance their livelihoods. The livelihood strategies are therefore choices and activities that people make to achieve their livelihood goals in a vulnerable context. For example Ghana was the leading producer of cocoa until the early 1980s when the price for cocoa fell drastically and this affected the cocoa farmers adversely, so most of them had to come up with new strategy of survival. A number of them moved away from cocoa farming by cutting down their cocoa trees and moving into palm oil and pineapple farming which were more marketable at the time. Though this affected the country negatively because it lost its position to Ivory Coast as the leading producer of cocoa, the farmers benefited from the new strategy of exporting new crops.<sup>119</sup> What seems to be coming out is that some of the strategies can have negative long-term effects both on the household and the community, yet at the same time can help them to cope for a limited period. It must be noted that the framework helps us to understand the factors that are behind the choices that people make to reach their livelihood goals.

We see from this study that as a result of the poverty situation, and the effects that policies, structures and processes such as patriarchy, lack of access to credit, influence from peers, lack of adequate education etc has on the women in Pietermaritzburg, some of them choose Sex Work as their livelihood strategy. Some of them, who have jobs, also earn so little that they choose Sex Work on a part time basis to supplement their salaries. It must be noted that four of the interviewees have been previously employed and one person is still working in a shop but earns so little that her pay cannot sustain her family. For example Cindy earns R600 per month at the local hair salon where she works. She

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<sup>119</sup> Samuel Boateng an ex farmer in Ghana. Personal interview by Telephone by Beatrice Okyere-Manu on 12 July 2004

has to work for about 8 hours every weekday and sometimes 5-7 hours on weekends. She spends R7 on bus fare to and from work. She has the responsibility of caring for herself, her son and her extended family. From this, it is clear that the money she earns is not enough to sustain her family.

Sibongile, who at the present moment works in an Indian shop, did not mention how much she earns but said that her salary is not enough to even pay her rent so she has to do part time sex work to supplement what she earns. It seems this problem is a widespread issue. In a study by Christine and Pat Stilwell also in Pietermaritzburg, they shared a similar experience where 64.7% of the women they interviewed said they could not get any alternative work and about 61.8% are happy with the money they get from sex work.<sup>120</sup>

Noah D. Zatz, agrees that most prostitutes go into the profession because of money.<sup>121</sup>  
Dori Posel agrees that:

Prostitution serves both as a means of economic survival for women with few skills, and a more lucrative form of employment than that available to them in the formal labour market. Some women turn to prostitution as the only means to secure their (and their families) economic survival. They cannot find either any employment that offers enough to support themselves and possibly their children and /or their (common -law) husbands.<sup>122</sup>

From this study it is clear that most of these women see SW as a job and they are in it because they sacrificed everything to ensure that their families survive. Cindy, in this study, has managed to buy an electric stove for her mother so that she will not have to not use paraffin or firewood at home anymore. She buys groceries and pays the bills for her mother every month. Lisa says “My children accept it because it gives them a house of

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<sup>120</sup> See Stilwell et al. Pg 49

<sup>121</sup> Noah, D. Zatz. Sex work/sex act: law, labor, and desire in constructions of prostitution. *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society*. 1997 22 (2) Pg 395

<sup>122</sup> Dori Posel. *The sex market in the inner city of Durban*. Economic research Unit University of Natal, Durban. 1993. occasional paper No 28, Pg 19

their own and a higher standard of living.”<sup>123</sup> In a study by Debra A. Castello et al on *Boarder lives: Prostitute in women in Tijuana*, a woman said that, “she has to force herself to prostitution because she has the responsibility of taking care of her mother, siblings as well as her two children.”<sup>124</sup> Looking closely at all these stories it is obvious that in most cases the money earned through sex work is looking after three generations, including the older generation because most of these Sex Workers have to look after their mothers and even grandmothers who are in the villages and the townships without jobs. Secondly, most of the Sex Workers have the responsibility of caring for their younger siblings, cousins, nephews and their own children who represent the future generation and need care now to be able to make it into the future. Finally the Sex Workers have to look after themselves through the same money they earn.

#### 4.3.5 Livelihood outcomes

The strategy that each household adopts has outcomes, and these outcomes can improve or erode the household assets. The livelihood outcomes therefore are the result of the livelihoods strategies and may produce more income, such as cash or valuable goods for the households, good health, and more food in terms of quality and variety and even food security.<sup>125</sup> It is important to realize that “there may be trade-offs or conflicts between the livelihood outcomes of different groups of people (e.g. between short-run income and longer-term natural resource conservation), and the framework does not offer any answers to these dilemmas but provides a structure for thinking them through.”<sup>126</sup> It must also be noted that livelihoods outcome is not always positive or sustainable.

From the interviews, it became clear that the livelihoods outcomes for the SWs are in two forms: positive and negative.

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<sup>123</sup>Vicky Robinson,. “Strangers in a new land”. *Mail and Guardian* July 9-15 2004 Vol 20 No 28 . Pg 6

<sup>124</sup>Debra A. Castello Rangel Gomez, M.G. and B. Delgado. “Boarder Lives: Prostitute women in Ttijuana” in *Journal of women in culture and society*. 1999 No 24. Vol 2. Pg 405

<sup>125</sup> See Butler and Greenstein. *Towards a research agenda*. Pg 10

<sup>126</sup> See Mearns *Environment Strategy*. P 3

#### 4.3.5.1 Positive outcomes

For all the sex workers interviewed, they see this job option just like any other work and, as such, beneficial. They all see it as a livelihood strategy which has improved their lives for it is helping their families to survive and children to go to school. Most of them are able to remit funds to their families at the end of every month. There have been material gains such as cell phones, expensive clothes and shoes. Some have bought televisions, refrigerators, etc. All of them reckon that they are able to go to expensive places they would not otherwise go to. They meet important people each day for business. They feel this work has made them independent as women to stand on their own. Fisher brings out responses from two sex workers on the benefit that they enjoy that: “ ‘When you are working it takes a month before you get paid your salary, but in sex work you are paid as soon as you have provided your services’, ‘We are even better than the working class. We have money everyday.’ ”<sup>127</sup>

#### 4.3.5.2 Negative Outcomes

Despite all the positive outcomes, we can see clearly that most of them are not happy in this work because almost all of them have the desire to stop and look for something else to do. Posel adds that “The advantages are easily outweighed by other considerations: the risk of sexually transmitted diseases and Aids in particular; their lack of protection under the law; and the nature of the work itself.”<sup>128</sup> All the 12 women interviewed are aware of these factors. For example, Ruth, one of the ladies interviewed, said that “I want to stop doing this, it is not safe, it has no dignity and it is not worth the money. I am praying that after some time, I get money and stop this ‘hide and seek’ business. For now I have to sacrifice for my children.” An article that appeared in the *Natal Witness* about a research conducted by Pat and Christine Stilwell of sex workers in PMB revealed that “The women are in sex work because they could not get any alternate work. Though they get a lot of money, they all have plans to quit but they are trapped in it. They said the work was

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<sup>127</sup> See Fisher . Pg 32

<sup>128</sup> See Dori Posel. *The sex market in the inner city of Durban*. Pg 22

stressful, they were tired and wanted to get out but struggled to find other options.”<sup>129</sup> A very powerful signal of the negative aspects of this work was the almost unanimous conviction that the Sex Workers would not want their daughters to be involved in the same work.

In considering the negative outcomes, health issues, abuse, market or seasonality and dangers will be discussed.

#### 4.3.5.2.1 HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is the biggest health concern of sex workers. Using Posel’s words, the Stilwell’s say that “Sex workers have been targeted as primary carriers of HI Virus as opposed to being seen as victims of the disease.”<sup>130</sup> Research in Hillbrow in Johannesburg (2004) revealed that out of the 247 sex workers tested, 45 were HIV positive. Among these were women who had joined the industry for only three months.<sup>131</sup> An article reveals the shockingly high rates of HIV among sex workers in South Africa that:

Ramjee (1998) found a 50% HIV-positive rate in sex workers operating at truck stops in South Africa, and 42% of them had active syphilis. Morar (1998) found an even higher 60% HIV prevalence rate in sex workers based in KwaZulu-Natal. In Carletonville, a mining South African community, sex workers had an almost 70% HIV prevalence rate (Taljaard, 2002, Van Dam, 2000). 47% of sex workers based in brothels in a Johannesburg suburb tested positive for HIV, and those who have been working only for three months had similar rates to those who had been working for one year.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>129</sup> Nalini Naidoo. The big teaser. *Natal Witness*. November 11 2002

<sup>130</sup> See Christine and Pat Stilwell. *An exploratory study on sex workers in PMB*. Pg 24

<sup>131</sup> Plus news March 2004. Sex workers get free health care *Agenda- Empowering women for gender equity*. No 60, 2004 Pg 96

<sup>132</sup> Mathew HIV/Aids Interventions In Female Sex Worker: Population In Southern Africa Countries: A Literature Review at [Http://www.rhap.org.za/resource/163.pdf](http://www.rhap.org.za/resource/163.pdf). (5-09-2004).

This confirms my own research, as the sex workers I interviewed mentioned that they know friends who were once in this work but have died of HIV/AIDS and many who are still working but are positive. Yet none of them wanted to test and know their status.

#### **4.3.5.2.2 Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's) and Condoms**

Other health problems mentioned were STI's and vaginal injuries. "Within a 15 months period from 2002- 2003, over 1,243 sex workers were screened for STI's and about ½ presented symptoms of STI."<sup>133</sup> Condoms pose two major problems: most clients do not always want to wear them, in fact some of them insist on not wearing them and they are prepared to pay more money for that. In some instances instead of R100, they had to pay R120 to about R150. The second problem is that there are accidents in using the condom such as breaking or leaking. The method used by the majority of sex workers to prevent pregnancy is the contraceptive injection, and this also has some bad side effects for most of them. Condoms are not used one hundred percent of the time, which reduces their effectiveness, both as protection against HIV and STDs, and as contraceptives. For example in the interview all the women mentioned that many of the clients do not want to use condoms, and it places them under the danger of becoming pregnant or getting HIV/AIDS or other STI's. A similar danger is mentioned by Sibongile, where a condom got stuck in her and she had to see her doctor to remove it.

#### **4.3.5.2.3 Pregnancy**

25% of the women interviewed in study in revealed that they have had more than three abortions, which they know places them in danger but had no choice if they wanted to continue in the work. Though they mentioned that they are protected by condoms yet what came out of the interview is that a number of them have had abortions, which suggests that they are also very vulnerable to STI's and HIV infection.

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<sup>133</sup> Plus News. Sex workers get free health care. *Agenda*. Pg 96.

#### 4.3.5.2.4 Alcohol and Substance use

Almost all of the SW's interviewed use alcohol on a regular basis. Drugs and painkillers are also used a lot. Almost all of them use some substance on a regular basis, but they did not specify what kind. They were reluctant to discuss this issue which makes it impossible to come to any conclusion about the particular drug. They claim that these substances help them cope. Stilwell et al notes that the "reasons for getting into the use of the drug mostly related to dealing with the pressure of the job or 'the life that led them into the job.'"<sup>134</sup> According to the African Christian Action (ACA), "Almost 75% of all prostitutes active today have attempted suicide at least once in their life, and many prostitutes are addicted to chemical substances...".<sup>135</sup> Stilwell et al quoted Lena Stander in her Honours research on *The attitudes of pimps and their modus operandi in Durban* which also confirm that about 75% of the Sex Workers in her study used dagga and mandrax regularly.<sup>136</sup> Another research in South Africa also says that Sex Workers use a lot of illicit drugs and reveals that cannabis is the most commonly used drug.<sup>137</sup>

#### 4.3.5.2.5 Abuse, Violence and Physical Danger

Abuse, harassment and violence are another negative outcome noted in the interviews. All of the sex workers interviewed confirmed that at times clients who are not satisfied beat and abuse them to get their money back. In fact some also threatened to kill them. It seems to me that this is a problem facing Sex Workers in all locations. In a report written by Njoki Karuoya on "Poverty leading to prostitution", Joyce, one of the ladies interviewed in Nairobi in Kenya, confirmed this by saying "Some men threaten us with knives and steal from us. They take the money we have collected for the day. Others beat us after they have had sex. Others take advantage of us because we are young and they refuse to pay."<sup>138</sup> This is more prominent during time of migrant sex work. According to

<sup>134</sup> See Stilwell et el. Pg 23

<sup>135</sup> Comments on current moves to legalise the prostitution trade. Published on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2001 at CTF articles [www.ctf.org.za](http://www.ctf.org.za).(\$-11-2003)

<sup>136</sup> See Stilwell et el. Pg 22

<sup>137</sup> Bridget Ducasse. South Africa Madrax use 'Probable linked to dagga' *Natal Witness*. June 28 2002

<sup>138</sup> Njoki Karuoya. Poverty leading to Prostitution. *The Nation (Nairobi)*, 18 December 1999: <http://www.hartford-hwp.com?archives?36?178.html>.(4-12-2003).

Anders Lisborg “ Violence is work-related risk factor that occurs in the migrant prostitution”<sup>139</sup>

As a result of the crime rate on South African streets, especially at night, it came out in the interviews that most of the Sex Workers are scared to be alone on the streets waiting for clients. This is the reason why most of the ladies prefer to work for pimps who offer security for them as they stand on the streets. Yet these pimps also abuse them. A need assessment survey conducted by Jillian Gardner and Jill Sloan of the Sex Worker Education and Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT), in some massage parlours, escort agencies and brothels in Cape Town revealed that:

Most of the pimps do not give the sex workers the maximum protection they need. Pimps appoint clients to sex workers, so unless a very good relationship is maintained by the sex worker, they do not get a booking. Some of the workers are made to work 20 hours per shift. Most of the pimps do not allow their workers to leave the premises, so they may be on call for 24 hours so even if they are asleep they will be woken up. They do not have leave or time to go out and relax. In some places workers are punished by a system where they are fined from about R5.00 to about R1000.00 by the pimps for various offences.<sup>140</sup>

The Sex Workers interviewed in this study confirmed this same allegation as the reason why they work for themselves.

Helen Jackson identifies another factor that: “Sex work is in any case a time-limited occupation- men tend to go for younger rather than middle aged women so a woman’s capacity as a sex worker usually declines with age.”<sup>141</sup> I agree with this and believe it

<sup>139</sup> Anders Lisborg. Bodies across borders: Prostitution-related migration from Thailand to Denmark. In Sussane Thorbek and Bandana Pattanaik (eds). *Transnational Prostitution: Changing Global Patterns* (New York: Zed Books, 2002).Pg 107

<sup>140</sup> Jillian Gardner and Jill Sloan. *Two years of safer sex promotion work in escort agencies and massage parlours: a review of an NGO’s successes and difficulties*. An unpublished paper presented at International Conference on AIDS in Context. 04-07 April 2000. Pg 6

<sup>141</sup> Helen Jackson. *AIDS Africa Continent in Crisis*. SAFAIDS, 2002 Pg 342.

explains why most of the Sex Workers I interviewed were in their teens and early twenty's. Only two among the twelve were in their thirties. Again I believe this may be one of the reasons why all of them were talking of stopping in the future to settle down, for they know once they are in their middle age they may not get many clients to support them in this work, and their performance will go down.

In South Africa, at the time of the interview, Sex Work or prostitution was illegal, though there was talks on whether or not to legalize it and because of that most of the Sex Workers are not protected by law for their activities. This places them at a serious disadvantage when dealing with clients. For example, most of them mentioned that they have been raped by their clients before. Some of them too have been threatened. If a man refuses to pay after sex, as commonly occurs when the clients are not satisfied, then the Sex Workers has no right. On a more serious note they are afraid of the police. Whenever they report such incidencies practically nothing happens to the clients.

In a document containing a report on the formative assessment for the Zambia boarder initiative, Wendy Fisher shares similar findings from sex workers at the Zambia boarder whom she interviewed. In addition to sleeping with lots of different men, they are also abused and stigmatised. Clients do not want to pay for services they render, some stole from them and some clients intentionally pierce or remove condoms and refuse to wear them during sex. Sometimes too they are harassed and raped even by the police. She also found out from the sex workers that they are continuously insulted and gossiped about in their communities by neighbours.<sup>142</sup> This leads us to the next problem, loss of dignity.

#### **4.3.5.2.6 Loss of Dignity**

SW leads to stigmatization. This is the reason why most of them hide on dark street corners so that they are not seen by relatives and familiar faces and this puts them in danger. In an article written by Vijaendra Rao, he confirmed this saying "Sex work is a highly stigmatized activity and women who enter the profession are rarely able to

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<sup>142</sup> Wendy Fisher. A report on the formative assessment of the Zambia cross boarder initiative. September 2003. published by USAID

participate in mainstream social activities and see themselves as "fallen."<sup>143</sup> I agree with this because in the interviews I conducted, these ladies mentioned that once they are seen in public as sex workers, they will not be able to participate fully in any activity publicly because people will resent them.

Not only does the outside World discriminate against sex workers, they themselves suffer emotionally. Cecilie Hoigard and Liv Finstad add that:

When prostitutes talk about the damages of prostitution, however, it is not the traditional violence they emphasise most. Fractured jaws heals, split lips will mend. Even anxiety dulls and fades. Regaining self-respect and recreating an emotional life is far more difficult. It is as hard as reconstructing a hundred crown bill from ashes<sup>144</sup>

#### 4.3.5.2.7 Seasonality

Another factor that sex workers have no control over, is seasons. All of the sex workers interviewed mentioned that though they get lots of money through sex work, some months are not very good. Most often business is not very good in Pietermaritzburg around January, February and August. This is because it is during this time that parents have to buy things for their children's schools and also pay school fees. November, December, January are also difficult months when most people are preparing to buy Christmas presents and also go holiday so they do not get lots of local clients and they have to depend mostly on tourists which suggests that most of them have to move around to Cape Town, Durban and other tourist attraction areas. This is what Thorbek and Pattanaik refer to as migrant sex work.<sup>145</sup> Some also indicated that they do not get a lot of clients when it is raining, especially those who stand on the streets.

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<sup>143</sup> Vijaendra Rao. *Sex Workers and the Cost of Safe Sex: The Compensating Differential for Condom Use in Calcutta* Development Research Group, The World Bank Indrani Gupta, Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi. January 2001

<sup>144</sup> Cecilie Hoigard and Liv Finstad. *Blackstreet: Prostitution, money and love*. (Norway: Polity Press, 1992). Pg115

<sup>145</sup> See Thorbek and Pattanaik, *Transnational prostitution*. Pg 3-4

#### **4.3.6 Interconnectedness**

The arrows in the diagram that link the various elements show the relationship that exists between the different elements. For example it can be noted that the assets that a household has are influenced by the vulnerability context, and policies, institutions, processes and affects their access to assets. Therefore in order to achieve their livelihoods outcome which can either be positive or negative, there is the need to choose strategies. If their livelihoods are improved positively as a result of the strategies they choose, then they will be able to withstand their vulnerability context. Sex Work, for example easily enhances the financial capital of the household, but as we have noted it also erodes human and social capital. Furthermore, changes in patriarchal laws and policies could have a strong impact upon poor women's livelihood assets and strategies possibly forcing a fewer into Sex Work

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have seen that a livelihood is whatever a household does on a daily basis to survive and this can either be sustainable or not. We also looked at the SLF, a tool that helps to understand the livelihoods of the poor. We also tried to understand Sex Work with the SLF. It was evident that the vulnerable context that poor women in Pietermaritzburg find themselves in is poverty. This life of poverty and their access to assets has been shaped by policies, institutions and processes that are around them from the local to government level as well as in the culture. For these reasons, some poor women choose Sex Work as their livelihood strategy. I noted above that though as Sex Workers they have limited assets, these women try to build their livelihoods. It was clear that the outcomes of this strategy are twofold: positive and negative. They make a lot of money though at a cost, some of the cost includes abuse, violence, health issues, diseases like HIV/AIDS and STI's.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: ENHANCING THE LIVELIHOODS OF POOR WOMEN**

### **5.0 Introduction**

After looking at the models that Christians in Pietermaritzburg use when empowering poor women, we noted that they do not adequately take their livelihoods into consideration. Therefore, we saw the need to concentrate on enhancing the lives of the poor in our attempt to empower them. We moved on to consider Sex Work, the livelihoods option that some poor women in Pietermaritzburg choose, and then the SLF was used to analyze Sex Work. This helped us to understand the work and why poor women choose this option. We now move on in this chapter to look at how Christians can enhance the livelihoods of poor women. We will do this by first, considering the Christian understanding of sustainable livelihoods. Secondly we will look again at Sex Work in light of the Christian understanding of sustainable livelihoods, to identify whether Sex Work is a sustainable option or not and what Christians can learn from Sex Work through the use of SLF. Finally, we will suggest some strategic options Christians can use to enhance the livelihoods of poor women

### **5.1 Sustainable livelihoods in a Christian Perspective**

So far, through this study, Christians have been challenged to consider the model of the sustainable livelihoods in their attempt to make a more significant contribution to the poor. From the Christian point of view, any sustainable livelihood should promote the following seven values, which help maintain “Human Integrity” and therefore preserves the image of God in humankind:

#### **5.1.1 Good Health**

To be sustainable from a Christian perspective, a livelihood must enhance good health. In John 2, John, seeing the importance of good health, prayed for Gaius, his friend that he may enjoy good health and that all may go well with him. This is because when one’s health is catered for, the person will have the better life that Jesus described in John 10:

10. This passage emphasizes the mission of Jesus as primarily based on people's well-being. In a similar vein, he repeated the words of the prophet Isaiah at his sermon in Nazareth (Luke 4: 18-20)

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

We see Jesus, healing the sick (Luke 4: 41, 5: 12-26 ). He also drove out evil spirits as well (Luke 4: 31-37). In enhancing the livelihoods of the poor, one must be aware that they rely mainly on their physical strength as a source of capital and consequently to sustain their livelihoods. Therefore from a Christian perspective, sustainable livelihoods should incorporate an increase in human capital. Anso Kellerman, quoting from the World Bank (1993: 55) says, "Investing in the health of the poor is an economically efficient and politically acceptable strategy for reducing poverty and alleviating its consequences."<sup>146</sup> I agree with Kellerman because when people have good health they are able to work and take care of themselves.

### 5.1.2 Good labour

Good labour is another value identified as part of the Christian perspective of sustainable livelihoods. This is where the poor are encouraged to work and see the fruits of their labour. Good labour couples itself with good health, and Anso Kellerman confirms this by saying, "Healthy people are able to work harder and be more productive."<sup>147</sup> Work is as an important aspect to Christian life. Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, commented that, "If a man will not work he shall not eat (2 Thes 3:10)." In the same way a livelihood that is sustained from a Christian perspective will challenge the poor to appreciate good work and not just any work.

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<sup>146</sup> Anso Kellerman. "Health and Development" in *Development Studies 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. (Johannesburg: Oxford University Press, 2000). Pg 184

<sup>147</sup> See Kellerman. "Health and Development" Pg 184

It will help the poor to know that work is a fundamental way in which humanity participates in the activity of God in the world today. From Genesis, we read that God created the world and all that is in it. God further created human beings in God's own image and likeness. He charged them to increase and multiply, and to cultivate the earth and develop it (Gen. 1: 24-29). This suggests that God made human beings responsible to be co-creators in the continuation of God's creative work in the world. God was and still is actively involved in the world. God has given people whether black or white, European Asian or African, whether poor or rich, women or men, skills, knowledge, resources and assets to use.

When livelihoods are enhanced and made sustainable, then in the Christian perspective, people are able to contribute to the uplifting of their society and not be dependant. Julius Nyerere noted (in sexist terms) that "Man lives in society. He becomes meaningful to himself and his fellow only as a member of that society. Therefore to talk of the development of man and to work for the development of man must mean the development of that kind of society which serves man, which enhances his wellbeing and preserves his dignity."<sup>148</sup>

### 5.1.3 Dignity

From the Christian perspective, for a livelihood to be sustainable it must promote human dignity. People should be able to realize that they are not useless but have skills, capacities and talents that can be used to make their life better. It is clear that Jesus' approach in empowering the poor was to bring dignity to them. He went round not only preaching the message of the kingdom, but giving dignity to the marginalised. In the same way, when we enhance people's livelihoods we help them meet their physical needs, which results in self worth or self esteem. There is the need to address the context of the poor and restore them to their God given dignity. Gerald Anderson and Thomas Stransky say "Mankind is made in the image of God, every person, regardless of race, religion, colour, culture, class, sex or age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he

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<sup>148</sup> Julius K. Nyerere. *Is poverty the real problem?* Address to the Maryknoll Sisters General Chapter. (New York, Bangalore: Indian Social Institute, 1990) Pg 3

should be respected and served not exploited.”<sup>149</sup> This passage confirms the God-given dignity for all humankind, but in poverty situations, where livelihoods are not sustainable, this God given dignity is obscured. Poverty robs people of their dignity as they are neither able to stand on their own nor decide for themselves. So the Christian needs to assist the poor in the rediscovery of their God given dignity. Benson Okyere-Manu says “God creating humankind in his own image, making them different from all other created beings with dignity, is a demonstration of God’s intention for humankind.”<sup>150</sup> God’s intention is for us to help people to regain their human dignity.

#### **5.1.4 Family**

Another important value we see coming from the Christian view on sustainable livelihoods is that people should have a stronger family network. It is clear that in a household where basic needs are provided for, families get along better; members of the family relate well and even discuss issues pertaining to their livelihoods together. There is unity and love as each one is satisfied. Poverty, stemming out of unsustainable livelihoods brings about stress which contributes to selfishness and disintegration of families. This is a situation where each member of the family is forced to seek their own welfare instead of that of the whole family. In such families, children become delinquent and get involved in all manner of crime to survive.

#### **5.1.5 Food**

By enhancing and uplifting the lives of previously marginalized people, they become self sufficient and are able to provide food for their families. It is clear that most poor people lack basic needs of life such as enough food, and shelter, but by enhancing their livelihoods they should be able to put food on the table. Jesus gave us an example when he met the needs of people in terms of food, and fed the five thousand who were hungry and without food (Mathew 15: 29-39). In the same way, seeing the importance of food,

<sup>149</sup> Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas Stransky. (eds) *Mission Trends No 2: Evangelisation*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1975). pg 242

<sup>150</sup> Benson Okyere-Manu. *Identification of Untapped Skills in the church to be mobilized for Development*. unpublished MA dissertation, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 2000. Pg 55

when teaching the disciples to pray he told them to pray for their daily bread (Mathew 6: 11). Today millions of people, many from Southern Africa are dying of hunger. Women and children are the worst affected. Looking at the characteristics of the poor, The World Development report states that "...They then lack food and adequate shelter, education and health, deprivation that keeps them from leading the life that everyone values..."<sup>151</sup> So from a Christian point of view by enhancing the livelihoods of poor women there should be enough food to feed the family.

### **5.1.6 Sexuality**

When people's livelihoods are enhanced they are empowered to make sound decisions and choices pertaining to their sexuality. In the Christian perspective sexuality is very important especially in our day where, as Germond puts it, "sex and sexuality constitute a grave crisis for Christianity in South Africa."<sup>152</sup> Yet in our society today, even in the midst of HIV/AIDS, people do not appreciate a healthy and holy sexual life. People choose to do whatever they like. But from the Christian point of view, if we enhance the livelihoods of the poor, then they should be able to appreciate God's purpose of our sexuality and the context in which it has to be used.

### **5.1.7 Quality of life**

Sustainable livelihoods viewed from the Christian perspective must produce people who are empowered to make their own informed decisions and choices pertaining to life and not be pushed around by their peers or their desire for material gains. A look at the world today portrays a world where the "market" dictates the life that people should lead. Technology and fashion are the order of the day. Though these are good for our living today, from the Christian point of view, healthy people with dignity have the ability to make good judgments about life. They are able to know that there is more to life than chasing after commodities on the market. For we know that "The world and its desires

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<sup>151</sup> World Bank, World Development Report . *Attacking Poverty*. (London: Oxford University, 2000/2001) Press. Pg 1

<sup>152</sup> See Germond. *Sex in a Globalising World*"Pg 48

pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives for ever (1 John. 2:17). A Christian perception on livelihoods therefore must stress that there is a link between sustainability and the quality of life.

Having looked at the values of a sustainable livelihood from the Christian perspective, we move on in the next section to evaluate Sex Work as a livelihood option for poor women.

## **5.2 Is Sex Work a Sustainable livelihood option?**

In the previous chapter, the SLF was used to describe Sex Work; which is becoming a growing livelihood option among poor women in Pietermaritzburg. From the analysis made, and the values that we see should be coming from the Christian perspective of sustainable livelihoods, the question that needs to be answered is: In the light of these Christian values, is Sex Work a sustainable livelihood option?

### **5.2.1 Health**

All the Sex Workers interviewed see this industry just like any other work and as such see it to be beneficial. We see that even though Sex Work has sustained the livelihoods of some women in the short term, there is a cost or health risk, which is why some of them are not happy in the work. Most of interviewees are abused and threatened frequently by clients who refuse to pay after receiving services from Sex Workers. Ilse Pauw and Loren Brener confirmed this when they used Marcus et al's words about some experiences of Sex Workers in Pietermaritzburg that, Clients beat them, others are threatened, raped, abandoned in isolated places at night, some are left naked, and in worse cases others are thrown or forced to jump from moving vehicles.<sup>153</sup>

Not only are clients the abusers of Sex Workers but there is also abuse from the police who are supposed to protect them. In the same article, Pauw et al says "In South Africa, sex workers especially those on the streets are often arrested and harassed by the police.

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<sup>153</sup> Ilse Pauw and Loren Brener. "Naming the dangers of working on the street" in *Agenda*. No 36, 1997, Pg 80

Some force them to give free sexual favours, Sex Workers are subjected to unlawful arrest and detainment some police even demand money in return for protection.”<sup>154</sup> This was evident in the *Special Assignment's* documentary compiled by Jessica Pitchford. Hidden cameras showed how police in Durban, harassed, abused and even collected bribes from some Sex Workers. Some of the Sex Workers interviewed in the same documentary revealed how the police ask for sexual favours from them.<sup>155</sup>

Other factors that cause danger to the health of Sex Workers are the frequent physical and sexual abuse, substance use, frequent abortions and HIV/AIDS. Posel adds that “The advantages are easily outweighed by other considerations: the risk of sexually transmitted diseases and Aids in particular; their lack of protection under the law; and the nature of the work itself. Most prostitutes thus view prostitution as a temporary occupation that anticipates some long term alternative.”<sup>156</sup> I agree with Posel that a critical look at the work portrays that indeed in terms of good health, the dangers of Sex Workers outweighs the benefits and thus cannot be sustainable in the long term.

### 5.2.2 Good labour

There is no doubt that Sex Work is a means of work for some poor women in an effort to survive in the short term. As stated above, Fisher notes responses from two Sex Workers on the benefits that they enjoy saying, “When you are working it takes a month before you get paid your salary, but in Sex Work you are paid as soon as you have provided your services. We are even better than the working class. We have money everyday.”<sup>157</sup> From above it can be noted that these women get a lot from the work they are involved in.

Yet we can see clearly from the interviews that in the long run most of them are not happy in this work. Almost all of them have the desire to stop and look for something else to do. This to me suggests that though they are labouring, from the values outlined

<sup>154</sup> See Pauw *Naming the dangers of working on the street*. Pg 81

<sup>155</sup> Jessica Pitchford, *Special Assignment*. 28<sup>th</sup> September on SABC, Channel 3 at 9.30pm

<sup>156</sup> See Dori Posel. *The sex market in the inner city of Durban*. Pg 21-22

<sup>157</sup> See Wendy Fisher . pg 32

above, Sex Work cannot be described as good labour. A critical look at the stories of the 12 Sex Workers reveals that in the long term, Sex Work is not sustainable. Most of them mentioned that given a better job with a good salary they would willingly stop Sex Work. For example Thobile mentioned that if she could get a job that could pay her about R2000-R3000 per month, she would stop the Sex Work. In another case we see that Dora's dream is to get money and either go to school or be involved in a business.

It was strange to note that most of the Sex Works interviewed in this study see Sex Work just like any other work; however they do not want their daughters to be involved in it. In MacFarlane and Daniel's study, 99.5% of the Sex Workers felt the work was not a rightful job and were fed up with it.<sup>158</sup>

### 5.2.3 Dignity

All of them reckon that they are able to go to expensive places they would not otherwise have gone as a result of this work. They meet important people each day for business. They feel this work has made them independent as women to stand on their own. Nevertheless, they are aware that society looks down on them as immoral women, which is the reason why most of them are not open about the work they are involved in. Posel quoted Allegra Tailor saying "A prostitute is seen as being a mere body in the eyes of so many of the men that use her- an object, a collection of orifices to be plucked and poked"<sup>159</sup> For this reason we cannot say that Sex Work is a means of gaining the God-given dignity intended for women. For the Bible is clear that we should not commit adultery (Exodus 20: 14).

### 5.2.4 Food

In the short term, Sex Workers are able to provide food for themselves and those who depend on them. They are able to provide even expensive food, but as a result of the

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<sup>158</sup> See MacFarlane and Daniels, *Women at risk*. Pg 6

<sup>159</sup> See Posel. *The sex Market in Durban*. Pg 25

dangers associated with this work, these benefits do not last. Should the Sex Worker not able to work for some various reasons, then the food supply will be cut.

### 5.2.5 Family

Although most of the Sex Workers in this study do not stay with their families, they are able to help their families and dependents to survive: most of them remit to their families at the end of every month. However, as a result of the high risks involved, we see Sex Work is not sustainable in that the family's source of livelihood may be cut off at any given time. In most cases, the sex workers live away from the family and they may even be hiding the work from the rest of the family. As a result of this, they are not able to be part of the family's daily network. It was clear from the interviews that some of the Sex Workers live with their children and this makes one wonder what kind of role models they are being to their children and dependents. Seeing that from the Christian point of view the family is the primary teachers of their younger ones, we can say that Sex Work is not sustainable from the Christian point of view.

### 5.2.6 Sexuality

All the Sex Workers interviewed see nothing wrong with selling sex for money, but from the Christian perspective, it is evident that sex is gradually losing its God-intended purpose and context. Anthony Giddens says "Sexuality today has been discovered, opened up and made accessible to the development of varying life-styles. It is something each of us 'has', or cultivates, no longer a natural condition, which an individual accepts as a preordained state of affairs."<sup>160</sup> The consequence thereof is the high incidence of HIV/AIDS that we see in our society today. Speaking about sexuality in South Africa, Germond says:

We are facing a crisis of death in our country; a crisis generated by unhealthy sexual behaviour. The space and time to discuss and debate at

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<sup>160</sup>Anthony Giddens. *Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992). Pg 15

length appropriate sexual behaviours and values are being squeezed out. People are dying. Clergy are spending their time no longer at funerals of people who have died because of political violence, but at funerals where people have died because of sexual violence.<sup>161</sup>

From above it is clear that sex work is not sustainable, because the sexual freedom that people have is resulting in the death of many who shouldn't have died but for their unhealthy sexual behaviours.

### 5.2.7 Quality of life

All the interviewees see Sex Work as a livelihood strategy which has improved the quality of their lives. According to them, there have been material gains such as cell phones, expensive clothes and shoes, televisions, refrigerators, microwaves and many others. They are modern women who move with fashion. It is clear that this is in the short term. One strange thing is that none of them mentioned that they have savings accounts, though a few of them have funeral plans. It is evident that though they get a lot of money they spend it all on material things. To me this suggest that because they see money each day they are consumed about their passion for material things so much that they lack the foresight of thinking about their future.

Most of the interviewees in this study reveal that looking for alternative jobs becomes a problem once they retire; they cannot do any other work to survive and in the long run most of them become hardcore drug addicts. Clearly, as Sex Workers depend solely on their bodies or human assets for survival, therefore should something happen, then they are robbed of everything needed to be involved in SW. For example if they are hurt badly then their source of income suffers.

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<sup>161</sup> See Germond. *Sex in a Global World*. Pg 67-68

### 5.3 What Christians can learn through the use of SLF with Sex Work.

It is clear then that Sex Work is only sustainable in the short term, but even that at a cost; and also that in the long term, it is not sustainable. However, we will look at what Christians can learn from Sex Work through the use of SLF. The following are some of the issues that emerged.

#### 5.3.1. The depth of poverty

The first thing that Christians can learn from Sex Work is the incredible depth of poverty that traps young women in society. Since all the women indicated that poverty is the primary factor that is pushing them into Sex Work, we can then say that women's poverty creates desperation, which moves them into situations they would otherwise have not gone into. Today, people are aware of the nature, causes and the consequences of poverty. Millions of people are dying in Africa as a result of poverty and we have already noted that women and children are the worst affected. This pushes women to go out of their way to do something to help the situation. Bernadette Mbuy Beya quoted the pastoral letter on women by the Archbishop Kabanga of Lubumbashi who expresses concern that:

The material poverty of our region, together with unemployment in our cities, is the root of a great many ills in our humbler neighborhoods, like the inner cities of our large metropolitan centers... We find among other things, prostitution of minor girls..."<sup>162</sup>

In fact Amanda, one of the Sex Work in this study, asked me whether I had ever been in a situation where there was absolutely no money or food at home and my children were crying. "You will do anything to see that the situation is rectified."<sup>163</sup> It is interesting to see people's choices in desperate conditions as a result of poverty. Women do not care about what they do. In fact what the outside world sees as immoral, filthy, full of abuse, violence, and degrading, these women see as a way of enhancing their livelihoods. From

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<sup>162</sup> See Mbuy Beya. *Human Sexuality*. Pg 171

<sup>163</sup> See interview with Amanda on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2004

this we can say that women's poverty can create desperation and push them into unhealthy livelihoods option such as Sex Work. Christians are thus challenged by Sex Workers not to condemn the Sex Workers but to condemn the poverty which forces them into this work to survive.

### **5.3.2 The influence of patriarchy**

The second lesson Christians can learn from Sex Work concerns the effect of some cultural beliefs and practices on women in Africa. As noted from the interviews, the African male-dominated culture has created a situation of abuse and violence against women. The situation is such that most often women's bodies are seen and used as objects for the satisfaction of men, which oppresses women and forces them into abusive situations. This is something that Christians must look into because it puts women in vulnerable situations, and requires a sustained and coherent response if we are genuinely concerned about poor women's livelihoods.

### **5.3.3 The power of "The Market"**

Poverty and Patriarchy are not the only issues that challenge Christians, but also the "Market." We see this in three clear ways. First, all around the world, people are being challenged by consumer goods from fashion to technology like clothes, cell phones, "designers wear" etc. Advertisements around us portray that one cannot live a normal life without such things. This is a big challenge to poor women. As long as there are all these demands, poor women will have no choice but to make sure they are not left behind. Therefore they will have to do whatever it takes to be "modern ladies."

Second, as long as there is the "market" for the demand for sex in exchange for money, then it opens the door for women to meet this kind of demand. Posel draws our attention to the fact that "The prevailing high price suggests that some men are both willing and

able to incur these costs. The price of prostitution therefore also reflects the demand for sex and says something about how sex as a commodity is valued.”<sup>164</sup>

Third, as long as women in small scale businesses compete with the “market” in the sales of their product, then they will continue to be poor and in search for easy ways of making money. So Christians can learn a lot from SW’s about the power of the market, and see its negative impact upon poor women. Any coherent response to the situation of women in poverty needs to be very realistic about the ‘market’.

### **5.3.4 The importance of women’s agency**

One of the most important issues that seem to be coming out as we use the SLF to understand Sex Work is women’s agency. From the interviews we see that though there is poverty, these poor women are not sitting down waiting for the government to come and help but are trying to do something to live. As has been noted in the previous chapter, the African culture is such that most women have to depend on their husbands for survival so when the woman is not married or is a divorcee, then it becomes very difficult for them to survive. So out of desperation to feed children and other members of the family the poor woman does not sit but tries to do something no matter the consequence. It was clear that the Sex Workers interviewed are aware of the dangers, yet in order for them to survive, they cannot give it up.

We see also that some of the poor women are not educated enough to secure gainful employment but still they have to support themselves and their families. Those who are educated cannot find jobs, or their income is not enough and they need to do something to supplement it. As previously noted, some look after three generations; this shows the unselfish nature of women. Christian responses to poverty must learn from Sex Workers that women wants freedom that will help them be agents of their own destiny. Therefore they cannot be treated as mere objects for charity.

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<sup>164</sup> See Posel, *The Sex Market in Durban*. Pg 18

### 5.3.5 Women's dedication, commitment and creativity.

When we look at Sex Work and all the dangers that are associated with it and yet women are in it, we become aware of their commitment and dedication to see their families survive. For these reasons, they have used their creativity and come up with ways of making Sex Work as comfortable for themselves as they can afford. For instance as a result of seasonality when clients are extremely scarce, most of the Sex Workers migrate from Pietermaritzburg to other places where they can find a market. They are always on the move. An article by the Regional HIV/AIDS Program Southern Africa says that Sex Workers migrate a lot: starting from their own families as soon as they join the work. They also migrate from town to town, province to province and even country to country following migrant workers such as truck drivers and construction workers.<sup>165</sup> Zetler, speaking about sex workers who work for pimps, says that "In South Africa sex workers are not allowed to stick around the same bars and brothels for a long time. The pimps always want new faces around to attract customers".<sup>166</sup>

Another creative way of protecting themselves from the dangers on the streets of Pietermaritzburg is that some of these ladies have decided to advertise themselves in the local newspapers, instead of standing on the streets. They leave their contact numbers in the newspapers for clients to call them. Those who cannot afford to advertise in the newspapers allow their boyfriends to protect them on the streets by taking down the licence number of cars that pick them up, and they try to locate the drivers should anything happens to the Sex Workers. Some have also become members of the gym clubs so they can get clients there.

Still on the issue of safety, it came out that because of the abuses from pimps most of the girls have decided to work for themselves so the strategy they have adopted is for the ladies to hang around the Casino, Macdonald's and the other eating places as they look for clients to pick up.

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<sup>165</sup> Regional HIV /AIDS program Southern Africa. At [Http://www.rhap.org.za/resource/163.pdf](http://www.rhap.org.za/resource/163.pdf). 22-10-2004)

<sup>166</sup> Zetler, S. 1999. *Needs assessment of the indoor sex working industry in the Cape Town area* (internal agency report.) CITY: Sex Worker Education and Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT).

As a result of HIV/AIDS, the newly developed strategy by some of the SWs is for them to take a regular small group as constant clients. For example one of the sex workers, Elizabeth, has six men and each of them has a role and she is not seeing any others. She considers them permanent. So as long as the relationship lasts she has six permanent boy friends. She will only look for a replacement whenever her relationship with one has ended.

On the issue of condoms too, because they cannot trust the clients to use them well because of past experiences, almost all the ladies interviewed use the female condom instead. They have more control over that, and they claim that their clients do not see or feel it. It is also readily available and does not cost a lot of money. Sometimes clients have to pay more if they do not want to use condoms.

Another strategy is that during seasons that there is less demand because local clients are busy with their own family affairs, these ladies rely solely on tourists. Some even travel with them and give them the services whenever the men need it and as long as they are in the country. So though business may be low, they are able to rely on foreigners who usually have more money than the locals. Some even pay them in foreign money like dollars and pounds.

It came out in interviews that the age and appearance of the woman counts a lot: younger and better-dressed women find it easier to pick up men and get a better price. As such most of the sex workers spend a lot of money on themselves so they can look younger and more beautiful. So once again, we can learn from Sex Work that poor women are quite capable of being inventive and creative if they believe that a livelihood option will be to their benefit. This is something Christians can learn.

#### **5.4 Strategic options to enhance livelihoods**

It has become clear that Sex Work is by no means a sustainable livelihood. Yet the young girls and women interviewed in this study say that it has been helping them and their families to survive. They are prepared to compromise themselves in order to survive as a

result of poverty. Therefore the challenge rests with Christians to revision their contribution to the poor in order to be relevant to them. For we cannot say we are making a significant contribution when the poor women we pride ourselves to be helping end up taking up vulnerable and unsustainable work to supplement their income or for survival. If the duty of Christians is to help maintain the God given human dignity and integrity, then I suggest the following strategic options:

#### **5.4.1 Conscientize and encourage the education of girls**

One of the key strategies is in the area of educating young girls and women. More and more in our world today we are made aware of the importance of formal education. Therefore people need to be conscientized and encouraged about the importance of female education in order to restore their dignity. Paulo Freire says “conscientization involves a constant unveiling of reality and strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality.”<sup>167</sup> Christians can do this by coming together and organizing workshops and seminars to look into this area.

Talking about the importance of female education, Ogudinpe-Leslie throws down a challenge that, “even if the woman ends up in the kitchen or on the farm, appropriate education could improve productivity and income as well as women’s employment opportunities and decision-making influences within the household.”<sup>168</sup> Therefore there is the need to be more concerned with the education of girls and women. Clearly, there is some improvement in this area. Most families in the rural areas need to be educated more about it for it puts women in poverty situations and forces them into prostitution.

The African society must look again at the saying that “Educate a man and you educate an individual, but educate a woman and you educate a nation”. This suggests that once a woman is uplifted, the whole family, community and the nation as a whole will benefit. C. Hunter points out that without proper education, women will be prevented from having sufficient knowledge to recognize and prevent risks or even take proper action to

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<sup>167</sup> Paulo Freire. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. (London: Penguin Books, 1993). Pg 62

<sup>168</sup> See Molar pg 119

protect themselves.<sup>169</sup> This was evident in the Sex Workers interviewed in this study. The highest educational background is the matric certificate; most of them have dropped out as a result of lack school fees.

In the same line, girls must be encouraged to take their studies seriously and free themselves from the inferiority complex which makes them think they cannot do anything but only to be used as sex objects.

#### **5.4.2 Empowerment through Sex Education**

Sex education must be taught by parents and also by teachers in schools so the girls may be empowered to know the place of sex in their lives. This we see is one responsibility which is gradually missing in our day to day life and the media as well as peers have taken over. Therefore Germond throws a challenge that:

We must help young people grow their sexuality appropriately, appropriate to their emotional, physical and spiritual development. We must help people move away from the way the world defines sexuality as the satisfaction of appetite to a world where sexuality is affirmed, a world where values, not rules, determine the expression of one's sexuality, a world where sexuality is integrated into the building of a community, a world where sexuality is a justice issue, where its expressions are times of sustenance and growth, not violence and exploitation, and a world where expression of sexuality with another person have a relational purpose.<sup>170</sup>

#### **5.4.3 Training in a variety of skills**

Another strategy which can be a way forward to stop women flocking into Sex Work is that instead of teaching poor women skills that Christians and other developers think can

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<sup>169</sup> C. Hunter. *Women's Realities, Women's Choices: An Introduction to Women's Studies*. New York: Oxford University Press. Pg 413

<sup>170</sup> See Germond, *Sex in a Globalizing world*. Pg 68

be good for poor women, like sewing, baking, knitting, gardening, bead making etc, which have not been helpful to the majority of the poor women, there is the need to look at the ways these women are helped. For example they must be helped according to their interests, talents, and passion. This may suggest that the options for the poor to develop skills have to be many and at affordable fees. For those women who are interested in jobs like accounting, secretarial work and management etc, individual Christians with such professions can come together; and using their church's building, organize evening classes in these areas at a minimal fee.

#### **5.4.4 Encourage women's Cooperative groups**

Another strategy that can help poor women is for them to be encouraged to form cooperative groups in their businesses to be able to bring effective change in their lives. As the saying goes, 'United we stand, divided we fall'. For example, for those poor women who are interested in sewing, instead of sewing articles that are highly competitive on the market, Christians in the city can solicit tenders with schools and hospitals in the city so that these women can form co-operative groups and supply school uniforms, sports wear and other costumes to the schools around the city. In the same way they can make things like curtains and bedding for the hospitals. Church groups can order their uniforms from these co-operative groups. This will generate frequent income for them to have a meaningful human life experience.

#### **5.4.5 Identify Markets**

It was evident that there is a great need for Christians to identify markets for women in small-scale business. This to me is an important step for Christians to partner with other organizations and businesses. Christians who have acquired this skill can be asked to help. Seeing that a lot of tourists came into the city, these women can be trained in locally made things to attract tourists. They can also be encouraged to open Curio shops where they can sell their locally made goods such as beadwork, pottery etc.

This will mean that developers must be able to help them with marketing skills whereby products can be exported to overseas to help women meet their various need and also establish a sense of dignity.

#### **5.4.6 Help women with access to financial capital and credit**

Again it came out that access to financial capital and credit is a big issue for poor women. W. Naude agrees that its difficult for small businesses to gain the help of a financial institution because smaller businesses have less credit worthiness and interest and bank charges can also be very costly.<sup>171</sup> So it will be helpful if Christians can take the initiative in establishing financial support with affordable interest rates. This will be more beneficial to the poor than charitable hand outs.

#### **5.4.7 Encourage stable homes**

There was a suggestion that the church must encourage stable homes, where both parents can contribute to the upbringing of their children. This, the Sex Workers noted, is lacking in the lives of children and that is another factor which is pushing them into the streets. Our society today is a society where marriages are in crisis, the rate of divorce has escalated and children are the worst affected. Germond used Marvin Ellison's words by saying that:

Over the course of the past thirty years, the ratio of divorced to married people has increased fourfold. Approximately half of all North American marriages end in divorce. Between 1945 and 1995, births to unmarried women in the U.S. climbed from 5 per cent of the total number of live births to 32 percent. Married couples with children now represent only a quarter of households in this country. Married couples without children represent another thirty percent. People living together, single parent families, blended families, same-sex couples with and

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<sup>171</sup> W. Naude. "SMME's and Economic Development in South Africa." In *Africa Insight*. Vol. 28, No3/4. Pg 133-145

without children, and “tribes” of loving friends make up another 20 percent of the population. No one family pattern is statistically normative.<sup>172</sup>

Indeed there is the need for Christians to encourage marriages as God instituted it so that children can be brought up in stable loving homes, where both parents are able to instill the right values in them.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

This chapter looked at how to enhance the livelihoods of poor women. It is clear that from a Christian perspective, sustainable livelihoods must respond to some key values. It was also clear that SW is unsustainable, but with the use of the SLF, we learnt that chronic poverty creates desperation in poor women which pushes them into unsustainable and dangerous livelihoods. Not only poverty but also some cultural practices and the “market” affect women negatively and also push them into SW. Having said that we also realized that women in SW are trying to make a living. They are not lazy and do not want to be dependant on others so even in their desperate situation they try to make a living given the dangers that accompanied SW. Finally we saw that the Christians must engage in a range of different options to enhance the livelihoods of poor women.

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<sup>172</sup> See Germond, *Sex in a Globalizing World*. Pg 61

## CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

### 6.1 Summary

Chapter one has proposed the general idea and the motivation behind this study, that despite the all the empowerment opportunities available to poor women by Christians, some poor women in Pietermaritzburg choose SW as a livelihood option in the midst of HIV/AIDS, exploitations from pimps and the fact that society does not approve of this work.

Chapter two evaluates the two approaches: charity and skills training used by Christians to empower poor women in Pietermaritzburg. Having done this, it was evident that these approaches do not actually take the livelihoods of poor women into consideration. Charity work sees people as objects, who depend on others for survival, thus creating a spirit of dependency among the poor; we see that it is also unsustainable. Skills' training in sewing, baking and gardening on the other hand is costly and does not deal with structures that put people in poverty situations. Therefore we saw the need to look for an approach that takes their livelihoods into consideration. This, we realized, will make them agents rather than objects of charity, it will also build on what the poor have, and also address structures and policies in their cultures and religion that put them in poverty situations.

Chapter three deals with out the stories of twelve poor women who have chosen Sex Work as their livelihood option in Pietermaritzburg. These women shared their stories, bringing out the following: what actually pushes them into this work, the benefits and the challenges they face. They also revealed their support systems, their attitude towards HIV/AIDS, what Christians can offer them to help change their circumstances, how much money they get, their future in this work as well as whether they will encourage their daughters to choose this option or not.

The fourth chapter deals with the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, a tool that helps us to understand the livelihoods of the poor. From this, it was clear that the vulnerability context of some women in Pietermaritzburg is poverty, which is as a result of policies, processes and structures as well as the culture these women find themselves in. In their attempt to make a living in this context, they choose Sex Work as the livelihood option. It became clear that the outcome of this option is two fold: positive and negative, it was clear that these women make a better living but at a cost.

Chapter five, looked at enhancing the livelihoods of poor women. To help do that, a sustainable livelihood in Christian perspective was first established as promoting good health, good labour, dignity, strong family, sufficient food, sexuality and quality of life. In view of that it was clear that Sex Work, the strategy for some poor women in Pietermaritzburg, is not sustainable. The study further looked at lessons coming through the use of the SLF with SW. These include the depth of poverty which traps women in our society today, the effects of some cultural practices, the changing “market” in terms of fashion and technology, and women’s agency, commitment and creativity to work. Finally possible strategies for Christians, churches and FBO’s wanting to help empower poor women were outlined. These include conscientizing and encouraging the education of young girls, empowerment through sex education, training of young women in a variety of skills, encouraging women in cooperative groups, identifying markets for women in small scale business, helping them with access to financial capital and credits as well as encouraging stable homes.

The sixth chapter serves as the conclusion and suggest that further research is needed in this area.

## **6.2 Possibility for further research**

There is a great necessity for further research on the challenge that sex work poses to Christian work among poor women because this study is the first of its kind done in this area.

To secure an effective livelihood option, further research on many levels remains important. For instance seeing that the aim of the thesis is to get Sex workers tell their stories, the researcher did not ask questions that deal with pastoral issues like the moral issues around prostitution including the absent male and how these women see their sense of self. Further research needs to be done to include these issues. The researcher views this study as helpful to Christians who have the task of assisting poor women of Pietermaritzburg to combat poverty.

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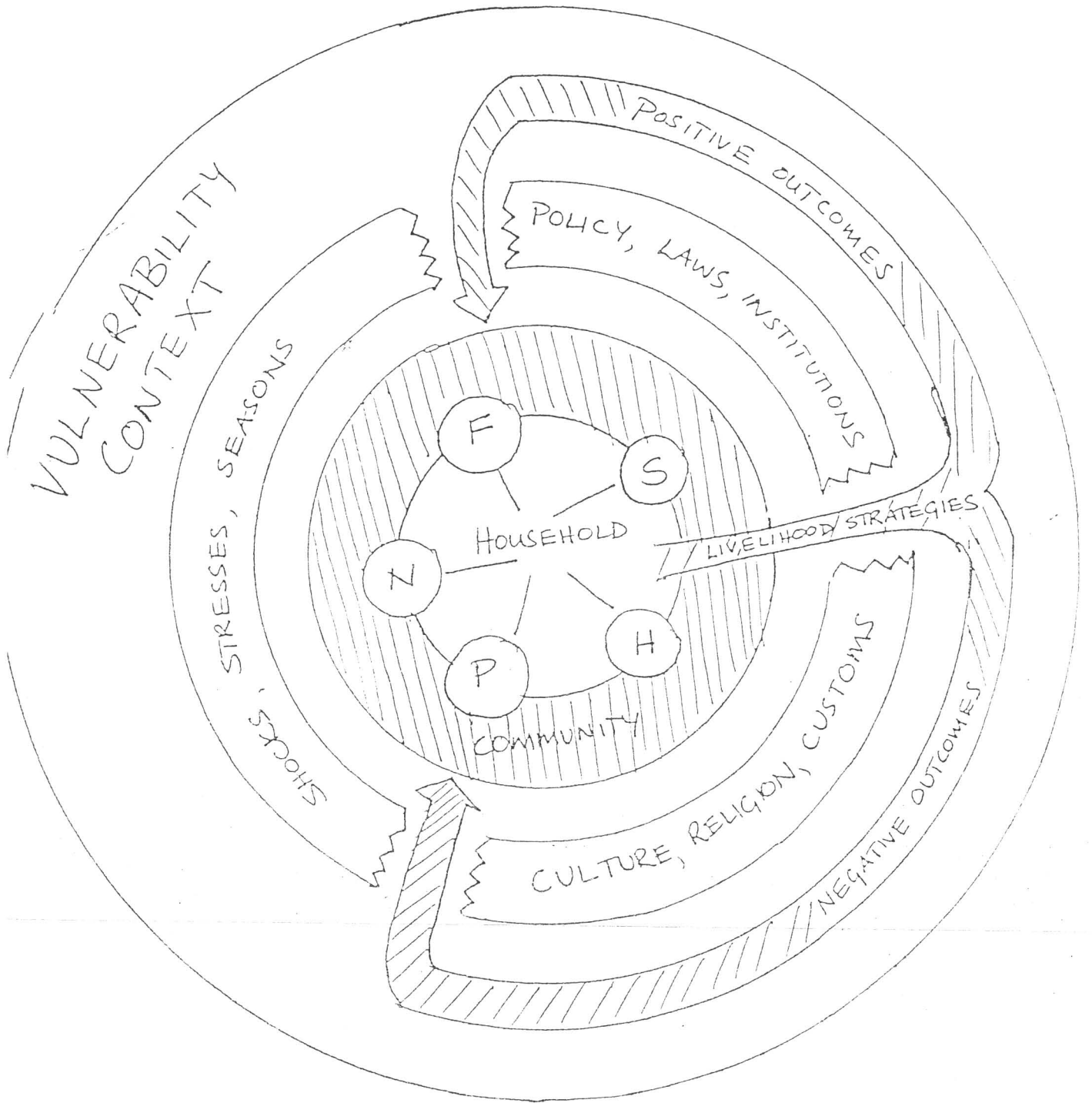
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RELEASE AGREEMENT - APPENDIX B

\_\_\_\_\_ state here that I have been fully informed of the reason for the interview to be conducted and the use to be made of the tapes and transcript of this interview by the Sinomlando ct (hereafter known as "The Project") of the School of Theology, University of Natal.

I acknowledge that the material of the interview is to have the following status: accessible, released only with my permission (conditional release), or released only after a certain period of time (e.g.: 5yrs, 10yrs, 15yrs, 25yrs)\_\_\_\_\_.

I acknowledge that the interview material will be catalogued and stored at the Alan Paton Centre for release to the public, under the conditions of the status that I have stipulated.

I acknowledge that should The Project use the interview material for publication, under the condition of the status I have stipulated, that I am not entitled to any financial gain from the proceeds of publication.

I acknowledge that should The Project wish to use the interview material for any reason other than that of cataloguing, release and publication that The Project is to secure my permission to do so.

Other release stipulations concerning the "conditional release" status:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

My contact details are:

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel (H): \_\_\_\_\_  
Tel (W): \_\_\_\_\_  
Cel No.: \_\_\_\_\_

I here-by agree to the above stipulations of this release agreement in conjunction with The Project interviewer, \_\_\_\_\_.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewee

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewer

# APPENDIX C

## QUESTIONNAIRE ON SEX WORKERS

1. Name (optional).....
2. Age.....
3. Educational level.....
4. Marital status?.....
5. Religious affiliation?.....
6. Why did you choose this Job?.....  
.....  
.....
7. For how long have you been in this job?.....
8. What training does one need before joining this job?  
.....  
.....
7. What is your church's view about this job? .....
8. Does your family support you in this job? .....
9. Do your neighbours and friends support you in this job? .....
10. What are some of the major benefits from this job?
  - a).....
  - b).....
  - c).....
  - d).....
11. What are the major dangers and challenges?
  - a).....
  - b).....
  - c).....
  - d).....
12. What do you say about HIV/AIDS and other related diseases?  
.....  
.....
13. What do you say about the attitude of the police towards you?  
.....  
.....
14. What can the government offer you to change your circumstances?  
.....  
.....

15. What can the church offer you to change your circumstances?

.....  
.....

16. How much money do you make per day?

17. Do you have any savings? What about a will?

18. Do you belong to an organization?

.....

19. How do you see your future in this job?

.....  
.....

20. Would you want your child to go into this job in future? Yes/no

Give reasons

.....  
.....  
.....

Thank you for sparing your time.