Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities

Department Of Library and Information Science

The Impact of the level of literacy on access to
information by urban black women in Zimbabwe: A case for Kariba town

By

Moira GUNDU (200254340)

A Research project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Maters degree,

In

Library and Information Science. B.BIBLIOTHECOLOGIAE (B.BIBL. Hons)

University of Fort Hare, South Africa

Supervisor: MR F. Khayundi (SENIOR Lecturer Department of Library and Information
Science)

DECEMBER 2006

TITLE PAGE

THE IMPACT OF THE LEVEL OF LITERACY ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION BY URBAN BLACK WOMEN IN ZIMBABWE: THE CASE OF KARIBA TOWN

By

MOIRA GUNDU

UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have read and recommend to the University of Fort Hare acceptance of the research project entitled, "**The impact of the level of literacy on access to information by urban black women in Zimbabwe: the case of Kariba town"** Submitted by **Moira Gundu (200254340)** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors Degree in

Library and Information Science. (B.BIBL. Hons)

Supervisor(s)

……………………………..

…………………………...

External examiner

Date:…………………………….

DEDICATION

To my family.

"With literacy, people don't earn more but everything they know is in their heads.They can go anywhere, do anything, ask for what they want, enter in. When people dont know reading and writing they are afraid" *Christina Mavale*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS.
AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ALOZ: Adult Literacy Organization of Zimbabwe
B.Bibl: Barraculette Bibliothecologiae
CAS: Current Awareness Services
CED: Convention on the elimination of discrimination in education.
CEDAW: Convention on the elimination of discrimination against women.
CRUS: Centre for Research on User Studies.
CSO: Central Statistics Office.
DFA: Dakar Framework for Action
GDP: Gross Domestic Product

HDI: Human Development Index
HIV: Human Immune Deficiency Syndrome.
HSRC: Human Sciences Research Council.
ICTs: Information Communication Technologies.
IFLA: International Federation of Library Associations
ILI: International Literacy Institute.
IT: Information Technology.
LIS: Library and information service/science.
MDC: Movement for Democratic Change.
NAC: National Aids Council.
NGOs: Non-Governmental Organizations.
NLZ: National Library of Zimbabwe
NWICO: New World Information and Communication Order
 OCED: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
SAFAIDS: South African Aids Council
SANCO: South African National Communication Organization.
SPSS: Statistical package for Social Sciences.
TV: Television
UDHR: Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UFH: University of Fort Hare
UK: United Kingdom
UN: United Nations
UNDP: United Nations Development Programme.
UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
US: United States.
USNL: United States National Libraries
WDEA: World Declaration on Education for all (1990)
WIPSU: Women in Politics Support Unit
ZANU (PF):   Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front.
ZESA: Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority.
ZIBF: Zimbabwe International Book Fair.
ZPC: Zimbabwe Power Company.
ZRA: Zambezi River Authority
ZWRN: Zimbabwe Women Resources Network.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

the study.

The success of this research project was a product of so many efforts too numerous to mention. I drew heavily on the experience and ideas of my supervisor Mr. Khayundi. I owe special gratitude to Professor Rembe, whose comments and suggestions were invaluable in the compilation of this report. I also acknowledge all the authors and researchers whose works I drew from.

Special appreciation goes to my family and friends for all the support and to my mom for acting research assistant when things got tough in the field. A large portion of credit goes to the urban black women of Kariba in general and particularly the respondents, whose time for the discussions made this, study a reality.

I thank the patron of the Presidential Study Programme, His Excellency the President of Zimbabwe CDE. Robert Gabriel Mugabe, whose efforts and determination to help the needy has afforded me University Education.

Above all I thank God for the life and capacity to undertake the study.

With all these people I share the credit for what is good in the report while the responsibility for any weaknesses is mine.

Gundu, M.

2006

ABSTRACT

This report lays out the findings of an investigation undertaken to determine the impact of literacy on access to information by urban black women in Zimbabwe. Kariba, a small town located at the Zimbabwe's North-eastern boarder with Zambia was used as the study site.

Document study supported by interviews and observations were used as methods of data collection. Key informants and selected women were respondents for the self administered interviews and focus group discussions. Representatives, each from, the local Catholic Church, the local clinic and the Department of Social welfare were the key informants. The Central Statistics Office in Zimbabwe was approached to get national statistics on women, literacy and development while the National Library of Zimbabwe (NLZ) provided data on the country's information policy and the general nature of information provision.

Snowball sampling was used to select a sample of 40 women between the ages of 18 and 60 drawn from the various residential areas of Kariba. Data collected was analyzed into themes and coded for statistical analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)

The results of this study may be generalized to the ecumenical information situation of urban black women in Zimbabwe. Findings show that the women in Zimbabwe experience information needs have limited access to information sources due to inappropriate levels of literacy, inter-alia other factors. This leaves the urban black woman uninformed or with inadequate information that she may not access or process due to insufficient levels of literacy. The study established that the major reasons for seeking information for the urban black woman in Zimbabwe are meeting personal and family needs. Areas of interest include education, health, childcare, politics, security, consumer issues and income generating projects.

There is need to develop an information gateway characterized by accessibility and flexibility, which will be of real value to a women user community in Zimbabwe. Women's access to education and information should be enhanced. This calls decision-makers to develop strategies for action to boost literacy for women, manage available information resources and harness effort towards making them accessible particularly to the urban black women in Zimbabwe. While interventions may be multi-sectoral, the role of government is stressed in this report.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

People in all walks of life and at any age make decisions mostly based on information, In which case the need for information cuts across, the educated, the uneducated, men, women, youth, working and non working. As such to function effectively in everyday life people need various kinds of information. The ubiquitous need for information is recognized by the United States (US) National Commission for Libraries and Information Services which states that,

> Ready access to information and knowledge is essential to individual advancement as well as to national growth. People are individuals, each with unique informational, educational, psychological and social needs. The need for information is felt at all levels of society, regardless of an individual's location, social condition or intellectual achievement. (Online)

People need information on how to stay healthy and to understand medical conditions they or their families have. In business, there is constant need for information in the form of statistics, corporate and individual addresses as well as various types of relevant information systems just to mention a few. Such information is crucial in the efficient operation of any organization. Individuals need information on changing careers and obtaining better jobs, and some need information for personal enrichment. Clearly there is no aspect of our lives that is not touched by information.

The world is increasingly becoming a global village, thanks to the increasing power of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). ICT has and still is a significant catalyst in the current globalization process. The creation and use of information is no longer affected by time and physical boundaries. This has resulted in the more real 'global village' ICT use is increasingly changing the ways in which people do things. There are a number of ICT developments that have profound implications on the way society is organized. We are living in an information age, in which case we have become more dependent on information and knowledge. What implications do these developments have for the developing countries and in particular Africa? What challenges does this engender for urban black women whose level of literacy may probably challenge the way they access and embrace the benefits of the new knowledge-based economy?

It is evident that technological literacy, economic adequacy and literacy skills are preconditions for effective ICT use. These skills lack in most parts of the developing world, Zimbabwe among them. This has resulted in what is currently referred to as the digital divide between the North and the South. In the developing countries these divisions manifest between urban and rural areas. Globalization therefore is evidence of the indiscriminate force of ICTs and information and the challenges that nation's have to capacitate their nationals so that they may embrace the benefits of ICTs through information access. This will afford the developing world a virtual

address by which it is identified with, in the global village. It also creates a chance for small towns like Kariba to make a contribution to the global information systems.

The World Bank fact book (1999) attests, that two-thirds of all non-literates in the world are women. This situation is not different in Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular. The literacy rate in Zimbabwe is high among men and lower among women. According to the Central Statistics Office CSO (2002) the country has a total adult literacy rate of 90% out of which 60% are men while women are placed at 40%. This percentage is threatened by the rise in poverty and early marriages. These statistics are indicative of the fact that more women are illiterate or semi literate when compared to their male counterparts. Findings from Kariba show that literacy is a major barrier to information access. It is highly possible that women in Zimbabwe face a lot of constraints in accessing productive resources due to lower levels of literacy and formal education. In other words lack of education for women makes the feminization of poverty a reality.

1.1 Statement of the problem

This investigation was based on the assumption that an urban black woman in Zimbabwe probably needs information but presumably, due to a number of factors, the information is either unavailable or inaccessible. In trying to solve her problems the urban black woman is likely faced with information she cannot access due to limited literacy skills, technology and economic inadequacy. Empirical findings suggest that Kariba, a small town in Zimbabwe has less formal organized information sources. In instances where information is available access may be limited due to, inter alia lower levels of literacy.

The urban black woman is probably faced with a glut of information that has potential to cause information anxiety, as she may at times not know how to deal with it. This may be so if access to the available information is challenged by her literacy status. For an urban black woman in Zimbabwe the challenge is presented by the fact that information is mostly from informal sources as revealed by findings from the National Library of Zimbabwe (NLZ). These sources include friends and neighbours who in most cases may not have authoritative information. Moreover the information is sometimes alien to their needs in the case of most information from the electronic media such as the television. At the end of the day the urban black woman in Zimbabwe is either uninformed or is inadequately informed. Amid a host of the challenges faced by the urban black woman the level of literacy is probably the main hindrance to access to information.

In this investigation the researcher has adopted the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD: 1999) definition of literacy. It is defined as a particular mode of behavior

and capacity to understand and employ printed information in daily activities, at home, at work and in the community to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential. Literacy is important for effective access to education and consequently information. If a person's level of literacy is limited then s/he may find it difficult to make sense of the information that requires appropriate levels of literacy. It is probable that the urban black woman in Kariba experiences information needs but also encounters problems in accessing information relevant to her needs. Moreover they may be insufficiently capacitated to effectively evaluate the quality and accuracy of the information. During data collection the urban black women in Kariba expressed an intense need for information yet this desire seems to be hampered by the level of literacy among other challenges.

The OECD identifies five levels of literacy .The first level is for people who do not have the skills to deal with written or print material that they are faced with in everyday life. It indicates persons with very poor skills, where the individual may, for example, be unable to determine the correct amount of medicine to give a child from information printed on the package. People in level two can deal only with material that is simple, clearly laid out, and in which the tasks involved are not too complex. It denotes a weak level of skill, but more subtle than level one. It identifies people who can read, but test poorly. They may have developed coping skills to manage everyday literacy demands, but their low level of proficiency makes it difficult for them to face novel demands, such as learning new job skills. They do not have the skills to cope with unfamiliar or complex reading material.

Level three is comprises of people who have the skills to carry out most of every day reading tasks. It is considered a suitable minimum for coping with the demands of everyday life and work in a complex, advanced society. It denotes roughly the skill level required for successful secondary school completion and college entry. Like higher levels, it requires the ability to integrate several sources of information and solve more complex problems. Levels 4 and 5 describe respondents who demonstrate a command of higher-order information processing skills. This group usually has better coping capacities.

The 2004, Department of Labor, Social Welfare and Employment Creation Human Development Index Report (HDI: 2004) for the Omay region in which Kariba is constituent revealed that out of a population of 16 000 black women, 14.29 % of the urban black women in Kariba never went to school hence belong to level one. About 40 % went through 9 to 11 years of schooling, which level is still considered as illiterate though these belong to level two. This level is considered illiterate as they run the risk of reverse - literacy because at this level cognitive abilities are not highly developed to sustain literacy without support. Only 11.43 % belong to level three while 5.7 % belong to level 4 and 5. Apparent from the statistics is the fact that 82.86 percent may be regarded illiterate hence challenged when it comes to functioning effectively in a literate society. According to the Status report of the Women in Politics Support Unit (WIPSU) (2000:12)

..the urban black women in Zimbabwe are responsible for the economic, social, physical and psychological support of their families yet they are illiterate and have a lower socio-economic status in society.

Obviously illiteracy for a woman exacerbates the poverty cycle because when parents particularly mothers are not educated, no one supervises and supports learning for children. Such a scenario is less empowering in terms of literacy attainment for children. This may lead to negative consequences such as high levels of school dropouts, anti social behavior as well as risky behavior that might lead to crime, HIV/AIDS and other health hazards. This creates a vicious cycle of poverty and underdevelopment.

The current world is increasingly becoming textually mediated and literacy is the bridge to information that is crucial for solving problems and improving the standard of living. On this basis it may be presumed that the urban black woman in Zimbabwe has information needs yet encounters more difficulty in obtaining relevant information to satisfy her needs due to a low literacy and socio-economic status.

This research is based on the postulation that women's roles in society, especially at home predisposes them to greater information needs yet arguably they make a significant contribution to the illiterate population in society which possibly limits access to information for daily coping. This research is therefore compelled by anxieties as to how these women manage in light of such obstacles and what are the available interventions to assist the urban black woman in Kariba? This study set out to answer these and other relevant questions pertinent to the correlation between literacy and access to information by urban black women in Kariba.

1.2 Aim

The research was an investigation of how the level of literacy influences access to information among urban black women in Zimbabwe. The town of Kariba was used as the study site.

1.3 Rationale

Focus on women and access to information fits well into the government of Zimbabwe's initiative to empower its citizen's through access to information and ICTs for development. At the same time, the United Nations is emphasizing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), agreed upon at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000 and subscribed to by both developed and developing countries. The goals are to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger,

achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability; and develop a global partnership for development. Tandem with this initiative, the UN set aside, 2003 to 2012 as a decade of literacy under the theme "literacy as freedom". This underlines international recognition of the role literacy plays in economic growth and national development.

The study on women, level of literacy and access to information in the information society or digital economy is pertinent to these initiatives on globalization and poverty eradication. Improved access to information for the urban black women in Zimbabwe creates an informed and responsible citizenry who helps to cut on the government's budget for social services. It expands the participation of all social groups, including women, in the information-driven economy and the knowledge society.

The 1961 UNESCO conference on the "Development of education in Africa" emphasized that, it is important that women be empowered to access relevant information sources in view of the roles that women play in society and the conditions that they face. These could help them in decision making as well as improving the welfare of their families and their communities. This fact may become the basis for a concerted focus on providing literacy support and improved access to information for women. This is essential not only for preventing an adverse impact of the digital revolution on gender equality or the perpetuation of existing inequalities and discrimination, but also for enhancing women's equitable access to the benefits of information and communication technologies.

Access to information is empowering and ensures that women can become a central tool for the development of Zimbabwe especially in light of the economic challenges currently facing the country. The results may provide the basis for the development and implementation of better information services to disseminate information and offer literacy support at various levels of comprehension to all people of Kariba, in the process empowering black women in Zimbabwe. The findings of this research may be used in development projects for instance, adult education by the government and other development partners such as women groups, Adult literacy Organization in Zimbabwe (ALOZ) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The results may also lay a foundation for subsequent research to cover gaps that this study may have left for example the impact of other variables like children on the literacy disposition of the urban black woman in Zimbabwe.

1.4 Objectives

The research objectives were to:

1. Describe the demographic profiles of urban black women in Kariba.
2. Determine the significance of information in the life of the urban black women in Zimbabwe.
3. Determine the information needs or motivations for seeking information by an urban black woman in Zimbabwe.
4. Find out how the urban black woman in Zimbabwe meets her information needs for everday coping.
5. Identify information sources available to urban black women in Kariba and determine their accessibility and use?
6. Identify barriers to access to information by the urban black women in Zimbabwe

1.5 Delimitation

The research was an investigation on the impact of the level of literacy on access to information to meet information needs of urban black women in Zimbabwe. The study was carried out at Kariba, a small town 365km North of Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe.

1.7 Limitations

Burns and Grove (2003:46) define study limitations as, "restrictions in a study that may decrease the generalizability of research findings" which may be theoretical or methodological. Gaining entry into the study area involved a visit to the Member of Parliament (MP) of the constituency of Kariba by the researcher. This presented an opportunity for the researcher to get more insight into the area of study and to introduce the research project. The MP had to give his approval and introduce the researcher to the constituency. It was important to observe protocol given that two main political parties exist in Zimbabwe namely, the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU (PF)) and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) The current MP for Kariba belongs to ZANU (PF)) as a result there were fears of being dismissed as a ZANU PF project by women from other political parties. This however did not happen because the women still had their own networks outside partisan politics. While the researcher did not anticipate difficulties in gaining entry into the research area because she was known to the area and is fluent in the languages of the land, there were other challenges.

Discussions with women and observations by the researcher prior to the study showed that the majority of the women in Kariba are semi illiterate or belong to literacy levels one and two, based on the OECD scale. They have a literacy level not good enough to interact with written text let alone respond to text in English. This limited the methods of data collection to oral interviews, which were time consuming. The researchers help was still required even where the

women could write to help with the interpretation of questions. The questionnaire was prepared in English while some of the women preferred to be interviewed in the local languages probably because of the low levels of literacy. As a result, most interviews were conducted in Shona, Nyanja and Tonga. It was a daunting and equally time-consuming task to translate the questionnaire to represent what the researcher needed. It took the researcher great effort to convince and gain the women's trust as they associated any questioning with the police despite assurances of confidentiality. This was so because of the current political environment that has created suspicions among the people.

The fact that the research target was an urban black woman in a predominantly patriarchal society also presented problems. In some instances husbands felt that, their authority was undermined. Some thought the research was a scapegoat for conscientizing women of their human rights in a society where such is regarded as rebellious. There was an incidence where one husband tore the questionnaire in protest. Being remote and a tourist resort area, Kariba is a favorite with Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that deal with relief aid. These NGOs also carry out field research before they donate money or food. To the women the researcher was no different from the NGOs hence they expected money or a reward for their responses. During the investigation the women often wandered from the research topic and chronicled their problems in anticipation of some form of financial intervention from the researcher. This affected the snowball sampling preferred by the researcher. Instead of referring a person who met the predefined criteria the respondents would identify a person in need of some form of financial help. The researcher however managed to bring the respondents back on track by perpetually reminding them of her purpose and that she was a bona fide student.

The current economic hardships in Zimbabwe mean that people in this region, like the rest of the country are too busy trying to make ends meet. This made it difficult for the researcher to steal off time from these people to participate in the research since it was secondary to them. The primary activity was bringing food to the table hence the research was not considered important and worth wasting time on. The researcher had to travel over 5000km return to the area of study from the University of Fort Hare where she is studying. Nevertheless the study area was the only convenient option for the researcher despite the constraints of distance and finance. The time available for the research was limited which therefore limited the scope and the size of the target group covered.

1.8 Definition of Terms
Access to information: availability of information and the ability to interact with the information for use in everyday life.
Gender: Sexual identity, especially in relation to roles given by society or culture.
Information: Information is the result of processing, manipulating and organizing data in a way that adds to the knowledge of the person receiving it.
Information need: vague awareness of something missing, culminating in locating information

that contributes to understanding and meaning.

Information seeking behavior: group of actions that a person in need of information undertakes towards meeting that need.

Information seeking experience: Experiences associated with the search for information.

Literacy: is the ability to read, write, listen, and speak. In modern context, the word means reading and writing at a level adequate for written communication and generally a level that enables one to successfully function at certain levels of society

User: One that uses: a user of information.

User studies: studies on the information user on how they interact with information systems

SUMMARY

This chapter introduced the study with focus on the statement of the problem,, aim of the study, and the rationale of the study, delimitation, limitations and definition of terms. The next chapter will focus on an overview of literacy, access to information and libraries. The purpose of this is to give a general picture of the correlation between the level of literacy and access to information sources at a local and global level.

CHAPTER TWO: THE CORRELATION, BETWEEN THE LEVEL OF LITERACY AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION: AN OVERVIEW.

2.0 Introduction

This chapter gives a general overview of the correlation between the level of literacy and access to information and sources at a national and global level.

2.1 Definition of literacy

The definition of literacy as a concept has evolved over time. This has been and still is influenced by academic research, international policy agendas, and different political, economic and socio-cultural contexts. Literature consulted shows no consensus on the absolute definition of the concept literacy.

At a basic level, literacy is the ability to read, write, speak and compute at a certain level. The OECD identifies five levels of literacy. The first level is for people who do not have the skills to

deal with written or print material that they are faced with in everyday life. It describes persons with very poor skills, where the individual may, for example, be unable to determine the correct amount of medicine to give a child from information printed on the package. People in level two can deal only with material that is simple, clearly laid out, and in which the tasks involved are not too complex. It denotes a weak level of skill, more or less the same with level one. It identifies people who can read less complicated matter. They may have developed coping skills to manage everyday literacy demands, but their low level of proficiency makes it difficult for them to face novel demands, such as learning new job skills. They do not have the skills to cope with unfamiliar or complex reading material.

Level three is comprised of people who have the skills to carry most of every day reading tasks. It is considered a suitable minimum for coping with the demands of everyday life and work in a complex, advanced society. It denotes roughly the skill level required for successful secondary school completion and college entry. Like higher levels, it requires the ability to integrate several sources of information and solve more complex problems. Levels 4 and 5 describe those who demonstrate a command of higher-order information processing skills. This group usually has better coping capacities.

The term literacy has been broadened to become a metaphor for many kinds of skills. Some scholars suggest that the concept of 'multiple literacies' related to technological, information, media, visual, scientific and other contexts, is better suited to life in the twenty-first century. Emphasis is placed not only on reading and writing, but also on skills and practices that are relevant to the changing dynamics of community life. According to MacGarry (1991), literacy is the ability to read and write but its familiarity is extended to other forms of cultural communication such as computer literacy, music literacy and video literacy among other media. The trend in today's society is such that literacy goes beyond reading and writing. It includes the use of literacy skills for functioning in society i.e. functional literacy. Functional literacy involves the possession or attainment of skills required to cope at an adult level in everyday situations such as reading the newspaper or completing a job application form, using a computer and analysis of the relevant written text.

Many educators have come to view literacy as an active process of learning involving social awareness and critical reflection. This can empower individuals and groups to promote social change. Recent perspectives have also involved the ways in which literacy is used and practiced in different social and cultural contexts. In Freire and Macedo (1987) literacy is treated as a tool of mass conscientization whose end result is to influence civic participation. For effective civic participation in the development of democracy, it is essential for an individual to have access to information and the required literacy skills to understand issues presented in the media and other formats. The citizen needs to be aware that information is used for making decisions and can often be used to sell political ideas. During the liberation struggles of South Africa and Zimbabwe in the 80s and 70s respectively, political parties such as the African National

Congress (ANC) and ZANU (PF) used literacy to sell their manifestos and conscientize the masses against the repressive regimes. On the other hand the National Party - led apartheid regime in South Africa suppressed the attainment of literacy to repress the majority. Unless the citizen is literate s/he will not be in a position to effectively participate in the democratic processes such as voting.

The work of the Brazilian educator Freire (1990) integrated notions of active learning within particular socio-cultural settings. He wrote that every reading of the word was preceded by a reading of the world. In other words Freire's idea was that the only fence between people and the world is the word. By reading one becomes knowledgeable about the environment and how to deal with problems. An informed citizenry is an empowered citizenry. This is what today's world expects of people. People should possess an ability to decode the textually mediated world and function within its complexity.

2.2 The Development of literacy

The rise and development of libraries is closely related to the history of writing. According to McGarry (1991) the idea of knowledge generation was initiated by King Arshubanipal in Babylonia. He commissioned a team of scribes to collect and transcribe all relevant literary works and translate them into the Assyrian language so that his subjects could be knowledgeable. His library broadened from keeping archival records to include materials contributing to the education of future generations. Sumerians were the first people to keep records and by extension writing. Libraries of that day were reference points where royalty, administrators and scholars could go and consult information such as tax records and official correspondence. These records were accessible to those who already possessed reading and writing skills.

Literacy of the middle ages was a symbol of power where the scribes were the sole depositories and interpreters of information. This seems to be the time when literacy starts correlating with access to information. During the middle ages the church controlled the writing and use of manuscripts. This extended to the medieval times and the rise of universities and literacy. When the barbarian wars subsided there was massive development, of organized societies and the growth of cities and towns. This means that people were reconstructing and resettling. Under such conditions there is bound to be trade, intellectual and social development such as town planning, engineering, etc. This growth also saw the development of Cathedrals which were not strictly religious but also centers of education. The Bishops in these Cathedrals recognized the need to support development by providing information or material to further growth in science. As such these were the first libraries to exclusively support literacy, education and access to information. The growth in intellectual activities reduced dependence on Cathedral libraries, marking the birth of University Libraries. Katz (2000)

Marshall (1989) writes that, Alexandria and Perganum libraries in Egypt and Turkey respectively also played a major role in the history of reading and writing. They owe their existence to Alexander the Great, the then emperor of Greece between 336 and 323 BC whose main preoccupation was to spread Greek culture into nations that he had conquered and beyond.

The great civilization of China experimented with paper, which in fact had revolutionary effects on literacy. Hoyles (1977:17) says that, "during the mercantile or industrial era that preceded the emergence of capitalism, literacy was already a vital tool for merchants and navigators". The invention of the printing press in the 16th Century marked the turning point in the history of literacy .This is when literacy was regarded as a tool. Garlake and Proctor (1994) say that skills were needed for the industrial era hence the necessity for literacy skills. This subsequently led to the spread of education or literacy and the rise of democracy in the 19th and 20th centuries. In this era there was an upsurge of public libraries different from what we know of them today because then they were only accessible to the educated and literate

2.2.4 Literacy and In formation and Communication Technologies (ICTs)

The information age has revolutionerized the way we do things. This era is characterized by ICTs, which have necessitated a shift in the definition of literacy from mere reading and writing to include other forms of literacy such as computer literacy. Studies in mass communication are based on the premise that the media affects our day-to- day lives. In other words our everyday experiences show the effect of the media and ICTs in our lives. Information seems to be packaged in such a way that it puts literacy demands on us. As Smith (1973:1) says:

> Our knowledge of contemporary society is to a large extent mediated by documents of various kinds. Very little of our knowledge of people, events, social relations and powers arise directly in our immediate experience. Factual statements in documentary form, whether as news, data, information or like, stand in for an actuality, which is not accessible. Socially organized practices of reporting and recording work upon what actually happens or has happened to create a reality in documentary form, and though they are decisive to its characters, their traces are visible in it. The construction of social phenomena in their familiar and recognizable forms as they appear to us is in large part a product of the reporting and accounting procedures of formal organizations, which in various ways provide for how society is governed.

The literate person has access to a variety of view points relating to economic and social policies thus increasing his or her potential for involvement in global affairs. One can understand what is happening in other countries through the print and electronic media. In this information-rich society where the amount of information and knowledge is rapidly increasing it becomes necessary to have abilities to access and process information. It points to the evidence of the indiscriminate force of ICTs irrespective of one's disposition. If one is educated s/he is able to acquire information and process it quickly, concentrating on what is needed and discarding the

1

rest.

2.3.1 International interest in Literacy

Since the 1950s, the development of literacy programmes has received marked attention in many countries. Moreover it has received international recognition for its impact on economic, social and political development. The United National Educational Scientific and Cultural (UNESCO) the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank, the International Literacy Institute (ILI) and OECD are among the international organizations and NGOS that have been at the forefront of promoting literacy. Such organizations have played an influential role in developing policies and programmes for literacy having taken the view that literacy is a necessary precondition for development.

Following the Second World War, UNESCO supported the spread of adult literacy as part of a concerted effort to advance basic education at a time when policy-makers were beginning to consider how education and literacy could better enable individuals to participate in and benefit from a modernizing economy. Since the 1960s and 1970s, the international community has recognized the role of literacy in economic growth and national development, especially in newly independent countries. To underscore the importance of literacy, the UNESCO's General Conference of 1978 adopted a definition of functional literacy still in use today. It states that,

> A person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his or her group and community and also for enabling him or her to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his or her own and the community's development.

For the past three decades the UN has been trying to tackle illiteracy to the extent of devoting a whole decade towards the eradication of illiteracy. The UN set aside, 2003 to 2012 as a Decade of Literacy under the theme "literacy as freedom." Development experts regard access to information as the main catalyst in the fight against poverty. This is affirmed by Koffi Annan (UN Secretary General's) during World Literacy Day in 1995:

> We at the United Nations are convinced that information has a great liberating power waiting to be harnessed to our global struggle for peace, development and human rights. We believe this because we are convinced that it is ignorance that makes enemies of men. It is ignorance, not knowledge that makes fighters of children. It is ignorance, not knowledge that leads more to advocate tyranny over democracy. It is ignorance, not knowledge that makes some argue that human conflict is inevitable. It is ignorance, not knowledge that makes others say that they are many worlds when we know that there is one. Ours.

214

The international Literacy Institute (ILI:2002) that is responsible for the eradication of illieteracy recognizes, that the involvement of international organizations in fighting illiteracy means that illiteracy is an important global problem that needs attention. ILI has a mandate to provide leadership in research, developmemnt and training in the broad field of international literacy and development with emphasis on developing countries. The British Library Association (BLA) and the American Library Association (ALA) are among other organizations playing a big role in libraries and literacy projects. Such concerted efforts recognize that literacy skills are a corner stone of economic success. The trouble is that many people are without them for example, on the occasion of the launch of the Decade of Literacy, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), recognized that,

> While societies enter into the information and knowledge society and modern technologies develop and spread at rapid speed, 860 million adults are illiterate; over 100 million children have no access to school. Countless children, youth and adults who attend school or other education programmes fall short of the required level to be considered literate in today's complex world. Literacy takes many forms on paper, on the computer screen, on TV, on posters and signs. Those who use literacy take it for granted - but those who cannot use it are excluded from much communication in today's World (Online)

A recent study estimates that 4. 5 million of Canada's 26 million population lack literacy skills. Bok (1990:1) also notes that out of the total population of France, 2 to 8 million people are illiterate. Such is the picture in the developed world, obviously the situation is worse the developing world especially Africa.

Besides efforts being made to address the problem of illiteracy the importance of literacy is reflected in the decision that was taken by various organizations and stakeholders in 1965. In a meeting held in Tehran, it was resolved that 8 September will be observed as the World Literacy Day. The aim of the day is to promote and to elicit activities to mobilize public international opinion, interest and active support for literacy. As a consequence of this most libraries commemorate this day by involving adult learners in activities like reading competitions, which enhance the connection between libraries and literacy activities. To emphasize the importance of libraries in the fight against illiteracy the International Federation of Library Association and Institutions (IFLA) states that,

Literacy is the key tool for the sustainable development of people and communities. Libraries and librarians have a fundamental role in helping people acquire this essential tool and develop the skill required to use it

Due to this realization several IFLA groups involve themselves in a variety of library and literacy programmes globally.

1

2.3.2 History of Literacy in Africa

Gumbo, Shumba and Moyana (1982) affirm that education and literacy in Africa were first recognizable among the Muslim Arabs who settled along the edge of Sahara in North Africa. Their schools taught Islamic religion, Arabic languages and science. Following the 1884 Berlin conference that led to the partitioning of Africa by the Western Europe colonizers, there was a significant in-flow of European colonists. It became apparent that for Europeans to be able to spread their religion and influence they had to teach the African how to read and write.

The missionaries started teaching Africans how to read the bible in the 18th Century. They concentrated on localities where they had established churches, which meant the selective spread of literacy on the continent. The colonists introduced literacy having realized the need for superficially educated African officers to assist in government. As a result colonial powers such as France and Britain established schools in African countries such as Zimbabwe, South Africa, Zambia, Kenya, Tanzania and Malawi. Most colonial activities were centered in major cities and farms, which mean that it, were mostly men who benefited from their influence in education, as it was only men working for the white settlers. Literacy may not be discussed in isolation of culture. The introduction of literacy and the book as a learning tool presented difficulties for the development of literacy in Africa. For the majority of Africa oral tradition is the mode of transmitting knowledge. Knowledge is passed from generation to generation by word of mouth or narration. The continent still lives with that legacy as manifested in the lack of a reading culture on the continent today.

According to a global monitoring report on literacy released at the 2006 biennial African Education Ministers conference in Libreville Gabon, less than 60 % of adults in sub Saharan Africa can read and write. Women bear the biggest brunt of illiteracy. For every 100 literate men in the region there are only 76 women who can read and write and in poorer countries such as Benin, Chad, Mali and Burkina Faso the literacy rates are less than 40%. A large percentage of the South African population is illiterate, estimated at 50% by the Human Sciences Research Council. (HSRC: 2000). Africa experienced almost a century of colonial rule, which thrived on the principle of separation and underdevelopment for the African or black population. Many of the 54 African states and governments on the continent have recognized the significance of literacy for development and therefore after independence from colonial rule, they invested in education for all. Such African governments include Malawi, South Africa, Zambia, Kenya, Tanzania and Zimbabwe among many others. Ogunwale (1994) notes that, the Nigerian government has since 1991 become more involved in literacy efforts focusing on women.

2.3.3 Literacy and the Zimbabwean situation.

Zimbabwe is one of the few African countries with a high literacy rate of 90%. Sadly literacy for women is pegged at 60%. At the attainment of independence in 1980, the new government launched a mass literacy campaign. This was done in recognition of the importance of literacy

for the overall development of the country. The literacy campaign aimed at eradicating illiteracy within a five-year period. This was a challenge for the country coming out of a war and faced with 2.5 million illiterate or semi-literate people. These were more than half of the four million people in the productive age group (18 – 60) implying a huge setback for industrial growth. At the launch of the campaign in Zimbabwe the responsibility for driving the campaign was shared between the then Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs. This union ended in 1988, when the Ministry of Education took over the campaign in an attempt to resolve some of the difficulties caused by joint responsibility. Dropping the Ministry responsible for women saw the women being dropped as well. Chigwedere (1989)

According to Mashingaidze (1987) the approach adopted by Zimbabwe in its literacy campaign was in line with the Government's socialist ideology, while the environment in which it operated was essentially pro-capitalist. The Socialist ideology preached free education for the masses while a capitalist environment called the masses to pay for the resources. This led to the failure of the campaign due to conflicting actors. The masses wanted free education but resources had to be paid for.

Primary or elementary education in Zimbabwe is mandatory for every child of school going age. Despite this there is a sizeable adult population that is illiterate. Illiteracy among adult Zimbabweans has become a growing concern in recent years because of the social and economic implications that, such a population poses for the state. National awareness of problems associated with limited literacy skills has led to legislation, beginning at the national level, to fund new literacy programs and expand existing programs such as the Adult Literacy Organization of Zimbabwe (ALOZ). Libraries and information centers are viewed as important components of this massive educational effort. Accordingly, library and information services for literacy were one of three major themes of the 1996 Zimbabwe International Book Fair (ZIBF) at Harare.

Appropriate literacy support materials have also been distributed to the institutionalized to include those in prisons, hospitals, rehabilitation centers, and group homes for the elderly and disabled. Intensive prison programs especially at Chikurubi Maximum prison have been coordinated under a literacy librarian. Dwindling resources and economic challenges facing the country since the 90s have challenged these efforts. The need for programs to increase literacy has been acknowledged through support from the government, from many organizations in the education and library and information fields, and from business and industry. (Ushewokunze 1986)

2.3.3 Urban black women and literacy in Zimbabwe.

A critical importance has been assigned to information access, with respect to urban black women in Zimbabwe because women are the most hardworking and productive. They are however the most marginalized group in terms of access to education and information in Zimbabwe. Most economies in the developing world such as Zimbabwe are sustained by the informal sector to which majority of the respondents of this study are active.

Statistics show that two-thirds of all non-literates are women. This fact has become the basis for a concerted focus on providing literacy services to women. Literature consulted gives various reasons as to why two-thirds of all non-literates are women. Most of these are culturally, economically and societally imposed. A report in City Press Newspaper (2006) raises concern that women bear the biggest brunt for illiteracy hence are unable to access valuable information that requires ability to read and write. This results in a generation of women trapped in a cycle of poverty where they remain chronically poor making them susceptible to various hazards, for example HIV/AIDS and crime. Literacy prepares women for economic, social and civic roles. Lack of literacy implies that they are always left out as noted by Muchinguri (2006) speaking at a gender and literacy seminar held in Harare. She emphasized the importance of women to be empowered with knowledge that will build their capacity and increase their economic participation.

Women's literacy is the single most important factor in development especially in developing countries. Literacy for women opens many other gates as a result of enhanced information searching skills. The 1961, UNESCO conference on the development of African education asserts that,

> For the increased use of educated women power in the working life of the community there is need to develop a new conception of the role of women in the life of the community, to improve their role in life as homemakers. To expand their opportunities for employment, to encourage greater participation and leadership by women in community affairs and public life.

Similarly the CSO (2002) indicates that there is a high correlation between the status of literacy for females and infant mortality or life expectancy at birth in Zimbabwe. The country has high rates of female illiteracy and life expectancy at birth is 41 years. In contrast, in countries with very low rates of female illiteracy, life expectancy at birth is 72, a huge difference. For many these statistics provide convincing evidence that women should be a primary focus of literacy programs. Such a focus, it is argued, provides the best return on investment for government's economic and social burden.

2.4 Urban black women, information and urban environments

Cities and towns in most countries around the world have been attracting considerable attention due to the large number of households migrating to cities. It has also been due to the centrality of

goods and services that cities offer. Over the last few decades, there has emerged a major form of migration, that of women moving to urban areas by marriage, education or work. The result of this has been the explosive growth of urban areas, bringing with it a host of negative effects. Population concentration in increasingly smaller landmasses has caused a drastic decline in the quality of living both in the residential and work fronts. Such a scenario has had ripple effects on a variety of sectors, such as education, water, sanitation, health, labor/job markets, economic activities, and information provision both directly and indirectly.

The complex interrelationship and interdependence of urban areas and their surrounding economic hinterland, which influences the distribution of resources, has had drastic effects on the urban black woman. Wessels-Fairer (1990) notes that, due to urbanization, urban community support groups are not as intact as they are in the rural areas leaving the woman to cope alone in a literate western oriented environment that is most likely alien to her in so many respects. The demands of urban life have in many cases outweighed the relative capacity of the urban black woman to cope. The urban environments impress so many demands on its inhabitants. The urban system is a western concept which the outsiders like the urban black woman has to grapple with. The demands of urban life are western engineered yet this woman has not reached that level in terms of needs. This means therefore she is forced to manage in an environment totally alien to her. The situation is more bearable for educated women and a nightmare to the illiterate woman. The need for information that is timely, accurate and repackaged into an accessible format is an important input for decision-making and everyday coping for the urban black woman.

2.4.1 Implications of lack of access to information for urban black women in Zimbabwe.

Majority of women in the developing world are informal traders, making them the backbone of the nation's economy besides their other roles as wives, home managers and informal traders. At one time a group of literate women from the South Coast of Kenya were explaining the advantages of their recently acquired skills in reading, writing, and calculation. Now that they could sign their names, they had more control over money transactions, and could read medical prescriptions and instructions. "Our eyes have been opened," said one of them, expressing her new sense of pride and increased self-reliance.

The risks involved in wrongly deciphering a medical prescription or instruction of using heavy machinery are obvious. The danger imminent in the case of a mother who cannot read instructions on the bottle of medicine prescribed for the child or a man who cannot read the sign "Danger Avoid!" are not imaginable. The child maybe poisoned or a person may lose any part of the body. It is not only costly to the individual, but to the company, sometimes to the environment and subsequently to the state. Poor literacy has considerable impact on health and society.

1

Educated mothers encourage children to go to school, they are also able to help them with their schoolwork. Therefore, it is argued, literate mothers are strong weapons in the fight against illiteracy. Women have economic potential just as men do. If women remain illiterate, some of that economic potential is lost as it is for men. Therefore, for a people or a nation to achieve development ideals, it is necessary that their female population be educated and empowered to access information.

CHAPTER THREE: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

3.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature related to the study, therefore a layout of the theoretical framework upon which this research is based. It reviews literature on literacy, information provision, information access, information seeking behavior, and information use and information sources. The review draws from writings, researches, existing books and journal articles as well as material from the internet. This is intended to give a better appreciation of the issue under study. This is supported by the observation made by Chikoko and Mloyi (1995) that the purpose of reviewing literature is to help the researcher in having a better understanding of the research problem.

The concept literacy has been subject to so much debate such that there is no absolute definition of the term in the existing literature. The OECD (1999) defines literacy as a particular mode of behavior and capacity to understand and employ printed information in daily activities, at home, at work and in the community to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential. Literacy is important for effective access to education and consequently information. If a person's level of literacy is limited then s/he may find it difficult to make sense of the information that requires appropriate levels of literacy. It is probable that the urban black woman in Zimbabwe experiences information needs but also encounters problems in accessing information relevant to her needs. Moreover they may be insufficiently capacitated to effectively evaluate the quality and accuracy of the information. At the launch of the World literacy programme in the UNESCO (1970) introduced the social dimension of literacy by recognizing that,

> Literacy is at the heart of basic education for all and creating literate environments and societies is essential for achieving the goals of eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, curbing population growth, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy

Literacy is therefore viewed as a necessary precondition for development and worthy of attention.

3.1. Information needs of an urban black woman in Zimbabwe

The concept of information and its definition throughout the history of library science has been

the centre of attention of the information community and the source of many opposing views. Belkin and Pao (1989) view Information as the result of processing, manipulating and organizing data in a way that adds to the knowledge of the person receiving it. Owing to the validity of the views of Belkin and Pao (1989) this study will not attempt to redefine such concepts but rather build on the concepts. There is no corner of this globe that is not in need of information. The need is increasing even at the lowest levels. The urban black woman in Kariba, for example experiences information needs in her enviroment to meet her responsibilities as mother, breadwinner and wife. The successful satisfaction of these needs is influenced by the individuals disposition. The individual disposition refers to the backgound and characteristic of the individual as well as the individuals' situation, which includes factors such as age, education, motivation, tasks, roles and problems. Pao (1989) argues that these determine the nature of needs whether they are cognitive, affective, social, spiritual or physical. The needs mould the demand for information, which in turn leads to information seeking behaviour by which a person decides to ask or solve the problem internally. Getting relevant information that help perhaps with, solving a problem or decision making results in information use and satisfaction satisfaction.

Figure 1, Wilson's model 1

Adapted from, Wilson, T.D. (1981) on user studies and information needs. *Journal of Librarianship*, **37(1), 3-15 (online)**

Wilson 1981 (Figure 1 above) identifies that people's roles at work and in society influence their needs and subsequent information seeking behavior and these requirements are influenced by changes in the user's environment both at work and the wider environment. The economic climate is a very important indicator of information user behavior. This refers to allocation of resources. Some information resources have to be paid for so if the economic situation does not afford people disposable income to pay for information, then some potential users of information are closed out.

The economic environment contributes much to the world of the urban black woman in, Zimbabwe in general and Kariba in particular. The urban black woman belongs to the economically marginalized in the society for example the respondents to this study cited cost of information as a major influencing factor for the choice of information sources. This also determines use to which information will be put, if the economy is enabling then there is active searching. The physical environment seems insignificant for instance the terrain in Kariba interferes with cell phone, radio and television reception hence limiting the available information sources. For the urban black woman in the Zimbabwean political, socio -cultural and economic

environment needs information, largely to run the household, make political decisions and also information to support any of her income generating projects at home and at work.

3.2 Information sources available to urban black women in Kariba

The focus of majority of research in Library and Information science has been on access to information or use of systems by students or faculty, usually the University libraries and big cities. Smaller towns like Kariba have been by - passed by research. There is very limited print literature on Kariba. The available print literature is mostly on tourism, nothing about development and the life of the people of Kariba. Little work has been done on how women in small urban communities access information and the sources they use. Mchombu (1996) and Kaniki (1995) attempted to capture the information behaviors of small communities in Southern Africa and nothing more has been done to follow up on their studies.

It is generally cited by literature that African communities rely on oral information derived from those close to them and passed down from generation to generation. Research findings are available online which excludes such communities since Internet access is remote if at all available. It is acknowledged that information and communication are vital to development and that many different information sources are available and are already being used by some urban black women. There are information sources such as radio, video, theatre, and social networks. Several authors have noted the role of other users or information seekers as a valuable source of information. This was confirmed by empirical studies. When asked what they do upon realization that they need information most respondents said that their initial action is to ask someone who could be a family member or friend or another woman or proffesional person they share the neighbourwood with. Only after they fail to get information from these sources do they go to the relevent institutions.

Some women revealed that they approach institutions only to confirm information from impersonal contacts. Some consulted the media while most said that by the time they get home they are too tired from th day's activity so much that they just eat and sleep. 3% used the internet. Those in professional occupation indicated that they approach the systems.

3.3 The impact of literacy on access to information.

Literacy and its impact on information use and access have enjoyed attention from LIS researchers as is shown by works of McGarry (1991), Katz (2000) and Pao (1990) among many others. The continuous growth of information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has

1

resulted in abundant information. This has necessitated new approaches to information provision and access. Informal information sources alone become irrelevant, they should complement formal information sources. To function in the new diversity it is important to attain key competencies such as literacy that gives one the capacity to acquire and exchange information using the written word as a communication channel among other innovations.

Studies on user needs and information seeking behavior have shown that one's level of education is an individual's context that determines one's information needs, how they confront an information system and subsequently use that information. In other words studies have shown that there is a positive correlation between access to information and the level of education. This is implied in the fact that one has to be able to read in order to be able to interact with information or an information source. There is a wealth of literature gathered from research in many parts of Africa and other parts of the world that indicate that women's access to information relies on literacy competencies. A study conducted in the Northeastern part of Uganda in January 2002 sought to find out how rural Karimojong agro-pastoral women gained access to agricultural information and the problems they faced in this regard. The main finding was that women's access to information was directly related to their levels of literacy skills. It was ascertained that, to a far greater extent the woman with appropriate literacy skills experience less difficulty in the interaction in accessing information or asking others.

The Dakar Framework for Action (2000) and the 2002 General Assembly resolution on the United Nations Literacy Decade, 2003-2012, acknowledged that literacy is at the heart of lifelong learning. As the resolution put it:

> Literacy is crucial to the acquisition, by every child, youth and adult, of essential life skills that enable them to address the challenges they can face in life, and represents an essential step in basic education, which is an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the twenty-first century.

Literacy prepares people for economic, social and civic roles. It empowers women as testified by Mavale quoted in Marshall (1989; 16), when she says: "With literacy, people dont earn more but everything they know is in their heads. They can go anywhere, do anything, ask for what they want, enter in. When people dont know reading and writing they are afraid" Mavale underlines the power that is inherent in literacy towards access to information and communication which seem to be indispensible in the ever demanding world that we live in.

The right to literacy is implicit in the right to education recognized by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Other conventions and international declarations have since

restated this right. The 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education specifically tackles the issue of those who have not attended or completed primary school. The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child recognize literacy, rather than just education, as a right. Both contain explicit references to the promotion of literacy.

Lack of literacy skills has major implications for the individual as well as for social development. Given the inverse relationship between female education and economic development especially at the first and second levels of literacy, the positive impact on health, well being and the process involved in the transforming societies makes education in any population an imperative.

The impact of literacy on access to information and use by urban black women in communities like Kariba has not bee the target of much research yet these are areas with limited information support. Such has to be investigated because they form the majority and have an important role to play as mothers and income generators. This made it even more relevant to undertake this study in order to tap the human information sources and mark a beginning in the documentation of the way of life or local knowledge of the people's of Kariba. This compilation might therefore be referred to in future.

3.4 Access to information for urban black women

The complex interrelationship and interdependence of urban areas and their surrounding economic hinterland, which influences the distribution of resources, has had drastic effects on the urban black woman. Wessels-Fairer (1990) notes that, due to urbanization, urban community support groups are not as intact as they are in the rural areas leaving the woman to cope alone in a literate western oriented environment that is most likely alien to her in so many respects.

Mujuru (2006) notes that, although women contribute 60 to 80 percent of economic activities in Zimbabwe, they have no access to productive information resources. Among urban black women, socio-cultural factors like poverty are reinforced by women's illiteracy which is related to their limited access and control over information pathways.

1

Literature indicates that literacy is an obvious challenge to access to information for the urban black woman but somehow she manages to meet her information needs for daily coping even though it might be to a less extent. This is possible because they have their own networks where information is passed by orally. Dervin (1977) argues that social status has considerably influence how well informed particular women are. For example, where women have a certain degree of authority or influence in their community, their information networks are stronger. Information networks used by poor and better-off urban black women are different. While relatively poor urban black women receive their information from within their community (neighbours, friends, local markets and the church relatively wealthy women have networks extending beyond their villages and trading centres to external, larger towns like Harare.

Another important factor that influences women's communication with groups involves the location of their communities the further away that a woman's home is from key trading centres and roads, the lower her access to information. This again reveals the extent to which poor women very often depend on direct communication and access to primary sources, rather than on the second-hand information that could be obtained through radio, for example, and that is not dependent on physical location. (Mashingaidze: 1985)

3.6 Information seeking behavior of urban black women in Kariba

Library and Information Science literature is vague on the nature and definition of information seeking behavior. Information seeking may be understood as a rational problem solving process where a gap in knowledge triggers a conscious search for information. Psychology tries to

explain information seeking as a behavior hence "information seeking behavior" It may be defined as physical and psychological characteristics that a person engages in when seeking for information. Information seeking behavior is shaped by a variety of factors such as education level, access, skills, age, and gender among many others.

When a person realizes an information need s/he engages in some information seeking behavior. That behavior may take various forms: for example, the information seeker may make demands upon formal systems that are customarily defined as information systems such as libraries, on-line services, information centers, or upon systems which may perform information functions in addition to a primary, non-information function such as government offices and clinics all of which are concerned with providing another service, but which may be used to obtain information on current legislation or health matters. Upon succeeding this leads to information use, which might lead to satisfaction or non-satisfaction of the need. If the information seeker or user fails to get information then they make demands on other systems such as literature or other people. The process may be vice versa where the user approaches other informal sources first and then formal information systems later.

Kuhlthau (1988) constructed a model of the Infomation Searching Process. This is a series of phases of construction and level of information needs. She combines different phases with physical, affective and cognitive modes that accompany these phases. In her theory she argues that information searching is a complex combination of thoughts, actions and feelings. (**FIGURE 1**)

Figure 2, Kuthlau's model of ASP 1

Tasks : Initiation	Selection	Exploration	Fomulation	collection	presentation
Feelings: Uncertanity Satisfaction or (Affective)	Optimism	Confusion	Formulation		Confidence
Thoughts: Vague (Cognitive)		Focused, increased interest			
Actions					

Each of these phases is accompanied by certain feelings and certain thoughts. Such feelings are uncertainity, optimism, confusion or frustration or doubt, clarity, sense of direction and confidence and satisfaction or dissapointment. Westbrook (1990) sythesises the different phases as identified by other authors like Belkin & Taylor (1990) to a five-phase process namely, **needing, starting, working, deciding** and **closing**. Needing meaning that there is a hint that information might solve the problem at hand, for example, health problem. Starting implies working on the need. Working refers to the action the user takes, which might be confronting either a formal or informal information system. Deciding is the decision on the value to be derived from working on the need and Closing implies the effort to work on the need.actions namely actively seeking for information.

3.7 Barriers to access to information by the urban black woman in Kariba

The barriers to information cited by the women fall into Dervin's (1977) five categories namely, societal, institutional, physical, psychological and intellectual.

Despite the significance of reading, most studies on literacy and information use have ignored the importance of the act and art of reading as well as reading culture. MacGarry (1991) defines reading as an art in which human beings decode, construe and negotiate meaning from text or printed material, therefore a good measure of how literacy levels determine one's access to information especially printed material. Reading like literacy has stages from an elementary level to an advanced level. Each level of reading is determined by one's level of literacy as identified by the OECD (1999). Those in level one have difficulties in reading and it improves until one gets to level five.

A reading situation is when an author has something to say, writes the text, the text reaches the reader, the reader reads the text and becomes informed. The information has an effect. This effect then influences and directs the behavior of the reader. Hatt (1976) identifies the reader as a person with four attributes, which are literacy, access to reading material, certain minimum environmental conditions and time to read. These four attributes distinguish them from non-readers. Literacy as a characteristic of a reader implies that a literate person has learned to perform certain mental tasks that enable him/her to decode the marks s/he finds on a page.

In his theory of scientific needs, Menzel (1967) argues that in order for a scientist to meet his/her information needs they have to be able to interact with an information system. To be able to interact with information system one has to be able to read and understand which leads to decision making. Reading is essential to full participation in modern society. It adds quality to life, providing access to culture and cultural heritage. Reading empowers and emancipates citizens, and it brings people together. Literacy without access to reading material is irrelevant,

214

therefore the need for access to the reading materials. This encourages a reading habit, which is crucial for the maintenance of literacy skills.

Of the population that learns or masters the skill of reading some use it frequently to access information while some not at all. Reading is an essential part of life. Throughout the world, many people are grappling to promote a culture of reading at a time when an increasing number of people are spending less time reading and when reading skills are declining. It seems our societies lack a reading culture and this has been a major cause for reversion to illiteracy because reading also helps reinforce skills gained. A reading culture is when people have an interest in reading beyond the classroom, which is reading for leisure and discovery.

There has been no attempt into finding out why people wean off reading yet it is part of life today. Most people are put off reading because of, language, cost of reading material, and distance of sources for reading material. Mann (1976) mentions inconvenient location of information institutions as a major barrier to access of reading material. Most Zimbabweans do not read for leisure because they are not familiar with the languages used. Zeleza (1990:12) notes that "Educationists generally agree that learning is associated with publication in first languages which effectively promotes and maintains literacy" Most published material in Zimbabwe, just like elsewhere in Africa is in the form of textbooks produced in English, French and Portuguese. People enjoy reading material produced in their own languages. Even where people are literate the nature of reading material sometimes excludes users from accessing information.

3.8 Theoretical Framework of information seeking behavior and information access.

There has been increasing focus on developing a theoretical understanding of everyday life and information seeking behavior of information users. According to Wellisch (1972) the theory commonly known as Everyday Life Information Seeking (ELIS) thoroughly investigates the central topics of information science and looks at the evolution of concepts and ideas. Concepts such as information access, information use, information need, information seeking behavior and channel of communication, exist in a system of complicated and interdependent relations. User studies are an area that combines some of the most used and the least precisely defined concepts of library and information science. Wilson (1981) constructed a model in order to illustrate the co-existence of these notions within the context of user studies and furthermore to emphasize the relations among them. Wilson (1994) further enhanced his model by incorporating internal and external factors that are liable to influence the dynamics of the model. Most studies have ignored the subject or the user of information who in this study is the urban black woman Wilson's model and other theories of information behavior (1996) attempt to explain the relationship between an individual's context, motivation, intervening variable and expectations influence information seeking behavior. Not every need provokes information searching but motivation

such as a reward like money for research or stress copying the information will help in solving a
problem at home.

Major weakness with user studies is inherent in the focus and process. Drawing on extensive
literature reviews on user research in the fields of library and information science and
communication studies, progress in the field is limited because the small numbers of researchers
venturing into user studies. The practice of librarianship can advance much more rapidly if
librarians also view themselves as partners in the enterprise of evidence-based librarianship or
research. Some studies conducted are too small in scope and pertain only to one service within
an individual library. Britain (1982:140) says that Librarians traditionally carried out user studies
with the objective of improving information provision and services within a microenvironment.
Surveys are typically focused on institutions as a result studies do not contribute to new
knowledge of users or theory or model building at macro level.

Such is characteristic of studies on information seeking behavior even by Katz(2000), Pao (1989) and Westbrook (1994) They focus on the literate user who is already within an organized information system such as a library. Katz (2000) for instance, studies the information seeking behavior of scientists as such many projects were involved with the information needs, the use of literature or the Information Seeking behavior of a particular group of people such as scientists. Where then does the ordinary woman in Kariba fit? The female information user in Kariba has no place, she is by passed by research. These are people in remote communities seriously inhibited by illiteracy but still have to cope with everyday day life. Their plight has not been addressed by research.

SUMMARY

This chapter has outlined the theoretical framework of the research project. The next chapter will look at the research methodology.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

The research was a qualitative study that employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Quantitative methods were employed for ease of data analysis and presentation. An extensive literature review, focus group discussions and observation complemented information gathered from the self-administered questionnaires. The respondents were drawn using various sampling procedures. Snowball sampling was used

to select the urban black women while the key informants were selected using judgement sampling. Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social sciences (SPSS)

4.1 Gaining entry into the research site

The study was conducted at Kariba town in Zimbabwe. Gaining entry into the research site involved a visit to the Member of Parliament (MP) of Kariba constituency to introduce the project. The Member of Parliament gave his approval to conduct the research. For introduction to the community, the researcher was advised to attend the launch of the Gatche - Gatche fishing cooperative for women. This was on 13 June, a week after meeting the MP. This arrangement was convenient because it presented an opportunity to meet with various institutional leaders from whom the researcher would draw the key informants from. Despite the fact that the launch was officiated by a ZANU (PF) Member of Parliament the launch was well attended. This provided a representative sample of the population of Kariba.

4.1.1 The research site

The town of Kariba is located in the Mashonaland West Province of Zimbabwe on the Northeastern border with Zambia. It is 365 km from Harare, the capital city. In 1961 one of the largest man-made lakes in the world was formed at Kariba. The massive project was undertaken to provide hydroelectric power for the growing industries of Zimbabwe and Zambia. The construction of Kariba dam was conceived at the peak of the British Colonial interest in Southern and Central Africa. It was envisaged as the driving force for economic development for the British territories of Southern and Northern Rhodesia and the protectorates of Nyasaland and Barotseland under a political conglomeration, the 1965 Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. (Garlake and Proctor 1994) These countries are what we know today as Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and Lesotho respectively.

4.1.2 Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country situated in Southern Africa. It is bordered by South Africa, Mozambique, Botswana and Zambia. Harare is the capital city of Zimabwe. According to (UN: 2005) Zimbabwe's population is estimated at 12.9 million and a life expectancy of 37 years. World Bank (2006) estimates the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of US$340. Literacy is defined in terms of age and ability to read and write in English. Based on that measure 90.7% of the population aged 15 and over can read and write in English, 94.2% being males while females constitutes 87.2%. The country was rated 145th

on the Human Development Index in 2003. Since then real output has dropped by one third and inflation topped 300% in mid 2003 and rose to 1000% in 2006. The negative effects of HIV/AIDS and a challenging economic and political situation exacerbate these problems.

The country's industry sectors include mining activities such as coal, gold, copper, tin and nickel, as well as agriculture where the majority of the women are active. The economy is largely dependent on agricultural products such as tobacco, cotton and sugarcane, which accounted for 17.4% of GDP in 2002. Efforts are now being focused on textile and sugar production against a global campaign against tobacco. Agricultural output has however declined over the past decade because of perennial droughts and the land reform programme where the government of Zimbabwe is reclaiming land from the white farmers. Bonjesi (2004) attributes this decline to the fact that majority of the people involved in agriculture are women and men with limited financial resources, farming skills and information access. They are therefore inadequately equipped to realize high production on the newly acquired farms.

The communications system used to be one of the best in Africa. This has deteriorated due to a lack of maintenance and upgrading as a result of an acute shortage of foreign currency. A 2006 "State of telecoms in Zimbabwe survey" by the Ministry of Transport and Telecommunication made some insightful findings. There is a large cellular network with a recorded 423,600 cellular phones as of 2004, 328,000 telephones as of 2005. The main cellular service providers include parastatals Telone and Netone and private companies, Econet and Telecel. Internet access is available at Harare, some major towns and selected small towns, which do not include Kariba. As of 2005 the number of Internet users is estimated to be 820,000. This means that a mere 6.5 % of the country's population has access to the Internet that is now a global information source. There are plans to extend this to all major towns and rural schools in the country. State owned Tel One is the sole Internet host in the country. There is one state run TV station and a variety of radio stations. More players are expected in the future when the airwaves will are liberalized. The Department of Policy Implementation in Zimbabwe is currently working on a multi stakeholder consultation to improve telecommunications. Library services are concentrated in major towns. Mobile libraries were common in rural areas and smaller towns. However they have since stopped because of the limited availability of fuel and spare parts due to shortages of foreign currency. In some areas school libraries are still functional, albeit with limited resources.

4.1.3 Kariba

1

The construction of Kariba dam resulted in the development of Kariba, an unplanned town, to accommodate a pool of labour from the federation states. Labor was needed for the construction of the dam wall and subsequently the power station. Sibanda, Moyana and Gumbo (1982:23) recognize that "these were mostly illiterate men" from Malawi and Zambia.

The town is spread along approximately 20km of the Lake Kariba shoreline which has turned out to be home to approximately 40 000 inhabitants. The population of Kariba is concentrated in the poorer lakeshore regions of Nyamhunga, Mahombekombe, Chawara and Charara townships as well as Baghdad squatter camp. These are medium to high-density suburbs with brick and asbestos structures provided by the Ministry of Local Government and Urban Development through the local municipality. Some individuals have now ventured into construction of their own houses or improving on the authority's two (2) and four (4) roomed dwellings. The 'Baghdad' squatter camp has mushroomed due to inadequate housing as a result of a growing population due to a notable growth in the fishing industry. This is squatter settlement dangerously located along the lakeshore. It is named after the Baghdad of Iraq, whose structures it resembles. As a matter of fact the Kariba town is gradually transforming from a makeshift town to a more permanent settlement in response to increased industrial activities and infrastructural development. There are smaller, more affluent communities at the Heights, Baobab ridge and Camphill with more cosmopolitan town houses. These are low-density settlements, which are more spacious and better facilitated in terms of infrastructure and amenities.

Kariba is an unplanned town, as such the sanitary services of this town were designed as a provisional arrangement. There has not been much improvement in the high-density areas of Nyamhunga and Mahombekombe since the 60s when the town was established. The lake remains the source of water, power and livelihood for the people of Kariba as well as the animal population. There is one major state run hospital located at the Heights, some distance from the majority of the populace. The hospital is supported by three clinics in service provision and outreach programmes. These are found at Mahombekombe, Nyamhunga and Charara. Besides receiving referrals from the three clinics the hopital also services the Omay and Binga rural areas 200km across Lake Kariba. These areas are predominantly rural and home to a significant number of urban black women in Kariba. Complicated ailments are referred to either Chinhoyi the provincial capital or to Parirenyatwa, the country's major referral hospital in Harare.

There is a small domestic airport, a highway stretching 350km from Harare, a waterway and a harbor because of it's proximity to the lake. The main mode of transport for the population is the state owned Zimbabwe United Passenger Company (ZUPCO) buses and personal vehicles. There are also private transport operators plying the local, inter-city and

regional routes. These do not last due to high maintenance cost necessitated by a bad terrain. The state transport remains the cheapest and most preferred such that commuters are almost stranded during times when ZUPCO faces operational challenges. To travel across the lake there are various boating companies for that purpose while business and holidaymakers mostly use Air Zimbabwe, the country's sole airline.

Literacy levels in Kariba are generally low. Women in Nyamhunga and Mahombekombe have a relatively lower literacy level than their counterparts at the Heights, Camp hill and Baobab hill. These are affluent enough to afford Internet connection at home or have Internet access at work. Topographically, Kariba is very hilly and this makes access to telecommunication difficult among other contributing factors such as a weak satellite system. Cellphone, radio and television reception is often a challenge. This sometimes leaves residents with no option but to watch Zambia National Television, which is not relevant to them.

The main industry is fishing and hydro - power generation. The power company, Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA), the dam maintenance company Zambezi River Authority (ZRA), fishing companies, various government ministries, local hotels and Safari companies are among the few employers in Kariba. Otherwise the majority of the people are part-time fishermen who depend on fishing as an alternative source of income to agricultural activities. Low rainfall and a high wild animal population make it difficult to sustain agricultural activities. As a consequence, local people depend on the lake for food and as source of livelihood.

Christianity is the predominant religion among others such as Islam and ancestral beliefs. The Roman Catholic Church has a high following while the rest of the Christians are spread among other protestant churches such as Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist and Pentecostal churches. The Johane Masowe Apostolic sect commonly known as *mapositori* in the local language also commands a high following and has had a significant influence on the life of it's following in Zimbabwe.

There are no distinguished tertiary institutions or any vocational school except three primary schools and two secondary schools. One of the secondary schools was recently conferred with High School status, to offer Advanced level studies. Besides the inadequately resourced school libraries there is no other information institution that the local inhabitants may use as a reference point. This means that the town neither has academic libraries nor public libraries. Majority of the women in Kariba are illiterate or semi literate and rely on the informal sector for survival while some are full time housewives.

The urban black woman in this scenario has traditional origins because she is transferred from rural to city by education, work or marriage into a western oriented society that is increasingly complex and sophisticated. Her role is that of employee, student, wife, and mother and/or co-breadwinner in the family. Sibanda, Gumbo and Moyana (1982) explain that this position is derived from the colonial setting. Traditionally women were left at home while their husbands went to look for work in urban areas or surrounding countries. The physical absence of men over long periods of time or even by death left the responsibility to do the entire work of production on women.

4.2 Research Methods

Burns and Grove (2003), identify three research methods, namely quantitative, qualitative and elective. They recognize that the research method is the blueprint for conducting the study, which maximizes control over factors that could interfere with the validity of the findings. It guides the researcher in planning and implementing the study in a way that is most likely to achieve the intended goal.

The qualitative study, which takes as its departure the insider perspective of social action, subscribes to naturalism, that is to say getting information from the natural environment. The primary goal of studies using the qualitative approach is to understand and describe human behavior in a natural setting. It was the intention of this research to determine the impact of literacy on access to information by urban black women in Kariba. It is argued that this may be achieved through understanding and describing their information needs and information-seeking behavior. The non-participant method was preferred to participant observation because of the limited time.

Best and Khan (1989: 11) define population as, "any group of individuals that have one or more characteristics in common that is of interest to the researcher" In other words, the population is the enumeration of elements that one wants to study. Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) define a sample as a portion of a population chosen by some clearly defined sets of procedures. This therefore means that a sample has to be systematically chosen. In this study, the entire urban black women population of Kariba constituted the population. The target sample of 40 respondents between the ages of 18 and 60 was drawn from the various residential areas of Kariba, namely Nyamhunga, Mahombekombe, the Heights, Batonga, Baobab Ridge and Baghdad squatter camp. It was important to pick women from various residential areas because the residential areas inconspicuously represented different social classes hence may give a representative sample. The sample was limited due to cost, time and manpower constraints. A representative each from the, local clinic, the Department of Social Welfare, The National Library, Central Statistics Office and the Catholic Church were interviewed as key informants in this study. These were selected

through judgment sampling.

Leedy (1985:96) postulates that the research design is the strategy, the plan and the structure of conducting a research study. It provides the overall framework for collecting data. There are three main types of research design under qualitative studies namely, ethnographic studies, case studies and life histories. The researcher employed the ethnography type of qualitative research. Spradely (1979:3) defines ethnographic method as,

> The work of describing culture. The essential core of this activity aims to understand another way of life from the native point of view…Field work, then involves the disciplined study of what the world is like to people who have learned to see, hear, speak think and act in ways that are different. Rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people.

It entails the use of interviews and direct observation of behavior in settings such as schools or clinics. This gave the researcher some understanding of the information seeking behavior of the urban black women in Kariba, as they were studied in their natural environment. Most interviews were carried out in the homes of these women or at various areas where they conducted business such as the clinic, vegetable market and the boarder post.

The objective of the research was to identify the facts of the everyday life of the urban black women in Kariba with the aim of understanding the needs that dictate the individual's information-seeking behavior and how the level of literacy impacts on this. Tandem with this was the need to have a picture of the level of literacy of urban black women in Kariba as spelt out in objective one. Some insight into the needs of these women gave an appreciation of the importance of information in the everyday life of an urban black woman in Zimbabwe.

4.2.1 Data Collection Instruments

1

Burns and Grove (2003:48) define data collection as the "precise, systematic gathering of information relevant to the research purpose." Data gathering under qualitative study is a process achievable over a time rather than a once off procedure. This characteristic makes it difficult to work with a prescribed template or a predetermined road map. Instead of working with a prescription the researcher made use of analytic judgment where the data collection instrument was influenced by the situation. To effectively cover the research problem it was appropriate to triangulate data from a number of data collection techniques namely, interviews with respondents and key informants, focus group discussions, observations and document study. By combining multiple methods, and empirical materials, the researcher hoped to overcome the weakness or intrinsic biases that come from single method, single-observer, and single-theory studies. Combining self-administered interviews and focus group discussion were particularly useful in verifying information from literature and the respondents.

Document study where literature relevant to the study was consulted was mainly used to comparison with other similar studies and probably identify gaps that this research could fill or improve on. Findings from literature review were also useful in providing motivation for the field study as it became even more necessary to test the findings from literature.

Information needs of urban black women in Zimbabwe identified from literature review were tested empirically through questionnaire interviews with the respondents and key informants at Kariba. The respondents were identified through snowball sampling. It was more appropriate to use self-administered questionnaires with urban black women of Kariba because the majority of the respondents did not have appropriate levels of literacy to independently interrogate and converse with the questionnaire.

It was necessary to use semi-structured questions with some respondents to make it more comprehensible. The researcher however remained guided by the standard questionnaire to ensure uniformity in the way data was collected. The open-ended questions gave the respondents the chance to voice their opinion on the issue under study. It allowed them to suggest solutions to the problems faced by the urban black women independently. Though the study was largely qualitative, it was still necessary to ask closed ended questions because they provide greater uniformity of responses, which is important for reliability.

Two focus group discussions were held with a church group to further explore the feelings of urban black women with regards to how they get information an. This provided an opportunity for the researcher to learn more about how they manage against a backdrop of many limitations. The focus group discussions were organized around major themes that the researcher derived from the analysis of individual responses. The focus group

discussions centered on the impact of level of literacy on access to information. Issues addressed included information needs, information seeking behavior, Information access, Information use and barriers to information access. The focus group discussion also came up with and suggestions on how to resolve the problems identified in the course of discussions

The researcher took advantage of a regular community group meeting that brought women from different backgrounds and religion together courtesy of the Catholic Church. The researcher's mother mentioned the community group meeting and negotiated with the convener to allow the researcher some time with women for the focus group discussion. Convening a focus group for the purposes of this research could have been a challenge as such the researcher credits the local Catholic Church for making this possible. The respondents seemed to be more relaxed as they talked more freely in both focus group discussions. The researcher noted that responses from focus groups were less reserved when compared to individual responses. This may be attributed to crowd effect where naturally humans are more open and flexible when giving a group response than an individual response that may require commitment. (Burns and Groove: 2003)

Observation is a data collection method whereby the researcher places him/herself at the area of research in order to observe action of interest to the researcher. This can be either participatory observation or non-participatory observation. Non-participatory observation may be used concurrently with interviews hence was preferred for this study. While the research was explained to the participants they were made conscious of the fact that they were being observed. This is crucial for research because if the participants are to be alerted of the researcher's intention they will act rather than being natural hence the results will not be valid. Le Compte (1993:7) says that this "has the advantage of providing a way of verifying that individuals are doing what they and the researcher believe they are doing" As an observer the researcher recorded notes of the daily happenings that were verified with key informants at a later stage. While this method gave the researcher a chance to get first hand information, there were also challenges with ethics, which dictate that the respondents should always be informed of the researcher's intention.

The respondents were not the sole source of information, instead key informants, observation and focus group discussions verified their information. This is important for the achievement of reliability and validity of the research findings. For more factual data, the Central Statistics Office in Harare and the National Library were approached to get national statistics and the country's information policy respectively.

4.2.2 Sampling Techniques and Procedures

1

There are two major sampling methods namely random and non-random sampling. The researcher utilized a non-probability method called snowball sampling. Naturalistic research focuses on purpose whose aim is to understand and not generalize. The study did not focus on the general information behavior of the population of Kariba but that of a specific group, the urban black women. As such members were chosen based on a criterion relevant to the research problem. The required criteria were that respondents be women between 18 and 60 and have children (whether single or married) or at least run a household. The (18 – 60) age group is regarded as the economically active group because under Zimbabwean legislation the entry age for work is 18 while retirement age is pegged at between 60 and 65

Using snowball sampling, the researcher began by identifying a respondent who met the criteria for inclusion in the study. The respondent was then asked to recommend others she knew who also met the desired criteria. In other words, with snowball sampling participants who are linked in some ways through shared experience lead the researcher to others in the same population. In this case the women were asked to identify other women who suit the described criteria within these communities. Selection of respondents based on snowball sampling is in most cases subject to numerous biases, for example, respondents are more likely to refer their friends for inclusion into the sample. The researcher used a variation of snowball sampling called respondent-driven sampling to allow the researcher to make unbiased conclusions from the sample. Respondent-driven sampling also allowed the researcher to make conclusions on the social networks connecting the urban black women in Kariba genarilizable to Zimbabwe.

Judgment sampling was used to select the key informants who were identified as other organizations that interact with the women. Representatives of Church groups, the department of Labor, employment creation and Social welfare were interviewed. In judgment sampling, the researcher uses his/her judgment in selecting the units from the population for study based on the population's parameters (Ryerson 2005) This determination is often made on the advice and with the assistance of the client who for this research were officers in the organizations the researcher hoped to interview. The choice of judgment sampling was based on the assumption that the potential interviewees were very busy and the time for this research was too limited to allow waiting.

4.2.3 Data processing techniques

Information from all sources was categorized into themes namely, socio – economic characteristics of urban black women in Kariba, economic activities, information needs,

information seeking behavior, information access, barriers to information and suggestions given by urban black women. Initial coding of each interview transcript began with manual annotation of questionnaires during a process of close reading, line by line. The purpose of this process was to identify keywords or themes from open ended questions that met the objectives of the study. These were coded to make the data quantitative for ease of statistical analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). This was also used to generate descriptive statistics for closed ended questions.

SUMMARY

In this section a framework of how the research was conducted was spelt out.   Thus, the nature of the research has been established. The instruments used were also identified and their justifications discussed. The population and sample involved in the study were clearly specified. The data collection and processing procedures have been described. The major focus of the next chapter is data presentation and interpretation

CHAPTER 5: DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION.

5.0 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to the presentation and interpretation of the data gathered in the field. Data collected using the questionnaire is presented by way of text and tables of frequencies and percentages. Information gathered through focus group discussions, interviews with key informants and observation is integrated to give an overall view of the situation under study.

5.1 Findings from the respondents
5.1.1 Socio-cultural characteristics of urban black women in Kariba

The socio- cultural characteristics of urban black women in Kariba were measured in terms of age, marital status, number of children, level of education, economic activity, role in the home and the daily activities engaged in by the respondents.

5.1.1.1 Age of the respondents.
TABLE 1, AGE OF RESPONDENTS N = 40

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
29-39	14	35
18-29	11	27.5
40-50	10	25
51-60	5	12.5
Total	40	100

The respondents were asked to indicate the age group to which they belonged. The sample was drawn from urban black women between 18 and 60 years. The findings as presented in table 1 above show that, the modal age group was the 29 - 39 age group and the average age was 29 years. The majority of the respondents (87.5%) were found to be less than 50 years old implying an economically active age group. Only 12.5% of the respondents were older than fifty.

5.1.1.2 Marital Status of urban black women in Kariba

TABLE 2, MARITAL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS N =40

STATUS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Married	18	45
Single	8	20
Widowed	5	12.5
Divorced	2	5
Separated	1	2.5
Other	6	15
TOTAL	40	100

Of the 40 respondents interviewed, 18 (45%) were married, 8 (20%) were single, 5(12.5%) were widowed, 2(5%) were divorced, 1 (2.5%) was separated and 6(15%) fell in the other category as presented in table 2 above. The other category defined those "living in", that is partners living together. Based on these findings, respondents who are single, divorced and separated add up to 16 (40%). These maybe assumed to be sole households heads owing to the absence of a male partner. All the respondents in the sample had children which was a requirement for inclusion in the sample, as such it may be assumed that the respondents were responsible for a family in one way or the other.

5.1.1.3 Level of education

TABLE 3, LEVEL OF EDUCATION. N = 40

LEVEL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Primary school	15	37.5

Ordinary Level	12	30
Diploma level	4	10
University Level	3	7.5
None	8	20
TOTAL	40	100

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of education on a scale from none to university level as indicated in table 3 above. About 37.5% completed 5 years of schooling, 30% completed between 9 and 11 years of schooling and 20% never went to school. These were mostly within the (40-60) age group. Of 17.5% who attained up to tertiary education, 10% reached Diploma level while 7.5 % had up to University education. From these results combining respondents who never went to school, those who attained primary education and those who have attained between 9 and 11 years of schooling adds to 87.5 percent. According to OECD literacy levels they belong to levels 1 to 3. These may be considered to be illiterate because those who have attained up to nine years of schooling are likely to relapse into illiteracy if they are not active readers. This explains why the majority of the respondents were involved in informal trading rather than formal employment where higher more specialized skills are required and these apparently lack in an average urban black woman in Kariba.

 Findings from literature review indicate that in all regions of the world, without exception there are more illiterate women than men. The OECD (1999) argues that the gap between male and female gender is most prominent in the developing countries. This is supported by the Central Statistics Office's Zimbabwe Census report for 2002, reveal that men are more literate than women at a national level. In Zimbabwe 85% of the national population may be considered literate, of this males constitute 90% while women trail behind at 80%

5.1.1.4 Household roles of the respondents.

TABLE 4, HOUSEHOLD ROLES N = 40

ROLE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Co - Breadwinner	22	55
Sole Bread winner	10	25
Full time House wife	4	10
Dependent	3	7.5
Other	1	2.5
Total	40	100

The respondents were asked to indicate their household roles based on the keywords enumerated in table 4 above. It was ascertained from data collected that 55% were co - breadwinners, 25% sole breadwinners, 10% were fulltime housewives and 7.5% were dependents while 2.5% fell in the other category. A large percentage of 55% indicate that the majority of the respondents interviewed were household heads by virtue of being core breadwinners. Sole bread winners and co-bread winners combine to 80%. This is indicative of the role the urban black woman plays in the family. They are responsible for the economic wellbeing of the family irrespective of employment status.

1

5.1.1.5 Economic activities of the respondents

TABLE 5, ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES, N = 50

ACTIVITY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Informal trader	24	48
Formally employed	14	28
Business woman	8	16
Other	4	8
TOTAL	50	100

The respondents were asked about the economic activity they engage in. They were allowed to select more than one option. This resulted in a frequency of more than 40. This however does not reflect the total sample of 40. Findings in table 5 above reveal that 48 % of the respondents are informal traders. This high percentage may be a reflection that the lower literacy levels limit women's participation in the formal sector. The 28 % in formal employment also engages in informal business to supplement incomes. 16 % of the women were running formal businesses concurrently with formal employment. 8 % of the respondents fell in the other category constituted by dependents. The dependents were mostly in the 51-60 age group. These were dependent on spouses, or children in the Diaspora. A significant percentage of respondents in formal employment does not dismiss that levels of literacy are low. Empirical findings show that the majority of the respondents in formal employment were involved in mostly menial non-skilled jobs like janitor and domestic work. The common informal business activities that the respondents engaged in included cross boarder trading between Zimbabwe and Zambia, selling freezits, drinks, fish, and vegetables and second hand clothing.

5.1.1.6 Daily engagements of the respondents

TABLE 6, DAILY ENGAGEMENTS OF RESPONDENTS, N = 52

ACTIVITY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Household chores &childcare	22	42.31
Informal business	12	23.08
Formal work	11	21.15
Education	2	3.85
Leisure	2	3.85
Business	1	1.92
Other	2	3.85
TOTAL	52	100

When asked about activities that characterise their normal day, the majority (over 42%) of the respondents mentioned that they cleaned and cooked for the family before any other activity set aside for that day. Some respondents had overlapping activities, which gives a frequency of 52. This frequency does not reflect the actual sample of 40. Table 6 suggests that 42.31 % of the women engaged in household duties and childcare, 23.08% engaged in informal business while 21.5% exclusively engaged in formal work. Education, leisure and other activities each had 3.85 % of the respondents involved in the activity while 1 (1.92%) of the respondents was involved in fulltime commercial business.

The activity with the highest percentage was household duties and childcare confirming that the urban black woman in Zimbabwe is responsible for activities concerning the family at some stage. Those involved in informal business or full time housewives would also be available to meet family calls during lunch time as such those roles influenced information needs, information sources as well as information seeking behaviour. The results show that the urban black woman in Kariba has little if any time for leisure, education and other activities. Research findings show that only 3.85% of the respondents were involved in either of these activities.

5.2 Information needs of urban black women in Kariba

Needs are categorized into three different groups namely, physiological, affective and cognitive needs. Physiological needs are basic human needs for food, shelter and security. Affective needs entail a combination of psychological and emotional needs. Cognitive needs, where humans need to plan, make decisions and learn a skill have to do with intellectual demands of a person. A person who uses information is referred to as an information user in the realm of Library and Information Science hence the term shall be used frequently or interchangeably with the respondents who apparently are the information users in the study. To show how information needs are related to everyday life, the information needs of the respondents are conceptualized and juxtaposed to Maslow's hierarchy of needs as shown in figure 3 below,

FIGURE 3, MASLOWS HIERACHY OF NEEDS

Adapted from Huitt, W. (2004). Maslow's hierarchy of needs. *Educational Psychology Interactive*. Valdosta, GA: Valdosta State University, http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/col/regsys/maslow.html.

The individual on Maslow's hierarchy has physiological or biological needs such as food, warmth, and water while the urban black woman in Kariba seeks information for survival for instance the best doctor for an ailing child. For some women like the fishmongers, accurate information about the weather is vital to their functions otherwise they might lose out on important revenue. The next need for Maslow's man is security while the woman seeks helping or survival information such as how to prevent house burglary. Then, there are social and belonging needs which the information user or the urban black woman in Kariba satisfies by seeking information for enlightment such as music and fanfare venues. To belong she may participate or join a womens' clubs or groups. She also satisfies affective and spiritual or emotional needs by going to church or joining a fellowship group.

5.2.1 Motivations for information seeking

TABLE 7, MOTIVATIONS N = 80

MOTIVATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Product availability	24	30
Decision making	18	22.5
Running the household	10	12.5
Business	8	10
Work	6	7.5
Survival	4	5
Politics	4	5
Education	4	5
To be current	2	2.5
Total	80	100

Table 7 above suggests responses to the enquiry on the respondents' motivations for information seeking. The need to know the availability of products topped the list of the respondent's motivations where 30 % expresses the need to be informed of availability of basic commodities such as sugar. The economic challenges facing Zimbabwe sometimes result in shortages of basic commodities. As a result women are always on the look out for such commodities. 22.5% of the respondents indicated that the need to make decisions was a driving force behind information seeking. Focus group discussions revealed that the urban black women in Zimbabwe made decisions mostly about the choice of school for children and political representatives. About 12. 5 % of the respondents expressed the need for information on running the household. This is an important activity for an urban black woman in Zimbabwe. Business information motivated 10% of the respondents to engage in information searching. 7.5% of the interviewed women had work related motivations. Education, politics and the need to be current each motivated 5% of the respondents. A cumulative 12.5% of the respondents were curious to know about what is happening around them in terms of governance and current affairs. It is therefore apparent that personal and family needs provide the motivation towards information seeking and such needs are shaped by variables such as personality, attitudes, level of education and culture among others. (Wilson 1996)

Over 50% of the women in the study belonged to level two (non skilled) of literacy which indicates their economic level. The economic level has an important role in the determination of the level of need. Measuring the women's needs using Maslow's hierachy of needs as a scale, it was established that most women had to meet, physiological needs, security needs, love and belonging needs. 1% of the respondents went as far as self actualization. In most cases, the respondents exhibited the need for survival or helping information as well as security information.

1

5.2.2 Information sought by urban black women in Kariba

TABLE 8, TYPE OF INFORMATION SOUGHT N = 150

SITUATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Health	25	16.67
Education	23	15.3
Childcare	21	14
Income generating projects	19	12.67
Security	16	10.67
Family Planning	12	8
Employment	10	6.67
Consumer issues	9	6
Politics	8	5.33
Current affairs	7	4.67
Total	150	100

The women were asked to indicate the type of information that they search for, based on their motivations. They had the liberty to select more than one, which resulted in frequencies higher than the sample. The information needs of urban black women recorded in Table 8 are ranked by priority. Results show that health, education, and childcare are the major reasons for seeking information. These form the foundation of the urban black women's needs. Field investigations show that women want accurate information to guide them in decision-making about colleges and schools for their children. 15.3% of the sample sought for educational information. Some respondents helped their children with homework as such they required information resources or guidance with assignments and school projects. Some respondents who engaged informal trading and education indicated an interest in statistics, addresses, legal and government information. The workingwomen needed advice on changing careers and obtaining better jobs. Other respondents showed an interest in this information for the benefit of their children.

The respondents exhibited an interest in information to do with childcare and health since they are responsible for the well being of the family. A sizeable 16.67 % showed that they needed information on how to stay healthy and how to understand medical conditions they or their families have. Information on HIV/AIDS was most sought after, from clinics as testified by health workers interviewed by the researcher. In essence the respondents searched for information on education, health, government, work, and even basic aspects such as the weather report.

5.2.3 Information Seeking Behaviour of Urban Black Women in Kariba

Information seeking behavior refers to the strategies and actions engaged in finding information to solve the problem at hand. These strategies are in the form of paths or

processes that one engages in to satisfy an information need. Chen and Hernon (1982:12) identify four elements that comprise information seeking behavior as, information seeker, information needs, information sources and resolution of the problem.

It was established from literature that people exhibit different patterns of behaviour when seeking information. The person with an information need has a variety of ways of fulfilling the need. Smith (1991:91) explains that the satisfaction of information needs may be realized in two different ways. The user can produce, observe or find the information needed from within herself or the user may turn to an information store. In doing the latter the user approaches an individual with potential for that information (informal source) or consult a record or an information system (formal source)

TABLE 9 INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR N = 50

ISB	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Ask other people	26	52
Approach institutions	13	26
Consult the media	6	12
Internet	3	6
Read books	2	4
TOTAL	50	100

Table 9 above has a total number exceeding 40 because respondents were encouraged toselect more than one option to indicate what they did upon realization of an information need. It was established from data collected that the point of departure for the majority (52%) of respondents was to ask others. These include husband, neighbours, children or other women. This is supported by Fairer Wessels (1990:365) who says that personal information sources and local social support networks in the neighborhood are the urban black woman's main sources of information. 26% of the respondents also approached institutions for information. Various community oriented organizations such as the local Catholic Church, other churches, the local clinic, government departments, etc are among institutions that the respondents approached. The media and the Internet were not widely used with a combined 18% of the respondents. 4% of the respondents said that they used books, implying some reliance on text. The inadequacy of personal sources is obvious in the information society. The urban black woman's lack of critical awareness and her lack of literacy make formal information sources inaccessible to her. This leaves her with not much choice but to rely on informal sources of information in most cases.

1

5.2.4 Information Sources

TABLE 10, INFORMATION SOURCE N = 100

SOURCE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE%	Cumulative
PERSONAL SOURCES			
Family and friends	14	14	14
Other women	19	19	33
Socialnetworks(church)	9	9	47
MEDIA			
Radio and TV	14	14	14
Newspaper	10	10	24
Phone	6	6	30
Internet	3	3	33
INSTITUTIONS			
Depart of labour	10	10	10
MPsand counsellors	4	4	4
Clinics	6	6	6
Libraries	2	2	20
TOTAL	100	100	100

An enquiry into the information sources used by urban black women categorized information sources into a tri-part taxonomy namely the media (TV, radio newspapers and cellphones), personal sources (friends, relatives and social networks) and Institutions (proffessional people, agencies, institutions and associations) as depicted in table 10 above.

Personal sources were used by 47 %, institutions, 20% and the media 33%. The majority (47 %) of the respondents showed preference for information gathered from informal contacts such as friends, colleagues and other people irregardless of level of literacy. The current economic situation in Zimbabwe has seen urban black women facing the same challenges irrespective of disposition. This creates the need to share information that addresses the common problems they encounter. Personal sources were preferred because Kariba is a small community and word of mouth spreads very fast. Information from these sources is within reach and may always be verified due to immediacy of feeback of personal contacts. Findings reveal that even printed sources were shared among friends and neighbours.

The media was consulted by 30% of the respondents, with the the radio being the most used and easily accessible form of media. When the network allows, Radio and TV seem to be the most used media with 14 % of the respondents affirming that it is their source of information. The internet was the least used media with a 3% use probably due to erratic telecommunications access and IT illiteracy. The church was the most approached social network (9%) especially for information on discipline, marital counselling and projects. This was probably due to the fact that in any society women contribute a larger percentage to the people who go to church. MPs and counsellors were prefered mostly with government and income generating projects.

Books, magazines and newspapers were popular with those who can read and afford to buy them. Libraries were mentiond as sources by a few (2%) respondents whose work or educational roles made such a demad on them. One such a respondent was an engineer with the power company. Over 50% of the respondents were not aware wether they have libraries or not in their community implying that they had never used a libray. Despite their absence from Kariba less importance wad placed on the role of libraries by the respondents. To them the library a collection of books and not a source of information as a result the libray was not of so much interest an urban black woman to as a source of information.

5.3 Access to information

The respondents were asked if they accessed information directly or via a medium which could be human or system. 72.5% of the respondents revealed that they were secondary recipients of information while the remaining 27.5% had direct access to information. This might be attributed to differences in education and economic levels. It appears the more educated had direct access to formal information while the less educated had to go through other people. At times they would not even initiate information seeking until the information reached them as rumors or hearsay. On the other hand those with higher levels of education were closed from informal information sources as their status made them in legible to break through the informal networks.

5.3.1 Access to relevant information

When asked whether they get relevant information in instances that they get information 47.5% of the respondents sometimes get relevant information, 37,5% did not get relevant information while 15% got relevant informtion. The degree of satisfaction with an information source is directly related to educational level, which also determines the level of income and occupation. Much of the information is from social networks which make its reliability doutful. It is often distorted by the time it gets to the third person.   It is only when one is literate that s/he can build on new information or discern whether it is reliable or not available.

5.3.1.1 Information use and relevance

Information use refers to the use of information as a means of solving problems. This is a process of deciphering the information, interpreting it to converge with the need, assimilating and applying it to solve the problem. In other words information use implies

that one uses the information obtained to solve problems, make a decision and sometimes-lead to the generation of new information or a combination of the above. Satisfying needs imply meeting a cognitive, social, emotional and physical problem.

TABLE 11, INFORMATION USE N = 40

INFORMATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Media	19	47.5
Family	7	17.5
Books	1	2.5
Internet	2	5
Other people	9	22.5
TOTAL	40	100

The respondents to this study agreed that they used information and their families also benefit. Any information that women searched had either a direct or indirect impact on the family. Those who needed information for work or projects would benefit their families through their earnings that brought food to the table. The women were asked to indicate the source they used frequently. 47.5 % of the respondents relied on the media most probably due to the fact that almost anyone can listen to the radio which also has programmes in the vernacular languages. 22.5 % relied on other people, the percentage couId be higher but this research recorded only the primary source. 17.5% relied on the family, 5% on the internet while 2% read books. Books and the internet need a higher level of literacy to be able to interact with which might be the reason for lower peercentages. Some searched health information when a family member got sick and those who searched for information on education and health said that they were doing it for their families or children.

5.3.1.2 Barriers to information access.

Barriers to information are factors that impede access to information by commission or omission. These could be attributed to the information seeker and the available information system

TABLE 12, BARRIERS, N = 80

BARRIER	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Illiteracy	20	25
Availability	15	18.75
Cost	12	15
Language	12	15
Poor Network	10	12.5
Distance	8	10
Other	3	3.75
TOTAL	80	100

The results in table 12 above show that illiteracy (25%), availability (18.75%), cost (15%) and language (15%) were the highly ranked factors impacting on access to information by urban black women in Kariba. The barriers to information cited by the respondents fall into Dervin's (1977) five categories namely, societal, institutional, physical, psychological and intellectual.

Physical distance or cost and inadequacy of a source such as no facilities for the disabled negatively impacted on information access by 25% of the respondents. In this regard 15% of the respondents cited distance while 10% cited cost. This indicates that 25% of the respondeents were excluded from information by physical barriers. Another difficulty or barrier that affected access to information that may be classed under physical barriers was poor reception due to the topography of Kariba. The town was engineered on a Gorge hence is on high land. There is poor TV, radio and cellphone reception so much that residents are sometimes forced to watch satelite TV or the Zambia Television which are informative but not relevant to their situation. They would want news about Zimbabwe from Zimbabwe.

Psychological barriers are when an individual is unable to percieve their needs for instance some respondents mentioned that they were not aware of their information needs and that some were not aware that information forms the base in meeting their needs hence did not accept that information could solve problems. To them if a person is hungry the food is the solution. How that food is acquired and the role of information in the acquisitio of the food ained that most of the information was difficult to read and comprehend. Low levels of literacy limited their confidence to approach institutions confining them to informal sources. Some respondents (15%) mentioned language as a barrier to access. The argument was that much of the available printed material is in English, a language they are not at home with. They are more conversant with the mother tongue. Focus group discussions identified lack of Information technology skills whose root they laid on the level of education. They argued that their education levels were not good enough to allow them to acquire Informaton and Communication Technology (ICT) skills which they required to communicate with their children outside the boarders of Zimbabwe.

Low levels of literacy were also suggested as limiting to the information poviders such as clinics and the Department of social welfare whose concerns were that low levels of literacy mean that the infomation they disseminate is often misconstrued with disastrous results such as wrong medicine dosage for children. Lack of suitable and relevant reading material was also noted as a possible cause for "reverse literacy", where literacy skills diminish with time. While Zimbabwe has a fairly high functional-literacy rate, quoted at between 70 and 80 per cent, the number of illiterate adults is high, with as many as 3 million adults unable to read or write. More than 50% of the respondents showed that they were ill equiped to function in today's information age despite having more than nine

years of schooling. The problem is that they acquired literacy skills and did not maintain them. They did not continue building on their competencies resulting in a delearning process (ALOZ: 2000)

Among the 87.5 % respondents affirmed the need for literacy support, more than 50% wanted it for supporting lifelong learning not as a starting point. The importance of basic literacy may not be underscored but lifelong learning is more relevent in today's ever changing world. This is supported by Knowles (1977) when he says "our society has a great stake in continuing education of adults in a world of accelerating change as it had for children in a stable world" Lifelong learning goes beyond just acquiring skills but polishing them for effective funtioning. Lifelong learning is imperative for adults as they continue to seek and interact with new information in order to deal with everday problems therefore it should be viewed as a process of building personal competencies. ALOZ has the responsibility of promoting adult literacy. However, the organization currently faces financial constraints and is almost totally dependent on donor funding for its activities. This limits its programmes and scope. Less and less functional adult-literacy trainers have been trained in recent years. The government has been running adult literacy programmes through night schools where government paid the teachers who undertook are used. This has since stopped due to laxity in supervision and financial constraints on the part of government.

5.5 Suggestions to the Problems Faced By Urban Back Women in Kariba.

TABLE 13, SUGGESTIONS BY RESPONDENTS, N = 80

SUGGESTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Adult literacy	22	27.5
Community centre	12	15
Language	12	15
Libraries	10	12.5
MPs and counselors	10	12.5
Colleges and clubs	4	5
Reading clubs	2	5
Institutions	2	2.5
Internet	2	2.5
Community papers	2	2.5
TOTAL	80	100

The questionnaire gave the respondents an opportunity to suggest what they felt could make access to information better. The results are presented in table 15 above. The respondents could make more than one suggestion which accounts for the total frequency of 80 exceeding the size of the sample. 27.5 % suggested the need for adult literacy classes, 12.5% suggested libraries, 15% suggested a community centre, and 12.5% wanted MPs and councillors to be their couriers of information, 2.5% institutions, the same for internet. 5% suggested colleges, reading clubs, while 2.5% suggested the availability of community newspapers in vernacular languages. These suggestions were also stressed during focus group discussions. This confirms that the urban black women in Kariba has information needs does not have enough information support to meet her needs. She is however eager to resolve her information problems where she could even suggest solutions to her problems when invited to do so.

5.6 Findings from key informants

5.6.1 The Central Statistic Office
The Central Statistics office in Zimbabwe was approached to get national statistics on women, literacy and development. The researcher held informal discussions with official from the CSO and heavily consulted CSO Documents on the subjects.

According to the Central Statistics Office (CSO:2002) the country has a total adult literacy rate of 90% out of which 60% are men while women are placed at 40% implying clearly that the literacy rate in Zimbabwe is high among men and lower among women. Related to illiteracy for women the CSO (2002) indicates that there is a high correlation between female illiteracy and infant mortality or life expectancy at birth in Zimbabwe. The country has high rates of female illiteracy and life expectancy at birth is 41 years. In contrast, in

1

countries with very low rates of female illiteracy, life expectancy at birth is 72. This shows the social implications of lack of literacy particulary women, on the individual and the state.

Research findings established that HIV/AIDS is prevalent in Kariba because of its position as a tourist resort and this has had an impact on the literacy status of the urban black woman in Kariba. Statistics released by the National AIDS Council (NAC: 2000) and accessed through the CSO show that 1.3 million children under the age of 15 years have lost one or both parents due to the virus. This has contributed to a high prevalence of child headed families due to HIV/AIDS which has also resulted in the vulnerability of the girl child and subsequently the woman. Such negative consequences of HIV/AIDS may also be likely to impact mostly women's education. These among other factors are responsible for the literacy status of the urban black woman in Zimbabwe.

5.6.2 The National Library Of Zimbabwe

The National Library of Zimbabwe (NLZ) provided data on the country's information policy and the general nature of information provision. The Information officer at the NLZ revealed that the sources of information for urban black women in Zimbabwe are limited as a result of her literacy disposion. For an urban black woman in Zimbabwe the challenge is presented by the fact that information is mostly from informal sources as revealed by findings from the NLZ.

Commenting on the National Information policy the respondent underlined government commitment to information provision as witnessed by legislative provisions such as the 1985 National Library Services Act of Zimbabwe NLS (1985) . Under this Act, one of the functions of Libraries is to "promote widespread enjoyment in Zimbabwe of publications of an educational, scientific, and recreational or sports value by all". The National Library of Zimbabwe also indicated that in 1990, the government, in collaboration with the NLZ supported a variety of programs, including adult literacy programs and mobile libraries for rural women. Mobile libraries have however since stopped due to limited fuel supplies as a result of foreign currency shortages. Library literacy programs have also been funded by the state, church and local resources or by individual donations and coordinated through literacy organizations such as ALOZ. In addition, new literacy organizations hold promise for assisting libraries in implementing literacy programs. Two that focus on the needs of special groups are the Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) and the Women in Politics Support Unit (WIPSU), which focus on empowering the illiterate or neo literate women parliamentarians. Both provide funding and training for program development and information to program providers and government policymakers.

Responding to possible explanation for a high rate of reverse literacy and absence of a reading culture, the information officer lamented the scarcity of material published in the vernacular. He said that the urban black woman in Zimbabwe experiences a poverty of reading experience in terms of choice and variety. The dominance of English in educational publishing limits the opportunities for expression. A related observation by Raftopolus (1996) is that Zimbabwean women have not had sufficient opportunity to tell their story. They have been few female writers largely due to lack of appropriate literacy skills and relevant support, thus leaving the field open to others to write for them resulting cultural domination. This severely inhibits their potential and motivations for reading.

The NLZ through its representative recommended that, the government must commit itself to literacy work by issuing a national policy statement regarding illiteracy. Resources to advance literacy must be provided indicating what percentage of the education budget is allocated for adult literacy.

5.6.3 The Department of Labour and Social Welfare

The reasons for high illiteracy among urban black women were pursued with the Department of Social Welfare who introduced the financial dimension. The Social worker responsible for education disclosed that finances play a major role in limiting access to education basing on a high number of applications for education grant from their offices. This was seconded by over 70% of the respondents in the (51 – 60) age group who said that they did not go to school for lack of funds. Where basic human needs such, as food, clothing and shelter were inadequate literacy was sacrificed. As individual incomes diminish, the possibilities of learning also diminish. In a speech on HIV/AIDS at the XIV international AIDS conference in Barcelona, Mandela (2002) pointed out that poverty is the main cause of illiteracy when he said,

> We must know that one of the greatest assaults to human dignity is poverty, where you wake up not knowing where you're going to get your next meal. Where you cannot have decent accommodation for yourself and for your children. Where you cannot feed them, where you cannot send them to school. That is the greatest assault on human dignity (sic) (Online)

The urban black women in Zimbabwe have inherited their literacy position from the colonial establishment hence have to grapple with the poverty of blackness and the burdens of women hood. This is explicitly expressed by results of a research undertaken by the Zimbabwe Women

Resource Network (ZWRN),

…fewer girls enrolled for primary and secondary education whilst a greater proportion of the 50% without access to education were girls because of the preference given to the education of the boy child due to socialization. Boys were then expected to find work as farm laborers and other menial jobs whilst girls were married off at very tender ages. Very few blacks let alone black girls could thus access skills training at the established skills training centers like Harare Polytechnic and even fewer could access university education. This had created a legacy of double discrimination for black girls, particularly those from poor families i.e. discrimination on the basis of sex and discrimination on the basis of color.

The requirement to pay school fees in schools saw the boys given preference to attend school due to social and traditional practices that define women's roles as tied to domestic work and women being regarded cated to literacy support. Newly literates should be assisted to sharpen and maintain attained skills through collaboration with the National Library of Zimbabwe. as inferior to men especially in rural settings. *Lobola* (payment of cash or cattle as compensation to the father of the bride) is still a common practice, which results in early marriages so that parents can acquire cash or cattle. As a consequence of this it is common to find an educated man married to an uneducated wife. This means that the burden of poverty always weighs heavily on the woman. (ZWRCN (1998)

Findings from a report by the Department of Social Welfare suggested that those who get to school, achievement is hampered by family responsibilities that keep them out of school at an early age. Findings from this research show that 55% of the respondents were sole breadwinners while 25% were co breadwinners. (Table 4). These are also responsible for running the home and fending for the family. Focus group discussions revealed that a normal day for a woman starts at 4am and ends when every family member has gone to sleep. This does not leave much room for reading and at times education. The same sentiments are echoed by the OECD (1999) that indicates that women in developing countries are engaged in work from twelve to eighteen hours a day, every day of the week, to ensure the survival and wellbeing of the family. They must prepare meals, care for children, husbands and spend the day trying to raise money to fulfill their roles as core or sole breadwinners. With such a workload seeing the day of school becomes wishful thinking or an urban black woman in Zimbabwe.

5.6.4 The Local Catholic Church

Findings from the Catholic Church confirmed revelations from focus group discussions. The head of training officer from the Catholic Church confirmed that Kariba is a small yet busy town by virtue of being a boarder town. It is therefore a melting pot of many cultures.

214

In this diversity there are some local religious and cultural beliefs that hinder the girl child's opportunity to develop and grow their potential in their reproductive and productive roles. The predominant religion is the Johanne Masowe Apostolic sect. This sect sanctions official marriages of young girls before they even go through elementary education. She raised concern that this was against the law but there has been laxity in protecting the girl child from such religious practice on the part of government. Most girls in Kariba have been victims of such arrangements including some women that attended the same primary school with the researcher but could not further their studies as a result of religious practices.

The training officer also disclosed that some traditions are firm in the belief that investing in a girl child is a waste of resources because when she marries, the in-laws enjoy the returns. The belief is that the girl child is prone to getting pregnant at some stage and not a worthy investment in terms of education. Chigwedere (1979) supports this ascertion when he says,

> The rationale of having many children is to have a large pool of labor and the girl child is often withdrawn or denied education for this purpose thus increasing the rate of illiterate females particularly in rural Africa

The respondents in the 51-60 age group were victims of this practice having been born in the rural areas were labor was required for production in the fields thereby denying them a chance to education. As a result they comprised the 12.5% of those who never went to school.

5.6.5 The Local Clinic

The local clinic was approached to find out how the respondents interacted with institutions in the information seeking process. Mahombekombe clinic was selected because it was one of the institutions that respondents approached for information. Information on HIV/AIDS was most sought from clinics as testified by the health worker interviewed by the researcher. The Sister In Charge at Mahombekombe clinic emphasized that low literacy challenged the effective dissemination of information by the health care providers. Low levels of literacy mean that information they disseminate is often misconstrued. She said that many would miss immunization appointments for children or dates for collection of Tuberclulosis (TB) treatment often with disastrous effects such as wrong dosage for children. Sometimes the individual urban black women were not forth coming in instances where they needed help due to lack of confidence or fear deeply rooted in their limited level of literacy. She however expressed satisfaction that at least the women turn up at public outreach meetings which they capitaluize on and try as much as possible to cover the concerns of the urban black women in Kariba.

5.7 Findings from focus group discussions

It was established from findings that 87.5 % of the respondents could be considered illiterate which has adverse implications on access to information. Based on this revelation, it was necessary to further interrrogate how the urban black woman with such a disposition meets her information n   eeds in Zimbabwe. It was also important to investigate the possible causes of high levels of illiteracy among urban black women in Zimbabwe. To further explore these issues two focus groups, each with eight members, were held with a community group. This allowed the participants to explain the thoughts expressed in the self administered questionnaire and put them in a context related to their personal experiences.

All the respondents (100%) affirmed the importance of information in their lives. As such it could be concluded that the respondents had information needs but they were seriously inhibited by poor literacy skills. One of the contributing factors is the respondets' level of education. 87.5% illiteracy rate obviously point to a population that cannot find information through reading. As a matter of fact 20% of the respondents indicated that they never went to school and could not read. Lack of education for the urban black woman means exclusion from the mainstream economy because they cannot access information. They cannot secure employment nor run successful businesses. Lack of education for women makes the feminization of poverty a reality. The respondents confided during the focus group discussions that they were often abused because of illiteracy and poverty. They sometimes engaged in risky behavior probably because information on the consequences of such behavior was inaccessible to them due to low levels of literacy and ignorance.

The respondents were engaged on the possible causes of the widespread lack of literacy skills among urban black women in Zimbabwe. Focus group discussions revealed that religion was a major setback in the attainment of literacy for the female child. Some traditional and cultural practices and the Apostolic faith sect were the major religious practices found to be impacting on access to education for females. The respondents confided that some cultural practices resulted in early marriages for young girls in Zimbabwe where they were married off to feed the family or to appease avenging spirits commonly known as *ngozi* in the local language. Some even confessed that they were married off to well off men in society to feed the family. In this situation, the girl child who is apparently the woman of tomorrow fails to realize her full potential in as far as education is concerned.

Some respondents disclosed that they had dropped out of school due to early pregnancy and were not allowed to continue while their male counterparts could do so. Under the

214

circumstances the girl child does not get a chance because local tradition forces the young woman to marry at a tender age, which affects her literacy level as an adult woman.

The focus group was also conducted to establish how the urban black women in Zimbabwe manage with information needs in a textually mediated world that made the necessity of literacy skills obvious. The participants acknowleged the indispensibility of social networks where they share information effectively. Social networks included church groups, neighbors, women's groups and political groups among others. These networks are sources for information such as deaths in the area, weddings and church meetings, the source of scarce comodities etc. On the other hand about 80% of the respondents had economic responsibilities on the family in one way or the other, which limits the time available for community networks. Some respondents revealed that they are often too tired after the day's work to engage with social groupings for information. This makes it highly probable that even information from social networks is not wholly accessible to them.

The non working class accused the working class of being arrogant and insensitive to their literacy position while the working class said that the people with low levels of education had an inferiority complex which then hampered their interaction with those with access to information. Educational levels created a gap between the working class and the informal traders. Government officials were criticized for creating fear in the mind of these women thereby eroding their confidence in the process. Some members of the focus groups said that they had stopped approaching government officials for help because they did not respect confidentiality. This therefore shuts them out from the limited information sources available. When the respondents were requested to make suggestions, they clearly indicated that they needed some form of information and literacy support.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This chapter is a summary of the research findings and recommendations to the problems identified.

6.1 Conclusions

The empirical findings of the study lend themselves to a number of conclusions. The foundational assumption was that the level of literacy has an impact on an individual's capacity to access information, interpret it and benefit from it. Dervin (1977) notes that the most advantaged or the literate members of society most effectively access information resources. It was the desire of this research to determine whether the level of literacy correlates with access to information by urban black women in Zimbabwe. This assumption was tested on urban black women in in Kariba. The study revealed that although information is one of the strongest tools of empowerment, women's access and control of the media and other information sources is limited by the lack of the appropriate literacy skills.

6.1.1 The urban black woman in Kariba

The research findings showed that the average urban black woman in Kariba is aged 26, has children and is probably married. This woman is alien to the urban environment having migrated into this environment by marriage, education or employment. The influence of culture and tradition predisposes the urban black women to a greater likelihood of getting married. This makes it probable that they become responsible for matters concerning the family at some stage. This predisposes them to a need for information to cope with various roles as wife, mother and breadwinner. The majority (87.5%) of the respondents were less than 50 years old implying a relatively young group that is group has potential to be economically active. However this might not be so because, based on the OECD's measures of literacy, this same group has limited literacy skills for functioning in society.

The urban black woman in Kariba is operating in a Western oriented urban environment alien to her in so many respects. 85.7 % of the respondents have potential to be economically active and they have to meet the demands of the city such as raise families, meet economic roles, and participate in national discourse, e.t.c The successful execution

of these activities hinge on access to information which puts literacy demands on the urban black woman in Kariba. The respondents presented a lot of difficulty in meeting this requirement where 87.5% are considered illiterate. This implies they cannot meet their economic potential as they lack the capability to exploit this environment. The economic activities they engage in are meant to bring food to the table hence subsistence in nature. They live from hand to mouth where in most cases they have to rely on the government grant which they accessed through the Depart of Social Welfare, labor and employment creation to supplement their incomes. Those who can not access the government grant may end up seeking for loans from loan sharks that rip them hence a cycled of poverty and dependence.

Over 70% of the respondents were engaged in economic activities aimed at bringing food to the table. 55% were sole breadwinners and 25% were co-bread winners. The number of households without male figures may be estimated at 55% of the respondents while 45% of the respondents are married. From the statistics it may be evident that about 80% of urban black women in Kariba are responsible for the economic needs of their families in one way or the other. Such a positioning predisposes the urban black woman to more information needs for everyday coping in her various roles as mother, wife, breadwinner or household head. Meeting these needs is however challenged by the low literacy status of the urban black woman in Zimbabwe in general and Kariba in particular.

6.1.2 Information needs and the role of information in the lives of urban balck women in Kariba.

All respondents affirmed that they needed information for coping with everyday activities that range from household chores, childcare, work, informal trading, leisure and others. The research findings established that the urban black woman in Kariba actively seeks information to meet family and personal needs. The respondents confirmed that the information they accessed also extended to benefit the family in particular their children. The need for information about the availability of scarce commodities was the major motivation for seeking information for 30% of the respondents. These respondents said that they actively sought for information regarding availability of scarce commodities to ensure a constant supply of food for the family and supplies for resale. Running the household and decision making about, in most cases politics and which schools to send their children were also motivations for seeking information influencing, 12.5 % and 22.5 % of the respondents respectively. The findings of the study revealed that the respondents were interested in getting accurate information to guide them in decision-making about colleges and schools for their children. This shows an awareness of the importance of education where mothers seek for outside schools in search for quality education for their children indicated by the 5 % respondents were motivated to seek information to meet the educational needs of their children or other family members.

1

6.1.3 Type of information sought

A significant, 56% of the respondents indicated that health, education, and childcare are the major reasons for seeking information. These form the base of these their needs. 15.3% of the sample sought for educational information. Some respondents helped their children with homework as such they required information resources or guidance with assignments and school projects. Some informal traders and students in the sample indicated an interest in statistics, addresses, legal and government information. The respondents in employment needed advice on changing careers and obtaining better jobs. 50% of the respondents requiring employment information showed an interest in this information for the benefit of their children. Health and security information were equally important for this population. The respondents exhibited an interest in information to do with childcare and health since they are responsible for the well being of the family.

A significant 16.67 % showed that they needed information on how to stay healthy and how to understand medical conditions they or their families have. Information on HIV/AIDS was most sought from clinics as testified by health workers interviewed by the researcher.

In essence the women searched for information on education, health, government, work, and even basic aspects such as the weather report. The respondents did not have time to search information for leisure, instead they sought for information in response to problems that arise in the context of everyday life. An information need was established to be part of the person, his or her situation and environment making the findings a clear manifestation of the social needs that lie in the Zimbabwean society.

6.1.4 Available information sources and accessibility

Information is an essential ingredient in community development and community development is an essential factor in working towards participating democracy. Lor 1996 shares the same view that access to information in a variety of formats is critical to the satisfaction of daily coping needs. This, among other factors helps in ensuring a competitive economy, democracy, nation building, promotion of education and life long learning.

Existing information sources accessible to the urban black women in Kariba are precarious and under resourced in terms of material or expertise. Kariba is a small town with no formal organized public information sources. Public information sources in Kariba are limited with the exception of a few company libraries. Most information services in Zimbabwe concerntrated in major cities such as Bulawayo and Harare, each with a fully

fledged public library.

An enquiry into the information sources used by urban black women categorized information sources into a tri-part taxonomy namely the media (TV, radio newspapers and cellphones), personal sources (friends, relatives and social networks) and Institutions (professional people, agencies, institutions and associations) as depicted. Personal sources were used by 47 %, institutions, 20% and the media 33%. The majority (47 %) of the respondents showed preference for information gathered from informal contacts such as friends, colleagues and other people irregardless of level of literacy.

In instances that the urban black women in Kariba attempts to get formal information, they are exposed to a lot of information from the radio, TVs, Newspapers and magazines. The packaging of this material makes it a challenge to access due to technology and economic inadequacy as well as low levels of literacy. This pose as a glut of information that remains inaccessible and unavailable to the urban black woman due to limited literacy levels that hinder critical awareness and accessibility. This underlines the force that ICTs have on the world we live to day. Black women in an urban environment are therefore shut away from the national discourse yet it is the same discourse from which their lives are indiscriminately determined. Information is so often a basis of power, and disempowerment. Lack of access to information in this case becomes disempowering.

It may be concluded from the findings that, discussions with other women, the media, and other people better equipped to have access to information constitute information sources for 90% of the respondents. These include the government officers, neighbors and church members. The Member of Parliament and councilors are sources of government information at rallies and community meetings. Some phone or travel outside Kariba to access information. There are no other support mechanisms other than the women's own initiatives. Research findings reveal that the process is dogged by so many difficulties, making information access a challenge for an urban black woman in Zimbabwe.

Most of the information is from informal contacts or hearsay which creates difficulties for the non-literate to discern between what is reliable and what is not. This even creates difficulties with deciphering information from the media. The inadequacy of personal sources is obvious in the information cycle yet 52% of the respondents rely on such information. This is hazardous information situation for the urban black in Kariba whose illiteracy level is 87.5%. This position makes it difficult to access and interpret

1

information from informal sources. They eventually turn out to be inaccessible and inadequate to her, for what use is information if one may not make sense out of it.

6.1.5 Challenges to information access

It is clear from the findings that there are challenges that complicate access to information for the respondents. These were identified as illiteracy (25%), availability (18.75), cost (15), language (15), poor network (12.5), and distance. 10% of the respondents were disadvantaged in terms of physical access to information sources for example internet facilities were available only at Cutty Sark hotel which route is hardly plied by public transport. Walking is not possible due to high wild animal population. Because of the commodification of information, 15% of the respondents could not access information because of the high cost. Where other needs have to be met, buying a newspaper becomes secondary. English is the language of business and inadequate knowledge of this language limits access to informationin that language as indicated by 15% of the respondents. Many information services and sources are now available only in machine-readable form, or ICTs, those without access and skill can find themselves in the "information gap". This is reflective of the situation of majority of the urban black women in Kariba. Only 5% of the respondents had the interest and capacity to use the Internet. The majority, 95% were challenged by a lack of access to ICT and largely lack of IT skills.

The ability to acquire and process relevant information depends on the level of education. 72.5% of the respondents revealed that they were at the receiving end when it comes to information. They lacked crititcal skills to facilitate direct access to information. This might be attributed to differences in education and economic levels. It appears the more educated have direct access to formal information while the less educated have to go through other people. Differences in levels of literacy matter both economically and socially. Literacy affects, *inter- alia*, labor quality and flexibility, employment, training opportunities, income from work and wider participation in civic society.

Success in accessing information depends largely on the presence or absence of restrictions or limitations such as literacy, cost of information and availability among other things. Education, age and level of income were found to be positively correlated to the ability of expressing one's information need to others and institutions. Findings indicated that people who showed information needs from the lower education class couldn't articulate their needs successfully. Language was also related to literacy because of its potential to influence the ability to articulate situations in English, which is a second language to them. This means that they do not access relevant information due to their

disposition hence widening the chasm between the information rich and the information poor. This means that those with limited access to information always lag behind while those with better access to information progress.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and what the respondents suggested to the researcher, herewith follows a set of recommendations. The conclusions may be summarized thus, that urban black woman in Kariba grapple to address employment, childcare, health, economic, security, political and education concerns everyday. Short term measures may be to boost literacy for the urban black women through interventions such as adult literacy while in the long term designing capacity building for women, improved access to information, improving the existing literacy and education systems. This will improve access to services and information resources, and strengthen their roles as community net workers. The aim is to give focus and direction to improved access to information that will enhance the competitiveness of the urban black women in Kariba and Zimbabwe, by optimizing the potential to meet their information needs. While interventions may be multi-sectored, the role of government is stressed in this report.

6.2.1 Literacy and education support

Findings reveal that the respondents are manly in engaged subsistence or hand to mouth production implies a lack of food security and a vicious cycle of poverty and dependence. It means that the urban black women in Kariba are merely surviving but life can be more stable if they are empowered to join the mainstream economy as formal employees or fully fledged business people running big projects such as lodges, which Kariba holds potential for, being a favorite with holidaymakers.

The capacity of local communities to cope with economic and social change depends heavily on access to information. Without access to adequate information, other policy measures will fail (Harris 1992:48) Recognizing the impact of literacy on the way the respondents accessed information, it is imperative that literacy for the urban black woman in Zimbabwe is boosted in order to make information more accessible. Literacy support where women are afforded literacy classes at schools and at work is recommended. The government of Zimbabwe used to operate night schools for adult learners, these may be revived to cater even for the youths. This will improve access to information and the standard of living. Other stakeholders like the church, NGOs and private companies may

1

be approached and challenged to promote literacy. The church will play a significant role because most women go to church and are available during the day.

Literacy must be boosted as an intervention but in essence the school system should be upgraded to offer quality education and literacy support for the urban black women in Kariba and Zimbabwe and by extension to the girl child. This will reduce dependency on the government and encourage savings. Low education has implications for development. Women should be equipped with higher education and training to enhance their capacities. Given the inverse relationship between female education and economic development especially at the first and second levels of literacy, the positive impact on health, well being and the process involved in the transforming societies makes education in the populace an imperative. The secondary schools available in Kariba are inadequate to meet the out from the primary schools in terms of space and quality. Only one school has high school status. This leaves the woman with not much choice but to look outside Kariba for quality education for the child. Government policy should initiate the development of existing school system and the expansion to encourage more ventures into education service by private players.

Appropriate policies and programmes should be put in place to address such education for women. Young women and girls should be afforded equal opportunities to develop their potential in their productive and reproductive roles. Young girls should not be married off at an early age but should be given a chance to education. The girl child should be viewed as the woman of tomorrow, this is in view of the rhetoric and non-controversial fact that women's roles are the very existence and subsequent progress of society. The girl child's upbringing and education needs equal attention and commitment as that of the male child from the government. Provision of good education for the girl child and the urban black women in kariba will raise the profile of Kariba and that of its inhabitants

5% of the respondents suggested the need for provision of reading clubs where they could borrow and exchange novels at least to maintain literacy skills already learnt and improve on the English language since it is the language of business and instruction. Williams (2003) agrees that literacy skills can be maintai Among the 27.5 % respondents who affirmed the need for literacy support, more than 50% wanted literacy for supporting lifelong learning not as a starting point. The importance of basic literacy may not be underscored but lifelong learning is more relevent in today's ever changing world. This is supported by Knowles (1977) when he says "our society has a great stake in continuing education of adults in a world of accelerating change as it had for children in a stable world"Stocking the local school libraries with information that may be helpful to the women and basic reading material could be a maiden step. This however, should not derail the planning for a more comprehensive library. If a library is provided then it becomes the most ideal place for such activities. There is a close nexus between availability of

appropriate reading material, reading and writing. Literacy flourishes where relevant support material is available for its maintenance. While the promotion of English as the global language is encouraged materials should also be made available in the vernacular languages.

6.2.2 Widen access to information

The existing information systems are not compatible with the needs of women especially in small towns like Kariba. This therefore means that access to information for an urban black woman in Kariba is limited by her literacy competencies, as much as by inadequacy of the information sources. Mechanisms should be put in place to enhance health info dissemination the clinic and police stations. The health of individuals reflects on the health of the state. The urban black women in Kariba should be encouraged to actively search economic information. The women seek information in response to problems implying that they live in the short term, they are not pro-active seekers of information. They should be encouraged active information searching.

12.5 % of the respondents mentioned that they needed a library. Further probing in focus groups indicated that what they wanted was a community information centre, suggested by 15%, which could serve as a central point where they could access information and services. Basing on the researcher's observations a library may be discouraged as a starting point. It risks the danger of being associated with education by the less literate users. Starting with a community centre will help. Examples such as news cafes they had seen in bigger towns were mentioned. The government or authorities could play a role of bringing information to the people and include personalized information services such as counseling, information literacy and information repackaging to suit the urban black woman in Zimbabwe. Stilwell (1992) suggests community centres as alternative information services to Libraries. The Nyamhunga community hall, which is currently partitioned into small flea market stalls, could be used for such a service. This is a central point that has the necessary infrastructure such as water electricity and furniture. The formulation of a community information centre should be planned within the context of the urban black woman. It should provide information support for the urban black women in Zimbabwe in a format that is compatible with them most effectively and efficiently. The kind of community centre suggested could be designed as a one-stop shop that has more involvement in the area of community needs and acting as mediator between the women, government and business. This will provide the much needed information support that is relevant to the needs of the urban black woman in Kariba.

6.2.4 Capacity building for women

Urban black women in Kariba need to be capacity built to respond to the growing

dependence on ICT and information. The slogan 'information is power' can only be true of people who have the ability to access and use available information in a variety of formats. The ability to exploit information or information handling skills are closely related to the general problem solving and development potential of a group or community. This brings the concept of information literacy to the fore, which is defined by (Rader & Coons 1992:113) as:

> To be educated for survival and success in an information/technology environment; lead productive, healthy and satisfying lives in a democratic society; deal effectively with rapidly changing environments; solve ... challenging problems ... in order to ensure a better future for the next generation; be an effective information consumer who can find appropriate information for personal and professional problem solving;

Writing and computer proficiencies are also important competencies for the increasingly globalizing world. Providing access to technology is critical. It must be available, affordable and create possibilities for effective use. Problem solving for the urban black women in Kariba.There is need for training to use technology effectively to improve their lives and those of their families.

For the survival of an urban black woman in the knowledge economy, emphasis must be placed on imparting knowledge navigation skill. When one knows how to find and apply information s/he can teach him/herself what is needed to learn. Essentially one learns how to learn as such Information literacy may be regarded as contributing towards personal empowerment and freedom to learn. More use of formal sources such as the internet should be encouraged. The government may collaborate with NGOs, private companies and schools to help alleviate the information situation of an urban lack woman in Kariba and Zimbabwe.

It is the hope of this research is to see a hassle free process for accessing information for the urban black woman in Kariba and nationally. It will be more gratifying to be able to develop an information gateway, which will be of real value to a women user community characterized by accessibility and flexibility.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ALOZ (2000). Adult Literacy Organization in Zimbabwe primer. Gweru, Mambo press..

Barugh, J. 1981. Community information provision in an urban area. In: *The nationwide provision and use of information: Association for Information Management, Institute of Information Scientists and the Library Association Joint Conference, 15-19 September 1980, Sheffield: proceedings.* London: Library Association

Belkin, N.J (1978) Information concepts for information science. *Journal of Documentation* 34, 55-85. London. Library Association.

Blank, R. (1997). It takes a nation: A new agenda for fighting poverty. Princeton: Princeton University Press

Bok (1990) Literacy and beyond. London. Spotlight books

Bonjesi (2004) Maximizing our land. Harare. ARDA

Burns and Grove (2005). The practice of nursing research. (5th ed) London. Elsevier.

Caswell, F (1985) Success in statistics, London. John Murray

Central Statistics Office Zimbabwe (2000) Zimbabwe census report 2000. Harare. Government Printers.

Chikoko, V. and Mloyi, G. (1995) Introduction to Education Research Methods. Harare, Mambo Press

Coles (1969) Education in developing countries. Oxford. Pergamon press.

Department of Labour and Welfare. (2004) Extract in the Human Development Index. Harare. Government printers

Dervin, B. (2003) "Human studies and user studies: a call for methodological inter-disciplinarily" Information **Research**, 9(1) paper 166 [Available at http://InformationR.net/ir/9-1/paper166.html]

Devin, B (1977) The development of strategies for dealing with information needs of urban residents. Seattle. WA. University of washing ton

Fairer-Wessels, F. A. (1990) Basic community information needs of urban black women in Mamelodi. South African journal of Library and Information science. Pretoria. Forum press.

Freire and Macedo (1987) Literacy reading and the world. Oxford.

Garlake and Proctor (1994) People making history. Harare. Zimbabwe Educational books

Garvey G and Bergin L, R. (1976) Educational Research: Competencies for analysis. Applications. Merrill. Columbus.

Gender Budgets Watch - Education. Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network (ZWRCN). 03/2004, Available online.
http://www.kubatana.net/html/archive/gen/040329zwrcn.asp. Accessed 13 April 2006

Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M (1995) Sociology: Themes and perspective, 4th ed, London: Harper Collins.

Hatt, F. (1976). The Reading process: A framework for analysis and description. London: Clive Bingley.

Howe K. R. (1985), Two Dogmas of Educational Research. London. Educational researcher.

Hoyles, M. (ed). (1997) The politics of literacy. London. Writers and readers publishing cooperative.

HSRC(2000) Education, Science and Skills Development (ESSD). Pretoria. HSRC

ILI (2002) Knowledge and Finance for Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

Education and Health in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Review o f Sector-WideA pproaches Washington. World Bank

Jay, R. 2000, How to write proposals and reports that get results. Britain. Brittle.

Joppe, M. (2000).The Research Process. Retrieved February 25, 2006, from http://www.ryerson.ca/~mjoppe/rp.htm

Katz, W. (2000) Introduction to reference work. (6thed) London. Library Association Kirk, J., & Miller, M. L. (1986). Reliability and validity in qualitative research. Beverly Hills

Kozol, J. (1995). Amazing grace: The lives of children and the conscience of a nation. New York: Crown

Kuhlthau, C. (1993). Seeking meaning. A process approach to library and information services. Norwood, N.J. Ablex.

Leedy, P.D (1980) Practical Research planning and design, McMillan, London.

Liebscher, P. (1998). "Quantity with Quality? Teaching Quantitative and Qualitative Methods in an LIS Master's Program." Library Trends

Line, M. (1971) Investigation into information requirements of the social science: research reports No1. V1 Bath University. May 1971

Makombe, K. (1992) *Desperate and on the street.*

http://www.pangaea.org/street_children/africa/lagos.htm retrieved 11 June 2006

Manyika, E. et al (2000) National Youth Policy of Zimbabwe. UNFPA, Harare

Marshall, J (1975) Literacy state formation and people's power. Education in a Mozambican factory. Bellville.UWC

Masuku, J. (2000) Module ECS 302, Research is Language, Literature and Communication. Harare: Zimbabwe Open University*Pattaya Street Kids Project* (2004) http://www.rsmall.net/pc/sk.htm Retrieved 10 July 2006

McGarry (1991) Literacy, communication and libraries: a study guide. London. Library Association.

Melton, M. (1999). The Modern M.L.S. degree: Library schools today are turning out webmasters. Online U.S. News.

Pennington et al (2003) Advanced Psychology: Psychology of health. London. McMillan.

NLZ (2004) The state of information provision in Zimabwe. Oxford. Oxford Press.

UN (1948) Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Geneva. UN

OECD(1999) OECD and statistics Canada (2000), Literacy in the Information Age: Final Report of the International Adult Literacy Survey, Paris. OECD

SAFAIDS (2003) Girls, young women and HIV/AIDS. Harare. SAFAIDS

SAFAIDS (2002) Safaids News letter (2002) News 3. Harare. SAFAIDS

Saiti, M. (2004) Public Relations module. Harare: Zimbabwe Open University.

Sibanda, Gumbo and Moyana (1982) **African heritage: history for junior secondary schools** / Harare, Zimbabwe: Zimbabwe Educational Books.

Sudanese National Women's Convention (2002), Freedom From Famine And Creating A Democratic Humanitarianism**.** Khartoum. UN

Stilwell, C. (1992) The resource centre forums: Democratic and alternative information networks for South Africa. *International Library Review.* Pp 213-220

Stilwell, C. (1991) Community libraries: a viable alternative to the public library in South Africa? *Progressive librarian.* 4(winters). Pp17-27.

Talbot, M. (1998) Language and Gender. United Kingdom: Polity Press. Cambridge

Tuchman, G. (1998) *A Study in the construction of reality*. New York

Smith, D. (1987) The everyday world is problematic: a feminist sociology. Toronto, University of Toronto.

Spradely P. (1979). The ethnographic interview. New York Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

UNESCO. (1960) Conference of African states on the development of education in Africa, Addis Ababa.15 - 25 May 1961.Final report. UNESCO. Chapter 1, p accessed 10th April 2006

UNESCO (1996) Literacy makes a difference. Geneva. United Nations.

USNL (1990) United States Commission for Libraries status report. New York. Library Association.

Vakkari, R. Savolainen & B. Dervin (eds.) Information seeking in context. Proceedings of an international conference on research in information needs, seeking and use in different contexts 14-16 August 1996, London: P. 39-50.

Westbrook, L. (1995) Identifying and Analyzing User Needs. New York: Neal-Schumann.

Williams, E (2003) Language, Literacy and Education in the Delivery of Development: Midwifery or Mirage? Reading. University of Reading Press

Wilson, T.D. (1997a). Information behavior: An inter-disciplinary perspective. Availablehttp://informationr.net/tdw/publ/papers/1981infoneeds.html]

World Bank fact book (1990) Country information: Zimbabwe.

Available online. http://www.umsl.edu/services/govdocs/wofact96/275.htm Accessed 16 November 2006

Young S. L (1996), "Citizen-Centered Approaches to e-Government Programs." Criteria for Accreditation, India's National Magazine V.21 - Issue 19, Sept. 11 - 24, 2004. Calcutta. India National Magazine.

Journals

LIASA (2005) South African Journal of Library and Information Science. Pretoria. Forum press
LIASA (2004) South African Journal of Library and Information Science. Pretoria. Forum press
LIASA (2002) South African Journal of Library and Information Science. Pretoria. Forum press
LIASA (1990) South African Journal of Library and Information Science. Pretoria. Forum press

Websites

http://www.un.org/av/photo/subjects/literacy.htm.
 http://www.globaled.org/curriculum/wlit.html.
http://www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl2119/stories/20040924003711200.htm
http://www.kioskmarketplace.com/article.php?id=16018 http://www.oecd.org/document/2/0,2340,fr_2649_34509_2670850_1_1_1_1,00.html
http://www.sil.org/lingualinks/literacy/PrepareForALiteracyProgram/WomenAndLiteracy.htm
http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php
http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/beyond/grad/gbmls.htm
www.herald.co.zw/reading/culture.htm

APPENDICES

I. Questionnaire for urban black women in Kariba, Zimbabwe.

This is a study which seeks to find out how literacy impacts on information needs of an urban black woman in Kariba and how it affects information seeking behavior and subsequent use of the information. Your participation and input is very much valued. I hope that you will appreciate the importance of your input in this research. It will contribute greatly to the body of knowledge that will be passed to policy makers. This may be used for subsequent development of Kariba. Please be guaranteed that the information collected from this interview will remain confidential and will be used solely for purpose of this study. No names will be taken during this discussion. The researcher kindly requests your faithful participation.

Moira Gundu. **(B.BIBL. UFH)**

(All respondents are female and black)

Instructions: Mark with an X where appropriate and explain where required Demographic Profile.

1. Mark with an X where applicable.

(a) Age	18 – 28	29–39	40 – 50	51 – 60	
(b)Marital status	Single	Married	Divorced	Widowed	
	Separated	Other…			
(c)No.Of Children	1	2	3	4+	
(d)Level of education	University Degree	Tertiary	A' Level	O'level	
	Primary	None	Other…	…………	

2. What do you do for a living? (You may select more than one)

Business woman		
Informal trader		
Formally employed		
Nothing		

3. Your role in the home may best be described as:

Fulltime housewife		
Co bread winner		
Sole breadwinner		
Dependent		
Other…………………		

4. What does your spouse do?

....

SECTION B: INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF URBAN BLACK WOMEN IN KARIBA

Information needs

5. What activities do you engage in during a normal day?

6. How do you manage with all these activities?

....

7. Do you sometimes need information as a way to cope with these activities? Yes/ No…………………………… …………………………………………………………..

8. If yes, what kind of information? If No how do you cope?

....

9. If answer to (7) is yes, why do you need this information?

....

10. What do you do when you realize that you need some information?

....

11. What are the common reasons for seeking information? (You may choose more than or one)……………………………………………………………………………………………

```
|Education              |    |
|Health                 |    |
|Child Care and family  |    |
|Income generating      |    |
|projects               |    |
|Politics               |    |
|Family planning        |    |
|Security               |    |
|Employment             |    |
|Other specify……………    |    |
```

Sources

Where do you get this information?...

Do you sometimes consult the media (Newspapers, radio, television, cell phone?) ……………………………………………………………………………………………

14. If yes, for what type of information? …………………………………………………..

15. Would you ask friends or relatives for information?
Yes/No……………………………………………………………………………………

16. If yes, for what type of information?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

17. If no to 13 and 14, what other sources do you consult?

....

18. What type of information do you seek from these other sources?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

19. Do you have community information sources such as libraries?
Yes/No……………………………………………………………………………………

20. If yes, do you use them? If no what other community information sources do you have in your community? YES/NO

21. Do you use them? ….

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Access to information.

21.   How does your level of education affect the way you access information?..............

23.   Does your level of education influence the information sources that you use? Yes/No……………………………………………………………………………….

24.   If YES, do you have anyone in the household to assist with accessing information? Yes/No……………………………………………………………………………….

25.   By which other criteria do you choose the source of information?

```
|Ability to read           |    |
|Ability to understand     |    |
|Accessibility (distance)  |    |
|Information format        |    |
|Cost (whether you pay or  |    |
|not)                      |    |
|Other (specify)           |    |
```

Use and reliance

27. Do you always get relevant information?...

28. Is the information that you get always useful?..

29.   Which sources provide the information that you use frequently?....................................

30.   How often do you use the information that you access?..

31.   Do your family members also use this information? …………………………………..

3   Is it to get information in your community?..

Barriers to information

33.   What challenges do you face in accessing information?
……………………………………………………………………………………………

34.   What do you think can be done to solve the challenges above?
……………………………………………………………………………………………

35.   How do you get formal information such as government information?
……………………………………………………………………………………………

35.   What other methods do you think may be used to get information to you?
……………………………………………………………………………………………

36. Why would you prefer thee methods?
……………………………………………………………………………………………

38.   Are they any other comments that you would like to make which have not been covered by   this questionnaire?.... ……………………………………………………………….

Thank you for responding

II. Interview guide for the Department of Labor Social welfare and employment creation.
1. What does your organization do?
2. What is your role in the organization?
3. The women mentioned your organization as a source they consult for information. Is that true?
5. What are the key motivators for the women to use your service?
6. How is the information packaged?
7. You believe that your service is sufficient to meet their needs?
8. If no what are the problems?
9. How can they be solved?
10. Is literacy a challenge?
11. Do you think that access to information is important in your community?
12. What is its significance?
13. How do you ensure that there is access particularly for women?

III. Interview guide for the health worker

1. What is your role in the organization?
2. The women mentioned your organization as a source they consult for information. Is that true?
3. What are the key motivators for the women to use your service?
4. What type of information do women ask for?
5. How do you pass information to the women?
6. You believe that your service is sufficient to meet their needs?
7. If no what are the problems?
8. How can they be solved?
9. Is literacy a challenge?

IV. Interview guide for the local Catholic Church

i. What are the social, political and economic challenges does an urban black woman in Kariba face?
ii. What sort of problems do the women bring to the church?
iii. What programs do you have for women?
iv. Do you only assist church members?
v. In terms of numbers what is your sphere of influence in Kariba?
vi. What are the main economic activities that women in Kariba engage in?
vii. Do you view literacy and access to information as crucial factors in the implementation of

your programmes?

viii. What are the likely major causes of illiteracy

ix. What interventions are there to address these problems?

x. What is the church policy regarding access to information?

xi. Where do they get information support for the programmes?

xii. What kind of information do these women need?

xiii. What are the challenges facing women in terms of information access?

xiv. What could be a possible explanantion for such a scenario?

xv. Do you have an adult literacy programme?

xvi. Are women keen to use the service?

xvii. What other institutions do the women approach for assistance?

xviii. Can you evaluate the benefits the women have accrued for other members of the family and society

xix. Are there any suggestions or comments that you would like to make

V. Themes for focus groups

1. Information seeking Behavior

i. Information

ii. Information need

iii. Action towards getting information

iv. The sources selected

V.The reason for selecting these sources

2. Access

i. Impact of level of literacy and possible causes for illiteracy

ii. Cost

iii. Distance

iv. Availability of information sources

v. Possible causes for illiteracy

vi. Barriers to accessing information

Use

i. Relevancy of information available

ii. Usefulness of the information obtained

iii. Sources frequently used

iv. Use of information generally

v. Benefits for other members of the family and society

5. Suggestions