



## Full Length Research Article

### WOODCARVING AND ITS SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS ON HOUSEHOLD LIVELIHOODS IN WAMUNYU LOCATION, YATHUI SUB-COUNTY, MACHAKOS COUNTY, KENYA

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#### ABSTRACT

This study examined woodcarving and the socio-economic implications of wood carving on household livelihoods in Wamunyu Location, Machakos County. Woodcarving has been practiced in the study area, for over a century, and it has affected the livelihoods of the majority of the people in various ways. Woodcarving plays a vital role in generating income to the households. Despite woodcarving being an important economic activity for the majority of households in the Wamunyu area of Machakos District who have practiced it for over a century and passed it on from family to family, the carving communities/ practitioners have remained in abject poverty in addition to not deriving maximum benefits from the same despite its high potential in providing safety nets for carving communities. Little is known on the socioeconomic implications of woodcarving on household livelihoods and this forms the basis of the study. The study was premised on General systems theory and Sustainable livelihood framework. Purposive and systematic random sampling was used to select a sample size of 100 woodcarvers. To achieve the objectives of the study, a survey was conducted among the woodcarvers in Wamunyu Location. Data collected was processed and analyzed using descriptive statistics with the aid of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences. From the study findings, woodcarving has huge socioeconomic benefits which can improve household livelihoods if well organized and managed. The study revealed that 41% of the respondents were between the ages of 20-29 years old with majority of them (41%) joined woodcarving at age 15-17 years. The study also revealed that 95% of the respondents were male. Wood carving is one of the major livelihood strategies employed by the inhabitants in the study area to supplement subsistence farming so as to meet basic needs such as food, health-care and education. The study shows that 62% of the respondents assert that woodcarving activity enables them to meet their basic needs. The findings also indicate that woodcarving is important in supporting households; consequently it's a key economic activity in the study area. This goes to reinforce the fact that woodcarving is critical in supporting households in the study area and consequently its increased uptake in the area. However, there is need to support and enhance efforts to improve woodcarving in order to support more households and improve their livelihoods. Numerous problems continue to affect woodcarving negatively thus reducing the socioeconomic benefits that would be realized. The study recommends the need for all key players in the woodcarving sector to put concerted efforts to address the bottlenecks affecting the sector and in extension woodcarvers. There is need for woodcarvers to be sensitized on homegrown solutions to address problems affecting them in addition to the policy makers taking necessary remedial policy measures to enhance socio-economic impact of woodcarving on households. If the problems affecting woodcarving are conclusively addressed, huge socio-economic benefits will be realized. The study gives a number of recommendations for further research. While there is enough evidence that woodcarving is a crucial rural safety net for many livelihoods in the study area, there is need to replicate the study elsewhere. More research is also needed to systematically explore and define the needs of woodcarvers and delineate ways to eliminate income disparities in woodcarving activities. Similarly, research is needed to delineate the artisanal policies and implementation that will spur woodcarving activities to the intended levels making woodcarving more attractive and sustainable.

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#### INTRODUCTION

This study sought to give insight into how woodcarving has continued to support many livelihoods in the rural set up and forming safety nets for many families. Katerere (2005) notes that woodcarving provides valuable income for many families, hence supporting livelihoods of the locals while allowing communities to maintain their security.

The local is have become stratified in terms of income earned from woodcarving. The emerging phenomenon of stratification results from the market accessibility. Some woodcarvers have wider access to market and this facilitates better sales transforming to high incomes consequently better livelihoods than the rest of the practitioners who live in the lower cadres whose income is low from the sales of wood products. Belcher (2002) notes that woodcarving was initially dominated by men in all stages, however since the trade is the major source of livelihood in Wamunyu area, it has seen entry of the women.

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Traditional customs were against the women doing any form of woodcarving however this has been reversed as women have entered the woodcarving activity at all levels from carving to marketing of woodcarving products. Woodcarving is one of the informal employment sectors that cater for many livelihoods in the rural economy and a source of foreign exchange. In Kenya, an estimated 80,000 carvers are currently active (Choge *et al.*, 2002). Their work supports nearly half a million people in this country. Carvers depend on wood from forests, farms and bush land as well as customers who buy their products. The government views the growth as a way to shed off some of its unemployment problems and boost the country tourism potential. The carvers, traders and the communities where the carvers work also view this as an opportunity that can be utilized to the maximum. Constraints which affect woodcarving were investigated which generated information that gave new insight into areas that need to be taken into consideration if woodcarving activity is to improve the livelihoods of many households in the area, hence reduced vulnerability through improved incomes.

In Non-timber forest products (NTFP) especially woodcarvings and its value to rural households is manifest through daily net function which represents a cost saving to the families involved and to the state as well as through an emergency net, which serves as an insurance in times of drought, disease and unexpected economic hardship (Saxena, 2003). Woodcarving activity has emerged as a common emergency net, which has evolved into permanent way of life. Financial returns from woodcarvings are variable depending on resource and hours worked typically low (Abane, 2009). The livelihood security aspects are manifest primary as a cost saving to rural households as most have limited access to cash incomes. Woodcarving has been practiced for longtime in South Africa, Kenya & India among other countries (Scoones, 1998). Labor diversity has only been practiced in South Africa in woodcarving activities unlike in other countries where woodcarving is practiced (Aryeetey, 2004). According to Myers (1988) majority of woodcarvers have been in the activity for a limited period and tend to view carving as a temporary occupation until they find formal employment. Women are involved in the final stages of the production of carvings and tend to earn the lowest income in the occupation. Woodcarving is typified by woodcarvers who have been in the business for a limited period and tend to view carving as a temporary occupation until they find a formal employment (Torres, 2009). Woodcarving is also characterized by high turnover of producers as they move back and forth between carving and wage employment. Households involved woodcarving tends to be highly dependent on the proceeds, furthermore many young men are engaging in the activity since they are unable to find any other form of income generating activity (Campbell *et al.*, 2002).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The paper is mainly based on review of both theoretical and empirical literature, government policy papers, legislations and institutional set up to facilitate the desirable role of the state in commercial activities. Wamunyu Location is in Machakos County, Yathui Sub-County where the study was undertaken is surrounded by Yatta Sub-County, which has some horticulture, and traditional food crops projects. Machakos county is one of the thirteen districts that form Eastern province.

The county covers an area of 6,281.4km<sup>2</sup> most of which is semi-arid high and medium potential areas where rain fed agriculture is carried out. It is divided into twelve administrative divisions, sixty-two locations and two hundred and twenty five sub-locations. In 2009 census report the population stood at 906,644 people consisting of 442,891 males and 463,753 females. This indicates that majority of the population is female surpassing the population of males by 20,862. Moreover great percentage of the population is the youth with 510,207 or 56.3% being below 20years. According to the welfare monitoring survey (WMSII) of 1994 and (WMS II) of 1997, the county had 68.7% and 63.3% respectively of its population below poverty line. The literacy level in the county stood at 75.9% in 2002 and continues to rise as more adult graduate from literary classes. The study employed purposive and systematic sampling. Purposive sampling was used to select Wamunyu location because it is the hub of woodcarving. The sample size for the study was one hundred woodcarvers. Ten woodcarvers were selected systematically for every one hundred woodcarvers. A sampling frame was made of woodcarvers in the location. The sampling frame was randomly obtained from the membership Wamunyu woodcarvers' society.

To protect those aged less than 18 years, a consent was sought from their parents through the leaders of Wamunyu woodcarving society and their names concealed. The data for this study was obtained from secondary and primary sources. Primary data was collected using interview schedules to get information from the respondents. The interview schedules contained questions that seek information on woodcarving i.e. socioeconomic implications of woodcarving on household livelihoods. Secondary data was drawn from documented work or literature, which was used to show information on woodcarving. Descriptive statistics were used for analysis. Descriptive statistics included use of percentages, histograms and pie charts to analyze information on socio-economic implications of woodcarving on household livelihoods. A summary statistics of the socioeconomic characteristics of woodcarvers was done and percentages were obtained. To assess the benefits of woodcarving activity to the livelihoods of people in Wamunyu percentages of the various response variables were obtained. The percentage of carvers prioritizing each constraint was calculated to rank the major constraints. The data analysis was done using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

## RESULTS

Age is a crucial socio-economic and physical factor that plays an important role in determining the contribution a person makes in the society. In this study, woodcarving is practiced by the older members of the community. The older members command a lot of respect owing to their position in the society. Similarly, they play a major role in influencing decisions on who can practice woodcarving. In the study, over 95% of the respondents were male while 5% were females. The gender disparity of the respondents was attributed to cultural factors of the Kamba community including woodcarving activity being a male domain, learning woodcarving art being time consuming and the tools used for woodcarving not being women friendly. This pushes women to only get involved in light woodcarving duties. As a result, women have a limited role in woodcarving activities.

According to the findings, only 14 of the respondents who were male had attained some non-formal education. Women scored dismal across all the education categories. Respondents indicated that those who acquired woodcarving skills through apprenticeship were 14%, observation 34%, practice 15% and training 37%. Very few respondents learned woodcarving skills through apprenticeship and this is attributed to the fact that woodcarving is very involving thus it would take long time to capture the skills. Observation was key to acquiring woodcarving skills and this enabled more woodcarvers to join the business. Practice is through personal initiative by working hard and trying to train oneself through observation and perfecting the skill. Thus through training woodcarvers were able to acquire the much needed skills. The woodcarvers who underwent training were either trained mostly by friends, siblings or relatives. Training formed the major component of acquiring woodcarving skills. This is because most of the families who had a practicing woodcarver were actively involved in woodcarving. Passing skills to their family was found to be an important component. This resulted into increased woodcarvers supporting their families and consequently improving their livelihoods.

From the findings, 16% of the respondents obtained their capital for woodcarving from business, 28% from farming, 6% from bank loan, 36% borrowed from a friend, 8% borrowed from Sacco and 6% from personal savings. According to the findings, a very minimal number of woodcarvers derive their capital from bank loan and savings. This could be attributed to the fact that poverty levels in the area are high and thus people have no bank accounts consequently having little or nothing to save. Majority of woodcarvers obtained their capital from borrowing from friends and farming. There also exists many informal networks among the woodcarvers from which they can obtain capital. The informal networks are instrumental in advancing loans to the informal sector. The wood carving business has slow growth due to insufficient capital and lack of raw materials and tools to produce in bulk. The socio-economic benefits accruing from woodcarving activity cannot be underestimated. Many rural households have few survival options to choose from and therefore woodcarving continues to provide safety nets for many families. Therefore as a livelihood strategy, woodcarving has been fully embraced in the rural areas as many households continue to rely on it for survival. The findings reveal that woodcarvers make 58% hand crafts, 18% furniture, 23% stool & drums and 3% sculpture. The study indicates that some of the social benefits derived from woodcarving include improved education (24%), improved livelihood (46%), reforestation (18%) and improved Health care (12%).

This demonstrates that woodcarving plays a crucial role in supporting the household and empowering their lives. Households are able to afford health care from the revenue earned from woodcarvings and hence improved health care for the family. Moreover the woodcarvers are able to get training to improve their skills and consequently improving the quality of the products produced. Regarding associations, 78% of the respondents had joined cooperative unions. The high percentage was attributed to the fact that cooperative unions have many varied benefits as opposed to working individually ranging from collective buying of raw materials to collective marketing of their products. The cooperatives apart from bringing the woodcarvers together also proved vital in giving loans to woodcarvers.

## DISCUSSION

According to Myers (1988) majority of woodcarvers have been in the activity for a limited period and tend to view carving as a temporary occupation until they find formal employment. Women are involved in the final stages of the production of carvings and tend to earn the lowest income in the occupation. This supports the assertion that women tend to trade in NTFPS, whereas men are more involved in woodcarving (Ahenkan et.al, 2010). Although some older women are involved half of them have some formal education. Lack of employment opportunities rather poor education and skills have forced women into hawking woodcarvings to make ends meet, however the literature does not capture the unique characteristics of the woodcarvers (*ibid*, 2010). Woodcarving is typified by woodcarvers who have been in the business for a limited period and tend to view carving as a temporary occupation until they find a formal employment (Torres, 2009). Woodcarving is also characterized by high turnover of producers as they move back and forth between carving and wage employment. Households involved woodcarving tends to be highly dependent on the proceeds, furthermore many young men engaging in the activity since they are unable to find any other form of income generating activity (Campbell *et al.*, 2002). And as such the study seeks to capture the socioeconomic characteristics of woodcarvers, which the literature under review does not wholly exhaustively address.

Incomes derived from woodcarving sales are variable across the trading households. The timing of the income from the woodcarvings is critical and the cash earned is important in giving subsistence support to the households (Faleyimu, 2004). Woodcarving proceeds are reinvested into alternative income generating opportunities such as sewing and shoe mending in order to increase household incomes. Market for woodcarvings fluctuates widely in accordance with the tourist market. Incomes for all the carvers are highly variable from one carver to the other. The variation in income is function of production levels as influenced by effort expended to gain credit facilities to diversify the enterprises (Saxena, 2003). Income level is only but one of the socioeconomic views expressed by the scholars are very important in understanding socio-economic characteristics of woodcarvers. Woodcarving is important in livelihood security and providing safety nets for many households in the rural setup and has evolved as permanent livelihood option. It has provided employment to many people across the society from women to men and young people. Policies need to be building upon the diversity of livelihood strategies and the abilities of rural households to enhance incomes, provide employment opportunities and meet their substance needs. The literature on woodcarving has majorly concentrated on the final products of woodcarving and the positive & negative impacts of woodcarving activities. However such literature has failed to look at the major player(s) of woodcarving i.e. the woodcarver(s). This gaping hole left out without looking at socioeconomic characteristics of woodcarvers' gave room to undertake this study in order to establish such characteristics. The examined literature have overlooked and failed to examine educational level, age level, household sizes and economic characteristics of the woodcarvers. The recent increase in interest in NTFPs has been a consequence of a number of shifts in developmental focus. With evolution in thinking about the importance of rural development and poverty alleviation has become growing interest on how forests and wood products contribute to

households' food and livelihood security (Ndam *et al.*, 2000). Woodcarving activity in Kenya supports over 80,000 carvers and over 1 million dependents rely on their activity either directly or indirectly, thus this woodcarving contributes significantly to creation of employment and growth of the economy of the country at large (Choge *et al.*, 2002). Woodcarving, improves the opportunities available to local user and this is bound to have benefits at the local level with potentially positive spin offs at national, sub regional and regional level (Katerere *et al.*, 2005). The literature has laid emphasis on importance of woodcarving which the study sought to unravel, however literature has not conclusively elaborated on the benefits of woodcarving to the households and how it has improved their livelihoods in the study area.

Forest products and services are extremely important for rural livelihood in Sub-Saharan Africa, livelihood assets serve as the basis for people's livelihoods. (Kaimowitz, 2003). It is argued that Making best use of sustainable harvested wood, ensuring that the market is not saturated with same products, maintaining cultural diversity to give depth to carving design, offering creative ideas for the future and fostering sustainable use of wood resources is definitely going to improve local livelihoods (Bolwig *et al.*, 2008). Community initiatives involving all stakeholders in woodcarving can be geared towards resource management, quality-carving production, reducing wastage and creative development of carving enterprise to improve the community welfare. Capacity building in woodcarving needs to be institutionalized in local institutions for carving communities and other stakeholders to be taught on conservation and sustainable use of plant resources for maximum benefits are to be derived from woodcarving (Mikolo, 2007). The study sought to examine the benefits of woodcarving to the households, however the above literature does not exhaustively highlight such benefits. Therefore the study sought to fill such gap, non-the less the literature highlights some of the ways to improve woodcarvings which consequently would improve the incomes from the woodcarvings.

Tyler (2006) observes that woodcarving activity involves a lot of social networking between the different practitioners. They involve a chain of players who require input of every player to sustain the activity which supports significant number of livelihoods in the rural economy. Social capital plays crucial role in woodcarving because of the multiplicity of tasks involved in the activity (Hnatow, 2009). Carvers are involved in transforming (carving) wood in carved products which are ready for market through the processing of carving, sanding and painting (*ibid*, 2009). The study sought to determine the importance of woodcarving in supporting livelihoods as a rural safety net, however the literature reviewed does not clearly pin point such benefits to the households. Notably the literature lays emphasis on social capital paramount in bringing the woodcarvers together due to multiplicity of tasks involved in woodcarving. Women participation in woodcarving have increased for the last decade, owing to shrinking economies and consequently need to improve livelihoods, however most of them are involved in light activities which don't require much effort. Women continue to play critical role in economies and due to socio-economic changes within the society, parental roles continue to change and thus the need to involve women in livelihood activities to support the households.

Therefore the study sought also to find out the roles women play in woodcarving in that women involved in furnishing 50%, paper sanding 37% and carving is 13%. Women are mostly involved in the first two activities because they are light activities which don't require lots of skill to undertake them. There were noticeable differences as majority of the women were involved in furnishing and paper sanding this was attributed to the fact that these tasks are easier to handle and require simple tools which can be easily accessible to women. Moreover, these tasks require a great skill of concentration and ensure wood carvings are handled with care due to their delicate nature. The involvement of women in carving however it's minimal since time in memorial woodcarving activity had been regarded as male domain. However due to hard economic times women has been forced to diversify their sources of income apart from their traditional sources such as rope making, trading firewood and merry go rounds. The socio-economic status of women in the community is falling and therefore it's important for women to look for other alternative sources of income. Diversifying income activities to incorporate non farming activities for women cushions them against adverse factors (such as climatic and weather vagaries) and offers them an escape route from effects of drought and poverty. This therefore constitute an integral part of their risk management and coping strategies for women with changes in climate and weather conditions being common.

Training is very critical in any field. In order to produce better woodcarvings which are easily marketable it's important for the woodcarvers to receive constant training to improve their products. Woodcarving skills can either be acquired through apprenticeship, observation or practice. those who acquired woodcarving skills through apprenticeship were 14%, observation 34%, continuous practice 15% and training 37%. According to findings very few respondents learned woodcarving skills through apprenticeship and this would be attributed to the fact that woodcarving in very involving thus it would take long time to capture the skills. Observation was key to acquiring woodcarving skills and this enabled more woodcarvers to join the business. Practice is through personal initiative by working hard and trying to train oneself through observation and perfecting the skill. Thus through training woodcarvers were able to acquire the much need skills. The woodcarvers who underwent training were either trained mostly by friends, their fathers, grandfathers or uncles. Training formed the major important component of acquiring woodcarving skills. This is because most of the families had a practicing woodcarver actively involved in woodcarving. Passing skills to their family was found to be important. This would result to increased woodcarvers supporting their families and consequently improving their livelihoods. 16% of the respondents obtained their capital for woodcarving from business, 28% from farming, 6% from bank loan, 36% borrowed from a friend, 6% from personal savings and 8% borrowed from a Sacco. The study found out that very minimal number of woodcarvers derives their capital from bank loan, Sacco and from savings. This would be attributed to the fact that poverty levels in the area are high and thus people have no bank accounts consequently little to save and have not joined any Sacco, due to lack employment opportunities. Majority of woodcarvers obtained their capital from borrowing from friends and farming to start woodcarving business. This is attributed to many informal micro -credit organizations on ground and merry go rounds in which the woodcarvers obtain capital. The informal micro-credit organizations have been

instrumental in advancing cash to the informal sector. Many woodcarvers get in the art of carving but without sufficient capital thus the slow growth of business. This because of lack of raw materials and tools to produce in bulky and enjoy the economies of scale. The suitability of loans comes in handy to help the woodcarvers support their business, consequently majority of woodcarvers settle for loans from friends to grow their business. Therefore loans from friends form a spring board for woodcarvers to start and inject cash into their woodcarving business and consequently boosting their woodcarving business. Among the main proponents of general systems theory was Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1955) who likened corporate bodies to biological organisms. The complexity of both biological and corporate bodies and their interrelationships with their environment suggested that management of such systems required understanding that all parts of the body are essential to normal and productive functioning. The general systems theory considers all elements, the whole organization as well as its components. According to systems view, the whole might have properties that are not mere summations of the parts (Bertalanffy, 1955). Ashby (1958) describes general systems theory as an effective method for integrating the theories of several fields. A system is seen as a set of interrelated parts. It follows that any change to one part of the system will have an impact on other parts of the system, and, in turn on its overall performance. However most of the proponents of general systems theory related it to organizational management. But one modern proponent of general systems theory who relates it to the current study was Bossel (1999). Bossel (1999) views sustainable development as a simultaneous evolution of human and natural systems. In a systems view of sustainable development, six essential subsystems can be distinguished: individual development; social system; government; infrastructure; economic system and; resources and environment.

The viability of the total system depends on the proper functioning of the subsystems. The six subsystems correspond to potentials that must be sustainably maintained. These systems are all essential parts of the anthroposphere and each can be viewed as representing a certain type of potential that is vital to the development of the total system (Bossel, 1999). The six subsystems can be aggregated to three systems: human system, support system and natural system. These three systems correspond to three categories of capital that are often used in analysis of the total system: human capital, structural (built) capital and natural capital respectively. The General Systems Theory, however, does not recognize the people as the main actors with assets and capabilities. The system correlates organizations with their environment but it does not look at communities in relation to their livelihoods. This necessitates for alternative theory hence the sustainable livelihoods framework model that addresses these inadequacies of the systems theory.

### **Sustainable livelihoods frame work**

Communities derive their livelihoods from available assets and within a broader socio-economic and physical context. Carney *et al* (1999) describes sustainable livelihoods framework as a tool that can be used for analysis of livelihoods policy, by identifying the main factors affecting livelihoods and the relationships between them. Booth, *et al.* (1998 in Rakodi and Lloyd-Jonnes, 2002) concurs that the framework can provide the basis for identifying appropriate objectives and interventions to support livelihoods.

In woodcarving, for instance, the various carving activities and allied services can be recognized as livelihoods. Objectives should then be set and appropriate interventions devised to overcome the prevailing investment challenges. Moreover the framework is concerned with supporting the livelihoods of the poor people to understand and manage their complexity, additionally it has become a shared point of reference for all concerned with supporting livelihoods. This enables the complementary of contributions and the trade – offs between outcomes to be assessed as well as providing a basis for identifying appropriate objectives and intervention to support livelihoods (Carney, 1998).

The needy rely on a variety of livelihoods which depend in turn on a wide range of natural resources. The sustainable livelihoods framework provides a livelihood analysis format to assess the causes of poverty. During this analysis process, attention is addressed to the poor's access to financial, natural, human or social resources, as well as to livelihood opportunities. Relationships between and interactions with relevant factors at the micro, intermediate and macro levels need to be considered. In this study it was apparent that area is endowed with human capital in form of woodcarvers. This could be combined with other forms of capital such as natural capital. Scarce capital resources such as financial capital were limiting. This could be obtained from savings and credit if Sacco would be well organized and embraced. Dora (2005) notes that communities with a sustainable livelihoods approach are better empowered to use it as a tool for mitigation of poverty. The poor depend on a variety of livelihoods and in turn depend on a wide range of natural resources. The sustainable livelihood framework proposes a form of understanding of assets in order to identify what opportunities they offer. The poor accessing the financial, natural human or social resources must be considered during the analysis. Relationships between and interactions with relevant factors at the micro, intermediate and macro levels need to take into account. Diversity of economic activities in which the poor people are engaged is met by the framework tool. Livelihoods provide foci that facilitate the assessment of development interventions and can guide prioritization decisions. Maingi, Benard, *et al.* Wood carving and its Socio-Economic Implications on Household Livelihoods in Wamunyu Location, Yathui Sub-County, Machakos County, Kenya

Sustainable livelihood framework recognizes people themselves as actors with assets and capabilities (labour, knowledge) that are capable of rational action in pursuit of their own livelihood goals (Tyler, 2006). In the process of woodcarvers pursuing their own livelihoods, the products of their collective efforts could improve the status of development in the area. One of the pillars of the sustainable livelihoods framework is social capital. UNCHS (1996) underscores the importance of social capital as a tool that facilitates local solutions to problems as exhibited by reciprocal exchange existing between individuals and households. This allows people to take initiative and work together in identifying and acting on local problems. Social capital is also important in providing networks that support the economic activities of the poor (Don *et al.*, 2009). This has been clearly illustrated in South East Asia where local saving clubs and finance groups form an important mechanism to allow limited asset accumulation and to encourage small or micro-enterprise (Rutherford, 2000). He observes that micro credit approach has enjoyed major success in areas such as

Bangladesh and Bolivia but failed to be espoused in Africa. The livelihoods perspective should broaden our understanding of the poor micro-entrepreneurs as individuals struggling in the management of day to day opportunities and risks of diverse and complex survival and development strategies. Sinha *et al* (1999) concurred with Rutherford that the poor need financial services more frequently and more urgently than other groups. These assertions necessitate the formation of strong savings and credit corporative societies capable of lending cash and other requisite investment resources to woodcarvers.

McGrath *et al* (1995) opine that over a lifetime, the work of the poor proceeds in stages or cycles of employment, self-employment enterprise and several combinations of these. In looking at education and training in informal sector, they identify six pathways to work. These can be summarized as two: from school to employment and self-employment; from school to self-employment/enterprise to employment. Livelihoods framework, however, encapsulates a process of reducing vulnerabilities and building capacities largely through the enhancement of assets. This conceptualization is positive and people centred. It takes its starting point on existing strengths rather than existing needs and it seeks to explain how relatively modest increment of support can leverage large-scale improvements in livelihood outcomes (*Ibid*, 1995). Shackleton (1996) notes that households may respond to economic stress by resorting to low-return subsistence or survival activities, better technology increases returns from labor hence increased productivity. Improved infrastructural facilities coupled with better technology enhances the ability to secure a livelihood more directly in rural areas than in urban set ups. Enhanced technology in rural areas improves the home-based enterprise enabling people access markets and directly supporting income generating activities.

According to the above literature review woodcarving activity has immense potential of improving the community's livelihoods; on the other hand woodcarving activity can also impact negatively on the practitioners. Previous studies have not underscored the importance of woodcarving to rural livelihoods. Additionally the previous studies have left out on the threat the woodcarving poses to indigenous tree species. The conceptual framework links woodcarving together with positive and negative effects and theoretical framework of general system. Sustainable livelihood framework model assisted to find out how communities construct their livelihoods from the present assets and how these can enhance community opportunities to improve the community's livelihoods. Access to and use of assets influenced by organizations, level of technology and other capitals. The sustainable livelihood frame work is a suitable tool for analysis of livelihoods in this study because it links the broader socioeconomic components of household assets, livelihood activities, outcomes of livelihood activities and factors mediating access to livelihood activities. The study used a combination of the General Systems Theory and Sustainable Livelihoods Framework model which complement each other using a conceptual framework.

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