



Fighting Poverty with Sheep in Armenia: The Role of Hope

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Abstract

Half of the world's population lives in poverty, yet eradicating poverty remains the first Sustainable Development Goal by 2030. Studies evaluating poverty traps and livestock often overlook the role of hope in their analyses, a factor that has recently been recognised as vital in combating poverty. Non-Governmental Organisations implement livestock transfer projects to help families escape poverty and restore hope. To understand the role of hope in these projects, a qualitative approach with interviews was employed, combined with observations of multidimensional poverty indicators to reveal participants' experiences of hope and changes in poverty. The study found that hope is essential for participants' responses to the project and, consequently, supports their exit from poverty. Levels of hope significantly influence perceptions and in turn, actions during participation. Moreover, individual hope was enhanced through livestock transfers, affecting goals, mood, and perception of the future. Subtle changes in multidimensional poverty related to housing and health expenditure planning were also observed. Additionally, development projects can nurture hope by improving mental health, addressing multiple dimensions of poverty, and actively supporting participants' aspirations. Policies can influence both external and internal constraints on poverty and foster hope: firstly, by providing structural grounds for hope; secondly, by informing about available opportunities; and thirdly, by encouraging and supporting aspirations. The government can use policies to promote hopefulness. The fact remains that people living in poverty are not necessarily hopeless. Further research could offer quantitative insights into hope within development contexts. Overall, recognising the role of hope is crucial for designing holistic and effective development projects.

Zusammenfassung

Die Hälfte der Weltbevölkerung lebt in Armut, obwohl die Bekämpfung der Armut das erste Ziel für nachhaltige Entwicklung bis 2030 ist. Studien über Armutsfallen und Viehzucht vernachlässigen die Rolle der Hoffnung in ihren Analysen, die zuletzt als Schlüsselfaktor im Kampf gegen die Armut anerkannt wurde. Nichtregierungsorganisationen führen Projekte zur Viehübertragung durch, um Familien aus der Armut zu helfen und neue Hoffnung zu schöpfen. Ein qualitativer Interviewansatz mit Beobachtungen multidimensionaler Armutsindikatoren wurde angewandt, um die Erfahrungen der Teilnehmenden mit Hoffnung und Veränderungen in Bezug auf Armut aufzudecken. Diese Studie ergab, dass Hoffnung entscheidend für die Reaktion der Teilnehmenden auf das Projekt ist. Das Ausmaß der Hoffnung beeinflusst die Wahrnehmungen und damit das Handeln während der Teilnahme. Darüber hinaus wurde die individuelle Hoffnung durch die Viehübertragung in Bezug auf Ziele, Stimmung und Zukunftswahrnehmung gesteigert. Außerdem zeigten sich subtile Veränderungen bei multidimensionalen Armutsaspekten, z.B. Wohnen und Gesundheitskostenplanung. Darüber hinaus können Entwicklungsprojekte Hoffnung fördern, indem sie die psychische Gesundheit der Teilnehmenden verbessern, mehrere Armutsdimensionen angehen, die RezipientInnen ermutigen sowie ihre Ziele direkt unterstützen. Des Weiteren können politische Maßnahmen sowohl externe als auch interne Armutsfaktoren reduzieren und so Hoffnung fördern: erstens durch die Förderung staatlicher, infrastruktureller Faktoren für Hoffnung, zweitens durch die Information über Chancen und drittens durch die Förderung von Zielen. Wichtig bleibt, dass Menschen in Armut nicht zwangsläufig hoffnungslos sind. Weitere Forschung kann quantitative Perspektiven auf Hoffnung in der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit untersuchen. Insgesamt ist die Hoffnung bei der Armutsbekämpfung entscheidend für die Konzeption ganzheitlicher und wirksamer Entwicklungsprojekte.

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Declaration of Authorship

Declaration of Artificial Intelligence Use

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Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ARMSTAT	Armenian Statistical Committee
ATHS	Adult Trait Hope Scale
EU	European Union
GAiN	Global Aid Network
LPG	Liquefied Petroleum Gas
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UN	United Nations

1 Introduction

Poverty affects approximately half of the global population. At the same time, the first goal of the Sustainable Development Goals constitutes the eradication of poverty by 2030. To achieve this goal, the United Nations (UN) focuses on measures of empowerment, providing chances for enterprises and overall fostering sustainable living (United Nations, n. d.).

Numerous studies have evaluated poverty traps and the relationship between livestock and poverty; however, few incorporate the role of hope in these analyses. While income is usually the main research object (Moges et al., 2025), indices such as the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) include diverse poverty aspects while excluding hope in describing the situation of the population (United Nations, 2024). However, hope could be an interesting factor for development cooperation. While some argue that it would be irrational to have hope while living under strenuous conditions, Duflo hypothesises that hopelessness is a factor that keeps people in poverty (Duflo, 2012). Thus, hope needs to be researched to identify hidden success factors in the fight against poverty.

Taking the role of hope into account might reveal how to cooperate more effectively and see people's needs more individually. While the research focus lies on external conditions, e.g. infrastructure, hope can be an internal factor that has gained importance lately, requiring development economists' attention (Blöser, 2023). Interestingly, constraints as a part of poverty are an antonym of wish, according to the Cambridge Dictionary (2026a). Further, Hooft et al. argued that including project participants' worldviews is necessary to ensure successful interventions. They argue that worldviews should be the origin of development, ignoring materialistic measures (Hooft et al., 2012c).

In this complex development field, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) such as Sign of Hope e.V. or Global Aid Network (GAIN) gGmbH implement livestock transfer projects in Armenia to help economically disadvantaged families escape poverty. With projects aimed to “Restore Life. Reveal Hope” (GAIN Worldwide, 2026), they provide livestock, such as sheep, as a source of income, alongside veterinary support and fodder when necessary, to families in rural Armenia (GAIN Germany, n. d.–a; Hoffnungszeichen e.V., n. d.). Their overall goal as faith-based organisations remains in spreading hope through such projects. Notably, beneficiaries of GAIN's project show different outcomes since the implementation of the livestock transfer, raising the question of whether the project influences participants' hopefulness differently and what underlying factors might be associated with this difference. This question is important

to answer because the outcome of development projects is influenced by the beneficiary's agency (Sen, 1999), hence researching hope could reveal new connections between hope and escaping poverty.

The population in Armenia is around three million people (World Population Prospects, 2024). One fourth of the population lives below the poverty line (ADB, 2025). The Armenian rural population generates income with agriculture, which means 1/3 of the total population works in this sector (Zakaryan, 2023). However, people employed in the agricultural sector do not necessarily own livestock or other assets to build their living upon. According to Balboni et al., owning livestock supports employment that, in comparison to a different occupation, results in higher earnings. Their results showed that a key aspect of escaping the poverty trap lies in asset transfer (Balboni et al., 2022). The sector of agriculture is seen as an important development instrument, according to De Janvry and Sadoulet (2021). At the same time, improving livelihoods is also connected to a decrease in agricultural dependence (Dercon, 2009). The change in employment and livelihoods, for example, through livestock transfers, can be associated with an increase in hope for the recipients (Lybbert & Wydick, 2016, 2018). People who live in rural areas and are considered poor can find themselves in hopeless situations where possibilities to develop their livelihoods are extremely limited.

The role of hope in livestock projects in rural Armenia is relevant to GAIN because families' visions for their sheep businesses vary. Identifying whether this difference is connected to varying experiences with hope can help reevaluate the project and potentially improve it to better support families in the future. Depending on the level of hopefulness participants experience, they might react differently to the project. According to Hooft et al. (2012c), livestock development should start from the inside, meaning it should be developed from participants' worldviews. This starting point should empower participants to realise aspirations. That notion fits Lybbert and Wydick's definition of hope, which consists of aspirations out of pathway perception and self-agency (Lybbert & Wydick, 2016). Consequently, this raises different questions. Are participants of these projects more hopeful because of an intervention, or are hopeful people more successful because their endogenous starting point is more resourceful?

My aim in this thesis is to gather data on the family's situation while participating in the livestock transfer project and to document their experience with hopefulness before and during the project. This knowledge should help NGOs understand the role of hope, which some claim is their main goal. Because of the results, NGOs might be better at fostering hope or at seeing the individual beneficiaries' needs. To study people's experiences of hopefulness in livestock

development projects, I chose a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews. Working through the established themes from the data answered the following research questions:

1. What are participating families' experiences with hopefulness before and after one year of the livestock project from GAIN Armenia?
2. Which changes in multidimensional poverty aspects can be observed since the beginning of the project?
3. What are potential lessons learned, opportunities and future research questions from the project?
 - a. How can GAIN or other NGOs foster hope practically?
 - b. What implications are there for the government to foster hope?

I hypothesised that families report different possibilities after receiving sheep. I expected the change in income due to the sheep to foster hope, as it would relieve the constraints of poverty. All in all, I assumed high-hope individuals to see more pathways to utilise the sheep for their livelihoods, because it enables the perception of new strategies towards the goal.

After this introduction to the topic, the theoretical background for this work is described, including a description of GAIN's livestock development project in Armenia. Then, the methodological approach is explained. Next, the collected data is subsequently analysed. This is followed by a discussion. Finally, the results are concluded.

2 Theoretical Background

This chapter sets the basis for the study conducted. First, the key problem of poverty is defined with the literature at hand. Second, the hope theory is explained. Third, the current discourse around livestock projects is described, and the project in which the participants took part is presented in detail. Lastly, the project setting in Armenia is outlined.

2.1 Poverty

2.1.1 Layers of Definition

The initial situation of the interviewed recipients of GAIN's livestock transfers in Armenia is one of living in poverty. Notably, multiple concepts can explain poverty. For example, living below three dollars a day marks a poverty threshold (United Nations Global Compact, n. d.). However, poverty is multidimensional and is much more complex than the monetary aspect. Socioeconomic perspectives show that people living in poverty lack “the ability to access services and social protection measures and to express opinions and choice” as well as “the power to negotiate, [...] social status, decent work and opportunities” (United Nations Global Compact, n. d.). As a short and moral claim, Krumer-Nevo states, “poverty is not alright” (Krumer-Nevo, 2020b, p. 53). Therefore, poverty can be defined in multiple ways.

The MPI goes beyond measuring income and describes poverty at a household level using three dimensions. The dimensions are health, education and living standards. Health comprises nutrition and child mortality. Education includes years of schooling and school attendance, whereas living standards connect cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, housing and assets (Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, 2025). This index is measured by the “incidence of poverty” multiplied by “the average intensity of poverty” (Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, 2025, p. 1). Therefore, this index calculates the share of a population living in poverty as well as the total deprivation. Then, the index differentiates between vulnerable poverty, a person who is deprived in 20-33.33 % of the weighted indicators, and severe poverty, deprivation in 50-100 % of the weighted indicators. In the country of interest, Armenia, the MPI considers 0.2 % of the population poor, and 2.8 % vulnerably poor. In monetary poverty (3 USD/day), the incidence is approximately 2 % (Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, 2025). In contrast, 26 % of Armenians in rural areas are poor as defined by the national average poverty line (ARMSTAT, 2025b). This shows that for a broad

view on poverty, multiple aspects should be considered, because not all resources people in poverty have are reflected in money. Although the MPI describes poverty from a monetary perspective, it still lacks the psychological dimension of health, which is necessary for this study, given the question of the role of hope.

Sen deepens the definition in “Development as Freedom”. He defines poverty as having “deprived capabilities”, which can also be influenced intrinsically. He states that capability deprivation and low income are typically related (Sen, 1999). Instead of measuring poverty in low income, Sen argues that the capability deprivation a person faces should be added to the matter of poverty, because this allows for describing the freedoms an individual aspires to (Sen, 1999). To clarify, living with these freedoms is the opposite of poverty. For example, without the freedom to acquire food for nourishment, Sen considers this person unfree. In the end, both income and capabilities can be affected by development and affect each other interchangeably (Sen, 1999). For instance, developed education and health care impact a person's capacity to generate income. Simultaneously, income can help access better health care or education. Hence, the connection between capability and constraint in poverty exists in both directions, intrinsically and extrinsically (Sen, 1999).

Another example elaborating on the lack of capability can be found in decision-making. Krumer-Nevo states that “a bad choice can only be made if one is faced with a real choice, that is, a good choice” (Krumer-Nevo, 2020a, p. 86). This is in line with Sen’s example of a person without a chance of employment, who could receive state support for being unemployed. Certainly, the support raises income numerically, but in the lived reality of this person exists the deprivation of choice and the possibility to work potentially in a desired position (Sen, 1999). Without the real choice, this is not a capability for disadvantaged persons.

In the same way, this deprivation is addressed by NGOs like GAIN, which implement livestock development projects. By providing sheep to families, the beneficiaries receive a source of income and, with the sheep, possibilities that would have been unimaginable to acquire otherwise. At the same time, many people living in poverty remain poor despite owning livestock. Accordingly, the poverty trap indicates that animal husbandry alone is not the final solution to the problem (Balboni et al., 2022).

2.1.2 The Poverty Trap

Balboni et al. demonstrate that a threshold exists, marking the onset at which someone escapes the poverty trap. The threshold divides people living in poverty, who lose the few assets they own, from those living above this threshold who gain more assets. Nevertheless, a variety of aspects of people's lives contribute to escaping poverty through progress, for example, more meals, which increase the ability to do physically demanding work. This threshold is visualised in **Figure 1**. A higher income today results in a higher future income, especially outside of the poverty trap (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011). Because of the different factors influencing and contributing to the income, it is important to differentiate the underlying causes of someone escaping poverty (Balboni et al., 2022).

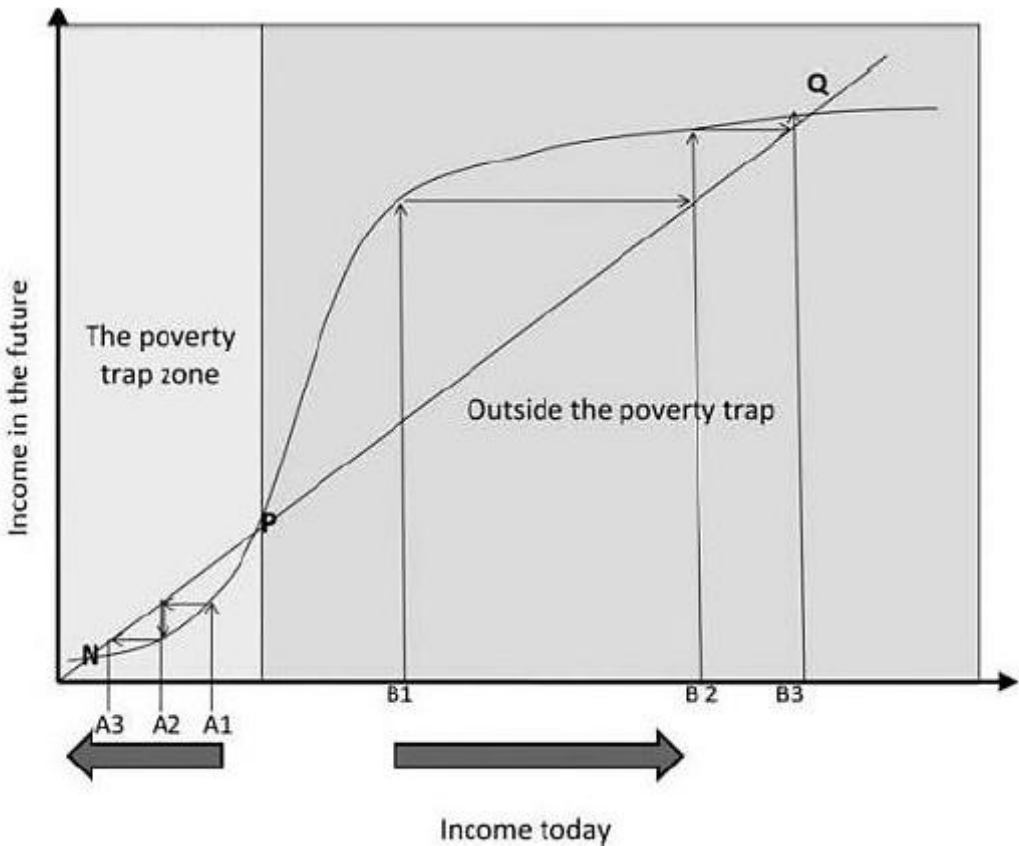


Figure 1: The S-Shape Curve and the Poverty Trap
 Note: A = Income today within the poverty trap zone; B = Income outside the poverty trap
 Source: Banerjee & Duflo, 2011, p. 12

The connection between income and the poverty trap can be visualised, including assets as well. This is relevant because livestock is the asset focused on in this study, which directly influences income (Conroy, 2005). **Figure 2** illustrates the relationship between assets and income. A person with assets less than \underline{A} , while the income is below \underline{u} , is structurally poor. With increasing income, the utility increases and both income poverty and asset poverty lines are exceeded

(Carter & Barrett, 2006). By owning sufficient livestock as an asset to pass the threshold, a household could escape the poverty trap.

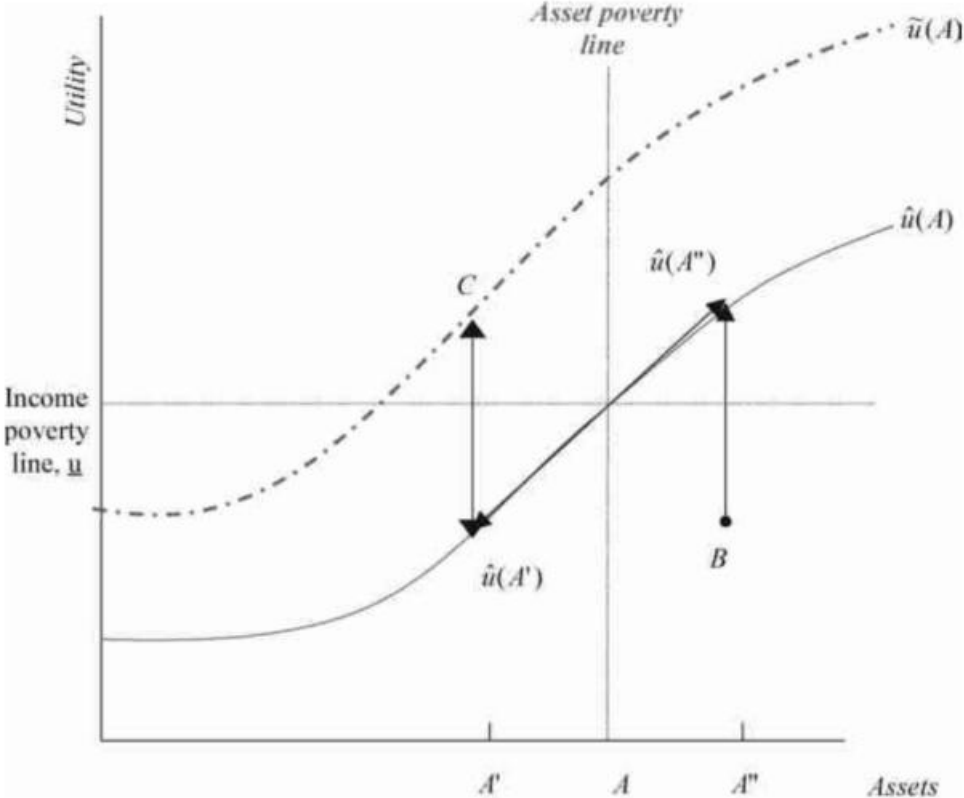


Figure 2: Single Period Income and Asset Poverty Lines
 Source : Carter & Barrett, 2006, p. 182

Furthermore, they found that a change in employment was fundamental for escaping the trap if the occupation increased income while being a stable one (Balboni et al., 2022). Additionally, saving a greater sum contributes to escaping poverty when these investments foster returns in the future. While some households possess assets that help them generate income, other households do not own these assets, such as livestock (Balboni et al., 2022). These assets are crucial for saving, and these savings can be visualised in livestock ownership (Lindahl et al., 2020). According to Sultakeev and Petrick (2025), poor and rich households show different saving behaviours. Households living in poverty hold their livestock, unlike richer households, who can sell in a shock, which positively affects the present consumption. Altogether, escaping the poverty trap is a complex task involving a variety of assets, support and underlying factors.

With the aim of supporting people out of the poverty trap, researchers study cash transfers. People living in poverty can face a constraint on credit (Blattman et al., 2014). Not only can they face the difficulty of taking a sufficient loan, but also the uncertainty of investing keeps

people from taking this step (Banerjee et al., 2015). For this reason, cash transfers offer support. The results of Blattman et al. point out that income and labour time were extended when cash transfers led young adults with business goals from unemployment to an occupation outside the agricultural sector (Blattman et al., 2014). Another extensive study showed that a major push aimed at fully exiting the poverty trap can profoundly impact recipients. This study focused on a combination of six activities:

- a productive asset transfer
 - consumption support through food or money
 - training that supports utilising the productive asset
 - high-frequency home visits
 - savings (sometimes mandatory)
 - health education, service provision or training in this area
- (Banerjee et al., 2015, pp. 5–6).

The results were improved physical and mental health, food security, income, and consumption. Furthermore, this study found an improvement in political involvement and women's empowerment. (Banerjee et al., 2015). Consequently, it is important to notice that in this example, multiple dimensions of poverty are present at the same time. This emphasises once again the importance of addressing all dimensions.

The fact that livestock is an asset in the lives of many people living in poverty highlights the relevance of this work. The connection between livestock and poverty will be described in further detail in Chapter 3. To begin with, the nuances of poverty through livestock are explained below, finally leading to the definition of hope.

2.1.3 Poverty and Livestock

To illustrate the importance of livestock, households in rural areas rely on agriculture for their living (Dercon, 2009). According to Hooft et al., there are three major strategies by which rural families support themselves with limited resources:

1. “Crop, livestock and forest production”
2. “Non-agricultural activities”

3. “Migration and other activities that generate monetary income outside the community”
(Hooft et al., 2012b, p. 45)

Catley and Ayele argue that livestock can help measure poverty by defining income in terms of livestock owned. A cattle owner who increases the number of animals, for example, could still be seen as poor, although he is overcoming the livestock threshold of poverty instead of the monetary threshold to poverty. Livestock ownership contributes to social participation, which poses new capabilities. In Sen’s theory, this owner is less poor, while, numerically, the owner could still be perceived as disadvantaged (Catley & Ayele, 2021). This highlights that when analysing the lives of people, nuances are important.

With all the above in mind, addressing households and their livestock should unbind them from constraints on income, for example, so that the effect of livestock on families' livelihoods increases (Pell et al., 2010). Regardless of this, in a long-term strategy, Dercon warns that while it seems logical to address livestock as it is what many poor people have in common, growing welfare is associated with a decrease in agricultural dependence in the lives of rural households (Dercon, 2009). Opposingly, it can be a strong strategy for poverty reduction, state De Janvry and Sadoulet (2021). Despite this controversy, livestock is of interest to development economists and NGOs when implementing poverty-reducing strategies. Notably, this might make it a short-term solution.

While many implement cash or livestock transfer projects, Sen’s definition of poverty has pointed out that providing cash transfers, for example, could influence income as one constraint; even so, internal constraints remain unchanged. This is why including hope from a psychosocial perspective is relevant in this matter. Considering that economically disadvantaged people can live with internalised constraints, they need to be addressed, especially because they can be binding and influence the outcomes of projects aiming to improve livelihoods (Lybbert & Wydick, 2016, 2018). As Sen advocates for freedom of choice in terms of one's future life, which is not given when constraints exist, these dreams and goals connected to one’s future establish the link between poverty and hope. Since hope can be a mere feeling or an entire philosophy (Pleeging, 2022), it will be defined in the next chapter.

2.2 Hope

As a broad and complex matter, hope relates to a person's lived experience, which is why the topic of hope is interesting for this qualitative study. Many scientists have defined the concept of hope in multiple academic contexts. For this study, it was important to narrow it down to one concept that can be applied to the context of livestock development projects. Different approaches to hope, such as spiritual or social hope, which define the origin of hope in spirituality or social contexts, are interesting to study in further research (Pleeging, 2022). However, for the intersection between poverty, hope and livestock projects, which rely on people's actions (Snyder, 2002), the question of the role of hope was studied with its origin in participants (Pleeging, 2022).

For the action-oriented approach, the concept of hope used here is Snyder's definition. Snyder is a known psychologist who approaches hope from a cognitive perspective (Pleeging, 2022). Stemming from cognitive psychology, Snyder researched the nature of excuses first, which led him to study hope as the opposition to excuses. He states hope to be more than a feeling, but a mode of thought, while feelings take part in this process (Snyder, 2002). Snyder's definition includes thinking that goals are achievable, as well as multiple ways to realise these plans and to change them when something hinders the goal. This definition will be used in this study because it captures the observed difference between project participants with varying strategies for their future after receiving sheep as assets. Pleeging explains Snyder's definition as agency being the "belief in our ability to reach our goals and a resourcefulness in following different pathways towards these goals even when we are met with obstacles" (Pleeging, 2022, p. 4439). In essence, this concept of hope focuses on goals, agency, and pathways that can be met despite constraints.

Constraints are the concept covered in Chapter 2.1. While external constraints have been the focus of development concepts, it is important to view internal constraints as well. Lybbert & Wydick (2016) argue that hope contributes to leaving the poverty trap through resulting optimism about the outcome. As Lybbert and Wydick, Duflo argues that hope plays a role in the situation of people living in poverty. Indeed, she states that a provided opportunity positively influenced people's situation (Blöser, 2023; Duflo, 2012). Although external constraints, stemming from institutions, markets, etc., as mentioned in Chapter 2.1, can be binding, the mental health of participants in development projects matters (Duflo, 2012). When analysing constraints people face, hope as an internal constraint needs to be considered. **Table 1** summarises this below.

Table 1: Differentiating External and Internal Constraints

Deprived Capabilities are expressed in:	
External Constraints, for example:	Internal Constraints, for example:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutions • Markets • Violent Conflict • Opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Physical ○ Mental • Hope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Perception of Pathways

Note: the examples are relevant in this context; however, this table could be extended.

Source: author’s own table

Consequently, labelling a lack of hope as a potential internal constraint introduces the importance of being thoughtful, because discussing hope psychologically and related to effort in the context of poverty is a sensitive matter. Particularly, Blöser makes a strong point explaining that discussing the role of hope in development must not result in making people in poverty responsible for their situation, especially because many constraints can be out of people's control (Blöser, 2023). A participant in a development project could lack hope, but not effort. This means that not trying in a matter with no reasonable outcome is rational (Blöser, 2023). With this example, Blöser highlights that hope needs to be realistic in a way that gives a logical expectation of an achievable outcome (Blöser, 2023; Duflo, 2012). It should be kept in mind that hope can be irrational to the point that it will not support any project outcomes long-term. Snyder contrasts this. Addressing critics of his hope concept, he summarises that hope should be free from illusions, suit the individual, and be based on a good strategy (Snyder, 2002). At the same time, he finds that hopeful individuals are rational and that these aspects are not problematic in the literature. Although high-hope individuals do have greater goals, the research suggests that they can achieve them (Snyder, 2002). Lastly, cultural and historical sensitivity are crucial, too. Development projects might not increase hope because factors like culture or other social influences limit the aspiration, for example, through gender roles, which determine what a person should aspire to become (Lybbert & Wydick, 2018). In this case, the violent conflicts Armenia faced could influence aspirations (see Chapter 3.4). In either case, people living in poverty should not be generally seen as hopeless (Lybbert & Wydick, 2018). Altogether, this stresses to approach discussing hope sensibly.

2.2.1 Hope and Poverty: The Aspirations Trap

A link between hope and poverty can be found when comparing Sen's poverty definition and Snyder's definition of hope. Lacking hope is a deprived capability, as Sen describes it in his definition of poverty. This connection can be found in Snyder's definition of hope as the "perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals and motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways" (Snyder, 2002, p. 250). This concept is grounded in positive psychology, which means that a person contributes to their reality and their perception of it (Froh, 2004). The intersection of Sen and Snyder's poverty and hope definition is highlighted through Lazarus' definition linking hope directly to deprivation or life choices (Lazarus, 1999). This is where Snyder connects hope and deprivation to goals: hope results in goals to take action against the deprivation (Snyder, 2002). Hence, hope can be a missing capability in poverty.

Regardless, hope must be gained through a reliable political system for hope to be reasonable (Blöser, 2023). Blöser questions that since no cash transfer alone releases the poverty trap, nor does providing new hope through lifting internal constraints while external factors still limit development, the entire system needs to be considered in order to relieve poverty (Blöser, 2023). Lifting constraints, when a person's psychological well-being is not cared for, will not change their situation without hope (Lybbert & Wydick, 2016). This interconnectedness between internal and external constraints, poverty and hope is described by the poverty-aspirations trap. In particular, Dalton et al. relate to this trap when low hope influences poverty, but poverty also negatively influences hope (Cassio et al., 2021; Dalton et al., 2016). Aspirations are important, but not the only factor. Although children in school with disadvantaged socioeconomic status have significantly lower aspirations, no causality has been found that proves aspirations influence success in the school context (Cassio et al., 2021). This hints that organisations aiming to empower, improve hope and raise aspirations through relieving constraints are highly important. Empowerment alone might not be enough to leave the poverty trap, as Blöser criticises with her statement on rational hope. Given these points, when aiming to truly reduce poverty, a holistic approach is necessary.

Hope is relevant for people's behaviour and development projects need to take the internal world of participants into account. Surprisingly, Dalton et al. observed that one-third of study participants did not take the support offer, composed of asset assistance and training. This stresses that poverty is not completely acknowledged by external constraints. Still, they found that although both internal and external limits should be addressed, when internal constraints are relieved, behaviour can change while already diminishing the perseverance of poverty (Dalton et

al., 2016). Next, Duflo states that people need a future vision for fundamental change; otherwise, the motivation or capacity to achieve something under constrained circumstances is blocked (Duflo, 2012). Then, the importance of the internal world is stressed through another example from Duflo, where she explains the role of fear in not taking a step to migrate because of the burden of building a new life in a new location. Especially because established social networks in their village support them through shocks (Duflo, 2012). The economist recognises that the lack of hope constrains people and therefore keeps individuals from achieving their potential (Duflo, 2012). Surely, when people remain constrained, this can exacerbate the poverty trap. Duflo implies that interventions potentially affect external and internal constraints and could be improved by providing information about other chances to take (Duflo, 2012). If hope fosters abilities, it simultaneously encourages further abilities and goals. An example of this is the power of a role model, which introduces new expectations of what is possible and therefore influences aspirations, leading to behavioural change (Duflo, 2012). Studies found that women's education affects their opportunities (Duflo, 2012). Most importantly, Dalton et al. warn that low aspirations are more likely to result from poverty than to be its cause (Dalton et al., 2016). For practical implications, this means that the real causes need to be addressed, and the consequences of poverty in affected people need to be faced, so that all constraints can be relieved.

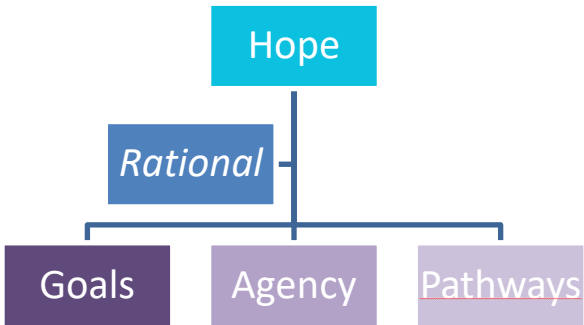


Figure 3: The direct Hope Attributes
 Note: added with a rationality condition, following Blöser
 Source: (Blöser, 2023; Snyder, 2002)

Leading back to the concept of hope used for the analysis of participants' experiences, the three direct attributes of hope combined with a rationality condition, which was mentioned above as the need to approach the topic sensitively, are illustrated in **Figure 3**. Goals, agency, and pathways will be defined further.

2.2.2 Goals

A goal is “an aim or purpose”, according to the Cambridge Dictionary (2026b). Goals are the aim of the hopeful thinking process (Snyder, 2002). Furthermore, they are influenced by what we see. For instance, seeing someone else with high expectations and aspirations can result in increased aspirations of the observer (Lybbert & Wydick, 2018). The observation influences the aspirations window, which means what a person believes is realistic to achieve. Having a role model is one example of how outside influences shape aspirations (Lybbert & Wydick, 2016). Hope begins where children look up to role models, for example, in school. On the other hand, their environment can lead them to expect little of their future (Cassio et al., 2021). Then again, people who experienced a traumatic event can lack the motivation to follow goals (Sypson, 2000). Under those circumstances, goals have different origins and influences.

As an illustration, a simple goal could be to buy a television (Duflo, 2012). This goal can appear different to people depending on their socioeconomic situation. While some might be able to buy a television without thinking about it, others might never be able to. This implies that achievements have limits. These goals can be too close to one's reality or so unrealistic that they result in frustration instead of achievement (Lybbert & Wydick, 2016, 2018). In the context of poverty, the literature suggests that the right goals address a lack in people's lives (Snyder, 2002). Overall, goals can vary in their level of realism.

All the above points towards the relevance of keeping participants' aspirations in mind when implementing a development project, because believing what is possible could drive actions (Lybbert & Wydick, 2016). Snyder's observation that goals can be communicated as to-dos, which involve referring to oneself, further contributes to the action-oriented nature of goals mentioned at the beginning of Chapter 2.2. He mentions asking indirectly to avoid prompting the answer (Snyder, 2002). Consequently, goals can be observed through direct and indirect questions as well as people's expressions.

2.2.3 Agency

The easiest definition of the concept of agency is the opposite: victimisation or the state of having no agency (Lybbert & Wydick, 2018). This is why a participant's perception of their agency is crucial, as it takes part in releasing internal constraints of poverty (Lybbert & Wydick, 2018). Agency is similar to self-efficacy. In particular, agency, “the perceived capacity to use

one's pathway to reach desired goals – is the motivational component.” (Snyder, 2002, p. 251). Self-efficacy is the perception of competence, leading to perceptions and explanations of the role the self plays in shaping one's life (Lybbert & Wydick, 2016). In brief, agency is the overall belief that goals are achievable.

An example to point out the relevance of agency is the distinction between wishful and aspirational hope. While wishful hope assumes that an outside factor controls the future, aspirational hope consists of agency and the belief that one can indeed influence the future (Lybbert & Wydick, 2018). The two are fundamentally different in how and if pathways are approached. If one hopes for a higher power to act for oneself, an opportunity might pass them by, whereas the belief in personal influence initiates action. Consequently, religious reasons can contribute to passiveness (Lybbert & Wydick, 2018). This differs from Blöser's concept of rational hope, where not approaching action is a result of no reason (Blöser, 2023).

Duflo summarises this as behaviour and results which depend on the expectation of what is possible (Duflo, 2012). When individuals feel powerless and life seems meaningless, there is even a correlation to income (Duflo, 2012). However, it is important to keep in mind that events that lead to feeling helpless and depressed, such as war, are outside of an individual's control. Still, people react differently to these events (Duflo, 2012). It must not be forgotten that this individual agency is crucial for facing deprivation, while the agency is ultimately limited by external constraints of the social, political and economic factors (Sen, 1999). The constraints on agency through institutions and laws can also be intrinsic through decision capacity and passivity (Duflo, 2012). Development, according to Sen, should lift diverse constraints so that individuals can live in line with their agency (Sen, 1999). Thus, increased removal of constraints helps participants to empower themselves. All things considered, agency is crucial in the execution of our goals.

2.2.4 Pathways

Pathways describe the way towards achieving the goal (Snyder, 2002). An individual with low hope might have difficulties speaking of pathways, in contrast to high-hope individuals who know concrete steps, while being able to pick a new path if an obstacle occurs (Lybbert & Wydick, 2018). This verbalisation makes pathways measurable just as goals and agency are. In a word, a closed pathway is a constraint (Snyder, 2002).

Lybbert and Wydick (2018) explain pathways in a way that persons with higher hope are more inclined to see different potential routes to success. Nevertheless, this choice costs time and mental power to think about options, as well as emotional capacity to take another step (Duflo, 2012). Thus, hopeful individuals can see more pathways to improve their livelihoods.

An example of the role of hope in the context of poverty is people living in poverty without employment, who lack hope. Without a stable source of income, future pathways are limited. The resulting lack of opportunity is an internal constraint. However, the same constraint can also be external. High interest rates, for instance, cannot be controlled. Livestock transfer might alleviate the internal constraint by enabling planning through income generation, while the external constraint remains an obstacle to other possible pathways. This remaining constraint can foster the belief that a pathway involving credit will fail and thus deteriorate this plan towards a goal. In addition, discouragement decreases acting self-disciplined (Duflo, 2012). Keeping in mind the constraints faced by people living in poverty, fostering hope requires goals to be realistic and feasible steps to begin with (Duflo, 2012).

Taking all the above into account, goals, agency and pathways are measurable. Multiple concepts of hope are used in scientific research to conduct data on hope quantitatively and qualitatively (Lybbert & Wydick, 2018; Pleeging, 2022; Snyder, 2002). The chosen definition, which was described above, was selected because it helps to narrow down hope in this smaller project with a smaller group of eight participants. Through the conducted interviews, the perspectives of the interviewees on their hope were observed through verbally named goals, statements of agency and expressed pathways, explicitly and implicitly (Snyder, 2002). As mentioned above, this psychological background allows observations of hope for this research question, which is why this approach was chosen.

NGOs working on livestock development projects aim to reduce poverty and provide new opportunities to the local population. Oftentimes, hope plays an important role in the organisation's motivation as well. Depending on the definition of hope, an organisation might want to empower the rural population with livestock, which influences capabilities and could lead to fostering hope as a side effect. Other organisations directly state that providing hope is their goal, for which GAIN and Sign of Hope, even in their names, are two examples. Duflo hypothesises that having hope is physically similar to being well nourished, pointing to a greater value in fostering hope (Duflo, 2012). Thus, development projects should keep this in mind when working with participants to ensure long-term independence and self-agency. Indeed, when a hopeful individual interacts differently in development cooperation compared to a low-hope

person, it is useful to consider where different types of support can begin by looking at the support someone truly needs.

This connection of poverty, livestock projects and hope, provided directly or indirectly by NGOs, leads back to the research questions in the interviews: What are participating families' experiences with hopefulness before and after one year of the livestock project from GAIN Armenia?

Next, this project's background will be introduced.

3 GAIIN Project's Background

As mentioned in Chapter 2.1.3, since livestock is highly relevant to many people living in poverty, this chapter explores livestock as an asset in more detail. Especially in the context of development projects, the topic is presented, followed by a description of the project from which the participants were interviewed for this study. Lastly, Armenia is presented as the project's setting.

3.1 Livestock as an Asset

Livestock, as a fundamental asset in the lives of families living in poverty, serves several advantages. Its role is to provide food and secure the household's livelihood. Typical animals owned are cows, chickens, goats, or sheep, of which the latter are the species of interest in this paper. In particular, livestock is an income source, which serves as an emergency fund and produces new inputs, e.g. manure, which can be used for heating (Lindahl et al., 2020). Furthermore, animal husbandry can diversify other income sources, e.g. crops, and lastly, livestock products are consumed (Conroy, 2005; Hooft et al., 2012b). Therefore, livestock helps the families support themselves in multiple ways.

Owning livestock is different to working with livestock. Notably, livestock as an owned asset leads to higher earnings compared to working on another farm as an employee, according to Balboni et al. (2022). Another advantage of livestock ownership is improved nutrition outcomes compared to other occupations, such as fishermen or non-farm workers in India (Senthil Kumar et al., 2022). From a cultural perspective, animals can be seen as a sign of wealth, and further support maintaining wealth through buffering economic shocks, but also serving as a buffer for climatic risks (Hooft et al., 2012c). Thus, livestock is valuable to its owner.

From an ecological perspective, the local livestock practices use local inputs, without further waste, which makes them eco-friendly (Hooft et al., 2012c). Regardless, the ecological perspective is not of interest in this study because it does not align with the research question. Considering the pressing issue of climate change, this topic remains extremely relevant for research.

Despite the above, owning livestock introduces challenges as well. How the livestock affects a family's life regarding poverty can vary. While the nutritional benefits of livestock ownership

are also found in children, keeping livestock increases the risk of infections in children and women (Zerfu et al., 2023). Moreover, for livestock production to be profitable, the owner needs further resources exceeding the animals' value, e.g. a vehicle, which enables the sale on a local market (Balboni et al., 2022). In that case, the farm can broaden its income and grow as a result (Balboni et al., 2022). Nevertheless, owning livestock comes with constraints to productivity: in arid regions, water can be scarce, diseases or wild animals can kill livestock, it requires work, theft can reduce the number of animals, and lastly, insufficient feeding can result in decreased productivity (Conroy, 2005). However, the livestock can not improve credit or insurance access, which is where policies are important. Instead, people need to rely on migration, for example, to cope with the difficulty of accessing financial support (Sultakeev & Petrick, 2025). These examples show that owning livestock as a contributing factor to escape poverty is a complex matter and not an easy solution.

Lastly, owning livestock is not just work, but a lifestyle (Hooft et al., 2012c). It is important to recognise that this fundamental role of agriculture influences the worldview of families and their opinion on livestock projects (Hooft et al., 2012a). This cultural knowledge is relevant for designing such projects.

3.2 Livestock as Development Support: Important Project Elements

Because of all the above, livestock projects are seen as a great development project. With increasing demand for animal products, the value of animal products helps poor households to escape poverty (Lindahl et al., 2020). However, a variety of factors are important in the design and implementation of these projects.

As mentioned, the worldview of the family is important, which includes the socioeconomic structure a family lives in and their culture, as well as a potentially already existing farming system in their lives. Hooft et al. state that the missing consideration leads to “a disappointing impact of livestock development efforts in terms of poverty alleviation” (Hooft et al., 2012a, p. 10). Banerjee et al. (2015) add to this aspect that the promotion of livestock businesses is difficult to implement and is seen as a failing approach. Considerations to address this problem begin with selecting livestock that fits the family's lifestyle and including the farming community in the design of projects (Hooft et al., 2012a). Hooft et al. suggest that development projects, therefore, must begin with the perspectives of beneficiaries (Hooft et al., 2012c). Synergies can emerge through community-based approaches that support livestock owners to learn

from each other. With this in mind, the already existing local knowledge must be included (Hooft et al., 2012c). Further, they argue that families' aspirations should be the goal, so beneficiaries should be empowered to create the development process to realise them (Lammerink & van Otterloo-Butler, 2010). Including cultural factors contributes to improving the outcome of projects.

A common concept is the redistribution of animals within a connected local society. A newborn animal can be given to another person in the group who knows animal husbandry to increase their income as well (Hooft et al., 2012c). One organisation called Heifer International provides livestock as an asset in combination with seeds, trees and substantial knowledge. In this way, they provide not only assets for income and food but a diverse spectrum of support (Hooft et al., 2012c).

Additionally, training can be part of livestock development projects. Training is not only generally useful, but should especially include animal health knowledge (Hooft et al., 2012c). A study showed that knowledge of cattle health improved their health status (Lindahl et al., 2020). Another aspect to consider is education on hygiene and nutrition. A study from Mullally et al. showed improved outcomes when education included these topics (Mullally et al., 2021). Notably, Balboni et al. (2022) found that the training effect was greater on people who had livestock before. The improved knowledge, therefore, develops the family's livestock assets.

A different kind of support can address market access. Projects can help families with accessing the market for local sales, which empowers them to increase income from an existing subsistence (Hooft et al., 2012c). Fostering livestock farming in an area where the infrastructure is insufficient for business expansion limits the undertaking from the start. This leads back to the notion of rationality in this undertaking (Blöser, 2023).

Furthermore, motivating savings, e.g. through coaching, is important. As described in Chapter 2.1, part of the poverty trap is maintained through saving behaviour (Duflo, 2012), which can be improved through livestock and then helps to cope with future shocks (Pell et al., 2010). Thus, including market infrastructure and savings as financial aspects in livestock development projects contributes to utilising their potential.

All the advantages of livestock could be expected in livestock development projects (see Chapter 3.1). However, studies show varying results. A review found that the livelihoods improved through livestock interventions, but anthropometric nutritional indicators showed no effect (Lindahl et al., 2020). Whereas another study suggests that livestock transfer with cash,

education, and support to save money and knowledge on health increased the wealth of families, which could be sustained for a year (Lindahl et al., 2020). Additionally, the benefits exceeded the initial costs of livestock asset transfers (Lindahl et al., 2020). Banerjee found that this calculation is true for most countries and that treatment groups had significantly larger income, revenues and consumption (Banerjee et al., 2015). Duflo reports effects through livestock transfer, where, after 18 months, the per capita food consumption increased on average by 15 % across beneficiaries. This effect was higher than what the recipients could have achieved by selling the livestock (Banerjee et al., 2011). A study in Niger combined capital support with psychosocial support through life skills training and awareness of aspirations and social norms. Especially the combination of both supports had the best results. They found an increase in consumption, food security, investments, women's participation, livestock ownership and revenues, as well as income diversification on a household level, after six and 18 months post-intervention (Bossuroy et al., 2021). Overall, different improvements were observed, depending on what the projects supported. It remains unclear for how long the change will be maintained and if it will keep people out of poverty.

Livestock projects as a livelihood approach can reduce rural poverty when constraints are relieved. Certainly, all possible constraints need to be taken into account, including institutions, markets, and policies (Pell et al., 2010) and psychosocial factors (Bossuroy et al., 2021). Bossuroy et al. show that the greatest effects on consumption and food security were observed when the group was treated psychosocially, which included life skills training and awareness for aspirations and social values, and was supported with a cash transfer (Bossuroy et al., 2021). Although revenues increased when the people owned more livestock assets and had increased labour (Banerjee et al., 2015), Balboni et al. (2022) found that support can be a tiny economic push that increases consumption while the recipients below the poverty threshold remain stuck in the poverty trap. Then again, this argument is based on an asset transfer. In order for livestock projects to be sustainable, many factors contribute. Since the reviewed study results show different outcomes, it seems that there is no generalised solution in applying livestock transfer as a poverty remedy; the presented studies, which provide a variety of support, including psychosocial support, report positive results.

When discussing the varying outcomes of the studies above, it is important to consider the time in livestock development projects. It takes time until the effects are measurable, because breeding takes more time than crop yields (Pell et al., 2010). Consequently, when project support ends after one year, and the results are reviewed at that time, this timing can create a bias where

the true effect can not be measured (Pell et al., 2010). Accordingly, this is another explanation for the different results. As shown above, different projects which aim to pull people out of poverty provide different combinations of support. For example, Banerjee et al. (2015) found that it is important to address multiple levels through a combination of productive asset transfer, technical training, life skills, visits, savings and health information. While multiple support strategies are initially more expensive as a program, it is necessary to sustainably push the majority of participants out of poverty (Banerjee et al., 2015).

In addition to the above, gender roles are an important factor which is often overlooked in livestock projects. Women take on the workload of animal husbandry, while project directors are often male. This gender difference could, depending on the culture, impede communication between the household and organisations (Hooft et al., 2012a). This gender inequity against women taking on the workload is stressed again through the high infection risk that affects them and their children through transmission by the animals, because they spend more time with them (Zerfu et al., 2023). Equally important are the findings that beneficiaries' health improved while domestic violence remained unaffected by the livestock asset and training provided (Glass et al. found in Lindahl et al., 2020). Then, in cash transfer-focused studies, it became clear that women's businesses only grew when they were supported, while men's businesses grew without external support (Blattman et al., 2014). For this reason, women could be empowered through taking part in training and, first of all, noting that they are the ones who manage the household (Nesamvuni et al., 2010). The studied project from Banerjee et al. showed positive effects on women's empowerment, with the broad approach of many support strategies; however, they found that the empowerment did not last (Banerjee et al., 2015). This is why projects should address women and always be informed about the local women's rights situation so that projects can contribute towards lasting empowerment from the beginning.

Lastly, Banerjee and Duflo warn that such projects should “give poor communities the opportunity and then get out of the way!” (Banerjee & Duflo, 2008 found in Duflo, 2012, p. 7). Because of that, Duflo highlights the importance of empowering poor communities in a bottom-up approach. This means that people must participate and act to evoke change. For instance, through top-down programs, which are what we consider charity, choice can be constrained, thus decreasing Sen's freedoms and keeping the people stuck in poverty (Duflo, 2012). Livestock project plans should always involve and empower the recipients.

All in all, livestock projects can potentially release constraints that keep people poor, for example, through increased income and provide an opportunity for self-employment. Subsequently,

people can develop new goals and therefore potentially hope. This chapter has shown that multiple aspects contribute to these projects' outcomes, to name a few: culture, community, training, savings, psychosocial support, timing, gender roles, and empowerment are important to include. While it is a complex matter, many NGOs work with these livestock projects, like GAIN, to provide a new perspective and hope. Since the participants of this study are from GAIN's livestock project, this project will be introduced in detail in the next chapter.

3.3 GAIN's Project Plan

GAIN is an international humanitarian NGO aiming to “reveal hope and restore life through relief and development initiatives for people living in crisis and injustice” (GAIN Worldwide, 2026). Through a global logistics network, the organisation can distribute gifts in kind for people in need. Their goal is to view each person individually, inspired by the quote “Whoever saves one life, saves the world entire” found in the Talmud. Their vision is reflected in the name “gain”, which means to receive something positive and useful over a period of time (Cambridge Dictionary, 2026b).

Within their global network are country-specific offices in Australia, Austria, Canada, Germany, South Korea, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (GAIN Worldwide, 2026). To name a few examples, GAIN improves water access in Sub-Saharan African countries, such as Togo and Benin, and supports children through partnerships with local schools or children's shelters in Haiti and Uganda (GAIN Germany, n. d.–b). Then, Medical Missions are part of GAIN Australia's work, for example, in the Philippines and Cambodia (GAIN Australia, n. d.). The NGO is active in multiple countries, offering support in diverse crises. Overall, GAIN provides relief through food, shelter and non-food items; water wells with WASH-strategies; and disaster response. The focus of the German office is on Eastern European and Central Asian countries, including the GAIN Germany Field Office in Armenia (GAIN Germany, n. d.–b).

The office in Armenia is an independently registered NGO, and GAIN Germany has been active there locally since 2000. The German Project Leaders for Armenia are responsible for the staff and projects, including strategy and decision-making. Their responsibilities include the complete project lifecycle from design to planning, monitoring, and evaluation, including the financial aspects. The German Project Coordinator, on the other hand, is the bridge between the local GAIN Armenia office and GAIN Germany. In close cooperation with the Project Coordinator,

the local staff works on the project implementation and monitoring, local procurement, and takes part in decision-making processes, such as which families should receive livestock transfers and advises the German project team regarding cultural norms and intricacies. They also advise about the contract with the households that receive livestock from GAIN (J. Fischer, personal communication, February 4, 2026).

The local office in Armenia launched the Sheep Rearing Support Project in 2022. Their goal is to improve families' livelihoods through resources for livestock farming (Weichbrodt, 2025). First, the staff from GAIN communicates with well-connected local people from villages where poverty is prominent. No specific region is focused on. The local mayor or an elderly person informs them about potential beneficiaries, because they know the social system and are in contact with families who sometimes already receive state support. Then, the Team from GAIN visits the household to decide if the people fit the project. Necessary criteria include experience with animal husbandry and the willingness to be accountable and motivated for this program (J. Fischer, personal communication, March 12, 2026). In the beginning, participating families have a stable, pasture, fodder and contact with a veterinary service as well as experience in animal husbandry (see **Figure 5**). If they have no access to the infrastructure, GAIN supports individuals in acquiring the feed or a stable, for example, depending on financial possibilities (J. Fischer, personal communication, March 12, 2026). Next, through the support program, they receive ten sheep, which ideally are pregnant (see **Figure 6**). The sheep are a typical Armenian breed which is adapted to the weather conditions and considered robust (see **Figure 7**) (Weichbrodt, 2025). This provision can result in participants changing their occupation to self-employed by owning livestock contributing to higher income, which was described in the literature above (Balboni et al., 2022).



Figure 4: Sheepflock with the Local Shepherd
Source: author's own photograph



Figure 5: Sheep in a Stable next to a Recipient's House
Source: author's own photograph



Figure 6: Sheep with a Lamb
Source: author's own photograph



Figure 7: Sheepflock
Source: author's own photograph

Some families care for the sheep themselves, while other flocks join the local shepherd (see **Figure 4**). After two years, if participants agree by signing a contract, five ideally pregnant sheep will be redistributed to another family, which establishes a network of sheep-owning families (Weichbrodt, 2025). This distribution aims towards fostering the feeling of contributing to the village, which should support self-efficacy. GAiN gives five additional sheep to the new participating household, so that the project is partially self-sustainable. Lastly, no

enforcement is performed if a family is unable to contribute five sheep. While accountability is important, GAIN acknowledges extenuating circumstances such as medical care. (J. Fischer, personal communication, March 12, 2026)

The overarching objective is to receive hope through the improved livelihood and empowerment, as well as evoking a deeper societal change through participation in sheep redistribution and the connection to other families. The sheep provide income for the family and add new food groups to their diet. Furthermore, the income is useful for medical expenses or other investments. Long-term, GAIN supports the families towards financial independence and, as an organisation with a Christian motivation, hopes that participants experience God’s love, hope, and feel seen through their project participation (Weichbrodt, 2025).

A family that is seen as successful by the local NGO Team, considered investing in their farm after the sheep increased their income for three years. This is in line with the research from Balboni et al. (2022), reporting that families who aim to escape poverty invest their earnings into their assets.

The project is regularly evaluated and developed further. Currently, no specific gender policy is in place to assess women's participation.

To gain a better understanding of the participants and the project, the country in which they live will be presented next.

3.4 Project Setting: Armenia

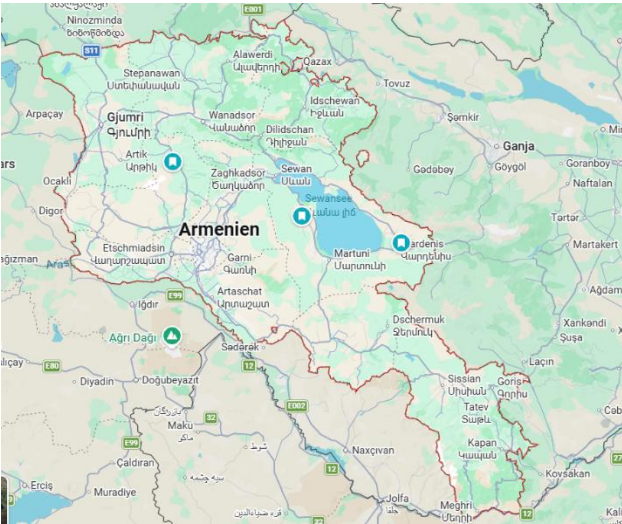


Figure 8: Armenia
Source: (Google Maps, 2026)

Starting with a brief overview of facts about the country, Armenia is a Caucasian state with a rich history, set between Turkey and Azerbaijan, with Georgia to the north and Iran to the south, as visualised in **Figure 8** (BBC News, 2024). Armenia's capital is Yerevan, and the main language spoken is Armenian (BBC News, 2024). The Caucasian country is a democracy with multiple parties (Sunny & Howe, n. d.), which is considered partly free in terms of civil liberties and

political rights (Freedom House, 2025). In 2018, protests and elections sidelined a fixed political elite. Since then, the government has improved corruption, elections, the law, and policies towards transparency. An example is the new Law on Parties, narrowing down donations, hence political pluralism and participation receive three out of four points. Unfortunately, the judicial system still receives one out of four points from Freedom House (Freedom House, 2025). With most scores at two out of four points, it is clear that the country faces challenges, resulting in an overall freedom score of 54/100 (Freedom House, 2025).

3.4.1 Poverty in Armenia

The population in Armenia is affected by poverty. According to the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), Armenia is an upper-middle-income country (OECD, n. d.). The GDP per capita in 2024 was 8,613 USD (IMF found in Destatis, 2025). The life expectancy for women is 81 years, and for men, 74.1 years (WB-WDI found in Destatis, 2025). Armenia's Human Development Index is 0.811, which ranks it 69th in country comparison (UNDP found in Destatis, 2025). Furthermore, the unemployment rate was 13.3 % in 2024 (ILOSTAT found in Destatis, 2025). Looking at poverty statistics, the Armenian Statistical Committee (ARMSTAT) has calculated that in 2024, following the average poverty line, 21.7 % of the total population were poor. For rural areas, the number increases to 26 % (ARMSTAT, 2025b). The average poverty line is set at 53,420 Armenian Dram, which is approximately 120.19 € per month. This equals 4 € per day. The lower poverty line is marked at 3.20 € per day (ARMSTAT, 2025b; Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, 2025). Moreover, almost 50 % of the population received secondary education as their highest education level, but 90% of the adult population has completed at least secondary education (ARMSTAT, 2025b). In conclusion, the data shows the relevance of fighting the present poverty in Armenia for almost 637,619 Armenians, which is one-fifth of the population.

Additionally, the population is affected by food insecurity. Manucharyan states food insecurity as one expression of poverty in this transitioning economy. The author argues for increased food production and a necessary transition towards an overall productive agricultural sector for the population to access healthy food (Manucharyan, 2021). While the Food Insecurity Experience Scale of 6.6% points to comparatively limited food insecurity, it nevertheless implies that a minority of households experienced difficulties in accessing sufficient food, highlighting the

relevance of addressing food insecurity (ARMSTAT, 2025a). In brief, food security is still a challenge faced by the Armenians.

Next, the cultural context in which the livestock projects are implemented is elaborated.

3.4.2 The Armenian History and Hope

As introduced above, Armenia has a rich history, which has caused deep generational trauma to the Armenian population (Anshu, 2025). This history and culture shape perceptions, hence they are relevant to exploring the role of hope. After learning about the connection between trauma and hope, these historical events are relevant for livestock development project design.

The country holds the second-oldest and largest diaspora in the world (Anshu, 2025; Mollica & Hakobyan, 2021). First, with the genocide in 1915 during the First World War, many thousands of Armenians fled to the United States, France, Syria, Lebanon and Russia. Depending on estimates, 600,000 to 1,500,000 Armenians were murdered in the genocide (Suny & Howe, n. d.). Second, when Armenia became independent in 1990 after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict led to war. Because of the deteriorating living conditions, once again, hundreds of thousands emigrated, and thousands were killed (Suny & Howe, n. d.). Today, many Armenian migrants stay abroad, establishing the diaspora (Anshu, 2025). With many changes in the following 20 years in leading politicians and a closer connection to the European Union (EU), the Armenians introduced a parliamentary system in 2015. The country continued to be challenged by corruption. After failed negotiations, the diplomatic relationship between Armenia and Azerbaijan deteriorated. Then in 2020, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict led to tremendous fights again. Today, the Enclave is under Azerbaijani control, and the Armenians who lived in the enclave fled to other Armenian regions (Suny & Howe, n. d.). Accordingly, these historical events should be considered in the hope research, especially the effect on goals in Chapter 2.2.2.

Hope remains deeply relevant to the Armenian culture. Researchers who observed personal narratives about the Armenian survival and hope found different perspectives. Some interviewees reported a survival identity with statements filled with optimism and positive perspectives about the ability to fight for the country, its industries and communities. For example, “I know that we are people that can survive, endure, produce, manufacture.” (Miller et al., 2003, p. 137). Statements like this came from people who view hope as important.

At the same time, others were less optimistic. People reported that hope runs low after years of survival. While some showed signs of depression, others kept the survival narrative, for instance, “Armenians survive, Armenians endure.” (Miller et al., 2003, p. 138). Another person said, “I have no hope, but I can tell you that if the war ends, we will be okay.” (Miller et al., 2003, p. 139) Notably, this research was conducted after the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 1988 and the continued deterioration of living conditions in 1990 (Suny & Howe, n. d.).

Narratives persist. As a nation which has survived a genocide, statements like “You see, what our great-grandfathers went through, we are going through now. It is history repeating itself. Suffering then, suffering now. War then, war now. Death then, death now.” (Miller et al., 2003, p. 151). Miller et al. emphasise a historical consciousness. All these narratives influence the role of hope and perspectives on productivity, which is relevant for livestock development projects, given these aspects of the cultural background stressed by Hooft et al.

Since agriculture plays a crucial role for the Armenian population, and sheep farming has been a traditional and economically productive part of livestock farming in Armenia (Manasian, 2011), aspects of livestock in Armenia are described below to wrap up the introduction of the project setting.

3.4.3 Livestock in Armenia

The landlocked country (BBC News, 2024) has alpine pastures, which are used for animal husbandry (Suny & Howe, n. d.). According to the statistical committee of Armenia, 68.6 % of the land is agricultural land (ARMSTAT, 2025b). In 2024, 17.6 % of employees worked in agriculture, forestry and fishing (ARMSTAT, 2025b). A report by the World Bank showed that larger livestock assets decrease the risk of facing poverty (World Bank Group, 2007). Therefore, agriculture is important in the country.

Sheep are particularly important. Together with goats, the animals are the second most frequent species in animal husbandry, after poultry (ARMSTAT, 2025b). Sheep specifically fit the harsh weather conditions faced in the mountain regions (Manasian, 2011). Additionally, it is a great source of protein and micronutrients, while being low in cholesterol. Simultaneously, sheep are less factor-intensive compared to other livestock and utilise the land more efficiently (Manasian, 2011). This is why sheep were chosen for GAIN Armenia's livestock project by the team.

Livestock projects have been implemented in Armenia by different actors. One example is the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. They researched “sustainable livestock agriculture as a key to economic prosperity in rural areas of Armenia”. The project included 13 villages of the Syunik region. The aim was to enhance market access and veterinary care, teach animal husbandry and improve milk production with cattle farming. Then, the project expanded to cover a variety of regions. Later, the project supported the farmers in developing their value chains for dairy and meat products. Furthermore, they kept supporting the participants with financing and governance aspects important to their business, as well as general farm support services (Zakaryan, 2023). Finally, the results showed an increase in income by 60 % and a productivity increase by 25 % for dairy and 32 % for beef production. Overall, many received support and benefit from enhanced access to farm support services and agricultural markets (Zakaryan, 2023). Thus, it is reasonable to consider livestock development projects to fight poverty in Armenia.

All in all, the country faces poverty, has a rich history which heavily influenced hope narratives into optimistic or depressed directions, and livestock is important for the rural population. With the presented background on poverty, hope and livestock, the research question can be approached.

4 Methodology

In this chapter, the methodology behind this thesis is explained. First, the selected method is clarified; after which, the sampling and the data-collection process are described. Lastly, the analytical process is characterised.

On a field trip to GAIN's sheep project during an internship, I observed that participants reacted differently to receiving sheep as livestock asset transfer. Surprisingly, some recipients mentioned business plans, while others did not know why sheep had died. Later, it struck me that the households seemed to view their role in the results of their farming differently. As mentioned before, the goal of GAIN is to provide a new perspective for the future through the sheep. Therefore, I was wondering what role hope could play in the experiences of families with the sheep. Does the project make the participants more hopeful? Or are the beneficiaries hopeful in the beginning? What is the true impact of the project on poverty markers? Because of these questions and observations, the following research questions evolved inductively.

1. What are participating families' experiences with hopefulness before and after one year of the livestock project from GAIN Armenia?
2. Which changes in multidimensional poverty aspects can be observed since the beginning of the project?
3. What are potential lessons learned, opportunities and future research questions from the project?
 - a. How can GAIN or other NGOs foster hope practically?
 - b. What implications are there for the government to foster hope?

To answer the first and main research question about experiences, a qualitative approach was needed. The second question was approached through questions and observations, as described in Chapter 4.3. The last questions are discussed in Chapter 6.

The foundation of this research is the concept that text can inform the analyst about social structures, a view known as objective hermeneutics. This means that the text is used to understand the true objective behind its content (Mayring, 2014). In this approach, the preconceptions of the researcher described in the theoretical background inform the interpretation continuously until the text material is fully interpreted (Mayring, 2014). In a greater scientific framework, the belief that the reality of participants is the result of people's interactions and experiences and therefore is constructed is fundamental and grounded in the paradigm of social

constructivism (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Glas, 2023). Thus, reality can be known through the interaction between the researcher and participants (Glas, 2023). Given these points, the foundation for this research approach was set.

Coming from this concept of hermeneutics, the following research questions were answered by analysing the meaning behind the empirical data gathered.

4.1 Literature Research

The starting point of my research was a literature study. In the beginning, I read three papers that Professor Petrick, the first supervisor of this thesis, recommended. I began with Lybbert & Wydicks “Poverty, Aspirations, and the Economics of Hope” (2018), to familiarise myself with the concept of hope in development economics. Then, I studied Balboni et al. (2022). After that, I read “Harsh winter shocks and distress sales: Consumption and asset smoothing among livestock farmers in Kyrgyzstan” by Sultakeev & Petrick (2025), which introduced me to livestock as assets in poverty (Balboni et al., 2022; Lybbert & Wydick, 2018; Sultakeev & Petrick, 2025). In the meantime, Lybbert & Wydick's paper led to other hope-related works, (Lybbert & Wydick, 2016; Sen, 1999; Snyder, 2002). These papers set the beginning for my theoretical knowledge.

Next, country-specific literature for Armenia was researched. For background information on country data, I used data for Armenia from the World Bank (Bossuroy et al., 2021), the Asian Development Bank (ADB, 2025), and the ARMSTAT. The term “country profile Armenia” was searched in Ecosia, which led to a country profile from Destatis, 2025, while “poverty share Armenia” led to the ADB, 2025.

To expand the body of literature, the search string “Poverty AND Livestock” was searched in Justfind by Justus Liebig University. Peer-reviewed literature was reviewed from 2020 to 2025. Since many results focused on climate factors, the time period was expanded. Utilised sources were Bossuroy et al. (2021), Hooft et al. (2012d), Swanepoel et al. (2010). Further, the term “Poverty AND Hope” revealed papers from Blöser (2023), Bossuroy et al. (2021), Cassio et al. (2021), and Krumer-Nevo (2020c). From researching “animal husbandry Armenia”, using Google Scholar Manasian (2011) was included. Searching for “Hope in Armenia” via Google Scholar put out Miller et al. (2003). In the literature search, I selected sources earlier than 2020 which connected livestock poverty, or hope poverty, without a heavy focus on other topics such

as nutrition or climate change. However, for fundamental definitions or primary literature, older papers were considered as well. Continuously, further literature was selected to find the primary source of the information (Banerjee et al., 2015; Barrett et al., 2019; Blattman et al., 2014; Duflo, 2012; Lindahl et al., 2020; Pleeging, 2022). This established the literary background for my research.

To provide an overview of the project, I used a manual from the executive office of GAIN Armenia, which I curated during my work placement (Weichbrodt, 2025). The office provided basic information on the participating families.

Meanwhile, the literature search on the methodology started with a recommendation by Professor Petrick to read Conroy (2005). After developing the research question and the method, interview techniques were researched in Google Scholar. I used Flick (2011) for the interview design together with Renner & Jacob (2020), and began developing my method on Flick's, *Qualitative Social Sciences: An Introduction* (2021), which was recommended to me by a fellow student. Out of the lecture on empirical research methods in my degree, I used Gill et al. (2008), Kuckartz and Rädiker (2022), Mayring and Fenzl (2022), Mayring (2014) and Braun and Clarke (2022) in the current versions accessible in the Justus Liebig University library system. I mainly used these books for defining the thematic analysis process (see Chapter 4.4.3). Finally, the literature research was completed.

4.2 Sampling

The sampling began with reviewing the data on families who received sheep from GAIN. In December 2024, eight families were given sheep, which creates a sample group that fits a criterion sampling typology through the criterion of the date the families received the sheep (Miles & Hubermann (1994) found in Glas, 2023). Hence, the decision was made to interview all eight families from the latest project round to ensure that retrospective questions are answered with the most recent experience and that all families had the same time for possible change through the project. Furthermore, the time to conduct data fit the number of families and their accessibility for this thesis, which was convenient and thus influenced the sampling (Conroy, 2005). In the end, it was possible to interview all eight families in Armenia.

After studying the methodological literature for my research question, it was logical to use episodic interviews to ask participants about the event of receiving sheep, and to do so recurrently

to open the interview towards hope and encourage the interviewee to talk about their perceptions (Flick, 2011). The interview was semi-structured to guide the interview into the direction of talking about goals and thereafter hope, experiences with the sheep and how they influenced their daily life and encourage them to talk. Additionally, the questions were selected to support participants in telling their story openly (Conroy, 2005; Flick, 2011). The guideline was aimed at leading the discussion to reveal goals, pathways and planning or agency.

For that matter, an interview guideline was developed with an introduction, warm-up questions to start the conversation, as well as transitioning questions or statements to lead the participants through the interview. In the guideline, the questions became more open, inviting discussion (Conroy, 2005; Renner & Jacob, 2020). For the direct questions, the Adult Trait Hope Scale (ATHS) inspired my interview guideline. This scale is used for quantitative hope approaches and measures with a seven-point scale the agreement on statements such as “I meet the goals that I set for myself” (Pleeging, 2022, p. 4442). Opposite to other questions, those asking about plans were broader in the beginning and became narrower following Snyder's observation that this way of asking gives more room for explicit and implicit goals (See **Annex A**) (Snyder, 2002). The Interview duration was approximately 60 minutes, while the episodic part took only 30 minutes, which was set as the minimum beforehand (Renner & Jacob, 2020). Finally, with the finished guideline, the families were interviewed.

The participants were interviewed as a household so that the main interviewee felt comfortable instead of isolated, and in a natural setting (Renner & Jacob, 2020). The interview was addressed to the primary person who cared for the sheep. In some cases, the person differed from the one being in contact with GAIN to plan the meeting. Furthermore, the GAIN employees explained that the families usually care for the sheep together. Throughout the interviews, it became clear that there is no constant person who cares for the sheep. Usually, the woman is occupied with the care work in the household, while animal husbandry is not necessarily her duty. The literature suggests women are typically responsible for the livestock (Hooft et al., 2012b). For the sampled families, this workload distribution was dependent on the job the husband is employed in. For instance, he could be an active soldier, in which case he is usually far away from home; however, older soldiers have different contracts allowing them to be home most of the time, such as P4, in which case, they care for the sheep. Another observed scenario is that the husband works somewhere outside the village, in which case the sheep stay with a shepherd, like in P7's case. This is in line with Hooft et al.'s observation that rural households have diverse income streams from livestock and migration (Hooft et al., 2012b). This is why it

was useful to address the household first and ask the main questions to the primary sheep caregiver.

The responsibility for the livestock was similar throughout the families.

The first family managed the sheep together, but the primary contact person was busy in the household during our visit, so her father-in-law mainly participated in the interview with his wife. He is also mainly occupied with the sheep. Particularly, this interview served as a test of the interview guideline, and adjustments were made afterwards, mainly regarding one food question, which turned out to be a taboo in the Armenian culture as explained by the local staff and the first family which was interviewed. Since the total number of interviews was eight, this pre-test was included in the analysis.

The second household cares for the sheep together, but because of sickness, the primary interviewee was alone. In household number three, the contact person is also the primary carer of the sheep. The same is true for households four and five, unlike household six, where the couple answered together because they both manage their flock.

With interviewee P7, the meeting was very short. She was interviewed alone, even though her husband is the primary sheep carer. Because of the small sample size, the interview was still conducted and kept; however, the answers were not heavily focused on the sheep since P7 was unable to answer most sheep-related questions. She still noticed some effects of the project without working with the sheep herself, and any observation is useful, although this interview was shorter than the others. The little outcome can still inform questions about the role of hope.

In the last household, both parents answered the questions alternately, which enabled the conversation to provide a variety of information.

To summarise, interviewees were sampled as follows:

- Having received sheep from GAIN Armenia in December 2024
- Main carer of the sheep

4.3 Data Collection

Before the interview, an information sheet was handed to the participants, explaining the procedure (Conroy, 2005), anonymity, confidentiality, and that no advantage or disadvantage

follows the interview. This information was provided for informed consent and to maximise honest responses (Gill et al., 2008). The persons then agreed to participate in the interview.

Immediately, the conversations were translated by the local translator from GAIN NGO Armenia. She was unfamiliar with the households before the interviews. The translation was carried out word by word, sometimes in the third person. Whenever the translator deviated from the guidelines, she informed me about it, which was recorded as well as the rest of the interview. Later, translation gaps in the audio recording could be filled after the interview was conducted with the translator's help via e-mail. During and after the interview, I took notes on special nuances, observations and key statements. This created the empirical basis for the analysis.

In order to gain a better understanding of the family's situation, an MPI questionnaire from Oxfam inspired questions related to the livelihoods of the families and was used with the intention of adding to the GAIN data, not to calculate the actual MPI. However, in the process of using these questions, some difficulties arose. While the original questionnaire uses anthropometric data for quantitative calculations, I decided to ask the families about their dietary diversity instead, because it was realistic given the instruments and time at hand. Discussing meal components turned out to be a cultural taboo. While I intended to fill data gaps in the data from the local GAIN team with this information, e.g. number of sheep alive, it turned out that the families' situations are very similar. This is described in Chapter 5.4. Nevertheless, this data on families' livelihoods added to the data on the families and still helped to understand the families' lives better. The information on the livelihoods was noted at the beginning of the project and after one year by asking the family for the missing information directly and through observation. Another advantage of this additional data collection was that it served as a logbook on the field data, including dates such as time, location and who exactly was interviewed. Unfortunately, we observed that some families felt uncomfortable with the questions regarding their home, which is why the data for the last year was only noted when the family freely told us about it, and not if they showed any sign of discomfort. Further, the current sheep ownership number was added to the NGO's data. However, in the process of visiting the families, it became clear that the information is secondary for the research and overall made the interviewees feel uncomfortable. This is why health-related questions were dropped. With more time and consideration, it might have been useful to adapt the questionnaire to suit the Armenian culture better. This cultural aspect should be considered in future research. In the final analysis, the multidimensional poverty aspects were useful but limited.

After all data had been collected, the analysis of the material began.

4.4 Analytical Method

The analytic method follows Kuckartz and Mayring's thematic analysis. In the following, I describe the exact transcription and coding rules used to analyse the empirical material. After inductively approaching the topic, the reflexive thematic analysis is deductive and explores the hope theory in the data through the underlying meaning provided by the empirical material. This material illustrates the experiences of the sheep project participants. Then, the analysis aimed to identify these lived experiences with hope in the data.

4.4.1 Transcription

After conducting the interviews, the transcription of the audio files was carried out. Only the translated parts of the interview, which are German, were transcribed and translated into English when transferring to the code-tree. Since the answers of the interviewees were short, the transcription was done sentence by sentence.

First, the data was prepared for transcription by defining the rules for the process and transcribing accordingly. Second, the first transcript was improved by correcting typing mistakes. Third, the participants were given anonymous numbers. Fourth, sentences that carried no content were deleted, and paragraphs with repetition were paraphrased (Flick, 2021). Lastly, the data was imported into QDA Miner Lite (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2022).

The transcription followed these rules, adapted from Kuckartz & Rädiker 2022:

1. The transcription is carried out sentence by sentence
2. A new paragraph begins whenever a new person speaks
3. The Interviewer is called I, the translator T, and the person answering P with the number of the interview (e.g. P1)
 - a. The transcript consists only of the translated part in German.
 - b. T indicates that the translator paraphrased, used the 3rd person or added something, which is noted additionally.
 - c. P indicates that the translation is in 1st person.
4. The grammar is corrected when necessary
5. Significant breaks or distortions are marked

6. Emphasis is noted through underlining
7. Nonverbal Reactions, e.g. hesitation, laughter or mood, are noted in [...]
8. Deviations from the interview guideline are noted in a German addition to the question
9. Unclear passages are highlighted
10. Useful time sequences are indicated in (...)
 - a. Time is measured in speaking about sheep, hope and livelihoods without the introduction to the interview process.

After the transcription process, the coding began.

4.4.2 Coding

The coding process was done with QDA Miner Lite. The thematic coding was deductive because the research question asked about the topic of hope, which was given through hope theory (Mayring & Fenzl, 2022). In the following, the coding rules are described:

Important themes following the research question are hopefulness and poverty. Following the literature theme for hopefulness: goals, agency towards the goals, pathways, wishful hope and the perception of the future were coded. For example, when families named the possession of a goal, which could be a plan, something they want to achieve, it was coded as a goal. Indicators that the family believes that this goal is achievable or the opposite is the case were coded as agency. This could be a phrase stating action and the role of the self in the achievement of the goal. Then, pathways were coded when families narrated how the goal should be achieved or counter plans in case of obstacles, as well as the perception of different options. This code could only notice the plan, not the resulting action. To explore realised actions, it would be necessary to follow up with the interviewees two years later; however, this is not the frame for this master's thesis. Lastly, wishful hope was coded when outcomes were connected to a higher power. The coding rules are based on the foundation of the definition of hope in 2.2, deduced from Lybbert and Wydick (2016), Pleeging (2022), and Snyder (2002). The perception of the future plays a crucial role in positive psychology and was therefore coded. In addition to that, the perception is an extension of hope since Snyder proposes that asking questions about goals can be done in a direct and indirect manner, to know about explicit and implicit goals (Snyder, 2002). Some of these text parts could not be classified as a direct goal, but mentioned important future visions and therefore indirectly contribute to goals and thus hope (Snyder, 2002). Then, the reported mood of the interviewees connected to the sheep can be an extension of perception

or a result of goals and is relevant to get an idea of the impact the project has on the internal world and, consequently, hope (Snyder, 2002). For comparison, it was coded before and after the sheep, whenever the families described a feeling. These codes revealed experiences with hopefulness from the data.

To keep in mind multiple aspects of poverty, phrases that depict the living standard or health, inspired by the Oxford MPI questionnaire, were coded and fell under the coding rules of goals and constraints (Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, 2025). Sen defines poverty as the deprivation of capabilities, which is why any imposed change through additional possibilities to act lies in the theme of new possibilities in the family's lives (Sen, 1999). Furthermore, external constraints are important. They were coded if anything is hindering the family from achieving a goal or living life to their fullest potential, for example, health costs, high interest rates or livestock health (Lybbert & Wydick, 2016). As the opposite of constraint, new possibilities were coded as well, describing changes through possibilities after receiving the sheep. These themes captured elements of poverty in the data.

The coding followed these rules, adapted from (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2022; Mayring & Fenzl, 2022):

1. The main codes were deduced from the literature and added to the corresponding text passages in the software
2. Passages that were coded were one word minimum and interpreted in the context of a paragraph
3. After that, but also simultaneously, subcategories were identified
4. Then the codes were suited to text passages fulfilling the coding rule
5. The process was repeated, and the codes were updated through the material
6. Codes were merged or split when useful
7. Then a table of codes was created and filled with quotations or paraphrases of the interview, see **Annex**.

The categories formed for the codes were thematic, and regarding the topic of hope, of a theoretical nature (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2022).

4.4.3 Thematic Analysis

After the entire interview material was transcribed, the research question was applied to the material using the prior set of hope definitions. Significant passages were commented on with memos in the QDA-Software. The developed codes were applied to the material, as mentioned in 4.4.2, and coded in accordance with the set rules and definitions. I then began filling the code tree with the themes (Mayring & Fenzl, 2022).

Subsequently, I created the table of codes with the following structure: Main Category / Code / Subcode / Code Description / Quotation or Paraphrase, see **Figure 9**.

Code Tree - Fighting Poverty with Sheep in Armenia - The Role of Hope					
Main Category	Code	Sub code	Code Description	Interview P1	Interview P2
Hopefulness	Goals	General	Indicators of hopefulness: a plan or something to achieve.	"If Armenia's peace remains stable, we have many goals" (L. 56)	

Figure 9: Code Tree Excerpt
 Source: author's own figure

The categories and themes were reevaluated continually. Highlighted passages that mismatched the research question were reevaluated, merged or deleted. Then, the codes and quotations were filled into the code tree. Using the theme revision practice of Braun & Clark (2022), all themes were checked for importance, information range, meaning, and boundaries once again.(Braun & Clarke, 2022) This process can be summarised in **Figure 10** below. Finally, the material was ready for the result presentation, and I began writing the analysis following the code tree.

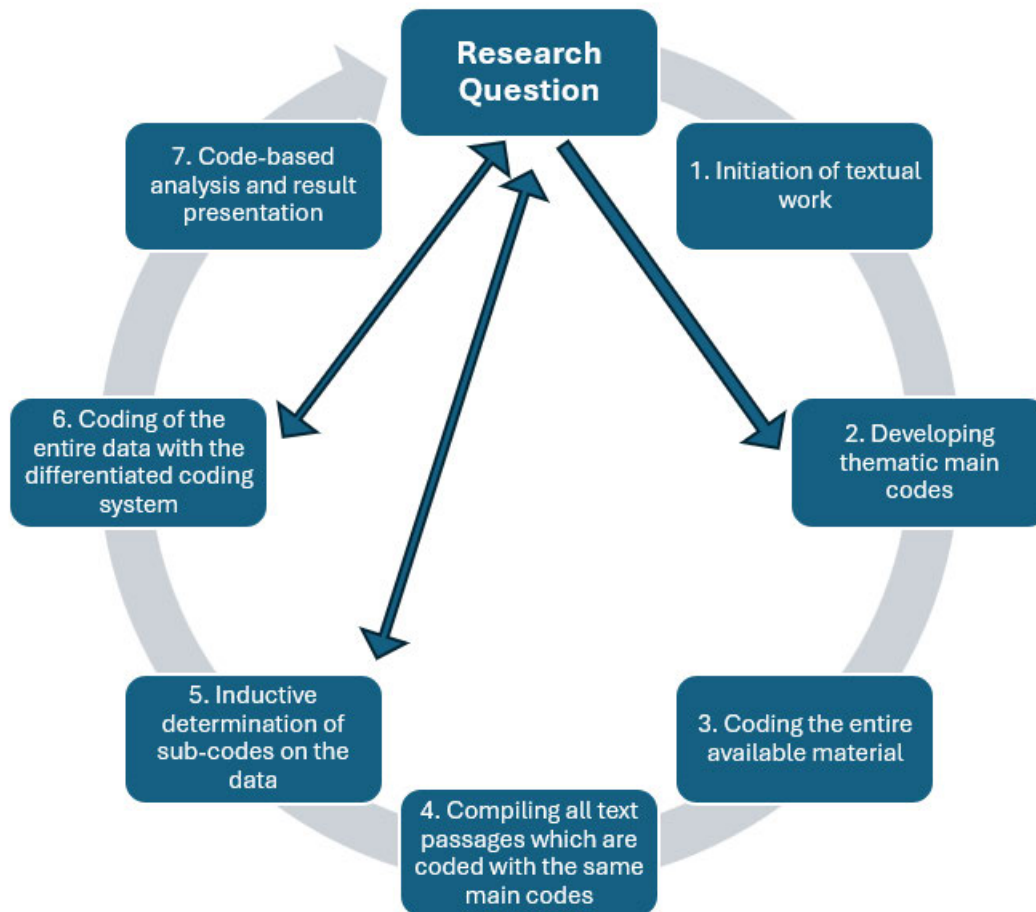


Figure 10: Thematic Analysis Process following Kuckartz
 Source: adapted from Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2022, p. 132


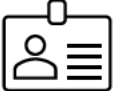
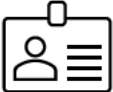
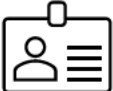
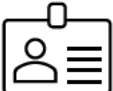

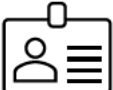
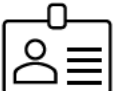
5 Analysis: Key Insights from the Possibilities, Constraints & the Role of Hope

This study collected data on families' experiences during their first year of participation in the sheep project from GAIN Armenia. The participants talked about their perceptions of the future before and during the project, as well as their plans, revealing elements of hope, aspects of poverty and personally relevant topics, e.g. childcare. In the beginning, I expected the research to show differences in families' experiences with hope and to observe possible links to the sheep and poverty. As described below, the families' experiences with hope are similar overall but vary in nuance, or observable impact, except for one outlier. However, the experiences are partially linked to the sheep. In the following, these experiences are depicted and compared with the theoretical background from Chapter 2, answering what participating families' experiences were with hopefulness before and after one year of the livestock project from GAIN Armenia.

Quotes and paraphrases from participants are indicated with P for participant and the participant's number, as well as numbers describing transcript lines, for example, P1 l. 1 relates to the first participant and the first line of the transcript.

Beginning with general observations: The interviewees welcomed the research team openly, and conversations were sincere as well, whereas the interview with P7 was short, which is reflected in Chapter 6.4. P3 was not as open as the rest of the families. Overall, most interviewees showed difficulties talking about the year before the support began. In contrast, most households easily reported developing sheep-related goals after the project implementation. At the same time, some emphasised that the goal of owning sheep or building a business around sheep livestock had existed before receiving support from GAIN. A brief case summary is provided in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Case Summaries of the Participants

Px	Case Summary
P1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The family was always optimistic. • P1 struggled with health costs, which the sheep relieved. • P1 mentions plans with sheep because of the project. • The sheep introduced options to react to difficulties. • P1 named many goals, which are partially sheep-related <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ E.g. the son's marriage: the goal existed before; however, the income to realise the goal increased
P2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No livestock experience before the project (an exception). • P2 appreciates the sheep as an income source. • P2 did observe no change in her life. • Hopeless: P2 believes she has no control over her future. • Depressed perspective (see Millert et al. 2003).
P3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P3 is an optimist. • Sheep provide work and income. • P3's wool business plans failed because of a lack of demand. No new goals were stated after the old plan failed. • P3 views the future as positive if good health remains. • P3 seemed uninterested and annoyed by the interview.
P4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P4 did not move because of the sheep, which was a motivating relief. • P4 articulated goals strongly and specifically, with excitement. • Specific farming plans are limited by financing opportunities. • P4 focuses on the goal and tries to find a different path. • P4 has an entrepreneurial mentality.
P5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P5 is opportunistic and motivated. • She is independent and sees herself responsible for her future. • She communicated goal-orientation before the project. • The sheep help in emergencies and are a financial relief.
P6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P6 had sheep-related goals before the intervention. • P6 plans to improve the living situation. • The sheep shape the future perception. • She is passionate about sheep and goals, because of the visual representation of already realised plans.
P7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P7 had no livestock goals; potentially, in her case, it's the husband's role. • She has nearly no answer to hope-related questions, but described a positive mood change through the sheep. • The sheep helped solve problems with the house. • Her main task is caring for the children. • "Everything will be alright" can be a saying or her perspective.
P8 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project changed P8s experience with support. Sheep were a relief coming from a difficult time of financial problems, because of health and housing problems. • They have high aspirations and are motivated to provide their children with a better future. • The energetic talk about their plans resembled the survivor narrative of Miller et al. 2003, reflecting hope despite difficult circumstances.

Source: author's own table

To analyse the observations in more detail, the established codes within the code-tree provide multiple themes connected to hope and are analysed in the following.

5.1 New Possibilities

First, reported changes in the family's life after receiving the sheep suggest new possibilities, while stagnation indicates experiences that limit new possibilities. The interviewees communicated a variety of possibilities after receiving the sheep, such as financial capabilities through increased income or an additional source of income, which seven out of eight families reported. Many participants said that they can sell the sheep in emergencies for health costs (P1 l. 68-70), or to solve housing problems (P7 l. 43). Equally, various sources describe the advantage of livestock as an income source (Banerjee et al., 2015; Conroy, 2005). Asset transfer studies found that income increased in treated groups (Banerjee et al., 2015), and that income sources allowed dealing with emergencies in health or childcare (Hooft et al., 2012b). Thus, it can be confirmed that livestock enables increased income.

Then, the participants mentioned a change in their work situation. They reported increased possibilities to work in connection with higher income, which fits Banerjee et al.'s observation that larger income stems from increased work and assets. In contrast, it was reported that the livestock requires less work if an external shepherd cared for the sheep instead of the families. While these families' workload remains the same because of outsourcing the animal care, their asset number still increases (Banerjee et al., 2015). P8 described a change in work that was linked to improving children's health, since this shift left more time to work instead of caring for the child. During this difficult phase in their lives, the sheep helped the family as an additional income source to go through the health and housing challenges and indirectly improved their work situation. Consequently, livestock influences the household's work opportunities and duration.

Further, half the families reported that the sheep project supported them directly and indirectly. P8 mentioned "no one supported us" before the project (P8 l. 23). P4 and P5 talked about the support the project provided. These statements reflect negative feelings before the project and a positive experience during the implementation, indirectly, which can be an extension of hope (Snyder, 2002). Altogether, the project introduced a new experience of support for these families.

Additionally, three people mentioned experiencing an opportunity. One person said, "this is a chance you have to take" (P5 l. 49). A pause before this sentence could show a thought process before answering the question further or stress the depth and importance of this experience (P5

l. 48). As shown in Chapter 2.2, opportunities can be the experience a person living in poverty lacks. Henceforth, development provides chances to execute rational agency (Sen, 1999). Duflo highlights the relevance of providing opportunities, for example, through an investment in knowledge for women to increase opportunity awareness (Duflo, 2012). From this perspective, the statement could imply gained agency.

In contrast to the new experiences, one person stated, “today is like it always has been” (P2 l. 19), indicating stagnation. This person seems to be in the poverty and aspirations trap explained in Chapter 2.2.1 (Dalton et al., 2016). A different explanation for this individual's perspective, following Blöser, would be that no logical reason exists to be hopeful in her life (Blöser, 2023). Interestingly, the other participants have similar experiences to this person; nevertheless, they found reasons to be hopeful and developed goals. Thus, Blöser's argument for rational hope, while stating the importance of mental health, ignores that this mental health could skew the perception of rationality. Therefore, the importance of hope in developing projects to seek new opportunities is reinforced.

5.2 External Constraints

Second, external constraints, as aspects that hinder families from achieving their goals, were coded. Constraints affect hope and pose a pillar of poverty, following Sen's definition in Chapter 2.2. The following was observed:

A major described constraint in people's lives in Armenia is assured peace. Just in August 2025, the Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev signed a historical bilateral agreement mediated by the US President Trump (Ahmadi et al., 2025). Meanwhile, two interviewees mentioned peace as a constraint. “If Armenia's peace remains stable”, said P1 (l. 56). P2 directly mentioned peace as more important than food: “I would rather have less bread to eat, but there is peace” (P2 l. 57-58). This constraint is out of their control, and neither livestock nor hopefulness changes the conflict (Blöser, 2023). Then again, all participants share that they have no control over war; however, some decide to pursue their goals while others seem stuck. The major difference between these participants is the locus of control discussed in agency in Chapter 5.3.2. Critics of Snyder's hope definition could state that people following goals while living in a conflict region may be irrational (Blöser, 2023; Snyder, 2002). In either case, peace remains outside of the participants' control, posing a potential constraint or even threat to their livelihoods.

Another external constraint is health costs. Two families reported difficulties due to the immense healthcare charges. For example, P1 said they “hope that health costs decrease” (P1 l. 73) and that the sons work for the treatment of their father’s disease (P1 l. 82-83). He mentioned that before the sheep project, they had already sold the cows they owned to afford the treatment he needed (P1 l. 14). For P8, it was the other way around. Health costs became a struggle because their daughters were sick right after they bought a house. In their situation, the parents worked and cared for their daughters intensely at the same time, posing a constraint on their ability to work, which can keep people in poverty (P8 l. 28 ff). Similarly, multiple sources describe health as one factor in poverty (Bossuroy et al., 2021; Duflo, 2012; Sen, 1999). The sheep as an income source can help to relieve this constraint financially, providing a pathway to dealing with the situation, which can be an experience of hope. At the same time, the underlying health issue might differ in cost intensity and in expected duration until recovery, if the disease is curable. Thus, health costs are a complex constraint which needs to be fully understood to address them.

Further, interviewee P4 mentioned high interest rates directly hindering his goals. He explained that interest rates are high in Armenia and that “with local financing opportunities it is difficult to reach the goal” (P4 l. 81 ff). It is a high risk with the exorbitant interest rates and could become an additional burden. This experience fits Banerjee et al.'s finding that underinvestment is connected to the poverty trap because it is a high risk to invest (Banerjee et al., 2015). This person reported trying to find new pathways to finance his goals. No other interviewee mentioned this struggle. In contrast to other participants, P4 was the only person who tried to achieve a tertiary education degree in law, which, due to high costs, he dropped out of. This is another example of Blöser's concept of rational hope. If P4 hopes that he can pay for the credit, this would be irrational (Blöser, 2023). This out-of-reach investment could keep this sheep owner below the threshold to escape poverty (Duflo, 2012). Similarly, Dercon described high interest rates as a credit market failure that has the potential to keep people trapped in poverty (Dercon, 2009). This experience shows the interaction of hopefulness through seeking pathways limited by external constraints to the livestock business.

Another constraint mentioned was a lack of demand for sheep products. However, this information came up when the person was asked about this aspect of their business plan, which he mentioned in a meeting before. His plan to sell the wool failed because of no demand (P3 l. 49). This is an example of constraints faced through the market situation, pointing towards the importance of market policies (Dalton et al., 2016) or project support, including market

information, as a way to identify opportunities (Duflo, 2012). Overall, markets are another dimension influencing people's hope and wealth.

Furthermore, two participants mentioned the difficulty of livestock health. P2 stated that a disease killed four of her sheep (P2 l. 12-14), which is a constraint in livestock projects (Conroy, 2005); and P5 mentioned that “the future plans depend on the sheep's health” (P5 l. 69). This quote highlights the important role livestock has in the families live (Hooft et al., 2012d). The extent to which this is external can be argued. To explain, killed sheep by wild animals during a long winter can be an external problem or related to improper stables. Diseases can be a pest in the region with a lack of public health provision or a problem of poor veterinary services. Regardless, studies showed that livestock health education improved outcomes (Hooft et al., 2012c), so projects could investigate the origin of livestock health problems and address them accordingly to relieve the real constraint. Since the livestock are part of the family's plans, hope can decrease with the death of animals.

5.3 Hopefulness

Third, hopefulness was split into goals, perceived pathways and agency, the attributes following Snyder's definition as well as extensions of observable hopefulness through attitudes towards the future and mood.

5.3.1 Observed Goals

The participants mentioned a variety of goals ranging from health, community or family-related goals to livestock and housing goals. In general, P1 introduced his goals as bound by peace, but as a variety of goals nevertheless (P1 l. 56). Next, P7 could not name any because she did not discuss goals with her husband. However, she told us that she wants a good education for the children (P7 l. 47). Others mentioned family-related goals were the marriage of the son (P1 l. 76) or securing their children's future (P8 l. 74). These social goals can influence sheep sales, for example, to pay for the wedding, as they are culturally important (Sultakeev & Petrick, 2025). A different example is P8, who connected social goals with the sheep first. Their children should live in abundance (P8 l. 17f). This is why they work towards a family business and plan that the sons take over the sheep someday (P8 l. 69f). P8 especially had extremely high aspirations, which Cassio et al. (2021) found unlikely in poor people, given that the socioeconomic

background influences our expectations of what is achievable. However, no information on why they developed these aspirations was observed. Then, P8 explained wanting to improve their financial situation so that other families can benefit from their support provided by the Armenian government (P8 l. 78f). From a different angle, all these aspects could be interpreted as a different type of hope mentioned in Pleeging (2022). These goals coded under Snyder's hope definition could be social hope, which is a hope we have for others instead of ourselves (Pleeging, 2022). Either way, goals reflect hope, showing these participants' experiences with hope during the project.

Other goals were related to the village and their community. For instance, participants stated they would like the project to extend so that migration decreases (P4 l. 115 f). Migrating was P4's plan before the project period, which can be a strategy to react to shocks (Sultakeev & Petrick, 2025). Because of the project, he did not migrate, which indicates the relief he reported. Additionally, the role of loss and sadness in migration and what keeps people from moving to a city appears (Duflo, 2012). From a personal perspective, P6 also mentioned the goal "to stay in the village, so that it stays vibrant" (P6 l. 29 f). These wishes, changes of plans and attitudes reflect positive feelings and goals which point towards hopeful experiences during the project.

Moreover, some families mentioned the goal to "stay healthy" (P2 l. 30; P4 l. 96). P1 stated the goal to decrease health costs when the cancer treatment is over (P1 l. 73). The different rationalities behind recovery from illness were discussed above in Chapter 5.2.

Six out of eight families mention direct sheep goals. They want to keep and nurture the sheep and increase the flock. The way in which participants reported the details of these goals varied. P1 has the direct plan to increase his flock to 50-60 sheep (P1. l. 63) while looking forwards to the lambs. He intends to "keep them healthy and well cared for" (P1 l. 65-66). P4 for example had business plan goals including increasing lambs so that he can sell the older generation (P4 l. 89-91), building a farm with employees (P4 l. 76f) and extending the stable, building the farm (P4 l. 86f). In contrast P5 also plans to increase the sheep number (P5 l. 36), however, her goal existed before GAIN's support. She mentioned "we always wanted sheep" (P5 l. 33) and that they saw sheep at the neighbour's house and wanted the same (P5 l. 33f). This is in line with Lybbert & Wydick's finding that expectations can change through observation, such as the neighbour's livestock (Lybbert & Wydick, 2018). Similarly, P6 said, "buying livestock and breeding it was our goal before we received the sheep" (P6 l. 24f). She and her husband also have numerical goals. They want to breed the sheep to have a flock of 50 in two years (P6 l. 52f). Additionally, they said: "in spring we want to purchase one cow and two calves, sell the

meat and repair our roof” (P6 l. 55-57). “Before we had sheep, we imagined having them next year” (P6 l. 44f). This statement shows visualisation of a goal (Lybbert & Wydick, 2016; Snyder, 2002). All in all, the families had goals with the sheep. If they had not already defined goals before the project, they evolved afterwards.

Specifically, P6 reported livestock goals in combination with housing goals. Their roof requires repairing (P6 l. 57f), and they overall stated the goal to “work on the house, invest in livestock and breed” P6 l 29f). P1 also mentioned the goal to build a house for his son (P1 l. 58). P8 struggle with their house like P6 and have the goal to “improve their living situation and solve problems“ (P8 l. 74). The endgoal is a properly heated house in multiple rooms (P8 l. 82f). Here hope is observable in the way that this statement describes a goal towards the housing that needs “repair” in the peoples lifes to be satisfactory. This reflects the connection between hope and deprivation as a motor towards a fulfilled life (Snyder, 2002). All in all, the codes show a variety of plans, concrete goals or to-dos of the families, which illustrate experiences with hopefulness during the project period (Snyder, 2002).

Table 3 summarises the goals participants mentioned before and during the project experiences. P1, P2 and P7 did not report goals before the project. P1, P4, P5 and P8 reported the greatest shift in goals connected to the livestock.

Table 3: Goals Before and During the Project Participation

Before	P	During
NR	P1	Breed, marriage, house, and decrease health costs
NR	P2	Stay healthy and keep the sheep
NR	P3	Breed sheep (sell wool)
Migrate	P4	Breed, build and grow a farm
Wanted sheep	P5	Increase sheep
Buying livestock, breeding	P6	Buying more livestock, breeding
NR	P7	NA
Provide for kids	P8	Breed, housing, children's future

*Note: NA = not available; NR = not reported; green = indicator of hope.
Source: author’s own table*

5.3.2 Observed Perceived Pathways and Agency

Another aspect of hope was coded as pathways. Codes showed options to achieve the goals or ways of dealing with obstacles. Except for P2 and P7, all households see pathways towards their goals. Interestingly, P2 and P3 did not mention anything. Snyder calls them a “low-hope person” because the pathways are not verbalised, which could be an indicator of non-existing pathways or a limiting effect of the interview setting, which hindered verbalisation (Renner & Jacob, 2020; Snyder, 2002).

In contrast, communicating about pathways means that an alternative way to achieve the goals is perceived in high-hope persons (Snyder, 2002). P1 said that “only when necessary and enough sheep are present, they can sell in an emergency, e.g. sell two sheep for health costs” (P1 l. 85-86). The constraint P3 faces with a lack of demand is solved through giving the wool to people who process wool instead of having no customer at all (P3 l. 50). The business can not grow, but the wool is still useful. This describes a closed pathway (Lybbert & Wydick, 2016). P4 outlined that after facing difficulties with cows because of an infrastructure project with solar panels on the field. They sold them and instead bought more sheep (P4 l. 23f). This report shows finding new ways to reach the goal (Lybbert & Wydick, 2016; Snyder, 2002). Although P4 finds financial support is required to change the situation, he wants to pursue the goal at a slower tempo (P4 l 82-89). P5 said that in a case of emergency, they can sell sheep (P5 l. 21). “With the sheep we can plan for the future and sell them” (P5 l. 43f). This quote does not show a pathway but could hint at one. “Lambs are the result of good work. I would like them to be healthy and grow in the future, so that I can see the result of my work” (P5 l. 71-73). Again, high hope is indicated by the articulation (Snyder, 2002). P6 pathway towards the goal is to keep working on the house and investing in the livestock (P6 l. 29f). P8 strategy is “the more sheep the better” (P8 l. 57). They said, “sheep get lambs which one can sell and solve problems in emergencies, then you can keep breeding them” (P8 l. 36). Unfortunately, with the given time frame, no executed pathway was observed, so these examples contribute only to the perception of pathways.

In **Table 4**, observed pathways and agency are summarised. The colours hint at a connection between agency and pathways, because the same participants who report goals, perceive pathways and have agency as well.

Table 4: Agency and Perceived Pathways Observed in the Interviews

Agency	P	Percieved Pathways
NR	P1	Emergency sales
Internal constraint	P2	NR
NR	P3	Closed pathway for the wool market
Self-efficacy	P4	Sold cows to invest in more sheep instead, trying to find another pathway for financing
Self-efficacy	P5	Emergency sales, healthily bred sheep
Self-efficacy	P6	Visualisation, bred to stay in the village
NR/NA	P7	NR/NA
NR	P8	Emergency sales, maximise sheep flock

Note: NA = not available; NR = not reported; green = indicator of hope; red = constraint; blue = constrained hope.

Source: author's own table

When it comes to agency, as the belief about the possibility of achieving the goal, P2 was the only interviewee showing internal constraints about it. In fact, she sees life circumstances outside of her control (P2 l. 56) and frustratedly mentioned: “you have got to be a scientist to be able to imagine the future.” (P2 l. 67-68). She is the only person who made a direct wishful hope statement: “we have to be satisfied with what God is giving us” (P2 l. 102). This statement indicates no striving for a change, because the self plays no active role in creating the future, but God is (Lybbert & Wydick, 2016). Concerning this, Duflo mentions that it is difficult to achieve one's goals if one's belief about the future is based on expectations of failure (Duflo, 2012). For P2 in particular, Duflo's description of depression as feeling that life is meaningless while believing one cannot influence one's future is correlated with income (Duflo, 2012). This knowledge illustrates how beliefs are linked to poverty.

In contrast to this P5 stated “the future depends on us. We create our future” (P5 l. 39f). Not only is she ready to achieve her goals (P5 l. 37) but she also stated, “diligence is necessary to do well in the future” (P5 l. 49f). Further, P6 said “now we achieve our goals” (P6 l. 45) adding to her explanation that they are the one's realizing the goal they already had long before the support. These statements show self-efficacy and describe pathways of high-hope persons who, in contrast to P2, take action (Snyder, 2002).

Interestingly, Lybbert and Wydick (2016) found that their hope intervention did not impact the agency after one month of the treatment. Since the participants in this study were interviewed after one year of the project, this could, on one hand, differ, or on the other hand, imply that the participants with agency had their beliefs before the project. Future research needs to clarify this.

5.3.3 Observed Future Perception

The perception is the participants' description of the future that has no direct hope attribute (goals, pathways or agency). Regarding future expectations before receiving the sheep, half the families made optimistic statements. P1 envisions a great future because of his grandchild (P1 l. 35), which could be a social hope (Pleeging, 2022). Statements like “we keep going through difficulties” (P8 l. 23 f), in the sense that they can face them, show a positive attitude (Snyder, 2002). P4, who faced constraints on his business with cows due to the solar project, narrated his future perception before the sheep as uncertain (P4 l. 39f); however, when he got sheep, he said, “We got optimistic. We felt encouraged to stay and were motivated to stay“ (P4 l. 57-59). This expresses a change in future perception coming from the past. P5 mentioned in this context that through the sheep she can utilise their dung for heating, already answering the following question, rather than how it was before (P5 l. 20). It is possible that the question was misunderstood; however, most participants avoided talking about the past, which implies that the participant expressed a positive change in her perception. These positive descriptions are an extension of hope following Snyder's definition, showing a positive attitude towards the future, indicating high hope (Snyder, 2002). Furthermore, the statements align with the hope portraits described by Miller et al. (2003)(Miller et al., 2003).

Negative statements on the future before the project implementation were related to a lack of trust that the peace could last (P2 l. 59-60). This person also mentioned that “there is no perspective for life” (P2 l.29), answering how she envisioned the year before receiving sheep, which is simply a sad belief. This was the most depressing statement of the entire interviews. Snyder observed that traumatic events can lead to loss of wishes (Snyder, 2002). Given the fact that P2's future perception was very affected by the violent conflict in Armenia, the impact of possible trauma is plausible in her life. In contrast to the examples before, these statements reveal a negative attitude towards the future and indicate low hope (Snyder, 2002). Again, this negative perception was discovered by Miller et al. (2003) as well.

The future perception during the project was similarly positive for most. P4 mentioned that it is a painful experience to see families leave the town (P4 l. 66). P1 had a positive perception of the future with high expectations he said, “the future is full of goals and well in my imagination (P1 l. 60). This is why he expects the sheep to reproduce to 50-60 sheep, and he expects lambs in the next month, which they intend to keep healthy, well and cared for (P1 l. 63ff). Similarly, P3 expects a change for the better (P3 l. 39), but the family's health is a strong criterion for this perception, while he is uncertain exactly what will happen (P3 l. 41f, 47).

One person had a negative future perception during the project. P2’s negative expectation mentions that you can not know what will happen (P2 l. 71). She prefers to be realistic instead of optimistic (P2 l. 54ff). This could be a reflection of the limited patience for change after crises that was described before (Miller et al., 2003).

The role of sheep in planning varied between participants. Planning for P5 is more connected to the children than to the sheep (P5 l. 62f), but the sheep are a chance to take (P5 l. 49). She knows that in the future, they can sell a sheep if they need to solve or purchase something (P5 l. 78f). P6 waited for the lambs and, in contrast to P5, said that “the perception is deeply connected to the animals” (P6 l. 55). She also has children, but just one baby. This finding fits the fact that many poor families' lives depend on agriculture (Dercon, 2009; Hooft et al., 2012b; Manasian, 2011). These findings are summarised in **Table 5**.

Table 5: Future Perceptions of Participants Before and After Receiving the Sheep

Before	P	After	Future Perception
Positive, optimistic	P1	Positive expectations	Positive (no change)
No perception	P2	Negative expectations, uncertainty	Negative
Uncertainty; expecting positive change	P3	Optimistic, expecting positive change, uncertain	Positive (no change)
Uncertainty	P4	Positive: relieved, optimistic, motivated	Positive change
Expecting stagnation	P5	Positive, depends on the children	Positive change
Goal oriented	P6	Goal-oriented, depends on livestock	Positive (no change)
Positive, unclear	P7	NR	NA
Keep going through difficulties	P8	NR	Positive (change unclear)

Note: NA = not available; NR = not reported; green = indicator of hope; red = indicator of low hope. Source: author’s own table

5.3.4 The Mood Before and After Receiving Sheep

As an extension of perception, the mood of participants was coded to reflect on their experiences before and during the project. Through the perception of their reality, experiences with hope are revealed. The mood could be clustered into positive and negative moods, with different nuances.

Notably, the negative codes were connected to the time before receiving the sheep as support, while after receiving the sheep, the participants reported feelings of relief, gratefulness, joy, surprise, optimism, motivation and even hopefulness. One interviewee directly mentioned feeling hopeful after receiving the sheep (P8 l. 36) and hopeful that the sheep will have lambs soon (P8 l. 89). P4 mentioned that after receiving the sheep, the family got optimistic and felt encouraged and motivated to stay in the village (P4 l. 57-59). “With the sheep we started to breathe again.” mentioned the first interviewee (P1 l. 94). These mood sets reflect the attitude towards goals mentioned under Chapter 5.3. While high-hope individuals show positive emotions, such as joy, a low-hope person reports negative emotions related to their work activities (Snyder, 2002). **Table 6** summarises the reported moods.

On the contrary, families seemed happier when answering current and future sheep questions than when discussing the past or their livelihood. The optimistic household P1 lives in showed joy non-verbally through laughter and excited interruptions (P1 l. 37). P6 acted similarly. These non-verbal cues for positive feelings show high-hope individuals (Snyder, 2002). At the same time, while positive feelings state optimism, agency is not ensured (Lybbert & Wydick, 2016). Therefore, the entire picture of hope attributes is important to reflect the hope experience of participants. These observations are summarised in **Table 7** in Chapter 6.1.

Table 6: Participants' Mood Before and After Receiving the Sheep

Before	P	After	Change
Negative: sad, bad	P1	Positive: relief, joy, surprise, optimism	Positive change
Negative: unwell	P2	NR	Unclear
NR	P3	Positive: gratefulness	Unclear
Negative: bored	P4	Positive: grateful, joy, motivated	Positive change
NR	P5	Positive: optimism, relief	Implicit positive change (relief)
Negative: bored	P6	Positive: joy, optimism	Positive change
Negative: pessimistic	P7	Positive: joy	Positive change
NR	P8	Positive: relief, surprise, motivated, hopeful	Implicit positive change (relief)

Note: NR = not reported; green = indicator of hope; red = indicator of low hope.

Source: author's own table

Taking all the hope attributes into account, the final role of hope is summarised in **Table 7** in Chapter 6.1 after including the observed multidimensional poverty aspects into the analysis.

5.4 Observed Multidimensional Poverty Aspects

Moving forward to other data collected, multiple poverty aspects were examined to gain a better understanding of the family's situation in their livelihood. Interviewees were asked about their own and their children's education. In terms of housing, the flooring, walls, and roof were observed. The sanitation facilities were noticed, as well as the cooking fuel and water source. These aspects, measured through observation and additional questions, advised that discussing dietary habits is a cultural taboo. Consequently, this question was only asked once in the pre-test. The following was discovered:

In terms of education, all interviewees hold secondary education. All kids eligible for school went there during the interviews, and one year ago. According to the GAIN employees, Armenia has a strict obligation for children to attend school. As an exception, P6 reported an artistic secondary school where she learned singing and dance. Similarly, P4 reported he began a juristic training (higher education); however, because of a lack of money, he had to stop studying. This is in line with statistics from ARMSTAT that most Armenians have a secondary education

level, and that nearly half of the people living in poverty hold a secondary education (ARM-STAT, 2025b). No change was observed in education since the project implementation, because no child graduated and no parent took on a new educational path.

As mentioned, diets are a sensitive topic, which is why data was only collected for P1. He named a variety of food groups and refused to answer what their diet was like one year ago. They communicated clearly that they do not want to be asked such a question, as it is culturally inappropriate. P1 and P2 explained using sheep's milk, hinting that the sheep are an additional food source (Conroy, 2005). Hooft et al. mention that livestock is a food source, which is probably the case for these families, too (Hooft et al., 2012b). Considering the cultural taboo, no change was observed in dietary patterns, because the question was omitted.

Next, the housing situation was similar, as most Armenian houses are built with stone. The flooring varied from wood planks to ceramic, vinyl or parquet. All households cook with liquified petroleum gas (LPG). In the same way, the water source for drinking and other utilisation is piped into the dwelling. Major differences were observed in sanitation. Except for one family, no household shared its facility with others. One household had a toilet flushed to a piped sewer system. Three households had a flush to a pit or septic tank, and three other households had a pit latrine with a slab. One household had a ventilated improved pit latrine. Again, no change was observed, because this information was only observed for the present, since asking the first interviewees showed an irritation towards these questions. Those who told us about their livelihood one year ago mentioned no change in housing, except for one person who recently moved. Notably, one household got an improved sanitation system. In terms of housing, a change was only observable through the mentioned plans to improve housing at P8's home and active construction work in P6's home, or P3, who has just built a new home. Every household had electricity, a fridge, a car and phones. Then, one household owned a truck. Furthermore, all except one household possessed a television. These observations help to gain a deeper understanding of the family's situation. While no causality can be established that the sheep are the reason for the changes in housing, in P3 and P6's homes, receiving sheep and improving the house happened simultaneously. P8 bought the house before receiving the sheep, but through the financial relief, the sheep helped develop new goals to improve the heating.

A summarising table of these results can be found in the Annex.

To answer what changed in these aspects since the project began, the observations suggest little change except for two participants with plans for improved housing. In addition, the participants

explained that LPG and their water systems are the standard in their villages. Their health situation seemed only to have changed in financial planning for the treatment and not in fully recovering from the present illnesses. The few changes are subtle. In sum, these aspects are still useful for the local team from GAIN to improve their knowledge of participants.

6 Discussion

In the following, the results are interpreted and discussed. The findings are generalisable through their relevance for other development projects with similar aims as GAIN's (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Since the sample size is small, when transferring the results, the participant number needs to be considered.

6.1 The Role of Hope

Taking all the above into account, this chapter summarises the role of hope in fighting the poverty of families who received sheep as support. The described data showed that the interviewees have different experiences with hope and follow different goals after receiving sheep in connection to their hope level, agency and pathway perception. This is evident in verbally named goals, pathways, and agency (Snyder, 2002), which are directly or indirectly related to the sheep. These aspects are underlined by perceptions of the future and emotions that the participants named explicitly and implicitly in connection with the sheep. Especially, in terms of positive feelings and future perceptions, one can see an increase in hope through the livestock asset. Hope through the sheep influences how participants plan with the livestock and what their attitude towards obstacles is. Furthermore, it plays a role in the perception of their own role in the process and what they can do to change their situation. Therefore, participants experience hope during the project.

Families showed, to an extent, goals and agency before the project implementation. Hopefulness before the project is evident in positive feelings or perceptions beforehand, or even recalling similar goals, e.g. planning to invest in livestock. These findings highlight that if a project aims to provide hope, it is important to see the specific beneficiaries' needs and to support them in their individual situation. This observation underlines the findings that people in poverty are not necessarily hopeless (Blöser, 2023; Dalton et al., 2016; Lybbert & Wydick, 2016, 2018). One could say that hope increases nevertheless because the increased income provides new possibilities to react towards emergencies. However, this possibility is just a part of hope in participants' lives, and no statistical causality of livestock asset transfer on hope was established here. The result that hope influences how people deal with the provided asset stresses the importance of including the level of hope in participants for creating livestock development projects that help the individual effectively.

One participant seemed hopeless. P2 was an outlier in terms of narrated hope experiences. Hope seemed to play no role in her life, which stresses the importance of mental health or trauma care for NGOs such as GAIN (Blöser, 2023; Bossuroy et al., 2021; Duflo, 2012), because the asset transfer alone provided income for this person, but failed to bring hope into her life.

The greatest change was observed in P4's report. He developed new hope through the project and reported finding solutions to problems in his business plans. This person could be supported further by providing targeted financial support. It is crucial to distinguish a lack of hope from a lack of effort (Blöser, 2023). The example of P4 and the risk of taking a credit highlights his goals and pathways, while it would be irrational to invest. This constraint traps him and could be relieved through governmental policies that regulate interest rates (Balboni et al., 2022; Dalton et al., 2016; Duflo, 2012; Sen, 1999), or GAIN, supporting him financially to give his business the push it needs. Although the project had an impact on his life, he still finds himself deprived of capabilities.

An unused project potential lies in pathway perception and agency. Hopeful individuals, before the project, might benefit from talking about agency and pathways with the project staff to foster aspirations (Cassio et al., 2021; Lybbert & Wydick, 2016). The findings on agency and pathways showed that not everyone named examples for these hope attributes. High-hope families mentioned pathways, while the interview guideline did not require them directly, because direct questions could invite people to exaggerate (Snyder, 2002). However, this approach allows the possibility that agency and pathways were simply not fully observed. Since the new employment situation can change the expectations and aspirations of participants who previously had low aspirations (Lybbert & Wydick, 2018), it seems logical that the sheep transfer supports positive aspirations in the individuals who, before the project, had negative moods and future perceptions. Through the increased income from the sheep (Conroy, 2005; Lindahl et al., 2020), the families can plan to realise their goals, and the impact of shocks could decrease, because the sheep are a financial emergency plan.

The data showed that the high-hope individuals, P1, P4, P5, P6 and P8, have more sheep-related goals and general plans for their future and see themselves as responsible for the outcome, while P2, as a low-hope individual, had no further plans. P7 recognised an improvement through the sheep, and the reported mood in connection with the sheep was more positive, but without the verbally communicated hope aspects, it is unclear if this person is a high-hope or low-hope person. P3 had plans in the past which did not work out. This observation is interesting because, as a high-hope person, one would come up with a different plan, while a low-hope person would

give up. At the moment, it seems this person is a low-hope individual. However, it is unclear what pathways might come up in the future. **Table 7** summarises the role of hope in the participants' lives below.

Table 7: The Role of Hope as Observed in Participants.

P	Role of hope
P1	High-hope individual (before and after)
P2	Hopeless (before and after)
P3	Low-hope individual (plan but no pathway, low articulation)
P4	High-hope individual (after)
P5	High-hope individual (before and after)
P6	High-hope individuals (before and after)
P7	Low-hope (recognises improvement)
P8	High-hope individuals (before and after)

Note: green = indicators of hope; red = indicators of low hope.

Source: author's own table

Another aspect is that answering positively fits the Armenian culture and hope narratives from Miller et al. (2003). The stresses that the experience of hope is culturally influenced (Lybbert & Wydick, 2018).

Due to the short observation time, participants describe their future successes, except for P6, who is already realising her goals. Families who participated longer in comparison probably show more profound development of their sheep business, as reported by Balboni et al., considering the poverty threshold (Balboni et al., 2022). The participants are more hopeful, as reflected in their mood and perception during the project, than before.

Hopeful individuals reported plans to change their livelihoods, such as housing, which was observed in the multidimensional poverty aspects. Although no tremendous change was observed in the poverty aspects, the increase in income reflects on monetary poverty definitions.

All the above add the importance of hope to the literature. Duflo states that in the end, it is a healthy mind which contributes to the motivation to escape, be productive, retain money and

invest in their children (Duflo, 2012). Hopefulness is a part of that healthy mind. Similarly, to what the interviewees reported in terms of support and motivation, Duflo (2012) hypothesised that people's success in escaping poverty relies on hope and an opportunity. In this project, many participants were hopeful before, but the project fostered their hope, visualised by mood and perception, while the livestock provides the opportunity.

Nevertheless, Cassio et al. (2021) state that no causality between success and goals has been established. Still, there seems to be a mutual influence of goals on poverty and low aspirations (Cassio et al., 2021). Dalton hypothesises that the necessary distinction between low aspirations is not the cause of poverty, but rather the consequence (Dalton et al., 2016) which various authors agreed with (Blöser, 2023; Lybbert & Wydick, 2016).

Lastly, to establish if the development is successful, Sen states that the freedoms of people should have been improved (Sen, 1999). This is the case in terms of new capabilities through income; however, not all freedoms are present, underscoring the importance of policies to improve, for instance, market or credit access. Against this argues Dalton, who states that only relieving internal constraints can already change behaviour and therefore diminish poverty (Dalton et al., 2016). A longer observation period would be necessary (Pell et al., 2010) to draw a significant conclusion for this project, which started in November 2024.

As Duflo (2012) summarises, hope can facilitate new possibilities and is a possibility in itself, because hope influences behaviour. „Both a lack of hope or fear can cause an individual to deliberately 'hold back', thus reducing the ability to realise his or her full potential” (Duflo, 2012, p. 39).

The entire interaction between hope, poverty and livestock in the project is described in **Figure 11**. Livestock increases hope by improving participants' mood and future outlook, and by providing opportunities to set goals. Since livestock increases income, provides work, and helps cope with shocks, it reduces poverty. Hope contributes to possibility perception and goal creation as well as pathway perception, which fosters the livestock business. It visualises ways out of poverty and helps relieve the internal poverty constraint, thereby reducing poverty. Then, poverty is a negative influence on both hope and livestock. It reduces pathways and capabilities through external constraints and can be an internal constraint. Resources to foster the livestock business are limited, keeping people from investing.

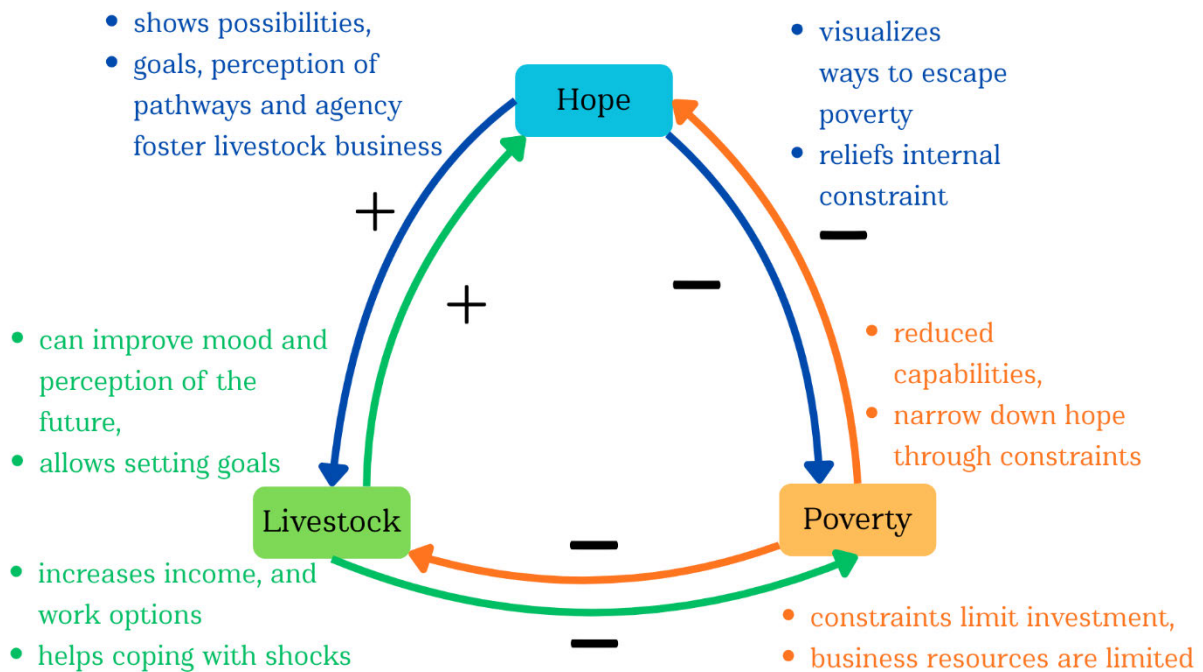


Figure 11: Interactions between Hope, Poverty, and Livestock

Note: + = increase; - = decrease;

Source: author's own figure

Since this study's methodology is qualitative, I did not establish statistical causality of hope on the project or the other way around, which will be interesting for future research. In conclusion, the role of hope is important for poverty alleviation and livestock farming. There is a connection between a person's hope level and their coping with poverty internally. Regardless, as Lybbert & Wydick (2016) explain, being poor and hopeless are not necessarily correlated; however, knowing about the role of hope can, in the future, help development projects to individualise approaches instead of applying one-size-fits-all plans in their cooperation with families.

6.2 Implications for GAIN's Project

GAIN aims to foster hope. With the given hope definition, hope is connected to seeing pathways for development. Therefore, an NGO that helps families create new pathways, for example, through an increase in income, must also foster hope. The initial situation of beneficiaries has changed, and they are empowered to pursue options for their future. This is why these results are relevant for improving the project.

First, mental health should be included in the project plan. While trauma care is part of GAINs' disaster response, it is not actively part of the sheep project in Armenia. Given that one participant seemed depressed, GAIN can optimise its approach by checking the mental health factors of participants and providing support towards mental health care (Bossuroy et al., 2021). Especially, after the war in Armenia and the connections of trauma after war and hope (Snyder, 2002), mental health care is crucial to realise the goal of fostering hope.

Second, multiple poverty constraints should be addressed at the same time. At the moment, the main constraint directly relieved is the income, as reflected in the interviews; however, the literature suggests that it is useful to address even more aspects in families' livelihoods, such as encouraging savings and livestock training for a longer time. Including these aspects in the project plan can improve project outcomes (Bossuroy et al., 2021).

The third aspect is direct encouragement. While hope is not directly addressed, but provided through the experience of support, which participants mentioned, hope could be fostered through discussing the family's plans proactively. At GAIN, encouragement is already implemented through check-up calls. To improve this step, the local staff could empower the families explicitly by directing the check-up call towards talking about goals and pathways and supporting them in their role of creating their own future. Especially because small pushes increase consumption without an escape from poverty, GAIN must consider multiple support tactics for a sustainable impact (Balboni et al., 2022).

While with the time at hand, it was not possible to observe if participants followed their reported pathways, GAIN could actively support these participants in realising their goals. In fact, GAIN communicates with its participants about their needs and support possibilities. An example from the new participants is P4, who mentioned his goal to find financial support without high interest rates. GAIN could help with finding such an offer for the push out of poverty if the NGO's resources allow it. Additionally, GAIN can ensure that proposed goals are achievable (Blöser, 2023). In this way, the fostered hope can be encouraged further.

In addition, GAIN's selection process of beneficiaries requires accountability. This criterion could influence employees to consider participants for the project who are already high-hope individuals, because it is important for the project that the beneficiaries are motivated to work with the livestock. As a result, individuals who appear more likely to achieve promising outcomes for the project may be more readily selected, suggesting that higher hope could increase the likelihood of receiving support in the first place. In contrast, another study found it was observed that people living in poverty declined receiving support (Dalton et al., 2016), highlighting that access to support does not solely determine being selected for participation. Regardless, P2 was a low-hope individual with a high motivation to work with the livestock without specific goals, which counters the argument that only high-hope individuals are selected. Even more, participants who were hopeful before the project still reported an increase in their hope experiences through mood or future perception, which rejects this notion. In sum, GAIN needs a strategy to foster hope in individuals who are hopeless at the beginning of participation and to continue to support individuals who already have hope.

Moreover, the independence of participants is important. In contrast to the long-term relationship between GAIN Armenia's local staff and the participants, Duflo urges "give poor communities the opportunity and then get out of the way" (Banerjee & Duflo (2008) found in Duflo, 2012, p. 7). GAIN Armenia has a strategy to ensure beneficiaries' independence from their support. The team can continuously discuss this controversial topic to determine the extent to which their support is useful and necessary. On the one hand, a certain push is necessary to support people; on the other hand, independence needs to be ensured. Some constraints are out of people's control, and some are not. This is a tension that perhaps will not be resolved but needs constant attention.

Lastly, the realisation that some of the participants were hopeful before the project began is important to note. Other authors have stressed that being poor does not mean a person is hopeless, and being hopeless is no cause of poverty (Dalton et al., 2016; Lybbert & Wydick, 2016). Since this study can not demonstrate a numerical increase in hope, it suggests that the project relieved constraints such as household income. As Lybbert & Wydick stated, the employees of GAIN could emphasise identifying the underlying reasons for their beneficiaries' poverty to address their support efficiently (Lybbert & Wydick, 2016). Overall, all these aspects can contribute to fostering hope with the sheep development project.

6.3 Policy Implications

The government is another actor which influences pathways for development in the population of its country. Sen states that discussions about policies focused on income poverty more than on deprivation through other factors, e.g. employment, health, education or social factors (Sen, 1999). This influence is crucial because if the person pursues a new pathway after gaining hope, but the infrastructure for their plan to succeed is lacking, the change will not be sustained. An example of a person in Armenia could be gaining hope through the sheep and planning to expand the business. However, interest rates are enormous, with lending interest rates of 13.1 % in 2024 (International Monetary Fund, 2024), so taking a loan seems impossible. Acquiring credit easily could continue to foster hopefulness by giving it a rational frame (Blöser, 2023). Nonetheless, none of the changes would be possible without the first step and the hope of seeking possibilities. While Blöser's (2023) argument for rational hope is one source of many, implying the importance of policies in fighting poverty and potentially strengthening hope. Sen stresses that policies need to address more variables for poverty than just income (Sen, 1999). In the end, not only policies but also institutional, political and market-related constraints need to be addressed (Blöser, 2023; Pell et al., 2010). Lybbert & Wydick summarise this: "Relieving internal constraints should rarely be viewed as a substitute for relieving external constraints" (Lybbert & Wydick, 2016, p. 17).

One way in which policies can help people develop hope through goals and achieve them is by first providing information about possibilities (Dalton et al., 2016; Duflo, 2012). The theory has shown that it is important to have role models and know what is achievable to build aspirations (see Chapter 2.2.1) (Cassio et al., 2021). This information is relevant because Dalton et al. show that internal constraints can already decrease poverty. While policies clearly can influence external constraints. It is important to develop how policies can support the relief of internal constraints, e.g. through role models, as well. Maybe schools could teach about aspirations. Research shows that education for women was linked to women's possibilities (Dalton et al., 2016; Duflo, 2012). Thus, policies should relieve internal constraints as well.

Then, policies can directly relieve constraints, for instance, by improving the accessibility of credit, which opens pathways and relieves external constraints (Duflo, 2012). Similarly, Sen highlights that opportunities can be provided through different facilities actively and therefore relieve poverty constraints because gained freedoms increase mutually (Sen, 1999). These interactions are visualised in **Figure 12**, which is an extension of **Figure 11**. As shown below, policies can foster hope and livestock businesses by relieving external constraints that hinder

the businesses and thus supporting hopefulness. When policies improve animal husbandry in a family's life, poverty should be relieved as a consequence of, for example, the improved income. Lastly, policies can contribute to relieving the internal constraint which fosters hope and supports decreasing poverty.

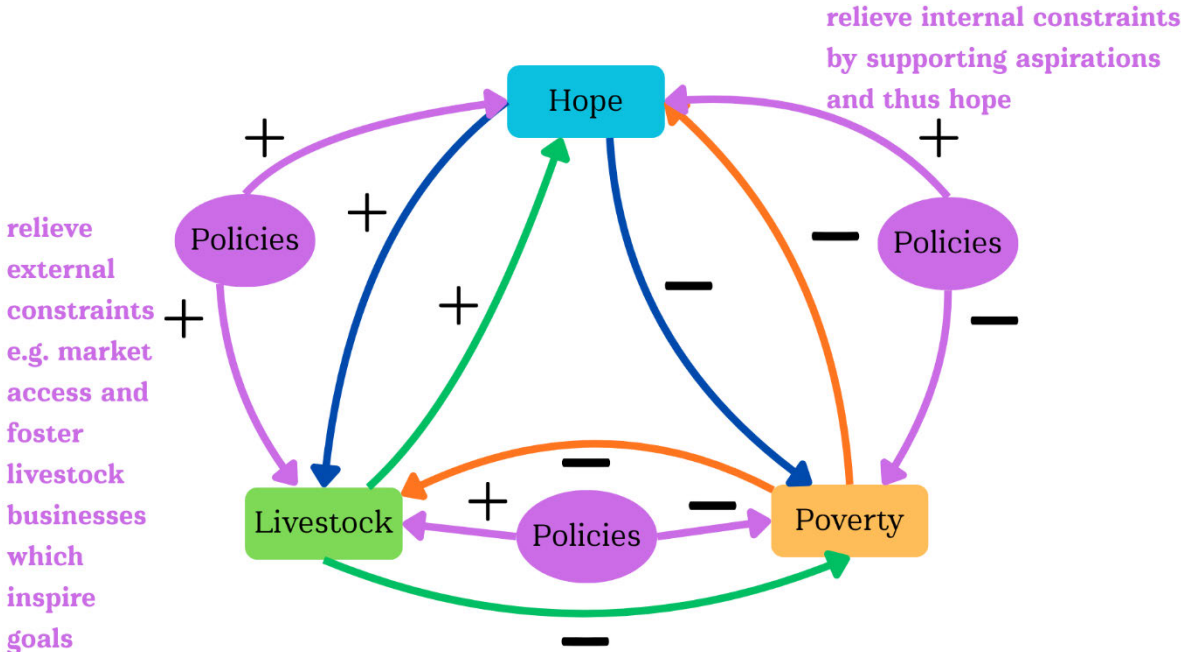


Figure 12: Interactions between Hope, Poverty, Livestock and Policies
 Source: author's own figure

6.4 Limitations

The findings of this study should be discussed in light of the following aspects that potentially influence the results.

The definition of hope provides practical criteria to observe the role of hope in the participants. However, considering the short observation period, this research is unable to observe how the participants fulfil their goals. The mentioned pathways only imply this part of hope. The participant's reaction towards an obstacle was unobservable. One might argue that participants were overly optimistic in describing their pathways, when in fact P4 is a realistic participant, and P2 is a pessimistic one. P4 knew that the high interest rates complicated fulfilling the goal, so he described that his plan would take more time until he finds a financial support project for his business idea, instead of taking the immediate risk. Despite the short observation time, the participants indicated their coping strategies when verbalising their hopefulness.

In the interviews, pathways became clearer after asking recurring questions, as the method required. This observation could imply that families would have mentioned more pathways if the interview had taken longer. Nevertheless, except for two interviewees, people began to talk about their pathways. Although agency and pathways were not observed before the project, hope comparison is possible through other hope attributes, such as goals, mood and future perception. Still, agency and pathways indicate the role of hope for escaping poverty in participants' lives.

Furthermore, the nature of the method reveals information about changes in plans and thus hope through the sheep project. The interviews stress this change by revealing that some families already had livestock plans before the implementation of GAIN's support, and some did not. Through directing questions towards the time before the project and during the implementation, a comparison is possible. At the same time, it is not a true counterfactual with all variables fixed (Ravallion, 2001).

One limitation is that the families received sheep right after the “end of the war”, so their potential positive change could be linked to both sheep and the end of the war. For example, P3 answered that their future perspective before receiving sheep was negative, and they do not talk about it, which could be linked to the war in their region. But now that they own sheep and the war ended, everything is better. They knew that the answer was for the sheep project, but the war had an influence on the future perception of this person. Additionally, many participants used the saying “everything will be fine”. A saying can evoke the result that a positive change has happened, while the truth lies in the cultural context described in Chapter 3.4. However, the literature implied that not every Armenian is an optimist (Miller et al., 2003). In the context of the project, the same picture was shown. While P2 resembles a depressed person, others call themselves optimistic. In the end, participants mentioned their perceptions towards their work, such as being bored before receiving the sheep one year ago, which was already after the war and being excited to have the work opportunity today. This finding contrasts with the notion of a heavy influence of the violent conflict on the results.

The interview of P7 was shorter than what was set as the standard. Because of the small sample, it was kept, nevertheless. While the meaning of this interview is limited, it was still noteworthy through the few aspects it revealed. Overall, the interview duration was kept at the lower end of the set standard. It was important to limit the interruption in the participants' busy work lives (Conroy, 2005). However, it would have been interesting to ask even more.

Potential limitations appeared through the applied method. While the interviewees were informed about the researcher's neutrality and that they could answer freely without any consequence, it is possible that interviewees felt pressure to answer positively in a way that pleases the researcher. This effect could have been influenced by the local staff being present during the interviews. A spontaneous change was that the translator worked for GAIN Armenia. Originally, the team searched for an independent translator, but due to a sudden illness in the team, the plans were changed, and the translator from the office joined. She was highly qualified, having studied Armenian and German and was instructed to translate word by word without deviating or changing the questions. With the little time and resources at hand, the decisions were made. For future research, it would be better to conduct data collection with an independent translator. Influences from the team on the interviewees' answers can not be excluded. However, the translator and the interviewer clarified all uncertainties and translated to the best of their abilities. Moreover, questions can always be interpreted differently (Renner & Jacob, 2020). The interview guideline was applied to all participants in the same way. Still, with a greater sample size in the future, interpretation deviations could be reduced. Finally, the method implies that what interviewees communicated is their reality, which is assumed in this study (Flick, 2021).

In order to establish a richer knowledge of the participants' livelihoods, questions about their living situations were deduced from the MPI (see Chapter 4.3). Unfortunately, during the pre-test, it turned out to include cultural taboos and made participants uncomfortable, which is why this data was only collected if mentioned freely by the participants or whenever it was observable, to keep the research culturally adapted. While this information still provides a more detailed background on their lives, it is incomplete. Since these questions do not directly contribute to answering the research question and were only supposed to deepen the knowledge on the background of families, this situation was accepted.

Finally, the relevant topic was analysed through the theory and the samples. The challenges were transparently reflected above. It contributes to understanding the role of hope in participants of livestock development projects, as well as giving practical implications. The research is valid, showing what was sought and is in line with the literature.

6.5 Further Research

For this research, it was useful to focus on one hope domain; nonetheless, the results indicate the existence of other domains, such as social hope or spiritual hope. Overall, the codes describe indicators of hope for the project in terms of goals; however, given different definitions of hope, other aspects might have been coded. What seemed to be social or community factors in motivation within my research paradigm could be interpreted as social hope in other frameworks. For instance, what is interpreted as the dream to see the children married can be interpreted as social hope towards the marriage. Another example is the optimism that everything improves inevitably, which could be spiritual hope. These hope aspects are excluded in this analysis because they differ from the definition of Snyder. Future research might want to investigate that, for example, by approaching the topic multidimensionally through addressing all hope domains simultaneously (Pleeging, 2022).

Especially, from a quantitative perspective, hope scales such as the ATHS could be applied to measure how much hope increased numerically during project participation. In addition, correlations between hope and poverty in development projects and income could be assessed. Lybberth & Wydick (2016) already stated the link between hope and the escape from the poverty trap. Does hope increase the effects of livestock development projects, or even development projects in general? What causality can be established? Future quantitative research can calculate these relationships.

Other research aspects are the factors time, gender and context. Considering Pell et al.'s notion of observable change in people's lives after longer periods of time, advises increasing research duration (Pell et al., 2010). Moreover, future research could address the role of hope, particularly for women, in livestock development projects, since women often take care of the livestock (Conroy, 2005; Hooft et al., 2012a). Lastly, this study heavily focused on livestock and, therefore, the work of the families. Other contexts, such as impact on children's aspirations in school, are yet to be researched. In conclusion, future research can explore multiple aspects of hope.

7 Conclusion

Poverty remains a pressing global problem. While multiple actors address the issue, the global community is far from meeting the first SDG target by 2030. NGOs support people living in poverty by providing livestock to help families build a sustainable business and escape poverty, and to experience hope through this support. Specifically, psychological factors such as hope have recently gained attention in development economics. Studies start to integrate hope interventions, such as Lybbert and Wydick (2016) or provide psychological support, such as in Bos-suroy et al. (2021). They acknowledge the importance of individuals' psychological health. Including the role of hope in planning and evaluating projects is important for identifying poverty traps and their cause (Lybbert & Wydick, 2016).

This thesis aimed to explore the role of hope in fighting poverty through livestock projects. After defining hope in the theoretical background, the complexity of poverty was shown. Then, the livestock development project from GAIN was presented and contextualised in terms of livestock as an asset for those living in poverty. A qualitative approach using interviews captured the experiences of eight participants in Armenia both before and after one year of the project. With this data, the thesis analysed the hope attributes: goals, pathways and agency, as well as the perception of the future and mood of participants to deduce their experiences with hopefulness. While this study can not establish statistical causal relationships between hope and the project, it clearly shows differences in participants' experiences of hope.

Following the observation that families respond differently to receiving the sheep as livelihood support, the interviews revealed differences in perceptions, mood, and hope. The data imply that hope plays a crucial role in how beneficiaries approach their livestock business. Notably, the project increased hopefulness for five participants. Looking at the data, participants were hopeful before the intervention. Still, the literature underlines the importance of hope in combating poverty and releasing internal constraints of poverty. Additionally, hope can enhance livestock farming by supporting problem-solving and fostering overall hopefulness. However, when discussing hope, it is essential to recognise that people are not poor because of low aspirations; rather, poverty can lead to low aspirations. This link is important for approaching participants with sensitivity and understanding that not every person living in poverty is hopeless. Most importantly, even if someone is already hopeful but faces difficult circumstances, a project like GAIN's livestock intervention can still bring hope into people's lives. In fact, the data clearly showed improved mood and future perceptions, which highlight that. Thus, hope plays

a key role in escaping poverty. Participants indicated that the project influenced their sense of hope. At the same time, their initial level of hope also affected their response to the project. Further research could help to establish the effects of hope in both directions clearly. Little to no change was observed in the multidimensional aspects of poverty. Future studies could explore whether a longer project duration influences this result.

Consequently, GAIN can utilise these results to further adapt and individualise their project to the level of hope recipients express at the beginning. While this project fosters hope, NGOs can, in general, encourage aspirations in practice. For instance, talking with participants about their goals, discussing possible pathways, and, most importantly, advising on mental health care if any indicators show the need. However, NGOs are not the only possible actors. The government can foster hope, for example, by directly encouraging aspirations in school. Indirectly, the government plays a fundamental role in relieving external poverty constraints, which also need to be addressed to foster hope. Thus, other actors are relevant when discussing how to increase hope in the population. The role of the government can be further explored in future research.

Adding to the existing body of research on poverty, livestock and hope, this thesis suggests that hope is a crucial factor in outcomes of development projects. Future research could establish numerical data for that. To improve the understanding of hope in practical development contexts, it is crucial to conduct research across various fields (Pleeging, 2022). Because of the qualitative nature of this thesis, it would be useful to measure the numerical effect of hope on livestock outcomes in such projects.

All in all, research has shown that hope is connected to perceptions that lead to actions. As Liebig's law of the minimum shows, the limiting factor determines growth (F. von Liebig, 1855). Since the internal constraint is a crucial factor in escaping poverty, it should always be included in any poverty intervention or policy aimed at fostering development.

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Declaration of Independent Authorship

I certify that I have written this thesis independently and have not used any sources, resources or technical tools other than those specified. All statements that were taken from other publications, either literally or analogously, are marked. I have not submitted the work in the same or a similar form to any other examination authority. I agree that this work may be checked with anti-plagiarism software.

Place, Date

Signature

Eigenständigkeitserklärung

Ich versichere, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit selbstständig verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel verwendet habe. Alle Ausführungen, die anderen Schriften wörtlich oder sinngemäß entnommen wurden, sind kenntlich gemacht. Ich habe die Arbeit in gleicher oder ähnlicher Form noch keiner anderen Prüfungsbehörde vorgelegt. Ich stimme zu, dass die vorliegende Arbeit mit einer Anti-Plagiatssoftware überprüft werden darf.

Ort, Datum

Eigenhändige Unterschrift

Prof. Dr. Martin Petrick
Professor of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Policy
Institute for Agricultural Policy and Market Research
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Student's declaration on the use of artificial intelligence in preparing written essays and thesis work

Name of the student

Family name: Weichbrodt First name: Louisa Joline
Matriculation number: 6007699

Title of essay or thesis

Fighting Poverty with Sheep in Armenia: The Role of Hope

Chatbots using [Large Language Models](#) based on artificial intelligence (AI) such as OpenAI's [ChatGPT](#) or [SchulKI](#), or Google's [Bard](#) have become easily accessible tools to support the academic writing process. Grading your work requires an assessment of what has been your own input to your text and how such models helped you. Please therefore complete and sign the following statements by ticking the boxes and add detail if applicable. Thank you!

Please mark as applicable:

- I have not used any AI tool in preparing this text
- I used an AI tool in the following areas (multiple answers possible):
- Finding ideas, stimulating my creativity
 - Understanding concepts, researching facts and definitions
 - Optimising a text that I drafted myself
 - Creating entire text passages following my prompts

If you used an AI tool, please explain which parts of your text have benefitted from the tool and how. Feel free to add an extra page if necessary, or provide hyperlinks to chat interactions you used.

1) I merged consent form texts for the interview from existing texts and own ideas using ChatGPT
2) I used ChatGPT for organising my knowledge on academic writing and creating a Checklist for text revision
See the Declaration of Artificial Intelligence Use attached

Date: 12.04.2026

Signature:

Use of Artificial Intelligence

I did not use any AI tool for creating my thesis, generating ideas, researching, defining or writing. I used Grammarly for correcting spelling mistakes, not for paraphrasing or generating text. Then, DeepL was used to translate the abstract. Despite that, AI was used for the two tasks below:

- a consent form, which was used in the field
- a text revision checklist.

Consent Form

ChatGPT was used to summarise the consent form for the participants. I inserted an adapted, translated consent form from Bielefeld University.

The prompt was:

„Fasse den Text zusammen, so dass sich nichts doppelt und die Reihenfolge der Inhalte sinnvoll aufeinander aufbaut: My name is blank. I am a student at University cooperating with NGO for a study on the sheep project. I collect data on living standards and health among NGO Sheep Project participants and the current plans of the participants. The information I collect will help NGO to improve the provided support. I would like to ask you some questions about your household and your perspective on the future. The questions should take about 45-60 minutes. By signing, you agree to participate in an interview as part of the research project. Furthermore, you accept the anonymous processing and scientific use of the interview conducted and the resulting data. Your participation in the survey and your consent to the use of the data are voluntary. Rejection will not result in any disadvantages for you. You are aware that you can revoke this consent at any time You have been informed about the nature, scope, and goal of the above-mentioned research project. The interview will be recorded with a recording device and then transcribed into written form. For the further scientific evaluation of the interview text, all information that could lead to the identification of you or of persons and institutions mentioned in the interview will be anonymised. The transcript of the interview is for analysis purposes only and will only be quoted in excerpts. Your personal contact details will be stored separately from interview data, inaccessible to third parties, and treated confidentially. All of the answers you give will be confidential and will not be shared with anyone other than members of our survey team. You can stop the interview at any time, and if I ask you any question you don't want to answer, just let me know and I will go on to the next question. In case you need more

information about the survey, you may contact the person listed on this card. Under these conditions, you agree to give the interview and consent to it being recorded, transcribed, anonymised, and evaluated. Do you have any questions? May I begin the interview now?"

The output was:

My name is [blank]. I am a student at [University], working with [NGO] on a study about the Sheep Project. I collect data on living standards, health, and future plans of project participants to help [NGO] improve its support.

I would like to ask you some questions about your household and your views on the future. The interview will take about 45–60 minutes. Participation is voluntary, and refusing will not cause any disadvantages. You may skip any question or stop the interview at any time.

By signing, you consent to take part in this interview, which will be recorded, transcribed, anonymised, and analysed for scientific purposes. All personal information and contact details will be stored separately, kept confidential, and accessible only to the research team. Any quotes used will be anonymised to ensure you or others cannot be identified.

If you have any questions or would like more information about the survey, you can contact the person listed on this card.

Do you have any questions? May I begin the interview now?

The adapted final version was:

Date:

Name:

Start Time:

End Time:

My name is Louisa Weichbrodt. I am a student at Justus Liebig University of Giessen, working with GAIN on a study about the sheep project. I collect data on living standards and health, and future plans of project participants, to help GAIN improve its support, and to complete my university degree.

I would like to ask you some questions about your household and your views on the future. The interview will take about 45–60 minutes. Participation is voluntary, and refusing will not cause any disadvantages. You may skip any question or stop the interview at any time.

By signing, you consent to take part in this interview, which will be recorded, transcribed, anonymised, and analysed for scientific purposes. All personal information and contact details will be stored separately, kept confidential, and accessible only to the research team. Any quotes used will be anonymised to ensure you or others cannot be identified.

If you have any questions or would like more information about the survey, you can contact the person listed on this card.

Do you have any questions? May I begin the interview now?

Contact:

Signature of Respondent:

(This consent form was translated with Yandex)

Text Revision Checklist

ChatGPT was asked to generate a checklist for academic writing. I inserted my personal check points for writing according to my academic writing training from zfbk. I referred to printed lists from that course I used corresponding to this checklist. The checklist was used to guide me through my own revision process.

The prompt was:

“Generate a to-do list on how to überarbeiten an academic text for a logical structure, coherence and connecting different parts of the text. Add to your ideas: linking words, topic and concluding sentence per paragraph, logical paragraphs, academic language, operating words, general rules from my class.”

The output was:

To-Do List: Revising an Academic Text for Logical Structure, Coherence, and Flow

1. **Clarify the overall argument**
 - Identify the central research question or thesis.

- Check that every section and paragraph clearly contributes to this main argument.
 - Remove or relocate content that does not serve the core objective.
2. **Review the macro-structure of the text**
- Check whether the sequence of sections follows a logical progression (e.g. context → theory → methods → results → discussion).
 - Ensure smooth transitions between sections (explicitly signal shifts in focus).
 - Verify alignment between introduction, body sections, and conclusion.
3. **Check paragraph logic**
- Ensure each paragraph develops *one* clear idea.
 - Split paragraphs that contain multiple arguments.
 - Merge very short paragraphs if they do not justify separation.
4. **Define paragraph structure**
- Add a **topic sentence** that clearly states the paragraph's main claim.
 - Develop the claim with evidence, explanation, or examples.
 - Add a **concluding or linking sentence** that:
 - Summarizes the paragraph's point, and/or
 - Bridges to the next paragraph.
5. **Strengthen coherence within and between paragraphs**
- Use **linking words and phrases** consistently (e.g. however, moreover, in contrast, consequently).
 - Refer back to key concepts using consistent terminology.
 - Use pronouns and demonstratives (this, these, such) with clear reference.
6. **Check logical connections between ideas**
- Make causal, comparative, or sequential relationships explicit.
 - Avoid “implicit jumps” where the reader must infer the logic.
 - Add short signposting phrases where needed (e.g. “This section builds on...”).
7. **Ensure appropriate use of academic language**
- Replace informal expressions with formal equivalents.
 - Avoid vague wording; prefer precise and discipline-specific terms.
 - Maintain an objective, analytical tone throughout.
8. **Use operating words from your class consistently**
- Check that paragraphs respond to the required task (e.g. *analyze, compare, evaluate, discuss*).

- Align verbs in topic sentences with these operating words.
- Ensure conclusions reflect the same cognitive level as the task.

9. Apply general academic writing rules from your class

- Ensure claims are supported by evidence or citations.
- Avoid repetition and redundancy.
- Maintain consistent tense, perspective, and terminology.
- Follow required referencing and formatting guidelines.

10. Check transitions and flow at text level

- Read only the topic sentences in sequence: do they form a logical outline?
- Read only the concluding sentences: do they guide the reader forward?
- Revise transition sentences where flow feels abrupt.

11. Final coherence check

- Read the text aloud to identify breaks in logic or flow.
- Ask whether a reader unfamiliar with the topic could follow the argument.
- Revise for clarity, conciseness, and logical consistency.

Annex

- A. Interview Guideline
- B. Code Tree
- C. Multidimensional Poverty Aspects: Results

A. Interview Guideline

Research Question: What are participating families' experiences with hopefulness before and after one year of the livestock project from GAIN Armenia?

I would like to collect empirical data on the goals, agency and pathways of the interviewees from one year ago and today by asking recurrently about their plans.

1. Small Talk & Introduction

- a. Arriving at the family's home & greetings
- b. Thanking the family for their time and hospitality
- c. Explaining the purpose and goal of the interview
 - i. I am working with GAIN on a research project
 - ii. It is for my thesis for graduating from the university in Germany
 - iii. I am interested in the impact of the sheep on your life
- d. Explain the interview procedure
- e. Consent to participating and audio recording & assurance of anonymity
- f. Ask for questions

2. START RECORDING

3. Life before the Sheep Project:

- a. Opening Question:
 - i. Did you have animals before the sheep?
 - ii. Which ones?
- b. What did a typical day in your life look like one year ago?
- c. Could you please describe what life was like before you received the sheep?
- d. One year ago, how did you envision the next year?
- e. What did you think about your future one year ago?

Now I would like to talk to you about the time when you received the sheep:

4. Change during the Sheep Project:

- a. How did your life change after you received sheep?
- b. When you woke up in the morning, how did you feel about your day?
- c. Could you please describe how you thought about your future in the last year?

Now I would like to talk about your plans:

5. Plans for the future:

- a. When you think about the future, what picture comes to mind?
- b. How do you envision the next three years?
 - i. Can you tell me about your current plans with the sheep?

What are you looking forward to in the next months?

6. Further Questions

- a. Could you please explain this in more detail?
- b. Could you give an example...?

7. Wrap up: We have reached the end of this interview...

- a. Thanking the family

B. Code Tree

Main Category	Code	Sub code	Code Description	Interview P1	Interview P2	Interview P3	Interview P4	Interview P5	Interview P6	Interview P7	Interview P8
Mood before receiving the sheep	Negative	Bad mood	Participants mood perception before receiving the sheep.	"not in a good mood" (l. 24)							
Mood before receiving the sheep	Negative	Bored	Participants mood perception before receiving the sheep.				"Back then it was boring, we waited for the day to end" (l. 68 f)		"not interesting" (l. 14)		
Mood before receiving the sheep	Negative	Unwell	Participants mood perception before receiving the sheep.		"last year we were unwell" (l. 27)						
Mood before receiving the sheep	Negative	Pessimistic	Participants mood perception before receiving the sheep.							"not optimistic" (l. 22)	
Mood before receiving the sheep	Negative	Sad	Participants mood perception before receiving the sheep.	"sad" (l. 24)							
Mood after receiving the sheep	Positive	Relief	Participants mood perception after they received sheep.	"It was a relief from worries." (l. 41)				"it was a relief" (l. 78)			"joy and relief from worries" (l. 41)
Mood after receiving the sheep	Positive	Relief	Participants mood perception after they received sheep.	"With the sheep we started to breath again." (l. 94)							
Mood after receiving the sheep	Positive	Gratefulness	Participants mood perception after they received sheep.			"grateful" (l. 54)	Grateful that they did not have to leave town (l. 115)				
Mood after receiving the sheep	Positive	Joy	Participants mood perception after they received sheep.	"The joy was limitless." (l. 37)			"we like caring for them" (l. 22 f)		"happy that the sheep exist" (l. 37)	Joy (l. 30)	
Mood after receiving the sheep	Positive	Joy	Participants mood perception after they received sheep.				They look forward to the lambing season (l. 96-98)		They love the sheep and adore the lambs (l. 35, 64 f)	"good" (l. 36)	
Mood after receiving the sheep	Positive	Surprise	Participants mood perception after they received sheep.	"surprising" (l. 21)							"support with sheep was unexpected" (l. 26)

B. Code Tree

Mood after receiving the sheep	Positive	Optimistic	Participants mood perception after they received sheep.	"excellent" (l. 28)				"they became more optimistic" (l. 48)	"interesting" (l. 34)		
Mood after receiving the sheep	Positive	Motivated	Participants mood perception after they received sheep.				"the project can motivate people" (l. 48)				Hopeful and motivated (l. 36)
Mood after receiving the sheep	Positive	Motivated	Participants mood perception after they received sheep.				"when we received sheep we got optimistic. We felt encouraged to stay and were motivated to stay" (l. 57-59)				
Mood after receiving the sheep	Positive	Hopeful	Participants mood perception after they received sheep.								They are hopeful that the sheep will have lambs soon (l. 89)
New possibilities in the family's lives	Financial possibilities		Changes through additional possibilities after receiving the sheep.	"e.g. sell two sheep for healthcosts" (l. 86)	"source of income" (l. 40)	More income (l. 20)	"It increases income" (l. 25)	With a sufficient amount of sheep the family can sell single sheep in emergencies (l. 21)		Sheep help to solve problems with the house (l. 43)	"sheep get lambs which one can sell and solve problems in emergencies, then you can keep breeding them" (l. 36)
New possibilities in the family's lives	Financial possibilities		Changes through additional possibilities after receiving the sheep.	"Because of sickness and health costs, we had many expenses, the family was in a state of need, but in the next years, the livestock will be reproduced" (l. 68-70)				"if we want to solve or purchase something we can sell a sheep" (l. 78 f)			
New possibilities in the family's lives	Workpossibilities		Changes through additional possibilities after receiving the sheep.			Increased possibilities to work (l. 28)	"before we had less income but more work" (l. 28)	There was not much work before but with the sheep the family has income (l. 19)			"children got well again and the parents could work sufficiently again" (l. 44 f)
New possibilities in the family's lives	Supportive experience		Changes through additional possibilities after receiving the sheep.	"With the sheep we started to breath again." (l. 94)			"the sheep were a great support" (l. 21)	"it was a great support" (l. 86)			"no one supported us (before)" (l. 23)

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New possibilities in the family's lives	Supportive experience		Changes through additional possibilities after receiving the sheep.				"it was a good sign to be able to stay in the village and a great support for our farming and a great motivation" (l. 64-66)				
New possibilities in the family's lives	Experiencing an opportunity		Changes through additional possibilities after receiving the sheep.			Life became more positive (l. 28)	Their life changed for the better (l. 63)	"this is a chance you have to take" (l. 49)			
New possibilities in the family's lives	Stagnation		Changes through additional possibilities after receiving the sheep.		"today is like it always has been" (l. 19)						
External constraint	Peace		Aspects that hinder families from achieving their goals.	"If Armenias peace remains stable" (l. 56)	"It depends on the countries situation" (l. 53)						
External constraint	Peace		Aspects that hinder families from achieving their goals.		"I'd rather have less bread to eat but there is peace" (l. 57-58)						
External constraint	Health costs		Aspects that hinder families from achieving their goals.	"Had to sell livestock for treatment" (l. 14)							A difficult situation was when both daughters were sick (l. 28 f)
External constraint	Health costs		Aspects that hinder families from achieving their goals.	"Because of sickness and healthcosts we had many expenses" (l. 68)							It was difficult when they faced health costs after buying a house (l. 29 f)
External constraint	Health costs		Aspects that hinder families from achieving their goals.	"hope that health costs decrease" (l. 73)							
External constraint	Health costs		Aspects that hinder families from achieving their goals.	Sons work for the treatment of their father (l. 82-83)							
External constraint	High interest rates		Aspects that hinder families from achieving their goals.				With local financing opportunities, it is difficult to reach the goal (l. 81 f)				

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External constraint	High interest rates		Aspects that hinder families from achieving their goals.				Interest rates are high (l. 83)			
External constraint	Lack of demand		Aspects that hinder families from achieving their goals.			no demand for wool (l. 49)				
External constraint	Livestock health		Aspects that hinder families from achieving their goals.		A disease killed four sheep (l. 12-14)			"the future depends partly on the animals" (l. 58)		
External constraint	Livestock health		Aspects that hinder families from achieving their goals.					"the future plans depend on the sheeps health" (l. 69)		
Hopefulness	Goals	General	Indicators of hopefulness: a plan or something to achieve.	"If Armenia's peace remains stable, we have many goals" (l. 56)						P7 did not discuss goals with her husband and does not know any
Hopefulness	Goals	Health	Indicators of hopefulness: a plan or something to achieve.	They would like that health costs decrease, needing to see the doctor less, and that the cancer treatment is over(l. 73-75)	"we want to stay healthy" (l. 30)		"stay healthy" (l. 96)			
Hopefulness	Goals	Community	Indicators of hopefulness: a plan or something to achieve.				Extend the project so that more people stay in town (l. 115 f)		"to stay in the village, so that it stays vibrant" (l. 29 f)	they want to get out of their financial situation so that other families can benefit from support from the state (l. 78 f)
Hopefulness	Goals	Livestock	Indicators of hopefulness: a plan or something to achieve.	"Sheep reproduce to 50-60 sheep" (l. 63)	"keep the sheep" (l. 81)	Aspiration to reproduce sheep (l. 44)	Increase number of sheep (l. 76)	"We always wanted sheep" (l. 33)	Breed sheep to have 50 in two years (l. 52 f)	"breed sheep" (l. 57)
Hopefulness	Goals	Livestock	Indicators of hopefulness: a plan or something to achieve.	"Lambs will be born in the next three months, we intend to keep them healthy and well cared for" (l. 65-66)			He would like to have more lambs to sell the old generation (l. 89-91)	They saw sheep at the neighbour's house and wanted to have sheep too (l. 33 f)		

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Hopefulness	Goals	Livestock	Indicators of hopefulness: a plan or something to achieve.				Have a farm with employees (l. 76 f)	The aspiration is to increase the number of sheep (l. 36)	"buying livestock and breeding it was our goal, before we recieved the sheep" (l. 24 f)		"breed sheep, and have a little farm" (l. 87)
Hopefulness	Goals	Livestock	Indicators of hopefulness: a plan or something to achieve.				Extend the stable, build farm and increase sheep number (l.86 f)		"in spring we want to purchase 1 cow and 2 calfs, sell the meat and repair our roof" (l 55-57).		
Hopefulness	Goals	Housing	Indicators of hopefulness: a plan or something to achieve.	Build a house (l. 58)					"work on the house, invest in livestock and breed " (l. 29 f)		They want the house to be properly heated in more than just one room (l. 82)
Hopefulness	Goals	Housing	Indicators of hopefulness: a plan or something to achieve.						The roof is in need of repairing (l. 57 f)		"improve the living situation and solve problems" (l. 74)
Hopefulness	Goals	Family related	Indicators of hopefulness: a plan or something to achieve.	Marriage of the son (l. 76)						Children should have good education (l. 47)	"secure the future of their children" (l. 76)
Hopefulness	Goals	Family related	Indicators of hopefulness: a plan or something to achieve.								They aim that the sons can take over the family business (l. 69 f)
Hopefulness	Goals	Family related	Indicators of hopefulness: a plan or something to achieve.								"It is important to us that the children get what they need, they should not have to lack anything" (l. 17 f)
Hopefulness	Perception of the future without sheep	Positive vision	Descriptions of future perceptions by the participants that can not be classified as other hope aspects.	Very good (l. 30)			Thinking the future improves (l. 24)		"we wanted to buy sheep and cows for breeding" (l. 27)	"everything will be alright" (l. 26)	"we keep going through difficulties" (l. 23 f)
Hopefulness	Perception of the future without sheep	Positive vision	Descriptions of future perceptions by the participants that can not be classified as other hope aspects.	Optimistic (l. 31)							

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Hopefulness	Perception of the future without sheep	Positive vision	Descriptions of future perceptions by the participants that can not be classified as other hope aspects.	Because of the grandchild, P1 envisions a great Future (l. 35)							
Hopefulness	Perception of the future without sheep	Uncertain	Descriptions of future perceptions by the participants that can not be classified as other hope aspects.				The future was unsure, cause the family sold their cows due to solar panels on a field that made it difficult to keep the cows on the field (l. 39 f)				
Hopefulness	Perception of the future without sheep	Undisclosed	Descriptions of future perceptions by the participants that can not be classified as other hope aspects.		"I don't know what to say" (l. 31)	Can't describe future thoughts from the period during the war (l. 34-35)		Difficult to answer, expecting the future the same (l. 27-31)		"difficult to describe" (l. 20)	
Hopefulness	Perception of the future with sheep	Positive	Descriptions of future perceptions by the participants that can not be classified as other hope aspects.	"great future" (l. 52)		"we try to be optimistic" (l. 34-35)	"when we recieved sheep we got optimistic. We felt encouraged to stay and were motivated to stay" (l. 57-59)	"sheep dung can be used for heating" (l. 20)			
Hopefulness	Perception of the future with sheep	Positive	Descriptions of future perceptions by the participants that can not be classified as other hope aspects.				The project prevents migration (l. 49)				
Hopefulness	Perception of the future with sheep	Negative	Descriptions of future perceptions by the participants that can not be classified as other hope aspects.		"I don't trust that peace will last" (l. 59-60)		When families leave the town it is a painful experience (l. 66)				
Hopefulness	Perception of the future with sheep	Negative	Descriptions of future perceptions by the participants that can not be classified as other hope aspects.		"There is no perspective for life" (l. 29)						

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Hopefulness	Perception of the future with sheep	Expectations	Descriptions of future perceptions by the participants that can not be classified as other hope aspects.	"The future is full of goals and well in my imagination" (L. 60)	"what can we expect to happen. We'd rather not be optimistic. You gotta be realistic..." (L. 54-56)	Expecting a change for the better (L. 39)					
Hopefulness	Perception of the future with sheep	Expectations	Descriptions of future perceptions by the participants that can not be classified as other hope aspects.		You can't know what will happen (L. 71)	"can't say but probably good, if we are healthy, everything is alright" (L. 41-42)					
Hopefulness	Perception of the future with sheep	Expectations	Descriptions of future perceptions by the participants that can not be classified as other hope aspects.			He is locking forward towards the next months if children stay healthy (L. 47)					
Hopefulness	Perception of the future with sheep	The role of sheep in planning	Descriptions of future perceptions by the participants that can not be classified as other hope aspects.		"I can't say" (L. 84)			"the future is strongly conneted to the kids" (L. 62 f)	"we are waiting for the lambs" (L. 60)	She does not know any goals and has no vision of the future on her own	
Hopefulness	Perception of the future with sheep	The role of sheep in planning	Descriptions of future perceptions by the participants that can not be classified as other hope aspects.					"this is a chance you have to take" (L. 49)	"the perception is deeply connected to the animals" (L. 55)		
Hopefulness	Perception of the future with sheep	The role of sheep in planning	Descriptions of future perceptions by the participants that can not be classified as other hope aspects.					"if we want to solve or purchase something we can sell a sheep" (L. 78 f)			

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Hopefulness	Pathways towards the goal		Shows how the goal can be achieved: options, and dealing with obstacles.	"Only when necessary and enough sheep are present they can sell in an emergency e.g. sell two sheep for health costs" (l. 85-86)		They give the wool to people who make wool instead of no customer at all (l. 50)	"We sold the cows and bought more sheep and increased them" (l. 23 f)	"lambs are the result of good work. I would like them to be healthy and grow in the future and that I can see the result of my work" (l. 71-73)	"work on the house, invest in livestock and breed to stay in the village, so that it stays vibrant" (l. 29 f)		"sheep get lambs which one can sell and solve problems in emergencies, then you can keep breeding them" (l. 36)
Hopefulness	Pathways towards the goal		Shows how the goal can be achieved: options, and dealing with obstacles.				"but now we focus on the goal" (l. 69) [after life was boring without sheep]		"before we had sheep we imagined to have them next year" (l. 44 f)		"the more sheep, the better" (l. 57)
Hopefulness	Pathways towards the goal		Shows how the goal can be achieved: options, and dealing with obstacles.				Financial support is required to change the situation (l. 82-84)	In a case of emergency one sheep could be sold (l. 21)			
Hopefulness	Pathways towards the goal		Shows how the goal can be achieved: options, and dealing with obstacles.				Pursue the goal, but slowly (l. 89)	"with the sheep we can plan for the future and sell them" (l. 43 f)			
Hopefulness	Agency for the goals	Internal constraint	Beliefs about the possibility of achieving the goal.		"cause life circumstances don't depend on you" (l. 56)						
Hopefulness	Agency for the goals	Internal constraint	Beliefs about the possibility of achieving the goal.		"You have got to be a scientist to be able to imagine the future." (l. 67-68)						
Hopefulness	Agency for the goals	self-efficacy	Beliefs about the possibility of achieving the goal.				"We decided to breed them" (l. 22)	"She is ready to do so" (l. 37)	"now we achieve our goal" (l. 45)		
Hopefulness	Agency for the goals	self-efficacy	Beliefs about the possibility of achieving the goal.					"diligence is necessary to do well in the future" (l. 49 f)			
Hopefulness	Agency for the goals	self-efficacy	Beliefs about the possibility of achieving the goal.					"the future depends on us, we create our future" (l. 39 f)			

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Hopefulness	Wishful hope		A type of hope not connected to oneself but something higher e.g. God.		"we have to be satisfied with what God is giving us." (l. 102)						
Non-verbal reactions				Interruption of excitement (l. 37)				Pause before naming the importance of taking the opportunity (l. 48)	Lots of laughter, joy and excitement around the sheep especially the lambs		It was difficult for him to answer questions related to the future
Non-verbal reactions				Laughing, showing joy (l. 21)							

C. Multidimensional Poverty Aspects: Results

Px	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	Source
Education	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary	Question
Nr. of kids (alive)	3	1	2	1	3	1	4	4	Question
Nr. of kids (dead)	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	GAiN
Kids in school/ kindergarden today	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	Question
Kids in school/ kindergarden one year ago	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	Question
Flooring today	parquet	ceramic tiles	wood planks	wood planks	wood planks	wood planks	vinyl	wood planks	Observation
Flooring one year ago	parquet	ceramic tiles	other dwelling	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	Question
House walls today	stone with cement	stone with cement	stone with cement	stone with cement	stone with cement	stone with cement	stone with cement	stone with cement	Observation
House walls one year ago	stone with cement	stone with cement	other dwelling	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	Question
Roofing today	metal	metal	calamine	calamine	metal	calamine	calamine	calamine	Observation
Roofing one year ago	metal	metal	other dwelling	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	Question
Sanitation today	flush to septic tank	flush to piped sewer system	pit latrine with slab	flush to pit	ventilated improved pit	pit latrine with slab	flush to pit	pit latrine with slab	Question
Sanitation one year ago	flush to septic tank	flush to pit	pit latrine with slab	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	Question
Sharing	no	no	yes	no	no	no	no	no	Question
Cooking fuel today	LPG	LPG	LPG	LPG	LPG	LPG	LPG	LPG	Question
Cooking fuel one year ago	LPG	LPG	LPG	LPG	LPG	LPG	LPG	LPG	GAiN
Water source today	pipled into dwelling	pipled into dwelling	pipled into dwelling	pipled into dwelling	pipled into dwelling	pipled into dwelling	pipled into dwelling	pipled into dwelling	Question
Water source one year ago	pipled into dwelling	pipled into dwelling	pipled into dwelling	pipled into dwelling	pipled into dwelling	pipled into dwelling	pipled into dwelling	pipled into dwelling	Question