

The Link between Rural Institutions and Rural Development: Reflections on Smallholder Farmers and Donors in Zimbabwe

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Abstract: This paper draws on review of current literature to explore the relationship between rural institutions and rural development while reflecting on the linkages of smallholder farmers and donor contribution. The results presented are of qualitative data analysis from previous and current literature. The paper provides a detailed overview of nomenclaturizing rural development as a critical result of improvements in education, health, agriculture, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as part of rural industrialization in rural Zimbabwe. Improving health by investing in increased awareness and access to information sharing among communities, policy development, program planning and service delivery fosters rural development. As the world belatedly turns its attention to the pressing issues of environmental degradation and climate change, the concept of sustainability takes its rightful place at centre stage in discussions about agriculture and rural development. Improving education through promoting information and technology dissemination for learning and access to information, coordination of major sources of funding for education, policy on education for rural areas, conducting research and development as well as the total number of rural farmers assisted.

Keywords: Agriculture, donor, institution, rural development, small holder

I. INTRODUCTION

The conception of rural institutions is the first and foremost partnership of people towards self and rural development (Gandure, 2005). Institutions are formal organizations, comprising constitutions, laws and informal taboos and traditions. This is in line with purely holistic capitalist approaches to economic development and progression which calls for more participatory rural appraisal and locally established economic opportunities. At the core of this prelude and evolution is a well-established strong community commitment to provide resources and information, deal with collective calamities and enhance the strength of local labour markets. FAO (2008) purports to the notion that, rural development involves the initiators, supporters and beneficiaries of any development input. The theoretical literature, literature and empirical findings from previous studies reveal that individual smallholder farmers by crafting programs that transform communities through supporting and enhancing self-reliance and underlining popular participation in their development activities impact positively on rural development (Anderson, 2007; World Bank, 2007). Apart from that, this study unravels a mammoth appreciation of donors' contribution and their important role in supporting the rural poor to break out of their condition of poverty. For instance, donors' insistence on the authorization of the communal poor as the key to their transformation provides groundwork for effective partnership. However, as noted by Dodman and Mitlin (2011), rural development cannot take place merely as a result of the dominance of the marginalised poor through supporting self-reliance and underpinning popular participation out rightly and also by attending to obstacles, faced by the rural infrastructure, inadequate processing opportunities and financial services, among others. Smallholder farmers as a distinct community group provide opportunities for communal people engage themselves at local levels. For instance, Wolmer and Scoones (2000) suggest that most communities' related activities occur in farming areas or mark ups with the family being vital in planning, decision making and implementation of the projects. In this regard, Giller et al (2009), FEWSNET (2007), World Bank (2007), Levy (2007) affirms that the dominance of smallholder farming through their planned systems and organised community groups initiates faster rate of poverty reduction. More so, smallholder farmers mediate in rural intra community conflicts, build infrastructure lure other developmental actors such as donors into the mainstream community and as well assist many people to run more effectively and collectively (Mupangwa, 2011). It is in this realm, that Anderson (2007) noted that smallholder farmers have taken on the role of "developmental catalysts" in most countries of the global south such as Zimbabwe and also in the emerging economies, particularly in health, education, industries and agricultural development. Furthermore, in a catalytic development model, the emphasis lies in mobilising rural synergies and leveraging local resources and networks to obtain solutions to local issues, and foster sustainable progression and development of communities while enhancing the improvement of education, health, industry and agriculture as discussed.

II. WELLNESS, EDUCATION, AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL ZIMBABWE

The Zimbabwean population stands at 15.8 million with a growth rate of 2.20% and a lifetime expectancy of 49.6 years (UNDP, 2011). Non-governmental organizations' (NGOs) likewise link up with intergovernmental organizations, such as the European Community and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, in order to integrate rural development concerns into every field of activity. For instance, NGOs help to shape "blueprint responses" to problems such as trans-frontier pollution, capacity building, infrastructure development and outbreak of diseases. The main causes of morbidity and mortality are malaria, acute respiratory tract infections, malnutrition and HIV/AIDS. About 65% of health care is provided onto by the government of Zimbabwe own facilities and the remaining 35% of the private sector providers (GoZ, 2010). While, in theory, public healthcare provision is supposed to be free; in reality, there are unofficial fees and patients are often asked to buy own drugs and surgical items privately. Other hidden "costs" of health care to people living in rural Zimbabwe, is the large distances patients travel to attend the nearest clinic as well as deprivation of income from time off work especially when receiving health care means queuing for long hours (Andersson and Giller, 2012). Pregnant women in many instances choose to deliver at home, unless a complication emerges and this has been the case of the Johanne Marange Apostolic and the Madzibaba sects. Major means of transport is by scotch-carts, bicycles and sometimes trucks carrying or donated maize, on the dirt roads, and when it rains the roads become impassable. Kassam et al. (2010) points out that unlike the large urban health centres, rural clinics have neither electricity nor running water, and in some cases solar powered electricity is used to run equipment for screening infectious diseases like malaria and TB. In rural areas of Zimbabwe, access to health care services is always limited and many rural facilities are not equipped to manage specialised follow up maintenance after a life changing illness (Gbetibouo, 2009). Some of the interventions and strategies used to better access to rural health include recruitment of students so that they become health workers from affected communities, locating training programs in spite of appearance or in close propinquity to the community to be dished out. Nkala et al. (2011) notes that agencies such as donors and sometimes in partnership with other agencies are complementing government effort in the rural health care provision by developing ways to strengthen health care approach in rural Zimbabwe for instance Global Fund and Oxfam. They assist with relevant training to health care workers, and this is a vital contribution as it enables healthcare workers to take on more demanding tasks and agencies which may improve health in rural areas (Kassam et al., 2010). In rural areas of Zimbabwe also, attraction and retention of conditioned and skilled health workers remain a daunting challenge (IFAD, 2013). However, Zimbabwe has chronically inadequate trained health personnel, poor equitable distribution of human resources, poor skills mix and ineffective use of available human resources which are aggravated by the practice of non-professional task-shifting (GoZ, 2010; UNDP, 2011). There are disparities observed in the placement of health workers in urban and rural areas in Zimbabwe (UNCTAD, 2011). This is exacerbated by the poor access roads to health facilities, low wages and lack of social amenities in rural areas (Kassie and Zikhali, 2009). There is no easy solution to these challenges and government and other health sector players such as private actors have begun programs to improve health care options in rural areas (Mupangwa, 2011). Many of these individual players are affiliated with religious organisations and funded by donors and foreign assistance. About 60% of Zimbabweans depend on traditional medicine as a first treatment; witch doctors offer herbal remedies for minor ailments and for more life-threatening diseases they refer patients to medical practitioners. The more economically developed a community is the better the health and wellbeing of its people (Chimhowu and Woodhouse, 2008). Power (2010) affirms that poor health affects economic growth through total factor productivity. With the concentration of poverty, low health status and a high disease burden in rural parts, achieving rural development require improving rural health (Oldreive, 2005). In the past decades, the Zimbabwean government has put in efforts to better the functioning of the health sector through increasing public expenditure on health, re-energizing diseases control programs and re-orienting services to primary health care (Nkala et al., 2011). For the purpose of this survey, the working definition for quality health care means a healthcare that improves health outcomes for all rural people, maximizes resource use, accessibility (timely, geographical and appropriate skills), and caters for gender needs. Power (2010) and Mupangwa (2011) show that many rural people the world over are captivated in the poverty – ill health – low productivity downward spiral.

2.1 Education

Prager and Posthumus (2010), basing on their treatise on human capital theory, takes note that training is an important part of total factor productivity and Dodman and Mitlin (2011) add that training is an investment "like any other" that generates externalities. For example, people arrive at individual choices concerning their education, but these choices have a substantial economic power through the resulting increase in total factor of productivity. Teaching in rural Zimbabwe, especially in the marginalised areas faces a complex mixture of lack of resources, unmotivated teachers, and the absence of government will to resolve those strains. Therefore,

inadequate educational infrastructure is related to extreme poverty in rural Zimbabwe by reducing productivity and earning capacity as well as increasing exposure to extreme poverty (Gandure, 2005). The shortcomings of education services in rural Zimbabwe are related to the fact that the country lacks adequate infrastructure and educated people ready to live in rural areas, lacks resources and infrastructure to design and deliver effective training services to the rural population (Mazvimavi and Twomlow, 2009). For instance, in most satellite (new fast track schools), “schools under trees” and “schools under the shades” are still common and affect access and quality of education. Curricula and textbooks in rural schools are often lacking or inadequate, with contents in many instances not particularly relevant to the needs of rural masses. Mupangwa (2011) and IFAD (2013) add that the calibre of instruction in government schools, especially in rural areas has not improved even with the implementation of the Nziramasanga Inquiry into Education which culminated in the proposed draft of 1999. The proposed thematic curriculum will have various learning areas with additional subjects and therefore result in the shortage of qualified teachers as the government is implementing the new curriculum without adequate preparations. The new Zimbabwean curriculum has been endorsed and will start to be implemented in 2017. The margin for implementing the course of work to fit rural learning is often as well limited. Thus, for this exceptional study, education improvement refers to advancing learning and achievement by providing leadership, direction and financial backing over a wide range of rural training programs that have direct impact on teaching and learning. This is the definition advanced by UNDP (2011) as education includes learners who are sound, well-nourished and ready to learn, safe, health and gender sensitive among others

2.2 Agriculture

Agriculture plays a pivotal role in the developmental discourse and economic development. The agriculture sector in Zimbabwe currently employs over 50% of the work force nationally with over 75% rurally (FAO, 2006). The sector consists of cash and food crops, livestock, forestry and fisheries activities and contributes 23.9% to the country’s GDP (Chambers and Cornway, 1999; Anderson, 2007). From the poor house-holds “point of view, improving agriculture-based livelihoods implies transforming agriculture by improving their capital assets which include natural, physical, financial, human and social assets. Zimbabwe is trying to accelerate agricultural growth by bringing in various technologies to raise yield, which stimulates labour intensive industrialization, improves the terms of trade, and concentrates pressure on food prices (GoZ, 2010). Chimhowu and Woodhouse (2008) concur that in Zimbabwe’s expansion of elements of sustainable production; especially cultivatable land promotes agricultural production in addition to considering research and development in new production technologies. The scope for considering research and development is the belief that investment in research results in additions in the inventory of knowledge, which in turn either facilitates the use of existing knowledge or generation of new technologies, similar to indigenous knowledge. This concurs with Wolmer et al (2003) who state that education, training and extension as well as technological advancement improves quality or how inputs are mixed, thus leading to productivity gains. According to Nkala et al (2011), agriculture plays a decisive role in the overall economic growth and rural development of a nation and increased agricultural yield leads to increases in total production and yield. A drop in agricultural growth throws the poor into poverty and hunger, and those with the most rapidly growing agriculture sector generally face the most rapidly declining poverty and malnutrition incidences (World Bank, 2007; Andersson and Giller, 2012). Zimbabwe’s farming sector is dominated by smallholder farmers in rural parts and therefore the sector faces several challenges including limited market and market access and inadequate infrastructure, high costs and limited approach to improved inputs and production technologies (Anderson, 2007). In that respect is also a shortage of agricultural credit facilities and inadequate work force, especially extension services (IFAD, 2013). Other challenges that inhibit and derail progress include unreliable data due to deficiency of quality research, poor coordination of producers, global price increases and lack of ownership and control of solid ground, especially for women (who are the majority participants in the sector). Simply put, the question of what donors’ and community groups are summarised in three activities of: implements, catalysts and partners (FEWSNET, 2007). Through community basic groups, efforts of the people are compounded with those of development actors (such as NGO, government) to improve socioeconomic and cultural conditions of the communities (Madzvamuse, 2010). Madzvamuse further argues that community based organizations offer an avenue for people to organize themselves for planning action, fix their common and individual needs and problems and offer solutions thus facilitating rural development. However, Wani et al. (2009) indicate that NGOs may not necessarily have positive and long lasting influences, particularly in places where they get locked within unidirectional processes of change and in circumstances where they inflict their own schedule and become self-interested actors at the expense of the citizenry they are defending. World Bank (2007) and IFAD (2013) argue that success in agricultural development needs a big number of investment and insurance measures. These include improving farmer and agro -industrial approach to markets, investments in infrastructure, information supply, rural education, regulation and policy. The study here sought to establish whether improving agriculture by focusing/investing in the factors affecting agriculture (independent variables) influences rural development.

The independent variable is: Agricultural improvement, which for the sake of this study means improvement in agriculture production and productivity to ensure food and income securities of the citizenry.

2.3 Rural industrialisation in Zimbabwe

It is worthwhile to observe that for rural industrialisation process in Zimbabwe, to be sustained it requires a lot of core resources and capacities such as skilled manpower, technical innovation and enhanced knowledge capacity, as well as approach to inexpensive finance, infrastructure and appropriate policies (Mazvimavi and Twomlow, 2009; GoZ, 2010). Zimbabwe recognises that ability of micro, low and medium scale enterprises to generate socioeconomic benefits, value addition to local raw materials, business creation, income generation opportunities and promotion of entrepreneurship. Despite the above benefits that accrue from rural based industries, even though they maybe setbacks which include poor infrastructural facilities such as road and energy (Mupangwa, 2011). For example, there is inadequate and unreliable electricity supply which affects efforts in rural agro-based industrial establishment. A number of the rural entrepreneurs face financial constraints in setting up rural industries because of the non-supportive attitude of commercial, financial institutions and banks (UNDP, 2011). Likewise, interest rates, collaterals and other requirement are stringent for rural entrepreneurs; such services are either modified or non-available by virtue of their location in rural regions of Zimbabwe. Rural industries are primarily agricultural based and labour intensive, therefore hard to introduce sophisticated techniques and methods of production which are expensive and there is no technical know how to operate them (Andersson and Giller, 2012). More so, there are various other components that are hampering the attainment and realisation of these destinations and they among others include the high population increase rate that creates a diversion of investment into other services and stiff competition from foreign industries that produce similar agro-based foods which are cheaper (World Bank, 2007). Andersson and Giller (2012) further assert that rural industries like others need to comply with the various legal formalities such as licenses in order to run. But rural entrepreneurs find it hard to follow due to the complexities of the legal provisions or illiteracy and ignorance. Other troubles include poor quality standards, use of obsolete technology, machinery and equipment as well as inadequate communication and marketing information (Oldreive, 2005; CBDC, 2009). There are several factors that can enhance industrial development for rural development. In light of the above, industrial improvement means paying attention to the above challenges by focusing on strategic factors that promote industrial growth based on local resources. Here, the study sought to establish whether improving the industry by focusing/investing in the factors affecting the industry (independent variables) which in turn influences rural development. Improving industry means setting up rural based industries which make use of the producers of agriculture directly or indirectly. This is because rural based industries are regarded as essential for rural development in view of its large potential for growth and likely socioeconomic impact on employment and income generation (Power, 2010; UNCTAD, 2011). It also helps make use of raw materials directly supplied by the agricultural sector and facilitates the growth of industries which produce several inputs such as fertilizer, pesticides and agricultural implements that promote the productivity and expansion of agriculture. Industrial improvement in rural development has two components, namely location (geographical scope) and linkages with large industries as Ancillaries (Levy, 2007). Therefore, industrial development for rural development in Zimbabwe covers all kinds of small and processing industries based on agriculture (GoZ, 2010).

III. DISCUSSION

3.1 Health and Rural Development

In rural areas of Zimbabwe, access to healthcare is limited and rural clinics are not well equipped to function properly. With the economic meltdown experienced between 2003-2008 and a shrinking economic base, the government has failed to allocate the much needed resources to the health sector. Seeing the deteriorating state of the health sector, NGOs partnered with Rural District Councils to compliment government effort in rural healthcare provision. Empirical evidence from this study and other studies conducted before noted that NGOs provide relevant training to healthcare workers which are critical to rural people. Some of the strategies used by donors to improve access to rural health include recruitment of elderly women “mbuya hutano” within the affected communities. The more economically developed a community is the better the health and wellbeing of its people (Glasby and Lester, 2004). With the concentration of poverty, low health status and high disease burden in rural areas, achieving rural development require improving rural health (Bage, 2004). This research noted that not only does NGOs provide assistance in the form of medical supply to rural health; they also provides health information and act as a bridge to health information sharing. This articulates that increase in access to healthcare information increase the chance of rural health. This goes hand in glove with Green et al (2009) who noted that availability of accurate, timely and analyzed information improves the quality of people’s health, healthcare system and delivery care. However, it is interesting to note that inconsistency of policy promotion by the government has significant effects on health improvement in rural areas. Deep analysis from this study noted that effective health policy and service delivery is crucial for an improved health community and rural development.

3.2 Education and Rural Development

Education is a critical part of not only rural development but total factor production. The most critical component of education is that it is an investment “like any other” that generates externalities (Boser, 2014). Most African countries face challenges in providing an educational playing field which fosters rural development. In rural areas of Zimbabwe, education is faced with a lot of challenges amounting to lack of resources and unmotivated teachers. It is interesting to note that poor quality of education is linked to poverty levels of rural areas. Education in rural areas of Zimbabwe is burdened by the country’s economic decline and rural teachers are not able to deliver effectively because of poor infrastructure. They are a lot of “schools under trees” with 5 or more pupils sharing one text book and this affects access to quality education. The government of national unit (2009-2013) saw UNICEF donating text books to schools in a way of promoting quality education. However, most schools no longer have the donated books and with the implementation of the new educational curriculum, rural schools do not have relevant materials. The new educational curriculum is putting significant stress on the limited rural educational infrastructure that having a consequential toll on quality. The findings of this paper indicated that promotion of education in rural areas strengthens and empowers rural people to be among global players in the knowledge based economy. NGOs provide good coordination of major sources of funding for education and it has an impact on rural development. Okidi and Mugambe (2002) argues that for the development of rural areas, one of the major challenges is about how to coordinate major sources of funding for achieving the greatest impact.

3.3 Agriculture and Rural Development

Zimbabwe’s agricultural sector employs over 80% and it contributes to the country’s GDP. Rural Institutions have played a critical role in improving the agriculture- based livelihood and improving capital assets (financial, human and social assets). Technologies have been introduced by stakeholders to enhance production and increase the output. In rural areas of Zimbabwe, new technologies have been introduced and investment in research has led to an increase in stock of knowledge which facilitate rural development. Education training and extension, introduction of new advanced technologies led to productive gains which plays a pivotal role in the economic growth of a country (Diao et al 2006; Rosegrant and Evenson 1992). Zimbabwe’s agriculture is dominated by smallholder farmers in rural areas and the sector is facing many challenges that include poor infrastructure, high cost of production and limited access to markets. Credit facilities to smallholder farmers is lacking and global market price affects mostly cotton farmers. Empirical evidence from this research showed that the government, NGOs and the private sector is providing agricultural education and trainings to enhance rural development. Through community groups, it is evidenced that NGOs are making tremendous efforts to provide an avenue for rural people to be involved in the planning process and facilitate rural development. However, the study pointed out that access to agricultural trainings and access to information from NGOs many not improve agriculture and rural development. This concur with Nalere et al (2015) who states that advanced training in agronomy practices only without the essential inputs such as fertilizer, equipment and improved seed among other may not improve agriculture to cause rural development. Mobilization of resources and the involvement of NGOs are critical for ensuring positive development of the sector and it enhances rural people to have food, income and employment which are critical for rural development. Kalibata (2010) is of the opinion that foreign aid can provide the necessary solutions to the needs of Africa’s farmers: need improved inputs, including improved seeds and soils, roads to connect them to markets, agribusiness credit and private sector investments to spur growth, facilities to reduce their estimated 40-60% post-harvest losses, and training and technology to cope with climate change. Agriculture is connected with food security, poverty reduction and maintenance of the natural resource base hence it requires better appreciation in terms of the skills, knowledge and funding rations in budget (Echeverria and Beintema, (2009).

3.4 Government Policies and Rural Development

The development of rural areas in every country in the world has required government assistance. After attaining independence, government of Zimbabwe formulated policies which was meant to address the gaps and disparities between urban and rural set ups. This saw the forming of the District Development Fund (DDF) which is responsible for putting in place physical development. The Zimbabwe government agency DDF is charged with the responsibility of providing and maintaining rural infrastructure and this includes drilling and fitting of bore-holes, dam construction, road development and fencing of grazing land. The District Development Fund (DDF), a department mandated by the government to control funds donated by NGOs for fostering rural development, provided tillage operations to the small-scale farmers who benefitted under the Fast Track Land Reform Program during 2000-2009 (Obi and Chisango 2011). However, in recent years, DDF has failed to implement its roles to develop rural areas, probably its operations is hindered by the crippling economy and the underperformance of state agency due to high levels of corruption. The state of rural roads is very shocking and pathetic and it has a negative effect to economic growth and development. Access to market

places by rural producers has been impacted and the cost of transporting raw materials has gone up resulting in slipping backwards as far as rural development is concerned. In addition to the various rural development initiatives by government, electrification of rural growth points increased the rural resemblance of urban areas and provided convenience and a conducive environment for business operations (Mapuva, 2015). The Rural Electrification program has saw growth within the rural set up with and it has allowed for rural business opportunities. Mapuva (2015) argues that many rural activities like running of nightclubs and bottle stores, grinding mills and welding activities are greatly driven by presence of electricity hence; the impact of rural electrification in rural development cannot be under-estimated. The rural electrification programme has created employment opportunities to rural people, with a greater proportion being youths. This conquers with Mapako and Prasad (2011) who argued that national electrification programmes have been given priority in many developing countries and the level of electrification has been generally seen as one of the key indicators of development.

In 2007, the Government of Zimbabwe launched farm mechanization program with an aim of supporting the fast track land reform program and improves farm productivity. The goal was to support the land reform program and improve farm productivity on newly resettled farms where output was either beginning to decline or had never looked good since the white farmers were forcibly driven off most land (FAO/WFP 2007; Mugabe 2007). The program regarded the rehabilitation of irrigation as important. The findings of the survey suggest that the government was unable to finance the mechanization program. This relates to Obi and Chisango (2011) who argued that there is evidence that the government was unable to finance broader development imperatives which resulted in an acute shortage of essential inputs, equipment and spares and Human resource constraints were also so severe that crucial agricultural support services could not be provided in a timely manner if at all.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has shown close linkages between rural institutions and rural development in the realm of agricultural reform in Zimbabwe. Although post-independence agrarian reforms have successfully handed land from a few commercial farmers to black majority, beneficiaries still face challenges related to capacity gaps, input support, markets for agricultural produce and poor infrastructure. The institutions are of paramount importance in that they buttress the strength of successful implementation of rural development projects and activities. Donors and private institutions have always been at the pinnacle of rural development since and even before the independence in 1980. Donors provided funding, oversaw capacity building initiatives to equip smallholder farmers and also towards the provision of infrastructure. Donors and private sector's role in driving agricultural growth that enables smallholders to move beyond subsistence agriculture should be maximized. Rural industrialization is also making a difference in that in that food markets are evolving rapidly, providing enormous scope for exploring alternative ways to improve social amenities and road rehabilitation. It is a result of such interactions between donors, entrepreneurs, smallholder producers, medium-size and large national in businesses which determine production, marketing, economic and environmental concerns. These actors need to be actively engaged in a way that encourages investment in smallholder agriculture as well as rural development. In this regard, this study sets out to analyse the critical factors influencing improvements in health, education, agriculture and industry in Zimbabwe's rural areas with the aim of gaining insight into the possible link of rural institutions to Zimbabwe's rural development. Given the above literature review, one would note that no single factor is likely to be successful in improving rural health, education, agriculture and rural industry in rural areas of Zimbabwe but rather multiple factors are required at different levels.

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