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REVIEW OF Rural Resilience Praxis

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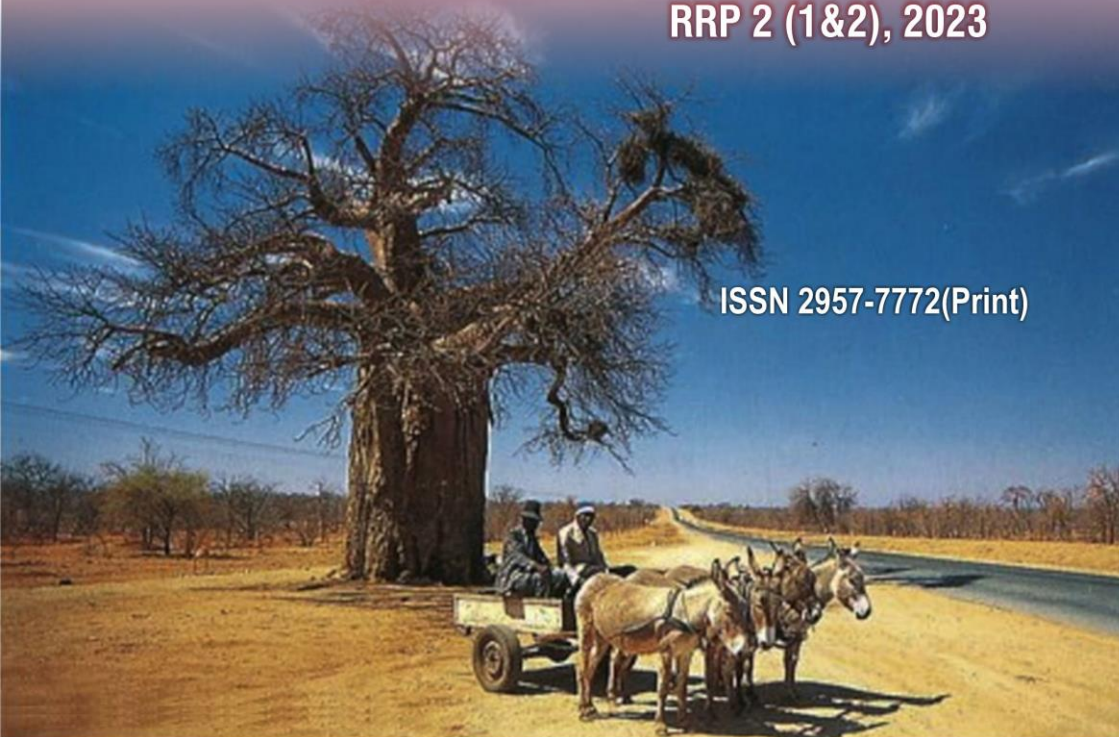

REVIEW OF
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About the Journal

JOURNAL PURPOSE

The purpose of the *Review of Rural Resilience Praxis is* to provide a forum for disaster risk mitigation, adaptation, and preparedness.

CONTRIBUTION AND READERSHIP

Sociologists, demographers, psychologists, development experts, planners, social workers, social engineers, economists, among others whose focus is that of rural resilience.

JOURNAL SPECIFICATIONS

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SCOPE AND FOCUS

As much as the urban territory is increasing by each day, the rural economy, especially in many developing countries, still retains a great proportion of the extractive and accommodation industry. Retaining some space as rural remains critical given the sectors role in providing ecosystem services to both wildlife and humanity. In this light, rural resilience as practice beckons for critical studies especially in the face of the ever-threatening extreme weather events and climate change that then impact on the livelihoods and lifestyles of the rural communities. Review of Rural Resilience Praxis (RRRP) comes in as a platform for critical engagement by scholars, practitioners, and leaders as they seek to debate and proffer solutions of the rural sector as well as trying to champion the philosophy of the right to be rural. The issue of conviviality between the different constituencies of the sectors, compiled with the competing challenges of improving rural spaces while also making the conservation, and preservation debates matter is the hallmark of this platform of criticality. The journal is produced bi-annually.

Guidelines for Authors for the Review of Rural Resilience Praxis

Articles must be original contributions, not previously published and should not be under consideration for publishing elsewhere.

Manuscript Submission: Articles submitted to the *Review of Rural Resilience Praxis*are reviewed using the double-blind peer review system. The author's name(s) must not be included in the main text or running heads and footers.

A total number of words: 5000-7000 words and set in 12-point font size width with 1.5 line spacing.
Language: British/UK English
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Italicise *et al.*, *ibid.,* words that are not English, not names of people or organisations, etc. When you use several authors confirming the same point, state the point and bracket them in one bracket and in ascending order of dates and alphabetically separated by semi-colon e.g. (Falkenmark, 1989, 1990; Reddy, 2002; Dagdeviren and Robertson, 2011; Jacobsen *et al.*, 2012).

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Social Networks and the Human Factor Perspective on Rural Development in Chimanimani District, Zimbabwe

TIMOTHY MARANGO[1] AND LEONARD CHITONGO[2]

Abstract

Uplifting human factor principles is a *sine qua non* for rural development. However, severe human factor decay has become a reality in remote rural districts of Zimbabwe. Failure to network seems to be a paradox that needs to be unlocked. Networks are based on good relationships. Relations impact on science and any livelihoods programmes. Networks are the bedrock for trust. Trust is a resilience builder for that sustainability. Limited networks and the general low human factor as evidenced my mistrust, poor service delivery, corruption and poor communication, have led to stagnation or even regression of the development gains brought by political independence. The conclusions of this article are drawn from a study done in Chimanimani Rural District of Zimbabwe. Whilst councils are the nerve centres for rural development, their members are continuously failing to make most of the ongoing networking platforms at their disposal. Respondents were chosen conveniently and judgmentally. This study revealed very poor networking among community members and organisations operating in the district. The conclusions of this article arrived at reminding to "going-back-for-it" (*sankofaism*), thereby integrating globalised philosophies with African indigenous knowledge on leadership. Indeed, Chimanimani District has the capacity for growth and sustenance of the same.

Keywords: *sankofa*, *dare*, social capital, communication, social resilience

INTRODUCTION

Globalised philosophies have invaded societies time and space. In this article, globalised philosophies refer to western science-based beliefs and its related religions. It is not the aim of this piece to draw a battlefield with globalised philosophies, but to integrate them with indigenous knowledge systems. There is severe inadequacy of investment in social networking. This is a misfire in rural development on the part of local government and evidence of severe human factor deficit. Social networking is one of the social capitals imbedded in the human factor development philosophy. Local government is the nerve centre for rural development (Marango, Francis and Adjibolosso, 2016). It

plays the coordinating and facilitation role in rural development. It is the local government system that can either empower or stifle citizens' participation on matters that determine their destinies.

There is a dearth of literature that highlights the benefits of investing in strengthening social capital. Social capital is one component embedded within the human factor development theory. The two are a driver for rural development initiatives. Therefore, there is need to single out the benefits of social networking. Social capital is the total sum of trust, social solidarity, knowledge, information, mutual support, empowerment, leadership, encouragement and social networking (Coleman 1988; Putnam, 1993, Marango, Francis and Mathaulula, 2016). However, there is a problem that scholars have tended to look at social capital in its entirety, without singling out its components such as social networking. This is problematic in that one swims in a myriad of concepts where the head and tail is not clear.

Social networks, as the ties between individuals or groups, could be considered the "structural" element of social capital (Baum and Ziersch, 2003). Social networks could be either formal or informal. Baum and Ziersch (*ibid.*). posit that formal networks are those ones that are developed through formal organisations and guided by some legal rules and regulations. These organisations include voluntary organisations and associations. On the other hand, informal networks are ties bound by mutual understanding and trust such as friendship, family, neighbourhood and work related. The primary role of informal networks is particularly the provision of scarce resources like social support. Social networks cement or cultivates the three forms of social capital, namely bonding, bridging and linking.

Bonding refers to the links that exist between like-minded people or the reinforcement of homogeneity. They are 'strong or thick ties' (Dale and Sparkes, 2008). Bridging refers to connecting heterogeneous groups. Lastly, linking social capital strengthens bonding and bridging. An example is family to family or community to community links. Another example is the community-donor linkage. Links are, therefore, are bridges of social capital (Putnam, 2000). There is always need for integrating these social capitals. This is so because, for example, bonding tends to shut out outsiders from community who might want to invest in it though it binds people together to work as an entity and reduce possibility of sabotage.

Social capital is linked to human factor development. Human factor development is part of African philosophies. Human factor bridges

Afrocentric thinking to science-based thinking. This is so because Africa is battling to recover its lost indigenous knowledge. Human factor refers to:

> The spectrum of personality characteristics and other dimensions of human performance that enable social, economic and political institutions to function and remain functional over time. Such dimensions sustain the workings and application of the rule of law, political harmony, a disciplined labour force, just legal systems, respect for human dignity and the sanctity of life, social welfare, and so on. As is often the case, no social, economic or political institutions can function effectively without being upheld by a network of committed persons who stand firmly by them. Such persons must strongly believe in and continually affirm the ideals of society (Adjibolosoo, 1993: 142).

Based on this, human factor does not only look at the present, it reflects at the past, the present and the future for sustainable development. This brings into account the philosophy *sankofaism*. Literary *sankofaism* refers to the idea that "go back for it" to that that has been lost or forgotten. The concept is derived from and symbolises the *sankofa* bird among the Akan people of Ghana. The bird is popular for its forward and backward gaze that symbolises that it is not wrong, shameful or too late to go back for something one had previously forgotten (Osei, Morrissey & Lloyd, 2005). Critical *sankofaism* is the way to go if Africa is to regain the lost time and the different types of its resources. Among the Ndau people of Chimanimani and Chipinge districts of Zimbabwe, the *matare* concept is vital as a networking platform.

The *matare/imbizo/inkundla* concept represents an all-encompassing, neutral, democratic, good governance and socially inclusive platform that is non-reprisal to all the actors (Marango, 2011). Having this in mind, the philosophy of "going back for it" is based on the saying that, "It is not a taboo to go back for a (valuable) thing one has forgotten" (Quan-Baffour, 2012: 2). This concept motivates all Africans to mobilise their moral and intellectual capacities for sustainable development of the continent (Osei, 2005). Marango *et al.* (2016) note that there is lack of synergy between globalised philosophies and indigenous knowledge even though there is potential for using them complementarily for rural development.

To demonstrate the wholesomeness of human factor, Adjibolosso (2013) outlined its six critical dimensions. These are: Spiritual capital—referring to the aspect of human personality that is usually in tune with God and His universal spiritual principles that inform how everyone must live to experience a life of meaning, fulfilment and greater productivity. There is the moral capital that represents habits and attitudes of the human heart based on universal moral principles regarding right and wrong, and the ability to live by these precepts. Aesthetic capital is the deep sense of and love for beauty. It

equips the individual to know and to decipher the true differences between what is beautiful and ugly, inclusive of a strong passion for positively ennobling and propelling music, art, drama, dance and other artistic capacities. Fourth is human capital that refers to the knowhow and acquired skills (i.e., technical, conceptual, intellectual, analytic and communications). Fifth is human abilities. This constitutes the power or capacity of an individual to competently undertake projects or effectively perform tasks requiring mental and physical effort. Lastly are human potentials that refer to untapped human talents which may or may not be fully harnessed and effectively utilised.

It is through social networks that talents, human capital, human abilities, moral capital and aesthetic capital are identified. Networking is nothing new among the indigenous Ndau people. It was part of the socialisation process. The *dare* will remain a central platform where people meet, not only as a judiciary platform, but a platform where development issues are discussed and evaluated together. Afrocentricity and rural development are anchored on the principle of *dare/matare* (singular and plural tense)/*imbizo/inkundla*.

Dare represents a meeting of minds, a place for implementing initiatives, lobbying, and advocacy. In the process, participants find it as a place that provides encounters with the newness of sharing, and uniqueness of exchange. Information is disseminated and consensus is built (Khoza 1994; Haruperi 2003; Mnyaka 2003). According to Mtuze (2004), *imbizo* is a traditional meeting or gathering called by a chief or headman, for listening to the news or concerns that affect individuals or community, and to discuss matters of common interest, e.g., to inform the community of rising levels of crime in the neighbourhood.

Communication is a strong component of social networking. It is aimed at the conveyance of the ongoing meaning or understanding from one person to another (Huband, 1992). It is the transfer of information from one person to another person. Communication is a way of reaching out to others to transmit ideas, facts, thoughts, feelings and self-worth (Marango, Francis and Adjibolosso, 2016). Social networking is propelled by a high level of healthy communication. Networking cultivates trust among the people in their own communities (*ibid.*). Trust is a multi-layered concept that is composed of a range of attributes such as dependability, credibility, faithfulness, information sharing, and the expectation of cooperation between partners (Lamothe and Lamothe, 2011). Effective communication inculcates, enhances and sustains unity of purpose and social inclusion.

Social inclusion refers to social attachments (Krishna and Shrader, 1999). This inclusion provides a feeling of safety, trust and community spirit. Networking cultivates social solidarity and collective action among people (Marango, Francis and Adjibolosso, 2016). Social inclusion is another pillar for rural development. Healthy communication equals to high level of social inclusion and social cohesion. It is through social networking that rural development is propelled. Networking enables communities to reach out to sources of resources such as human capital, economic opportunities such as markets and political awareness for governance purposes.

In a study in Chimanimani District of Zimbabwe by Marango, Francis and Adjibolosso (*ibid.*), severe human factor decay in the form of communication and social inclusion was noted to be unprecedentedly high. It should be borne in mind by development practitioners and scholars that investing in social networks is not a waste of time. Failure to appreciate this reality results in squandering of resources (Sandwith, 1994). Another example is one given by Manzungu and Van Dar Zaag (1996) in Nyamaropa area, Nyanga district in Zimbabwe.

In this study, the Nyamaropa irrigation scheme failed due to pitfalls associated with lack of effective communication among stakeholders. They were not networking in a healthy way. The Nyamaropa case reveals how an irrigation project, established as a rural development project, can collapse. The collapse was due to an astronomically high communication breakdown and conflicts between government officials who managed the scheme and the farmers. The irrigators were compelled to grow food crops for sale. In addition, a compulsory crop rotation of beans and wheat was introduced and imposed on them. As a result, the irrigators refused to give up dry-land cultivation. Government officials also dictated what to plant and when to plant. They failed to make most of the indigenous leadership and networking styles. Using local knowledge works since it is more compatible with local realities.

In this instance, farmers were not consulted for input into the project. Instead, government officials brought blueprints as if the farmers were *tabula rasa*, to use Freire's (2000) words. There was no social inclusion of these critical actors in development. Resultantly, time was wasted, resources were squandered and relationships soured (Sandwith, 1994). These outcomes are reflective of severe human factor decay. Adjibolosso (2014) notes that citizens of African counties find it difficult to create a sustained vision of their own manumission. This is due to interferences on a gargantuan scale that denies

them the opportunity to control their own planning, policy formulation, project development and programmes (i.e. the 4Ps portfolios).

CONCEPT OF RESILIENCE

The concept of resilience is increasingly being placed at the centre of development narratives as stated in the Sustainable Development Goal 11 through which world leaders committed to creating sustainable, safe, resilient and inclusive communities by 2030 (Parnell, 2016). In general terms, social resilience explains the ability of cities and towns to sustain continuity amid the stresses and shocks that it may go through. In their definition, Meerow, Newell and Stults (2016: 39) state that urban resilience is the ability of an urban system and all its constituent's socio-ecological and socio-technical networks across temporal and spatial scales to maintain or rapidly return desired functions in the face of disturbance, to adapt to change and to quickly transform systems that limit current or future adaptive capacity. In this setting, social resilience is the ability of communities to manage and adapt to change, including their vulnerabilities. Central to definitions of community resilience are ideas of robustness, mitigation and adjustment at all levels This includes national, city and local level formal governance, to how residents respond to their local circumstances at hand. Flexibility and responsiveness in how cities and their residents adapt and respond to change, both positive and negative, are central to understanding notions of urban resilience and sustainability (Sudmeier-Rieux, 2014), as the urban system is confronted with a plethora of stresses that disrupt the ideal or envisaged urban set-up. Urban resilience, thus becomes of utmost importance as it helps cities to bounce back after going through rough times.

SOCIAL RESILIENCE

Resilience is a multi-disciplinary concept that has gained prominence in development discourse, planning and design. It gained prominence in response to environmental/ecological and socio-economic problems affecting communities. Yet there are limited studies showing the nexus between rural development and social resilience. Adger (2003) defines, social resilience as "the ability of human communities to withstand external shocks to the social infrastructure, such as environmental variability, or social, economic and political upheaval." Later, Adger *et al.* (2002) describe social resilience as the ability to cope with and adapt to environmental and social change mediated

through appropriate institutions. Keck and Sakdapolrak (2013) provide a more expansive understanding of social resilience when they structure social resilience as comprising three dimensions: (i) coping capacities – the ability of social actors to cope with and overcome all kinds of adversities; (ii) adaptive capacities – their ability to learn from past experiences and adjust themselves to future challenges in their everyday lives; and (iii) transformative capacities – their ability to craft sets of institutions that foster individual welfare and sustainable societal robustness towards rural development.

Less known is the resilience in rural settings. Rural areas have long been places whose relationship with urban areas is exploitative. Rural areas provide the labour force for thriving urban systems. They also provide the bulk of the food supplies urban communities survive on. In this study, we explore social resilience in the context of social networks to achieve sustainable rural development. In particular, we analyse the transformative capacities that exist in communities of Chimanimani District.

The growing attention on community resilience remains unclear as to the best approaches to integrate resilience analysis in the development of cities and towns. Ironically, little research has been undertaken with regards to social resilience in the context of social network analysis. Therefore, this study examines the nexus between social networking and rural development in Zimbabwe. Three main research questions guiding this study are: Is there a relationship between social networking and rural development? How does social networking reduce vulnerability and increase resilience of communities? What are the best mechanisms of ensuring sustainable resilience?

METHODOLOGY

Chimanimani Rural District is located in the eastern highlands province of Manicaland, Zimbabwe. As shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2**,** the district shares borders with Mozambique in the east, Chipinge in the south, Buhera to west and Mutare District in the north. Chimanimani has approximately 133 810 people (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT), 2012). Of that population, the majority (52%) are females. The district is highly rugged in terrain. This is typified by the Chimanimani Mountain range, that is part of a

stretch of mountains from the Drakensberg Mountains in South Africa to Mount Kilimanjaro in Kenya. Its altitude ranges between 6 000 m in the east and 600 m in the west. The annual rainfall ranges between 1 000 mm in the east and 200 mm in the west.

The district is richly endowed with natural resources and if enough investment is put in, in social networking, there is potential for rural development. Natural resources include natural and commercial forests, fertile soils and precious minerals such as gold, diamonds, lime and copper.

STUDY AREA MAPS

Figure 1 show a map of Zimbabwe highlighting provincial and district boundaries. The study was conducted in Chimanimani District,is located in Manicaland Provimce

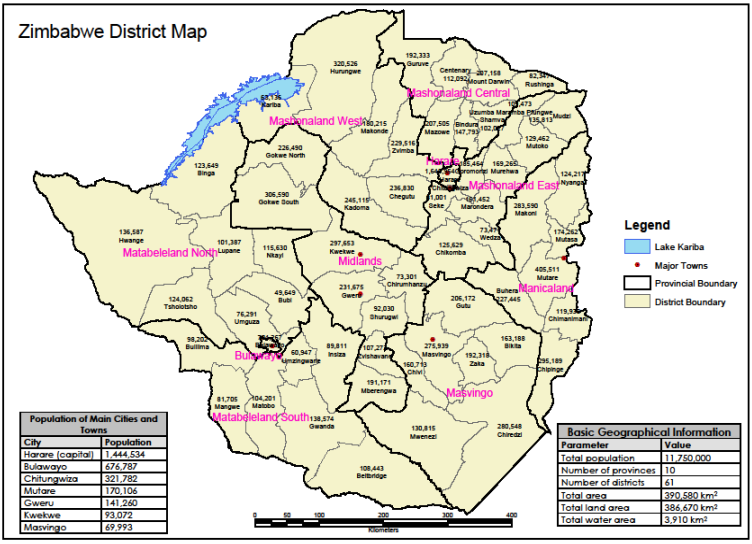

Figure 1: *Map of Zimbabwe Showing Provinces* (ZIMSTAT, 2012)

Figure 2 Wards in Chimanimani District

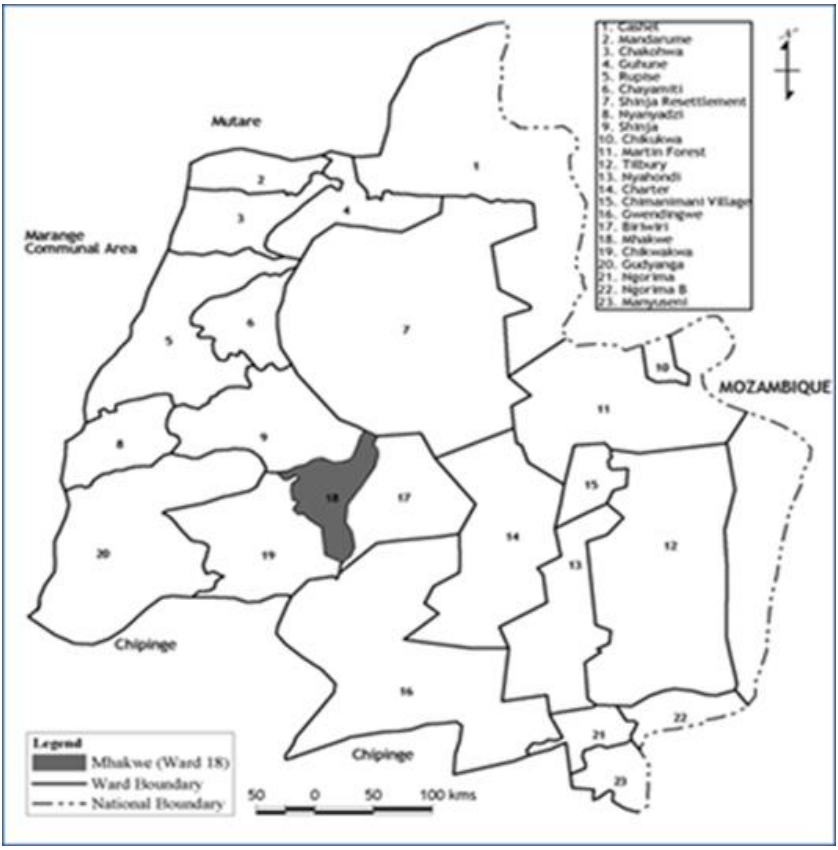

Figure 2: *Map of Wards in Chimanimani District* (Chimanimani Rural District Council, 2020)

Chimanimani boasts spectacular tourist sites, namely the Bridal Veil Falls, Pera Falls, Tessa's Pool, Vhimba Botanical Reserves and Chimanimani Mountains, locally known as Mawenje. These and others make Chimanimani a viable tourist destination (see Figure 1.1. A mixed design in the form of a survey and historical designs was employed in the study. A Likert-scale was used to collect community perceptions and to assess opinions on the level of networking. Non-probability sampling methods (i.e., convenience and judgmental sampling) were employed. This was due to the fact that the Chimanimani Rural District Council (CRDC), the local authority, did not have

clear records of its residents. Secondly, there were certain respondents with valuable information who could only be sampled purposively.

Five wards out of 23 in the district, namely Mhandarume (Ward 2), Mhakwe (18), Chikwakwa (19), Chakohwa (3) and Chimanimani Urban (15) participated in the study. Mhandarume has a population of 2 938, 2 457, 3, 573 4 492, and 3 647, respectively. From each ward, 44 respondents representing various households were conveniently and judgmentally selected. A total of 220 local residents participated in the study. Data collected through a questionnaire were entered into the computer using the Microsoft Excel software package. They were then imported into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19.0 for windows (SPSS Inc: Chicago, IL, USA). Frequencies of the scores of the dimension social networking were calculated. The Kruskal-Wallis test for k-independent samples was used to determine if there were any differences in perceptions relating to social capital dimensions among the Wards. Post-hoc tests for effects that were found to be significantly different were then carried out using the independent samples Mann-Whitney test.

Permission was sought from the CRDC to interview its residents and to get access to its records. Meetings with key stakeholders (i.e. District Administrator, local community and political leadership) were carried out. Respondents' consent was sought before data collection. Those who participated understood what it meant to either participate or not. Personal details such as the names of respondents were not included on the questionnaire to protect them from possible reprisals. The researchers made it clear to the participants as to the way to the publication of the findings ensuring honesty and justice.

OBSERVATIONS AND RESULTS

Out of the 220 people who participated in this study, 53% were females. Forty-five percent of the respondents were 20-35 years old, followed by 33% who were aged 36-50 years. Those aged 51-65 years constituted 10% of the respondents, with 7% and 5% being less than 20 years and more than 65 years of age, respectively. The majority of the participants (63%) were married,

with 23% being single and 8%, widowed. Divorcees and those cohabiting formed 5% and 1% of the total number of respondents, respectively.

Most of the respondents (43%) had attained secondary school level education compared to 32% who had tertiary qualifications. Almost 15% had only primary schooling with the remainder having no formal education at all. Approximately 66% of the respondents had lived in the district for more than 10 years, while 18% had resided there for 6-10 years. Only 16% of the respondents had resided in the respective wards for less than five years. While 47% reported that they were not employed, 31% were permanently employed and 12% self-employed. About 8% of the respondents were still attending school. An almost negligible proportion of the respondents were in temporary employment.

LEVEL OF NETWORKING IN CHIMANIMANI DISTRICT

Table 1 shows the level of networking in the Chimanimani District. Most of the respondents (70%) were not actively involved in the school governing body. The majority of respondents (69%) were not active in their village development platform, save for the minority (30%). There was poor networking in the wards since most of the respondents (71%) were not actively participating in village development. Seventy-one percent of the respondents were also not active in any development associations in their respective wards. The majority of professionals in the wards (68%) did not actively belong or participate in work-related associations. There was, however, very high networking among church-mates as evidence that the majority (83%) actively participated.

There was fair networking within the economic arenas within the district, since 48% were not active and 47% were active. Political groups were not warm and people-friendly enough as 65% were not actively involved, neither were the cultural groups as evidenced by the fact that 79% were not active too. Sixty-eight percent of the residents were not concerned with what would befall them when they died because they were not actively involved in burial societies within their respective communities. On the other hand, 68% were not active in any sporting activities. Youth networking was lukewarm since 46% were not active and 44% were active in youth empowerment programmes, so was participation in community-ased organisations (CBOs) as

revealed by a 44% no and a 45% yes response. On the other hand, 77% was inactive in micro-finance programmes in their respective wards. Lastly, 83% of the respondents were not active in any rural development programmes within their wards.

Table 1: *Level of Networking in Chimanimani District*

I am an active member in the following development organisation

Perception		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	School Development Committee	31	35	4	14	16
2.	Village Development Committee	31	35	3	13	18
3.	Ward Development Committee	33	30	8	16	13
4.	Other Development Association (Specify)	30	26	15	15	14
5.	Professional Association	36	25	7	16	16
6.	My Church	7	10	6	24	53
7.	Business Association/Farmers' Club	25	23	6	24	22
8.	Political Group	38	23	4	20	15
9.	Cultural Group	31	26	12	18	13
10.	Burial Society	30	26	12	18	14
11.	Sports Association	25	27	11	19	18
12.	Youth Development Group	25	21	10	25	19
13.	Community-Based Organisation	22	22	11	26	19
14.	Non-Governmental Organisation	14	26	10	18	32
15.	Micro Finance Club	35	33	9	10	13
16.	Other (Specify)	34	30	19	6	11

Proportion of respondents (n = 220)

Basing on educational backgrounds, there was a significant difference among wards on the perception "I am an active member of the Ward Development Committee" ($p<0.001$). The mean rank for females was lower. On the "I am an active member in a political group" ($p<0.05$), the mean rank for males was significantly higher. Significant difference was also detected on the view that "I am an active member of a cultural group" ($p<0.05$). On the perception "I am an active member of a burial society ($p<0.001$)", he mean rank for male respondents was higher. There was significance difference on the perception

"I am an active member of a burial society" ($p<0.001$), with males having a significantly higher mean rank.

There was also significance difference on "I am an active member of a micro finance club" ($p<0.05$). Lastly, basing on educational achievements, there was significance difference on the view that "I am an active member of other associations not specified ($p<0.05$), with males having a significantly higher mean rank. However, basing on the duration of stay in a respective ward, a significant difference was detected on the perception "I am an active member of a professional association" ($p<0.05$). Males had a higher mean rank. However, females had a significantly higher mean rank on the view "I am an active member of my church" ($p<0.05$).

DISCUSSION

A study in the US by Moser and Pike (2015) reveals that municipal and county staff, and community organisations, find public support as one of the greatest barriers they face. However, in this study, the local government, council and other development stakeholders fail to make most of the existing and on-going social networks. This appears to be the root cause of the current human factor decay. While legal statutes such as the Rural District Councils Act, the Traditional Leaders Act, and many others provide, in black and white, a conducive platform for productive networking, the local government officials and other development partners are failing to capitalise on this.

The Zimbabwean local government was decentralised with the aim of ensuring that people at the grassroots level network and bring development within their local communities. Stewart *et al.* (1994) argue that decentralisation was adopted through a Prime Minister's Directive on Decentralisation (1984 and 1985). Decentralisation promotes democracy, increase efficiency and effective service delivery by reducing the role of central government in local service provision and management (Government of Zimbabwe, 2002). However, the term 'directive' makes the noble idea problematic in that it implies non-participation of citizens.

The Traditional Leaders Act (Chapter 29:17) of 1996 provides the Village Assembly and the Ward Assembly as neutral platforms (*matare*), where the

whole village is led by the village head (*sabhuku*) and headman (*sadunhu*), respectively. The *dare/matare* concept is one African philosophy that provided a platform for all to come together and discuss issues of mutual concern, share information, sorrows and joys. This worked at family, community and judiciary level (Marango, 2011). Traditionally, traditional leaders are supposed to be neutral. The Constitution of Zimbabwe (Amendment No. 20) of 2013, section 281 subsection (1) (c) uplifts this principle as quoted, "Traditional leaders must treat all persons within their areas equally and fairly". However, discussions with citizens revealed that these platforms were being overwhelmed by party politics since traditional leaders are now appointed by the Minister of Local Government. This rendered the apolitical platform political.

Traditionally, these platforms took care of all concerns of the citizens of respective communities, be it religious, social, economic or political. The Traditional Leaders Act attempted to create platforms that resembled the traditional *matare* with a globalised 'flavour'. Marango (2011) argues that Afrocentricity is anchored on the *matare* principle. The *dare* concept is a human factor ideal and a *sine qua non* for rural development. The Rural District Councils Act (Chapter 29:13) also provides platforms for experts who can lead rural development from the grassroots level to the district level. These are the Village Development Committee (VIDCO), Ward Development Committee (WADCO) and the Rural District Development Committee (RDDC).

The results, however, revealed that people only networked effectively at church level. This is despite the presence of various networking platforms. This could be so because churches are still under little national and local political influence. Church still thrives through contributions by the local people, rather than the government or non-governmental organisations whose support comes with conditions. As a result, other platforms have been invaded by party politics. Even the traditional leaders have become partisan. This is so because they are paid allowances and these allowances are not banked into their accounts but directly handed to the leaders by officials from the District Administrators' Offices. As such, it is easy to manipulate the esteemed and revered traditional leaders. From the late 1990s to date, when opposition

parties became very influential, local government has been run through directives. As alluded to above, there were allegations that appointments of staff were being corruptly done on political grounds rather than on merit. If true, this is absolute violation of section 9 of the Zimbabwe Constitution (Amendment No. 20) of 2013, i.e. good governance.

This section encourages adoption and implementation of policies and legislation to develop efficiency, competence, accountability, transparency and personal integrity. This is done through appointments to public offices primarily on the basis of meritocracy. Zimbabwe Institute (2005) observes how the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing increasingly developed a controlling and directive rather than a facilitatory one. Chatiza (2010) argues that, that is due to fear of susceptibility to capture by opposition forces that has resulted in the ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) to silently limit local government powers. This has, however, grossly impacted negatively on social networking for effective service delivery.

Olowu and Wunch (1993) also note that politics in most post-independence African countries, Zimbabwe included, was characterised by development stagnation, decline in rural welfare, intensified ethnic conflicts, civil wars and many civilian regimes falling to military despotisms or rule as narrow oligarchies. Jonga and Chirisa (2009) argue that party politics adds confusion in the platforms of the apolitical and neutral role of local government. In fact, interference by the local government minister in councils' affairs, through use of directives, is an indication of a propensity to re-centralise. Centralisation is a globalised philosophy which does not consider citizens as knowledgeable people who have capacity to lead their own development but, instead, treat them as *tabla rasas* (Marango, Francis and Adjibolosso, 2016).

Jonga and Chirisa (2009) cite examples of the year 2000 when legally elected urban council mayors of Mutare, Harare and Chitungwiza, among others, were fired by the Minister for Local Government using the directives method. These were replaced by imposed District and Provincial Administrators, civil servants who reported directly to central government. Another example of a directive is the June 2006 takeover of water and sewer by the Zimbabwe

National Water Authority (ZINWA) through a ministerial directive. Directives are the tool used by central government to meddle in issues of a local nature (*ibid.*). All these examples are a demonstration of failure to use the African vitality of the *dare* philosophy where transparency and group decision-making is key.

Churches in Zimbabwe, on the contrary, to a larger extent, use local approaches in administration. This has led them to successfully maintaining high human factor in the form of social networks. Use of local culture to influence development is a vehicle for rural development. Churches use the *matare* concept. There are *matare* for men, youths and women in all local churches in Chimanimani in which concerns of these various categories are dealt with. This is *sankofaism* used by churches in an intelligent way. And, of course, there is nothing wrong with going-back-for-it. Going back to tradition using modern technology, e.g. social media, internet and public media to share information, is the right way to go. This ensures citizen participation.

There is potential for Zimbabwe to become an economic giant, provided enough social networks are fostered as evident from the results that there is potential for networking among business people and communities, farmers and visa-versa. Failure to take advantage of the ongoing networking is a recipe for development regression. Adjibolosso (2013) observes that while the attainment of political independence in Africa raised a ray of hope and aspirations among citizens of political emancipation, socio-economic growth and civil liberties, these are being shattered by current realities. There is no investment in communication and social networks for development.

Marango (2011) affirms that resources were availed from the donor community, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and governments, but regardless of this reality, African economies remained stagnant for a little while (Marango, Francis and Adjibolosso, 2016). Recently, some have entered a phase of regression (Marango, 2011). This implies that financial resources without requisite investment in good communication, good governance and, above all, proper social network, is not eventful. Chimanimani District, for example, is a very rich district. Vhudzijena (1999) confirms this reality, but is quick to rank it the poorest in terms of the people's livelihoods. This is

affirmed by ZimVac (2015) that there are various development challenges in the district. This paradox, therefore, can be unlocked only by investment in social capital, a human factor component.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With the current levels of human factor decay in local government, rural development remains a pipedream. There is need to invest in networking. Local government and specific councils should play a leading role in facilitating networking among various development partners to foster good governance. Good governance is an ingredient for rural development. The parent ministry of local government should foster good governance in councils, rather than be a player and referee at the same time. Good statutes are as good as having none as long as the calibre of executives is non-visionary.

There is need for institutional leaders with enough human abilities. Human abilities constitute the power or capacity of an individual to competently undertake projects or effectively perform tasks requiring mental and physical effort. To lack human abilities is to be bankrupt of those qualities required to be effective leaders. Organisational leaders hand-picked on political affiliations lines, rather than merit, are one of the recipes for the current severe human factor decay. Zimbabwe needs type 1 leaders (see Adjibolosso, 2014). They are honest, selfless, serviceable servants and principle-centred. They put the last first in the process of development (Chambers, 1994). Such leaders take rural development to its rightful people.

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