

The Paradox of Development Initiatives and Implementation Issues in Zimbabwe

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Abstract: This paper explores issues surrounding development and sustainability of development projects in the African context. Africa is a young continent with regards to development. The continent continuously faces various challenges such as economic stagnation, high levels of poverty and unemployment, political instability as well as increasing inequality. Cognizant of these challenges, development aid and project implementation are thus seen as a panacea to poverty reduction and the gateway to development, as they have a potential to improve the livelihoods of African citizens. For instance, through the interaction and contribution of various actors within the development spectrum, development project implementation can improve conditions for these developing economies. This paper presents a case study of beneficiaries of the International Labour Organization's youth development programme in Zimbabwe where the programme's sustainability in reducing poverty and improving lives was assessed. A qualitative approach was utilized to attain in depth knowledge on the program, from the perspectives of beneficiaries. Data was analyzed using qualitative content analysis. Findings of the study portrayed various factors which hinder the success of development project implementation such as politicization of programmes, the unstable state of the economy, poor monitoring and evaluation systems and lack of financial support. The study recommended promoting formalisation of the informal sector, alleviating political interference in development programmes and community inclusion in all stages, supporting youth businesses and implementing strong monitoring and evaluation systems including measures that will address the widespread challenges impacting sustainable development in Africa.

Keywords: Development, Evaluation, Informal economy, Monitoring, Poverty, Sustainable

1. Introduction

Development encompasses several issues for instance, economic growth, freedom, democracy, social justice, reducing income inequalities and further portrays change in the economy and society in general (Lawal, 2017). Africa has been experiencing high levels of poverty and inequality (Diallo & Thuillier, 2005) which are the same conditions various development initiatives being implemented are 'addressing' hence the paradox. However, research in most parts of these countries such as Zimbabwe, Botswana and Nigeria has shown a small percentage of success as projects continue to fail due to various factors such as corruption, setting of unrealistic goals, lack of funds and political instability (Makinde, 2013; Bothale, 2017). These countries continue to face challenges despite numerous 'development orientated' interventions. This negatively impacts sustainable development in Africa as a reduction in both poverty and inequality play a huge role in ensuring future generations benefit from the resources of the present.

Development projects and interventions are therefore long term plans consisting of certain objectives

to be achieved (Ika, 2012). The projects are financed by various development agencies and organizations such as The World Bank, The European Union, The African Development Bank (Diallo & Thuillier, 2005). Implementation of these projects involve the interaction that occurs among various actors such as local stakeholders and development practitioners in order to come up with strategies that help improve the conditions of the poor (Hart, 2006). This helps to assess problems and understand what the project has to address and thereafter designing and implementation can occur to achieve the stated objectives (Diallo & Thuillier, 2005; Ika, 2012). Thus, rigorous planning before implementation is vital to understand the needs of the people and the real issues that need to be addressed. This paper reviews development initiatives and their implementation issues in the Zimbabwean context using a case study of the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) 'Skills for youth empowerment and rural development programme'. The first section of this paper introduces literature which provides knowledge on previous development projects in Africa, constraints of development, sustainable development issues, background of the challenges facing Zimbabwe, and introduces the ILO programme under

study. Thirdly, the methodology section provides a design and approaches used for the study. This is followed by a discussion of results and recommendations then the paper is concluded.

2. Previous Collaborative Projects in Africa

Africa remains underdeveloped despite decades of development aid. There is a wide array of previously implemented development projects and programs dating back to the pre-independence era. Some of these initiatives as highlighted in Nkurayiga (2011) include the Priority Programme of Economic Redressing of Africa (PPREA) by the Organization of African Unity in 1985 which ran until 1990; The African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programme (AAF-SAP) which was adopted by the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the African Scope of Reference for SAPS for Socio-Economic Redressing and Transformation. There is also the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) which is an amalgamation of the Omega Plan, the Millennium Action Plan for African Recovery Programme (MAP) and the New Compact with Africa. The impact of the projects is mostly questioned due to increased poverty and inequalities (Diallo & Thuillier, 2005). For instance, The Independent Evaluation Group (2010) cited in Ika (2012) points out that 39% of World Bank projects have been unsuccessful. Furthermore, Dugger (2007) cited in (Ika, 2012) mentions that 50% of World Bank projects have failed regardless of investing more than US\$ 5 billion in over 700 projects in Africa. Most of the successful World Bank projects in Africa have been in infrastructure, oil and gas industries while the weak ones have been in banking and manufacturing (Ika, 2012).

2.1 Constraints of Development

In principle, the state in African countries must play a key role in structural transformation and economic development. However, the incidence of corruption is thwarting development in the African continent (Lawal, 2007). Nduku and Tenamwenye (2014) argue that corruption hinders development progress while simultaneously destabilizing the legitimacy of accountability of governments. For example, the development funds which would have been channeled to African states in the name of development tend to be misused with states failing to account for these funds. Some of the causes of corruption

in Africa also include lack of political will, weak judicial systems, regular conflicts and insecurity, lack of transparency and accountability, poor leadership, weak ethical values, the colonial legacy, greed and selfishness (Lawal, 2007; Nduku & Tenamwenye, 2014). As long as corruption exists in Africa the continent will continue lagging in terms of economic growth and development taking into consideration that corruption has many negative effects such as discouraging foreign investment, subversion of democracy, and increased poverty (Lawal, 2007).

Development projects in Africa have also been failing due to many other reasons (Ika, 2012). Resource constraints is also a challenge as projects require funding hence sometimes a lack of resources causes problems for carrying out implementation (Lawal, 2007; Ika, 2012). Differences in the systems and demands of the donors and the government of the recipient country also lead to projects failing (Desai & Potter, 2004; Diallo & Thuillier, 2005). This is because donors have more power and funding over the recipient government. Hence as much as aid is believed to lift people out of poverty and encourage growth, this has been found to be controversial as others question its effectiveness for various reasons such as project failure and aid conditionality (Desai & Potter, 2004; Ika, 2012).

Politics and corruption also interfere in the success of development projects as only a few get to benefit (Ika, 2012). Lack of implementation, putting emphasis on quick results as well as ignoring aspects of sustainability of the projects also contribute to development projects failure (Ika, 2012). For example, the US4 billion Chad-Cameroon pipeline project portrays development project failure in Africa (Ika, 2012). The project was meant to build a 1000 km pipeline and reduce poverty, among others (Ika, 2012). However, the project finished a year ahead its end date and it has had negative impacts on the environment and people's health (Leibold, 2011). According to Leibold (2011), the project failed due to World Bank's neoliberal approach to development, as well as ignoring the local context of the project and problems that needed to be addressed beforehand such as corruption (Leibold, 2011).

2.2 Can Africa Achieve Sustainable Development?

The rationale behind sustainable development is that of improving quality of life, conserving resources

while also protecting the environment for future generations (Brundtland Commission, cited in Redclift, 2008:333; Mistry, 2014). There are three dimensions of sustainability and these are the economic, social and environment (Awan, 2013). Social aspects are to ensure safety of people and make positive impacts in communities, economic aspects ensure growth and environment aspects ensure minimal harm to the environment and health of the people due to the emissions and toxic wastes (Cannon, 2008; Awan, 2013). However, in Africa, sustainable development is far from being achieved. For instance, there have been plenty of oil spills in the Niger Delta region where there were huge and irrevocable impacts both on the society and environment (Olawuyi, 2012). Such challenges affect Africa's ability to save for future generations furthermore, due to poverty it is difficult to save when resources of the present are insufficient.

2.3 A Case of Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is currently facing various challenges and these impede growth. One of its biggest challenges is unemployment. ZIMSTAT (2013) showed that only 56% constitute the economically active population. Furthermore, Murinda (2014) mentioned that Zimbabwe's young people aged 15-34 years constitute 84% of the unemployed population. Unemployment affects youth in many ways as they cannot take care of themselves or their families which then leads to a poverty cycle (Bhebhe, Bhebhe & Bhebhe, 2016). Increased crime rates in urban areas of Zimbabwe such as Harare and Chitungwiza, political violence, early marriages, spread of diseases, increased inequalities and migration to other countries are also attributed to youth unemployment (Mpfu & Chimhenga, 2016). Youths are also starting their businesses to earn income however, lack of capital and skills hinder progress including inability to access loans from the banks as they do not have collateral (Mpfu & Chimhenga, 2016).

Apart from these challenges, the residents of Harare also face poor service delivery, population increases in urban areas due to rural urban migration thereby causing an outbreak of diseases like cholera and an increase of the informal sector (Mugumbate, Maushe & Nyoni, 2013). The informal sector is a major challenge as vendors mushroom in efforts to avoid unemployment (Chenga, 2013). The Zimbabwean economy being highly informal, many earn low wages and work in poor conditions

(Ndiweni Mashonganyika, Ncube & Dube, 2014). Therefore, education and the provision of skills training is vital to not only improve the skills but also increase the people's chances of employability (Makura, Mweha, Chikwiri, 2016).

In order to create employment opportunities and improve skills, several development initiatives have been implemented in Zimbabwe by the government, different institutions and individuals (Murinda, 2014). These include Vocational Training for Enterprise Programme, National Skills Development Policy Framework, National Youth Policy, Integrated Skills Outreach Programme, The Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development, the 2018 Empower Bank, etcetera (Murinda, 2014; Daily News, 2018). Majority of the efforts made to curb unemployment have failed when it comes to delivering impacts (NewsDay, 2017) hence it is vital to understand how to achieve sustainability and improve livelihoods.

2.4 ILO's Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development Programme

The programme was led and implemented by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in collaboration with the Government of Zimbabwe, different organisations, civil society, the private sector, employers, workers, among others and funded by the Government of Denmark (ILO, 2015). It ran for a period of six years from 2010 to 2015 in Zimbabwe and its main objective was to strengthen the skills of the youth, improve their chances of employability, provided employment opportunities as well as increase income generation that will be able to sustain the youth, thereby developing their communities (ILO, 2015). According to ILO (2015), the programme 'Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development' in Zimbabwe was implemented through two methodologies. These two methodologies were the Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE) for the rural communities, and the Quality Improvement in Informal Apprenticeships (QIA) for the informal sector (Murinda, 2014; ILO, 2015). The Government of Zimbabwe through the Ministry of Youth, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment (MYIEE) adopted the TREE and QIA models as working models for addressing youth empowerment needs and solving the country's rising youth unemployment challenges (Murinda, 2014).

The study focused on the QIA component of the programme in Harare. QIA focus on improving skills of

Table 1: The Number of People Who Benefited from the Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development Programme

Quality Improvements in Informal Apprenticeships (QIA)		Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE)	
Direct Jobs	Indirect Jobs	Direct Jobs	Indirect Jobs
150	2972	4	4418

Source: Muradya (2019)

an apprentice through a master craft person who is skilled in that trade (ILO, 2015). The ILO QIA projects include motor vehicle mechanics; cosmetology; fashion design and clothing; arts and crafts; carpentry and hotel and catering. The QIA programme reached out to 2300 MCs to train the youth, approximately 1300 MCs took part in the programme and over 3 300 apprentices were helped (ILO, 2015).

3. Methods and Materials

A case study research evaluating sustainability of the informal apprenticeship programme was conducted in Harare. The study was descriptive and exploratory as it sought to investigate the youth unemployment issue and gain new insights (Kothari, 2014). This was done through reviewing literature, analysing ILO documents and interviewing programme beneficiaries. The study was qualitative in nature. Data collected for the study was both qualitative and quantitative thus a concurrent embedded research design was adopted. This allowed mixed data collection methods with qualitative being the primary method and quantitative supporting it for numerical data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Qualitative content analysis was utilized and this involves interpreting data from texts to find their meaning and the data is then put into codes, categories and themes to find meaning (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

4. Results and Discussion

According to the ILO official, the programme achieved a lot as it provided skills to those without qualifications. Informal jobs were created due to the informal nature of the economy (Ndiweni *et al.*, 2014). The official also mentioned indirect jobs were also created were youths who managed to start businesses ended up employing others, 2972 under the QIA and 4418 from TREE. Also, about 150 and 4 direct jobs were created by QIA and TREE respectively (see Table 1). The official further mentioned that indirect jobs are mostly as a result of the

economic trickle down of the successful businesses that offer opportunities for others.

Furthermore, the official mentioned challenges facing youths such as building sustainable businesses in an unstable economy like Zimbabwe's, factors such as inflation and corruption are also hindering progress. In addition, the politicization of programmes also stop majority from benefitting. These support studies conducted by Ika (2012), Makinde (2013) and Bolthale (2017) highlighted politics and corruption as some of the factors that hinder development and implementation in most African nations. According to the official, the programme impacted positively on the youths as women participation was encouraged even though in some instances some dropped as they did not feel comfortable to participate, probably attributed to the patriarchal nature of the society. Youths also show a change of behavior for instance, they save and invest more, some are going back to finish school and there are low incidences of HIV/AIDS as youths are empowered and now make more informed and better decisions affirming Mpofo & Chimhenga's (2016) views.

Furthermore, the official reported possibilities of scaling up the programme and transferring to other regions provided there are sufficient human and financial resources. This was also supported in documents collected from ILO. Youths are also encouraged to pay back loans as well and not misuse donor funds. This is ideal in encouraging sustainability of future programmes. Also, the government should take more action within implementation of programmes. The official also encouraged community participation as he mentioned when various actors fully participate and are committed, development initiatives can have more impact. This supports views of Diallo & Thuillier (2005) and Hart (2006) on the importance of involving local stakeholders for projects to work.

Results from the youth showed appreciation for skills training programmes. They mentioned that

youth unemployment has negative effects like indulging in illegal activities, influencing hopelessness, and also leads to spreading of diseases and early pregnancies, further supporting Mpofu & Chimhenga's (2014) assertions. Sixty-seven percent of youths acknowledged having a good experience with the programme in terms of attaining skills and certificates, this confirms the importance of skills training for improving one's life as reported in Makura *et al.* (2016) study. However, thirty-three percent expressed disappointment as they expected more than just acquiring skills, also portraying that more needs to be done to ensure skills training genuinely change lives.

Mastercraft persons indicated that a majority of QIA beneficiaries are finding it difficult to find employment, 60% of the participants mentioned benefits included receiving certificates and upgrading skills in areas such as carpentry, business, leadership, hotel management and catering, metal work whilst 27% mentioned ability to start businesses and improved income. However, 13% mentioned programmes do not help. QIA is also said to have helped with forming networks for some although participants faced financial problems to start or stay in business. Others did not receive the promised loans. This affirms Mpofu & Chimhenga's (2016) who mentioned that youth businesses fail due to lack of funds. A majority acknowledged that programmes can have more impact if they provide funding, allow youth participation in the programme and decision making processes. Politicization of programmes also hinder effectiveness (Ika, 2012). Youths also felt that the possibilities of their businesses expanding are very low and is dependent on the Zimbabwean economy. This supports views of Mugumbate *et al.* (2013) who attribute Zimbabwe's challenges to its economic state.

During the document analysis process, it was discovered that whilst QIA objectives were achieved and more youth benefitted than targeted (ILO, 2016), interviews with youth portrayed only a few were employed or started profitable businesses, and that a majority are unemployed. QIA was very beneficial when it came to improving skills and youths attaining certificates however, more needed to be done as majority are unemployed and for the few who are in business, not all anticipate growth neither are they receiving profits, businesses are not sustainable. This shows the contradiction between planning versus implementation of projects. The

programme could have taken into consideration the needs of the youth as they were not involved prior to the skills training.

Hence, development initiatives can be effective however implementation is difficult and more needs to be done to ensure majority benefit and lives are truly transformed. ILO through QIA managed to successfully implement its programme and achieve its objectives although in reality it was not sustainable. This is evident as majority of the youths despite improving in skills, are failing to secure employment while some are working and earning low wages as well as depending on the extra financial support of families to run business. The few that managed to start their businesses however anticipate growth if the economy of Zimbabwe changes. Other challenges faced included not all youths received loans or start up equipment for businesses and they do not have financial support to run businesses. This supports the views of Mpofu and Chimhenga (2016) who mentioned unavailability of funds makes it challenging for youth to grow businesses. Youth were also not involved in decision making processes to know what they needed, they could have been engaged in all stages of the programme to have better outcomes.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The developmental issues faced by Africa in efforts to develop its disparate countries are to certain extent giving an impression that development aid can assist to enable desired change. This paper has argued the paradox embedded in development initiatives as they fail to achieve the desired development in Africa due to both donor and governments' limited commitment to the development discourse. Often programmes are initiated and implemented to the satisfaction of donors and governments with recipients of the initiatives not considered. This leads to programmes that are not sustainable and long term impacts of such programmes by recipient communities not being realized. The case of Harare's youth who were involved in the QIA programme attest to the minimal gains of this development programme which has left the issues of high youth unemployment unresolved.

In addressing key issues that emanated from this study it is recommended that national ownership is encouraged for development projects as governments get the chance to lead the process since they have the knowledge and understanding of the

context and needs of their people unlike donors. Also, corruption is an issue of governance that can be improved through transparency, accountability and increasing participation of the people in decision making processes.

Furthermore, the community should be involved in development projects so that when the donor pulls out the initiative may still be able to survive thereby leading to sustainable projects. On involving community, it is also important to include women so that they are part of development initiatives and will not drop out due to feeling threatened. The community also plays a role in monitoring programmes to uphold accountability from both the government and donors.

Additionally, depoliticisation of projects is crucial in empowering all beneficiaries and not the few that have advantages over others. Hence increased access to markets and information to all is vital. It also helps to correct mistakes for instance ILO documents portrayed the misuse of funds in some instances. Furthermore, not all youths received loans hence through monitoring such mistakes can be avoided in the future. The state should also support businesses through policies that formalize the informal economy so businesses can grow.

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