

CHAPTER 1: DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND RURAL WOMEN: CONTEXT AND FOCUS

The study aims to critically explore the impacts of development policies on rural women with special reference to Gokwe's two districts, Gokwe North and Gokwe South, respectively, and examine the extent to which women took advantage of the policies and the impact of those policies on their livelihoods. Globally, women face more or less the same problems socially, economically, politically and religiously. Their problems include, among others: poverty, discrimination, unequal access to opportunities in employment, lack of promotion in formal employment and domestic violence. It is common practice across the developing world that when development interventions are implemented by governments and communities, women are expected to benefit indirectly through their husbands or cumulative benefits intended for the whole community, but rarely as individuals endowed with special rights and needs. These challenges adversely affect rural women more than they affect their urban counterparts. The main argument anchoring this study is that women in rural Zimbabwe appear to continue facing intersectional discrimination, despite post-independence formulation and implementation of development policies. The gist of the study is to examine and document the experiences of these women and how they benefited from post-independence policies.

The study explores how women in Zimbabwe, particularly those in remote Gokwe District, have benefited from development policies in the country. The intention is to ascertain whether the rural women have taken advantage of the policies introduced by the Government of Zimbabwe, and what improvements, if any, to their livelihoods and survival trajectories have been realised and can be measured. The study focuses on the Growth-with-Equity and the Growth Point policies. The study takes its main argument from the phenomenon of gender disparity in the world. Women have been discriminated against in many ways because most countries in the world have patriarchal societies, some historically and others currently that men are given preferential treatment in all facets of life. This scenario has made women to remain economically dependent on their spouses. Statistics indicate that women remain the poorest in the world because two thirds of

people living on less than \$1 per day are women, a scenario which is deplorable and needs improvements in all sectors of the economy across the world (Africa Partnership Forum, 2007). A UNDP report indicates that the world's richest 225 people are all men and more than 70% of the poorest people are women, because they earn less than men for the same work, a situation which continues to perpetuate gender inequality across the world. In addition, women are rarely found to be leaders in political parties or executive branches of governments world over. Very few countries have reached the 30% target outlined by the Beijing platform for action for women parliamentarians, let alone the 50% current guideline in international, regional and national policies as specified by Africa Partnership Forum (2007). In addition, the author avers that no country in the world has closed or reduced the gender gap significantly, despite heightened awareness of gender issues. These figures show that gender equality discussions have remained on paper, without substantive implementation in the whole world. Women across the world continue to be subjected to psychological, physical, economic, and sexual violence irrespective of age, academic qualifications, income or social standing. As argued by the African Partnership Forum (2007), statistics show that between 20% and 50% of women worldwide experience domestic violence. For example, in France, 95% of its domestic violence victims are women and 51% at the hands of their husbands. The statistics shown here need to be reduced through policy formulation and domestication of international and regional gender equality guidelines.

In Sub Saharan Africa, women face many obstacles to achieving their potential at work and other spheres of life. Gender inequality has adverse effects on economic and social progress in the region (Chichester *et al.*, 2017). The greater demographic proportion of poor women in Africa resides in the rural areas, and lack of rights, resources and economic opportunities continue to be the major drawbacks, when compared to their counterparts in the urban areas. In education for example, Africa remains one on the continents with the largest gender gap. Among females above the age of 15, only 51% are able to read and write compared to 61.7% for men (Africa Partnership Forum, 2007). On another note, poverty, male child preferences and work demands often prevent girls from attending school, a trend further compounded by child marriages. These are deep rooted problems in Sub-Saharan Africa which

needs a change of attitude and socialisation processes if any meaningful changes are to be realised. HIV&AIDS is also worsening the situation since there are no schemes to take care of the bedridden, a responsibility which is relegated to women, hindering women and girls from attending school or participating in other economic activities. However, the mortality rate due to HIV&AIDS has been reduced significantly due to the improved accessibility to Anti-Retroviral Therapy drugs, a positive development which is highly recommended in the development discipline, particularly for developing countries. In the agricultural sector where women tend to be dominant, lack of access to land, credit facilities and other agricultural inputs affects women's ability to utilise their full potential as farmers, reducing their chances of ever owning properties or to develop as individuals.

In terms of gender disparity, the situation of women in Zimbabwe is not different from their counterparts in the African region and most of the world. Gender inequalities continue to hinder the progress of women in most facets of life. Colonial policies which had racial segregation connotations had more negative effects on women (more so for rural women) who neither had voting rights nor access to education and work opportunities compared to their male counterparts. A brief examination of the history of development policy in Zimbabwe reveals that development policy has been skewed against the rural areas. Looking at colonial instruments such as the Hut Tax of 1894, the Native Reserve Act of 1899, the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1930, the Land Tenure Act of 1969 and the bottle neck Education System among others, only the white minority benefited while blacks were excluded, with adverse effects on the women.

An analysis of the impacts of just one of these policies may help shade light on how bad the situation was for the blacks and the women in general. The Land Apportionment Act of 1931 for example, shaped the situation of landlessness in the country, a situation which was further aggravated by natural population increases leading to pressure on the land due to high population densities. Section 46 of Southern Rhodesia constitution and barred native Zimbabweans from owning any productive land except in the rocky and dry parts of the reserves. The Land Apportionment Act resulted in many negative impacts to the livelihoods of the black people which included inequitable

land distribution, paving way for over-exploitation of natural resources which inevitably led to environmental degradation and a threat to sustainable livelihoods. The rural areas remained excluded, marginalised and a domain for women due to the fact that men resided in the urban areas, close enough to offer the much-needed cheap labour in the mines, factories, industries and the low density white residential areas (kumayadhi) as gardeners and maids. Three factors can be identified, namely: racial discrimination, rural exclusion, and gender discrimination, all leading to the feminization of rural agriculture and poverty (Mapuva, 2015).

When Zimbabwe attained independence in 1980, the ZANU-PF-led Government had a mammoth task at hand to redress the imbalances brought to the populace by the white colonial rule. This was done by changing the systematic inherited policies which had so much racial segregation, to bring about democratic, egalitarian and inclusive policies intended to reverse inequalities and to benefit most of the populace. Some of the major policies included the Growth-with-Equity and the Growth Point policies, both launched in 1981. The Economic Adjustment Programmes dominated the 1990 to 1995 era, while the Land Policy and the Indigenization and Empowerment policies were formulated during the years 2000 to 2010. Using the growth pole theory as an optic of reference, Zimbabwe was taking Françoise Perroux's idea that devolution and decentralisation would curtail rural urban migration through the creation of a better economic space in the rural areas (Mapuva, 2015).

The assumption was that industries and factories would create employment through manufacturing and service delivery, while Government departments were predicated to offer services like birth and death registration, passports and many more in the remote districts of the country. This was presumed to curtail rural -urban migration since the same services would be available in the local environment. The introduction of these new services was expected to generate employment opportunities for the youth, a sector of the population which is very mobile, encouraging them to remain in the rural areas to make contributions through the much-needed labour pool, knowledge and skills. With the introduction of development policies in the rural areas soon after independence, women were expected to benefit more by

virtue of being the majority in the rural areas. A close examination on the effects of development policy (The Growth Point Policy and the Growth-with-Equity Policy) on rural women is necessary to assess levels of women's inclusion and exclusion in the mainstream economy due to geographical location or gender lines.

While a significant number of scholars have written about Gokwe District (Gokwe North and Gokwe South), the studies had not focused on women in the two districts of Gokwe. Studies conducted by Nyambara (2002), Nyamudeza (2012), and ZIMSTAT (2012) portrayed the district as a remote place with economic and political challenges and the focus was on the general population and state of affairs, not specifically for women. The situation in both districts of Gokwe is further aggravated by the fact that Gokwe is a very remote marginalised area where development initiatives were never a priority. This provided the two districts a disadvantage compared to other districts in Zimbabwe. Gwimbi (2009) argues how Gokwe is one of the largest regions in Zimbabwe, the reason why it was divided into two district-Gokwe North and Gokwe South in the early 1990s for easy administrative purposes. Gokwe region is in the country's agro-ecological region three, receiving an annual average of 819mm rainfall, with average temperatures of 26°C per year (Mudzimu undated and Nyambara, 2003).

Cotton used to be the major agricultural income earner for farmers in the region but geo-political circumstances have changed due to the declining cotton prices on the world market leading to fewer farmers growing the white gold. As argued by Burns and Omeno (2007), Gokwe-South was identified as one of the most food insecure areas of the country. This is due to the fact that the farmers used to rely on the cotton to buy food but now the situation has changed and cash inflows are very low. Climate change and increased midseason droughts has led to less harvest of maize that is the staple food in the country, thus families are left susceptible to food insecurity (Africare Zimbabwe, 2015).

Machingura (2016) also avers that Gokwe region suffered due to remoteness and marginalisation since the colonial era, and the provision of education remained a challenge, even after independence due to political instability

during the ethnic conflicts in 1983 and the political violence that accompanied the 2008 elections. These disturbances affected women and girls mostly as they were used as sex objects at bases by the youths who were in control of the situation, unleashing the violence on people. Female teachers and young girls were raped in Gokwe- Gumunyu, leading to many leaving school and migrating from the area. Such scenarios led to the closure of the schools, further aggravating the already pathetic standard of education in Gokwe North. However, the intervention of some Non-Governmental Organisations such as World Vision and UNICEF has been very crucial to the communities of Gokwe-Gumunyu, particularly for the girls and women. They implemented various programmes which include Improving Girls Access to Education (IGATE), Bicycle Education Empowerment Programme (BEEP), Village Saving and Lending (VSL), Emthonjeni Women's Forum, Zimbabwe Vulnerable Assessment (ZIMVAC), Community Supporting Girl Education (CSGE), Basic, Education Transitional Fund, The Education in Emergencies and Post Crisis Transition and other programmes (Machingura, 2016).

As argued by Youth Alliance for Democracy (undated), some violations of human rights have been reported to be perpetuated by members of some political parties, and women have been found to be the worst victims. The situation is aggravated by lack of access to information, low levels of education and poverty. Gokwe-Nemangwe, is a constituency situated some 40km West of Gokwe Centre (Gokwe South district), with an estimated population of about 57000 people. Most of residents are young and most of them used to be employed by the Cotton Marketing Board (CMB) while others relied on agricultural activities in the production of crops such as cotton, maize, millet (rapoko) and rice. However, a significant decline has been noted in the number of employed youths due to the fluctuation of cotton global prices already discussed in the study (Gwimbi, 2009). Vulnerability has increased and it has more negative impacts on women and children due to the feminization of poverty in most of Zimbabwean rural areas, thus women in Gokwe are exposed to poverty and vulnerability due to their geographical location, historical factors, like colonisation and gender insensitive development policies.

Very few studies have isolated rural women in remote areas like Gokwe North and Gokwe South, whose situation is aggravated by the fact that the region suffered marginalisation and exclusion from the main economy for a long time during the colonial era due to inaccessibility, pests and diseases. For example, studies done by Sibanda and Makwata (2017), Nyambara (2003), Saungweme (2013) on rural development did not specify how women as a special group benefited from policy and other development initiatives but focused on conflicts between the Shangwe and the new arrivals who were the immigrants from Rhodesdale area. Another example is from the studies carried out by Nyambara (2002) on the economic situation and land ownership in Gokwe. When the era of the landlords came into effect, it is the men who benefited. The women are not mentioned anywhere. Even the tenants are..." young men from the urban areas" (Nyambara, 2002:81) and nothing is mentioned about young women. The Communal leaders (chiefs and headmen) who were the landlords were also male since women rarely occupied such influential positions. It may be assumed under the patriarchal systems that women would benefit from their husbands since the food is prepared from the same point. One needs to point out the plight of unmarried mature girls, widows and the single mothers. Nothing is available to their titles as individuals. Taking into consideration that some of the women are also leaders of households as widows and single mothers, it will remain difficult for such households to get access to resources, a situation which inevitably affects child safeguarding, protection and care.

Even the married women have nothing to benefit since the cash from the cotton is usually kept by the male leader of the family. Their input is needed during the rainy season as sources and providers of labour for weeding, planting and harvesting- in metaphoric terms, hewers of water and wood- while they are seldom considered or consulted on how and when to spend the money, thus gender inequalities have always existed within households in Gokwe. Women in Gokwe town, for example, may have an advantage over the women in Nembudziya Growth Point (Gokwe North district) or other surrounding villages due to the differences in geographical location, access to resources, opportunities and information which affect their levels of awareness and adoption of development programmes.

Most policies changed in the developing world when the nations attained independence, with an ultimate goal of reversing the injustices perpetrated by the colonial rulers. Sibanda and Makwata (2017) buttress the view that policies were meant to redress imbalances perpetrated by the unjust colonial rule. These injustices were along racial and gender lines. While efforts to redress imbalances along racial lines have been clearly defined by many scholars, very few studies have made efforts in Zimbabwe to examine how women have been included or excluded by development policy.

When Zimbabwe attained independence in 1980, Government recognized the role of women during the liberation struggle and new laws were put in place to ensure that women also reaped the benefits of independence. Some changes were promulgated for the women and the whole population in general. Mungwini (2007), examines how the Zimbabwean government was committed to changing the status of women in Zimbabwe since independence in 1980, although the programmes and policies could not have achieved the outlined objectives due to other unforeseen challenges. At independence, women were for the first time in the history of the country officially recognized as an oppressed group and as such were the target of a conscious government policy to change their situation through the introduction of the Legal Age of Majority Act of 1982(LAMA) which applied to all-men and women. Other policies and pieces of legislation which benefited women included the Sex discrimination Removal Act of 1985, Reconciliation policy, the Growth-with-Equity Policy, the Growth Point Policy, the Domestic Violence Act of 2006 and the National Gender Policy of 2013 – 2017 While all these are efforts to achieve gender equality, the results are still very low and more still need to be done.

As argued by Sibanda and Makwata (2017), Zimbabwe's early years of independence were marked by policies aimed at redressing colonial era injustices, thus previously marginalised individuals and groups were assimilated into the mainstream economy. The new policies formulated for this purpose included the Growth-with-Equity Policy that was adopted in 1981 as the first post-independence policy. Guided by democratic and socialist principles adopted by the country, the policy had aims and objectives to re-

allocate and re-distribute resources. This policy became the basis for national planning and every citizen was supposed to be catered for in development initiatives.

The targeted marginalised people included women, youth and the general populace which did not have the means and capacity to participate in the economic programmes. Government had to assist the marginalised groups through providing free education and health, land resettlement and job creation. Considering that the rural areas in Zimbabwe had been marginalised since the colonial era, the Growth-with-Equity policy focused on rebuilding rural infrastructure, in addition to re-distribution land and wealth in general. Saungweme (2013) looks into the peace and reconciliation pillar, and how critical it was for sustainable development to take place so that different ethnic groups and races could co-exist and work together.

The Growth-with-Equity Policy was divided into five main pillars, namely: health, education, agriculture, industry, and reconciliation. Clear benefits of this policy were in the health and education sectors because public and social facilities could be accessed by the majority as opposed to the scenario during the colonial period. Zvobgo (1987) observes that the Government realised that education was the backbone through which an economic revolution could be realised, through which the economy could stand and be self-sustaining through the provision of skilled manpower and professional people in various key sectors, hence the need for a socialist education. The sex ratio in schools improved through the education for all. For example, the 1982 enrolment figure in education was 1 934 614 as compared to 1 235 994 in 1980, showing a significant rise. The figures rose to 2 431 000 in 1983. By 1990 the figure was expected to reach the 3 217 000, and the target was reached with so many benefits to the women and girls (Galabawa, 2001). In less than a year after primary education had become free, enrolment increased phenomenally by 232%. Secondary school's enrolment rose by 33% while the demand for teachers saw teacher education enrolment skyrocketing by 254% (Galabawa, 2001). Similarly, university enrolment figures ballooned. However, the number of educational centres did not increase correspondingly although efforts were made in that direction.

In 1989, the country had 4,504 primary schools with an enrolment of 2,274,178 pupils compared to 2401 primary schools with an enrolment of 819,586 pupils in 1979. Similarly, a significant rise of secondary schools and enrolment figures were seen in 1989 as compared to previous lower figures in 1979 (Galabawa, 2001, Zhou and Zvoushe, 2012). The growth and expansion were welcome initiatives and developments which enabled the generality of the people who were previously marginalised to access the much-desired education.

A significant rise of teacher training was also seen and these included: the Zimbabwe Integrated Teachers' Education Course (ZINTEC), Belvedere, Chinhoyi, Masvingo, Hillside, Mkoba, Gweru and Shamva, among others which were created to cater for the need to have the classes manned by qualified teachers (Zhou and Zvoushe, 2012). Most importantly, Education for All (EFA) helped to break the cycle of poverty by creating a new generation that was functionally literate and numerate. The Government had therefore become a welfarist state with limited re-distribution especially in the first decade of independence (Parpate, 1995, Mazingi and Kamudzi, 2009 and Zhou and Zvoushe, 2012).

Like any other policy, the Growth-with-Equity Policy had successes and challenges. There was generally an increase in the number of women who went to school. Some literacy and numeracy skills were obtained, to the advantage of women across the country. The skills gained by women were very essential in effecting operation of their small business ventures, and ability to read instructions on chemicals and fertilizers packaging used in the agricultural sector, thus increasing levels of self-reliance and independence. More girls managed to complete their Ordinary Level studies, compared to previous years before independence, enabling them to enrol in teachers' colleges and health institutions as student teachers and trainee nurses respectively. Mazingi and Kamudzi (2009) are of the view that there was an increase of women graduating as teachers and nurses in the period between 1981 and 1990 that was the period when the results of the Growth-with-Equity Policy were being realised. Evidence can be seen even today by the way female nurses dominate the health sector while female teachers are equally dominant in the education sector, especially in primary schools.

However, when challenges in the implementation of the policy started to show, women and girls were the first to be affected. Zhou and Zvoushe (2012) buttress the view that the period between 1991 and 1996 saw much retrenchments and introduction of user fees when the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) was introduced in the country. Women topped the lists of school drop-outs due to the cultural, male preference practice in Zimbabwe and most of the African region. In addition, adult literacy classes which benefited women the most died a natural death when user fees were introduced.

As argued by ILO (2017), most women were pushed into the informal sector and 53.2% of informal businesses were owned by women, an indication that the Growth-with-Equity expected in the policy never really benefited women to the full but continued to show fissures of discrimination along gender lines. Zinyemba (2014) avers that, men also participated in the informal sector, but their areas of specialisation (which were mainly manufacturing and repairs), were inevitably noticed to be paying more than the fruits and vegetable vending which was the domain of women, a clear sign of gender disparity in the informal sector.

Manyanhaire *et al.* (2011) assert that growth center is a service center or a central point chosen to initiate growth to other peripheral areas. Rural centres identified and targeted for such kind of growth and development initiatives are referred to as Growth Points (GPs) in Zimbabwe. The idea originates from the theoretical framework of Francois Perroux in 1949, whose idea was that development does not take place uniformly across spaces but follows nodes or poles that for some specified reasons have a tendency to attract other investments, only to diffuse later to areas around them (Mapira, 1997, Glassen, 1998, and Mapuva 2015).

The concept of Growth Points (GPs) in Zimbabwe was introduced in 1978 as part of an initial plan called during the colonial era "Integrated Plan for Rural Development", in which Chisumbanje, Jerera, Mataga, Mushumbi, Gutu, Maphisa, Murehwa, Nkayi, Sanyati, and Wedza were identified as the 10 pilot rural service centres to be given growth point status. Gokwe joined the list in 1980 and is amongst the very few to register success stories for the

Government when the Growth Point attained town status in 2007. The rapid growth of Gokwe may be attributed to the availability of the cotton production and associated industries and other infrastructural development attracted by the Gokwe- Kwekwe, Gokwe –Harare highways (Manyanhaire *et al.*, 2009).

The Growth Point Policy of 1981 had many objectives at its inception. The main objectives included: to decentralise administrative functions, to promote rural industrialisation, to create rural employment, to reduce pressure on urban facilities, to create a nationally, evenly balanced development pattern and to give the rural 70-80% of the population worthwhile development opportunities which they were historically denied for a long time by the colonial regime which had an urban bias, neglecting the rural areas. Mapuva (2015:142) concurs and summarises: “In line with the dictates of the growth poles theory, Zimbabwe established the growth points which helped in the curtailment of rural urban migration through the decentralisation of services to rural areas and the creation of employment opportunities for the rural folk”.¹As early as 1982, the Government had identified ten more places to be set up as Growth Points, and thereafter more places were given Growth Point status (Wekwete, 1988).

Among others, the following criteria were used to select the centres which could be awarded Growth Point Status:

- Proximity to an area of elevated agricultural production;
- Possession of a basic economic potential to jumpstart agro-industrial ventures;
- Presence of a significant population in the surroundings to provide labour and market;
- Accessibility to existing or newly planned sources of water supply, electricity, residential areas, and other necessary infrastructure (Wekwete, 1988; Zhou and Zvoushe, 2012)

¹ Mapuva, J. (2015). Skewed Rural Development Policies and Economic Malaise in Zimbabwe Bindura University, Bindura.pp 140-159.

By 1987, 16 rural centres had been granted Growth Point status leading to intensification of investments in rural infrastructure in areas of electrification, telephone installation, construction of water supply dams and waste disposal systems (Zwizwai *et al.*, 1992; Zhou and Zvoushe, 2012; Nhede 2013). Successes were registered for some of the growth points in areas like the decentralisation of social services, reducing the distance the rural people used to travel to get such services like passports and birth certificates. Farmers could also sell their produce close by, reducing transport costs and making their lives better as they would have more cash at their disposal to meet other needs like paying school fees and purchasing of properties for their families (Wekwete, 2001). Examples can be cited of Cotton Marketing Board and ginneries, Grain Marketing Board Depots at Nembudziya Growth Point in Gokwe North and Nemangwe Growth Point in Gokwe South District.

However, the Growth Point Policy had its own challenges. Most of the centres were allocated growth point status on political basis without actually following the stated criteria, leading to their failure to take off. Mismanagement of funds by some government officials hindered the industrialisation and, in the end, dampened the enthusiasm of some potential investors to come to the rural centres. (Manyanhaire *et al.*, 2009, and Conyers, 2001). The main point of inquiry remains on how women as a marginalised group benefited from this policy. While the success of such centres could have been a welcome achievement by women across the country, their failure had its worst effects on women because they would continue travelling to Harare and other cities for birth certificates, passports and purchasing the wares for their informal markets.

As argued by Mushuke and Takuva (2013), it remains sad to observe how so many years after the inception of the Growth Point Policy the centres still lag behind with rural people still travelling long distances to urban areas to look for services which were initially meant to be taken to the rural areas through devolution. The Government of Zimbabwe has embarked on devolution with the same aim-to decentralise services and resources, although challenges are inevitable in any development programme. The theories initially followed needed extra practical considerations before they could be applied in Zimbabwe. The growth point policy has very few success stories like Gokwe,

Murehwa and a few more centres which managed to grow into small towns. The rest of the centres remained service centres with only a few beer halls, bakeries and night clubs. (Zhou and Zvoushe, 2012). While such failures of policies negatively affect all sectors of the population, women are hit most considering the fact that the rural area has been a domain of women for a very long period. In very rare cases have women been isolated as a special stratum in the population and an analysis made on how they have benefited from policy, irrespective of the fact that they constitute more than 50 % of the population (ZIMSTAT 2012). This gap in literature on how women benefited from development policy is the aim of this inquiry so that a contribution to knowledge is made through the results. Figure 1.1 below demonstrates the location of the two Gokwe districts, Gokwe North and Gokwe South.

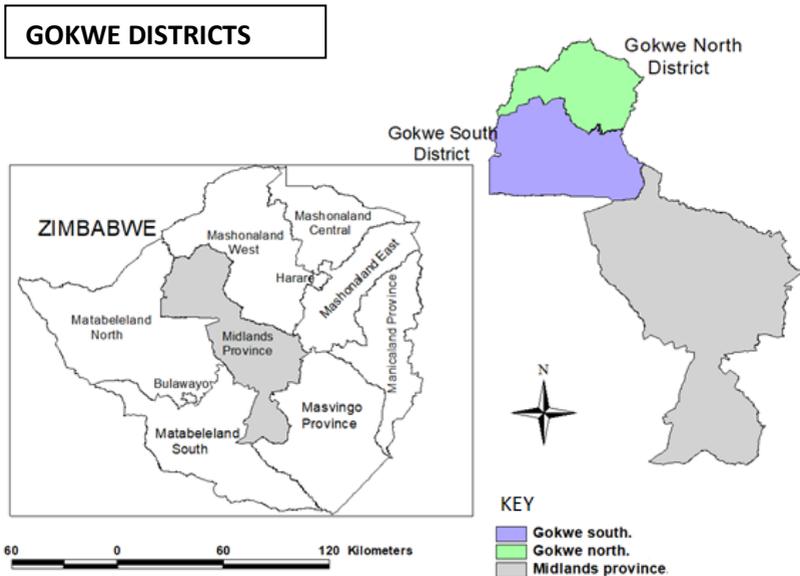


Figure 1.1 Gokwe North and Gokwe South Map

The area under study, Gokwe Region which is now divided into 2 districts of Gokwe North and Gokwe South, is located in Zimbabwe's Midlands Province (Figure 1.1). Gokwe Town is 300 kilometres from Harare and 157

kilometres from Kadoma while Nembudziya growth point is 72kilometres from Gokwe town, 165kilometres from Kadoma and 305 kilometres from Harare. Gokwe region is delimited by Sanyati River to the east, Chemagora forest and Nkayi districts to the South, Kariba and Binga to the West and North respectively. Gokwe is in ecological region 4 experiencing very high temperatures and low rainfall (250-500mm/year). Three specific sections of interest have been chosen for the study: Gokwe Centre (Gokwe Town), Nembudziya Growth Point and the peripheral rural areas. Gokwe center is the urban area/town in Gokwe district. The region is dry and rainfall is very sporadic leading to poverty incidence of 75 % (ZIMSTAT, 2012). Food shortages are very common due to drought, while bumper harvests may also be experienced when the season is good in terms of rainfall amounts, combined with the large size of the farms and the good soils. The soil types range from black clay, red clays to medium sandy soils (Nyambara, 2003). With an average altitude of 1220m, the temperatures are normally very high (30–40-degree Celsius maximums). Zimguide Online (2019) maintains that the area experiences average temperatures of 29 degrees Celsius for most of the year with winter temperatures of 22 degrees Celsius being considered the lowest. Drought resistant crops like cotton, maize, millet (rapoko), sorghum and millet are very common. Groundnuts are also found in the district; thus, farmers usually have a wide range of crops and sources of starch and protein are available.

In the 1950s, the population used to be very sparse due the tsetse fly infesting the area and the thick forests. While the tsetse fly made the area unsuitable for human inhabitation, the thick forests reduced accessibility, making the area unattractive to many people including the colonial settlers, and the district lagged behind in development activities. This scenario explains the sparse populations in Gokwe district until the 1960s when the colonialists forcibly removed people from their homelands into Gokwe region using the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 and the Land Husbandry Act. While the Shangwe are considered to be the original inhabitants of Gokwe, immigrants came from other places in the 1950s. Forced migrants from the Rhodesdale area (crown land) were involuntarily taken to the region of Gokwe, and the population size and densities began to increase. In the 1960s and 1970s, immigrants coming to Gokwe were volunteers in search of bigger pieces of

land and in search of where to grow cotton 'white gold' particularly in 1962. At the moment, languages range from Zezuru, IsiNdebele, Chikaranga, and Korekore, just to mention a few. People from other provinces were attracted by the large pieces of land they were offered and the 'white gold' which was the main cash crop in the district (Nyambara 2002, 2003 and Maravanyika, 2012). The geographical location physical characteristics and the colonial era exclusion of the region led to delayed development opportunities for a long time, giving rise to terms like marginalised or remote which all carry segregating connotations.

With time, much changes came to Gokwe's two districts. The once sparsely populated districts started to experience an influx of immigrants in the 1950s. These two pieces of legislation created land alienation and the greatest inequality in the country as the best land was seized to further white interests, supremacy and dominance leaving the dry areas in regions 4 and 5 to blacks. The black families were given 6 hectares for a family of 6 people, meaning the rural areas were always overcrowded. These immigrants were now coming from urban areas like Kwekwe where ZISCO had retrenched thousands of people. In the 1991-1992 drought, people still moved to Gokwe in search of better farming land. (Nyambara, 2002; Mazingi and Kamidza, 2009).

These increases in population density brought with them changes in the livelihoods of households in Gokwe. Nyambara (2003) maintains that the introduction of cotton as a cash crop in the district in 1962 also attracted more people into Gokwe followed by agricultural institutions such as Agricultural and Technical Extension Services (AGRITEX), credit agencies like the Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC), parastatals marketing brands like Grain Marketing Board (GMB), Cotton Marketing Board (CMB) assisted communal farmers. More programmes on infrastructure development, installation of marketing depots and many more were all positives in the improvement of growing the cash crop in rural areas particularly in Gokwe.

With such a population growth rate and increase in population density (60 320 people in 1962 to 399 906 people in the year 2000), change in livelihoods

and survival strategies were inevitable (Nyambara, 2003). Pressure began to mount on the land and the immigrants ended up buying land from the chiefs and headmen, creating rural landlords and rural land tenants. Inequality was inevitable and there were groups with better access to land, the major means of production. The Marxist view points out that those with better access to the means of production always accumulate more wealth than those without, the reason why unequal distribution of land has always been a cause of conflict world-wide. The tenants, as argued by Nyambara (2003) were the young men from urban areas who could afford to buy some pieces of land for themselves.

Maravanyika (2012) posits that the state induced migration of people into Gokwe region caused conflicts between the original inhabitants of Gokwe (Shangwe) and the immigrants (Madheruka or MaRhodesdale). The migrations caused the local people to change their lifestyles of nomadic hunting and gathering as they adjusted to the permanent way of agriculture, particularly the growing of cotton. Immigrants were moved to Gokwe to modernise the Shangwe people and clear forests with the intention of reducing tsetse fly. The district was divided into Gokwe North and Gokwe South, with Nembudziya Growth Point or Mutora becoming the administrative centre which was awarded growth point status in 2001. Ginners were dotted across the district creating employment for people in the district.

Currently, world cotton prices have significantly dropped and the farmers are no longer interested in the 'white gold'. Production costs have surpassed the returns and the farmers are now shunning the crop. These winds of change also came with negative impacts to the livelihoods of the rural people in Gokwe, particularly women. While residents of Gokwe have been cotton growers for so long, they also rear domestic animals like donkeys and cattle (for draught power), goats, sheep and fowls for meat. The donkey remains the oldest animal for draught power found in the district since cattle came in the district later. Tsetse fly prevented the ownership of cattle at any scale and it was only around the late 1970s that cattle were introduced in the district.

The introduction of cattle came as a sign of improvement and development since there was none for a very long time. With the change from cotton as the stronghold of Gokwe economy, the people are now moving to mining which was not a very common economic activity during the prime period of cotton. Only a few official large mines like Copper Queen mine were operating in the district. Currently many illegal gold mines (licensed and unlicensed) have taken over the economic activity of Gokwe. The youth have resorted to mining to augment incomes. Before that, people never used to concentrate on mining. No one had the time for that since “the field” was the main activity for cotton production. Coal mining at Sengwa Colliery is also another sector which has given Gokwe some mileage economically in recent years. At the moment buying and selling is also on the increase in Gokwe. Men and women are resorting to cross boarder trading, selling of vegetables, freezits and catering for travellers at the growth points (Kubatana Archive, 2008; James, 2008; Nyamudeza, 2012, Maravanyika, 2012 and Tumbare 2013).

Gokwe experienced shortage of skilled manpower and professionals for a very long time. Teachers who were found in schools were mainly untrained teachers from various districts and provinces all over the country. Qualified teachers and other experienced personnel shunned the district due to the climatic conditions and the state of the roads. The very few who came in to take up high posts like headmasters, members of parliament, nurses and so on were from other districts because the inhabitants of the district were lowly educated and unqualified for these posts. These delayed opportunities for Gokwe residents were due to the fact that schools were very far away and children had to walk long distances to school leading to high percentage of school dropouts. In addition, the parents never took education seriously since the children were already an available labour force in the cotton fields, no one would query a child for absconding school. Additional labour force for the day was always welcome. Another factor leading to the missed/delayed opportunities in Gokwe is that there were very few high schools offering Advanced level education. Most schools offered up to Ordinary Level. Teacher training colleges, technical colleges, vocational centres, universities and any other institutions of higher learning remained an elusive goal in Gokwe.

The closest one could go for higher learning institutions. like technical colleges, Teachers' colleges and so on was Kwekwe or Bulawayo, thus higher skills and qualifications remained lower in Gokwe compared to other districts in the country. Although improvements have been noted by the introduction of Advanced level education in some schools (only Nyamuroro and Cheziya high schools have boarding facilities to date in Gokwe North,) the situation is still below expectation compared to the low level of education and the population. More can still be done. (ZIMSTAT, 2012; Parliament Research Department, 2011 and Mutami, 2015).

Table 1.1: Population of Gokwe Disaggregated by Sex (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (web), 2012)

District	Population		Total
	Male	female	
Gokwe South	147 726	158 256	305 982
Gokwe North	116 467	123 885	240 352
Gokwe Urban	10 914	13 140	24 054
Gokwe region	275 107	295 281	570 388

Table 1.1 shows the population of Gokwe North and Gokwe South. The statistics show that there are more women than men in Gokwe that could be used to suggest that more developmental programmes can be established for women and men. In addition, the figures also show that the percentage of women in Gokwe district is significant and cannot be excluded in developmental activities.

The study intends to examine the livelihoods of the women in three specific areas (Nembudziya Growth Point, Gokwe Town Centre and the surrounding villages in Gokwe region and to identify indicators and pointers which attempt to explain the effectiveness of the Growth-with-Equity Policy and the Growth Point Policy on women as a special stratum of the population in Gokwe. With reference to the Growth-with-Equity Policy and the Growth Point Policy, the majority interests should be served since women are the majority in the district, thus they are supposed to benefit on equal basis as men. This does not appear to be the case on the ground from the specified period of policy implementation to date. Women were already strategically

positioned to benefit from the Growth Point Policy. However, the assumption never became a reality since the intended benefits from the policy continued to exclude them despite their heavy presence in the rural areas. The study intends to find out the extent to which women were included in these policies since independence.

Women from Gokwe North and Gokwe South, continue to be excluded in the mainstream economy as evidenced by their low numbers in leadership positions, less ownership of properties and access to financial resources or credit facilities, despite the fact that development policies have been formulated and implemented since independence with the intention to improve the livelihoods of the same women and everyone else.

The Growth Point Policy was implemented in 1981, aiming to decentralise services and decongest services in the urban areas while at the same time promoting even development across the country. The Growth-with-Equity Policy was adopted in 1981 as well, with the intention to grow the economy with equal opportunities to all sectors of the population, particularly those which had been historically marginalised. Women, particularly rural women, have been one of the strata of population historically excluded from mainstream economy who were supposed to benefit from the development policies. Despite some noticeable increases in female enrolment figures in schools and other institutions of higher learning, the question which continue to be asked today is why the status quo has remained the same for women in Gokwe region in terms of empowerment, economic engagement and inclusiveness despite policy implementation. The study seeks to find out if the women in Gokwe region (Gokwe North and Gokwe South) have really benefited from the Growth-with-Equity Policy and the Growth Point Policy, implemented in Zimbabwe soon after independence.

The aim of the study is to examine the impact of government development policies on women in Gokwe Town, Nembudziya Growth Point and the surrounding villages in the two districts of Gokwe with particular reference to the Growth Point and the Growth-with-Equity Policies. The study has the following objectives:

1. To explore the extent to which women in Gokwe South and Gokwe North are aware of the Growth Point and the Growth-with-Equity Policies;
2. To examine the factors influencing effective implementation of development policies on women in the two Gokwe districts;
3. To examine the effects of these two policies on the livelihoods of Gokwe women in terms of economic engagement, empowerment and inclusiveness;
4. To assess the benefits of the two policies on women in Gokwe's two districts;
5. To examine the challenges Gokwe women face in accessing benefits of Development Policies;
6. To suggest and recommend some policy strategies which can be used to effectively implement policies for rural women in the district of Gokwe.

The research questions guiding the study are:

1. Which development policies were implemented in Zimbabwe since 1980?
 What is the level of awareness of the women in Gokwe on the Growth-with-Equity and Growth Point Policies?
 What indicators can be used to measure change in the lives of the women in Gokwe Districts attributable to development policies?
 What factors influence the effective implementation of development policies on women in Gokwe?
 What prerequisites should be provided for Gokwe women to effectively receive gains from development policy?
 Does effective implementation of development policy on women in Gokwe solely rely on the women themselves or on other groups in the population?
3. What are the effects of The Growth Point Policy and the Growth-with-Equity Policy on the livelihoods of women in Gokwe?
 Are there any indications of economic engagement of women in the rural Gokwe region compared to periods prior to policy implementation?
 Are there any noticeable indicators of women empowerment in the two Gokwe districts?
 Does the mainstream economic sector show some inclusiveness?

4. What are the benefits and challenges of the two development policies on women in Gokwe District?

Do the benefits outweigh the challenges faced by rural women in Gokwe?

Do the women in Gokwe show improved standards of living as individuals or as beneficiaries of spouses?

5. What recommendations can be made for effective policy implementation for women in Gokwe?

What suggestions can be made for remote rural and small urban areas in terms of women empowerment?

Can all rural and remote areas benefit from the same policy countrywide?

Women in remote rural areas appear to remain in poverty despite the formulation and implementation of development policies.

The study focused on Gokwe Town, Nembudziya Growth Point, and some villages in Gokwe South and Gokwe North. Women aged 18 years and above were randomly selected, observed, and interviewed during focus group discussions, and were requested to answer questionnaires. Limitations of the study included high transport costs because of the distance of the area under study from Harare where the researcher resides. The economic hardships in the country during the study period also presented challenges to the researcher since the respondents were already stressed and appeared not willing to answer questions for no financial benefit. They did not want to be disturbed from their day-to-day endeavours just to respond to some questions. The leadership structures in the rural areas are such that it is not possible to gather people for focus group discussions or interviews before being granted permission by the traditional leadership that was time consuming. Accessibility into the two districts of Gokwe was usually a challenge due to the state of the roads particularly during the rainy season. The researcher made trips to the study area during the dry season.

The study makes significant contributions to many areas as indicated below:

1. The study provides new insights into the effectiveness of some government development policies on the livelihoods of rural women in general and more importantly at the household and individual levels. The study is approaching development policy from a micro

rather than a macro perspective, highlighting challenges caused by overshadowing vulnerable groups like rural women.

2. The study provides rural sex disaggregated data provision that is usually not available for remote areas, benefiting researchers and academics.
3. The study makes a significant contribution to literature on rural development policy and women empowerment.
4. The study is useful to policy makers so that they understand heterogeneity of population and their problems, and the impacts of a whole plethora of macro issues like political, legal, cultural and environmental challenges which may overshadow effectiveness of policies on a micro scale.
5. The study assists women to identify their self-worth and become proactive and self-advocates in development issues since structural and institutional hurdles like socialisation and patriarchy are not problems to be solved overnight. It contributes, through awareness and sensitisation, of the women about the need to be involved in policy formulation and implementation as stakeholders and beneficiaries.

The chapter has provided an introduction of the topic under study, giving the reader an overview of what prompted the study and how it was conducted. An overview of the status of women worldwide was given and the purpose of development policies in most countries. The background of the study provided a detailed analysis and historical background of Gokwe's two districts in terms of population size, climatic conditions and levels development. The statement of the problem, aim of the study, objectives of the study and research questions were enlightened. The chapter also outlined the delimitation of the study, limitations and the significance of the study. The next chapter reviews literature related to the study.