

CHAPTER 5: GENDER, POLICY AND WOMEN IN GOKWE: A DISCUSSION

The chapter critically discusses the findings of the study. The findings presented in the previous chapter were based on the results gathered using five objectives which were used as guidelines for research questions to collect data. The first objective of this research was to ascertain the levels of awareness of development policies from the women in Gokwe, who were the participants in the data gathering process. From this objective, the main research questions aimed at finding out from the respondents if they were aware of the Growth Point Policy and the Growth-with-Equity Policy. The study also asked questions on how they got know the policies. In the second objective, the study intended to find out the factors which affect the effective implementation of development policies in Gokwe's two districts. A wide range of factors were presented by the study to which the respondents agreed or disagreed. The third objective sought to find out the effects of development policies on the livelihoods of rural women, while the fourth objective sought to find out the benefits and challenges women in rural areas face in trying to access the fruits of development policies in remote rural areas.

The demographic characteristics of the respondents who participated in the quantitative research were designated into five main categories namely: age, education, marital status, occupation and place of residence. The 18-25 years age group had twenty-four (24) respondents, constituting 9% of the total. In addition, the same characteristics were sought from the participants of the eight (8) focus group discussions, and very few (15 out of 80) respondents were aged between 18 and 25 years. This shows that at the time of data collection, very few young women were readily available in the two Gokwe districts as respondents. In most societies, the young population is normally very mobile (UNCTAD 2018), particularly during times of hardships like the period currently being experienced by Zimbabwe. The young relocate to other areas in search of jobs and other survival strategies like gold panning or buying and selling in urban areas. This is in line with what Zaiceva and Zimmerman (2014) posited on the mobility of population and its impact on the labour force in both the recipient and sending countries. For developed countries, the aging population may migrate periodically in search of holidays

and leisure while in developing countries, the aging population remains in the rural areas and production and productivity may be affected when the strong young people emigrate to other areas within the same country or out of the country in search of greener pastures. This was exhibited by the results from the study because very few respondents were found in the 18-25 years sector, an indication that the region will be left to the elderly people only which leads to retrogression and stagnation of the remote areas in terms of production and productivity per household. This may open up room for food insecurity since the elderly people left may not be in a position to provide the much-needed labour in the fields due to old age and ill-health.

The other dimension of demography is education. Education is a strong indicator of development. Huis *et al.* (2017) argue how if more women are educated, their level of their understanding improves and child survival because of more access to literature, more capital and accessibility to food for their families. More education also leads to reduced fertility levels, raised awareness on hygienic conditions, planning and budgeting including health spending which works better for household and community health. From the two districts of Gokwe, the study discovered that only 14 (5%) of the 260 respondents to the questionnaire attained education up to degree level, while 19% (48) attained diploma education. In the qualitative analysis, only 4 participants had degree education, while the majority (58) had secondary education, with an additional 18 participants having attained primary education. More efforts should be made to increase women enrolment in schools, institutions of higher learning like universities and vocational training colleges to enable more women to join the mainstream economy through various economic activities, thus contributing significantly to economic development.

The other demographic variable examined in the study was marital status. The study findings show that twenty-four (24%) of the respondents were single while the majority (62%) of the respondents were married, while 47% and 25% of the respondents were divorced and widowed respectively. While the findings from the study reveal that most women find marriage as the best option for survival in rural areas, it is essential to ensure that these women are empowered as individuals not as beneficiaries of their spouses for more

economic participation and benefits to families and communities to be realised. If women are expected to benefit from their spouses, it means a significant percentage of the women (38%), and an additional 31 participants from the focus group discussions (Table 24), will be excluded from the benefits of development policy because they are single, widowed or divorced. This situation was also discussed by Van de Walle (2018) on the fate of widows and divorced women since marriage has always been taken as the source of social security for women in most societies across the world. Such scenarios call for effective policy implementation strategies which are inclusive of all women irrespective of their marital status.

Most of the respondents were not employed while 31% (81) were self-employed and only 20% (51) of the respondents were formally employed in hospitals, clinics, schools and shops in the Growth Point and Gokwe Town Centre. At the same time, only 10 respondents from the focus group discussions were formally employed while the rest survived on farming (52). An additional 18 participants earned a living from buying and selling in markets. The number of formally employed women in Gokwe district is intricately related to the levels of education the women attained. Taking unemployment as an indicator of development levels in the country, it can be concluded that the women respondents were unemployable due to low levels of education. The study recommends that more women should be encouraged to enrol in institutions of higher education.

Lastly, the demographic analysis examines the place of residence of the respondents. Most of the respondents (60%) reside in the villages while 34% of the respondents resided at Nembudziya Growth Point and only 6% (16 respondents) were from Gokwe Town. This was due to the fact that the people in the villages live close to each other and find it easy to assemble even if it is during COVID-19 movement restrictions as compared to the urban areas where much seclusion is the normal way of life that worsened during the same time of COVID-19 movement restrictions.

The results presented in the previous chapter show that the respondents from both quantitative and qualitative research instruments were aware of the development policies in the study. About 53% of the respondents strongly

agree that they were aware of the Growth Point Policy while only 25% strongly disagreed on any knowledge of the policy. In addition, a total of 41 participants from the focus group discussions were aware of the growth point policy while 39 of the total respondents were not aware or not very sure of the two development policies. This constituted most of the participants with knowledge of the Growth Policy which was formulated and implemented in 1981, soon after Zimbabwe's independence.

Literature indicates that during this period in Zimbabwe, the Government had so much bias towards rural areas and many benefits were channelled towards remote areas. Parliamentarians would also address people with regards to development initiatives, particularly towards elections. In addition, some 45% of the respondents strongly agreed that they were aware of the Growth-with-Equity Policy, while another 35% strongly disagreed on any knowledge of the Growth-with-Equity policy. The two policies sounded similar to some respondents as indicated by the responses from the 8 focus group discussions. Others indicated knowledge of the Growth-with-Equity policy based on prior indication of knowledge of the Growth Point policy.

Participants strongly agreed that they know about the policies through media and literature. Most of participants in the qualitative research indicated that public meetings and radio programmes were the main source of their knowledge of the development policies. Some 38.8% of the respondents from the quantitative study indicated that they got to know about both policies through Government programmes as well.

Although 30% of the respondents disagreed with the fact that Government programmes provided them knowledge of the policies, there is a strong indication that the Government had a significant part to play in raising knowledge and awareness of development policies to residents of Gokwe. More can still be done to improve the awareness levels of the rural population on the existence of these development policies so that the people can fully participate in the development initiatives and activities. The grassroots approach and the multi-stakeholder approach in development are important since all the critical players in rural development will be made aware of the implementation strategies, the resources available and the mitigation

measures put in place during the policy formulation level. Another 36.2% of the respondents in the quantitative study strongly agreed that they got to know both development policies through friends and family while 16.9% agreed. In addition, some 33.3% strongly agreed to having got knowledge of the policies through media and literature. In the focus group discussions, the respondents did not mention literature as the main source of their knowledge because they lamented that most literature will be written in English and not in the local languages, an observation which needs attention for women in remote rural areas to be able to benefit from literature. This shows that while media and literature may mean radio and television, a significant number of people in remote rural areas still have no access to information through media.

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE 2019) proposes that awareness of development initiatives should be improved among the women themselves by identifying the socio-demographic characteristics of the beneficiaries like age, education levels, marital status and so on so that specific awareness methods can be implemented for them through radio and television, printed pamphlet distribution, workshops and public meeting events, social media and social networks. Access to knowledge of the development policies through literature was a response mainly given by those who have managed to go to school from secondary level to tertiary level where such topics are included in the curriculum. This brings another development indicator that is the nexus between education and development. There is positive relationship between education and development because the more years the women and girl children stay in school, the more enlightened they are and the more awareness they get on development policies and activities taking place in their own geographical locations that is very vital for willingness, knowledge and ability to participate in development programmes.

It is evident from the study that there are much factors that influence successful implementation of development policy in the districts of Gokwe as indicated by the findings of the study. From the eight factors suggested by the study, corruption emerged at the top of the list of factors influencing development policies. Most of the respondents (63.3%) in the quantitative

research strongly agreed that the success or failure of development policy depends on the levels of corruption in the area under consideration, while another 31% agreed to the same variable. High levels of corruption negatively affect the success of development policy because resources may be channelled towards personal use or the objective selection of beneficiaries may be overshadowed by corruption evils like nepotism, favouritism, bribery and so on. Lack of accountability systems makes it difficult to reap the best rewards from development policies in remote rural areas like Gokwe.

Results show that women rarely benefit as individuals because they lack the resources necessary for improvement of their own businesses, an idea agreed to by more than 90% of the respondents during the focus group discussions conducted in Gokwe North and Gokwe South. Elimination of corruption through tightening of the policy cycle procedures is highly recommended by the study so that there are no porous stages where resources can leak and /or be converted to personal uses at the expense of most of the people in rural areas. Continued corruption leads to people losing trust in government as they wonder whether the Government is not aware or they just do not care or, worse still, the people would assume the government is part of the corruption (Dantamna, 2016; Hussein, 2018; Zhou and Zvoushe, 2012).

Another factor which hinders successful implementation of development policy is lack of funds as indicated by the findings. Most projects were reported to have been aborted due to the lack of funds. This idea calls for stricter measures to monitor and evaluate development programmes at all levels. The Government is the major stakeholder in any development policy being implemented in the rural areas. It provides financial, human and material resources directly and indirectly. Shortage of these resources means the project cycle cannot be completed, leading to abortion of such critical development projects. These negative factors affect women more than their male counterparts as was stated by FAO (2017).

It is, therefore, critical for the Government to involve other stakeholders like Non-Governmental Organisations, private enterprises and many more non-state actors available at national and international levels to raise funds. In addition, the role of appropriate technology was also noted by the study as

essential in determining the levels of success of any development policy. Without the correct technology, the policy implementation cannot meet the time limits within the project plans and this means the project can be aborted or is overtaken by other events that may lead to irrelevance of the policy if it takes too long to complete.

Staff incompetence is another factor influencing the success of development policies. Some factors which will be blamed on the Government might be actually emanating from the incompetence of the Government officials, a variable which had 51.9% of the respondents strongly agreeing and an additional 42.25% agreeing. Education and training of the officials to implement Government programmes should always be a priority. The recruitment and selection process of the implementers of the policy should be thorough, and based on meritocracy rather than bribery, seniority or political affiliation.

The study also sought to establish the importance of the characteristics of the policy recipients in the successful implementation of the policies. Four variables namely lack of education among the women, lack of involvement of the women at the planning stage, the age of the targeted women and the negative attitude of the women themselves were examined. The focus group discussions clearly indicated that women are not a homogeneous group and some may be lazy or have some negative attitudes towards developmental work, but the majority are hard workers. The age of the targeted women in the policy being implemented was also presented as an important factor. About 43.8% of the respondents strongly agreed to this factor while 48.8% agreed. Only 1.6% and 1.9% of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagree respectively, an indication that most of the respondents felt that the age of the policy recipients has something to do with the levels of success of any policy being implemented.

During the discussions, it came out that elderly women are more resistant to negatives and more stable in terms of mobility. Involving them in development project will increase the chances of success. On the other hand, some respondents felt that younger women have the energy, sharp minds and better access to technology and exposure to internet where they can source

better information useful for development from other communities which may then benefit their own rural communities, thus the views were that all age groups should be involved when development projects are implemented to harness the strengths from all age groups in a spirit of unity in diversity.

Lack of education was also discussed and the respondents strongly felt that the women are better placed if they get access to higher and tertiary education, an idea which was also stated by UNCTAD (2012). While some elder members of the qualitative inquiry indicated that women can perform the same with or without education, the majority validated the facts emanating from the quantitative inquiry in which 34% strongly agreed and an additional 53.5% agreed that lack of education among the women was a factor which negatively affected the success of development policy implementation in rural areas like Gokwe. The respondents strongly indicated during the focus group discussions that adult literacy classes were very important during the 1980s and should be re-introduced so that women can benefit. While enrolments in schools currently indicate some gender balance, the number of female students' school dropouts still exist due to lack of fees and early marriages, and such groups can be assisted significantly by adult literacy classes.

The study proposed twelve (12) variables which were perceived to be the effects of development policies on the livelihoods of women in remote rural areas like Gokwe. The variables were: when development projects include women, they positively contribute to the economy; projects are more viable; women are enabled access to international markets; they use time efficiently; their access to information and media increases; decision-making capacity increases; implementation of plans becomes timeous; Gender-based Violence is reduced; women share their opinions openly; women have less financial problems; women diversify their livelihoods and effectively participate in markets. In response to the first variable, Table 28 shows that women will learn from others and become more self-reliant promoting child survival and national economic growth through improved production and productivity. This is an indication that the Government should take stringent measures to ensure that women as stakeholders to the development policies and the majority in the nation are included because excluding them means sidelining

the contributions from 52% of the population (ZIMSTATS, 2012; Ferrant and Koleve, 2016).

The other variable examined was that projects by women become more viable when they are included in development policy programmes. This means the women themselves will be having more exposure as they share knowledge, education, training and awareness campaigns from different groups as opposed to when they are at home. Access to information through media and literature also increases because of this exposure as they learn from others. As a result, the gained experience and exposure is also implemented in their own projects to increase efficiency and viability, an indication that the more women participate in development programmes, the more they ensure their own livelihoods are improved as they get exposure to the outside world.

The study also evaluated the variable that women get access to international market through engagement into economic activities. About 45.6% of the respondents agreed while 47.1% strongly agreed. When development policy programmes are effectively implemented, beneficiaries are expected to get a chance to market their products locally and internationally. These benefits will also be enjoyed by women if they are not excluded from development programmes. It is a plus for any nation to include men and women equally in any policy implementation for equitable distribution of policy benefits.

The respondents also shared their opinions on the fact that Gender-based Violence is reduced when women are included in development policies as shown in Table 28. The more the benefits of programmes are brought home, the less the conflicts and friction because there will be enough provisions for the family. When people lack basics that is when most conflicts start. With enough proceeds from the economic activities of husband and wife, peace prevails in the home.

Literature (for example, Asaolu, 2018; Chinyambidze, 2015 and Zinyemba, 2014), has it that women increase their capacity in decision-making when they are economically engaged. Their opinions are also shared openly between spouses and community members and as such it becomes a strong conflict resolution tool. Similarly, the respondents in the qualitative study also

observed that when women are experienced in leading projects, even at home they will do the same, without having to wait for the husband all the time to implement some important plans. Their decision-making capacity will be improved and it reduces time wasting. The same women will not have time to waste chatting with friends unproductively because there will be so much work to take care of and such commitment cascades down to effectiveness and efficiency at household, community and national level.

Findings from the research show that benefits accrue to women when development policy includes women from policy planning to policy implementation. These benefits can be summarised as: access to education and training, well-planned families and improved dwellings, awareness of their human rights, family members also benefit, and financial independence. When development policies include women's participation, it increases the women's visibility. These ideas are in concurrence with UN Women (2018) reporting that women become aware of their rights, and have some self-worthiness, higher self-esteem (a core value of development) and confident business people. Okeke (2018) also points out that women become more visible in significant economic markets when development policy includes them, a finding which was revealed by many respondents in the 8 focus group discussions.

The qualitative research revealed that women are in agreement that awareness of their human rights increases when they get the chance to stand as individuals in their own communities, making them realise how important they are as equal partners in all sectors of the economy. Table 28 shows the summarised benefits listed by participants in the eight focus group discussions and they included personal growth, family finances increase and general national growth. All these benefits make the policy implementation process a critical process in which women must participate to their own advantage as individual citizens and members of families, communities and the nation at large. UN (2017) argues that including women in development policy leads to the achievement of agenda 2030 (Goal number 5, gender equality, goal number 8- decent work for all and goal number 16- building peaceful and inclusive societies). Despite being the majority in the country,

women do not benefit as individuals but as groups and families through provision of basic needs like food, clothing and so on. About 55% of the respondents agreed that when women are included in development policies they have well planned families, and the benefits they receive also benefit other family members, like children, the elderly and the disabled. The qualitative participants added that stress and its related diseases will be reduced if women are empowered economically by recognition and inclusion in the decision-making and implementation process of development policy.

When development policies are being implemented for women in rural areas, there are challenges which are hindering women from accessing these benefits. The study revealed the following findings as the major challenges: corruption, poor communication channels, strict traditional structures, male dominance and corruption. In most cases when individuals seek to market their businesses, they have to look for contacts, who are usually friends, family and other colleagues. Women lack these connections because of they rarely leave the home. Men get these connections in beer halls and workplaces.

It is essential to increase the communication channels for women for the success of their businesses and projects. This was mentioned by UNCTAD (2012) which emphasises that lack of communication channels, education, resources and bureaucratic challenges hinder successful policy implementation for women. These points were also presented by Samman (2016) who summarised the challenges as lack of education and training, lack of skills, lack of access to quality paid work, burden of unpaid work at home, lack of access to assets and property among others. This is an indication that what is affecting Gokwe women is also affecting women in other geographical areas as shown by literature. Access to internet and social media which is common these days is well embraced and should be taken advantage of by women in Gokwe to enable them to access information and contacts so that they can market their businesses. In most cases, this lack of contacts and famous colleagues reduce the women's chances to grow their networks, reducing their chances to get connected to influential people who may help them to secure better paying jobs. The women remain in their low paying

vegetable markets and so on. An increase in communication channels is a good initiative which should be encouraged at all levels.

Strict traditional structures also deter women from performing at their maximum potential because they are expected by society to be in the home where there are no opportunities for employment and promotions as shown by the findings from this research. Male dominance was among the challenges women face when they try to access benefits of development policies. Many development policies are dominated by men despite the fact that the women are the majority in the communities or in the nation at large. About 52.9% of the respondents agreed while 40% strongly agreed that women are not allowed to surpass men in anything no matter how good they are. Detailed explanations came from the focus group discussions in which participants lamented that women are never seen as capable partners in development. Even simple matters like when to plant, when to harvest, what and when to go to sell all delayed until the husband provides consent. Some programmes especially in the farming business are time bound and they should not be delayed because the husband is not available to give consent.

Even when a woman does anything good for the family, the man will be praised for marrying a good wife rather than the woman receiving the praise and the encouragement as an individual. Some respondents even indicated that their in-laws would prefer to call them using the totems of their marriage families rather than their own totems which they feel is lack of acknowledgement and appreciation that they are also individuals who came from well-respected families. This is the reason why some women have resorted to negative attitude towards development initiatives because they are always overshadowed by this male dominance home and away, as indicated by the participants in the focus group discussions who actually showed their displeasure in the way culture is such a deterrent to women empowerment. This was also pointed out by the respondents in the focus group discussions who said the women are always prevented from personal growth because culture has it that all belongs to the man because he is the head of the family who has paid lobola.

Scholars, like Ferim (2013), Mkhize (2015) in Tebele (2016) and Siambombe (2015), concur that women, particularly rural women are rarely consulted in any policy plans even if they are the beneficiaries and this leads to exclusion of the female beneficiaries from development policy. Even if the women have the ability to improve their status and livelihoods, they lack adequate resources (Ajulor, 2018 and Makinde, 2017) because everything they have ever worked for does not belong to them but to their husbands. Their individual projects therefore become less viable as compared to their male counterparts who can quickly make decisions to sell property or other resources owned to improve their businesses without much bureaucratic consultation. Instead of empowering women, society expects the women to do more tasks for the family as was once expressed by Nyamudeza (2012) on the situation of cotton production relationships in Gokwe. More tasks arose for the woman whenever a new activity was planned by the husband in the family, but not her access to income, decision-making or empowerment in general.

In summary, the chapter has discussed the findings of the study based on the objectives and aims of the study. All the study objectives were discussed. Women in rural Gokwe North and Gokwe South Districts indicated that their access to benefits from development policies is hindered by many factors which include corruption, male dominance, strict traditional structures, and lack of funds among others. The study proposes some strategies such as involving the private sector in all Government led initiatives for increased transparency and viability of projects. Ensuring that women get the education they need for effective and substantive participation in economic activities is also critical for effective policy implementation in remote rural areas like Gokwe. The next chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.