

Chapter 4: THE CASE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN AROUND TSHOLOTSHO GROWTH POINT

In this chapter, emphasis is on the analysis and interpretation of the generated data, based on the research questions of the study. The objective is to present a picture of rural women's empowerment outcomes through the growth point policy at Tsholotsho Growth Point. The findings are presented according to the themes emerging from generated data from in depth interviews and focus group discussions.

Changes in the socio-economic empowerment status of women were contextualised as a constellation of various vectors whose interconnectedness has depicted variously improved statuses for women. At a higher level (superordinate), the change was abstracted as having three axiologically linked thematic findings designated as agentic, catalytic and resultant vectors. As shown in the model below, the said variables were found to be in a vicious cyclic relationship thus forming the wheel of change.

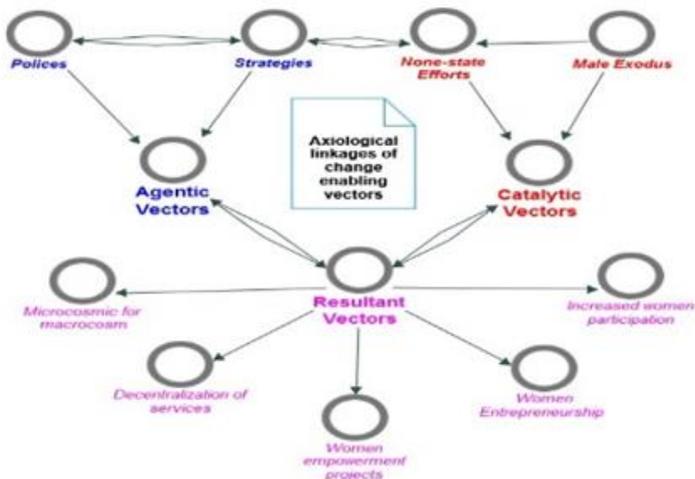


Figure 4.1 - Socio-Economic Status of Women (Researcher)

Both the agentic and catalytic vectors were abstracted as relatedly having a formative influence on the resultant vectors, with the latter also having enabling feedback to the former.

AGENTIC VECTORS

Agentic vectors were abstracted as the main driving force toward change, chiefly driven by government policies and strategies.

POLICIES PROMOTING RURAL WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT OUTCOMES

The theme of policies was contextualised as all references to the government policies that were understood to be related to the socio-economic status of women within the growth point strategy. In this vein, the study discovered that despite the differences in views, all interviewees conceded and recognised that the growth point policy was indeed promulgated for rural development. This was evident from the following responses:

...the policy was about transforming the face of the rural sector... K116.

...it is a policy by government implemented to try and decongest urban centres to form urban within a rural set up... K113

... it started as a service centre with a few shops as it grew were grinding mills, more general dealer shops and service offices then it has grown further to what it is today... K111.

... the ushering in of the growth points managed to do away with traditional structures, it has changed the area from reserves to a developed centre...a policy to decentralise services from major towns and cities to the rural areas... K112

... I think that the growth point was created to have a place where there is access to essential provisions and centralising services for everyone, including women in the district... K110

It was understood that the community members do have a social contract with the government in that the latter had made promises to improve the socio-economic status of women.

In an FGD at the centre, it was expressed that the district government stakeholders are fully aware that “women need land and financial assistance.” This understanding was also found among the village FGD members who also pinpointed the Women Affairs department as playing a pivotal role in advancing the welfare of women. KII10 also confirmed that as a growth point, they are anchoring on the various development policies more so directed by Vision 2030:

... there are various council initiatives towards development mainly headed by the health and the social department in terms of roads and dams, the engineering department and the finance department support these initiatives to support and avail budgeted funds as per the budgets to attain Vision 2030. We are also anchored on the various development policies. We disburse funds for example for clinics. Our funds come from the devolution grant, it is an intergovernmental fiscal transfer. The funds are administered through my office. For example, let us say we have 4 million dollars, we must decide that service it is going to be spent on which is ranked in terms of priority that is important for women too, that is health, social services, clinic or school repairs. So it is not just determined by the finance office but obviously in consultation with other departments. That is in time of budgeting and spending. So that is how in part, the growth point is enabling such functions...KII10

Growth points were particularly referenced as a cornerstone upon which women are especially benefitting from various government efforts on development. KII2 reiterated that because of the gender policy,

“women should be equal to men and the growth point gives them the opportunities to venture into business and other activities to put them at par with men.”

This categorically puts women in the limelight for socio-economic improvement. The process of change was also reported to be taking place to advance this. KII3 acknowledged that more still needs to be done and confirmed that whilst;

“like everywhere else [in the country] women are still confronted by various issues that render them poor, Tsholotsho district is no exception; women in Tsholotsho also suffer inequality, social economic inequality, but various departments and their partners are doing all they can to recognise women.”

It was learnt that in Tsholotsho there are perceived changes related to the reduction of segregation and gender empowerment because of the growth point policy:

... yes, as you can see Tsholotsho is growing, we have our township here, and we also have our businesses and there is no segregation as to who in terms of gender empowerment, it is inclusive... KII3

It was established that issues relating to women's empowerment are being advanced across all the government departments in Tsholotsho. KII5 reported that the growth point policy is relevant as shown:

... issues of women empowerment are relevant across all government policies and what comes to mind is that women are usually empowered in these centres through trading... KII5.

KII5 also recognised the efforts by the Ministry of Women Affairs and Community Development as being at the forefront in advancing the socio-economic status of women:

... it is very important but the question is, are they getting the opportunities in the growth centre, if so what are these opportunities also there is the small to medium scale enterprises direction that I think the Ministry of Women Affairs is trying to push that takes us into the whole big arena of the informal sector... KII5

STRATEGIES BY GOVERNMENT TO IMPROVE THE STATUS OF WOMEN

'Strategies' as a theme was contextualised as all references to the government's efforts to form departments and linkages for the promotion of rural socio-economic development especially with a link to improving the status of women. It was found that women in the communities are aware of the relational context in that they are to communicate and account for what is due to them. Both the village and centre FGD participants pointed to their relational context with the Ward structures in communicating their concerns. Through their Ward Councillors, key informants reported that they can advance various issues as part of their Public-Private Dialogue platform:

... I feel that we should engage our councillors to push for the issue of stands. They know that as women we have been promised pieces of land and financial assistance by the government... C2

The existence of Public-Private Dialogue platforms was found to be one of the strategies to enhance the rural development agenda. This would enable accountability and ownership of the development happening. Reference was also made to the devolution fund that in itself is an independent government strategy and effort to support the periphery. KII10 spoke of receiving these funds from the devolution grant as an intergovernmental fiscal transfer. This fund's use was said to be deliberated through a consultative process with the district's Public-Private Dialogue platforms. KII10 spoke of the process as being able to prioritise people's desires and rank them according to priority areas. It was also reported that a decision must be made based on what product to spend on, based on what the community needs most, be it health, social services, clinic or school repairs. KII10 further reiterated that the growth point is enabling such consultative functions. Vision 2030, as alluded to by KII10, is an overall government strategy found to be trickling down to the growth points. For the current study it was found that for Tsholotsho women, they also benefit from this as a strategy.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs and Community Development was also abstracted as the government's efforts to put women in the limelight for socio-economic development. Almost all the participants from both the FGDs and the KIIs concurred that the Ministry of Women Affairs and Community Development is playing a pivotal role. As said by KII3 and KII5, the same ministry is trying to push for the advancement of women in various areas of life including the social and economic empowerment of women. It is also said to be working on improving women's representation in the political arena. KII8 noted that they had done quite a lot as a ministry in terms of lobbying for women's representation:

... as you see right now in Parliament, we have got the 60 MPs who happen to be women... we call them proportional representatives who just happened to be in Parliament without even being voted in... so that one I think is our brainchild as a ministry alright. We also encourage women to participate in the development... we realise by the nature of their gender roles, they are sort of incapacitated in most circumstances to participate because we expect a woman

to be at home. If you are to do a simple survey, you would realise a single woman is more at liberty to participate in national development or politics at the expense of the one who is married, but the one who is married would fear that their husbands will leave them while at Parliament making debates... that's why sometimes they do not participate in politics. They leave it for men why? Because men are not preoccupied with household chores... **KII8**

Strategic partnership with developmental partners was also reported in that the government agents would be monitoring livelihood programmes and projects being implemented in the district. KII6 reported different livelihood programmes and projects being monitored through the DA's office:

*... we as an office, monitor several [projects]... projects that will be carried out by our ministries. Different line ministries that we have in the district have got their partners and those partners that are non-governmental organisations, bring in livelihoods projects like broilers keeping... **KII6***

It was revealed that there are some efforts to provide some technical financial support for business ventures. All these efforts are due to the permissiveness and responsiveness of the government structures to allow the developmental partners to penetrate the community and help with their needs. The government would, however, play an oversight and supervisory role:

*[Partners] ...giving out monies, they support in terms of financial support, giving women money to start businesses like that. They also give them advice. They also support them socially so that they have projects running. So as an office now we come in, in terms of monitoring, ...OK, yes, our role now is to supervise and monitor those projects, those livelihoods projects...yes, that's our role... **KII6***

Effort is also being made to enhance the quality of farming in the district. As a community largely based on agriculture, the government was also reported to be working on improving the quality of livelihoods in the district. This is being achieved through the promotion and training of the households on good farming practices especially consonant with ecological climatic conditions of the district, KII8 from the Ministry of

Agriculture, Lands and Rural Development reports:

... the role that our office plays is very critical, especially for a place like Tsholotsho where farming is poor and poverty levels are high. I can say that the push that we have done for the growth of small grains has improved food security at the household level. As for women, they are still most of the farmers and those that are growing small grains and are also engaged in nutrition gardens can sell the excess to GMB and use the money for things like school fees. However, we have those that have resisted and still want to grow maize that unfortunately does not do well in this area. So you find that organisations like the World Food Programme give handouts to such people... KII8

CATALYTIC VECTORS

All relationships, activities and linkages other than the direct government efforts that were found to be giving impetus to improving the socio-economic status of women were abstracted as catalytic vectors. Two subordinate themes emerged relating to the NGO efforts and the opportunities that rose with the migration of males to nearby countries.

NGOs AND OTHER NON-STATE EFFORTS

The presence and or attraction of NGO activities in the district was variously linked to the tremendous advancement of women's social and economic status. The proliferation of livelihoods, food assistance, health and sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) programmes have equipped women with knowledge and capacities to improve their statuses. During an FGD discussion in the village, V1 revealed that:

... we now have access to a lot of facilities such as health, education, water and livelihoods by NGOs. Previously there were no food handouts that we see today being given by the government and some NGOs. Knowledge and information in the communities came from NGOs and government departments. We have learnt a lot from the NGOs operating in the district, especially on agriculture... V1.

The role of the NGOs is mostly a helping hand that in part facilitates the implementation of government policies and strategies. KII3 revealed that it is usually the government's effort to find investors and partners who can

assist jointly in achieving their goals. NGOs and other non-state actors such as diasporans, locally known as *Injivas*, were cited to be filling this gap and easing the implementation of some of the policy obligations:

... well we look for investors, and partner with non-state actors that include our very own diasporans (Injiva). You will argue that there is a big number of NGOs that are active here in the district implementing projects that support women's livelihoods such as nutrition gardens, savings clubs, and health services and so on. So they complement the activities of the council. We also have Injivas who are highly contributing to the economy of Tsholotsho. They have built houses, shops and have contributed to the infrastructural development of the district...

KI13.

It was also observed that the presence of the Tsholotsho growth point has attracted non-state actors to work in the district in pursuit of addressing poverty through capacitation with different socio-economic interventions. All key informants concurred that the activities of NGOs have been fundamental in supporting government efforts. At the district level, it was established that a Memorandum of Understanding has been entered into between the RDC and prospective NGOs. The RDC has the mandate to vet, classify and approve them after due diligence is done. To confirm this, key the informant (KI13) noted the following:

...the presence of my office right here at the centre ensures that when NGOs seek to partner with us, we look at gaps and urgent issues that need addressing ...this is an advantage because being on the ground we usually know the issuesKI13.

When asked if non-state actors would not participate if the RDC was not at the growth points, he further explained that:

*... what I am saying is that there is the elimination of red tape and vetting is efficient
.....we are also able to monitor their activities....I am sure you know that some NGOs can come up with an agenda that is not desirable... KI13.*

The views of KI13 show that his office is the custodian of government partners. They approve their applications and monitor their work as well.

Other key informants also expressed the same sentiments as shown below:

*...in terms of livelihood projects and programmes, as an office, we monitor these projects by NGOs... different line ministries have got their partners (NGOs)... **K116.***

*... we have NGOs and other different organisations that offer social and financial assistance **K117.***

*...another thing is thatthere are various NGOs that are important for the people of Tsholotsho... **K110.***

*... NGO work has been aided because we have this growth point... **K112.***

*... NGOs are our partners...they have signed MOUs with the RDC, as for me as Councillorwe determine the pace of their work and direct them to areas needing help more... **K112.***

From the above perceptions, there is a pattern that seems to be in place for NGO work. The key informants agree that NGOs are critical partners for the socio-economic development that is happening in the district.

K113's view points on the fact that they are responsible for NGO work and the MoUs. This was shared by key informant K112 that it is them who determine the pace of the work. It also shows that there is reliance on such assistance proffered by non-state actors. Furthermore, NGO work/projects seem to form a big part of the development discourse as indicated by K116, that almost every government department at the growth point has an NGO as a partner. K114 also expressed the same view:

*...we have partnered with NGOs in the protection of the environment and developing good farming methods...most of the projects that we have implemented are NGO funded... **K114.***

*....right now I am working on a document for the establishment of safe shelters for gender-based violence survivors...we are partnering with Bantwana Zimbabwe... it is an NGO operating in the district...NGOs are major financiers for most of our projects... **K118.***

Using the above information for key informants it emerged that the centrality of the growth point and the presence of key government departments is an attraction for NGOs. It also serves as an advantage to the government departments that have cited poor funding to facilitate

development in the area. Against this backdrop, it can be argued that contrary to the thinking that the government is fully initiating and funding projects for livelihoods and development, the opposite can be said since data point to NGOs being at the forefront. There are varying perceptions on NGOs in the district but the majority strongly believe that NGOs are critical for rural development and therefore women's empowerment.

THE INJIVAS/OMALAYITSHA/DIASPORANS ACTIVITIES

It was established from most key informants that *Injivas*/diasporans are a force to reckon with owing to their socio-economic contributions in the district. The views show that the diasporans commonly referred to as *Injiva* and *Omalayitsha* referring to the transporters of goods from neighbouring South Africa and Botswana have contributed immensely at both household and district levels. They are regarded as the pallbearers of economic activities at the growth point and beyond. Some of the responses from the key informants on the role played by *Injiva* were recorded as follows:

... as you might be aware... Tsholotsho is close to Botswana and South Africa where most of our people work... they have done a lot in terms of developing their rural homes... even rural businesses... KII10.

This was about what the *Injivas* have achieved in terms of developing the areas in the district:

... most men are in South Africa and they make an effort to assist their families back home... KII11.

*... we have our *Injiva* that have invested a lot in the district and have created employment for the locals including women... KII13.*

*... we are witnessing several entrepreneurial activities by *Injiva*... they are building shops and houses here at the centre that is contributing to the growth of the growth point... KII14.*

*... most of the goods sold here in the district are from South Africa... we have regular supplies from *Omalayitsha*, that is why there is greater use of the Rand... KII17.*

On being asked why *Omalayitsha* and not local supplies, it was noted that it was more convenient because *Omalayitsha* delivers to the growth point that is central and accessible to everyone. The above quotations indicate

that the presence of the growth point has also enabled the flow of goods and money (remittances) in the South Africa-Zimbabwe channel. Goods are delivered right at the doorstep. It was evident since most of the general dealer shops mostly stock South African goods. There is an elimination of direct travel and transport charges to Bulawayo and Plumtree. What it shows is that *Injivas* and *Omalayitsha* have generally contributed to the economic activities of the growth point and women are the main participants in the economic activities at the centre. On a social note, KII3 and KII10 are specific on the indications that the diasporans have managed to carry out work such as bridge, school and clinic refurbishment at the district level. The contributions by the *Injivas* have contributed to the improved socio-economic status of women through service provision and general development of the growth point.

MALE EXODUS – OUTWARD MIGRATION

The rife outward migration into nearby South Africa and Botswana was found to be common for Tsholotsho district and this has mostly attracted males more than their female counterparts. This migratory behaviour is the one that has largely fed into the direct contributions made by the *Injivas* and *Omalayitsha* economic transformations. The other result of this migratory behaviour is the separation of family members, often having the male household heads moving away from the daily activities and management of the household. Consequently, this was found to present an opportunity for women to be heads of households and be at the forefront of participation in the representation of their families. This has seen role reversals and active participation of women uniquely in the context of migration.

It was found that the gap left by the male migration birthed Female-Headed Households (FHH) with some vulnerabilities catalytic to the exploration of various survival modalities leading to more independence, entrepreneurship and consequently improved socio-economic statuses.

C10 from the FGD at the Centre revealed that the migration of her husband was a blessing in disguise for her because it became a wake-up call for her to introspect and awaken her to her potentials:

...yes it has, my life has changed in terms of not having to depend on anyone for financial support. I moved to the growth point from the village when the father of my children left for Botswana and never came back home. I came to the growth point looking for work and ended up having my own small business. Yes, the business has not grown and I am facing a lot of challenges but I manage to fend for my children. The growth point has not grown to give us the services that would also make us grow.... C10.

The study revealed that the district population is now more dominated by women and most of them in the district are de facto heads of households because their men in Tsholotsho have migrated to nearby countries:

... you see most women in our district are de facto heads of households because most men in Tsholotsho are in South Africa. They are burdened with having to look after the family by themselves and still undertake chores and other economic activities... K11.

... most of the women are now household heads. All the men are out of the country... K17.

Uniquely for Tsholotsho, both at the centre and the hinterland, most businesses were reported to be run by women mainly due to the role reversal birthed by the male migration:

... Tsholotsho businesses are mostly run by women, most men are in the diaspora. Their participation is very high. Women, here at the centre and in the villages too own and run their businesses and I would like to say they are successful... K12.

RESULTANT VECTORS (SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGES)

Resultant vectors were abstracted as the various reported and observed changes concerning the socio-economic statuses of women. As shown in the resultant vector cluster analysis below, the overarching resultant vector was microcosmic for macrocosm; contextualised as small and slow changes incrementally and over time, yielding bigger socio-economic positive changes for women. The decentralisation of services to the Centre

was found to incentivise the emergent women entrepreneurship, relatedly an impetus to increased women participation more so due to diversity and proliferation of women empowerment projects.

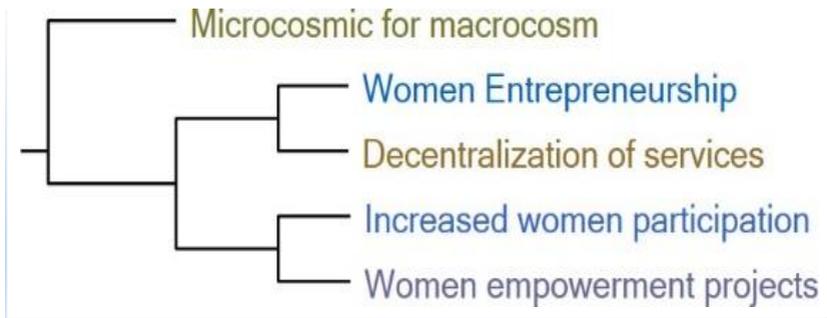


Figure 4.2 Resultant Vectors (Researcher)

MICROCOSMIC FOR MACROCOSM (SMALL AND SLOW CHANGES BY THE GROWTH POINT POLICY)

The growth point was said to be set for potential changes with necessary structures in place to facilitate the changes. Already, changes have begun to be observed and are expected to improve and increase over time and with experience. All participants in the FGD at the Centre concurred that the growth point has the government offices that have been tasked to lead the development, but at the moment the development is perceived as minute and slow. All the women in the FGDs were optimistic and believed that the growth point had the potential to address issues that constrain women. C7 expressed that through the growth point the government can be able to promote businesses so that all women can succeed by improving from the existing structures:

...things like housing, water and sanitation that are already here at the growth point can be improved so that we don't spend much time carrying out these duties but we need to spend more time at our workplaces.... C7.

Even the participants from the village acknowledged the minute changes from which future changes are going to be built. All participants noted positive changes due to the growth point and are still hopeful that more change is possible:

...I strongly believe that the growth point can change our lives because they already changed them in a way, however, things have been left as they are for so many years. What is already on the ground needs to be improved so that our lives and livelihoods can also change.... V1.

...I can say yes [presence of the growth point has changed our lives and livelihoods], it has but not fully, we are still poor but some things have improved and we are knowledgeable about a lot of things....V2.

Acknowledgement of the acquisition of knowledge and some positive changes related to lives and livelihoods denote a process incrementally leading to macro changes. KII1 reported that the growth point has evolved over the years, having started from a very small centre that started as a service centre with a few shops and as it grew there were grinding mills, more general dealer shops, service offices, hospitals and the police camp. From there on it has grown tremendously to be what it is today. KII2 also confirmed the humble beginnings of the growth point, having started as a white-owned dairy farm belonging to Potgieter, to which the coming in of the growth point strategy has managed to do away with traditional structures and changed from reserves into the nucleus of urban development.

From KII1 and KII2's submissions, it is apparent that the development is more of a process in that minute advancements build upon each other to have a macrocosmic effect. KII1 felt that as it stands now, the growth point is now fully-fledged, and it is still growing. KII10 also emphasised that several changes have taken place in the district as evidenced by the erection of several shops that are at the centre indicating the changes that have taken place over the years. KII10 agreed that there are challenges that have slowed down the growth of the district but still think that a lot has been achieved so far. The trickling down into the rural periphery was also found to follow the same microcosmic effect, with the periphery still

lagging behind but surely showing some minute and slow changes. Both women at the centre and those from the villages/hinterlands were said to be all-changing with the latter lagging due to the slow proliferation of the enabling facilities:

...I would like to say that women in urban areas have more advantages over rural women because development lags in the rural areas compared to the urban and what the city offers in terms of socio-economic development is not offered here in the rural areas, but this is not to say that rural women are not able to do what is being done in urban settings but they have limitations in terms of facility availability. But, women here, are drawn behind by several factors.... K110.

It was clarified that because of the policy by the government, Tsholotsho's growth point is evidence of implementation of the decongestion of the urban centres and formation of urban centres within a rural set up and incrementally the goal is being achieved:

...the policy is about uplifting rural areas so that they can resemble small towns, and I am glad to say the centre here resembles a small town, we have modern houses, shops, services departments, schools and hospitals that one can find in an urban area. So, in earnest, although the area has not developed to where we want it to be, there have been some milestones that have been achieved.... K113.

... then in terms of infrastructure, I think one way or the other is coming up well because in our case we now have an urban area, but can you see if you go to the location or locations, people are expanding, alright! They are building houses. The same people were in the rural areas. They now own houses here. They also own businesses here...K117.

DECENTRALISATION OF SERVICES

The most central benefit reported by all the participants was the decentralisation of services, making these more accessible to the rural community. FGD participants at the Centre expressed that the growth point has enabled them to have services nearer to them. C8 and most other participants believed that the growth point is a centre where they can access most services. They felt that the growth point has almost everything that they need, "we do not need to go all the way to Bulawayo for social services and shopping" (C8). Most services were said to be available at the centre. The same applies to employment opportunities, people hardly go to other districts in search of employment:

...people from all over the district come to the centre to access different services... C8.

Access to the market also serves as a key decentralised service, especially for farmers from rural areas. The Monday Market and the general growth point populace offered a viable market for the smallholder farmers and the vendors in the horticulture and other agricultural value chains. The Monday Market was said to comprise farmers from around the district who come to the centre every Monday to sell their produce. It was reported that if there was no growth point, most of the participants would be in the village (where there is a lack of access to markets). The centre offers better opportunities for trade since a lot of people from all over the district come for their supplies at the centre. Business is conducted faster than back in the villages and there are a lot of people to sell to. C5 expressed that the kitchen business that she runs has been made possible by the number of people who come to eat at her place.

Additionally, the presence of the GMB was reported to have made the marketing of farm produce easy and accessible. C1 expressed that every woman farmer was very happy when the GMB depot came to Tsholotsho but expressed the poor service offered by the GMB as follows:

... we thought we would now make money because before then we would go as far as Bulawayo to sell our produce, it was worse because of transport costs and one had to find a place to stay while going around suburbs such as Luveve and Gwalabanda selling door to door. But unfortunately, the GMB has worsened our situation because of poor pay-outs. I hope that the government can improve the GMB service so that farmers can benefit... C1.

... we have a GMB at the growth point that makes marketing our goods a lot easier. GMB and Agritex assist us during the farming season with ploughing and we are given free seed and fertilisers. Before we used to just use draught power and we used recycled grain for the new planting season... V3.

Apart from the market access, the farming communities now have access to technical expertise on good farming practices. FGD participants at the village expressed gratitude for the accessibility of technical expertise in agriculture through the decentralisation of Agritex (ARDAS) offices and veterinary services. Like V3, V4 expressed that Agritex (ARDAS) has

introduced improved farming methods; strenuous but more putative for their livelihoods:

... well our socio-economic status has changed since we have had the growth point, we have improved farming methods that are spearheaded by Agritex. These methods are strenuous but when we receive good rains we are assured of a good harvest that we can sell the excess. After selling we can buy food, pay school fees and other provisions... V4.

Overall, government departments were reported to be offering various services that the locals used to travel to Bulawayo and Plumtree for. KI11 reported cases where children did not have birth certificates because the parents would not have bus fares to go to Bulawayo but all this has been made easy by the presence of the growth point. KI10 reiterated that the growth point is important in that it seeks to improve the economic status of the people in the district through a lot of inroads that have been made since the beginning mainly improving the lives and livelihoods of the locals:

... without this growth point, we would probably not even have a central place like this one. We would still be going all the way to Bulawayo to access services and conduct business. You will notice that most people, especially women have businesses that have created livelihoods as business owners. The centre itself provides a lot of opportunities for the rural people... it is a central point to conduct business and access services such as birth and death registration. Another thing is that there are various NGOs and other departments that are important for the people of Tsholotsho... as I mentioned earlier, the growth point is a centre for economic activity that has brought several changes. I am looking at the employment opportunities of women in the business centre where we have a lot of women employed in various places. If you walk around and into the shops, you find that more women are employed than men and in terms of vending in the district you find that more women vendors are vending for themselves, for example, the Monday Market, is women trading and participating. So having a growth point as a centre for economic activities has enabled women to have income for their households... KI10.

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITIES

It was found that most of the women at the centre are entrepreneurs, as seen in the demographics, and were engaged in sundry activities. C1 reported that they sometimes get help in terms of businesses, financial

advice and services while C8 confirmed that most of them are self-employed:

... we buy and sell and also run kitchens where we cook food and we have people who come to buy, we sell dresses and foodstuff as vendors going around or at the flea markets. So, in these businesses, we also employ others (assistants) to help with the chores and that is how employment is created here.... C8.

Entrepreneurship was reported to be supporting the basic needs of their respective families. C3 and C10 spoke of how they are now in a position to support their families despite the rising costs of living:

... well, I am in a position to work and support my family. Things are expensive here at the growth point but since I am working, I can afford several things even though it is hard to make ends meet. If there was no growth point, I would probably be back in the village having no income.... C3.

... yes, I agree with C3, being at the growth point, some opportunities have been made possible. Before I came to the growth point life was extremely difficult because back in the village there are no opportunities for employment or business. Here I can make some money. I know it is difficult, but I am better off suffering here than in the village... C10.

The centre was commended for variety and potential for much more growth. C1 reported that she had seen some changes in her life and the way she earns money because of the growth point:

... I have benefited a lot.... I can sell my products at the centre, and I have customers. With the money I get from the sales, I buy food and clothing for my children. If you are a hard worker, you will never go hungry because there is a lot to do here at the centre but, there is a lack of capacity, there is never a time that I can say I have enough because the business conditions are not favourable. I wish that the roads could be repaired so that transport will be affordable to enable travel for cheaper supplies... C1.

The urban (Centre) women concurred that as women, they have benefitted in that the growth point has managed to create platforms whereby women can work and be able to fend for their families.

C8 prides herself in how she has ready markets and has managed to build a house back in the village through the work she does. Even though the work was said to be mostly not sustainable, it felt better to be doing something than doing nothing.

Entrepreneurial engagements in the rural areas were, however, found to be minimal as also seen above that all the women from the village were all communal farmers. The opinions from the village FGD participants can be summarised by C7's submission that more engagement is required to source links at the centre. She reasoned that local business/entrepreneurship is preferred as compared to external markets where transport and food requirements are costly.

Overall, it was found that most women did benefit from entrepreneurial opportunities at the growth point. KII1 used an exaggerated quantifier, “everyone”, to emphasise the extent of the accrued benefits:

... everyone has benefitted from the growth point in several ways. We have women operating their businesses and making a life for themselves... Yes, most women are in a better position to fend for their families.... KII1.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PROJECTS

Through the government and partner support, several projects were reported in terms of supporting women to be empowered and fend for themselves. FGD at the village revealed that having a growth point has reduced poverty; V2 felt that only those who are lazy have children going around the village begging for food. V10 reported that people in the villages through the government and some NGOs have livelihoods that have been made possible by the presence of the growth point, this never used to happen before they had a growth point. V10 further reported that they have been taught not to depend on hand-outs but to work hard with the resources they have and must be self-sustainable. V1 gave an example of nutrition gardens that they got and are sources of income for them and could afford to use the proceeds to help pay school fees and buy food.

Reports were made by participants of efforts to educate women on various aspects of their lives and appreciate the worth of women in society. V8 and V6 applauded the Ministry of Women Affairs for championing the women empowerment projects in the district:

... there is an office at the growth centre that teaches us as women to know our worth in society. This office helps women with various challenges that we have in our lives. They also encourage us to vote and attend Ward meetings. This is something that we did not experience before... V8.

... I agree with what V8 is saying. The Women's Affairs department has taught us a lot of things that include reporting gender-based violence. ... V6.

From KII10 and many other KIIs, it was established that there are various NGOs and other departments that are important for the people of Tsholotsho in terms of empowerment. KII7 prides herself in how their organisation, MANA has transformed the lives and livelihoods of women through several MANA projects. V9 also referenced and was grateful for MANA's work saying that MANA that is an NGO that has given them nutrition gardens mostly enough for consumption. However, 68 families are members of the garden project and each has two beds, usually with no excess to sell.

Projects being run by NGOs were reported by almost all the key informants, more importantly, women being most of the beneficiaries. KII9 spoke of several projects that they are running with their developmental partners such as breeding of Boer Bucks. Also, there was a note of nutrition gardens and seed bank projects that promote the production of small grains, since the area is very dry and receives very little rain. Through the partners, boreholes have been drilled, training offered and village savings clubs created. KII9 noted that women are the majority in all these projects, even the Boer Bucks project was reported to have more females than males. KII9 reiterated that this is so because there are more women than men in the district because of the *Injiva* phenomenon discussed above as a catalytic vector.

EMA was also singled out as advancing eco-friendly projects in the community, promoting climate-friendly projects among the community members to which women were reported to be most active in the activities:

... I will talk about EMA's activities that include training and recycling. We have a very successful project of individuals who collect used cans that are later melted to make aluminium pots. This project has seen several women being able to create a livelihood as a result. Unfortunately, the pots are produced in Bulawayo because there is no factory in Tsholotsho. They make up to 400 rand per week... Some of the income-generating projects led by EMA include nutrition gardens, capacity building, training and awareness campaigns... It is women who are most active in the activities and I would like to say knowledge has been imparted as people are enlightened to issues of the environment... You know that Tsholotsho is prone to floods, so we work with various partners and other government departments to raise awareness campaigns and educate people through traditional leaders.... KII4.

INCREASED WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

Being the heads of households, women were found to be more involved in the developmental activities in the district, uniquely so for the district due to the migration of men into the nearby countries. As presented above, most women reported being independent and participating more in economic activities. KII9 revealed that currently in Tsholotsho, it is notable that women's participation is very high in most development interventions that are being spearheaded by government departments and their partners. From KII4's work at EMA, it was also confirmed that women's involvement resounds and dominant than that of men. For the work that KII9 has been doing on the growth of small grains for improved food security at the household level, women were found to be still most the farmers. KII9 felt that women are critical for the food production in the district and play pivotal roles in feeding for their families:

... to an extent women have been given the chance to work and fend for their families. Whenever there is a good harvest women from the villages come to the centre to sell their produce where there is a ready market. I can imagine without a central place like this where would you sell to? For example, we have one woman in Ward 10 who is into cattle production, she has managed to come up

with ways of producing her feed that she also sells. Some women have also gone into Boer buck production and have since accumulated a sizeable number... .KII9.

As observed from what was said by all participants (FGDs and key informants), the presence of the growth point has had a transformative effect on the lives and livelihoods of women. Issues such as decentralisation of services, projects and their increased participation, therefore, are the outcome attributed to the growth point policy. Women from the FGDs, at both the centre and the villages, concurred that several developmental interventions have been key in promoting the socio-economic empowerment of women. In the same vein, key informants also acknowledge that the decentralisation of services has been instrumental in the changes that have occurred in the district since the promulgation of the growth point policy. An increase in women's participation in projects initiated by the government and its partners is the cornerstone of the improved livelihoods that women depend on.

ESTABLISHING RURAL WOMEN'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OUTCOMES IN THE GROWTH POINT THRUST

The participants' evaluation of the extent of women's empowerment due to the growth point policy was subsumed as thematically relating to the applicability of the growth point policy in promoting women's empowerment outcomes at Tsholotsho Growth Point. Evaluations from all the participants, both FGDs and KIIs were categorised by source reflecting key areas of improvement.

Six key areas were coded as follows;

- Improving service delivery
- Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs),
- Developmental Aid
- Increased agency from women,
- Skills development
- Employment creation.

Among these key areas, improving service delivery followed by SMEs and developmental aid were the most dominant findings that came from among the KIIs. Equally on the other hand improving service delivery was the most dominant among the FGD participants also followed by SMEs but then with relatively more allusions to skills development as protruding findings from among the women who participated in the FGDs.

IMPROVING SERVICE DELIVERY

Evaluations relating to proximity and availability of services were contextualised as a conduit to women's empowerment due to the growth point policy. The finding is equally the most dominant for both the KIIs and FGDs. The centre was said to have offered a near and reliable market for both rural farmers and enterprising women from the central growth point. KII1 emphasised that the growth point is instrumental in rallying customers and enterprising women at the centre:

... definitely, it has, if there was no growth point here, where would women be conducting their businesses or working. The growth point has been an enabler in promoting the socio-economic status of women... As a meeting place, it means that markets for different goods are readily available. Whatever one is selling, they don't need to travel far... KII1.

Women at the centre confirmed that the growth point has enabled them to have services near to them, they are now getting help nearer. The Monday Market and the generally growing urban population offer a business-enabling environment for women.

Key informants and others noted the improvement in service delivery attributed to the centrality and proximity to health services. Despite the noted challenge with the cost, the mere nearness was applauded as a positive linkage to the growth point policy, C1 and C5 debated:

... we have access to the hospital where we can be treated. However, the difficulties are that you must pay before being attended to.... R180/ \$12. The 12 dollars is beyond the means of many, (laughing) we are now resorting to traditional medicines just like in the old days... "who can afford the hospital fees and medication"? C1.

... but we cannot say having a hospital is bad, it is good and those who can afford it receive medical treatment. So, I can say that having a growth point has positively changed our lives. Talking of women's health, we have NGOs who offer training and advice and screening on women's health. But what they do is screen and refer you to the hospital, so it is up to you to seek further medical treatment depending on if you have the money or not... C5.

KII1 also concurred with C5 that they do have NGOs that promote women's health and the hospital and clinics around the district that women benefit from. KII2 further illuminated that they do have a big hospital with a capacity of 300 beds for women, men and children's wards with a lot of departments, doctors and nurses and a school of nursing:

... we have a big hospital that services the whole district... the hospital is quite big and has a capacity of 300 beds for women, men and children's wards. It has a lot of departments, doctors, nurses, and a school of nursing. [the hospital offers full board] Yes, it does, it offers consultation, X-rays and admissions. It is fully equipped, and only more complicated cases are referred to Mpilo Hospital in Bulawayo, there are 3 resident doctors currently... KII2.

As earlier reiterated, the most central benefit reported by all the participants was the decentralisation of services, making these more accessible to the rural community. The hospital and the registration offices are now localised. People from all over the district come to the centre to access different services. Access to the market also serves as a key decentralised service, especially for the farmers from the villages. For instance, the presence of the GMB was reported to have made the marketing of farm produce easy and accessible. Overall, government departments were reported to be offering various services that the locals used to travel to Bulawayo and Plumtree for.

ESTABLISHMENT OF SMALL TO MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMEs)

The establishment and growth of women-led businesses, characteristically SMEs, was subsumed as empowerment due to the growth point policy. This finding is equally the second most dominant for both the KIIs and FGDs,

especially through buying and selling. SMEs, it was found that women are thriving at the centre tending for their families. As reiterated above, most women are self-employed in their SME capacity and also employ others in these enterprises. All the women in the FGD at the Centre concurred that most of the employment opportunities are within the small businesses operating at the centre. C8 echoed a description that all the participants agreed with:

...yes, most of us (women) are self-employed, we buy and sell, we also run kitchens where we cook food and we have people who come to buy, we sell dresses and foodstuffs as vendors going around or at the flea markets. So, in these businesses, we also employ others (assistants) to help with the chores and that is how employment is created here....C8.

With regards to the extent of success of these businesses, the profit margins were said to be low. For example, C5 has her kitchen (a small eating place) and she serves meals three times a day. Her income hardly covers the expenses. Most of the money goes towards procuring supplies, rent for the premises and wages for the assistants' help. However, the returns were said to be sufficient for them to make a living, paying for household expenses like school fees, food and rent. Living in the urban setup had driven several women to tap into their capacities and this has seen a number of them, establishing more than one enterprise, multi-tasking and task shifting among these endeavours. In C8's case, she runs a kitchen, farming and manufactures detergents:

...it is an advantage for me to have three business ventures, when the kitchen is not making any profits, instead of having to borrow, I take money from the detergents to support the kitchen. I also do the same for farming activities. I have employed people to help me in allthree projects...C8.

Having small businesses were said to be a response to the capacity and market thresholds of the growth point. It was noted that none of the women mentioned big amounts or business intentions reportedly so because the reality at the growth point has not grown sufficiently enough to sustain big initiatives:

...we are dealing with real situations, so why waste time wishing for something that will never happen, what we want is to be able to fend for our families only. So the little that we can get, we appreciate that a lot... C2.
...we all depend on our small businesses for survival, but these businesses are small, not growing hence we are not able to make good profits. The conditions that we operate in make it difficult for businesses to expand. ...C8.

Most of the businesses are just SMEs and there are no big industries to stir the development, most of the activities and employment creation are within the SMEs or other service points:

... there are no big industries, only a few small industries. So when people come to the centre it is us who give them employment as our assistants or in the big shops where they earn up to R300 depending on the size and nature of the job. Most of the people here are not educated, so they just take whatever jobs available that is why they end up having their businesses because the wages are too low. But with no capital, it is these businesses that we end up doing, buying and selling and cooking in the kitchens...C8.

Currently, the Centre was described as operating with light industries, KII2 pointed to the existence of small light industries comprising two abattoirs, motor mechanic workshops, welding and general dealer shops. As for women's endeavours, KII7 confirmed that there is no diversity; everyone is selling the same things. It was viewed that selling the same products also accounted for the low incomes that most women experienced and hence the lack of growth within the business ventures. It is therefore evident that such factors are viewed as piecemeal economic empowerment.

REALISATION OF DEVELOPMENT AID

The ability to attract, relate and monitor various developmental partners, mostly NGOs, was subsumed as empowerment due to the growth point policy. The establishment of the district offices and urban built-up area has facilitated the centralisation of the NGO efforts and efficiencies in communication and response to community needs. NGO efforts were mostly noted in enhancing livelihoods, health promotions and skills/knowledge development. FGD participants in the village were

delighted in having access to a lot of facilities such as health, education, water and livelihoods through NGOs. It was revealed that knowledge and information in the communities came from NGOs and government departments:

... we now have access to a lot of facilities such as health, education, water and livelihoods by NGOs. Previously there were no food handouts that we see today being carried out by the government and some NGOs. Knowledge and information in the communities came from NGOs and government departments. We have learnt a lot from the NGOs operating in the district, especially on agriculture... V1.

NGOs have done so much work in the community to the extent that their work was being perceived as having overshadowed the efforts of the government that enabled them in the first place:

...the government has forgotten us, if it was not for the NGOs we would not be having some of the things and knowledge we have. We also want to have better lives and livelihoods that are sustainable like irrigation.... V10.

As said above, the presence and or attraction of NGO activities in the district were variously linked to the tremendous advancement of women's social and economic status. The proliferation of livelihoods, food assistance, health and SRHR (sexual reproductive health and rights) programmes have equipped women with knowledge and capacities to improve their statuses. With the high prevalence of HIV&AIDS in the district, NGOs have tried to spearhead campaigns in this regard. The role of the NGOs is, therefore, mostly a helping hand that in part facilitates the implementation of government policies and strategies. It was also observed that the presence of the Tsholotsho Growth Point has attracted non-state actors to work in the district in pursuit of addressing poverty through capacitation with different socio-economic interventions.

Increased inclusive participation and involvement of women in various developmental forums and leadership in business initiatives were contextualised as empowerment due to the growth point policy.

Developmental projects have mostly attracted women, more so because they are now playing critical roles in families following the massive movement of males into nearby countries. Being the head of households, women were found to be more involved in the developmental activities in the district and they reported being independent and participating more in the economic activities.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Reference to various pieces of training and evidence of application and hybridisation of the applied skills was contextualised as empowerment due to the growth point policy. The skills acquired have fed into the growing entrepreneurship reportedly supporting the basic needs of their respective families. The centre was commended for variety and potential for much more growth. Urban women have benefitted from platforms whereby women can work and be able to fend for their families. The government and partner support created several projects which were aimed at supporting women to be empowered and fend for themselves. Reports were made on efforts to educate women on various aspects of their lives and appreciate their worth in society. Reference was made by KII2 to the presence of a school of nursing attracting qualifying applicants. However, most training was said to be done by the NGOs:

...most of the training for skills development is conducted by NGOs especially when they are introducing a new project. So most training is done in the villages because that is where most NGO work happens. With us here at the centre, we get training for women's health. Most of us do not have tertiary education and we have learnt to train ourselves using skills learnt from others... C8.

In the same vein, the Ministry of Women's Affairs was also noted as being at the forefront in stirring the skills development among women and the general welfare of women. Agricultural extension workers were also said to be working well in enhancing their farming skills. V9 reported the existence of veterinary services extension workers who have enhanced their skills through village visits, teaching them about the care of livestock.

As a result, they are not losing livestock as much as they used to because their knowledge had been enhanced. V5 also prides herself in having a permanent Agritex (ARDAS) officer who stays in the villages and often carries out training and awareness campaigns. When there is an outbreak of disease the officer informs and guides them accordingly.

Availability of work opportunities for the self and others was contextualised as empowerment due to the growth point policy. As shown above, women are mostly employing themselves as well as others in their business ventures. C8 gave the best description of the work situations at the Centre; buying and selling. C10 reiterated that those with businesses employ others and these small-scale businesses are the basis of most employment opportunities. K12 also confirmed that the light industry and the SMEs are attracting employees from all over the district.

FACTORS CONSTRAINING THE GROWTH POINT POLICY AND THE IMPACT ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT OUTCOMES

An inquiry was made on the perceptions of the factors constraining the growth point and the effects on the lives and livelihoods of women. The proffered factors formed a trichotomous and intractable interlinkage identified as;

- Systemic Factors
- Social Factors
- Natural Factors

Submissions from both FGDs and K12s were categorised by source reflecting the dominating key factors. Systemic factors related to government functions and policy implementation. Social factors related to societal reactions and contributions to the development or lack of it. Natural factors were related to naturally occurring events/conditions or globally acknowledged phenomena.

Systemic factors were contextualised as constraints emanating from the imperfections associated with government implementation of policies and activities or situations associated with government functions. As shown in the cluster analysis below, the factors ranged from resource exploitation, infrastructural development, public-private dialogue, funding, macro-economic conditions, industrialisation and politicisation of development.



Figure 4.3 - Systemic Factors (Researcher)

The district and the province at large is endowed with natural and man-made resources. These are underutilised and as a result, slow potential development for women and communities. KII3 noted that the level of poverty for women in the district is partly due to a lack of initiatives for resource exploitation:

... well what I can say is that women can look after their families in one way or the other.... but yes, I agree that most are poor. This goes back to the district itself as having not much in terms of resource exploitation. You will also realise that we have no farms here because of the geographical location, the soils themselves are not good, we lie in regions 4 and 5 with Kalahari sands that are not good for farming. Also, there is the issue of the border with Hwange National Park.... KII3.

There is not much in advancing the agricultural value chains in the district. The council is failing to attract funding and investment to the district. K110 revealed that as a council, they mainly lobby for development interventions such as infrastructural development and are always on the lookout for potential investors because they lack investment in the district. They have a lot of resources that remain unexploited because of a lack of investment.

As shown in the cluster analysis above, the lack of resource exploitation is related to the poor state of the infrastructure. Women from the FGD at the centre decried that it is very difficult to conduct business as they work in open spaces, when it rains, they lose out on business. C2 explained that market structures are not fully developed and they must improvise for them to work:

... the flea markets are there by name, it is just open space with no structures, Council has failed to build flea markets. We use plastics and anything we can get to make it more habitable so that we continue to work. It is also difficult because customers shun such places, they prefer buying from the shops.... C2.

Women in the village also decried the status of the infrastructure, especially relating to water and transport. Women decried that most of their time is spent looking for water, leaving less time for them to focus on their core businesses. The boreholes were reported to be far and apart:

...we have different activities such as borehole pumping (because we do not have running water). The boreholes are located far from the homes. This makes it very labour-intensive because one can have many trips to the borehole... Pumping water from the borehole is very exhausting because I need water for household use and livestock. I spend a lot of time doing this task and yet other tasks still need to be done... V6.

The road and communication infrastructure was noted as lacking, especially in the rural part. V6 was hopeful for the improvement of the network because only a few places have good networks. It was also reported that the District Development Fund (DDF) takes time without attending to roads, during the rainy season, 'omalayitsha' were reported

to shun the rural routes as a result further complicating the flow of the remittances with beneficiaries having to go up to Tsholotsho (centre) to collect their parcels.

The health facilities were also said to be largely based at the centre with the rural clinics not adequately equipped. V3 desired more fully equipped clinics so that they do not spend money on transport to the centre for medicines and consultation. As it is, they must walk long distances to the nearest clinic where they know that they will not get any medication.

KII1 acknowledged that the growth point is growing but the facilities are not improving. There is a poor sewer system and no public toilets, people relieve themselves in open spaces. This is a problem and they live in fear of disease outbreaks. The road linking the centre to Bulawayo is very poor, and KII1 said this had made transport expensive. Delivery of the farm produce to the centre has not been spared, women who get the farm produce supplies from the farmers around the district, due to poor roads affect these businesses. KII10 concurred one of the main reasons is poor infrastructural development due to limited resources. There are issues of poor roads within the district and those linking with big towns. The district has the District Development Forum to lobby for the state to attend to roads. Many times, they have been promised that the Bulawayo to Tsholotsho road will be attended to, however, it has been years and this has not happened:

...there have been some sentiments where people and companies have said they are not able to come to the district because of the road. So, the state of the road has had adverse effects on investment in the district. If they sort out this road (Tsholotsho-Bulawayo), we will have much more investment because as you are aware Tsholotsho is close to Botswana and South Africa where most of our residents work in those countries. They have done a lot in terms of developing their rural homes, even rural businesses. But their efforts have not been complemented by the development of infrastructure... KII10.

All the key informants acknowledged that the poor road network has affected the growth of Tsholotsho, deterring investments in the district. A lot of people who want to come and give help in Tsholotsho are discouraged. KII2 reiterated that women, for their social and economic development, would desire roads, well-equipped health facilities, business and residential stands, jobs, loans and industries, they want to own and run their businesses and they also want to be involved in sustainable farming. They also desire to have irrigation schemes, inputs and boreholes to promote agricultural activities (off-farm) because most women rely on farming for their livelihoods. Even in the centre, the state of service delivery was said to be deplorable, KII2 highlighted that the government offices are still incomplete:

... they also expect infrastructure in terms of good road networks that link them. Even if it is a dust road, let it be a good gravel road. Instead of a road that is not trafficable during the rainy season, they also expect facilities like clean water that is accessible. They also expect facilities like health to be improved with reliable medication supplies. They also expect our offices, government offices that are finished. As you can see, we're not finished here. It would also be expected to have offices to be manned fully, those offices that provide services. I was indicating they should have more employees... so if right now I need to go out no one will be in the office to assist the clients... KII2.

The rate of infrastructural development was said to be very slow and from the sentiments by KII2, it is evident that they are short-staffed and therefore ineffective since his, is a one-man office. Clients often come to an empty office.

POOR TELECOMMUNICATION

Related to the poor infrastructure is also the telecommunication connectivity, especially in rural areas. As highlighted by V6, there are a few places with good networks. V4 also concurred that the network is very poor with patched spots where one can go for better reception. KII2 revealed that the network is very poor if you move more than 7km from the centre:

.... in terms of communication infrastructure, if you move from here some 7 kilometres you find you no longer have network.....we would have expected to

see more boosters in Tsholotsho to reach out to the people. We are even unable to communicate with our officers inwards just because they don't have access to communicate.... K112.

Most of the women-led businesses were found to be informal and not registered. The regulations and registration for formal operations were noted, withstanding the poorly developed market infrastructure. C2 revealed that the flea markets are there by name, but the Council has failed to build flea markets. The makeshifts from which women are conducting business have not attracted good business, sufficiently enough for them to legalise and grow their businesses:

... as for me, I sell vegetables and fruits from the front/veranda of a shop where I pay 150 rand a month. But I face a lot of harassment from the shop owners.... but I don't mind because I have no other choice, it is still better than being in the open space or going around with all your stuff. If business was good, I would buy a stand and build a shop because as it is, 2 of my children have joined me in vending in street shops, we are all conducting business in the same manner where there is no growth. We read assistance to move on... I have not bothered to apply for a stand because I know I cannot pay for it and build it as well... C6.

Most women have accepted being informal and unregistered. This can be ascribed to the council not having built up business infrastructure to encourage development.

ILLEGAL SETTLEMENT

Relatedly, due to a lack of regulation and maintenance of standards, illegal settlement is booming and people building without the council's approval. This has thwarted the development, especially for accountability of the quality and quantity of service delivery. During an FGD at the centre, it was noted that the problem is that most houses have been built without council approval and it is difficult for such occupants to access services or even go to the council to complain:

... we live in places where these services are supposed to be available, but we are worse off than people in the villages. Lack of such provisions adds to our roles as women since we must make sure that we protect the family...C4.

...I agree with her (C4), at least in the village most households have Blair toilets and there is less risk of the outbreak of diseases. The problem here is that the Council waits for the NGOs to build toilets. Even the boreholes around the centre were drilled by NGOs. I wonder what the work of the council is. As you can see, they are even failing to clean the place, there is garbage everywhere.... C1.

K114 noted that about three-quarters of the houses at the centre are substandard and have no electricity and running water.

There is an increase in illegal settlements at the centre and the Council is struggling to provide for those in legal spaces. The lack of access to water has made the lives and livelihoods of women more strenuous, C1 narrates her day:

...I have many roles that I undertake in my household. Firstly, my day starts as early as 5 am. Because I don't have running water in my house, I must go and fetch water from the borehole. There is usually a very long line so the earlier you get there the better. From the borehole, I must prepare the children for school and then prepare to go to work. The roles are made difficult by the distances I must cover in preparation for the day, and everything is manually done... C1.

C3 concurred that their roles as women are determined by factors such as lack of running water and electricity in their houses. As for C3, she stays in a house without electricity and uses firewood. She reported that it is not easy to get firewood sometimes she buys from those selling around the centre, a scotch cart full of firewood costs R200 that is unaffordable for her. At times they share the cost with neighbours.

Refuse collection was reported to be a challenge. More so, several people were reported to be using the bush toilet:

...you might have noticed how filthy this place is, wherever there is a bush, people use that as a toilet, yet we have ZINWA that is supposed to provide water. Many of us use the bush and we fear for diseases because the situation gets worse every day... C7.

For those with tapped water and electricity, these were said to be hardly available. C8 reported having to go for 2 weeks without electricity and this disrupts business because the fridges will be off and there would be nowhere to store ingredients. As for water, the service is very poor, most of the time they must buy water. When there is a fault, Council takes time to repair it. C7 urged the Council to improve and not worsen the situation

because they are not seeing any improvements in the services they are supposed to offer. Because of these challenges, women find it hard to conduct their business since most of the time will be spent trying to gather the essentials for both home and work. C9 revealed that they are trying as women to fend for their families but such challenges are a burden. One cannot do without water and energy so it is either they buy or must walk some distance and spend time getting the resource for something that is supposed to be at their disposal.

Health services even at the centre were said to be poor, C8 reported that they have seen a lot of people failing to meet hospital fees for serious conditions. C7 confirmed that the doctor comes in on certain days, only nurses are in attendance and in most cases student nurses. C1 reiterated that as women, they desire to see a growth point that will provide them with the necessary factors to enable them to be independent. C2 would like the growth point to electrify all areas even in the villages with more boreholes drilled in and around the centre and road to be rehabilitated.

The public-private dialogue platforms are there but not fully functional and respected. It was expressed that people are hardly consulted for various developmental activities. C8 felt that as people residing in the growth points, they should be asked what they need and what should be done to improve their lives and the lives of women in general. Even other women leaders were said to be inactive:

....I don't know much about the policy itself, but what I know is that as people residing in the growth points, we should be asked what we need and what should be done to improve our lives and the lives of women in general.... C8.

...I think everyone agrees with me that what we want to see is a place that is growing so that we can be financially independent. We have women leaders in our district but not even a single day have they ever called a meeting to understand the challenges that we face here in the rural areas.... C1.

...we have lost hope of ever having people in the top offices come to ask us what we need. All we ask is for them to improve some facilities here so that we can work and live in safe environments... C9.

...if they would come today to ask us what we need, we will tell them to improve the facilities in the growth point first... C2.

From the above quotes, there are indications that some of the initiatives being implemented by various stakeholders lack sufficient consultation with the communities. For example, the Tsootso stove project by the Bantwana Zimbabwe was said to be good but had insufficient consultations to meet the needs of people:

... we now have tsootso stoves, a project by Bantwana Zimbabwe. The stoves are good in that they use less firewood, but they are too small for the sizes of pots that we use. A three-legged pot cannot sit on the stoves and yet these are the pots that we use for everyday cooking... V3.

... most households have tsootso stoves but they are not in use most of the time because of the capacity. If we had been asked what we wanted as energy, we would have made other options... V2.

... we understand that the tsootso stoves are meant to benefit us and make our workload bearable, but they are just there for display... V8.

The sentiments of the above participants imply that projects are imposed on the receivers of developmental projects. Consultation is therefore lacking hence the ineffectiveness of the interventions. It was therefore not surprising that all the FGD participants at the village concurred that they have several projects that have failed to take off because they do not work for them, not because they do not want them but mainly because they are not suitable for the local conditions.

In some instances when consultations are made, it was also decried that their recommendations are hardly followed:

... we usually have meetings here at the ward level where we are asked what challenges we are facing and how we think they should be addressed, we tell them but they do the opposite or do nothing.... V6.

... we have Ward Councillors that call for meetings whenever there is something that we, as villagers need to know. They promise to take our requests to the higher authorities, so we do not know whether that happens or not.... V1.

... there was also a time when the government was in the process of coming up with the new constitution and we were asked a lot of questions... we contributed as much as possible, what I do not know is whether our input was taken into consideration... V8.

... I feel that they need to implement what we request, we cannot have a situation whereby they keep asking us what we want but never do much to improve our lives... V2.

Reports were also made in that consultations and promises are made but in terms of service provision, there is nothing that comes to the community. The community members felt being used:

....last year we had some people from the Women's Development Bank who came promising us loans that we can use for projects like poultry. We filled in forms, had our pictures taken and they promised that in a month they would come back to us. To this day we have not heard from them... V10.

... such promises make us feel undermined, that is why we do not ask for a lot but enough to survive... V8.

Strategies to secure and allocate funds for the development of the district were found wanting. The district was found to lack financial institutions to lead and guide the financial needs of the people.

All the banking services are outsourced from other districts. This has seen women being vulnerable to trickery from unregistered money lenders taking advantage of the situation in the district. All women in the FGD at the centre concurred that they borrow from each other or unregistered moneylenders and are charged high interest. If they do not pay on time, they risk having their properties attached. They felt that if they had financial assistance, they would be able to expand their businesses and have regular incomes. To benefit from their growth point, they desire to have banking services restored so that they do not go all the way to Bulawayo.

The lack of financial support was not only felt in the Centre but also the Village. Often due to a lack of financial capacity, women are failing to run their projects:

...I think it is a matter of being used to the situation. We have lived our lives like this for years. As long as we have enough to eat and can pay school fees then we cannot complain. But it does not mean that we do not need more, if we had financial support we would probably be running projects like poultry... V10.

...I feel that the growth point can promote women in several ways, if we get sustainable projects, we can be able to be financially independent and not rely too much on farming... V2.

The council and other departments are failing to attract funding and investment to the district. KII10 revealed that as a council, they are always on the lookout for potential investors because they lack investment in the district. They have a lot of resources that remain unexploited because of a lack of investment. KII10 reiterated that obviously, lack of investment is one of the challenges but poor financing of the council by the government makes it difficult for development plans to be met and this impacts women too whose livelihoods are anchored on the success of the growth point. This is despite the other plans to raise funds to keep the work going, for example, revenue collection and engagement of partners to assist. KIIs noted some efforts to try and raise the investment for the district:

... so far, we still have not received any funding for that, but we hope that in the future we might have... we might receive funding for that. But in terms of investments, I know that was the purpose of setting up this office to see or champion those developments around the district. So, in terms of investment, I know that soon we will be having investors coming to the district to try and see how best we can develop the district because we have got a lot of resources. Be it minerals there are so many resources around.... KII6.

KII4 pointed out that funding is a key challenge, interventions that are implemented must be funded so that women can have livelihoods that they can rely on:

.... there is a need to capacitate the various departments in the growth point. As it is, you find that only wards and villages that are nearer the growth point are mostly the targeted ones for projects mainly because of incapacitation.... KII4.

Incapacitation due to lack of funding has thwarted development. KII8 also agreed that the performance cycle is often incomplete due to a lack of funding:

.... yeah, there is still a lot to be done. There are quite several things that need to be done for the betterment of their lives. That's why we are here, the Ministry is still doing this and that.... we are also incapacitated in terms of funding because we would have wanted to fund more. In a performance cycle... sometimes we just happen to fund just a few... KII8.

KII8 emphasised that to a large extent, the intention of the policy could have been better or it could have borne some fruits if there was funding:

... the impact on women is another thing... they are helpless because they will be

looking upon us as policy implementers. But you will find we may be incapacitated in terms of funding.... K118.

K119 revealed that the growth point itself is not well developed to cater to the needs of women and drive them out of poverty, even government departments are not well-resourced to ensure that there is productivity to fight poverty:

... we have a lot of challenges that have stopped us from carrying out our work efficiently.

For instance, the officers that I spoke about earlier who are based in the wards, have no vehicles or motorbikes to move with ease around their respective wards. Communication is also another issue. We struggle to get through to them even for emergencies. So it becomes difficult to reach our farmer... K119.

Tethered to the lack of funding, is the growing acute problem of donor dependency. Due to lack of funds, the government is largely dependent on the community development projects being led by NGOs. From the FGD at the centre, it was noted that often the council is waiting for the NGOs to come up with some community development initiatives:

... at least in the village most households have Blair toilets and there is less risk of an outbreak of diseases. The problem here is that the Council waits for the NGOs to build toilets. Even the boreholes around the centre were drilled by NGOs. I wonder what the work of the council is. As you can see, they are even failing to clean the place, there is garbage everywhere...C1.

...most of the training for skills development is conducted by NGOs when they have a new project that they are introducing. So most training is done in the villages because that is where most NGO work happens. With us here at the centre, we get training for women's health. Most of us do not have tertiary education and we have learnt to train ourselves using skills learnt from others...C8.

... the government should give us water and boreholes in the district so that we can have more nutrition gardens.... what we have is from the NGOs. You know that NGOs only provide start-ups, if you want to expand you must do it on your own using proceeds from the initial project... V9.

Even among the people, there is also the same dependency, there is even

now a scramble for NGO attention:

...the NGOs in this area are very selective, they do not cover the centre, only the villages because there is a belief that people at the centre are financially stable. What we get are women's health interventions... Of course, who does not need assistance? They are based here at the growth point, but they conduct their work in the villages. We have expressed our concerns to the Councillor that we also need assistance....
C3.

On being asked what type of assistance they needed from NGOs? C6 responded as follows:

...in terms of financial assistance, they can give us amounts like \$10 as revolving funds, that way we don't borrow but use the funds to boost our businesses. Such an intervention may bring a change.... **C6.**

The face of rural development is branded NGOs. This is so to the extent that people feel abandoned by the government:

...definitely, the government has forgotten us, if it was not for the NGOs we would not be having some of the things and knowledge we have. We also want to have better lives and livelihoods that we can depend on like irrigation.... **V10.**

People in the community are even emulating those receiving the humanitarian aid yet the reality should be the opposite:

...it is a struggle, it means that even at schools children are chased out of school or must borrow to survive. Those who qualify for food parcels from WFP (World Food Programme) are better placed, some of us suffer.... **V9.**

Due to the lack of government funding, much of the work for government officials is about the monitoring and regulation of NGO activities as they embrace them as partners:

...those are our partners; they have signed MOUs with the Rural District Council. I, as Councillor determine the pace of their work and direct them to areas needing interventions more. As far as their work is concerned, I will talk of my ward 22, they have done quite a lot of work and there has been a lot of investment in terms of projects, training, skills and general funding...
We are gatekeepers, we establish first if their interventions are suited to what the

people need. This is to avoid a situation where they create dependency. Some NGOs implement projects that cease to exist the moment funding is stopped. We urge them to come up with projects that can carry on after. We want to improve supplies to GMB by promoting sustainable farming that is the mainstay of women's livelihoods... **K12.**

Regardless of NGOs being embraced by the government as partners, the perception in the community is clear that this is the work of the NGOs. The dependency on NGOs is too apparent and worrying. For instance, K114 acknowledged that EMA, as a government department, is also under-resourced, and there is much dependency on NGOs. The EMA department had some projects put on hold due to poor funding, the interventions that are implemented must be funded so that women can have sustainable livelihoods.

Running a business at the growth point was found to be a challenge. This is difficult for both the local women and bigger business entities. For the women small businesses, they only generate enough for family sustenance. The money they make is not enough to expand the businesses, at times there is not even enough for restocking. Such challenges often result in one closing down. There was also a feeling that the situation is a vicious circle, trapping successive generations into poverty:

...I agree with what C6 is saying, our children are falling into this poverty trap because we have nothing to offer them, we do not generate much income and school fees are too high, so if I choose school then the business suffers and all the family members also suffer, so at times we are forced on making choices that are not good for the children and for us. I wish that the government would give us loans to support our livelihoods... C3.

...the growth point has the potential to make our lives and livelihoods better, but there are just so many challenges, we are managing but we remain poor because most essentials are out of reach. I have children who have dropped out of school because what I make is not enough to pay for all of them. I prioritised the boys to send to school... C6.

THIS IS CREATING A VICIOUS CYCLE OF POVERTY.

The instability of the currency also makes it unpredictable and unreliable

to run a business, especially small-scale:

... I am a smallholder farmer on the outskirts of the growth point. I sell my produce to the GMB but we are given RTGS that has no value and I cannot use it here, the shops do not take RTGS. We also wait for a long time for payments from GMB; by the time we receive the money it will have no value. Last year, I only got enough to pay school fees for one child... C1.

The decision to remain in business is largely based on a subsistence basis rather than a growing business. Most of the women reported that they did not have options but relied on the little profit that is only enough for their food and basics:

... I do because I do not have much of a choice, if I don't, I find myself in a worse-off position. I should get the R20 than have nothing. I hope that one day the situation can change and I can make more.C7.

.... I also sell tomatoes, they rot easily and in most cases, I end up selling them at a discounted price than risk throwing them away. I have resorted to borrowing for re-stocking... C9.

Formal businesses were also reported to be facing some operational challenges in the district. Women decried the closure of the banking services:

... I mean that most of what is at the growth point has been there since I started living here and even some of the services like banks have closed. Maybe if we had banks we would get loans for our businesses... C2.

KII2 noted the closure of CBZ, the only bank that used to be at the centre. The closure has made the district vulnerable:

... well, those are the majority and like others, they also have several challenges like lack of access to capital. This puts their businesses under pressure especially those in very small businesses. We had CBZ bank but it closed leaving people vulnerable... KII2.

KII3 noted that the district is working towards attracting the banks to the district following the exit of the Commercial Bank of Zimbabwe (CBZ). However, this could be difficult given that the centre is not growing lucratively enough to attract investors. KII4 noted that the growth point is

not growing, the only growth they are witnessing is that of *Injivas* building houses and shops at the centre but not in terms of coming up with facilities such as factories. This has not happened notwithstanding the closure of the only bank that was at the centre. K114 reasoned that this shows that there is no growth, of course, the poor economic conditions are contributing as much.

The operational costs for CBZ were said to be too high such that it ended up closing, K118 revealed that they no longer have banks because of the cost of operation. As such they decided the cost that included the armoured vehicle that came with money from Bulawayo cost 1000 U.S. dollars per trip.

The rate of development was said to be very low if not deteriorating because the closure of the banks and the DDF vocational facility could be indicative of a deteriorated state. K118 reasoned that the centre is improved but not to the desired extent:

... the level of development in my opinion is not that it's not marginal it's slow, the pace in terms of development like I was saying, we once had some banks instead of adding more we had banks closing shop. So I think that we are moving but at a slow pace... K118.

Absence of the banking services had cost the district, they cannot even efficiently run loans and financial services.

...we are supposed to be rolling out loans like other districts, but we don't have an agent for the woman's Bank... K118.

MACRO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

Much of the challenges were largely linked to the ailing economy. Most largely attributed this to the economic situation of the country. It was noted that even those with trained skills such as motor mechanics are failing to make ends meet because even the clients are finding it difficult to afford the services. C1 noted that she together with her mechanic husband are struggling to make ends meet. C6 also noted that the cleaning work that she does is increasingly getting thinner, for most people are failing to

afford extra help for cleaning their houses:

... my work involves cleaning people's houses at a rate of R50 a day. Work is hard to get by because not a lot of people cannot afford extra help. I and my husband are cleaners. We have two school-going children. At times we can go for weeks without any work. It becomes very difficult to sustain the family. ... C6.

It was noted that there is not much development at the centre since the main business is just on district administrative functions rather than industrial activities. The FGD participants at the centre wished that there could be big companies investing in Tsholotsho so that they can be gainfully employed:

...our children are also joining us in these businesses, imagine everyone selling tomatoes for a living.... C5

...there is no diversity.... now when you are saying it that way and it brings to the point that there is no diversity. Everyone is selling the same thing... K17.

K110 noted earlier that generally, the growth point is growing in terms of structures such as housing and retail shops. Other than that, there is not much going on. The lack of such development harms women. K13 concurred that Tsholotsho is growing but of course, is lacking critical development factors like industries that are envisaged to create sustainable employment opportunities:

... we do not have industries but what I will tell you is that Tsholotsho is endowed with several natural resources, wildlife, timber and minerals. For instance, as a council, we have contracts with timber loggers, and we have agreed that we do not want any movement of round logs outside the district. We are trying to look for investors to value add but then we have not been able to attract any. On the minerals side, of late, several people are prospecting for gold and diamond in the area, and we hope once they explore we can start some processing. On wildlife, our main aim is to expand the sale of animal hides. Once this happens there will be employment creation that will also benefit women... K13.

K118 noted that some of the components of the policy are not yet met.

The livelihoods of women in the hinterlands/village were found to be lagging. This was a sign that the rate at which development is spreading was very low. In the village FGD, it was expressed that had it been that they had

electricity like those at the centre, life would have been easier as they would dedicate more time to more productive work:

... I am not saying that we should all move to the growth point, but why can't we have what is there like electricity and water. These things can change our lives....

V8.

... all we are saying is that we also need to have the facilities that are at the growth point and we have said it many times to our leaders... times are changing but we still find ourselves in the same situation we were in many years ago... V5.

... I am 82 years old and most of the things that have been improved in our district are not much. Yes, some changes have improved our lives but to this day, I still must carry buckets of water, why is it that the development is not reaching us....

V9.

... those at the centre have much better lives and facilities than us. They have job opportunities and all other things that make life easy... V1.

There was consensus confirming that there were better services at the centre than in the villages. The village dwellers were not asking to be at the same level as urban women, but asked for improvement in their facilities so that they can be fully productive in their areas:

... I am referring to things like power, water and hospitals. Do you know that we spend more than anyone else because of our location? If I decide to go to Tsholotsho today I must pay for transport, if I want to deliver my grain to GMB I pay double. You see that our life is very difficult and for that matter, all the profits can go into transport costs... V4.

V8 acknowledged that what has been achieved at the growth point has benefited them in that shops and other facilities are available at the centre. Some years back, they would go to Bulawayo for the same services that they currently get from the centre. But the problem is that one must make a journey for the services to the centre because the trickle-down effect has not been realised, hence, they felt that it was about time they also had some satellite offices and services for even closer access.

Beyond secondary schools, the district was said to offer very limited options for skills development:

... what we have in the district is a lot of secondary and primary schools. There are

no colleges. The only training centre that used to be run by the District Development Fund closed many years ago... C5.

The main hospital was said to be training nurses but this was said not to have benefitted the locals:

... the only training offered here is for nurses. What we have is a school of nursing at the hospital. The enrolment is not fair for student nurses, most of them are from other districts even though we also have children who have applied but are not admitted... C4.

Politics was said to often permeating in developmental processes, creating unjust practices and room for corruption. Several public consultations and promises were reported to have been made only for political expedience. V1 reported that they have Ward Councillors that call for meetings whenever there is something that they, as villagers need to know. Ward Councillors promise to take their requests to the higher authorities but often this would just end at that. It was noted that such consultations are only made during election times. K118 concurred that the political will is biased, only serving its best interests:

... then we also have got a problem to do with what I would call political will. We do our things as election gimmicks. They lack sustenance in implementation. You realise we had some policies like ESAP that died a natural death at the infant stage... K118.

The sheer need for monetary benefits was also noted especially among those who are in influential political positions. FGD participants at the centre noted that there is more corruption in the allocation of stands by the council:

... yes, the main reasons are that we do not have the stands to build our premises and there is corruption in the allocation of business and residential stands by the council. You will find that priority is given to Injiva and those with political influence... C10.

... I have been on the waiting list for many years for both residential and business stands. But every time I make a follow up, I am told that stands are not available yet, but then I see others getting them. I have given up hope of ever getting a stand. ... C7.

FGD participants at the centre felt that the growth point has benefitted those that already have financial resources and the politically affluent. For ordinary women, it was reported that they have been left out. Even the developmental activities at the village level were also reported to have corrupt activities related to the politicisation of activities meant to benefit everyone:

... we also distribute inputs but the political situation is a barrier. These are politicised while those who get sell them... KII9.

... corruption is another thing that also impedes the smooth implementation of the growthpoint policy... KII8.

Social factors were contextualised as normative activities affecting the development of the women and the factors identified are;

- Multi-tasking and Task Shifting
- Educational Priorities

Roles of women were found to be more complicated, more so with the male migration, women were found having to do much more work to cover for the absent male partners. This has not been made easy with the poor service delivery that could have eased the household chores. C1 reported having many roles that she plays in her household. Firstly, her day starts as early as 5 am. Because she does not have running water in her house, she must go and fetch water from the communal borehole. There is usually a very long queue so the earlier she gets there the better.

From the borehole, she must prepare the children for school and then prepare to go to work. The roles are made difficult by the distances she must cover in preparation for the day. C5 agreed that most of the boreholes are not working, so one must move around looking for one that works. That is a burden because the time one spends looking for water means that she will get to do her work late. This also compounded with the need to take care of the children makes the work of the women insurmountable:

... I want to say that as women we have many roles but they are more because of the conditions we live and operate in. Even at our businesses, I must carry a huge

dish of the things that I am selling going around selling and I have a small baby that I will be having the whole day. If we can have favourable conditions, then the burden will be less. There have been promises that the council will construct houses for those with low incomes, that was a few years back but up to now nothing has happened...C2.

Even at the village level, women are often left with less time to focus on income-generating projects since much of their time is spent on house chores, more on reproductive duties than productive activities. V6 reported that her day starts at 5 am when she prepares her children for school. At 6 am she does household chores that are fetching water and pounding millet; at least twice a day, in the morning and the afternoon. Already this is time-consuming, and one must do it properly otherwise the 'isitshwala' (from pounded millet) does not taste good. V6 reiterated that as women, they undertake community duties that include burials and public meetings, so overall, their roles are overwhelming:

...had development reached us, maybe we could be having electricity at ward level to lighten the burden... V6.

EDUCATIONAL PRIORITIES

The education of women is not prioritised in the community. K112 agreed that another challenge is lack of education, most of the women are not educated, and others, even lack basic numeracy to be able to run their business ventures. The vicious circle was said to be difficult to rid of as it continues to self-create:

...you would find uneducated women who are not even capable of reading. We were not supposed, actually, by now to be having people who are not literate...

K118.

From the FGDs, it was learnt that most women acquire some basics skills from the non-formal education offered by NGOs. C8 noted that most of the training for skills development is conducted by NGOs whenever they are introducing a new project. So, most training is done in the villages because that is where most NGO work happens. Most women at the centre do not have tertiary education and they have learnt to train

themselves using skills learnt from others. C3 confirmed that they would benefit from training such as the management of funds and the basics of how to run a small business. Some of them did not reach the secondary school level and often struggle with basic knowledge. Furthermore, C8 noted that there are no industries in the district but only a few small ones often run by those without the necessary skills. So, when people come to the centre it is these women who give them employment as assistants or in the big shops where they earn up to R300 depending on the size and nature of the job. Since most people are not educated, they just take whatever jobs are offered and available.

Three natural factors were found identified as shown in the figure below;

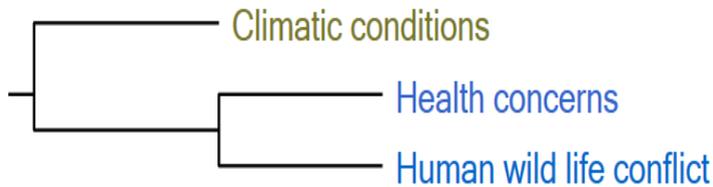


Figure 4.4 – Natural Factors (Researcher)

As a district largely based on agricultural production, its development resonates with the varying climatic conditions. KII1 revealed that agricultural production is the major livelihood in the district but it is affected by many factors such as changing rainfall patterns, use of labour-intensive methods of farming and lack of inputs. Women desire to have water and irrigation schemes to improve their livelihoods. There is a ready market for farm produce, but water is a challenge in the district. KII3 was optimistic that women can support for their families in one way or another, but they remained poor partly because of no lucrative off-farm activities owing to the district's geographical location. The soils themselves are poor, in regions 4 and 5 with Kalahari sands that are not good for farming. KII3 also describes the challenge of floods and drought as major factors in the poor economic performance in the district.

Women confirmed that they are facing challenges due to the climatic conditions mentioned above. V3 revealed that farming would be more profitable if it was done on a rotation basis. But this can only happen when there is adequate water, others also concurred:

... water limits our efforts in a big way. They say water is life, with enough water we can produce different types of crops all year round. This would improve our lives.... V8.

....we need the government to allocate more land and drill boreholes so that we can extend the nutrition gardens that have been established by the NGOs... V5.

... most of us are farmers and we depend on the rains, so our livelihoods are also dependent on the rains. When rains are poor, it means we have nothing to consume and to sell... V3.

HIV was the main health concern affecting the district mainly due to families' high mobility and separations in the community:

... first of all, the issue of HIV is still a challenge. There is a high prevalence in the district mostly because of the Injivas. You see Injivas only come home once a year, to return with HIV because they will be staying with another wife, so spousal separation is a problem..... HIV affects women more than men, so we have NGOs working with and educating the people on HIV&AIDS... KII3.

The community decried that the presence of wildlife has lost much of its efforts in agriculture. As communities, they felt that they have benefitted less from living with these wild animals. V5 revealed that one of the hardest tasks that women undertake is of having to go into the forest for firewood. Their area has elephants coming from the Hwange National Park that borders them. Women indicated that because of their fear of elephants, they must move in groups since a lot of people have lost their lives to elephants. Even going to the fields is also scary when alone. They live in fear of these animals, however, through the Council's Department of Natural Resources Board, they have been taught to coexist with wild animals but are failing to understand how humans relate to wild animals.

KII3 also noted the issues of the border with Hwange National Park. He reiterated that wild animals come to the villages and destroy habitat and

crops resulting in human-wildlife conflict. Elephants escaping from the game park destroying crops. KII3 reported that they have rangers who do PAC (Problematic Animal Control). They always try to drive them back to the park but it looks like the holding capacity at Hwange is a problem.

An inquiry was made on the perceptions of the critical role of success and effectiveness of the growth point policy in improving women's empowerment outcomes at Tsholotsho Growth Point. The analysis of the findings was grouped into three interlinked efforts:

- Government
- Community
- Developmental Partners

Submissions from both FGDs and KIIs were categorised by source reflecting the dominating key institutions. Government efforts related to the roles and expectations from the government, current and those not fulfilled. Community efforts were those perceived changes in attitudes and behaviours and community-based activities linked to the socio-economic development of women. Developmental partners' efforts were mostly related to rural development projects linked to the work of NGOs. KIIs almost had a balanced attribution to all three while the FGD women seemed to mostly pinpoint the government and developmental partners' efforts.

The government effort was critiqued, and six key areas emerged as the critical roles linked to (and/or lack of) success and effectiveness of the growth point policy in achieving the socio-economic outcomes of women at Tsholotsho Growth Point. The availability of markets, industrialisation, collection and utility of revenue, decentralisation, increased urbanity and the creation and functionality of the PPD platforms were the key areas considered as possible solutions.

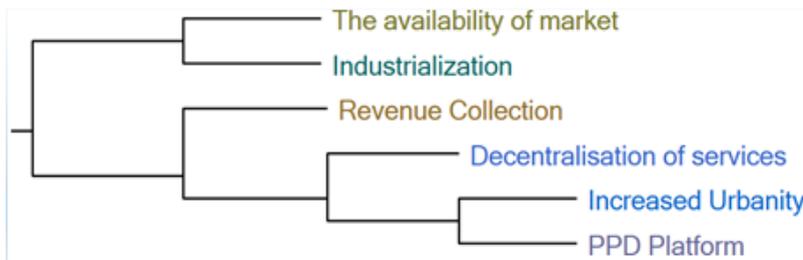


Figure 4.5 – Government Efforts (Researcher)

The Centre was said to proffer a business centre attracting customers all over the district. Business is conducted faster than back in the villages, there are a lot of people to sell to. GMB is also a critical market player credited for making the marketing of farm produce easy and accessible. Unfortunately, the market dynamics were said to be not favourable. C1 expressed that GMB has worsened their situation because of poor pay-outs, an area needing improvement. Women from the village also confirmed that they are now shunning GMB:

... if we have a good season, we make some money, but we do not sell to GMB because they don't give us the dollar or rand. Some people and companies come to buy privately. At times Ingwebu Breweries buys from us but they would have provided us with seed... V1.

The briefcase buyers would take advantage of the farmers due to the lack of a stable and reliable market. The rural women said there is a lot that they desire to have. Living off farming and petty trade was said to be risky, especially during these years when the rain seasons' patterns have changed. The farming methods used were said to be labour intensive and they have no draught power. GMB's buying price was decried low. V3 wished the government to facilitate market structures so that they are not entirely dependent on farming and be able to diversify their businesses. Development of flea markets and markets are centralised to allow people to get supplies from one place.

Debates and discussions to stimulate industrialisation were found to be lacking. KII10 and KII3 concurred that Tsholotsho is growing but not in industries. Despite the endowment with several natural resources, wildlife, timber and minerals, there is stagnation in processing and value- addition initiatives. KII8 noted that some of the components of the policy are not yet met, considering that some of them were to urbanise, industrialise, create employment and not just have service centres. All the participants felt that it would be beneficial to have big industries that can use the local resources and create employment for the locals.

The council reported collecting revenue, a critical resource for potential development at the growth point. KII10 revealed that the policy is about the provision of essential services that is the mandate of the council. To this, revenue collection is essential for rural development:

...my office collects revenue to ensure that we have our development projects. For example, we can say we want to raise money from service delivery to carry out a sewer system repair, street lighting, or a centre for women and the youth. This needs budgeting depending on what we want to achieve. So, we must have ways and means to collect that revenue, so we do fundraise activities through development levies, called "imithelo yamakhanda" in Ndebele at the village level. Then at the centre, there is service delivery where each household is supposed to pay USD12 a year to collect waste and repair drainage systems. Water has been taken over by ZINWA but we still need to ensure our services are development oriented... KII10.

The growth point has government departments offering various services that people used to travel to Bulawayo and Plumtree for. This so far has managed to make the growth point a success. NGOs and other different departments that offer social and financial assistance to women have established their bases and are now housed at the centre:

...it is a policy to decentralise, services from the major towns and cities to the rural areas. For instance, when the government was just saying from Bulawayo, let's have Tsholotsho, let's have Lupane, let's have Umguzi as a development centre where development can be taking place so that at least the person who is travelling from the furthest point will not go to Bulawayo, but rather end up getting services in Tsholotsho district...we do have some services that happened

to be moved closer to the rural population, for example, we do have the district offices. We have women's affairs in Tsholotsho at the district level that means the person needs not go to Bulawayo to access services. So we have got the government departments at the district level. I think it's a milestone that one. We also have got some businesses that are functioning, as you see at the centre where people can purchase from. We also have people accessing health facilities and also pharmacies.... **KII8.**

However, the effectiveness of some of the services is still wanting, and the infrastructural development is delaying the availability and reliability of the services offered.

INCREASED URBANITY

The expanse of the urban built-up area and business spaces has seen an improvement in women's livelihood and quality of life. For C6, whose work involved cleaning people's houses, the expanse of the urbanity would also make their work more lucrative. KII1 revealed that women at the growth centre are like those in urban centres where facilities are within reach, they are more exposed to modern facilities than those in the village. This then puts them a step ahead. KII10 confirmed that the growth point is growing in terms of structures such as housing and retail shops. However, the pace is very slow:

*...of course, we are moving towards that but the pace is a bit slow. So, we need to increase our pace so that we will reach what we want to reach. But I think going forward with the policies that are coming and with the vision, I think one day you will see this growth point obtaining a town status... **KII6.***

Structures and platforms for Public-Private Dialogue Platform (PPDP) were said to be available and KII3 revealed that as Council they make sure that women's issues are addressed through ward councillors who work closely with the council:

*...as I stated earlier on, we have a transparency system of no segregation. Local governance is all about participation. Women are also included and if you look at our district most men are outside the country, it is women who are looking after cattle, grazing them, tending to the villages, and just doing all things development. Even in NGO-led initiatives, women's participation is high... **KII3.***

Despite the availability of the channels and systems, there was a strong registry of inconsistencies and partiality. FGD participants both at the centre and the village felt that they were not sufficiently consulted about developmental issues that concerned them and often projects are just imposed on them:

...I don't know much about the policy itself, but what I know is that as people residing in the growth points, we should be asked what we need and what should be done to improve our lives and the lives of women in general... C8.

...we desire to see NGOs that make a needs assessment first and then bring in projects with consent from the community... V2.

Two critical roles in the community were identified, relating to the feminisation of the business environment and the function of the remittances.

Women from the centre concurred that they benefitted in that the growth point has managed to create platforms whereby women can work and be able to fend for their families. Through the government and partner support, several projects were reported in terms of supporting women to be empowered and fend for themselves. Reports were made by women of some district efforts to educate women on various aspects of their lives and appreciate the worth of women in society. Projects being run by NGOs were reported by almost all the key informants, more importantly, women being most of the beneficiaries. Being the head of households, women were found to be more involved in the developmental activities in the district, uniquely so for the district due to the migration of men into nearby countries. As presented above, most women reported being independent and participating more in economic activities.

KI10 revealed that the growth point being a centre for economic activities has brought employment opportunities for women at the centre where there are a lot of women employed in various places:

...if you walk around and into the shops, you find that more women are employed than men and in terms of vending in the district you find that there are more

women vendors, for example, the Monday Market, it is mostly women trading and participating. So having a growth point as a centre for economic activities has enabled women to have income for their households... most women are small shop owners and of course, more women are employed in these establishments. I can therefore testify that when a shop is opened let's say a restaurant, it is women who are employed as shopkeepers or cook or waitresses in the restaurant. So if we are to carry out a survey it will reveal that it is more women employed than men. More trading is in retail, so women are a part of it. They are also participating a lot because as a country we are more into retail than manufacturing... **KII10**

KII2 also confirmed that Tsholotsho businesses are mostly run by women, most men are in the diaspora and their participation is very high. Women at the centre and in the villages too own and run their businesses. Men who have shops also have wives who own their businesses, like KII2 himself owns his shops and his wife has hers and several people were said to have that same arrangement. KII6 also felt that women are doing quite well:

...their participation is good and their projects are successful. I think maybe it's because women have got a lot of patience in terms of business. Business needs someone who is very, very patient. Yes. If you see profits not coming, you keep on trying. Men, sometimes quickly give up and say no, shift to another project if this one has failed. So, we have got so many women's groups in the district who are into livelihood projects. Again, I can give you an example, we have got a group of women who are into basketry. They produce baskets, mats and nice products, especially targeting tourists. It's a very, very expensive material that they use and some of those products are now sold as far as England and other European markets. It's a group of women, I'm only talking about women, there are no men there, it's only women. So, they are doing their thing alone... KII6.

KII9 has also noticed that women's participation is very high in most development interventions that are being spearheaded by government departments and their partners. To an extent, women have been given the chance to work and look after their families:

...whenever there is a good harvest, women from the villages come to the centre to sell their produce where there is a ready market... KII9.

The community was also said to thrive on the remittances. FGD at the centre pointed out that the growth point makes it easy to conduct business because even those who (*Omalayitsha*) bring goods from South Africa to the centre, this is an advantage because a lot of people have family in South Africa (*Injiva*). Families with *Injiva* were said to be doing well and able to build better houses and livelihoods:

...as it is every backyard here, has a cooking area resembling that of the village. It is not surprising because even the houses are substandard, and most are incomplete because of financial constraints. Those who have built to the end are usually injivas (diasporans)... C10.

... there are not a lot of economic activities here in the villages besides farming. We rely on farming a lot and from remittances from the family in South Africa and Botswana... V6.

... I receive money and groceries every month from my husband who works in South Africa. I manage to look after my family this way, however, I still engage in farming so that he does not must send mealie meal but concentrate on other things... V2.

... I receive money and groceries bimonthly, life is better for me and the children, we donot lack the essentials... V6.

V10... I receive money and groceries every month from my family in South Africa.

The *omalayitsha* plays a critical role in the success and effectiveness of the growth point. FGD at the village revealed that roads and communication enable "*omalayitsha*" to transport goods home all the time. Without them, they do not even know how they would survive. They are keeping them going by supplying local shops with goods. V7 felt lucky because her husband and children are in the diaspora, so they are always assured of supplies every time. V4 said remittances are a more reliable source, at least one is assured of food parcels and money every time.

The infrastructural development is, however, posing an impediment to the efficient movement of goods and services in the district. K110 pointed out that there have been some sentiments where people and companies have said they are not able to come to the district because of the bad road. So, the state of the road has had adverse effects on investment in the district:

...if they sort out this road (Tsholotsho-Bulawayo), we will have much more investment because as you are aware Tsholotsho is close to Botswana and South Africa where most of our residents work in those countries. They have done a lot in terms of developing their rural homes, even rural businesses. But their efforts have not been complemented by the development of infrastructure... KII10.

KII3 acknowledged that they have *injiva* who are highly contributing to the economy of Tsholotsho. They have built houses, shops and have contributed to the infrastructural development of the district. KII3 reported that they currently have a group of *injivas* that have constructed a school, scooping of dams and refurbishment of clinics and could safely say that 80% of the district's GDP is coming from the *injivas*.... 'Even during drought, they bring food from outside to feed their families...KII3.

Efforts from developmental partners were acknowledged in the rural development projects, contract farming and the creation of ISALs and VSLAs.

The community is still desiring more community development projects. V4 desire to have facilities that can promote entrepreneurship activities such as poultry. V7 desired irrigation schemes, tap water and more boreholes drilled around the villages. V2 felt they would benefit from electricity, maybe a bakery industry can be opened then they can buy bread locally. KII1 expressed that agricultural production is the major livelihood in the district but it is affected by many factors such as changing rainfall patterns, use of labour-intensive methods of farming and lack of inputs. Therefore, women desire to have water and irrigation schemes to improve their livelihoods. The developmental partners were called upon to provide this assistance:

...in terms of livelihood programmes and projects, we as an office and just maybe speaking on behalf of the office and our role as an office, we monitor several projects that will be carried out by our line ministries. Different line ministries that we have in the district have got their partners, they bring in livelihoods projects ...

KII6.

KII7 revealed that the first market that farmers are forced to sell to, is the GMB. However, they are not paid well and at the end of the day, people are discouraged to take their produce to the GMB. As a result, one ends up selling to briefcase buyers and this becomes an advantage in situations where they have people grow crops on a contract basis and they know what they are dealing with:

... though they used to be there... I think they used to do contract farming even for sorghum. It's better that way... KII7.

Financial support was cited as a major challenge. All the women cited that they borrow from each other or unregistered money lenders indicating the readiness to engage in Internal Savings and Lending Associations (ISALs) and Village Savings and Lending Associations (VSLAs). Advances in facilitating more organised community-based monetary systems could help reduce the risk of high interest and trickery from unregistered money lenders.

The discussion on government, community and developmental partners' efforts in improving rural women's empowerment show that there is more that women in Tsholotsho desire in order that they can have improved livelihoods. Government efforts are central and dictate the pace for the community and developmental partners' efforts.

Moreover, women's desires that include improvement of the factors of the growth point that inhibit women's participation have been seen as contributing to the many challenges confronting the growth point itself and women as shown by the discussions from both FGDs and KIIs.

In this chapter, presented is the analysis and interpretation of data generated from Key Informants, FGDs and in-depth interviews about rural women's empowerment outcomes in the growth point thrust of Zimbabwe with a view to ascertaining the different but enmeshing strands adversely affecting women's empowerment in rural locales. The next chapter discusses the key findings of this study.