LACK OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE MIDST OF PLENTY: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF CHIKOMBEDZI (GAZA KHOMANANI), DISTRICT SERVICE CENTRE 1999-2010

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ABSTRACT

The area of the study is Chikombedzi located about 120 kilometres south east of Chiredzi town in south east Zimbabwe. The presentation investigates the level of socio-economic development of Chikombedzi (Gaza Khomanani) District Service Centre. For data collection the case study method, oral and structured questionnaire interviews, historical research using secondary and primary sources were used. In presenting the findings the researcher employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Statistical data collected were presented quantitatively in tables and graphs and discussion carried out. The presentation argues that there was slow paced development at Chikombedzi Service Centre, but the area has the capacity to embark on sustainable development due to the availability of natural resources. The presentation concludes that Chikombedzi has a lot of potential which policy makers and implementers may exploit in an effort to achieve sustainable development of the area. Overall, sustainable development of the area will ensure human security and either prevent or at least reduce the migration of Zimbabweans into South Africa.

Keywords: Chikombedzi, development, socio-economic, district service centre, resources.

INTRODUCTION

The presentation gives the background to the study, the research objectives and research questions to be dealt with in this study. It also highlights the significance of study as well as the delimitation of the area under study. Furthermore, it outlines the problems encountered in the field and then defines the key terms. In addition, the presentation reviews literature on the meaning of development and discusses the growth point and Service Centre concepts. The research proceeds to explain the factors which affect the development of settlements and finally reviews literature on suggested ways to enhance socio-economic development.

Furthermore, the study section describes the research design adopted in this presentation and what has influenced its choice. The researcher further illustrates the population, the sample and research instruments chosen for the study notably; questionnaire, observation and interview techniques. In the presentation of the findings the study argues that, Chikombedzi District Service Centre like other Service Centres in Zimbabwe is still at its low level of socio-economic development. There a number of social, economic, political and physical constraints to the sustainable development of Chikombedzi service centre. It concludes that if the constraints to the development are removed the service centre establish sustainable business projects and community development livelihoods.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Chikombedzi District Service Centre is situated in a natural resource rich area that is close to Gonarezhou National Park. The area is good for cattle ranching and is a rich agro-zone because it has fertile soils but against this background it has not witnessed significant economic development. This has influenced the researcher to find out what has led to such a scenario.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Chikombedzi (Gaza-Khomanani) District Service Centre lacks sustainable socio-economic development hence the need to investigate the factors which have led to this scenario. The findings will be of use to policy makers and implementers in a drive to ensure sustainable development of the area.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The District Service Centre should be set up where population densities are over fifteen people per square kilometre and at least twenty kilometres from the next Service Centre (Munowenyu 1977: 227). It is therefore one of the aims of this study to establish the authenticity of Munowenyu's view on the growth of Chikombedzi District Service Centre. It sought to;

- Identify the socio-economic challenges faced by the people at Chikombedzi District Service Centre.
- Define the meaning of development.
- Outline the factors which beset sustainable development of Chikombedzi District Service Centre
- Discuss the level of socio-economic development that has been attained by Chikombezi District Service Centre.
- Establish whether the centre has developed as is expected of such centres or did not witness significant growth.
- Give suggestions on how sustainable development can be attained in Chikombedzi.
- Explain the nature of industries which were set up at Chikombezi.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What factors are affecting the socio-economic development of Chikombedzi?
2. How can sustainable development be achieved in Chikombedzi
3. Is Chikombedzi developed?
4. Is there potential for development?
5. What can be done to enhance the socio-economic development of Chikombedzi District Service Centre?
6. What was the role of the Zimbabwean conflict 1999 to 2010 to the socio-economic development of Chikombedzi District Service Centre?

ASSUMPTIONS

1. A good economic base and natural resource rich area is ideal for the sustainable development of District Service Centres and Growth Points.
2. A good social and political environment is crucial for the sustainable development of District Service Centres.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This research contributes to the development of Geography and Environmental Studies. In support of this view are Flowerdew and Martin (1997: 1) cited by Gwimbi and Dirwai (2003: 7) who note that the purpose of any piece of research work is to add to the stock of knowledge. The investigation of Chikombedzi District Service Centre's socio-economic development evaluates the role played by the new service centre programme in reducing disparities between rural and urban areas and this benefits Geographers, policy planners and implementers.

Moreover, the study is of significance to the Government and rural planners. This research would provide planners and donor agencies with ways of enhancing the growth of district service centres as well as growth points in an attempt to improve rural living standards. The research is an appetiser to investors. Business people who have already invested at Chikombedzi District Service Centre (CDSC) would benefit from the opportunities available in the area. If policy implementers take on action to develop the area its infrastructure will be enhanced. The development of the area could lead to the growth of large market size for business persons' commodities and at the same time provide attractive infrastructure for further investments.

More-so the study is of importance to the communal areas of Chikombedzi. The Service Centre's growth directly benefits locals because instead of going to Masvingo and Chiredzi for business, most of the required services and goods would be obtained at the Service Centre consequently cutting down transport costs.

DELIMITATION OF STUDY

The area of study is Chikombedzi District Service Centre (CDSC) situated in the communal areas of Chiredzi South in the South East Lowveld of Zimbabwe. The District Service Centre is about one hundred and fifteen kilometres south of Chiredzi town, about one hundred and twenty kilometres east of Rutenga and two hundred and forty three kilometres form Masvingo town. Beit-bridge and Sango Boarder Post also border Chikombedzi.

Chikombedzi is hot and dry and it is in natural region five which receives low annual rainfall totals of around 600 mm (Nhandara et al 1987: 38). The area has surface water scarcity with few large and seasonal rivers, which flow through Chiredzi South. Ground water is abundant, but salty. However, the area is good for ranching and has heavy clay soils, which are suitable for crop production for example in the small-scale commercial farms and communal farms around Chikombedzi District Service Centre. Its dryness has also made available land for wildlife management in Gonarezhou National Park. Figure 1 below shows the area of this study and its surroundings.

Figure 1 Chikombedzi District Service Centre and its surroundings Source: Digitalised by Mediel Hove December 2011.
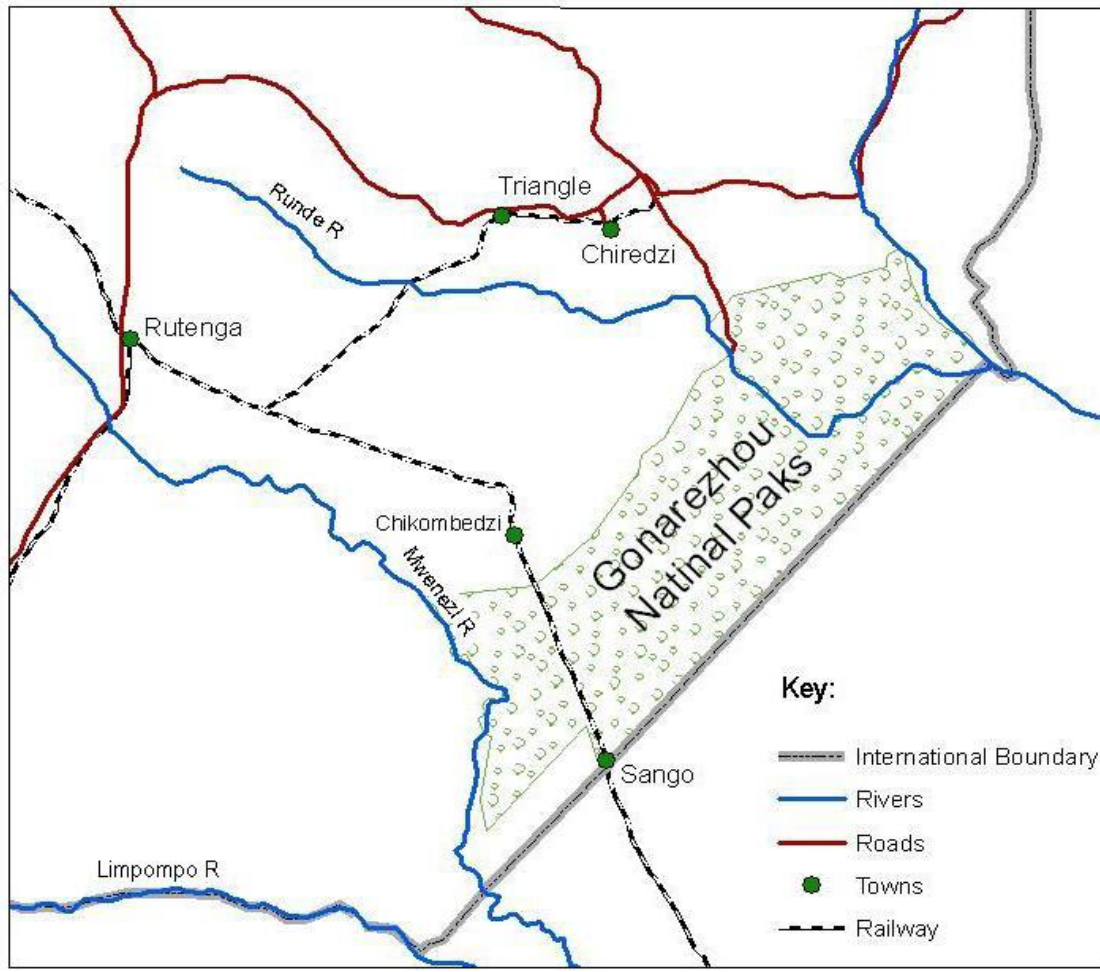
The areas have sugarcane plantations at Hippo Valley and Triangle Estates under irrigation drawing water from dams along the large seasonal rivers.

LIMITATIONS

There were many problems encountered when this study was carried out and the most pronounced were those related to time, reluctance by some respondents and communication barriers. At times respondents were found busy and suggested their own time of interest such as weekends, which delayed the researcher resulting in several trips being made, more than those initially planned. This raised the financial costs beyond the initial budget.

Some respondents were reluctant to be interviewed especially the Shangaan when it came to the factors which impede Chikombedzi's socio-economic development. They overlooked the problem of cultural practices and tribalism. The researcher had no problem of communication because he is conversant with the principal languages; Shangaan and Ndebele used in the area.

There was no published information obtained about the socio-economic development of Chikombedzi District Service Centre, which obstructed the precession of this study. Due to lack of documentary evidence about the socio-economic development of Chikombedzi there are no references, which are given in this research, about the area under study.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. *Settlement* – a place where people live. Munowenyu and Pritchard (1997: 221) define a settlement as any form of human habitation, a group of dwellings or those large such as Service Centres, towns and cities.

2. *District Service Centres* – settlements which have been chosen to develop into growth points and then towns to service rural people and reduce rural urban migration (Munowenyu and Prichard, 1997: 227).

3. *Development* – Any change for the better. Conyers (2201: 93) notes that development is a process of change in the economic political and social sectors which enhances the well being of inhabitants of an area.

4. *Sphere of influence* – is a maximum distance of a good or service that a customer is prepared to travel to obtain it (Carr 1997: 123). This means that it is an area that obtains its services and goods from a given central place such as a school, a hospital, a District Service Centre or a town.

LITERATURE REVIEW

What Is Development?

The term development has different meanings to different people. Conyers (2001: 93) defines it as a process of change, which can take any form for instance economic, social and political, aimed at improving the well being of people in an area. In support of Conyers in Mtukudzi (1999: 31) who notes that development could be associated with improvement in cultural, economic or political circumstances of a society.

Development implies a process, which brings about a change or growth from one state to another. Hamse (1995: 50) views it as a complex multi-dimensional concept which implies both structure and process which brings about material and non-material improvement in people's lives. Hamse (18995: 43) adds that this is ensured through the existence of various institutions, which ensure that the dignity of human beings and their material and non-material needs are guaranteed. Development varies with respect to place and time and to Johnson (1981: 79) it is a historical process. Conyers (2001: 93-94) observes three aspects of development namely the nature, rate and level. Nature considers the type of economy for instance development based on agriculture or industrial growth. Rate refers to how fast or slow is the change and level means what point of development has been attained. This study dwells on the level of socio-economic development of Chikombedzi District Service Centre. This settlement has been chosen because it is among new service centres designated for rural development.

Growth Point and District Service Centre Concepts

Attempts to reduce inequalities between growth regions and the disadvantaged regions have played a significant role in the economic policies of most countries and it was widely accepted that governments should intervene to reduce the negative economic and social effects of market forces. In industrialized countries of Europe and North America, the aim was to tackle the problem of declining industrial areas and in less developed states, they were intended to encourage industrial and urban growth in rural areas (Conyers 2001: 102-3).

The establishment of growth poles (also known as growth centres of growth points) has been the most popular strategy for reducing inequalities between core regions and peripheral regions in the less developed countries. The concept can be traced back to the work of Perroux (1955) who defined a growth pole in terns of abstract economic space and not in terms of geographical space.

The growth pole strategies vary greatly from one country to another and are different from Perroux's intention. In this research Conyers' definition has been adopted and growth poles are defined as centres of economic activity, which are artificially created in disadvantaged regions with the intention that they will eventually become "natural" centres of economic growth (Conyers 2001: 103). Munowenyu and Pritchard (1997: 2270-228) indicate that both District Service Centres and Rural Service Centres are inclusive in the growth pole strategy and are excepted to develop into growth points and then larger urban centres.

In Zimbabwe the strategy was introduced before independence as part of a policy document called the integrated plan for rural development of 1978 (Conyers, 2001: 182). Ten centres were designated under the government's national development programme intended to encourage investment and employment creation thereby reducing rural urban migration. The idea was taken up and expanded by the new government after independence aimed at reducing inequalities between communal and commercial farming areas. More centres were identified as growth points, District Service Centres and Rural Service Centres hoping that they will grow and eventually become small towns (Weiss and Newsome, 1989: 68). Service Centres are smaller than growth points with the former aimed at improving the quality of life and the latter are earmarked for industrial development in addition to the services they provide. The growth point and service centre strategy has triggered the researcher to carry out a research with reference to Chikombedzi to find out whether the Service Centre has enough services and industries to improve the community's quality of life and ensure human security.

Growth poles and new service centres are expected to be established in places where there is already some potential for economic growth. The government's role is to stimulate and support this potential until the process becomes spontaneous (Conyers 2001: 103). However, significant socio-economic growth occurred only in a few of the service centres and others remained as not more than small centres consisting merely of government offices and a few shops.

Industries are encouraged to develop in the service centres to create employment. Nhandara et al (1989: 178) note that light manufacturing industries and other developmental projects such as carpentry, dressmaking, knitting, milling companies, green markets and periodic markets should be established in these entries. Tertiary services such as banks, schools, a health centre and a police camp are also expected in these centres.

Factors Affecting the Growth of Settlements

Factors affecting the growth of settlements are discussed in this section. These factors would be related to Service Centres because they are settlements as well.

Once a settlement is established it should develop. Settlements do not have to attain a particular size in order to become towns because they are of different sizes ranging form small country towns, which are smaller than villages elsewhere to enormous sprawling centres (Leong and Morgan 1982: 60).

Leong and Morgan (1982: 60) note that site, situation and function are inextricably linked in the development of settlement. Growth results from valuable resources nearby such as minerals and agricultural products because many

towns are founded on the exploitation of these resources. To take obvious examples Victoria Falls developed from Tourism and Hwange form coal mining. Conyers (2001: 182) asserts that lack of an economic base has been the main reason for low levels of investments in some settlements.

There are certain conditions expected to be met for a new service centre to grow. Munowenyu (1997: 227) notes that the population size of the service centres should be five hundred to one thousand people. In addition to that it is expected to have a sphere of influence, which is roughly three hundred square kilometres with a threshold of ten thousand people. These centres should be set up where population densities are over fifteen people per square kilometre and at least twenty kilometres form the next Service Centre (Munowenyu 1997: 227).

In developed countries, the decentralization programme involved the setting up of new towns to solve conurbation problems. In Britain the first generation of new towns are said to have failed because they were too close to a main conurbation and people continued to communicate back to work in large cities (Carr 1987: 77). As a remedy the second generation of new towns were located sufficiently far from established conurbations to be independent for instance Milton Keynes, and they grew.

Suggested Solutions to Enhance Development

Various stimulation and support methods have been suggested to enhance the growth of Service Centres. The government is encouraged to establish a state owned or supported industry, which marks the economic base of Service Centres (Conyers, 2001:103).

The above writer notes that it is crucial to provide centres with infrastructure and services such as serviced industrial stands, roads and social services to make the new centre more attractive to investors. The growth of Bulawayo (Zimbabwe's second largest town) was slow than most other towns in Zimbabwe between 1982 and 1992 due to acute water shortage (Conyers and Mlalazi 1998: 122). Furthermore, lack of economic infrastructure for example roads and market facilities in communal areas are a hindrance to development. Following the provision of roads, marketing depots and other services during the 1980s, agricultural production sustainability increased in many communal areas. The tarring of the main road from Kwekwe via Gokwe centre to the Sengwe coal mine accelerated agriculture in Gokwe.

Another way of attracting prospective investors is to provide with financial incentives such as tax concessions. Lowering taxes or exemption would make Service Centres more ideal for location than towns.

Literature reviewed on development showed that it has various meanings but generally there should be a positive change in life. The growth pole and service centre concepts was outlined and the plan reveals that it is aimed towards development of rural areas. On factors affecting development, works consulted revealed that it is a result of different factors and the recommendations to enhance growth are mainly government initiated.

RESEARCH STRATEGY

Research Plan

This research was based on a case study of Chikombedzi District Service Centre and the study method was used to collect data. The approach adopted on research writing used both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Statistical data collected were presented quantitatively in tables and graphs and discussion carried out. Information obtained on the factors besetting sustainable development potential and recommendations to enhance growth were discussed qualitatively.

Population

The research was carried out in Chikombedzi with a population size of approximately forty thousand people when the study was carried out. The young who are below sixteen years and old people who are above fifty-five years dominate the demographic structure of the area. Most of them are females. The largest population percentage is not formally employed, but they have a strong economy pivoted on livestock rearing. Only a few of the inhabitants are civil servants at the police station, hospital, Chikombedzi Primary and Alpha Mpapa High schools. People from these various sectors supplement their income through trade in Mozambique, South Africa and in their locality.

Population Sample

A sample is part of a population under study (Chimedza 2003: 36). A population sample of forty respondents was used for unstructured oral and structured questionnaire interviews. The sample was selected using the stratified sampling method. In this method the population was classified according to occupation. The population was grouped on the basis of their jobs. The groups from which people were sampled are civil servants, youths, business community, community leaders, peasant farmers and small-scale farmers and small scale commercial farmers. Simple random sampling was employed to get the respondents in order to minimize the degree of bias. Chimedza (2003: 38) defines simple random sampling as a sampling method which ensures that each possible sample combination has an equal probability of being chosen.

Research Instruments

During the course of the study Observations, structured questionnaire and oral interviews were employed for data collection.

Observations

Observations were made at Chikombedzi District Service Centre. Targets were the shops to observe their sizes, number and sizes of small scale manufacturing industries, public amenities available and other services offered. The researcher also made some observations on customer turn up and the nature of roads linking Chikombedzi to its surroundings. The observation method was used to get the following:

- The behaviour recorded as it occurred
- Some of the information which was not taken seriously by those involved was collected.

In support of this observation Chikoko and Mhloyi (1995: 64) have noted that the observer being an outsider can see phenomenon about a situation which those people involved in it may take for granted.

Interviews

An oral interview is conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee for the specific purpose of obtaining relevant information for the research (Cohen and Manion 1989 in Gwimbi and Dirwai 2003: 77). Interviews take a number of forms based upon how they are structured. In this research oral interview questions were used to probe the respondents on the socio-economic development of Chikombedzi. The questions were flexible and the confidence of the respondents was gained first to facilitate communication. This instrument had the following advantages:

The method was appropriate in the area with a highly illiterate population. Chikoko and Mhloyi (1995: 74) note it that the flexibility of interview questions is valuable when seeking information from children and the illiterates. The information could be easily collected from the Shangaan because clarifications were made to the respondents. Non-verbal responses were also observed during the interview and these were important in bringing out possible changes in the meaning of some aspects under probe. More-so, almost all interview questions were answered unlike questionnaires where some people did not respond to them due to boredom and lack of clarification.

Some interviewees were afraid that information collected could be used against them as a result of the influence of the Hlengwe-Shangaan cultural practices and ethnicity. Supporting the same point of view Cohen and Manion (1980: 245) point out that if the questioning is too deep respondents feel uneasy and adopt avoidance tactics, resulting in inadequate information. To reduce the degree of this setback, a clearance letter was produced and people were not asked to give their names. It was also difficult to compare the data obtained from the various respondents especially those aspects which were raised by few interviewees for example cooperative formation to boost the craft industry. However, the recommendations and factors besetting development which were only identified by a few respondents were not left out because they were valid.

Questionnaires

A questionnaire is a document distributed to be completed by the respondent in his/her own time. The technique had the following advantages: It was easy to contact the respondents even where the researcher could not physically reach because of transport costs and shortage of time. Some of the questionnaires were sent by mail. Maximum confidentiality was ensured given the fact that respondents were not required to state their names and felt comfortable to give the required information.

The data collected through questionnaires could be easily compared resulting in reliable generalizations. Factors besetting development and resources which can be utilized (Appendix **1**: Question 14 and 15) were easy to summarize and generalize because interviewees responded by ticking. The questionnaire has disadvantages and in support of this Tuckman (1978: 196) notes that questionnaires do not probe the respondents if they either give an inadequate answer or an interesting one which needs expansion. To reduce this limitation the questionnaires used included open ended questions, as well as asking for reasons where possible.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

Chikombedzi District Service Cerntre's Level of Socio-Economic Development

The researcher observed the shops, industries and services offered at Chikombedzi District Service Centre in an attempt to establish its socio-economic development level and these are presented in table **1**. Findings (Table 1) show that some of the services, which are expected at District Service Centres, are available at Chikombedzi but other important services do not exist.

Table 1: Services at Chikombedzi Rural District Service Centre

Retail Services	1 x General Dealers 4 x Eating houses 1 Night club 1 x Filling station 1 Council beer hall 1 x Farm supplies 2 x Butcheries 1 x P.G. Building Material shop
Communication	1 x Post Office 1 x Telephone 5 x Chiredzi and Masvingo buses 1 x Untarred bus terminus Per every 8 people two are connected to NET ONE Cellular phone network. Per every 8 people four are connected to ECONET Cellular phone network.
Agricultural Processing	5 x Grinding mills
Small Industries	4 x Welding shops 1 x Bakery 1 x Carpentry shop 2 x Freezit making shop 1 x Cutting and Designing shop 1 x Repair shop
Marketing and Financial	1 x Monthly cattle sales 1 x Post Office Saving Bank (P.O.S.B) 1 x Grain Marketing Board (G.M.B.) 1 x Green market
Administration	1 x Police Post 1 x Water Office
Other Social services	1 x Hospital 1 x Primary 1 x Secondary School 2 x Planned residential surburbs Churches- Catholic, Methodist, AFM, Seventh Day Adventist, Church of Christ

Retail services at Chikombedzi are few and generally offer poor services. As shown in Table **1** there are general dealers, nightclub, a council beer hall and two butcheries. Three eating houses, a filling station as well as a PG building material shop. Most of the general dealers sell only low order foods especially groceries. High order goods such as furniture and clothes are very few. Respondents revealed that people go to Chiredzi, Masvingo and South Africa for shopping because there is a limited range of goods at the Service Centre. It was noted that commodities such as soft drinks, sugar, cooking oil, freezits and beer are outstripped by demand. The government's aim to reduce inequalities between communal and commercial farming areas is not being fulfilled. The petrol and paraffin stations were not operating due to fuel crisis and the people were getting the supplies from the black market, which was very expensive.

Chikombedzi's communications system consist of untarred roads, a telephone line, a post office and serviced by buses from Masvingo, Chiredzi and one from Harare. Untarred roads indicate low levels of socio-economic development, inaccessibility and less importance of the District Service Centre because it is linked to the surrounding town by poor

roads. When the research was conducted there were three buses from Masvingo namely ZUPCO, Mhunga and Musasiwa. Two more buses namely ZUPCO and Mutsetse operated from Chiredzi but they are nor reliable.

However, on Wednesdays, about six buses reached Chikombedzi District Service Centre with other twenty or more passing the Centre to Sango Boarder Post using the route along the railway line. The major problem is that roads become muddy during the rain season and this affects the transport system.

The land line telephone system is also unreliable people cited the problem of limited telephone accessibility and the hospital, police and others rely on communication radios and the hospital makes use of the a fax machine. In 2010 the communication problem was eased when ECONET and NET ONE constructed cellular phone communication systems. Per every eight (8) people two (2) are connected to NET ONE Cellular phone network and Per every eight (8) people four (4) are connected to ECONET Cellular phone network.

As shown in table **1** there are only grinding mills under the agricultural processing sector. A District Service Centre in cattle rearing area is expected to have a beef canning industry or an abattoir as confirmed by Conyers that a good economic base supports growth but against this expectation, Chikombedzi District Service Centre does not have any of the two despite large numbers of livestock herds.

Small manufacturing industries at Chikombedzi include welding shops, cutting and designing shops, a carpentry shop, a bakery and a repair shop. These industries are very small employing four-five people on average. More of these industries for instances freezit making could have been established at Chikombedzi to meet its large demand. Business people said that they are mainly depending on Masvingo and Chiredzi town for manufactured products and individuals carry out their shopping in the respective towns due to shortages at Chikombedzi. This shortage is an indicator of low levels of socio-economic development at the District Service Centre because the growth pole concept is intended to create employment opportunities and improve rural life quality which has not been attained at the area of this study. Marketing and financial services at Chikombedzi include a green market which is always deserted, a temporary Grain Marketing Board depot, farm supplies, POSB and monthly cattle sells. Rural to Urban migration has not been curbed as people go to Chiredzi and Masvingo for banking facilities which should have been located at Chikombedzi to minimize transport costs.

The District Service Centre has a Police Post and water office under the administration sector. Administration workers run the council beer-hall and the water office but the latter service few people because most households have bucket pumps.

Other social services available are churches of various denominations (Table **1**), high and low density residential suburbs. Local pupils attend school at Chikombedzi Primary and Alpha Mpapa High schools offering classes up to advanced level. For boarding facilities pupils have to go far away schools, for instance Rundeand Malipati High Schools among others.

The health sector has a hospital with good infrastructure but at the time of the study there were no medical doctors, a centre that used to have two at a time. This was partly caused by the economic melt down and the interference by the

local people in the day to day running of the mission hospital. Health is among the social well being indexes identified by Hagget (1983: 508) and inadequate health facilities indicate a low levels of socio-economic development. Respondents complained that there was a high staff turn-over at the hospital resulting in few nurses and unsatisfactory services. Regardless, of the staff turn-over the hospital was well supplied in terms of drugs which come from outside Zimbabwe.

Generally Chikombedzi District Service Centre's socio economic development level is still low. There is no local television coverage and the same applies to radio stations as a result only those people who can afford satellite connections have access. For radios people connect easily to the Mozambican and South African stations. Cellular phones which connected before 2010 were those from South Africa controlled network. Therefore before 2009 the people could not communicate with people in other parts of Zimbabwe using cellular phones.

Factors Besetting the Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of Chikombedzi

Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect information on the factors which hamper the socio-economic development of Chikombedzi District Service Centre. Figure 2 shows a bar graph, which represents the findings.

Figure 2: <u>Major Factors Besetting Sustainable Development</u>
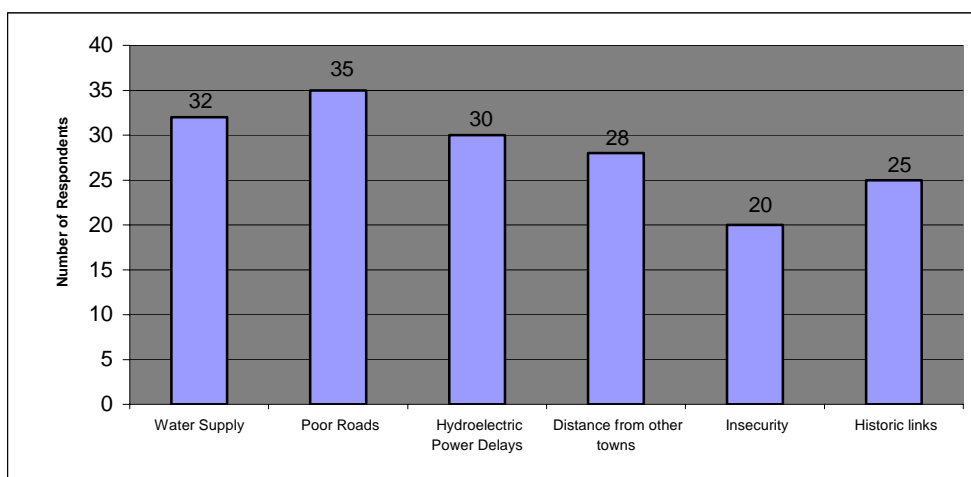
The bar graph shows the major factors, which beset the development of Chikombedzi. Thirty-five respondents indicated that poor roads hamper Chikombedzi's socio-economic development.

Chikombedzi is linked to Chiredzi and Rutenga by gravel roads which are one hundred and fifteen and one and twenty hundred kilometres away respectively. During the rainy season the gravel roads become muddy and impassable. There is no bridge over Runde River between Chiredzi and Chikombedzi because it was destroyed by cyclone Eline floods of early 2001. Up until 2010 the bridge had not been replaced or repaired due largely to negligence by government. It is also alleged that Parks and Wild-Life personnel is against the repair of the bridge on the grounds that vehicles using the road adjacent to the Gonarezhou National Park scare wild game. The poor state of roads resulted in unreliable transport system during the rain season. Business people are seriously disadvantaged because they face problems when transporting goods from Chiredzi and Masvingo, leading to shortage of basic commodities at the Service Centre and if

available they would be too expensive. During the rain season motorists have to travel to Chiredzi via Rutenga thereby making the journey too costly. Consequently, the transport problem is discouraging would be investors.

Thirty-two people identified water supply among the factors affecting growth (see Figure 1) of the area. Chikombedzi area has salty ground water except the hospital and residential suburbs which get their water from Mwenezi River. The salty water has limited industrial uses, as a raw material for instance, cannot be used for soft drink and freezit making. More-so there is no dam, which supply the service centre with water for industrial and domestic uses. Water drawn direct form Mwenezi River and from hydroelectric powered boreholes is insufficient and this has greatly contributed to low levels of socio-economic development.

Thirty respondents saddled the blame on hydro-electric power inadequacies due to the shortage of power in the whole country and lack of funding. Chikombedzi District Service Centre was electrified in the year 2001 and that was when more grinding mills and welding shops were established at the centre. Before that lack of electricity resulted in limited incentives to attract investors because industries require power for operation.

Twenty- eight people indicated that long distances form Chiredzi and Masvingo result in high transport costs and this raises commodity prices. Shortage of basic commodities was also common because they could not be easily replenished. This contradicts with Carr's (1987: 77) assertion that new towns which were located sufficiently far from established conurbations experienced growth. The distance should be reasonable because District Service Centres rely much on towns for some raw materials and other manufactured goods.

According to Figure **1**, twenty five people noted that historic links between South East Zimbabwe and South Africa discouraged development. They referred to the migrant labour system which favours the Hlengwe/Shangaan for their historic good reputation as miners. Such a development is robbing the area of its own able bodied labour who energetic to invest in their home area. The able bodied largely cross the Mozambican and South African boarders, which lack physical control barriers especially in summer to reduce external migration. The able bodied have then developed a tendency of returning home just as visitors during the public holidays without plans to invest in their home area. The historic links are negatively impacting on the population characteristics of the area. Chikombedzi's demographic structure is characterised by a small percentage of the working age and lack of labour and potential employees affect levels of development.

Insecurity was also cited among the factors hampering socio-economic development. From the findings, twenty people said that the centre has few investors due to insecurity. After independence there was continued destabilization by the Mozambique National Resistance Army (MNR) which carried out attacks killing civilians and looting from shops. Investors did not feel safe to invest in the area up to 1992 when warring parties in Mozambique resolved their dispute through the Rome-Accord. This was worsened by lack of black majority rule in South Africa up to 1994. This discouraged the development of the area as investors feared that apartheid South Africa could bombard some centres in the neighbouring countries. So as result of the Chikombedzi's proximity to South Africa investors shunned the area up until the country became independent in 1994.

Chikombedzi's socio-economic development is also affected by other factors which are presented in table 2. Respondents cited factors which include unfavourable climate, diseases, low levels of education, unreliable incomes sources, cattle rustling by Mozambicans and ethnicity.

Table 2 Other factors which beset Chikombedzi's sustainable socio-economic development

OTHER FACTORS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS
Low rainfall	5
Drought	2
High temperatures	4
Malaria and Cholera	11
Low levels of education	15
Reliable income sources	10
Ethinicity	8
Cattle Rustling by Mozambicans	14

Five people indicated that low unreliable rainfall coupled with frequent droughts as factors contributing to poor crop production (Table **2**). Chikombedzi has remained small, partly due to few agricultural processing industries of which there are grinding mills only. At times it takes up to five years without good harvests and more agricultural processing industries cannot be located at the Service Centre. Fourteen respondents cited cattle rustling by Mozambicans who came in Zimbabwe armed and kill those who try to resist. A case in point was of four members of the Sibanda family who were killed in cold blood in 2004 by armed Mozambicans.

Besides that, the area is very hot. Four respondents cited high temperature among other factors besetting development. Local investors and civil servants who are used to the conditions dominate Chikombedzi and people from outside said that they could not easily adapt.

The area is prone to (Table 2) malaria and cholera outbreaks, which were singled out by eleven and five people respectively as deterring qualified civil servants from operating in the area. The situation has been made worse by low levels of education in the area (Table **2**) due to their cultural practices and the need to seek employment South of the Limpopo at tender ages. The Hlengwe-Shangaan people do not consider formal education important when it comes to their cultural practices. Initiation ceremonies and circumcision held for adolescents' result in high drop out rates from school for marriage. This sharply cuts down the number of potential employees and investors in fields such as welding, carpentry, brick moulding and repair shops to mention, but a few.

Ten people blamed reliable income sources for low levels of development. The area has large livestock herds, which ensures breadwinners of reliable income sources thereby reducing their eagerness to look for employment at the centre. Labour supply is an important factor which is considered before establishing an industry in an area as noted by Carr (1987: 77) that Britain's first generation of new towns failed due to poor labour supply.

Tribalism has also been identified by ten people. There is conflict between the Shangaan and Karanga on resource management. The Shangaan expect high posts to be occupied by local civil servants and this is forcing doctors, nurses and teachers to leave the area. Business people from outside are also not accepted in the area. When computers were donated to Chikombedzi Primary school in 2003 the local community voted against the idea of sending teachers for

computer courses in Masvingo arguing that locals who are unemployed should be given the chance. Their attitude is negatively impacting on Chikombedzi District Service Centre's growth as indicated earlier that there are low levels of education, few people qualify to be sent for such courses.

Resources that can Ensure Sustainable Development

The area of Chikombedzi is rich in natural resources as shown in table **3**

Table 3**: Available Resources**

RESOURCE	CHARACTERISTICS
Soil	Fertile, good water holding capacity
Forest	Hardwoods for example Mopani and ironwood
Wild animals	Large numbers in and around Gonarezhou
Livestock	Large cattle herds, many goats
Minerals	Coal, natural gas
Mac'imbi	Abundant, harvested twice a year
Water supply	Large seasonal rivers
Reeds and ilala	Abundant in forests

The area has fertile soils which do not require the use of fertilizers and manure. In well watered years crops mature with three heavy rains if evenly distributed and this is so because the soil has a good water holding capacity. To this end sustainable crop production can be run especially if irrigation systems are kick-started.

Chikombedzi is in the South East Lowveld of Zimbabwe where large perennial rivers flow through (figure 1) for example Runde and Mwenezi. Ground water can be easily drawn because the water table is near the surface as evidenced by many bucket pumps. This presents an opportunity of introducing livelihood gardens and what is only needed is to capacity build the inhabitants on how the sustainable livelihood gardens are managed.

The area has vast forests containing Mopani and ironwood (Musimbiti or Msimbiri), in addition to the reeds and ilala plant. Mopani worms (Mac'imbi or Matamani) are also available and they are harvested twice a year in December and April. Good pastures in the area support large livestock herds, which are of good breeds. In addition the area is good for goat and sheep breeding. Sustainable livestock rearing is less expensive because there are good pastures and little supplementary feeds are required.

The area is also rich in wild animals, which are of a wide variety for instance elephants, lions and kudus in Gonarezhou National Park and the surrounding farms and these attract tourists. However, snaring and poaching are rife a development which endangers wild game. Chiredzi South has coal and natural gas reserves in the vicinity of Chikombedzi. These minerals are important sources of energy which if exploited, could provide reliable energy to Chikombedzi and its surroundings as a drive to the establishment of sustainable projects in the area.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

After carrying out the study, it was revealed that the service centre's level of development is still very low. The centre consists of few shops, which do not offer a variety of high order goods. Some of the services which are expected at

District Service Centres are not available. There are no banks, marketing facilities no local television and radio coverage, the bus terminus is not tarred and small manufacturing industries are very few.

The growth of the service centre is hampered by poor roads, long distance from other towns, insecurity, historic links and delayed hydro-electric power installation. Some of these factors tally with what has been reviewed, for example, infrastructure services such as roads and electricity, but the factor on distance from town centres contradicts with the reviewed literature.

Other factors, which were identified, include unfavourable climatic conditions diseases, tribalism, reliable income sources and low levels of education. Few people listed source of these factors, but have considerable effect on growth and are unique, especially tribalism, historic links and reliable income sources. Chikombedzi is a natural resource rich area.

The researcher's assumption that a good social and political environment is crucial for the development of district service centres has been proved correct because ethnicity and political instability are among the factors which are besetting development. However, the other one, which spells out that a natural resource rich area is ideal for development, has been proved wrong because Chikombedzi District Service Centre has not witnessed significant socio-economic development despite its being laden with resources.

Recommendations: The Road to Sustainable Development

After investigating the socio-economic development of Chikombedzi District Service Centre, recommendations which could assist in bringing about sustainable development to Chikombedzi and other centres were made.

The service centre should be provided with tarred roads. The construction of highways from Chiredzi and Rutenga will help to ease transport problems, which are encountered during the rainy season. The Rutenga route would be the most ideal and reliable because it does not cut across large rivers. In a drive to achieve sustainable development it is vital to construct large dams in the area for example across Runde and Mwenezi Rivers to establish reliable water reservoirs for domestic and industrial uses. At the time of this study there was no dam to supply the service centre and this was a hindrance to industrial expansion as well as the introduction of irrigation schemes since water to service Chikombedzi centre is drawn directly from the Mwenezi River. The introduction of irrigation schemes in the area taking advantage of the gentle terrain, rich soils and big rivers is a positive move towards Chikombedzi's socio economic development. Crop cultivation under irrigation would reduce the risks caused by droughts and low unreliable rainfall patterns. This would ensure that the Grain Marketing Board has constant grain supplies instead of being a temporary depot. More agricultural processing industries would be located at the centre bringing sustainable development and the community would be assured of income to ameliorate their social well being.

While working on the production of thermal and solar power, the amount of hydroelectric power allocated for the centre should be increased so that all domestic and industrial activities can be sustained. Furthermore, as planned Chikombedzi's telephone system should be maintained at the 2010 levels or above for the community to be assured of reliable phone calls for business, leisure and in cases of emergency. In the world of globalisation, a good telephone

system lures people to stay because they will be well connected. However, it is vital to note that the cellular phone service providers indicated that network challenges would be a theme of the past by the end of 2011.

It is essential for the government to intervene for instance by establishing abattoirs to develop Chikombedzi's beef industry. More-so, there is need to provide security especially against Mozambican cattle rustlers. The challenge of cattle rustlers should be accorded the seriousness it deserves. After a deeper scrutiny on the challenges faced by the Ministry of Home Affairs it might be critical to deploy the army to curb the menace caused by armed Mozambican cattle rustlers. This is imperative given the fact that armed Mozambicans were not disarmed in totality following the end of the conflict between RENAMO and Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO). Industrial agglomeration would then come into play thereby increasing employment opportunities at the centre. Resources, which have been highlighted, should be utilized to benefit the people.

Investors should also take advantage of the tourism industry in the area by establishing a hospitality industry, which caters for the needs of tourists visiting Gonarezhou National Park. More-so, stakeholders need to consider seriously the proposed multi-billion dollar Great Limpopo Trans Frontier Park (Sunday Mail, August 10, 2003) linking Southern Africa's three vast national parks in South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. This will bring a lot of sustainable development including employment creation for the benefit of Chikombedzi in particular and the whole country at large.

The exploitation of Forestry is of importance as a foundation for extraction of Mopani and Ironwood timber found in the area. During the course of this study the timber lay unexploited. Reeds and ilala are available in these forests but are only exploited by few individuals who make mates, hats and baskets. They exchange their products for clothes and grain or go to Mozambique to sell them. Organising the locals into basketry cooperatives is ideal and it would become easier to gain access to large local and external markets.

The council should introduce legal control measures to raise revenue from Mopani worms. In addition, it is essential to locate a processing industry at Chikombedzi centre because at the time of this research the worms were sun or fire dried by individuals at their homes. Investors should also be encouraged to mine coal and natural gas reserves in Chiredzi South in the Sengwe-Gezane area as a strategy towards sustainable development of the area. Mining improves infrastructure of an area since roads are need to transport mined minerals to the market and indirectly this would benefit Chikombedzi Centre. Added to this, natural gas and coal are important sources of power, which can be used for industrial and domestic purposes.

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