

Bottlenecks to Integrated Rural Development Planning in Zimbabwe: A Focus on the Midlands Province

Hahlani, C.D

*Department of Development Studies,
Midlands State University,
Gweru, Zimbabwe*

Abstract

The study sought to identify factors hindering effective integrated development planning in Zimbabwe. In this study specific focus was on the Midlands province, one of the 8 rural administrative provinces of the country. The study was largely qualitative in research approach. Data were collected mainly through interviews conducted among a total of 66 key informants. The key informants interviewed were purposively sampled from a population of development agencies operating at both national and sub-national levels in the country. The results of the study showed that lack of a shared vision among stakeholders and stakeholder frustration due to non-implementation of plans formulated in an integrated fashion and style have been among the major factors hindering an effective integrated approach to development planning in Zimbabwe.

Key Words: bottlenecks, integrated, rural development planning, Midlands Province

Introduction

Integrated rural development management is a multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary approach to development management. To integrate is to combine parts into a whole, look at all the circumstances that might affect a project or plan in a holistic manner, and coordinate all stakeholders and role players (Geyer, 2006:5). Integrated development planning therefore entails a holistic and comprehensive look at all aspects of any subject under planning.

Planning on the other hand is an important managerial function in any field of human endeavour, and perhaps the first among other equally important functions of management such as controlling, reporting and human resourcing. In rural development management, planning or more precisely development planning, has over the years gradually shifted from being sectoral to being integrated in its approach. This paradigm shift in planning has largely been necessitated by the failure of the traditional, sectoral and purely technical planning approaches of the pre-1970s to bring about sustainable rural development in less developed countries. Thus, an integrated approach to rural development emerged in the 1970s as donors and governments broadened their understanding of rural problems leading to a realization by the same donors and governments of the need to adopt a multi-pronged approach to interlocking (rural) problems (World Bank, 2000:7).

Many African countries have adopted the integrated rural development planning approach upon attaining political independence as a way of doing away with the technical, top-down and unresponsive planning systems of the colonial dispensation. In Tanzania, integrated rural development planning came during the formulation of the Third 5-Year Plan (1976-1981) when the Prime Minister's office directed that the development plan was to be based on projects and programmes from the regions and districts in the form of village integrated development programs with the main idea being to avoid thinking sectorally so as to achieve both vertical and horizontal coordination in development planning (Mhoshia, 1988: 93). In Botswana District Development Committees were set up in 1979 to coordinate development in the districts (Molebatsi, 1988). In countries where integrated development planning has been associated with decentralization, the approach has also been seen as a way of increasing popular participation (Conyers & Hills, 1984). In all the above cases rural integrated development planning has largely been seen as important in fostering better coordination in the formulation and implementation of development plans.

Like in almost all other African countries, the colonial public management machinery in Zimbabwe was typically sectoral, vertical, top-down and centralized. The machinery was thus geared more towards maintaining 'law and order' than it was interested in bringing about real development of the indigenous Africans, the majority of whom resided in the rural areas. It is because of the imperative to reverse this sectoral, top-down, anti-participatory and unresponsive planning system of the colonial dispensation that, at independence in 1980, the Government of Zimbabwe decided to embrace an integrated rural development planning paradigm in its noble intention to develop the, hitherto, neglected rural areas. To consummate this integrated rural development planning thinking, the then Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, issued a directive now famously referred to simply as "The Prime Minister's Directive of 1984". The directive issued in January 1984 was aimed at defining public administrative structures at provincial and district levels and the relationships and channels of communication between all participants at provincial and district levels in order to replace the sectoral approach to planning and achieve coordinated development of the provinces and districts of Zimbabwe (Rambanapasi, 1990). Apart from strengthening coordination of development at sub-national levels, the directive which was also known as the Prime Minister's Directive on Provincial Councils and Administration was also aimed at ensuring the effective use of scarce resources at both provincial and district levels (Wekwete, 1990).

Thus, although also geared towards fostering decentralized development planning, the major focus of the directive was on coordination. This obsession with coordination was not an obsession with coordination as an end in itself, but coordination as a means to achieve the higher-order objective of integration. In

line with this coordination thrust, an elaborate array of hierarchical structures were concomitantly put in place at provincial, district, ward and village levels in the form of Provincial Development Committees (PDCs), District Development Committees (DDC), Ward Development Committees (WADCOs) and Village Development Committees (VIDCOs), respectively and in that strict descending order. While these administrative structures have remained in place and ever intact up to the time of conducting this study, their operational effectiveness in delivering a truly integrated approach to rural development planning, however, needs interrogation.

A clear and authoritative policy directive notwithstanding, the adoption of the integrated rural development planning approach or style has in reality failed to bring about optimum synergy and robust team work in development planning at the sub-national level in Zimbabwe. Development plans, programmes and projects at provincial and district levels in the country have continued to be formulated, prepared, financed and implemented largely along sectoral lines, with particular agencies in the form of line or sector-ministries, departments and civil society organizations paying scant attention and regard to what happens in other agencies.

While structural media for coordination in the form of Rural District Development Committees (RDDCs) and Provincial Development Committees (PDCs) exist and, again, while these committees continue to regularly meet and produce district and provincial development plans, the whole process has, however, practically failed to bring about synergy and holism in sub-national development planning. To begin with, there has been discord in the actual practice of development planning at these levels with a multiplicity of government departments and agencies, in reality, taking up a number of similar but essentially separate approaches, a situation that has been further complicated by aid agencies and non-governmental organizations that have been piloting their own approaches to development planning on the back of their projects (Hadingham, 2003:11). Thus in practice planning guidelines have largely remained agency-and-project-specific, with different agencies adopting different approaches for different programmes and projects. In the case of government, staff of line ministries have continued to mainly take instructions from their line superiors (Chakaipa, 2010:45). This has also been the case with non-governmental organizations or civil society organizations whose staff have, in the main, looked up to their headquarters and donors for guidance and direction. The net effect of this discord has been paralysis and glaring gaps in the implementation of integrated sub-national development plans, rendering sub-national integrated development planning in Zimbabwe a mere academic or ritual exercise.

The main research question guiding this study was what major factors have militated against an effective integrated approach to development planning in the Midlands

region of Zimbabwe? Underpinning this overarching question were four composite sub-questions, the first of which was to what extent were development agencies able to attend integrated planning meetings in the region and what major factors, if any at all, have affected meeting attendance in the region? The other sub-question begging an answer in this study was whether and to what extent did development agencies in the region have a shared vision and common priorities on development in the region since without such a commonality of purpose integration becomes difficult to foster? The third sub-question to ask was to what extent were integrated development plans implemented in the region under study and what major issues have affected implementation of these plans and to what effect on stakeholders' moral and verve?

On the back of the above research questions, the purpose of this study was therefore to identify major factors militating against an effective integrated approach to development planning at sub-national level in Zimbabwe with a specific focus on the Midlands province. In identifying these factors, special emphasis was placed on the integration of different agencies at the district-level. The study also looked at integration at the provincial level since all district planning efforts in the form of projects and programmes have eventually been ending up, and were indeed consolidated, at the provincial council. The study was also interested in what obtained at the national level in terms of development planning since the local state, universally, has little autonomy and specificity in that it is simply part of the whole state system (Cooke, 1983:181). Since sub-national development structures in Zimbabwe have essentially been creatures and to a large extent dependents of the national government it therefore follows that decisions made at the national level have, naturally always had a strong bearing on whatever obtained at the sub-national level.

In more specific terms the study was, among other objectives, aimed at investigating the extent to which integrated structures at provincial and district levels in the study area were active with regards to attendance at integrated planning meetings by agencies in the area as well as finding out the major factors working against attendance at these meetings. The study was also aimed at finding out the existence, among stakeholders, of a shared vision and common priorities on the development of the area in which they operated. Lastly, the study also specifically sought to establish the extent to which integrated development plans in the study area had managed to attract funding and also the degree to which other factors, technical or otherwise, had affected implementation of these plans as well as finding out the extent to which plan implementation or lack thereof has had on the morale of stakeholders. Implementation is important because without implementation planning becomes an exercise in futility. A plan that cannot be implemented is, *ipso facto*, good for nothing.

Scope (or focus) and de-limitation of the study

The researcher chose, for this case study, the Midlands province among other provinces of Zimbabwe for a couple of reasons. The first reason has had to do

with convenience. The researcher resided and worked in the region during the period the study was undertaken, thereby making data collection relatively easy and cost-effective. The other reason why the Midlands province was chosen was because of the province's strategic physical location at the centre of the country, which location has made the province the country's socio-economic melting pot. The province was therefore seen as more representative of the country's development planning challenges than any other Province in the country and therefore a relatively good choice for the study.

While membership of the Provincial Development Committee technically consisted of government ministries and departments, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), parastatals and private sector organizations; only government agencies and NGOs approximated the researcher's definition and understanding of development agencies. Since private sector organizations ordinarily do not provide public goods and are in the main driven by the profit motive such organizations therefore failed to measure up to the researcher's conceptualization of development agencies and therefore, from the perspective of this research, were not worth of consideration. Besides, information gleaned from the Midlands PDC secretariat indicated that private sector organizations rarely attended PDC meetings and on the few occasions they attended these meetings, it would usually be for purposes of presenting special reports or answer to specific questions of interest to the public.

The study also limited itself to provincial and district level structures and deliberately left out sub-district level structures at the level of wards and villages in the form of Ward Development Committees (WARDCOs) and Village Development Committees (VIDCOs), respectively. This was because provincial and district level structures in Zimbabwe have had a longer history and were, during the period of conducting this study, more operationally vibrant than sub-district/community-level development structures in the country. In addition, the sub-district level structures also posed a distinct and uniquely interesting development planning challenge as they represented a more novel, spectacular and overly-ambitious attempt at community-level planning, thereby warranting a separate study of their own.

Literature Review

John D. Montgomery (1981:2) observes that what distinguishes the integrated rural development function from other governmental functions in the rural sector is that it brings diverse functions together administratively in order to achieve synergies and efficiencies that are not likely to occur as a result of their mere co-existence in a region. Integration, according to Christopher Colclough (1993:19) should not be viewed as the amalgamation of existing sectoral ministries as, equally, there would remain a need for sectoral planning units in each of these ministries working on technical aspects of sectoral policy, and preparing projects for submission to the centre but whose linkages would need to be considerably strengthened and co-ordinated by a central human development planning unit

located in one of the central ministries. Thus, emphasis here lies in co-ordination by a central planning unit for the purpose of achieving synergy and efficiency. Literature on integrated development planning also recognizes that, in its practical form, development is multi-sectoral or inter-sectoral on one dimension and multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary on the other. Therefore for development planning to be effective it has to draw on expertise and “inputs from several different sectors, agencies or disciplines” with each expert from a different discipline having a role to play (Conyers & Hills, 1984:201). In other words, just like in any system, in development, what happens to one agency or sector has ramifications on the whole.

Scholars have also observed that while a good approach in principle, integrated rural development planning is however in practice beset with a myriad of challenges. One of the main challenges to this approach has been lack of a shared vision among stakeholders often leading to conflicts in regional development. Chatiza (2010:1) for instance observes that Zimbabwe in the independence era just like in the pre-independence period has largely been a terrain for sub-national governance conflicts. Besides lack of a shared vision effective integration is also viewed as having largely been hampered by lack of finances on the part of sub-national development agencies. In Zimbabwe, the Provincial Council, a body which superintends over development at the provincial level, did not have a budget of its own and as a result the plans produced by the Provincial Council have usually gathered dust as a result of lack of implementation (Chakaipa, 2010:35). Indeed all the planning in the world will count for nothing if there is not enough money to pay for it (Geyer,2006:18). Lack of a strong link between project planning at the sub-national level on the one hand and the centrally-controlled budgetary process on the other hand has therefore been largely responsible for the lack of implementation of district level projects (Mutizwa-Mangiza, 1990). The problem of poor funding has also been noted in Tanzania’s integrated rural development programme where too little money was allocated to the regions leading to both slow and incomplete implementation of projects (Mhoshu, 1990).

Another challenge to integrated rural development planning noted by scholars has been organizational. According to Conyers & Hills (1984) integration has been particularly problematic where geographical boundaries do not coincide with those of normal political and administrative areas as in the case of many river basins. Such scenarios have given rise to the problem of poor coordination among agencies resulting in overlapping of action or no action at all (Mhoshu, 1990).

From the stock of scholarly knowledge reviewed above, it becomes clear that an integrated approach to rural development planning has the potential to generate high development returns. However, from the same stock of knowledge, it has also become clear that an integrated planning culture has, in practice largely been difficult to foster mainly due to lack of a shared vision, organizational weaknesses

and funding bottlenecks. However even with well funded donor sponsored projects challenges have still been noted. A good example is that of the Integrated Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programme (IRWSSP) implemented in Zimbabwe in the 1980s to the 1990s. Clearly evident in this programme was the “disjointed and uncoordinated pattern of implementation, with different agencies using different approaches and technology alternatives in different areas” (Mutizwa-Mangiza, 1991:309).

The major theory underpinning this study is the general systems theory, a theory based on the notion of wholeness and conceives any phenomenon as one monolithic system consisting of regularly interacting or interrelating groups of activities/parts which, when taken together, form a new whole. One common element characterizing all systems is that knowing one part of a system enables one to know something about another part (Rakotsoane and Rokotsoane 2007 : 41). In a system, the different parts are interdependent and contribute to the survival of the whole (Gwirayi, 2010:10). Consonant to the systems theory, a development area or region should, accordingly, be looked at as a one whole system on which different stakeholders or agencies interrelate for the survival of all as a whole. It is this thinking which has given rise to the systems approach to planning of which integrated rural development planning is part. This study is also informed by the paradigm of post-modernism. Post-modernism subscribes to the notion that there is no fixed, commonly understood external social reality, only images, fragmented views and performances (Cunliffe, 2008:15). In line with this thinking the role of an integrated planning approach would therefore be to bring together these disparate images, fragmented views and performances into one coherent system so as to ensure sustainable development in an area.

Methodology

The research was a case study focusing on the Midlands province of Zimbabwe. The qualitative research method was mainly used in this study. This method helped the researcher to gain an insight into the feelings, perceptions and experiences of a few but well informed respondents in the form of heads of development agencies operating in the study area. Though to a limited extent, the quantitative approach was also used. This approach helped in determining the prevalence and frequency of particular issues, attitudes, opinions and perceptions with regards to integration in the study area.

Data were collected mainly through personal interviews with key informants in the study population. In carrying out the interviews, the researcher made use of the instrumentation of semi-structured questionnaires which consisted of both closed and open-ended questions with a bias towards open-ended and flexible questions. The few closed questions in the questionnaire were designed to help the researcher to identify and quantify frequencies and distribution of particular

responses on particular issues of study interest. Open-ended questions on the other hand were designed to provide respondents with a fairly unlimited leeway to express themselves and, in the process, be able to bring out their emotions, feelings and opinions on issues under investigation.

At the provincial level, key informants interviewed during the study included selected members of the Provincial Development Committee (PDC) and at the district level the interviews targeted selected members of the various sub-committees of the 8 RDCs in the Midlands province. At the national level, the researcher targeted representatives of the three sector ministries that were considered key actors in the planning and implementation of rural development in the country. The three identified ministries were the Ministry of Local Government and Urban Development, the Ministry of Economic Planning and Investment Promotion; as well as the Ministry of Finance.

Representatives of provincial-based organizations interviewed during the study were selected from a sample frame provided by the provincial administrator's office while different district administrators' offices in the various districts also provided sample frames for their respective districts. All these sample frames consisted of all organizations officially recognised as members of the development committee of that particular area. In all the samples provided, three dominant clusters emerged in the form of the NGO cluster, the government line ministry cluster and the quasi-governmental organization (parastatal) cluster.

A close scrutiny of all the sample frames provided to the researcher revealed that not more than twenty government ministry representatives were members of the PDC. The same scenario applied to all the eight RDDCs in the provinces none of which had a membership of government ministries exceeding twenty in number. While the Government of Zimbabwe Website (2011) lists a total of 32 government ministries as constituting the ministerial complement in Zimbabwe, only 20 ministries have been found to have a presence at sub-national level with one of the 20 being the Ministry of Defence which is not very active in mainstream development activities at this level. The NGO and parastatals clusters each did not have membership to the development committees exceeding ten at either provincial or district level. In proportion to the membership size of each cluster in all the committees, be it at either the provincial level or district level, the researcher then settled for a sample size of at least 2 government ministries, 1 NGO and 1 quasi-governmental organization. These sample sizes being at least 10% of the total study population in each area was viewed as representative enough to yield valid data particularly given that the study was more qualitative than quantitative in its approach. As with all studies with a qualitative bias the main focus was therefore not on the number of units in a population studied but, rather, on the depth of investigation and multiplicity of issues covered in each of the chosen units.

Research data were collected during a period of about 5 months between 16 September 2010 and 24 March 2011. In collecting data, informants were randomly selected from the three main clusters described above. During the process of data gathering a total of 66 research participants were interviewed as follows : Mberengwa District (10), Zvishavane District (8), Gokwe North District (6), Gokwe South District (6), Mvuma District (9), Kwekwe District (6), Shurugwi District (6), Gweru District (6), Provincial-Level (6) and National-Level (3). The data collected from these key informants were then organized into different categories on the basis of emerging discrete themes and in a way that attempted to answer the key research questions of the study. While data analysis in this study was largely narrative, some quantitative analytical inferences were also made in an attempt to explain particular relationships among key study variables.

Results and Discussion

(a) District and provincial planning processes

The study showed that the three forms of meetings dominant at the district level were the Full Council, Rural District Development Committee (RDDC) and Rural District Council (RDC) sub-committee meetings in that hierarchical order. At the bottom of the hierarchy were the RDC sub-committee meetings chaired by one of the councilors for the district elected by fellow councilors to preside over the business of that particular sub-committee. Sub-committees were formed along key development sectors like Social Services; Agriculture and Natural resources; Finance; Roads and Works, among other sectors, depending on the space economy of the district in question. A sub-committee brought together all district-based agencies with an interest in the sector concerned, be they governmental, para-governmental or non-governmental agencies. The sub-committee level was a very important level since it is at this level that development plans were formally formulated on the basis of profiles of needs coming from sub-district community structures (wards and villages). The formulated plans were then forwarded to the RDDC for further consolidation before onward presentation to, and approval by, the Full Council meeting. The RDDC was the main technical and co-ordinating committee responsible for collating and consolidating development plan submissions from different sub-committees and was chaired by the District Administrator (DA), an employee of the Ministry of Local Government and Urban Development while the Full Council was presided over by the Rural District Council Chairperson for the district, a non-technical person elected from, and by, a team of councilors themselves on the other hand elected by the general populace as its representatives to the district council.

A more or less similar process obtained at the provincial level where plans in the form of projects and programmes formulated, consolidated and approved at the district level were further scrutinized by provincial inter-agency sub-committees made up of interested sector agencies at that spatial level. Once assessed for feasibility at the sub-committee level the plans were then forwarded to the Provincial

Development Committee (PDC). The PDC, chaired by the Provincial Administrator (PA), just like the RDDC, consolidated all the projects and programmes brought to it from all provincial sub-committees. From the PDC the consolidated development plan would then be submitted to the Provincial Council (PC) for approval. As already alluded to above, the PC chaired by the Provincial Governor and Resident Minister and made up of various elected and appointed people representing different interests was the supreme policy making body in the province.

(b) Stakeholder attendance at integrated planning meetings

While the study found the level of attendance at committee meetings across all study areas to be generally good, the actual attendance rates fluctuated from one area to the other with specific reasons behind attendance at these meetings or lack thereof equally varying from area to area. Satisfactory attendance rates were generally reported for Gokwe South, Gokwe North and Mvuma districts, and the province itself. For Mberengwa, Kwekwe, Zvishavane, Shurugwi and Gweru districts less-than-satisfactory attendance rates were reported. Out of the 9 areas studied, 5 recorded less-than-satisfactory attendances.

In Mberengwa and Shurugwi the major reason given for the poor attendance at co-ordination meetings, particularly by government officers, was distance. Full Council and RDC sub-committee meetings were ordinarily held at RDC offices. In Mberengwa, for instance, the RDC offices were reportedly located at Mataga District Service Centre, a distance of more than 70 kilometres (of largely untarred road) away from the DA's office where most district-level government workers were domiciled. As for Shurugwi, it was learnt that RDC offices were located at Tongogara District Service Centre in Nhema communal area several kilometres away from Shurugwi town where most government departments were located. This obviously made travelling to meeting venues difficult for most government officers especially given the inadequate stock of vehicles among most government ministries. In the case of Zvishavane a plethora of reasons were given for poor attendance. One of the reasons given was that of lack of motivation among agency staff most of whom saw the meetings as a sheer waste of time as plans discussed during these meetings were rarely implemented, a reason also cited in Gweru. For Zvishavane it was again pointed out that many agencies had no projects on the ground and therefore with nothing to present at these meetings, these agencies usually failed to see any plausible reason for attending the meetings.

While the reasons for non-attendance given above in Gweru and Zvishavane equally applied to Kwekwe, it was also noted that for Kwekwe the personality issue also came into play. One respondent intimated that agencies were usually invited on the basis of personal informal relations and not because of the offices these

individuals held. For example under the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare there were three distinct departments operating at the district level, namely the Department of Labour Relations, the Department of Labour and Employment Services and, the Department of Social Services. However, due to high staff turnover, officers in the Department of Labour Relations were hardly personally well known to meeting convenors and as such were usually not invited to most meetings. The department also found itself not belonging to any of the various development planning sub-committees in the district, an administrative oversight that smacked of a serious error of omission.

While almost all respondents in all the study areas concurred that schedules of district development planning meetings were always availed to stakeholders at the beginning of each planning year, 5 out of all the 9 sub-national areas studied indicated that the calendar of meetings was rarely followed. In these 5 areas it was pointed out that meetings were usually called at too short notices for people to reschedule already planned programmes, leading to low attendances. In addition, the issue of material incentives also featured as one of the major reasons behind non-attendance by some committee members. Although explicitly mentioned only in 3 districts, the need for material incentives in the form of lunch money and sitting allowances was very apparent in all districts. For instance, in Mberengwa a district council official pointed out that the issue of lack of transport cited by most government agencies was a lame excuse as the RDC always made available a vehicle to ferry people from the DA's Mberengwa Offices to Mataga District Service Centre for any meeting and yet only a few government officers bothered to make use of the facility preferring to use the facility only for meetings during which sitting allowances or per diems were provided. This, it was also learnt, had been the case with donor-sponsored meetings which, because of provision of allowances to participants, had reportedly been attracting full attendances almost all the time. In Zvishavane a District Development Fund (DDF) officer also corroborated this observation when he intimated that attendance at RDC meetings improved when the Runde RDC started providing meeting participants with lunch in the form of a "soft drink and a meat pie".

Attendance at district integrated development planning meetings were also affected by the fact that the operational boundaries of some agencies did not always coincide with administrative boundaries. Agencies mainly affected by this boundary incongruence were the Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA) and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife, among others. ZINWA for instance operated on the basis of major river systems known as catchments. For example, the Gweru ZINWA office located in the Midlands province was under the Sanyati Catchment Area. However, this catchment area stretched beyond the Midlands province to cover parts of Mashonaland West and Matebeleland South provinces while at the same time leaving out Zvishavane district which, administratively,

was under the Midlands province but, in catchment area terms, was under the Runde catchment area. The same also applied for the Department of National Parks and Wildlife whose Kwekwe office in the Midlands catered not only for the Midlands province but also parts of Matebeleland North and Mashonaland West provinces. Further to the problem of boundary incongruence, some agencies such as the Zimbabwe Statistical Agency also did not have offices in the districts making attendance at district-level meetings difficult.

Reasons for attending integrated development planning meetings also varied from agencies to agencies. Government and para-governmental agencies generally felt duty-bound to attend these development planning meetings as failure to do so would be viewed as a form of misconduct in terms of the Provincial Councils and Administration Act (Chapter 29:11) and Rural District Councils Act (Chapter 29:16). Non-governmental agencies on the other had unanimously indicated that integrated planning meetings were important mainly to the extent that they provided them with a platform to solicit for stakeholder support in the implementation of their projects and programmes.

(c) Shared vision and shared priorities on development

The study found no strong evidence of a shared vision among stakeholders in the study areas as demonstrated by the non-existence of strategic plans and shared priorities on development in most areas. Where strategic plans existed either the plans were not up to date or most stakeholders were not aware of their existence. For the most part, respondents only made reference to the 3-year Rolling Plans, and not strategic plans as such. These in reality were mere lists of projects lined up for possible future implementation in a period of three ensuing years. The plans were called 'rolling' in that should a project failed to secure funding during one particular year it would be rolled over to the following year for possible funding. It was also not clear as to when the rolling process would end. An interview with one stakeholder in Mberengwa revealed that one project i.e the Mataga Government Complex had been rolling ever since the 1980s without any implementation due to lack of funding.

In the 9 sub-national areas studied, an authoritative affirmation on the existence of a strategic plan was only made in Gokwe South, Kwekwe and at the Province although in Gokwe South a representative of one agency confessed ignorance about the existence of such a plan. In Mberengwa the strategic plan in place was found to be very outdated as it covered the period 1992 to 2000. In Mvuma and Gweru the Assistant DA and DA respectively were not very sure about the existence of such plans. In Zvishavane, Shurugwi and Gokwe North the process of coming up with a strategic plan was said to be underway although one respondent for Gokwe North intimated that, due to lack of resources, only a few handpicked agencies were involved in the strategic planning process. It should however be noted that a

strategic plan by its very nature must be participatory and all-inclusive. This would help the plan to capture the collective vision of all stakeholders. Therefore involving only a few players is not, from a strategic planning point of view, proper and ideal.

There has also been evidence of lack of stakeholder consensus on development priorities. When asked about what they thought were development priority sectors in their areas of geographical operation, respondents tended to give priority to programme areas under their operational mandates. For example the District Development Fund (DDF) prioritized roads and boreholes while the Department of Physical Planning viewed spatial development planning initiatives as the province's area of priority. However, an interesting exception to this general bias was Gokwe North where there was a near-consensus on water as the district's area of development priority.

(d) Implementation of projects and programmes in the Midlands province

While plans continued to be produced the study revealed that very little was happening in the area of plan implementation in the province. Research participants in all the 10 study areas at both national and sub-national level cited lack of adequate funding as the major bottleneck to plan implementation. It was learnt that in the past financing of regional-based projects was largely the responsibility of central government under what was known as the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP). However, due to the economic crisis that gripped the country from 2000 to 2008 PSIP support had, reportedly, virtually not been forthcoming. Indeed all the 8 RDCs in the province revealed that they had last received PSIP financial support when the country was still using the Zimbabwean dollar and that no financial support had been rendered to these local authorities under PSIP since the adoption of the multi-currency system in January 2009. The only financial support the RDCs reported to have had received from the central government were road construction and maintenance funds disbursed through the Zimbabwe National Road Authority (ZINARA) and generated from toll gate fees paid by motorists for the use of major state roads in the country. While going some way, these funds were not that significant with field data showing Gokwe North, Gokwe South and Mvuma receiving amounts of only U\$ 28 000.00, US\$ 46 134.00 and U\$56 000.00 respectively for the 2010 financial year.

Due to lack of central government support RDCs had to rely on local sources of revenue mainly in the form of development levy, unit tax and, to a lesser extent, proceeds from council self help income generating projects. In Gokwe South, for example, 60% of the RDC's revenue was said to come from development levy. In both Gokwe North and Gokwe South taxes levied from the not less than 8 cotton companies operating in these cotton-growing districts was also cited as a major source of revenue. In Zvishavane and Mvuma royalties and fees paid by miners operating in the districts reportedly constituted a significant portion

of RDC revenue in these districts. However, local revenue collection had not been quite optimal. For example, it was reported that rural households in Gweru district had been finding it difficult to raise the U\$2 annual development levy charged per households by the Vungu RDC. In Mvuma, Chirumanzu RDC reported resistance in paying unit tax on land by newly-resettled farmers as a major limiting factor to optimum revenue collection in the district. In a budget proposal presented during the 111th Gokwe South Full Council Meeting on 26 November 2010, it was reported that the RDC had managed to collect only US\$ 70 834 out of the US\$ 93 936 targeted for 2010 with only one month left before the year came to an end (Gokwe Rural District Council, 2010:3). During the study, all rural district councils complained of lack of funds to acquire equipment such as tractors, graders and motor vehicle necessary in implementing development projects a situation aptly summed up by the Gokwe South RDC in a budget statement when it pointed out that: "The council's fleet is now depleted with (only) one truck and a tractor available for use in service delivery" (Gokwe South Rural District Council, 2010:8).

Apart from but related to finances or lack thereof has been the problem of lack of technical capacity to implement projects and programmes in the province. Out of all the 8 RDCs in the region only Runde in Zvishavane boasted of having managed to employ a full-time Engineer. Mberengwa had one on contract and cited lack of accomodation and other perks as factors working against the attraction of a resident and permanent Engineer. The rest of the local authorities depended on technicians in handling projects whose implementation required the expertise of qualified engineers. While one research participant in Mvuma tried to downplay this problem by pointing out that the district had provincial-level cadres like water engineers and civil engineers for dam and road construction respectively to fall back on, participants elsewhere cited lack of funds to bring this critical mass of technical personnel down to districts as the major challenge. In addition, a Gweru-based research participant with CARITAS, a development arm of the Catholic Church, pointed out that the available cadre of technical personnel in the employ of government generally lacked experience as the experienced officers were easily lured to the better-paying private sector. It is perhaps because of this deficiency in technical expertise that we had in some districts a low absorptive capacity in the utilization of development funds. For example it was reported in the Gokwe South RDC budget proposal for 2011 that out of the US\$ 93 936.00 set aside in the 2010 budget for ward capital projects only US\$23 382.00 had been utilized (Gokwe South Rural District Council, 2010:3).

Lack of implementation apparently also emanated from lack of a clear link between the sub-national and national development planning processes. In an interview with the researcher, an Acting Chief Economist with the Ministry of Finance described the whole planning approach in the country as "fragmented

and unsystematic" a situation which was made worse by what the economist referred to as lack of "institutional capacity" among line ministries. While the Ministry of Economic Planning and Investment Promotion was expected to produce the policy framework guiding the identification of projects and programmes of investment priority in the country nation-wide, a senior official in the Ministry's department of Economic Affairs and Modelling could not say as to which office at the national level integrated development plans produced in provinces were directed. The confusion was not made any better by the Provincial Administrator's office which had earlier informed the researcher that plans produced by the PDC were forwarded to the National Economic Planning Commission, an agency that, surprisingly enough, had long been disbanded. However the misty was later cleared by a Head Office official in the Ministry of Local Government and Urban Development's department responsible for rural local authorities who pointed out that the PDCs directed their integrated development plans to her department which in turn forwarded the plans to the different concerned line ministries at the Headquarters for further appraisal. After appraisal the respective ministries were supposed to then submit the plans to the Ministry of Finance for funding. However, in reality, integrated development projects evolving from local communities and consolidated at the provincial level have rarely been forwarded to the finance ministry as capital funding of development projects has continued to be based on separate national-level sector ministry financial bids to the Ministry of Finance (Department of Physical Planning, 1993:1.2).

Thus from the above discussion it becomes clear that lack of funding, inadequate technical capacity and a not-so-clear link between sub-national and national processes has adversely affected the implementation of sub-national plans in the Midlands province. For planning to be meaningful it must be accompanied by implementation. Lack of implementation of integrated district and provincial plans has therefore been a source of immense frustration to stakeholders in the province rendering the whole integrated planning process meaningless. However, in all the areas studied, donor-funded and NGO-sponsored projects have somehow helped in providing agencies with a reason to continue working together. With these projects implementation has been near-universal due to availability of full financial and technical backing. However, the major problem affecting donor-funded NGO projects has been their limited operational scope or lack of geographical spread resulting in their interventions having a restricted impact on rural livelihoods. Very few NGOs have been found to cover all districts in the province and within districts hardly have these organizations managed to cover all wards in their intervention. Mberengwa for instance was made up of 37 wards but one NGO by the name ACTION FAIM operated only in 13 wards, Lutheran Development Services operated in 9 wards, Care International in 9 wards and, World Vision in only 6 wards. In Gokwe South, Eden Centre operated in only 13 out of 33 wards and World Vision in Gokwe

North had a presence in only 4 out of 36 wards. However a notable exception was CARITAS which covered all districts in the province. Midlands Aids Caring Organization(MACO) in Zvishavane also had a near full coverage of 14 out of 19 wards. Another problem with most donor-funded NGOs is that they mainly deal with development software i.e. the intangibles like community mobilization and awareness as opposed to development hardware in the form of provision of tangible physical goods like boreholes and roads and as such their investments are not easy to quantify and therefore value.

Conclusion

The study has shown that an integrated approach to development planning in Zimbabwe, while good in principle, was in practice held back by a number of deep-seated bottlenecks. Chief amongst the bottlenecks identified in the study have been lack of a shared vision among stakeholders, lack of logistical and technical support and, concomitantly, stakeholder frustration due to non-implementation of integrated development plans emanating from the provinces. Lack of a shared vision was mainly evidenced by the absence of strategic plans in most districts as well as lack of consensus on development priorities among stakeholders. The study identified non-implementation of development plans as largely a function of lack of funding due to limited revenue generating capacity at the local level. Lack of funding was also due to a poor link between sub-national development planning and the national budgetary allocation process with the budgetary process giving priority to plans generated at the centre by line ministries ahead of plans evolving from below and generated through sub-national integrated development planning efforts. Thus, for the most part, politicians have paid only lip service to integrated development planning and for the remainder have not bothered to take plan priorities into account (Helmsing, 1988:172). During the study an official in the Ministry of Local Government and Urban Development made a proposal for local planning authorities to have direct central government funding like what was happening in South Africa. In any case, the National Economic Planning Commission, a planning agency which once operated from the office of the State President of Zimbabwe had long before made a proposal for the resolution of this problem of lack of a link between provincial development plans and the central budgetary process (Department of Physical Planning, 1993:1.2). These proposals need serious official consideration if an integrated approach to planning is to become meaningful and effective in propelling the country's rural development process forward.

References

Chakaipa, S. (2010). Local Government institutions and elections. In de Visser, J., Steytler, N. & Machingauta, N (eds.), *Local Government reform in Zimbabwe: A Policy*

Dialogue. (pp. 31-69). Community Law Centre: University of the Western Cape, RSA.
Chatiza, K. (2010). Can local governance steer socio-economic transformation in Zimbabwe? Analysing historical trends and gazing into the future. In de Visser, Jaap., Steytler, N., & Machingauta, N (eds.), *Local Government reform in Zimbabwe: A Policy Dialogue*. (pp. 1-30). Community Law Centre: University of the Western Cape, RSA.

Colclough, C. (1993). Towards a More Integrated Framework for Planning in the 1990s. IDS Discussion Paper.

Conyers, D. & Hills, P. (1984). *An Introduction to Development Planning in the Third World*, John Wiley & Sons Ltd: Chichester, New York.

Cooke, P. (1983). *Theories of Planning & Spatial Development*. Hutchinson & Co. (Publishers) Ltd

Cunliffe, A.L. (2008). *Organization Theory*. SAGE Publications Ltd.

Department of Physical Planning (1993). *Midlands Province Planning Handbook*: Gweru.

Geyer, Y. (2006). *Integrated Development Planning: A Handbook Series for Community-Based Organisations*. Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA): Pretoria.

Gokwe South Rural District Council (2010) "2011 Budget Statement". Presented by Councillor Z. Chibwana: Chairman of the Finance Committee, Gokwe.

Government of Zimbabwe Website (2011) zim.gov.zw, Developed and hosted by GISP , Retrieved on September 14, 2010, from <file:///home/user/Documents/index.php.html>Govt ministries.

Gwirayi, P. (2010). *Sociology of Education: An Introduction*. Mambo Press: Gweru.

Hadingham, T. (2003). *Decentralisation and Development Planning: Some Practical Considerations*. A Paper Prepared by Tim Hadingham, January 2003.

Helmsing, A.J.H. (1988) "Planning and the financing of plans. Reflections on Subnational practice in Southern Africa and Eastern Africa". In Helmsing, A.H.J. & Wekwete, K.H. (eds.). *Subnational Planning in Southern and Eastern Africa: Approaches, Finance and Education*, Gower Publishing Co. Ltd: Averbury

Interview with Chabikwa Crispen (Mr), District Water Technician, District

Development Fund (DDF), Gokwe South District, on 26 November 2010.
Interview with Chatikobo Lovemore (Mr), Chief Executive Officer, Chirumanzu Rural District Council, on 15 December, 2010.

Interview with Chiburura Clayton (Mr), Provincial Planning Officer, Department of Physical Planning, Midlands Province, on 10 March 2011.

Interview with Chidzonga (Mr), District Inspector, Public Service Commission, Mvuma District, on 15 December 2010.

Interview with Chimbodza Denford (Mr), Program Manager, World Vision, Gokwe North, on 18 November 2010.

Interview with Chingwe Rosemary (Mrs), Assistant District Administrator/Principal Administration Officer, Mvuma, on 15 December 2010.

Interview with Chinoda Nelson (Mr), Field Operator, ZINWA, Chirumanzu (Mvuma), on 15 December 2010.

Interview with Chirhomo Willis (Mr), Mataga Depot Manager, Grain Marketing Board, Mataga District Service Centre, on 16 September, 2010 .

Interview with Chivanga (Mr), District Administrator, Mberengwa, on 26 October 2010.

Interview with Chiwanga (Mr), Acting District Administrator, Zvishavane, on 20 October, 2010.

Interview with Dafi Happison (Mr), Catchment Water Technician, Zimbabwe National Water Authority, on Gweru, 9 March 2011.

Interview with Dile John (Mr), Acting Executive Officer (Planning), Mberengwa Rural District Council, on 16 September, 2010

Interview with Dube Lonious (Mr), Acting Technician-in-Charge, TELONE Pvt Ltd, Mataga District Service Centre, Mberengwa, on 16 September, 2010.

Interview with Dube Petronella (Ms), District Elections Officer, Zimbabwe Elections Commission, Gokwe South, on 26 November, 2010.

Interview with Gumbo Collet (Mr), Project Manager, Care International, Gweru, on 10 March 2011.

Interview with Gumbo Rudo (Mrs), Planning Officer, Chirumanzu Rural District

Council, on 15 December 2010.

Interview with Gumbu Kudakwashe (Mr), Research, Documentation & Learning Officer, Midlands Caring Organization, Zvishavane and Mberengwa, Interviewed on 22 October 2010.

Interview with Gundani, Mr Oliver, Livelihoods Officer, AFRICARE, Zvishavane District, on 20 October, 2010.

Interview with Gwandure Cosmos (Mr), District Behaviour Change Officer, Midlands AIDS Service Organization (MASO), Mataga District Service Centre, on 16 September, 2010.

Interview with Gwengwere Pardon (Mr), Acting Provincial Head, Ministry of Housing & Social Amenities, Midlands Province, on 10 March 2011.

Interview with Machaya Desmond (Mr), Chief Executive Officer, Zivagwe Rural District Council, Kwekwe, on 4 March 2011.

Interview with Mahefu Daniel (Mr), District Education Officer, Ministry of Education, Sports, Arts and Culture, Gokwe South, on 26 November 2010.

Interview with Makotore Walter (Mr), District Agriculture Extension Officer, Agricultural Technical Extension Services (AGRITEX), Mberengwa District, on 21 October 2010.

Interview with Manenji Paul (Mr), District Livestock Programme Development Officer, Mberengwa District, on 21 October 2010.

Interview with Manhobo Blazio (Brother), Programme Officer, CARITAS, Midlands Province, 10 March 2011.

Interview with Manyakara Nyasha (Mr), Lands Officer, Ministry of Lands & Rural Resettlement, Gweru District, on 7 March 2011.

Interview with Manyati P (Mr), District Head, District Development Fund, Gweru, on 10 March 2011.

Interview with Manzini Martin (Mr), District Agricultural Extension Officer (AGRITEX), Gokwe North District, on 17 November, 2010.

Interview with Mashasha Charity (Ms), Behaviour Change Support Officer, Midlands AIDS Service Organization(MASO), Kwekwe District, on 28 January 2011.

Interview with Mashavakure Julius (Mr), Chief Executive Officer, Mberengwa

Rural District Council, on 16 September, 2010.

Interview with Mapumah Douglas (Mr), District Co-ordinator, District Development Fund, Zvishavane District, on 21 October 2010.

Interview with Mare Virginia (Mrs), District Agricultural Extension Officer, AGRITEX, Kwekwe, 4 March 2011.

Interview with Marecha Dambudzo (Mrs), Executive Officer (Administration and Social Services), Chirumanzu Rural District Council, on 15 December 2010.

Interview with Marwei (Mr) District Administrator, Gweru District, on 9 March 2011.

Interview with Matavire Tawanda (Mr), Youth Development Officer, Ministry of Youth Development & Economic Empowerment, Mberengwa, on 21 October 2010.

Interviewed with Moyo Martin (Mr), Director, Eden Centre, Gokwe South, on 26 November 2010.

Interview with Mukanga, H (Mr) Provincial Planning Officer, Ministry of Public Works, Midlands Province, 9 March 2011.

Interview with Mubvumi Naison (Mr), Commodity Tracking Officer, AFRICARE, Zvishavane District, on 20 October 2010.

Interview with Mugwagwa Margret (Mrs), District Head, Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender & Employment Creation, on 9 March 2011.

Interview with Mutare Patience (Ms), Assistant Processing Officer, Registrar General's Department, Shurugwi, on 8 March 2011.

Interview with Mujajati Charles (Mr), Director for Economic Affairs & Modelling, Ministry of Economic Planning and Investment Promotion, Government of Zimbabwe, Harare, on 24 March 2011.

Interview with Mupungu Fortune (Mr), District Administrator, Gokwe North Rural District Council, on 17 November 2010.

Interview with Murumbi Cephass (Mr), District Registrar, Registrar's Office, Gokwe South District, on 26 November 2010.

Interview with Mutimbairi Charles (Mr), Assistant District Administrator, Shurugwi, on 7 March 2011.

Interview with Ncube Wilson (Mr), District Head, Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanization & Irrigation Development, Irrigation Department, Shurugwi District, on 8 March 2011.

Interview with Nhidza Jaison (Mr), District Co-ordinator, District Co-ordinator, Zimbabwe Farmers' Union, 20 October, 2010.

Interview with Nhongonhema Antony (Mr), Field Officer, CARITAS, Chirumanzu, on 16 December 2010 .

Interview with Nhopi Nyikadzino Sydney (Mr), District AIDS Coordinator, National AIDS Council, Kwekwe, on 4 March 2011.

Interview with Nyakuedzwa Paul T (Mr) Acting Chief Executive Officer, Gokwe North Rural District Council, on 18 November 2010.

Interview with Nyaruwanga Marcos (Mr), Acting Chief Economist, Ministry of Finance (Capital Projects), Government of Zimbabwe, Harare, on 24 March 2011.

Interview with Nyoni Erenaeo (Mr), Acting District Agricultural Extension Officer, Zvishavane District, on 22 October 2010.

Interview with Ruziwa Theresa (Mrs) Paidamoyo, District Labour Relations Officer, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Kwekwe, on 4 March 2011.

Interview with Sahanga E (Ms), On behalf of Forestry Commission Officer, Shurugwi, on 8 March 2011.

Interview with Shirichena Viniel (Mr), District Education Officer, Mberengwa, on 21 October 2010.

Interview with Shoshore Rodrick (Mr), Civic Education Officer, Ministry of Youth Development & Economic Empowerment, Mvuma, on 15 December 2010.

Interview with Sibanda Tarirai (Mr), Acting Chief Executive Officer, Runde RDC, on 20 October, 2010.

Interview with Sithole H (Ms), District Veterinary Officer, Shurugwi District, on 8 March 2011.

Interview with Tabeth (Ms), Deputy Director for Rural Local Authorities, Ministry of Local Governmentl & Urban Development, Government of Zimbabwe, Harare, 24 March 2011.

Interview with Takura-Zvobgo, Mrs Abigail, District Head, Ministry of Youth Development & Economic Empowerment, Zvishavane District, on 21 October 2010.

Interview with Tagwireyi, Ms Tendai, Acting District Coordinator, District Development Fund, Gokwe North District, on 17 November 2010.

Interview with Tengende Alice (Mrs), District Programme Officer, Zvitambo (Zimbabwe Vitamin A For Mothers & Babies Organization, Mvuma, on 15 December 2010.

Interview with Velani Silas (Mr), Chief Executive Officer, Gokwe South Rural District Council, on 26 November 2010.

Interview with Verenga Blantina (Ms), Acting District Head, Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender & Community Development, Gokwe North District, interviewed on 17 November 2010.

Interview with Zhou Kufa (Mr), Senior Ranger, Parks & Wildlife Authority, Kwekwe, on 4 March 2011.

Interview with Ziso Fortunate (Ms), Acting Executive Officer (Social Services), Tongogara Rural District Council, Shurugwi, on 8 March 2011.

Interview with Zinhumwe Augustine (Mr), Provincial Manager, Zimbabwe Statistical Agency, Zimbabwe, interviewed on 9 March 2011.

Mhoshwa, A.R. (1988). "A review of subnational planning experiences in Tanzania". In Helmsing, A.H.J. & Wekwete, K.H. (eds.), *Subnational Planning in Southern and Eastern Africa: Approaches, Finance and Education*, Gower Publishing Co. Ltd: Averbury.

Molebatsi, C.O. (1988). "Planning based on consultation: Botswana's search for grassroots participation in district planning". In Helmsing, A.H.J. & Wekwete, K.H. (eds.), *Subnational Planning in Southern and Eastern Africa: Approaches, Finance and Education*, Gower Publishing Co. Ltd: Averbury.

Montgomery, J. D. (1981). *On the Decentralisation of Integrated Rural Development Activities*. Harvard Institute for Integrated Development: Harvard University.

Musandu-Nyamaro, O. (1992). Some perspectives on the role and significance of planning in sustainable Rural Development in Zimbabwe, Paper Number 4. Paper prepared for the Conference on Rural Development, 21-25 September, 1992, Department of Rural and Urban Planning/University of Zimbabwe: Harare.

Mutizwa-Mangiza, N.D. (1990). "Decentralization and district development planning in Zimbabwe", *Public Administration and Development*, Volume 10, Issue 4, (pp. 423-435)

Mutizwa-Mangiza, N.D.(1991). "Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Policy in Zimbabwe". In Mutizwa-Mangiza, N.D., & Helmsing, A.H. J. Helmsing (eds.), *Rural Developemnt and Planning in Zimbabwe*. Gower Publishing Co. Ltd: Averbury, U.S.A.

Rakotsoane, F.C.L. & Rakotsoane, M.A. (2007). *The ABC of Research Project, Dissertation and Thesis Proposal Writing*. Choice Publishing Company.

Rambanapasi, C.O. (1988). "Regional Planning Practice in Zimbabwe: An analysis of the determinants of change". In Helmsing, A.H.J. & Wekwete, K.H. (eds.), *Subnational Planning in Southern and Eastern Africa: Approaches, Finance and Education*. Gower Publishing Co. Ltd. Averbury.

Temple, M. (1994). *Regional Economics*. The Macmillan Press Ltd: London.

Wekwete, K. H. (1990). *The Local Government System in Zimbabwe: Some Perspectives on Change and Development*. In Helmsing, A.H.J. and Wekwete K.H. (eds), *Subnational Planning in Southern and Eastern Africa: Approaches, Finance and Education*. Gower Publishing Co. Ltd.

World Bank. (2000). *New Approaches to Planning*. OED Working Paper Series, World Bank Operations Evaluation Department: Washington DC.