Opportunities for Improving Livelihoods, Water, and Sanitation in Runde Rural District, Zimbabwe

Patience Matunhu, Precious Matunhu, Jephias Matunhu and Viola Matunhu

TMMRI, Midlands State University, Zvishavane, Midlands, Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

Zimbabwe is experiencing livelihoods, water, and sanitation challenges especially in the rural areas. The study investigated opportunities for improving the same in Runde rural district. The study collected qualitative data through interviews, observation and documenta reviews. The findings were that disused mining pits could be utilised to supply water for market gardening, tourism and fisheries to support rural industrialisation as well as water for domestic use. Availability of university and their focus on community engagement offers a huge opportunity for the locals to engage them in knowledge generation and dissemination on livelihoods, water, and sanitation. The emphasis of heritage education by the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education exerts pressure on academics to lead in finding solutions to community problems.

Key Terms: Livelihoods, Water, Sanitation, Runde district

INTRODUCTION

The identification of livelihoods, water, and sanitation to be one of the targets in the UN SDGs is proof of its importance in a world where over 50% (4.2 billion) of the population lack safe sanitation. In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly affirmed that access to safe water and sanitation[1] are human rights which cannot be abrogated. The WHO (2019) assets, *"Over 2.2 billion people lack access to safely managed drinking water and 4.2 billion lack safely managed sanitation services . . . The impact on child mortality rates is devastating with +297 000 children under five dying annually from diarrhoeal diseases* (www.unwater.org/water-facts/water-sanitation-and-hygiene). In rural areas, 91% of the people practise open defecation and 72% of them survive in conditions where basic sanitation is non-existent (Castaneda, Doan, Newhouse, Nguyen, Uematsu and Azevedo, 2016). About 62% of rural populations in Africa have are poor with no access to adequate potable water. The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey of 2014 pegged the national open defecation rate at 31.7% and at around 44% in the rural areas in Zimbabwe.

Area of Study

Runde Rural District Council is located in Zvishavane district. The district has two administrative areas; namely urban[2] and rural. In 2002, the district had a population of 67 999 people but that figure had risen to 72 513 by the last national population census in 2012 (ZimStat, 2012). Poor livelihoods, Water, and Sanitation continue to be daunting tasks for the district.

Objectives of the Study

The research aim is to contribute solutions to poor livelihoods and poor delivery of public services[3] by the district council in line with Zimbabwe's Vision 2030[4], the Africa Agenda 2063 and the UN SDGs. The specific objective is to establish opportunities available for enhancing livelihoods, water and sanitation service delivery in the district.

[1] Sanitation is about clean surroundings and is about personal habits for bodily cleanliness.
[2] The urban area is governed by Zvishavane Town Council and the rural part by Runde Rural District Council.
[3] Public service delivery is an expectation that local residents receive services that are effective, predictable, reliable and customer-friendly.
[4] The Vision is to achieve upper middle- income status, leaving no one behind.

Theoretical Framework

The foothold of this thesis is a combination of the Stakeholder Theory by Freeman (1984) and the Stewardship Theory by Donaldson and Davis (1991). The former theory emphasises the importance of harnessing the comparative advantages of stakeholders in a management system. Carroll (2016) seems to suggest that issues relating to legitimacy and illegitimacy of demands by different stakeholders complicates the theory. The theory falls short of explaining how this can be resolved. The weakness is cured by the Stewardship theory which insists on the creation of subsystems for achieving the intended ends. The theory encourages corporates to play an important role in community development in its reference to corporate social[5] investment.

Research Method

The case study adopted qualitative method because (Saunders, 2012) it provides rich descriptive explanations of the participants' attitudes, assessments, perceptions, dogmas and feelings over the subject under investigation. Researchers get (Cresswell and Poth, 2017; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012) deep explanations of particular occurrences. The research method allowed us to collect information in a natural setting and allows collection and analysis of information in multiple ways. Yin (2003) warns that researchers may have biased views which may influence research findings and conclusions. To overcome this challenge, we maintained neutrality in reporting. Information was collected through interviews, observation and focus group discussions.

Twenty (20) persons participated in the livelihoods, water, and sanitation inquiry. Eleven (11) females and nine (9) males participated in the inquiry. Of the 20 participants, 8 were ordinary villagers, 3 business entrepreneurs, one (1) public administration specialist from a local university, one (1) member of the Diaspora Investment Authority of Zimbabwe, and two (2) Council employees.

Participant observation was also used in information gathering. The approach is characterised by intensive social interaction[6] between the information seeker (researcher) and the information supplier (subjects) in the latter's environment. Participant observation aims to view (Gabriel, 1991) the world from the other person's perspective. The apparent assumption of participant observation is that what and how the participants verbalise or act is a manifestation of how they view and make sense of life (Gabriel, 1991).

In order to minimise further researcher bias and enhance the credibility of the study, triangulation was employed. Methodological triangulation was achieved through the use of multiple data collection techniques, namely interviews, participant observation, and focus group discussions. The use of these different methods enabled the researcher to cross-check and collaborate findings from diverse sources, thereby strengthening the trustworthiness and validity of the research outcomes.

Opinion leaders such as the school head, health officer and ward councillor were also interviewed at places, date and time mutually agreed. Focus group discussions were conducted with villagers at the drought relief food distribution points. Key informants[7] were purposively nominated on the strength of their competencies and knowledge of water and sanitation programming, public administration and service delivery in rural areas.

Research Ethics

Ethics such as informed consent; no harm to participants, anonymity, honesty and confidentiality are essential when dealing with human subjects. Informed consent was observed by ensuring that participants willingly participate in the study after they have been given information on the benefits and risks of being involved in the research inquiry. We ensured them that no befalls the informants following their participation in the proposed investigation. Interviews were conducted in safe locations and at time slots mutually convenient to the researchers and the interviewees. The participants were identified by codes rather than real names. Anonymity and confidentiality of the participants was observed at every stage of the research process.

[5] The consequence of using stewardship theory is that various business managers can position higher resources on maintaining corporate credibility, and ultimately create, build and sustain customer loyalty (Knudsen, 2017).

[6] The observers are skilled in methods and strategies of observation (Patton, 1990).

[7] Key informants are often influential, higher income, better informed and or learned people (Patton 1990)

Presentation of Findings and Discussion

Table1: Distribution of Participants

Occupation	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
Villagers (rural peasant farmers)	3	5	8
Business Entrepreneurs	2	1	3
Public Administration specialist	0	1	1
Zimbabwe Diaspora Investment Authority	1	0	1
Runde Rural District Employees	1	1	2
Traditional Leaders	1	1	2
Public Administrators (Health and Education)	1	2	3
Totals	**9**	**11**	**20**

The participants were disaggregated according to occupation and gender. More females participated in the study because the local traditions allocate the tasks of ensuring family health, food cooking and water fetching to women and girls[8]. Villagers were accessed at drought food distribution points. Besides face-to-face interviews, follow up interviews were conducted telephonically where necessary. The table below shows the distribution of the participants according to their age groups.

Table 2: Distribution of the Participants According to Ages

Age Group (years)	**Female**	**Male**	**Total**
Below 20	2	1	3
20-30	3	2	5
30-40	3	3	6
40-50	1	1	2
50-60	1	1	2
Over 50	1	1	2
Totals	**11**	**9**	**20**

Most (14 out of 20) participants were young people. More and more young people have to be at the front line in community projects (Mandela, 1996). There is evidence of increased recognition that youths are the future of every country's social and economic emancipation (Schusler, Davis-Manigaulte and Cutter-Mackenzie, 2017).

Table 4: Distribution of Participants According to Annual Incomes

Annual Income Levels	**Female**	**Male**	**Total**
Below US$360	6	3	10
US$360- US$720	2	1	3
US$720- US$2 000	1	1	2
US$2 000 – US$4 000	1	0	1
US$4 000 – US$6 000	0	1	1
US$6 000 - US$8 000	0	1	1
US$8 000- US$12 000	1	0	1
+ US$12 000	0	2	1
Totals	**11**	**9**	**20**

Income is an important factor in water and sanitation programming. The table shows that more women (6) than men (3) are surviving on –US$1 per day. Most women are in that category. WHO (2019) estimated that over

[8] Women and girls bear the burden of fetching water and as a result miss out on opportunities for education, productive activities or leisure time (UNICEF, 2014). In the context of COVID-19, UNICEF is urgently appealing for support to reach more girls with basic water and sanitation facilities, especially those who are cut off from safe water because they live in remote areas, or in places where water is untreated or polluted (www.un.org/sustainabledevelopmet/water-and-saniation).

827 000 people with below average income levels parish annually due to inadequate water and sanitation. According to the table, two (2) females and one (1) male survive on less than US$2 per day. The income factor is important in inferring the ratepayers' potential to honour their rates obligations. Under normal circumstances, higher incomes increase ratepayers' liquidity which in turn motivates them to pay rates to the council.

Opportunities for Enhancing Livelihoods, Water, and Sanitation Delivery in the Area

Low Competencies

The Council, revealed that the Council did not have qualified and competent staffers in some of the key offices. The finding above is not unique to the District Council, in South Africa, for instance, many rural municipalities are recruiting people who are underqualified (The South African Human Rights Commission, 2014). Participant P12, a male educationist, indicated that one of the universities in the province was offering degrees and certificate in rural development and water management. The university is offering short courses in rural livelihoods, water and sanitation from which the community could benefit the necessary skills and technology. The short courses were being offered in English. It is encouraged that the courses be offered in local languages. Participant P05 was concerned about the high fees charged by the service provider. The heritage-based Education 5.0 principle being promoted by the government of Zimbabwe provides a leeway for the service provider to offer such courses on consensual rates.

Three (3) employees in the Council expressed interest in enrolling for degrees and short courses but complained about the cost of the programmes. Participant P17, a female employee of the Council had this to say, *'I would love to pursue my education with the tertiary education institutions but the cost of doing so is beyond my means. I am earning Zimbabwe dollars, which has a low purchasing power'.* The fact these tertiary education institutions are accepting fees in local currency and that they permit fees payment arrangements is one the opportunities that the Council employees could take advantage of. Two (2) staffers were taking advantage of the existing tertiary education programmes to sharpen their competences in rural development, water and sanitation. Thus, there is a positive link between skills and performance.

The study revealed that brain-drain was one of the factors promoting incompetencies in the Council. The multi-currency regime being promoted by the Government offers as an opportunity for the council to levy rates and other fees in hard currencies. However, for this to happen the Council should educate people on the medium- and long-term benefits of investing in community livelihoods, water and sanitation.

Poverty

The district has many water bodies in disused pits, which can be utilised to raise incomes, part of which could be used to finance water and sanitation projects. The pits could be used for fisheries and tourism. The advantage of fisheries is that they are not labour intensive and they have high returns on investment. Interviewee #11 revealed that the local leadership had already approached the Cabinet of Zimbabwe for permission to operate fish farming cooperatives on these mining pits. The community could also take advantage of Government's rural industrialisation drive. In China, such activities reduced income poverty from 53 % in 1981 to 8% in 2001 and in Ghana a 24% reduction in rural income poverty was achieved in 15 years (Chen, 2004). As income levels increase, the people will also be able afford paying rates to the Council. Enhanced Council incomes are likely to encourage people to invest in public water and sanitation at schools, clinics and townships. Enhanced incomes could also support individual or household water, and sanitation programmes.

The district lies in the periphery of the highly populated Zvishavane and Shurugwi towns. The farmers could engage in contract fisheries and horticulture with local retail outlets such as Pote Hill Hotel, Pote Supermarkets, Runde Hotel, Gains Stores, Pick and Pay Supermarkets and OK Zimbabwe. Agreed and enforceable percentage of income from such activities could be invested in water and sanitation projects at household and community levels.

A walk through the district gave the researchers an opportunity to see how millions of litres of water pumped from the mines is put to waste. In an interview with Interviewee #3, it emerged that most of the water is safe for irrigation and can therefore be used instead. In Asia, the unprecedented fall in rural poverty was attributed to the successful agriculture (Datt and Ravallion, 1998a, 1998b). According to Ravallion and Chen (2004), Ghana achieved a 24% reduction in rural poverty over 15 years because of its strong commitment to rural livelihoods activities.

The district lies in the Great Dyke, which is rich in minerals. The community could engage mining giants such as ZIMASCO, SABI, MIMOSA and UNKI to sponsor water and sanitation initiatives as part of their corporate social responsibility. One female participant noted thus, '*Proper and clear landholding rights make the land bankable . . . which encourage people living in contested land to invest more in water and sanitation.'* The recently popularised 99-year land lease should be extended to the resettled villagers in the district.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Disused mining pits could support water reticulation and rural industrialisation initiatives in the villages. The problem of poverty as a factor in financing the water and sanitation in the district could be cured by market gardening, tourism, bee keeping, and fisheries. The district lies on the periphery of the highly populated Zvishavane and Shurugwi towns, which would offer market for the community's water-related investments. The availability of the local university offers a huge opportunity for the locals to engage them in knowledge generation and dissemination on water and sanitation. The emphasis of heritage education by the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education exerts pressure on academics to lead in finding solutions to community problems.

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