

## PERSPECTIVES OF INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF THREE WARDS IN NKAYI DISTRICT, ZIMBABWE

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Rural development has been attempted in Zimbabwe both prior to independence and in the post-independent era. While results have been meager, very few studies have attempted to give a portrayal of the state of development in certain places. Moreover, few studies attend to localized experiences of such development. This study makes a modest contribution towards filling this lacuna. It employs Michael Lipton's urban bias theory as a theoretical framework to make sense of the situation in Zimbabwe. Using a case study approach, the study focussed on Nkayi District in Matabeleland North province. Within the case study, purposively selected interviews and observations were conducted. The findings are that (1) not all key development has been state-led; (2) small strides have been made in terms of infrastructure and these strides tend to be sector specific; (3) Nkayi suffers from poor infrastructural development, and; (4) resident's perceptions of service delivery in such sectors as health and education are average in the main.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Development, Infrastructure, Nkayi, Rural Areas, Rural District Councils, Rural Development, Zimbabwe*

### **INTRODUCTION**

When Zimbabwe attained political independence in 1980, the new government faced a daunting task of facilitating 'development' both among the resource-disadvantaged African population as well as in the areas within which they resided. In physical planning and development, this new challenge meant that physical infrastructure was required, and heavy investments were to be made in urban, peri-urban and rural areas. Influenced by the disparities between rural and urban areas -and quite possibly urban bias hypotheses as well- the government sought to modernize rural areas through what was termed 'growth points'. Growth points were places in rural areas which were 'earmarked or designated for economic and physical development' (Wekwete, 1988). They constituted 55 areas, each with a governance structure. The model employed in this renewed quest for development assumed that the growth points would become economic hubs serving persons within their sphere. As a result, the populations which they served would not be compelled to visit established urban centers for access to goods or basic services. As hindsight has taught us, the growth point model largely attained meager results with few exceptional success stories. It typified the assertion made by Conyers (2003) and de Herdt & de Sardan (2015) that the gap between what is made visible or explicit in rhetoric and what happens on the ground may be quite large. Policy and practice have been separated by a wide chasm. The net result has been an economy which still faces gross inequalities in resource distribution wherein rural areas are often poor compared to urban centers. The dire situation regarding physical development is also mirrored in terms of human development. Rural areas generally tend to be populated by persons who fare poorly on the human development scale. The 2016 ZIMVAC report indicates that

infrastructure of various kinds (communication, health, road) are deficient in rural areas around Zimbabwe (ZIMVAC, 2015). The ZIMVAC report adds that there are variances in terms of the need for physical infrastructure across districts.

The fact that human development and physical development fare poorly in rural areas would appear to suggest that the two are interrelated, an assumption which would reinforce the 'urban bias theory'. Michael Lipton's urban bias hypothesis suggested that development policies in the global South have been systematically distorted in favor of the interests of urban areas and against those of the (in many cases) majority rural population (Jones & Corbridge, 2010). His model which made use of 'price twists' made clear the differences in value forms to and from the rural areas. It is such disparities which growth point models attempted to resolve. However, the theory's assumptions did not always manifest in developing world countries. For example, a contrast of price disparities was used so long as there was a market-driven system. As such, where the state assumed the dual roles of regulator and agent, the analytical usefulness of the theories became diminished. This means that for Zimbabwe -which employed a mixed system in the early 1980s-urban bias could not sufficiently account for disparities despite Lipton's revisions which identified 'distributional urban biases'. Instead, the state's priorities and policies would be of better service in explaining disparities. With the aid of some development partners, the government took charge of many aspects of development such as education, health, physical infrastructure, and housing. However, more than three decades later and with numerous policies having been crafted, implemented and discarded, hardly much change has transpired in some areas. This lethargy leads to numerous questions, some of which are attended to in this research paper. The overarching question was 'what is the state of infrastructure development in rural areas?' A cursory reading of Zimbabwe's experience suggests that infrastructure availability is not necessarily positively related with economic growth in the long run (Chogugudza-Sithole, 2012). An ancillary question which emerged in the process of the research was 'what the perceptions of residents of rural areas on infrastructure access and availability are?' The discussion below presents the issues related to these questions as well as the data gathered in answering them. The structure of the paper is as follows: after the introduction, the paper presents a various perspective relating to infrastructure and rural development. Thereafter, a methodology section outlines the study site, the methodology employed as well as challenges faced. The section which comes after methodology will be a presentation of findings as well as a discussion of the same. The final section offers a summary conclusion.

### **Infrastructure and Rural Development**

A useful starting point would be clarifying what infrastructure is and what forms are attended to in this paper. According to the Word Web Dictionary, infrastructure is the stock of basic facilities and capital equipment needed for the functioning of a country or area. Bell *et al.*, (2006) identify infrastructure as diverse provisions ranging from all public capital investment to the specific investment in the construction, repair, and maintenance of fixed capital assets or facilities (such as roads, bridges, airports). Alternatively, infrastructure comprises of all those activities and facilities which help to sustain the growth in production and income generation in the rest of the economy rather than production and income generation within the enterprises themselves (Bhatia, 1999). The World Bank cited in Satish (2007, p.33) identifies infrastructure as follows:

- Public utilities - power, telecommunications, piped water supply, sanitation and sewerage, solid waste collection and disposal and piped gas.
- Public works - roads, major dam, and canal works for irrigation and drainage.

- Other transport sectors-urban and inter-urban railways, urban transport, ports and waterways, and airports.

While the World Bank's definition is useful for identifying the specific forms of infrastructure, Bhatia's definition is deployed here.

But why attend to infrastructure anyway? For rural economies, infrastructure is a crucial piece for ensuring fairer outcomes such as pricing and distribution of goods and services. This is evident in a study by Jayne (1994) which recognizes that price differentials in rural economies tend to be the result of transportation, storage, and processing technology, infrastructure, policy-related factors, and institutions that coordinate exchange across space, time, and form. Moreover, infrastructure and development have been observed to share the following relationship:

Infrastructure affects growth through many channels both direct and indirect. The most evident direct link is through the productivity effect. This is often captured in a production function framework, where an increase in the quantity of infrastructure ought to raise the productivity of other factors. For example, giving enterprises access to electricity will spread to the development of other types of investment. This process can be applied to infrastructural investment in remote areas and result in an increase and diversified range of private investments in productive activities (Cook, 2011, p.305)

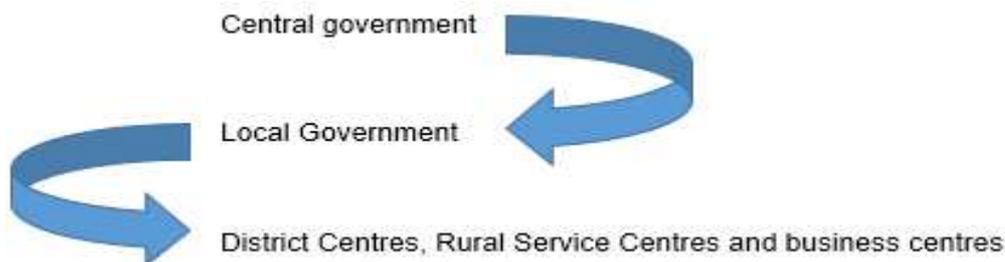
Given the intersection between infrastructure and development, the development forms and conceptions must be emphasized. Development theorists have contributed immensely to the way in which we conceptualize 'development'. Shifts from 'welfarist' to 'human needs' through to human-centered approaches have witnessed tremendous changes in the development arena. This in turn, has impacted on the way in which practitioners engage with many other stakeholders in facilitating development in its various guises. The transition in thinking has also witnessed a mutation in spatial focus. With a move away from welfares', development has ceased to be a problem peculiar to Africa and Latin-America. Instead, it is a global problem requiring global efforts. Such conceptions are hardly out of sync with dominant discourses; after all, globalization has been a dominant influence in contemporary development thinking. The challenge that emerges from the globalist perspective is that the unit of analysis employed misses localized nuances which vary from place to place. Hence, in taking a global perspective, different experiences from localized areas in Africa, Asia, Latin-America and so forth are neglected. Although precise linkages between infrastructure and development are still open to debate, the experience across the world has shown that increase in the stock of infrastructure is associated with the increase in output across the count (Bhatia, 1999). Zimbabwe is a site where a more scientific Inquiry is needed to draw out the dynamic between the two. This paper makes a modest contribution to the analysis of such dynamics.

Lastly, a passing enunciation of what we mean by rural for the purposes of this discussion. The definition of rural areas is vague. In many cases, rural areas are seldom defined although they are –according to Wiggins and Procter- 'readily recognizable' (cited in Ashley & Maxwell, 2001). In this paper, rural areas are those areas which were designated as places of domicile for displaced African communities during colonial rule and which have continued to be identified as home/kumusha/ekhaya by the African populace. This rural area or home is not merely a physical location but a place replete with symbolic value (Ndlovu, 2010) and identity for the African and their consciousness. In these rural areas, human capabilities- to use Sen's terminology- are generally rising as indicated by the statistics for literacy, infant mortality, and access to health and sanitation (Ashley & Maxwell, 2001). However, the pace at which such improvements are made tends to vary across the globe since rural areas tend to exhibit spatial variations in infrastructure (Bhatia, 1999).

Such has been the case in Zimbabwe in general and this is discussed in a later section concerning Nkayi.

### Development of Rural Areas: The Zimbabwean Experience

According to Wekwete (1988), in the state-led quest for rural development, priority areas in infrastructure development during the 1980s included water reticulation, internal roads, sewage-, electricity, and other community services. This focus has persisted with 'soft' forms of infrastructure such as training being extended. Funding for infrastructure has been through the central government initially through Public Sector Investment Programme. In many ways, the changing architecture of authority responsible for development and therefore utilizing funds is a result of the changing perspectives by the political elite on decentralization. According to Diana Conyers, forms of decentralization which have played out include fiscal decentralization, sectoral decentralization and political decentralization (Conyers, 2003). The mechanism through which funds were disbursed (fiscal decentralization according to Diana Conyers) followed government structures depicted in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1: Flow of State Funds for Rural Development**

The flows of funds depicted in Figure 1 above are within formal, non-traditional channels, cascading from central government to local centers. Because traditional structures are not captured in the figure above, traditional governance channels and flows of funds are not accounted for in the figure. Furthermore, the flow of funds above does not trace those sourced from quasi-governmental structures such as the relatively new community share ownership schemes which have been fashioned through the indigenization and economic empowerment programme. Whatever the structure, the source of funds is through various forms of tax. As Chirisa, et al., (2015) observe, at the center of infrastructure provision in local government taxation. In Zimbabwe, these include rates, rents, license fees and parking charges and they are complemented by funds from central government disbursed through the national budget. The collection of such taxes has been enabled by legislative support through a raft of instruments. Changes in legal instruments during the post-independence era have so far included the District Councils Act in 1980, the 1984 Prime Minister's Directive on Decentralization as well as the Rural District Councils Act (Mutizwa-Mangiza, 1990).

In Zimbabwe's growth-point project of the 1980s, there were clear differences in emphasis as growth points followed a hierarchical topology in the form of District Centers, Rural Service Centers and business centers. Of the fifty-five (55) growth centers which existed in the late 1980s, only ten (10) were poised to be self-sufficient (Wekwete, 1988). Such a situation did not bode well for a state-led development project given the fact that Zimbabwe was increasingly sinking in a financial crisis due to unsustainable public spending (Bond & Manyanya, 2002). Indeed, as Wekwete (1988) aptly observes, public expenditure was already in decline by 1988, a scenario which coincided with the adoption of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) by the government. As history has revealed, ESAP resulted in retrenchments, unemployment, economic decline and declines in productivity. These had the net effect of plunging livelihoods in chaos as well contributing to deteriorating living standards. Neglect of rural areas also ensued.

Rural areas were therefore; cast aside once again, having experienced a similar fate in colonial times. This is alluded to by Thebe (2010) who identifies progressive challenges in rural areas in what he terms ZANU PF's 'peasantization' effort. This effort to 'modernize' rural practices has roots in the colonial state where efforts were engineered by the Rhodesian government and non-state actors (Clever, 1995).

In spite of the resources and energy expended by successive governments and actors, the successes have been hardly discernible. People in rural areas continue to cry foul at their backwardness with much identifying inadequate support as drawbacks. For example, with regards to access to agricultural markets, most rural dwellers in all districts identified transport, long distances & bad infrastructure as a critical challenge (ZIMVAC, 2015).

In Nkayi district is no exception in this complex national history. In her study on water as an instrument through which power was exerted and negotiated, Frances Cleaver makes it clear that infrastructure associated with water provision was selectively a veiled (Clever, 1995). A similar challenge also prevailed in animal/cattle markets during colonial times as well as after independence. For example, the paper by Frances Cleaver recognises that by independence, approximately half of the boreholes in the area were non-functional (ibid).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study was exploratory, making use of the case study research design. Case studies explore in depth a program, an event, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals (Creswell, 1994). Yin (2003) adds that 'among the actual case study designs, four major types are relevant, following a 2 x 2 matrix. The first pair consists of single-case and multiple-case designs. The second pair, which can occur in combination with either of the first pair, is based on the unit or units of analysis to be covered and distinguishes between holistic and embedded designs'. Considering the diverse case study designs which may be employed, the study employed a single-case (embedded) design. This is different from a simple case study which employs a single case as a unit of analysis because, within the single case, there are numerous points/subunits from which comparisons can be made. Resultantly, although the research focussed on the case of Nkayi District, subunits of analysis included physical infrastructure, markets as well as soft infrastructure. Analysis of rural infrastructure can use numerous instruments to ascertain the extent of development. For example, (Bhatia, 1999) considers the amount of public spending over successive national plans. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in all three wards (n=22) and these were complemented by site/transect walks. This approach was employed as a triangulation technique –briefly discussed below.

Although the study sought to ascertain an infrastructural perspective of Nkayi in its entirety, a purposive sampling technique of wards within the district was employed. The study focused on Wards 5, 15 and 20 which are namely Nesigwe, Skopo, and Zinyangeni. The justification lay in the fact that Ward 5 is the most populated in the district according to the 2012 population census report while Ward 15 is the least populated. Ward 20 reflects figures which are consistent with the district average and therefore serves as a comparator.

### **Methodological Concerns**

In the design of the study, numerous concerns emerged largely centering on the validity of results. This was due to the localized nature of the study as well as the sampling approach adopted. The first concern was on the generalizability of findings or to use a more technical term, external validity'. External validity addresses whether the results of a study can be generalized to other populations, other settings, other measurements (Kothari, 2004). In employing a non-probability-based

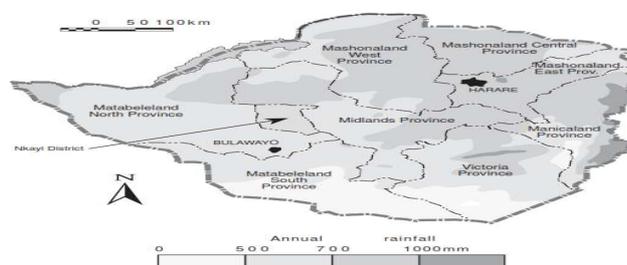
approach, the study *results* were resultantly non-generalizable –although generalizations based on theory (construct validity) may be done. Our position was that threats to external validity are therefore very negligible in the study which is of a qualitative nature and employs a convenience sampling method. The low threats from external validity are consistent with observations made by Mouton & Marais. Mouton & Marais (1996) assert that designs such as case studies and participant observations avert the pitfalls of external validity threats. A second concern related to making inferences which insinuate causality. Such matters reflect on ‘internal validity’. While there are many threats to internal validity, focus on those most pertinent to the research will be maintained in this brief discussion. These include maturation and changes in variables. To such issues, the researcher notes that the study is neither longitudinal nor exploratory. As a result, we noted that maturation as a threat to sample participants was diminished.

To curb against the threats posed in the study proposed, the researcher employed triangulation methods (Zohrabi, 2013). In deploying triangulation, threats which may have emanated from interpreting data from only one instrument are minimized. For example, the risks inherent in obtaining data using a single questionnaire are reduced when a study relies on questionnaires, interviews, observations and desk literature. In addition, triangulation methods can equally be employed in data analysis, thereby ensuring consistency in deductions and conclusions made.

### The Site

Nkayi district is in Zimbabwe’s Matabeleland North province which is generally characterized by low annual rainfall. The mean annual runoff in Nkayi mirrors that of other dry and arid regions where between 17–70 mm which translates to river flows especially in Nkayi and Lupane that are seasonal and often dry in the period June to November every year (Hoko, 2005). The political and administrative structure of the district is like other districts in Zimbabwe. This means that the district is demarcated into wards (30 in total) which in turn comprise of numerous villages (156 villages) within them (NkayiRDC, n.d.). There is one growth point in the district which is commonly referred to as Nkayi Business Centre located in Ward 29. According to the 2012 census, the total population in the district amounted to 109, 371 people with an average household size of 5.1 persons (ZimStat, 2011).

By 1988 the major secondary school in the district, Nkayi Secondary School (whose first batch of form four graduands were in 1986-7), was servicing a wide area and churning out students who largely emigrated to Bulawayo or across national borders to Botswana and South Africa (Bennell & Ncube, 1994). The number and distribution of schools have since increased due to various reasons.



**Figure 1: Location of Nkayi District in Zimbabwe Annual Rainfall Distribution**

**Source:** Cleaver (1995: 316)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The province marked ‘Victoria Province’ is recognised as Masvingo Province. The name Victoria is a colonial name which has since been discarded in all official platforms.

**The State of Infrastructure in Nkayi**

As outlined in the methodology section, the study approached the matter of infrastructure from multiple perspectives. This multi-focal perspective was due to the embedded case study design employed. In this respect, the section on findings attends to infrastructure from the perspective of telecommunications and finance, education, transport as well as health. A presentation of the findings will follow these dimensions and is presented below.

**Telecommunications and Finance**

We observe that there is a confluence between physical and ‘soft’ infrastructure largely because of non-state entities. The effect of lethargic development on physical infrastructure has been an absence of important facilities and services such as banking and finance. This has historically meant that persons in the area and its immediate environs have had to get transport to Bulawayo where banks can be accessed. Ironically, it is the private sector which has spearheaded a pivotal form of infrastructure in Nkayi and indeed across the country. Econet’s mobile banking facility Ecocash has enabled people to transact with much greater convenience than before. Not only do economic agents can engage in their activities without being compelled to move to the nearest urban center of Bulawayo for banking but they can make transactions in real time. Similar products are offered by other telecommunications firms in the form of Telecel (TeleCash) as well as Net One (One Wallet). The Zimbabwean experience follows that of Bangladesh and Kenya. Bangladesh’s Grameen Bank pioneered the use of telecommunications infrastructure for development in rural and poverty-stricken communities by making use of village pay phones (Bayes, 2001).

**Education**

The situation regarding education infrastructure in Nkayi is dire in some places. Responses from participants regarding education infrastructure are presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Perceptions towards Education Infrastructure**

Ward	Is there a Primary School Close to Where You Reside in Your Ward?	Is there a Secondary/High School Close to Where You Reside in Your Ward?	Do the Schools Provide Resources for Learners?	Is there Adequate Staff in the Schools?
5 (n=10)	70%	50%	20%	60%
15 (n=6)	66%	33%	17%	66%
20 (n=6)	33%	33%	17%	66%

Table 1 makes clear that while there have been improvements in the number of schools in the district’s select wards, their distribution is problematic. Secondary/high schools are far fewer than in primary schools. In addition, the schools are both understaffed and under-resourced. These findings mirror those made by researchers elsewhere in Zimbabwe where teacher-pupil ratios in rural areas are high and schools are terribly short of resources (Kariwo, 2007; Mlambo, 2013). In fact, the study noted that some schools which were created in the aftermath of the land reform programme were barely resourced and staffed at all. For example, people from Ward 20 have children who travel more than 10 kilometers to the nearest secondary school, a finding which mirrors reports in the media (Moyo, 2017). What was particularly conspicuous was the delayed attention to dilapidated infrastructure at schools. Figure 3 shows one of the schools in Nkayi district whose roof was damaged in the 2016/17 season.



**Figure 2: Damaged School Roof from 2016/17 Season**

The figure above reveals a classroom block at Sivomo Primary School whose roof was damaged in a storm. The failure to repair the roof is due to protracted and yet unsuccessful efforts to raise funds for acquisition of new material. Efforts to raise such funds often become the prerogative of parents and school governing bodies instead of the local government. Equally worrying is the fact that repairs fail to be made for more than a year resulting in successive rain seasons and damage.

### **Transport**

The road network in Nkayi district comprises of a major road, a secondary road, feeder roads as well as connector roads. The major road runs through only four Wards (20, 29, 22 & 30) right on the south-eastern margin of the district. Much like the bulk of Zimbabwe's road network at present, the roads are in deplorable condition, making travel and movement of goods difficult particularly during the rainy season. While there are buses that ply some of the routes, the road is unfit for use on a regular basis without making huge sacrifices on the operator's part. Figure 4 below depicts a strip of major road in Ward 20.



**Figure 3: Narrow Road in Nkayi District**

The figure above illuminates the narrow nature of the tarred strip as well as the inadequacy of the road to comfortably accommodate traffic flow moving in opposite directions. Of importance in Figure 4 is the fact that the strip of road captured here is the strip which is considered 'good' road. In many places within the district, the tar is hardly visible and non-existent at all. The situation gets worse when one moves onto secondary and less prominent roads. Figure 5 shows a much more dilapidated strip of road in Nkayi which in some parts shows a barely covered dust road surface. From the two figures discussed here, it is evident that the transport infrastructure is greatly dilapidated and lacks fitness for purpose.



**Figure 4: Strip of Worn Out Tarred Road in Nkayi District**

### **Health and Water**

Since the attainment of political independence, the provision of health services has been extended to many people in the district. In some cases, construction of such clinics as Delawa Rural Health Centre has employed use of global standards such as Agenda 21 on Sustainable Construction (Mashingaidze, 2000). Other health facilities include the Nkayi District Hospital, Zinyangenirural health centre (RHC), Guwe RHC, Zenka RHC, Franison RHC, Gwelutshena RHC, Nesigwe RHC, Mateme RHC, Sivalo RHC, Dakamela Rural Hospital, Ngwaladi Rural Hospital, Sikobokobo clinic, Sesame Clinic, Sebumane clinic, Mbuma mission hospital and the Mission hospital at Kana. Most of the health facilities are state-owned while some are run by religious organizations as mission hospitals. Of the health facilities identified above, Nesigwe rural health center is situated in Ward 5. Ward 15 harbors no health facility while situated in Ward 20 are the Zinyangeni and Guwe rural health centers. Evidently, the predominant form of the health facility is rural health centers which serve as primary sites for residents if medical attention is sought. Where attention cannot meet the requirements of a patient, referrals are made to clinics and/or hospitals.

As Amateur Sen has discussed in his oft-cited work on human development (Sen, 1999), the presence of facilities **alone** is insufficient for the betterment of lives. For the purposes of our study, we considered physical and 'soft' infrastructure. 'Soft' infrastructure is concerned with the support or ancillary activities which enable further production by agents. Hence in a hospital setting, they include staffing of institutions by competent personnel as well as sufficient supply of medicine. Regarding the former, our observations were that most hospitals were sufficiently staffed with critical staff (nurses and doctors) available. However, doctors tended to be more readily accessible in hospitals with very sparse visits

noted in rural health centers. Accessibility in hospitals was however only useful for prescriptive purposes because hardly any medication was available in all forms of the health facility. Table 2 below presents responses to select questions on health for wards 5, 15 and 20.

**Table 2: Responses to Select Health Questions Across Wards**

Ward	Is There a Hospital Close to Where You Reside in Your Ward?	Do You Get Medicine When You Visit the Hospital for Treatment?	Is There Adequate Staff to Attend to Your Needs?
5 (n=10)	50%	40%	70%
15 (n=6)	33%	17%	83%
20 (n=6)	33%	50%	100%

Our findings indicate that although health facilities have increased in number over time, residents interviewed are mostly of the opinion that medicine is in scant supply and that they are far off. While the situation appears bleak, respondents indicated that the staffing at health facilities was adequate. Given that health practitioners have emigrated *en-masse* from Zimbabwe (Chikanda, 2004; Chikanda, 2010; Vearey, et al., 2010), it is commendable that the numbers in health facilities have not dwindled to the extent of creating a complete shamble of the health system.

Related to health is the matter of water. Access to water is a challenge given the low amounts which fall in the area on an annual basis. To address this challenge, the government and non-state actors in the form of non-governmental organizations have installed boreholes in select villages. It is because of this that there are boreholes at Manabe as well as Zenka among others. Where villagers have alternative sources, they resort to *inter alia* such for example raw water from Shangani River and Sikobokobo dam. Stationary water bodies in the district amount to three, namely, Sikobokobo, Zenka, and Dakamela dams.

### Analysis

From the foregoing, the following deductions can be made : (1) not all key development has been state-led; (2) while strides have been made in some aspects of infrastructure development, they are small and tend to be sector specific. This is large because of reception of innovations and technology (water) and complexities in the governance structure; (3) Nkayi has generally lagged in terms of infrastructural development and; (4) resident's perceptions of service delivery in such sectors as health and education are averages in the main.

The first issue to emphasize is the presence of the private sector in infrastructure provision both soft and physical within the area of study. Private sector players have been at the forefront of extending crucial mobile telephony products which serve both as information and finance mechanisms. Such interventions are crucial especially when one considers the financial challenges which hamper economic activity in Zimbabwe. Through such products as Ecocash, the unbanked have access to formal mechanisms of financial intermediation which in a structured, state-led project would hardly have been fathomable. Although mobile penetration rates may not be 100%, the fact that the products can be shared makes it possible for the poor to also participate in the economy with the knowledge that they can honor their financial obligations and equally receive their funds from debtors and/or clients.

The general development deficit in Nkayi District is in part a result of the dual system of governance (Mutizwa-Mangiza, 1990) where district councils and central government functions intersect plays a part as well as the general bias towards urban center development in relation to rural areas. The challenge that faces places such as Nkayi is

that they were exposed to sector-specific development based on the rural economy which thrived in their locality. While such an approach benefitted places such as Gokwe, Gutu, and Ngundu, it failed to extend its successes to many other places, Nkayi included. The rural economy in Nkayi failed to harness the small communal-based activities for scalable commercial gain. With poor rains and low annual yields, agriculture failed to take off as a central part of the area's growth. Moreover, the demise of the Cold Storage Commission (CSC) meant that cattle ranching -the most recommended farm-centered economic activity in Matabeleland. Resultantly, what has been left is a business center with many shops and a few service-oriented businesses such as grinding mills and repair enterprises.

The urban bias thesis suggests that rural areas are relatively scantily provided for compared to urban centers. The bias which favors urban centers means that there is a duality in development with one area experiencing surges in growth while another is caught in the throes of stagnation or decline. Nkayi appears to have been victim to this problem. Urban centres which are within three hours' drive such as Kwekwe and Bulawayo have grown in leaps while Nkayi's growth is very difficult to measure. In addition, the broader pressures which have impacted on the country since 2000 have impacted negatively on rural areas such as Nkayi. For example, although respondents perceived generally high staff complements in health facilities, such perceptions contrasted with the observations of the researchers. Doctor numbers were low and even then, the doctor would not be available throughout the week. In some places, neither were nurses. Instead, it is nurse aides who tended to be readily available and their presence accounted for the high perception of staff availability. The experts were much lower in number. This suggests the impact of greater forces in healthcare provision some of which have been observed by Chikanda (2010) in relation to emigration. From the foregoing, it is evident that infrastructure development both in terms of physical and soft infrastructure is not well developed in Nkayi. Some physical structures have been installed but they are in many places distant or dilapidated. Where soft forms of infrastructure are concerned, skilled personnel and expertise are not very readily available. However, the base on which infrastructure development can be launched is in place and this should be cause for the future positive transformation of the rural economy in Nkayi.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Michael Lipton posited that development policies in the global South have been systematically distorted in favor of the interests of urban areas and against those of the (in many cases) majority rural population. While his thesis has been challenged, it remains useful in trying to understand the condition of development in places such as Zimbabwe. Having adopted the growth point strategy in much of the first decade of independence, rural areas have nonetheless lagged in infrastructural development. Natural, such a situation leads to questions for researchers. This is likely especially when one considers that some growth points transitioned into peri-urban centers while others did not. While the study did not attend to causality per se, it attended to the question over the present state of infrastructure in rural areas. Once the state is established, causes can then be sought after and interrogated. Using a case study approach, the study focussed on Nkayi District in Matabeleland North province of Zimbabwe. Within the case study, purposively selected interviews and observations were conducted. The findings are that (1) not all key infrastructural development has been state-led; (2) small strides have been made in terms of infrastructure and these strides tend to be sector specific; (3) Nkayi suffers from poor infrastructural development, and; (4) resident's perceptions of service delivery in such sectors as health and education are average in the main. Having laid out the study findings and discussion, we conclude with the following two recommendations:

- Alternative theoretical prisms could be employed to gain a grasp of the situation from a different perspective.
- Future studies could look to establishing a relationship between the infrastructure available and rural economic activity as well as establish causality for varying levels of development.

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