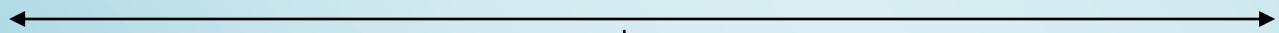


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## THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN PROMOTING DEVELOPMENT: A CASE OF BINGA DISTRICT

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### *ABSTRACT*

*This research study analysed the role of the media in promoting development focusing on Binga district. The study also sought to find out whether the local communities understand what is required for development to take place in their localities. This, study used a qualitative research approach. The nature of the research design is one of descriptive form, because this researcher intended to stress the importance of context, setting and the participants' frame of reference. From the data collected it was apparent that the majority of the participants consider media to be very passive in promoting development for the people of Binga and to make it known to other stakeholders that Binga needs urgent development. The study recommends that media should be more involved in the issues of development in Binga district and that they should engage other players in development issues like the non-governmental organisations and the government.*

*Key words: media, development, participation, projects, rural, district.*

### INTRODUCTION

There are diverse institutions that help push development issues to the front seat of any national agenda—including politics, media, people affected by the local situation and local leadership (Stiglitz, 2002; United Nations, 2011). Among the institutions whose role in national, provincial and or district development of the less developed regions is a well recognized but inadequately emphasized player—the media. In most places, media plays multiple roles that help promote, nurture, support and monitor a number of activities, through their important function as drivers of development (Stiglitz, 2002). For example, in Zimbabwe, underdeveloped regions depend on strategies often used by media to bring awareness of the need for initiating development

projects in the areas especially in the backdrop of decolonization of Zimbabwe in 1980, and the need to accelerate the pace of growth (United Nations, 2011). In Zimbabwe, in the wake of the introduction of the affirmative action policy since 1995, targeted development has always been viewed as the obvious requirement for alleviating poverty and reducing the developmental gap that separates Zimbabwe from developed countries.

In Binga, the introduction of any development project will meet some challenges related to communication level barriers, technical knowledge of the general population, human skills and other resources that should lead to some form of productivity increases most of which are characteristic of predominantly agrarian and mineral economies like Zimbabwe. If, after 35 years of independence at the time of conducting this study, some previously neglected places are still not showing signs of improvement in Zimbabwe, that “backwardness implies that the government and or state as investors may not be aware of the problem” (United Nations, 2011). From the lenses of this study, there may be a problem with the providers and or source of the information that helps to move development agendas forward getting to the rightful people—hence the focus on the local media. How has the media substantially used its power to inform authorities of the requirements of the development need? How is the media in Zimbabwe focusing of creating awareness among the people of Binga to know the development needs of their district? This study describes role played by media in promoting development in Binga District of Matabeleland North Province in Zimbabwe.

In Zimbabwe, some areas have shown bigger strides of development when compared to other provinces and districts. In the same country, the conditions and potential of development are created by the same state. However, the state on its own cannot achieve coverage of every blade of the ground without the help of other players like the local media. Results of positive development trends indicate that fast growing economies come from states that have the capacity to receive information, access the information and then match opportunities to the local capabilities that will help to create strategies that sustain local growth through long periods (Stiglitz, 1994). This study views the possible problems from the context of media—which should play a critical role in helping national and local government to be aware of the role that it needs to play to ensure sustained development in all areas of the country.

Geographically, Binga is located in region v which is only suitable for wildlife instead of farming activities. Rainfall patterns in Binga are not predictable hence there is need to identify the best cash crops suitable for the district, for example—cotton since cotton does not require a lot of water. Due to the poor rainfall patterns

people in Binga can only produce food for their own households. People of Binga also rely on fishing for household income.

There is a connection between positive development in an area and availability of transport system. In Binga, compared to other provinces, the road network is very poor. There is only one tarred road connecting Bulawayo to Binga Business Centre. No other access roads link Binga to any other city and towns. Therefore, communication is very limited. The people of Binga have limited access to news and or any other events that are happening around the country because of poor communication and transportation networks. The only available road links include dusty roads that are not suitable for travelling especially during the rainy season.

Binga experiences a huge problem regarding availability of clean water. Unlike people in most provinces, the people in Binga, need to walk long distances to fetch water for households and animals. In the 1960's, Binga people were displaced from Zambezi Valley when the Kariba dam wall was constructed. This decision removed them from their single source of water supply.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Development projects in all their facets in Binga do not meet the minimum standards required to help the population of Binga to survive and help more development to be implemented by the local government. How does media and communication influence the planning and execution of development plans in Binga District? According to the most recent population census statistics, Binga has a population of 139 092 which when broken down shows that there are 63 736 males and 75 358 females (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, 2012).

There is a very low employment rate in Binga with almost 89% of the population not gainfully employed (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, 2012). This finding from literature reveals that most of the people in Binga District struggle to educate feed and provide for their families.

*The study was guided by the following research questions;*

- How informed are the people of Binga on the developments prospects of their district?
- What levels of match exist between the type of development projects expected by the people of Binga and those already and being undertaken in their district?

- How is the media helping the feminine gender to take part in their role to promote development in Binga?
- What barriers exist between people participation in projects and the reality?

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Development implies improved living standards, improved health and the well-being of the people which is regarded in other areas as a general good for society at large (Thomas, 2000). Development as an idea can apply to any field—education, buildings, human resources, infrastructure, technology and even agriculture to name just a few examples. According to Thomas (2000), viewing development from this perspective implies that development is about improving all facets of human life so that life continues to improve for current and future generations. For example, particular building projects may be described as forms of development that benefit the people. The relationship between development at local level and at national or societal levels also brings in the idea of equity between various localities or between different social groups or classes (Korten, 1995). Another view of development starts not only from production, but from people and from human needs. Korten (1995), one of the leading proponents of alternative development contrasts growth centred with people centred visions of development.

Research and modern theories on development reveal that people have pre-determined basic human needs without which life would be impossible (Todaro and Smith 2012). Life sustaining needs indisputably include food, shelter, health and protection. When any of these life-sustaining needs is absent in human life, human beings may feel a condition of absolute underdevelopment and levels of discomfort (Thomas, 2000). When a condition like that is present, the human being will try to access development tools through unorthodox means like stealing, cheating and or robbery. Todaro and Smith (2012) stresses that the relationship between economic growth and freedom from servitude is that the advantage of economic growth is not that wealth increases happiness, but that it increases the range of human choices. Development is both a physical reality and a state of mind in which society has, through some combination of social, economic and institutional processes, secured means for obtaining a better life.

Mass media affect both who receives information and what information they receive. Media plays a key role in delivering all type of news related to development, economic, social and political (Stromberg, 2002). Usually, there is a positive correlation between positive development and levels of reporting used by media.

Political news coverage influences public policy, because political trends favour informed voters and well covered issues, hence politicians do pay attention to issues that may do them done; because well-informed voters are more likely to vote than uninformed voters, but that voters are also more likely to vote for those candidates who further their interests in terms development. Stein and Bickers (1994), found that people who are well informed in general are more likely to be aware of new projects in their districts. Furthermore, those voters who are aware of new projects are more likely to vote for representatives, controlling for the actual increase in awards to the district. Media is like a mirror of the society which reflects each and everything about the society to us. It also plays quite a vital role in influencing the decisions we make in life, provides knowledge to make informed decisions. Media also has to provide a communication link between people. Media has a strong social and cultural impact upon society.

Media have played a prominent role in bringing to the forefront certain decisions taken by the state and in exposing corruption and graft within the government and private sector (Chavunduka 2002).Media is the most effective and most sought after means of communication that seeks to inform people of their rights to development. In fact, media now influences all facets of human life-personal, social and professional. Accessing various forms of media influences social change in a developing countries and districts (Mathur 2012). Media performs various functions in promoting consciousness for development, and can help contribute in three spheres which in turn make a society cohesive and better organised (Mathur, 2012).

The following gaps were identified in the reviewed literature including, that there is a dearth of information related to the role being played by media in fomenting development in rural areas. There is need to create a model that defines how media may influence development projects so that it informs policy making. This study adds to this literature gap through the information that was collected for this research.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This, study used a qualitative research design approach since it matches the requirements of the grounded theory approach to data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2009). The nature of this research is one of descriptive form, because this researcher intended to stress the importance of context, setting and the participants' frame of reference (Rossman and Rallis, 2006; Creswell, 2009). Because the researcher also used the interpretative approach to the creation of meaning in the interpretation process, there was need to create conversations that



require the participants to provide information related to how they interpreted certain information that they provided. The rationale used to select the qualitative research design is that it helps the researcher to clarify the logical and the compelling connection between the research question and the methodology used especially when many variables are connected.

## RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Instruments are described as techniques for collecting information that will be used to describe the context from respondents. For this study, questionnaires and interview guides were used.

The purpose of this study was to describe the role played by media to promote development in Binga District in Zimbabwe. To achieve this goal, the researcher collected data from various participants who have lived in Binga for a minimum of 20 years by the time when this study was conducted. All participants in this qualitative research study included adult volunteers from the community around Binga. This researcher sent out 30 invitations to potential participants in the study and there was an overwhelming response of a total of 22 volunteers from the citizens of Binga District.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data was analyzed in the context of the interview questions which in turn answered the specific research questions. The specific research questions gradually built up the answers to the broad research question.

The respondents were asked whether they are satisfied with the way development is progressing in Binga. From a total of 22 respondents a total of 14(64%) respondents revealed that there is lack of development in Binga District. However, only 5(23%) respondents were not sure and this could be as a result of ignorance not knowing exactly what development standards should look like for their district. A total of 3(13%) respondents agreed that there was some development progress in Binga. However, further questions revealed that the 3(13%) people were mostly living at Binga Growth point a position that led this researcher to conclude that they viewed development only in terms of what they were benefiting regardless of the status of the majority of the people of Binga. From the data that was collected through a follow-up question on, how media is helping to increase



development awareness in Binga, it was apparent that the majority of the participants consider media to be very passive in promoting development for the people of Binga.

From a total of 22 respondents only 2 (9%) agreed with the notion that most people in Binga are educated and are well aware of how development issues are being promoted in Binga. These few agree that they have access to news that pertains to their district development plans while 18 (82%) disagreed, confirming that media does not popularize any news relating to government involvement in the development of Binga. Only 2 (9%) participants were not sure. This high number of respondents confirmed during the interviews that they were not seeing promotion of development projects through media. From data collected it was concluded that media is not doing enough to help development situation in Binga.

Infrastructure is an essential part for community development. Developed infrastructure is an indicator for the growth of the area economy. 20 (91%) respondents strongly disagreed that infrastructure in Binga including roads, posts and telecommunication and bridges are adequately developed and another 2 (9%) were not sure. The conclusion therefore is that media as a vehicle for development needs to seriously get involved in publicising development needs for Binga.

Similar to the feminist theorists, this research values the importance of women in any society and hence supports the need to promote their development. From the results of this study, 17 (75%) of the respondents disagreed that women are given equal opportunities to education. 5 (25%) were not sure and this could be because they are not really aware that women also have rights and should be given equal opportunities as men. This researcher concluded that media is not acting as the mouthpiece for women development in Binga.

Media must be the driving force of all developmental projects in Binga and therefore it should be accessible to all people. Out of the 22 respondents a total of 18 (82%) were not satisfied with the way media covers developmental issues in Binga. Only 4(18%) respondents were happy with media coverage in Binga. The conclusion therefore, is that media is not covering much ground on developmental issues in Binga. Some of the respondents were not even sure whether media is in anyway taking part in informing both the government and the citizens about development.

Of the 22 respondents 18 (82%) disagreed that people of Binga are well informed of development projects which shows media is not doing much to get the people and the government involved in developing the district. These could be the people who are in constant touch with what is happening in their district they could be reading the newspapers but not actually coming across any news about Binga. only 4 (18%) indicated that they are well informed of the projects in their district.

A total of 20 (90%) respondents agreed that there is enough coverage by media while 2 (10%) agreed that there is enough coverage. Fisheries in Binga do not receive adequate coverage from the media. not many people know that most fish come from Binga and also the fact that fish is processed in other cities like Harare shows that media is not doing anything to campaign for the people of this district to have fish processed there. There is no support with modern technology and knowledge otherwise these people would be processing the fish for themselves.

## CONCLUSIONS

The researcher made the following conclusions. Almost all respondents shared the same sentiments that the media was not doing much to bring development issues in Binga to the attention of the government and other stakeholders involved. Binga is still lagging behind in terms of development. Development in this district does not match with other districts of the country.

Media coverage in this district is not impressive and this covers all forms of media be it print or electronic. The few development projects like fishing do not benefit most people of Binga, people feel that the government must do something for them to be able to process the fish in Binga instead of it being processed in other cities like Harare. Road network is very poor which makes connection with other towns and cities very difficult.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

With reference to the above conclusions, it is recommended that: There is need for media houses to establish offices in the district to cover issues that have to do with Binga as a district. Media through their reporting should highlight projects like fisheries. This way, these projects will get funding so that it benefits the people of Binga and therefore bring self sustenance to the district.

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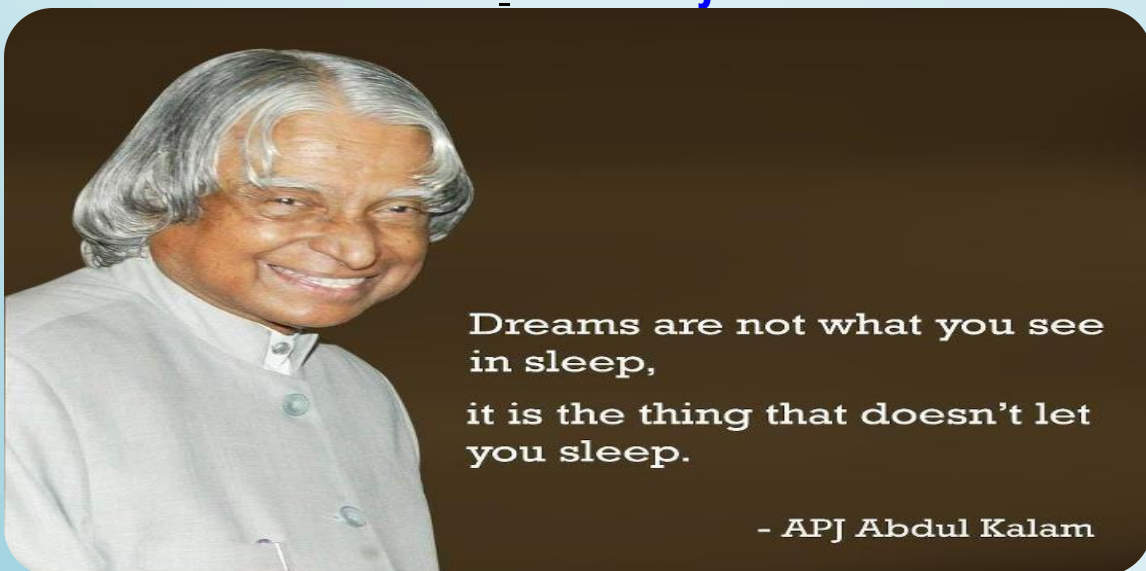
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Dreams are not what you see  
in sleep,  
it is the thing that doesn't let  
you sleep.

- APJ Abdul Kalam