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## THE ETHNICITY OF DEVELOPMENT? DISCOURSES SHAPING DEVELOPMENTAL POLITICS IN RURAL MATABELELAND SOUTH, ZIMBABWE

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### ABSTRACT

*The focus of this study was to discuss the conditions of rural women in Matabeleland South, who are going through various levels of development challenges, marginalisation, exclusion and discrimination. More particularly the study focused on exploring the experiences of these women and the specific challenges they face in relation to their socio-economic realities and their ethnicity. The research objective of this study was to explore how rural women describe their situation in Matabeleland South with regards to the specific challenges they face in relation to their socio-economic realities and their ethnicity. An exploratory, qualitative approach was adopted because it is appropriate for getting first-hand information as it provides a platform for the researcher to explore participants' experiences in detail. A focus group discussion and face to face interviews were conducted and data was analysed using Tesch (1990)'s approach to data analysis. Findings showed that Matabeleland South has been politically and ethnically excluded from mainstream development resulting in the province being among the poorest in Zimbabwe and the rural women are hardest hit.*

**KEY TERMS:** ethnicity, development, rural women, Matabeleland South, Zimbabwe, politics, socio-economic realities

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## INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe is going through political and social turmoil which has negatively impacted the lives of its citizens. Poverty and various development challenges have taken over the lives of many. However, for the rural women of Matabeleland, their case is dire. This is because development for the people of Matabeleland cannot be divorced from the politics of ethnicity.

Dangarembga (2004:16) through her character MaShingai, a rural woman, describes the condition of black women as "...the poverty of blackness on one side and the weight of womanhood on the other..." This statement is a true reflection of the conditions of most black rural women. But, for the rural women in Matabeleland, this poverty takes on different dimensions. It is the poverty of blackness, the poverty of womanhood and the poverty of being amaNdebele. Their socio-economic realities are determined by ethnicity and as a result their access to basic services is severely hindered pushing them into a deep dark pit of poverty.

This study discusses the conditions of rural women in Matabeleland South, who are going through various levels of development challenges, marginalisation, exclusion and discrimination. More particularly the focus is on exploring the experiences of these women and the specific challenges they face in relation to their socio-economic realities and their ethnicity. The research objective was to explore how rural women describe their situation in Matabeleland South with regards to the specific challenges they face in relation to their socio-economic realities and their ethnicity?

## BLACK RURAL WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT: SETTING THE SCENE

*"I believe that black has been oppressed by white; female by male.... It follows from this that the black female worker and peasant is the most oppressed. She is oppressed on account of her color like all black people in the world; she is oppressed on account of her gender like all women in the world; and she is exploited and oppressed on account of her class like all workers and peasants in the world. Three burdens she has to carry"* (wa Thiongo: 2006:428).

The 1995 World Summit for Social Development was an agreement between world leaders to focus on people centred development and its priority was poverty eradication. The 2000 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) followed as an offshoot of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development. The aim was to eradicate poverty, hunger, illiteracy and the discrimination against women among others. Following the success of the Millennium Development Goals were 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are also a call for poverty eradication. Lombard (2011:237) states that the "World Summit on Social Development, and the Millennium Development goals, reinvigorated social development." According to Ngudu (2010: 16) the "key reason behind the summit was to address global poverty and unemployment."

However, despite these and other international, global and local strategies to enhance people centred development, the plight of women in many parts of Africa still remains unchanged. There are wide gaps between what's on paper and the conditions of the women on the ground. While some women have benefited, a lot of women still remain in dire straits and rural women bear the brunt. They bear the brunt of being mothers, fathers, home defenders, care givers and farmers.

Rural areas are predominantly known for being economic underdogs whose access to basic services is very limited. It is therefore not surprising that in this context, rural women are the wretched of the earth due to the numerous development challenges facing them. Consequently, according to Ahmed (2016:34) "The profile of a rural woman is that of a poor, ignorant, illiterate, superstitious and suppressed being. She has low levels of skills. Her access to information, assets, and opportunities is also low... She is under-represented. She is overworked..." and to this end, Dangarembga (2004:16) laments "This business of womanhood is a heavy burden." The rural woman is the face of poverty, she is an embodiment of misery and all things wretched. However, no matter how much outsiders try to define her struggles, it is only the one walking in those shoes who can accurately define and describe what being a poor rural woman means and feels like. Outsiders can never understand nor adequately describe the term 'poor rural woman' until they walk in her tennis shoes. To this end, Davids, Theron & Maphunye (2005:37) state that "poor people have their own understanding and interpretation of their social reality, and this is often removed from the outsider's perspective." For poor rural women, "poverty is a multi-faceted reality consisting of, inter alia, lack of power, income and resources to make choices and take advantage of opportunities" (Davids et al, 2005:37).

For rural Matabeleland, the situation is worse and the women have been hardest hit. In the opening quote, wa Thiongo (2006), shares three burdens that rural women carry, the burden of being exploited on account of the colour of their skin, gender and class. The Matabeleland women, have an additional burden to carry. This burden is on account of being amaNdebele women. This says a lot about Zimbabwe as a nation, its focus, priorities and progress. To this end, wa Thiongo (2006: 253), asserts that "The condition of women in a nation is the real measure of its progress." Clearly, the dire state of these women in Zimbabwe is an indication of the country's focus, progress and its definition of the concept of development.

## THE CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT

The term development is a multifaceted and multidimensional concept. Its meaning varies, depending on who is talking about it and for what context and there have been various debates on how to achieve it. That said, does the lack of a universal term impact on how development practitioners and politicians serve intended beneficiaries. Does this give one a right to marginalise a group of people? Does the above fact affect development in a particular area? Does it intentionally or unintentionally lead to discrimination and social exclusion of certain groups?

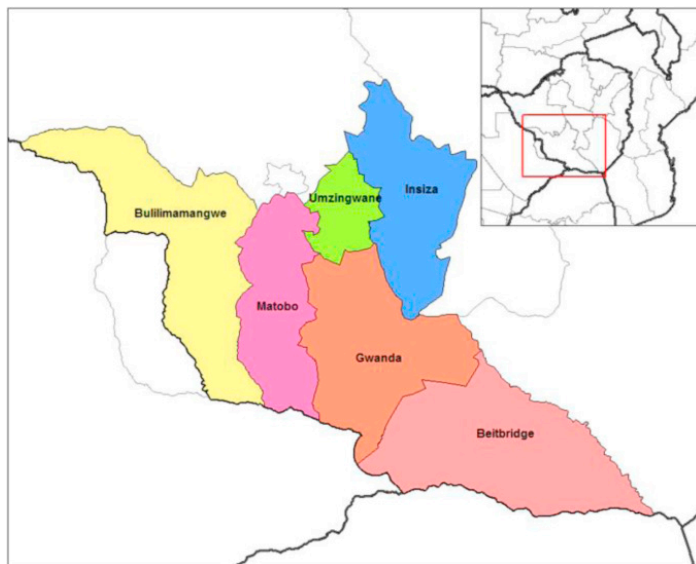
Gray (2017:15) poses some very pertinent questions, she asks, “What is the purpose of development, for example? Is it economic development or poverty reduction or an enhancement of people’s quality of life?” What then is development and what is its intended purpose? Correll (2008: 458), argues that “development is perceived differently by the different actors. Commercial and central ministries in government see development as economic development. Civil society sees development as involving all aspects of society.” No matter the definition or purpose, the outcome of development should always be an improvement in what Gil (1992:25) calls “outcome variables of ways of life” for the intended beneficiaries. These “outcome variables of ways of life are circumstances of living of individuals, groups and classes; power of individuals, groups and classes; nature and quality of human relations among individuals, groups and classes and overall quality of life” (p25).

People are at the core of development. Every development endeavour should centre around them, both as recipients and active participants in their own development. Development should therefore be a continuous and deliberate activity aimed at meeting basic human needs in a particular area. It should enable equal access to all. Development should not focus on race, language, ethnicity, sex, political affiliation and location of people.

## THE EARLY RAIN WHICH WASHES AWAY THE CHAFF? THE CASE OF MATABELELAND SOUTH

The study was carried out in the Sababa village which is under the Insiza district located in the Matabeleland South Province in the Southern part of Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is in southern Africa, has eight provinces and two cities and is divided into districts, wards and villages. The country is landlocked and has a projected population of roughly 13 million people (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency ZIMSTATS, 2012). Insiza is situated about 100 kilometres south of Gwanda which is its administrative town, and about 150 kilometres from Bulawayo, Zimbabwe’s second largest city.

*Map 1: Matabeleland South Districts*



*Source: ZIMSTATS, 2012*

Matabeleland South, shares its borders with South Africa and Botswana. The province consists mostly of young people who are still of school going age and the elderly, women in particular. This is mainly because of the migration of younger people to neighbouring countries like South Africa and Botswana (South Africa in particular) in search of greener pastures. According to Dube, Sithole and Nkala (2012), due to the exodus of the labour force in search of employment opportunities, the province is mainly populated by young people aged between 5 and 14 years and the old who are above 50 years.

The province is culturally inhabited by amaNdebele. Eppel (2014) attributes this to the 1930 Land Apportionment Act which saw the amaNdebele being moved into desolate regions. Agriculture is the traditional livelihood strategy, however, rainfall is lower than in other provinces rendering it infertile. The province falls in natural farming regions V and is prone to drought and dry spells. According to ZIMSTATS (2012), lack of financial capital and low rainfall are major contributory factors that hamper farming which is the traditional livelihood strategy of the province.

Exacerbating an already dire state is the fact that because the province is predominantly isiNdebele speaking, it consequently faces socio-economic marginalisation. Mtetwa, Dziro & Takaza (2013:32) state that “socio-economic marginalisation stigma and discrimination go hand in glove with socio-economic marginalisation of the population.” Eppel (2014) adds that marginalisation, exclusion and underdevelopment are terms associated with Matabeleland and that the province is a source of political opposition. As a result of this socio-economic marginalisation Matabeleland is one of the poorest provinces in the Zimbabwe.

Mtetwa, Dziro & Takaza (2013:32) state that “This marginalisation can be due to political beliefs, ethnicity and religion. Coming three years after a protracted struggle for liberation, the civil strife in the early 1980s was cited as one of the major stumbling blocks to the development of Matabeleland South. During the said period, people of Matabeleland and midlands were labelled as dissidents that should be exterminated. As a consequence, more than twenty thousand people perished through a state sponsored operation codenamed Gukurahundi.” Gukurahundi is a Shona word which means the early rain that washes away the chaff.

Mtetwa et al (2013:32) add that after this whole fracas, the Mugabe led Zimbabwean “government withdrew all development focus from the province” consequently propagating untold poverty. This poverty took the “form of a lack of Government-sponsored economic and social activities, inadequate infrastructure development and the migration of most young productive people” (Mtetwa et al, 2013:32). Mabhena (2014: 148) further adds that “ethnicity and the politics of development have shaped the development agenda in southern Matabeleland.” In the face of this exclusion, the people of Matabeleland, young people in particular have resorted to alternative survival strategies like ukukuta (illegal gold panning) and *ukuba zinjiva* (border jumping).

wa Thiongo (1989:12) asks "So a handful of people still profited from the suffering of the majority, the sorrow of the many being the joy of the few?" This is the case in Zimbabwe, where a few privileged people get to enjoy ‘milk and honey’ while the rest languish in poverty. As a country, a few individuals are waxing great while the country is going through dire straits economically. Poverty, unemployment, migration, a breakdown of institutional systems and limited investment are the order of the day. Dodzo & Mhloyi (2017) unpack Zimbabwe’s “period of political plurality and tensions in governance systems.” They discuss “the consequent social upheaval and economic fragility, characterised by poor performance of key social sectors” as well as the failure of agriculture, the collapse of industries, increase in unemployment, the decline of aggregate expenditure among others. Consequently, Matabeleland is getting a triple dose of this with its rural areas feeling it in buckets. In the midst of this misery, it is the women who suffer the most. As wa Thiongo (2006:83) puts it “Women bear the brunt of poverty. What choices does a woman have in life, especially in times of misery?” In this case, the women of Matabeleland are hardest hit.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research design

An exploratory, qualitative approach was adopted for this study. This is because it gives participants space to share their experiences, how they understand them and how they interpret these perceptions (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). Such a qualitative design is appropriate for getting first-hand information as it provides a platform for the researcher to explore participants’ experiences in detail.

This approach therefore afforded participants a platform to give a narration of their experiences with regards to their socio-economic realities. It also enabled the researcher to understand the perceptions of rural women’s socio-economic realities and how they link them to their ethnicity. In Matabeleland, where rural women have been subjected to various forms of development challenges, marginalisation and social exclusion, this approach could be seen as giving a voice to the voiceless. Data was obtained from in depth interviews and a focus group discussion through the use of an interview schedule. All the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed accordingly.

In addition, this is a case study approach. As already mentioned, Zimbabwe is undergoing various development challenges and the case study approach allowed the researcher to interrogate the various development challenges facing rural women with a particular focus on their socio-economic realities linked to their ethnicity. Even though the research focused on a single rural village, the findings from this study could give a better understanding of the plight of rural women in similar villages in Zimbabwe and beyond.

### Sampling and sample focus

Purposive non-probability sampling was used in this research. This is because this type of non-probability sampling is based entirely on the researcher’s decision on who has the required attributes. The researcher identified

a sample that contained the most characteristic and representative qualities of the population (De Vos, 2002). The researcher was interested in locating a village in a district that is wrought with various development challenges. The researcher was particularly interested in exploring how women in this village articulate these challenges in relation to their socio-economic realities and their ethnicity. In consultation with various informants, Sababa village was identified. Sababa village is in the Insiza district and the main source of livelihood is agricultural farming, vegetable gardens, cultivating worms and stokvels.

### **Participants**

All participants were purposively selected. With the permission of the village chief, 20 rural women were selected. Fourteen formed part of a focus group, six were individually interviewed (in-depth interviews) and four commuting traders were also interviewed (in-depth individual interviews). Additionally, eight informants were interviewed (in-depth). The list of informants included the village chief, acting Chief, Governor and Resident Minister of Matabeleland South, Provincial Administrator of Matabeleland South, NGO Field Coordinator, NGO Committee Member, Editor in Chief and a Senior Journalist. Thus the researcher had four sub-samples that were interviewed namely: fourteen women from the Sababa village who formed part of a focus group; six individual interviews with women from the village (not part of the focus group); four individual interviews with women from the village who commuted between Matabeleland South and South Africa in order to trade and eight informants. All in all, there were 32 participants.

### **Data collection approach**

The researcher relied on focus group discussions and individual face to face in-depth interviews for data collection. In both the face to face interviews and focus group discussions, the researcher encouraged the individuals to tell their stories. The interviews were carried out using interview schedules that had guiding questions. Furthermore, a tape recorder was used to ensure accurate capturing of data.

### **Data collection instruments**

Interview schedules were developed so as to guide the questions and probe answers that the women and informants gave. An interview schedule was designed to guide the focus group discussion and in depth interviews with the six rural women and four commuting informants. Another interview schedule was developed to guide the in-depth interviews with the eight informants. The interview schedules were used in a flexible and informal way that gave room for new questions to be brought up during the interview. Both schedules covered questions pertaining to some basic details about the participants; development challenges facing rural women in relation to food insecurity, access to water, climate change, health, education and poverty; responses to development challenges and recommendations that could be made to government and the NGO sector.

### **Data analysis strategy**

Data was analysed according to the adaptation of Tesch (1990). The steps used by the researcher to guide the analysis included: reading through one transcript for meaning, assigning labels to the meanings of the text in the margins of the transcript (for all the transcriptions), classifying and grouping labels into themes and categories, revisiting the main themes and categories to make sure that the themes reflected the main objectives of the study, checking the categories to make sure that they were mutually exclusive, developing a framework for depicting the revised themes and categories, writing up the discussion of findings using the themes as main headings and categories as sub headings. The researcher then used the actual quotes of the respondents for discussing the findings and linked them to the authors in the literature review. The researcher was also critical in relating the actual quotes to relevant studies.

## **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Informed consent**

Consent to do research was obtained from the relevant authorities in Matabeleland South. Preceding the interview process, the researcher informed all the participants that they were not forced to share any information against their will. They were also informed of their right to pull out of the research any time in case they felt uncomfortable with the process. Fortunately, no participant walked out of the interview. However, some indicated that they were uncomfortable with some questions and chose not to respond to those questions. The consent of the participants was gained before recording the interviews.

### Anonymity

The subject of ethnicity and development challenges, especially in a country like Zimbabwe, aroused sensitive responses from the women and informants hence the researcher made sure that anonymity of the participants was respected and they were not compromised in any way. The researcher asked them to use pseudonyms to protect themselves. Pseudonyms were used even for those participants who insisted on using their real names.

### Voluntary participation

Prior to the interview process, the researcher informed the participants that participation was voluntary, no one was forced to take part and if ever during the course of the interviews they felt uncomfortable they could leave. Fortunately none of them walked out of the interviews.

## PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### Profile of the rural women

The first group of participants to be interviewed were the 14 women who took part in the focus group discussions. Their ages ranged from 44 to 80, they were all isiNdebele speaking and their source of livelihood included vegetable gardens, mopani worms, stokvels and farming.

The second group consisted of six women who took part in the individual interviews. Their ages ranged from 40 to 65 including one who didn't know when she was born, they were all isiNdebele speaking, had the same source of livelihood except one who also sold home brewed beer on top of the other activities. Important to note is that the source of livelihood is the same for all women and it is an indication of the economic activities that the participants engage in as a survival strategy.

From the profiles, one can see that these rural women were aged 40 and above and did not commute. As a result of marginalisation, exclusion and discrimination, most young people migrate in search of greener pastures hence there are generally more dependants in rural spaces, mainly women and children. In this situation they eke out a living through vegetable gardens, mopani worms and farming.

The third group of women consisted of four commuting informants. These women are engaged in cross-border trading where they sell *izikiriyo* (curious) outside the country. Their particular country of choice is South Africa due to demand as well as proximity. Their ages were 29, 33, 35 and 70. With the exception of one woman, most cross-border traders are younger persons.

**Table 1:** Profile of the Informants

Table 1 is presented with regards to participant's sex, position held and years in the designated position. Some of these informants are based in the Sababa village for example the village chief and the acting chief, while others are based outside but have close ties with the village due to their line of work.

Participant	Sex	Position Held	Duration Worked
Informant	Female	NGO Committee Member	2 Years
Informant	Female	Senior Journalist	8 Years
Informant	Female	Governor and Resident Minister	7 Years
Informant	Male	Editor in Chief	20 Years
Informant	Male	Chief	10 Years
Informant	Male	Acting Chief	3 Years
Informant	Male	NGO Field Coordinator	11 Years
Informant	Male	Provincial Administrator	10 Years

Note: Informants hold significant positions

### Profile of Resources

This community has one primary school, one borehole, no health facilities and no secondary schools.

### Theme and Categories

The theme identified from the findings is socio-economic realities and the categories are poverty, politics, the ethnicity of development and exclusionary development.

### Socio-economic realities

The categories to be discussed in this section are poverty, politics, the ethnicity of development and exclusionary development. This broad theme of socio-economic realities pertains to the objective: **“explore how rural women describe their situation in Matabeleland South with regards to their socio-economic realities.”**

#### Category 1: Poverty

Research findings indicated that poverty is one of the main socio-economic realities facing rural women in Matabeleland South. Davids *et al* (2005) define poverty as a multifaceted reality consisting of inter alia lack of power, income and resources to make choices and take advantage of opportunities. The participants projected poverty in various ways and this highlights the multifaceted aspect of their poverty as reflected in the following responses:

*“People here are really poor. We don’t have access to money, where will we get money when there is so much drought?”* (Participant W6, Individual Interview)

*“People in this area are very poor, this year it has been worse. We have complained in previous years but there will be food on the table even though we will be struggling to send our children to school. This year we could not even harvest anything.”* (Participant W2, Individual Interview)

*“Our children go to school without eating. They only eat in the evening and most fail at school because it is hard to concentrate when one is hungry.”* (Participant W5, Individual Interview)

The participants also shared that other indicators of poverty are their lack of access to health and education facilities, lack of employment opportunities and the shortage of rain and livestock. All the participants highlighted the vicious cycle of poverty in that it manifests itself in a number of ways. This can be their failure to send their children to school, food insecurity, constant illness due to hunger and other development challenges. Maphosa (2009) describes the poverty in rural Matabeleland as very complicated and multidimensional and highly noticeable because of the apparent deprivations. Moseley and Logan (2001) note these deprivations as inadequate access to health and educational services, poor roads and infrastructure and food shortages.

Participants also highlighted the extent of poverty in the region. Sen (1999) states that development entails the removal of major sources of ‘unfreedom.’ These sources of ‘unfreedom’ include poverty, tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, access to education and health, neglect of public services as well as intolerance. It is evident therefore from the responses that various substantial freedoms are being compromised. The economic situation in Zimbabwe has depreciated and the state is failing to meet the basic needs of its citizens and as a result people are being neglected and the rural woman is hardest hit. With many of the amaNdebele rural women in Zimbabwe living under the poverty line, it is clear that the major sources of unfreedom have not been adequately addressed. Structural violence is the order of the day rendering the women vulnerable.

#### Category 2: Politics

There was a general consensus that politics is used to use and abuse the people of Matabeleland as summarised in the following responses:

*“...At the end of the day, even the government efforts are politicised...People fail to benefit the way they should and you find all the resources are channelled to the wrong people. Those that are not supposed to benefit do and those that are genuine, genuine beneficiaries because of their political affiliation tend to be affected.”* (Participant Blue, Informant)

*“I think politics plays a negative role. Some women are dedicated to working in the gardens and do not attend some of the political gatherings and this is interpreted as a sign of disassociation with the political party in question. This in turn puts a strain on relations between the women involved. That is how politics affects women in my opinion.”* (Participant Yellow, Informant)

*“Because when you go to register, you hear that this is ZANU party food that is MDC party food. If the food came as a result of ZANU effort they don’t want MDC people to benefit.”* (Participant Green, Informant)

The participants noted that there is a link between the women’s socio-economic realities and politics. One participant specifically noted that when it comes to the development of Matabeleland, politicians “play dirty.” It

was also noted that politicians are only interested in serving their interests at the expense of the Matabeleland people.

Participants also pointed out that the state is only interested in the people of Matabeleland for political reasons and not development. They pointed that as a result, the ruling ZANU-PF party is not the amaNdebele people's choice. Wiggins (2004) agrees that the 2002 and 2008 elections confirmed the fact that the ruling ZANU-PF party is not supported in Matabeleland and as a result, amaNdebele have been intentionally left out of Zimbabwe's development agenda. Mabhena (2014:137), also argues that "development marginalisation of Matabeleland region... has been influenced by politics of revenge."

wa Thiongo (1989), asserts that poverty is an essential tool used by the post-colonial government to control people. He argues that the black government is responsible for oppressing its own citizens and laments at the fact that the government calls itself a 'government for the people,' yet it has done nothing to improve the lives of its people. This is the case in Matabeleland where the government of Zimbabwe has been biased in terms of access to basic services. This bias has seen amaNdebele being treated like foreigners in their own country.

It is clear that politics have a huge role to play in marginalising people. Due to their political affiliation, the people of Matabeleland, have consequently been marginalised socially, economically, politically. Additionally they have been excluded from most development programmes. There is little or no improvement in their circumstances of living, power, nature and overall quality of life.

### **Category 3: The ethnicity of development**

The participants working in the government sector did not address the issue of tribalism or any link to tribal focused institutional systems of development. However, all the rural participants were IsiNdebele speaking and they attributed their socio-economic realities to what I call the ethnicity of development. They indicated that their interests as amaNdebele are being excluded and political domination is used to exclude them from development. The general view among the participants is summarised below:

*"Tribalism has really impacted negatively to the development of women in particular in Mat- South. Because if you go out to Mashonaland you will find women owning quite beautiful, big things, big projects but in Matabeleland it's rare to get that. (Participant Purple, Informant)*

*"The issue of political involvement in development has been an issue ever since for Matabeleland because of its political history, you know, the Ndebeles, the Shonas, you know, and this has really, really affected development of women because even if there is a government drive to improve the lives of women, you will find that there is that political interference, you know, people from this side will not benefit from this one, such things. (Participant Brown, Informant)*

The participants also added that Shona speaking people are being given leadership positions in the Matabeleland province and when there are development projects, they only hire Shona speaking people while leaving amaNdebele people out. The participants reflected that if the intention is to develop people from Matabeleland, then, amaNdebele people should lead and be at the forefront of these development programmes.

Another point which emerged from the findings was that the government is not interested in the people of Matabeleland and they are "not hiding it." When they do "turn up," which is normally mostly at election time they do it reluctantly. The participants indicated that their development or lack thereof is linked to the fact that they are amaNdebele people based in Matabeleland. Participants also noted that the ethnicity of development limits their access to human rights.

From the above responses, it seems as if in Matabeleland South, the struggle for freedom is not yet over. Before they could even recover from colonisation, they had to endure black on black colonisation. This black on black colonisation has led to untold suffering for many of them. As a result of their location and ethnicity, they are being treated like vagrants in their own country. The development or lack thereof is linked to the politics of ethnicity and institutional systems of discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion. Wiggins (2004) indicates that poverty in the Matabeleland provinces has its roots in the Gukurahundi or the amaNdebele-Shona post-independence clashes, which have never been addressed. He attributes these clashes to the ZANU PF government's involvement in two conflicts in Matabeleland around the early 1980s which saw the deaths and disappearances of over 20 000 amaNdebele people. Mabhena (2014:137), also argues that "it would be extremely difficult to understand the social, economic and political dynamics of southern Matabeleland without recognising the role of ethnic conflict and persecution in the making of this region." For this reason it may be suggested that the issue of ethnicity still plays a huge role in the underdevelopment of the amaNdebele women who are mostly found in Matabeleland. As a result, they still face divers forms of marginalisation and discrimination from access to the political, social, economic and developmental benefits of independence.

The participants pointed out that the Zimbabwean political dispensation has not been kind to the amaNdebele in Matabeleland. To this end, Mabhena (2014) notes that ethnicity has been used to marginalise the people of



Matabeleland from development. Consequently, according to Bird and Shepherd (2003), Matabeleland province struggles with spatial poverty and the socio-political and economic situation of Zimbabwe has further exacerbated the situation. Patel & Hochfeld (2013: 692) state that among other things, development encompasses the “provision of other publicly funded services and social programmes targeted at the poor and vulnerable groups such as primary education, primary health care, housing, basic services, public works (employment), and support for micro and small enterprises...” Therefore, development should be about access to basic services for all people not according to ethnicity lines. It should prioritise the respect of all human rights not a selected group to the detriment of other groups. This begs the question, if development is for people why are the amaNdebele rural women not included in development programmes? Are they still considered as chaff?

From the narratives, one can see that there is a clear link between ethnicity and development. This view emanates from the fact that Matabeleland is the poorest province in Zimbabwe as a result of marginalisation and the ethnicity of development. It looks like the term development is for people has taken a different meaning in the context of Zimbabwe. It is fair to state that in Zimbabwe, the term development is defined on ethnicity grounds. Years after Gukurahundi, amaNdebele still face the poverty linked to their ethnicity.

#### **Category 4: Exclusionary development**

This category brought out a lot of emotions from the participants. Participants indicated that the government is only interested in developing people from the Mashonaland province. This is demonstrated in the following narratives:

*“You find that when the government is bringing aid or assistance in Matabeleland they do it half-heartedly, but when they are developing Mashonaland they give with a very big heart. This really affects us as women in this region because we are discriminated against.”* (Participant Red, Commuting Informant)

*“Women in Matabeleland face a lot of development challenges. It is very sad that the government has chosen to turn a blind eye to their suffering. If government gave Matabeleland the same attention they give to Mashonaland, we would be telling a different story today.”* (FG8: Focus Group)

*“As women in Matabeleland we suffer a lot because the government has never prioritised us in development. We are always getting bread crumbs like birds. It’s like the government feels like we are a nuisance...”* (FG2: Focus Group)

Participants also indicated that when it comes to access to opportunities, people in Mashonaland are prioritised and amaNdebele are ignored. They also added that the government does not care for them as a result they have to be their own government.

Midgley (2014), says that in social development, equal access to rights and opportunities, with special focus on previously disadvantaged communities are pivotal. This line of development calls for the active participation of people including their participation culturally, politically, socially and economically. van Breda (2015) stipulates that these rights are the right to basic services (for example health care, education and housing) as well as access to social welfare services. This access is fair, equitable and equal. Midgley (2010: 20) adds that “the investment of resources for social development also involves wider advocacy for social justice such as when community members face entrenched inequalities in resources and power or when they are exploited or discriminated against.” However, for the people of Matabeleland, the word equal access to rights and opportunities is non-existent. What is happening in Zimbabwe is development yes, but it is what I call exclusionary development because it favours Mashonaland provinces at the detriment of Matabeleland.

Mabhena (2014: 137) argues that the “current hegemony of the Shona people in Zimbabwe and their desire to dominate Ndebele communities in the south has contributed significantly to development marginalisation of southern Matabeleland over the past 30 years” This ‘development marginalisation’ or exclusionary development is an indication that in the case of Zimbabwe, human rights refer to Mashonaland rights. People in Mashonaland, are prioritised in terms of access to key human rights. This background of exclusionary development, has had a direct impact on rural women’s ability to lift themselves out of poverty. This argument is supported by the narratives of the amaNdebele women as summarised below:

*“All I can say is that the government of Zimbabwe does not like the people of Matabeleland. Look at us. Look at our children. So much suffering. Why are we being excluded from development?”* (FG12: Focus Group)

According to (Makumbe, 2012:34), “the government of Zimbabwe has for long been condemned for breaking human rights despite being a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights...” The rights of

amaNdebele women are human rights, but it seems like they are constantly infringed on. Their rights are neither acknowledged nor respected as a result they find themselves facing diverse development challenges. Consequently, they have resorted to alternative means in order to eke out a living.

### **NOT YET UHURU? CONCLUSION**

Unfortunately, despite this glaring marginalisation, there seems to be no help in sight for the amaNdebele. When it comes to development in Matabeleland, the government has turned a blind eye to the needs of the people and the only visible role player is the NGO. A sustainable solution to the Matabeleland problem is to address the root cause of the challenges and that is a government that genuinely cares about all people, a government that is no respecter of ethnicity, language or background. A government that will redefine the term development to include all citizens in Zimbabwe not just a few. We can talk about policy, gender mainstreaming, social protection, poverty alleviation and education among others, but if the government or the relevant role players are not interested in the needs of all people, all we have are lavishly designed strategies that do nothing to improve the lives of people. Zimbabwe needs a government and role players that are interested in people centred development.

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