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## MIGRATION DYNAMICS AND THE DEVOLUTION AGENDA IN MATABELELAND SOUTH PROVINCE OF ZIMBABWE

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### Abstract

Economic challenges in Zimbabwe have seen most people relocating to different countries in a bid to earn a decent living. These movements are done at all levels, whether learned or general/domestic workers. In doing so, a lot of brain drain is witnessed where many technical and expert personal are no longer offering their services to their home countries but elsewhere. The government of Zimbabwe has come up with a statutory instrument to grow the Zimbabwean economy at Provincial level so as to become an upper middle economy by 2030. With this challenge at hand, migration of these people has a lot of implication on the government's devolution agenda as the local people are moving away from developing their area. Against this backdrop, the paper seeks to bring out migration dynamics in Matabeleland South Province which may hinder government efforts in achieving the agenda in the Province. Most of the people in the province are a source of cheap labour in the neighbouring South Africa and possibly Botswana. Using qualitative research methods, the researchers purposively sampled some families in Gwanda and conveniently selected some government departments to establish the purpose and impact of the devolution program. Through some interviews carried out, the research established that many people especially youths in the Province migrate to South Africa as cheap labour and that impacts negatively on the devolution agenda and the vision 2030 in the Province. As a result the

researchers therefore recommend that the government of Zimbabwe should put in place stringent measures at the boarder places so that the easy flow of human traffic as boarder jumpers is curbed.

**Keywords:** migration, brain drain, devolution agenda, Zimbabwe, Matabeleland South

### Introduction

Migration is a common occurrence in most developing countries in the world because most of these countries lack political will to solve problems that affect their economies. Zimbabwe is not an exception in the matter hence statistics and a lot of researches show that it is one of the country with a lot of immigrants in various countries, (Human Rights Watch, 2008). The reason that most developing countries face are a combination of economic and political challenges so as a result of these many educated and skilled people migrate to other countries to better their lives. This phenomenon in Zimbabwe is peculiar all over the country but Matabeleland South has been chosen in this case because it has so many immigrants who migrate to South Africa, (South African Migration 2006, Polzer, 2009). The area is dominated by the Nguni spoken languages hence by virtue of their history that point back to South Africa, a lot of people find themselves going back because of the commonality in their language use. It is because of this rampant movement that this research is given impetus because devolution

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agenda by the government will be affected in terms of employment creation for the local people. The article therefore analyses migration dynamics and how they eventually impact on the government's agenda to empower the Province through devolution.

### ***Understanding devolution and its agenda in Zimbabwe***

It is critical at this point to spell out what devolution is and the agenda for the program. Beris (2008:47) defines devolution as a situation where central government transfers legislative, executive, administrative and financial decision making authority to local government that have clear and legally recognized jurisdictions within which they provide public services to constituents to whom they are accountable. The idea is to decentralize power to the local people through their council and making them observe their economic potentials. Thus devolution is therefore an important medium to achieving national economic growth. More so, Madanhire (2019) in a newspaper article alludes to the idea that Zimbabwe's devolution programme is largely founded on the principle of empowering provincial government councils to spearhead economic and social development projects in their areas by leveraging on local resources. These local resources in the paper involve the use of human capital thus the emphasis on Matabeleland South province. Devolution emphasizes on economic development and not political power which remains in the hands of central government under the country's unitary state structure.

Devolution of power is enshrined in Chapter 14 of the Zimbabwe's 2013 Constitution as one of the country's founding values and principles. Zimbabwe's statutory objectives for the devolution of governmental powers and responsibilities include:

(a) to give powers of local governance to the people and enhance their participation in the exercise of the powers of the State and in making decisions affecting them (b) to promote democratic, effective, transparent, accountable and coherent government of Zimbabwe as a whole (c) to preserve and foster the peace, national unity and indivisibility of Zimbabwe (d) to recognise the right of communities to

manage their own affairs and to further their development (e) to ensure the equitable sharing of local and national resources (f) to transfer responsibilities and resources from the national government in order to establish a sound financial base for each provincial and metropolitan council and local authority.

In accordance with the above devolution constitutional vision, political power, policy making decisions, resource raising and distribution, as well as administrative and governance responsibilities are meant to be devolved through three tiers of government. These include: (1) the national government; (2) provincial and metropolitan councils; and (3) local authorities (which include urban councils and rural councils). The national government is composed of national Ministers who constitute the Cabinet (the executive arm of government). These Cabinet Ministers are directly elected Members of the National Assembly (MPs), Senators or non-constituency Ministers appointed by the President in terms of the new Constitution. The second tier of government - provincial and metropolitan councils - is composed of directly elected and proportional representation public representatives elected using constitutional provisions contained in chapter 14 (2:268) (for provincial councils) and chapter 14 (2:269) (for metropolitan councils). The third (and by no means the least) tier of government is that of the local authorities. These are the grassroots level urban councils and rural councils. These councils are composed of ward councilors directly elected using constitutional provisions contained in chapter 14 (3:277) read together with chapter 14 (3:274) (for urban councils) and chapter 14 (3:275) (for rural councils). In broad terms, rural councils are expected to represent and manage the affairs of people in rural areas within districts into which Zimbabwe's provinces are divided, while urban councils do the same in urban areas. The small size of wards from which councilors (who make up the council) are drawn enables councilors to be in continuous close contact with their constituents. This potentially provides an avenue for local citizens to access their political representatives thereby enabling their voice to be heard in decision making that affects their local service delivery and local development.

In theory, Zimbabwe's three tiers of government are predicated on a constitutional provision

within which they will implement their functions in a cooperative manner. A cooperative framework in which the three tiers of government inform, consult, harmonise and coordinate on matters of common national and public interest is thus imagined in the new Constitution. While such co-operation among the three tiers is possible, its success or failure will depend on how an Act of Parliament (which is yet to be crafted, debated and enacted) will define the mechanisms and procedures to facilitate co-ordination between central government, provincial and metropolitan councils and local authorities.

With regards to this article, narrowing down of economic powers maybe welcomed by the local people as it creates employment at local level and make people understand the economic values and resources within their Provinces. The argument in the paper is centered on the rate of migration by the Matabeleland South population and the government plan to empower Provinces economically. This means the local people are to be considered first and yet the local people in the Province are providing their labor elsewhere.

### ***Migration and Devolution***

It is of paramount importance to elaborate on the issues of migration and how it affects the devolution agenda. By way of definition, generally migration is the movement of people from one place to the other for a reason. This movement could have been necessitated by a plethora of reasons among them natural disasters, war among others. Also of importance to note is that migration can be internal where people can migrate from their place of origin to another place within the same country. Then migration which takes place between countries. In relation to this article, migration is discussed at the external level and Kennedy (1985) postulates that migration has to do with individual behaviors that produce a population outcome, and that outcome provides the selection acting back on individuals. Although migration can be *defined* only for individuals (behavior, syndromes), it can be *described* in terms of population outcomes (dynamics, trajectories, displacements). On the other hand, migration can be viewed as an adaptation specific of arenas in which changes inhabitant

quality in different regions occur asynchronously so that movement allows a succession of temporary resources to be exploited as they arise. More so, Gando and Michalakakis (2001) further assert that migration is movement away from the home range that does not cease, at least not initially, when suitable resources or home ranges are encountered. Eventually, however, the migrant is primed to respond to appropriate resources. It is in this circumstance that the immigrants eventually are considered to be using the expertise from their home country to tap the resources found in other countries and that impacts negatively on the devolution agenda in the home country.

King (2012) notes that migration inevitably shapes the demographic and environmental contexts of both the areas of out-migration and in-migration. Out-migration in this case refers to the place where the immigrants are coming out of. Making reference to this article, the out - migration is the Matabeleland South Province and movement of people to the neighboring country shapes negatively on the labor that is supposed to be provided by the local people towards their development. On the other and in-migration is the place where the immigrants would have gone to stay. In this regard it is South Africa or Botswana. This raises a lot of problems as both parties are affected. Of interest in this paper are the effects of migration on out-migration as there are repercussions on achieving the devolution agenda to grow the local economy with the absent of the local people. Kallio (2016) notes that humans have been migrating for millennia, and while data are increasingly captured on human migration flows, with the advent of devolution agenda by the government of Zimbabwe, there is a challenge of achieving the later with the local people failing to participate in their projects for economic prosperity. Migration is inherent for the human species, and while we can seek to prevent some types of migration through policy and sustainable livelihood practices, much of human migration is inevitable, thus posing contests on achieving the set goals in the Province. More so, many definitions of migration specifically state that migration is the crossing of a political or administrative boundary for a certain period of time (Castles, 2000; Richard and Sabine, 2012). It is evident

that, with the formation of modern states and borders, defining migration has become much more politicized and complex (Castles, 2000; King, 2012). Hence failure of the devolution agenda to be participated by the local people will be envisaged as political sabotage, whilst there are many circumstances that necessitates these movements by the native people.

On the other hand, proponents of devolution such as Chigumira et al. (2019) and Fonshell (2018) argue that devolution curbs corruption and inefficiency. According to Ngigi and Busolo (2019), devolution helps to establish institutions that are more accountable and an effective system of good governance. The fact the local government in Zimbabwe is entrusted with the role of promoting public participation in local governance in the first objective 264 (2a), also means that the good governance systems that are created are bound to be more efficient and transparent. When resources are distributed to local communities, it makes it easier to manage them in an accountable and transparent manner (Chikerema, 2013). It is this advantage of devolution which involves the native communities that the article is debating the factors that necessitates migration and consequently affects the implementation of the devolution agenda in Matabeleland South Province in Zimbabwe.

### ***Matabeleland South Province***

Matabeleland South Province is one of Zimbabwe's ten provinces situated South West of the country bordering with Botswana to the West, Midlands Province to the North east, to the South east is Masvingo and South Africa to the South. Its Provincial capital is Gwanda which is 132.7kms from Bulawayo and 197.3kms from Beitbridge. It is the country's least populous province despite constituting 13,86% of the total area of Zimbabwe. Matabeleland South sits on the edge of the Kalahari desert giving it an arid climate not favorable to agriculture. The economic activities that happens in the province are subsistence farming and livestock farming. This results in droughts and lack of economic opportunities which has seen people migrating from the Province for greener pastures. Despite the arid climate patterns in the province, the place has vast mineral deposits which could equally

sustain the economic status of the inhabitants of the province.

## **Research Methodology**

The article is guided by qualitative research paradigm grounded on Denzin and Lincoln (2005)'s definition that: qualitative research aims to gather comprehensive understanding of human behaviours and the resources that govern it. This visibly highlights that qualitative researchers study cases in an effort to make sense of or strive to interpret occurrences according to implications people afford them in their natural settings. More so, the choice of the research paradigm is necessitated by Creswell (2003) who argues that a qualitative study is, 'an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting' which is contrary to quantitative research. The target population of the study are people in Matabeleland South Province and participants are sampled using both convenience and purposive or judgemental sampling. Convenience sampling is a type of non-probability sampling which involved the selection of the sample that is convenient and readily available but drawn from part of the population under study. The province is chosen because it has a high rate of people who migrate to South Africa in search of jobs. Local government workers from the Provincial capital of Gwanda are the ones conveniently selected on the basis of their understanding and involvement in the devolution process and the nature of livelihoods in the areas around. Besides being readily available some respondents failed to have adequate knowledge about the subject matter so the researcher also enco-operated purposive sampling where choice was according to Olivier (2006) based upon a variety of criteria which may include proficient knowledge of the research issue, or capacity and willingness to participate in the research. In that regard, the researchers purposively sampled some youths in the Province who happen to be the target of employment that will be created by the devolution process.

Data was collected using interviews which Kvale (1996) says its sole purpose is to gather descriptions of life-world of the interviewee

with respect to interpretations of meanings of the described situation. An interview is a direct verbal data collecting tool which gives room for face to face interaction between the researcher and the respondents. The researchers used face to face interviews to solicit data from the selected people. This tool was useful in the exploration of deep unknown data from the respondents that is; their expectations, values and knowledge of the situation about development of their area. Furthermore, this tool was useful because even those respondents who cannot read or write can be included and more questions can be asked as rapport can be established with the respondents.

### ***Migration dynamics and its effects on devolution agenda in Matabeleland South***

The section is presenting dynamics in migration and consequently the implications it has on the devolution agenda in Matabeleland South Province.

#### ***Proximity of the Province to the borders of Botswana and South Africa***

Matabeleland South Province shares borders with South Africa and Botswana. The Province also hosts Beitbridge and Plumtree which are entry points to South Africa and Botswana respectively. The fact that there is no infrastructure to demarcate the borders make it easy for the residents to just cross imaginary lines and be on the other side of the border. This way people need not to have passports to pass through any formal entry/exit points to get to the other side so that makes the Province lose a lot of people to the neighboring countries, especially the youths. One of the respondents in the study commented;

*Umumo okulesi sigaba unгани uyahlupha ngoba siduzane lomungxele owamazwe amabili. Kunzima ukhuthi abantu bahlale phakhathi kobunzima ngoma indaba zomnotho lapha eZimbabwe kazimanga kuhle, kantike eBotswana lase South Africa impilo ingcono ukwedlula lapha ekhaya njalo lemisebenzi itholakhala kalula, Njengomngxele wona vele singathi kawuko*

*ngoba ngugwaqonje kombe okuyisifudlana. Sibanye.*

(The situation is very tricky in this Province because of our proximity to the two borders. It is difficult for our people to continue holding on to this difficult economic situation in Zimbabwe when they know you can lead a better life across the road. The border between Zimbabwe and Botswana or South Africa here is just marked by a road or a small river so it is easy for these young ones to just move and find themselves on the other side of the border where they can secure employment. After all we are one people)

The submission above by one respondent clearly shows that brain drain is inevitable in the Province. The young generation who are not patient with the economic environment in Zimbabwe carry the highest population of people who migrate to either South Africa or Botswana for better living conditions. In the process brain drain is high as their skills are being used elsewhere while their Province needs them. In the spirit of wanting to achieve upper middle income economy by 2030 through the devolution agenda, it may be difficult for the Province to tape from their local human resource because of this high rate of migration in the Province. Thus Jager and Mutusva (2015) contend that significant numbers of migrants have been heading south in response to the crisis with the perception of economic opportunity in Botswana and South Africa.

Besides crossing to the neighboring countries in search of better economic opportunities, a lot of illegal economic activities and dirty deals are rampant in the border towns of Beitbridge and Plumtree such that many youths resort to those activities at the expense of formal employment. It is difficult for somebody who has been involved in illegal foreign currency dealings at either Beitbridge or Plumtree border post to join say the road construction industry because to them money has been made easy to get by just standing at a corner. Some are into fuel selling, some are facilitating people to jump the borders to the neighboring country among other deals. This has been confirmed by another respondent who vowed that even if the government has plans to empower communities he will never join formal employment because of other

opportunities found in the border towns. He says verbatim;

*Impilo inhle lapha emngxeleni. Umuntu okhala ngokuswela umsebenzi kacabangi ngoba indlela zokwenza imali zinengi lapha ebhirijinuni. Ngiyazisola ngesikhathi engasimotshayo ngisiya esikhohlo ngoba imisebenzi enginika imali khayifuni isikhohlo. Ukucaphisa abantu abangela amapasiphoti umngxele akufuni isikhohlo ngoba ngisebenzisa ulwazi lwendawo njengesizalwane. Njalo ngiyathengisa amafutha awezimota ngithola imali enengi. Angitsho akhula amafutha awezimota lapha eZimbabwe.*

(Life is good here. There is nothing good as staying in a border town. Complaining of unemployment will be your own failure to think of plans to make money. I even regret why I spent all that time at school because things that we do here do not even need school. For example facilitating people to cross over to the other side just needs my knowledge of the place as a bona fide citizen of the area. We earn a lot through that because passports are not easy to get in Zimbabwe at the same time life is not rose so people go out without these travelling documents. With the current fuel shortages in the country, fuel business is brisk here. Transport business, foreign currency exchange and many other things. We can spend the whole day).

Above is a narration by one respondent who earns a living through various illegal activities in the border town of Beitbridge. The respondent exploits the harsh economic conditions in the country. It is evident that many youths now regret having gone to school to learn certain skills which they cannot use due to unemployment resulting from economic challenges in Zimbabwe. In other words the skills that they have learnt at various institutions are likely not going to be used in the Province's devolution agenda because the populace seems to be comfortable with opportunities they derive from illegal synonymous with being a border Province. It is because of this factor that the researchers in the paper argue that devolution agenda may be difficult to achieve in Matabeleland South province in Zimbabwe considering its proximity with both Botswana and South Africa.

On the same note, even government officers from the local government confirmed that proximity to the border is quite a challenge in achieving the devolution agenda in the Province. The interviewed officer reiterated that, '...it is actually heartbreaking that jobs are taken by youths from other Provinces whilst the owners of the jobs are nowhere to be found. The other thing is we have challenges in communicating with the local people. If we had youths who grew up in the area they would help spearhead some projects and help by explaining to the general populace and elderly in the language that they best understand...'. These concerns are still pointing to the absent of youths in the area to be involved in the projects that are initiated by devolution in their places.

#### ***Drought prone area***

Another important point to take note of about the challenges of Matabeleland South being part of the government's plan in achieving an upper middle economy through devolution agenda is their climate situation. Matabeleland South sits on the edge of the Kalahari desert giving it an arid climate not favorable to agriculture. In other words it is a drought prone area where little agricultural activities are done. People in the Province are into subsistence agriculture where they can carry out agriculture activities for their own consumption. Then they are into livestock rearing because at least they can take care of their cattle to send their children to school among other things. This clearly shows that for their source of livelihood, they go outside the Province because there is little that the province can offer. In this case migration is prone to happen and that will culminate into brain drain as people move out to go and fetch for better things elsewhere because even if they do subsistence farming they have no guarantee that they will have food. Jager and Musuva (2015) acknowledge that migration has become a crucial response of the poor, the better-off, the skilled and the unskilled to Zimbabwe's protracted crisis. To this effect another informant said:

*Indawo yakhithile iwomile izulu khalini kuhle. Imizamo yonke esiyizamayo eyokhulima ayiphumeleli ngenxa yokuswelakhala kwezulu. Ihloko yomuzi nje ngami kangingeke ngayekhela imuli yami ibulawa indlala ngihlezi lapha.*

*Akulalapho engingaya khona lapha eZimbabwe ngoba ukhula misebenzi.*

*Intonje yikhuthi ngicaphe ngiye eGoli khona ngiya tholela imuli ukhudla lemali yesikholo.*

(This place is dry, there is no water in the area to the point that even when we do agricultural activities for our own consumption, we have no guarantee that we will harvest. A head of a family like me cannot sit down and watch my family suffer. I have to leave the place go elsewhere to work for them...in this case where do we go in Zimbabwe with these hardships? We cross the border and go to South Africa. At least that way I can send food back home and my children can go to school)

Van Hear (2011: 2) notes that the notion of mixed migration has gained recognition over the last two decades as people ... move to escape intolerable living conditions, they may move to better themselves, or they move for these and other reasons. Poor living conditions have led to migration as the above informant has confirmed. The Province has a challenge that even when government programs come they are least considered for example they have been allocated funds to construct one dam during the 2019 Infrastructural investment plan when it is known that the place is dry, people there need more water resources to carry out more agricultural activities for their upkeep, (Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, 2019 Infrastructure Investment Plan). By giving them money to build one dam in six districts, little confidence is built among the people so they end up migrating away thereby defeating the devolution agenda.

Supporting the same view. Another government officer in an interview reiterated that these dry conditions in the province have made people shun farming at all costs because they are convinced that they buy the food not plough the food. In an effort to buy the food, every child who finishes school has to go and look for employment elsewhere so as to assist those at home.

### ***Province has the least population in the country***

Matabeleland South Province is the least populous province in Zimbabwe with an estimated population of 683, 893 as of the 2012 census. Being the least populous province, and has the highest rate of migration, this is a cause for concern because effective implementation of devolution will need manpower and skilled people from the Province. If the idea is to build a source of livelihood for people, then it will be difficult without the involvement of people from Matabeleland South. Tevera and Zinyama (2002: 7) note that prior to 2000 better-educated and skilled whites dominated the migration population. This has since changed to black Zimbabwean professionals as well as an increase in skilled labor migration. All these are economically motivated moves where people would want to earn a living out of their qualifications as a result brain drain is high. Although Jager and Musuva (2015) note that there has been a change in the ethnic composition of the Zimbabwean community in South Africa. Historically Zimbabwean migrants to South Africa tended to be from the Ndebele community or white settlers. This has necessitated debate in the article as the population of people from Matabeleland South is high hence impacting on the devolution agenda by the government as the program calls for the participation of the local people within the area, thereby creating employment.

Furthermore, allocation of funds for devolution takes cognisance of the numbers of people in the Province. If the numbers are low that will also guarantee allocation of less funds hence impacting on the agenda to empower the local people. Even the huge deposits of minerals in the Province, if there is no manpower and skilled people, the resources within the Province will be exploited by people from other areas thus giving a negative signal on the devolution agenda which calls for participation of the local communities.

### ***Historical political conflicts***

Historically, Matabeleland South has almost constantly been a victim of unrest. During the war of liberation the Province suffered from the effects of battles which occurred between the

Rhodesian Security Forces and the Freedom fighters. It was equally affected by follow up operations which were carried out by the South African Defense Forces as they pursued the South African Freedom Fighters who used the then Rhodesia as their passage into South Africa for their operations. When Zimbabwe attained independence in 1980, the Province once again became a war zone during the 1983-87 post-independence hostilities which occurred in parts of the Midlands and the Matabeleland Provinces. During this period a number of people fled Matabeleland Province into neighboring Botswana and South Africa. From that time to date some people of Matabeleland South Province have never trusted a government led by a Shona speaking leader. They have always felt marginalized and regard all government programs as less meaningful to them. When one respondent was asked to comment about money which the government allocated for devolution in 2019, this is what was said:

*Uhulumende lo, vele thina abantu base Matabeleland khasinanzi. Sizwa khuthiwa imali edlula i300 million yabelwa uhlelo lukha zibuse wezabelo, kodwathina lapha eMatabeleland South sanikwa imali engaphansi kwe3million. Ezinye izabelo ezinje nge Nkabezwe zathola imali endlula i40million okutshingisela ukubana uhlelo lolu alusoze lwaphumelela lapha kwekakithi. Ngakho akhula sizatho sokumelela into zobandlulo.*

(This government does not care about people of Matabeleland South. We understand that more than 300million was allocated for devolution but Matabeleland South was allocated only money below three million dollars whereas other provinces like the Midlands were allocated more than forty million for a similar program. Therefore there is no reason to wait for issues of segregation.)

On checking with relevant authorities it turned out to be true that the devolution program was allocated 310 million in 2019 and Matabeleland South was allocated 2, 7 million dollars for all the six districts yet the Midlands Province was allocated 41,6million dollars. Although there could be some other considerations which might have necessitated the disparities in the allocation of the funds to the Provinces, the government needs to explain these differences especially to

those who have always felt marginalized to avoid cases of negative perceptions which could affect the success of devolution in Zimbabwe.

## Conclusion

The paper has managed to spell out migration dynamics and the devolution agenda in the Matabeleland South Province. It can be concluded that economic motivated migration leads to brain drain hence making it difficult to achieve the devolution agenda which the government has set to achieve especially in Matabeleland South Province. From the results obtained in the study, Matabeleland South has proved to be a challenging case since factors such as proximity to border towns, drought prone, least populous and political history makes it difficult for the Province to achieve its agenda to improve the livelihoods of these people through devolution. The researchers came to conclusion that if the government is to achieve on the devolution issue, it has to carry out a strong campaign to win back the hearts of the people of the Province so that they regain the confidence needed for development of economies. In principle the devolution agenda in Matabeleland South Province is likely to be implemented by people from other Provinces at the expense of the local people. After a thorough interrogation of the concerns of the people of Matabeleland South Province which are centered around their lack of faith in the government of Zimbabwe's public programs, the people of the Province will not stop their migration to South Africa to support the devolution agenda and thus devolution is likely not to succeed in Matabeleland South Province of Zimbabwe. Even if it may succeed, its implementation will be done by people from outside the Province.

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