

Role of Government in Rural Entrepreneurship to Economic Development- The case of Murewa Rural-Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The importance of rural entrepreneurship in enhancing rural and economic development necessitates the active participation of government in promoting entrepreneurship in rural areas. Hence this study sought to assess the role of government in rural entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe. Its main objective was to investigate the services offered by government to rural entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe, to find out about the impact of government support to rural entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe and to describe the major challenges hindering the effectiveness of government in promoting rural entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe. The study was carried out in Mashonaland East province taking Murewa District as a case study. It involved purposive samples of 3 interviewees from the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Arts and Recreation Development, Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises and Co-Operative Development (MSMECD) as 136 entrepreneurs who participated in a questionnaire survey. The findings of the study indicated that government offers vocational and technical training to rural entrepreneurs but is not active in entrepreneurship training, financing, mentorship and training and other key entrepreneurial development activities. It also found out that rural entrepreneurship has not benefitted much from government in terms of productivity, sales, profitability and asset increase. The main challenges hindering government support of rural entrepreneurship include poor leadership commitment, skills and financial resources shortage, poor infrastructure and poor entrepreneurial attitude of the rural people. Thus

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the study recommended that government come up with an effective rural entrepreneurship policy, carry out rural entrepreneurship awareness programs and partner developmental partners promoting entrepreneurship in rural areas.

Background to the study

Rural entrepreneurship is now considered among the most important strategies to enhance development in rural areas. Most scholars including Paul et al. (2013) agree that socio-economic development in rural areas can only be achieved through the creation and running of businesses by people in rural areas. According to Joshi (2016) most developmental strategies like infrastructure development and food security can only bear fruit and sustain in the long run if there is an increase in economic activities in rural areas. The importance of rural entrepreneurship lies in its ability to create income and employment for rural people (Katekhaye, 2018). This would in turn improve their standards of living through nutritious food, better health and sanitation as well as better shelter and other household assets. Hussain (2014) concurs with this adding that rural entrepreneurship is also very crucial to the development of the economy as a whole as it can contribute to employment, gross domestic product (GDP) as well as exports enabling the country to earn more foreign currency. The promotion of rural entrepreneurship is thus very crucial in every economy.

The promotion of rural entrepreneurship is especially important in developing countries like Zimbabwe where the majority of people live in rural areas. According to the Zimbabwe Census Report (2012) 70% of the 14 million people in Zimbabwe live in rural areas. Hence economic marginalization of rural people would be very detrimental to the socio-economic development of the country. This is in line with the background that Zimbabwe has been experiencing harsh economic condition for the past two decades. Chimucheka (2012) reveals that the country experienced severe economic challenges including hyperinflation, negative GDP growth, massive loss of jobs and poor capacity utilization in the manufacturing sector. In the last few years there has been severe shortage of cash and foreign currency and negative balance of payment. Rural areas have been the worst hit by economic challenges bedeviling the country. ZIMSTAT (2013) estimated that 76% of people in rural areas are poor with 30% being in extreme poverty. Unemployment and hunger are also reported to be very high in rural areas

(United Nations, 2016). Hence such circumstances warrant effective strategies like rural entrepreneurship in order to uplift the lives of rural and enable them to contribute meaningfully to the socio-economic development of the country.

Meanwhile rural entrepreneurship is being practiced in Zimbabwe to some extent. This is evidenced by the Finscope Report (2012) which reported that 66% of micro, small and medium enterprise owners are in rural areas. However, the majority of the businesses are found in the agricultural sector. Many challenges hinder the development of rural businesses among them lack of financial resources to support investment and working capital needs (Katekhaye, 2018). Jakia (2010) also highlight that most people in rural areas do not have the necessary entrepreneurial skills to start and operate businesses successfully. Other challenges cited by scholars include poor confidence, discouragement from family and lack of government support (Kumari, 2012). Consequently, it is crucial for government to be involved in the development of rural entrepreneurship in order to help overcome these challenges and spearhead social economic development.

Objectives

- To investigate the services offered by government to rural entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe
- To find out about the impact of government support to rural entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe
- To describe the major challenges hindering the effectiveness of government in promoting rural entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe

2.0 Literature review

2.1 Defining rural entrepreneurship

In order to understand rural entrepreneurship, it is crucial to first grasp the concept of entrepreneurship. According to Saxena(2012) no agreed concise definition of entrepreneurship exist despite agreement on the positive role played by entrepreneurship in economic development. However, a few definitions are worth noting. Among these Bolton and Thompson (2003) define entrepreneurship as the creation of new products and businesses in order to exploit

opportunities arising from changes like technology and consumer preferences. In the same vein Eroğlu, and Picak(2011) define entrepreneurship as the process of initiating new ventures or modifying existing ones in order to exploit emerging market opportunities. Thus these definitions agree on a few things including that entrepreneurship involves initiating new enterprises and that this is undertaken to exploit business opportunities. At the same time various other scholars among them Katekhaye (2018) have highlighted that rural entrepreneurship is the engagement into entrepreneurial activities by people in the rural areas. Hence combining this definition with that of entrepreneurship distilled above this paper defined rural entrepreneurship as the initiation of new businesses in the rural areas in order to exploit new market opportunities for profit.

2.2 Benefits of rural entrepreneurship programs

Most studies and scholars have focused on the benefits of rural entrepreneurship programs to the livelihoods of beneficiaries. These include Adofu and Akoji(2013) who point out that rural entrepreneurship improves the level of income of rural people by engaging them in income generating activities. This is concurred by a study conducted by

the Asian Productivity Organization (2007) which indicated that agro-based entrepreneurship programs in Indonesia resulted in higher income per capita for farmers in the country. In addition, Karanja (2011) also highlights that rural entrepreneurship programs generate higher income which enables rural people to afford more nutritious food and pay for their health and sanitation expenses. As a result, the involvement of rural people in entrepreneurship improves the health and nutrition. This has been supported by various studies among them Uwantege and Mbabazi (2015) which indicated the AgasekeProject for women entrepreneurship significantly improved the quality of life of the Rwandan women who participated in the project. In addition, rural entrepreneurship has also been credited with increasing the wealth of rural people. According to Mweene (2006) rural entrepreneurship programs inculcate saving and financial accountability which enable the beneficiaries to save for assets like household furniture, modern houses and equipment. At the same time Hussain (2014) contends that involving rural people in entrepreneurship activities improves their confidence and status which results in them taking active roles in decision making at both family and societal level. This agrees with findings by

Jakia (2010) which revealed that NGO rural entrepreneurship in Bangladesh resulted in higher participation in the running of households and community by beneficiaries.

In addition, focus on the role of rural entrepreneurship has also focused on the effectiveness of the programs in enhancing entrepreneurial development in the rural areas. According to Osemeke (2012) entrepreneurial development encompasses the ability to identify and exploit business opportunities at a profit, obtain the necessary resources and management of the business into the sustainable future. In this regard Tende (2014) explains that entrepreneurship programs in rural areas equip the people with the necessary entrepreneurial and managerial skills so that they are able to initiate and run businesses at a profit. Some studies have confirmed this including Ogundele et al. (2012) in Nigeria. However, Mohamed et al. (2011)'s study in Malaysia revealed that government programs were ineffective in imparting entrepreneurial skills to program participants. At the same time rural entrepreneurs benefit from acquiring technical skills that they can use to engage in income generating activities (Osemeke, 2012). In addition, rural entrepreneurs who have worked under facilitated entrepreneurship programs have found their businesses experiencing higher sales and growing in assets. This is pointed out by Anekwe et al. (2018) explaining that marketing support programs like networking with buyers and dealing with customers' result in rural businesses being able to acquire more customers thus being able to sell more of their products. Also the ability of rural entrepreneurs to generate profit is enhanced by their participation in government entrepreneurship programs. According to Atiku (2015) the entrepreneurial skills offered by entrepreneurship development programmes ensure that rural people have the ability to implement strategies to ensure cost effectiveness and higher productivity. Furthermore, some scholars like Ayerakwa (2012) point out that entrepreneurship programmes result in increased capital for the businesses of the beneficiaries. This is however disputed by Kadete (2014)'s study in Tanzania which found out that entrepreneurship projects had no effect on capital and marketing effectiveness of SMEs who participated in the projects.

2.3 Services offered by government rural entrepreneurship programmes

Government entrepreneurship programmes are often implemented through the provision of various services policymakers believe would result in rural people being able to run their own businesses. According to Mandengenda (2016) most government rural entrepreneurship programmes put a large impetus in vocational and technical training of beneficiaries in various

fields. This is supported by Panthi(2015) highlighting that technical and vocational skills are important to enable rural people to produce products that can be sold on the market. It has also been confirmed by several studies including Rwamitoga (2011) in Tanzania. In addition, beneficiaries also undergo entrepreneurship and management training so as to master the ability to initiate and manage businesses at a profit. Ayerakwa (2012) agrees with this citing that this training involves the impartation of entrepreneurial skills such as business management, financial management and marketing. Financial resources are also provided to beneficiaries of entrepreneurship programmes. This was in line with Kamil (2015)who said that government provides grants in the form of cash, materials and equipment for beneficiaries to start their operations. Sharma et al. (2013) also state that the government organizes loans for beneficiaries and act as the guarantor. However, most studies including Ayerakwa(2012) in Ghana have found that the resources provided by government are usually not enough to fully finance the operations of rural entrepreneurs. Some scholars have also highlighted that most entrepreneurs do not receive any financial assistance and are left to rely on their personal savings and borrowing from relatives and friends (Agbenyegah, 2013). This is one of the major factors impeding the success of rural entrepreneurship programmes by the government.

In addition, the government can organize markets for the products of their rural entrepreneurship beneficiaries. This was revealed by Wade (2014) whose study indicated that the Zimbabwean government organized market fairs to help rural women and youth exhibit their products to potential buyers. Mentorship and coaching services are sometimes provided to rural entrepreneurs. According to Kumari (2012) this is to build confidence in entrepreneurship and learn to tackle challenges associated with starting one's own business in the rural areas. Furthermore, literature has also shown that government agents supervise and monitors the performance of their beneficiaries' businesses. This helps to ensure that the beneficiaries stay focused, use resources appropriately and also to evaluate the success of the programmes (Durlak, 2016). The monitoring and evaluation of projects has been supported by a number of studies including Majova (2018) in South Africa. However, most scholars have lamented lack of monitoring and evaluation in most government entrepreneurship projects. In addition, several studies including Mugambi(2005) in Kenya have also shown that a number of government entrepreneurship programmes in African countries are not monitored and evaluated at all. This

results in policymakers having no idea about what went wrong and what needs to be done to enhance the effectiveness of these projects.

2.4 Challenges facing government rural entrepreneurship programmes

A number of government rural entrepreneurship programmes in developing countries have resulted in higher income and employment for rural people. However most of them remain largely unsuccessfully due to a number of factors. Most scholars citing Osamironyi and Tafamel (2010) agree that shortage of financial resources is among the main challenges confronting government rural entrepreneurship programmes. As a result, they are unable to run effectively as well as financing entrepreneurial ventures by their beneficiaries. Also poor government commitment has been blamed for the failure of government entrepreneurship programmes. Ayerakwa (2012) concurs with this arguing that government does not allocate enough resources or release them on time to ensure the viability of its entrepreneurship programmes. In the same vein poor formulation and implementation of strategy by government in developing countries is also blamed for the poor performance of its entrepreneurship programmes. According to World Bank (2002) most government run projects are marred by duplication of efforts, unplanned activities and lack of monitoring and evaluation of projects. In addition, most government or donor run projects are criticized for not including the beneficiaries in the design and planning. Atiku (2015) among several others lament the lack of participation of local people in the planning of entrepreneurship as a major cause of their inability to come up with models that fit in and are agreeable to requirements of the beneficiaries.

Above that several authors have pinpointed corruption as one of the major impediments to the success of government rural entrepreneurship programmes. Among these Godley and Wilfred (2014) say that a lot of resources are diverted by political leaders and administration staff to their own ends thereby depriving the projects of the much needed resources. Also Lenu et al. (2015) point out to corruption in the selection of beneficiaries which hampers the inclusion of people in need and with the proper levels of commitment needed to participate in entrepreneurship programmes. Shortage of skilled labour is also a constraint cited by a number of scholars as impeding rural entrepreneurship programmes. Among these Yusoof and Yaacob (2010) state that the government lacks sufficient trained staff in entrepreneurship development and rural sociology to successfully roll out its programmes. At the same time the attitude of rural people

has been cited as being detrimental to the success of entrepreneurship programmes. In line with Kamal et al. (2015) most rural people are heavily dependent on government and donors to alleviate their poverty and thus express less enthusiasm in participating in entrepreneurship activities. Above that several scholars have cited poor infrastructure as a major impediment to rural entrepreneurship programmes. These include Dzanku (2015) who point out that rural areas in most developing countries have poor roads, lack of electricity and limited internet connectivity. As such these factors result in entrepreneurs being unable to implement innovative strategies like e-commerce to limit higher transport costs and also the kind of machinery that can be adopted by rural entrepreneurs(Sharma et al., 2013).

Methodology

The research used an exploratory research design since the role of government in rural entrepreneurship is a relatively unexplored study area. It however used a combination of qualitative and quantitative data in order to achieve triangulation in the study findings. The study population consisted of government officials at district level from the Ministry of Youth Development, Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises and Co-operative Development (MSMECD) as well as micro and small business owners in Murehwa. The research used a purposive sampling of 3 respondents from each of the two cabinet ministries as well as 136 entrepreneurs. Purposive sampling allowed the selection of respondents that could give useful information towards fulfilling the study objectives. In the case of entrepreneurs, the study could not find a sampling frame for all micro and small businesses in the area hence had to rely on informants among them key business people and other micro and small business owners to come up with a sample. Data collection involved both secondary and primary data. Secondary data involved government reports, academic journals and online sources. Primary data was collected from semi-structured interviews with government officials and questionnaires self-administered by micro and small business owners. Quantitative data was analyzed through percentages and mean scores while qualitative data was coded according to the study objectives and analyzed together with quantitative findings.

Findings

Demographic characteristics of rural entrepreneurs

		Freque ncy	%			Freque ncy	%
Age	20-30 years	24	17.6	Gender			
	31-40 years	44	32.4		Male	67	49.3
	41-50 years	37	27.2		Female	69	50.7
	50 and more years	31	22.8				
Education level	Primary	18	13.2	Age of business	0-2 years	15	11
	O level	44	32.4		2-5 years	26	19.1
	A level	21	15.4		5-7 years	32	23.5
	Certificate	35	25.7		7-10 years	34	25
	Diploma	14	10.4		Above 10 years	29	21.4
	Degree	4	2.9				

The results of the demographic study indicated that the majority were females constituting 50.7% while male entrepreneurs were 49.3% of the respondents. In terms of age the largest proportion was 31-40 years (32.4%) followed by 41-40 years (27.2%), 50 years and more (22.8%) and lastly 20-30 years (17.6%). The results also showed that the majority of the respondents were fairly educated with 13.2% having primary education, 32.4% having O level, 15.4% having A level, 25.7% having a certificate, 10.4% having a diploma and 2.9% having a degree as their highest qualification. Regarding age of business, the results indicated that 11% had been in business for 0-2 years, 19.1% for 2-5 years, 23.5% for 5-7 years, 25% for 7-10 years and 21.4% above 10 years. Thus the majority of the entrepreneurs had been running their own businesses for at least 5 years. The research went further to ask respondents about the kind of business they engage in. The findings are presented in Fig 1 below.

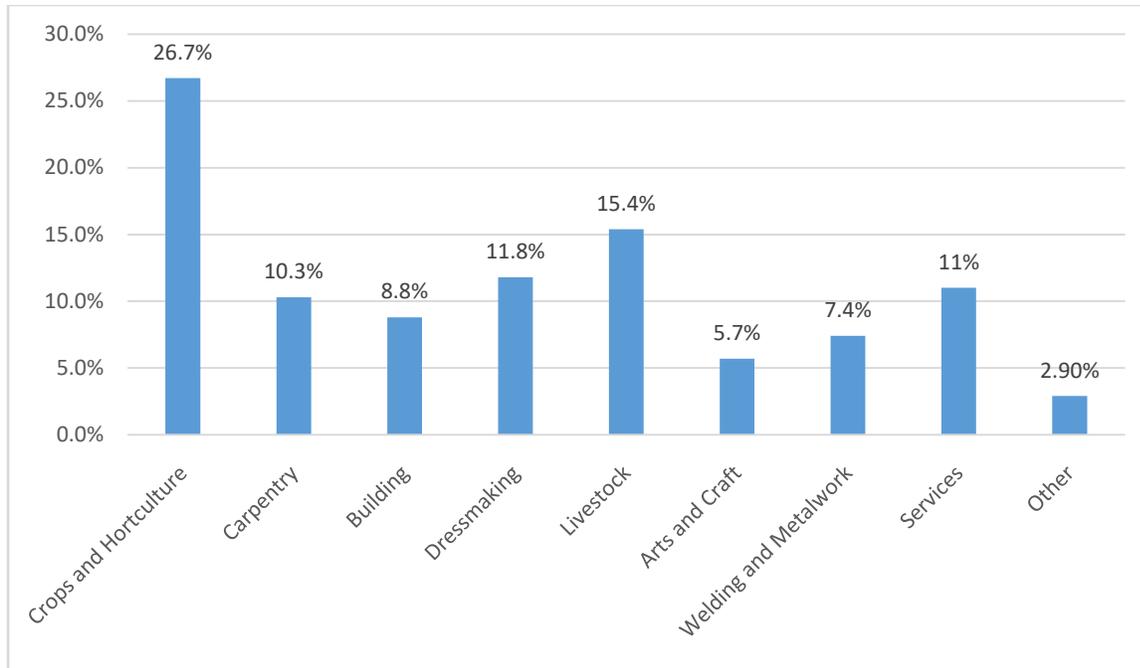


Fig 1: Type of business

Source: Questionnaire data

The results indicate that the largest proportion of respondents were into crop farming and horticulture (26.7%) followed by livestock production (15.4%), dressmaking (11.8%), carpentry (10.3%), services (11%), building (8.8%), welding and metalwork (7.4%), arts and craft (5.7%) and other (2.9%). Thus the majority of the respondents were into agriculture with the rest distributed across other sectors.

Contribution of government to entrepreneurship in rural areas

The results on the contribution of government to rural entrepreneurship were obtained from both interviews with government officials and questionnaire responses from entrepreneurs. Most government officials indicated that the government has put in place a number of policies to encourage entrepreneurship across the country. One interviewee explained that the government launched the Zimbabwe National Employment Policy Framework (ZINEPF) which recognizes the need for entrepreneurship as a source of self-employment and job creation in the economy. This was also concurred by an interviewee from the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises and Cooperative Development who cited the National Policy on SMEs launched in 2013 as encouraging Zimbabweans to start their own businesses as well as undertaking a study to

understand the nature of SMEs in Zimbabwe and the challenges they are facing. Another interviewee from the MSMECD explained that his ministry supports entrepreneurial activities by offering entrepreneurship training, business advisory services and financing to SMEs across the country. She highlighted that,

“Through our organization SMEDCO we offer upto US\$5000 6 months’ loans for registered SMEs and US\$500 to unregistered and individual businesses. The loans have a maturity period of 6 months and attract only 15% per annum interest rate. We also focus on the establishment of cooperatives in rural communities by providing them with advice and incentives with the hope that one day they will grow into registered SMEs”.

In addition, an interviewee from the Ministry of Y

outh said that, *“we have vocational training centres imparting technical and vocational skills to youth in our community so that they can use their skills to earn income”.* The interviewee went further to point out that the ministry runs the Youth Development Fund offering a maximum of US\$5000 to youth so that they can start or support their businesses.

The rural entrepreneurs who participated in the study were asked to indicate the kind of support they have received from government in their businesses. Fig 2 below indicates their responses.

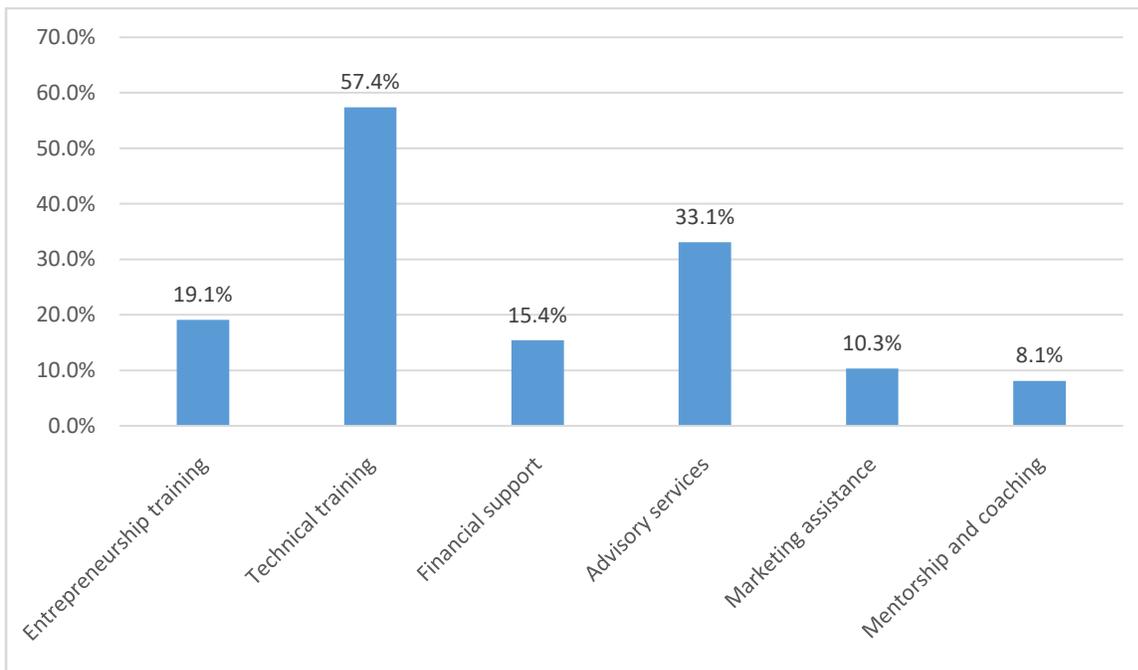


Fig 2: Entrepreneurial support from government

Source: Questionnaire data

The results in Fig 2 above show that 19.1% of the respondents indicated they had received entrepreneurial training, 57.4% indicated they had received technical training, 15.4% had received financial support, 33.1% had received advisory services, 10.3% had received marketing assistance and 8.1% had received mentorship and coaching services from government. The results thus indicated that technical training was the most prevalent form of government support received by the majority of the respondents. The findings also indicated deficiencies in entrepreneurial support in terms of entrepreneurship training, financial support, advisory services, marketing assistance as well as mentorship and coaching.

Benefits of rural entrepreneurship to entrepreneurs

The research sought to find out about the benefits of rural entrepreneurship to entrepreneurs. Thus questionnaire respondents were asked about the extent to which they agreed to a number of statements concerning benefits of rural entrepreneurship based on a 5 point scale. The results were summarized in terms of mean scores and are shown in Table 2 below.

Benefits	Mean	Standard deviation
Earn income	4.21	0.79
Getting employed	5	0
Afford nutritious food	2.79	1.93
Afford medical bills	3.12	1.44
Pay school fees	3.68	1.20
Buy household assets	2.64	2.08

Table 2 show that earning income had a mean score of 4.21 and standard deviation of 0.79, getting employed had a mean score of 5 and a standard deviation of 0 and affording

nutritious food had a mean score of 2.79 and a standard deviation of 1.93. These findings show that the majority of respondents agreed that they can now earn income, are now employed and can now afford nutritious food because of entrepreneurship. The results also show that afford medical bills had a mean score of 3.12 and standard deviation of 1.44, paying school fees had a mean score of 3.68 and a standard deviation of 1.2 and buying household assets had a mean score of 2.64 and a standard deviation of 2.08. Hence the findings indicated that most respondents were positive that they can now pay for medical bills, pay school fees for their children and buy household assets through their entrepreneurial activities.

Questionnaire respondents were also asked whether or not they attribute their entrepreneurship success on a number of factor to the support they have received from government. The results are indicated in Fig 3 below.

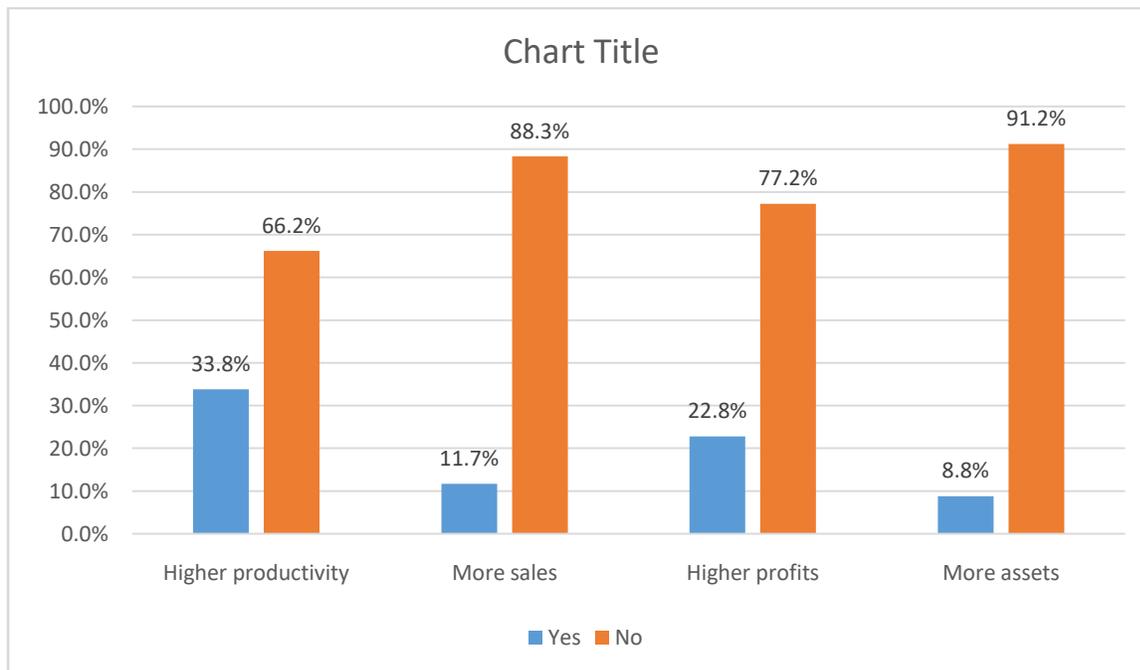


Fig 3: Impact of government support on rural entrepreneurship

Source: Questionnaire data

From the findings in Fig 3 above it can be noticed that 33.8% attributed higher productivity in their businesses to government support, 11.7% attributed more sales to government support, 22.8% attributed higher profits to government support and 8.8% attributed asset growth in their businesses to government support. Hence the findings indicated that most of the respondents did

not consider government support to be a major factor explaining the performance of their entrepreneurial ventures.

Challenges hindering government support of rural entrepreneurship

Data on the main challenges hindering government support of rural entrepreneurship was obtained from both entrepreneurs' questionnaires and interviews with government officials. Entrepreneurs were asked to indicate whether or not a number of challenges were hindering government from supporting them. The findings are depicted in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Challenges hindering government from supporting rural entrepreneurship

Challenges	Yes	No	Not sure
Poor leadership commitment	41.9%	33.8%	24.3%
Corruption	64.7%	25%	10.3%
Dependency attitude of rural people	52.9%	38.2%	8.9%
Shortage of financial resources	78.7%	18.4%	2.9%
Shortage of staff	58.1%	28.7%	13.2%
Poor infrastructure	36%	47.8%	16.2%

Source: Questionnaire data

The findings in table 3 indicate that 41.9% said yes, 33.8% said no and 24.3% said not sure to the assertion that poor leadership commitment is hindering government support of rural entrepreneurship. Hence the results of the questionnaire survey were inconclusive on the notion. On the effect of corruption on government support 64.7% said yes, 25% said no and 10.3% said not sure indicating that most respondents believed corruption was hindering government in supporting rural entrepreneurship. The findings also show that 52.9% said yes, 38.2% said no and 8.9% said not sure to the notion that the dependency attitude of rural people was hindering government support of rural entrepreneurship. Thus the results show that most respondents considered the dependency attitude of rural people to be a hindrance to government rural entrepreneurship efforts. On shortage of financial resources 78.7% said yes, 18.4% said no and 2.9% said not sure hence indicating that the majority of the respondents regarded shortage of financial resources as a challenge affecting government support rural entrepreneurship. The findings also show that on shortage of staff 58.1% agreed, 28.7% disagreed and 13.2% were not

sure. Thus most respondents agreed that shortage of staff was one of the factors hindering the support of government to rural entrepreneurship. On poor infrastructure 36% said yes, 47.8% said no and 16.2% said not sure. Hence there was little agreement on the role of poor infrastructure on government support of rural entrepreneurship.

Concerning interview responses most of the interviewees concurred that shortage of financial resources was among the major challenges affecting the effectiveness of government in supporting rural entrepreneurship. One interviewee highlighted that, *“the government is currently running on a very short leash in terms of financial resources and cannot afford to provide financial assistance to rural entrepreneurs, neither can it afford to fully fund all the costs associated like fuel and remuneration”*. In the same vein the government officials indicated that shortage of skilled labour was hindering the ability of government to support entrepreneurial development in rural areas. According to one of them,

“we would wish to go about the district conducting entrepreneurship workshops, and advising entrepreneurs but we can’t because of staff shortages. Nevertheless, our offices and contact centres remain open to those wishing to access our services”.

In addition, the respondents decried poor government commitment to rural entrepreneurship. Respondents from the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises and Co-operative Development indicated that the budget allocation they were receiving was not enough for them to be able to fund their programs. Consequently, they ended up being limited to urban areas because of proximity. Above that corruption and nepotism were cited as a major impediment to government rural entrepreneurship efforts. The interviewees indicated that corruption results in loss of financial resources targeted for rural beneficiaries as well as those earmarked for operational purposes. In the words of one interviewee, *“one major problem is that money budgeted for rural beneficiaries is diverted to someone’s relative or friend, who is neither vulnerable nor an entrepreneur in the rural areas”*. As a result, little progress is made in economically empowering rural people.

At the same time the interviewees also lamented poor infrastructure as one of the hindrances to the active role of government in rural entrepreneurship. They explained that shortage of electricity and internet connectivity was a major factor affecting the usefulness of modern business management technics. In addition, they also said that poor roads made it difficult for

them to reach their targeted areas thus hampering their efforts to support rural entrepreneurship. One respondent said that, “*in some areas the roads are so bad that they are impassable*”.

Discussion

The results indicated that the government has a number of policies and institutions dedicated to enhancing entrepreneurship in the country including the Youth Development Fund and SMEs Policy as well as the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises and Cooperative Development and SMEDCO. This agrees with Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) (2013) who undertook a study on opportunities for employment creation in rural Zimbabwe. In addition, the government has put in place measures to equip rural people with technical skills through its vocational and training centres and other frameworks. Mandengenda (2016) concurs with this adding that the government has 42 vocational training centres across the country and also runs the Integrated Skills Outreach Programme (ISOP) as a crash programme for the lowly educated. However most rural entrepreneurs indicated they had not received any entrepreneurship training from the government. This is against several scholars including Ayerakwa (2012) who emphasizes the importance of such training in ensuring that rural people are able to successfully start up and run their businesses. Almost 70% rural entrepreneurs also indicated that they had not received any financial support from government which was contrary to the perspectives of government officials. In addition, most respondents indicated that they did not get any advisory services, mentorship and coaching and marketing support from government. This is lamentable considering how crucial such services are in enhancing the entrepreneurial development of rural people and the performance of their businesses. The findings also disagree with Wade (2014) who indicated that the government organized market fairs for rural women and youth in Zimbabwe.

The results of the study also indicated that rural entrepreneurship was crucial to employment creation and income generation in rural areas. This is in line with Adofu and Akoji (2013) and several other scholars who have emphasized the role of rural entrepreneurship on socio-economic development. The rural entrepreneurs who took part in the study also indicated that they could now afford nutritious food, medical bills, paying school fees and buying household assets. These findings were in agreement with several studies including Uwantege and Mbabazi (2015) which indicated the Agaseke Project for women entrepreneurship significantly improved

the quality of life of the participants. However, most questionnaire respondents did not attribute increased productivity, higher profits and asset growth to government support. This disagrees with a number of studies including Ogundele et al. (2012) in Nigeria. However, some studies like Mohamed et al. (2011) in Malaysia indicated that government was ineffective in imparting entrepreneurial skills to rural people. Also the study found out that government support had little impact on the sales growth of rural business which participated in the study. This was in line with Kadete (2011) who found entrepreneurship programmes to ineffective in enhancing marketing and asset growth in Tanzania.

Concerning the challenges hindering government support of rural entrepreneurship lack of financial resources was identified amongst the major challenges. This concurs with several scholars including Osamironyi and Tafamel (2010). Corruption was also found to hindering the effectiveness of government rural entrepreneurship by diverting resources to personal use and to unintended beneficiaries. Godley and Wilfred (2014) agree with these findings explaining how corruption hinders government entrepreneurship programmes. The findings of the study showed that shortage of skilled labour was also a challenge hindering entrepreneurial development efforts of government in rural areas. The results of the study were in line with Yusoof and Yaacob (2010) explaining that most government in developing countries do not have sufficient staff skilled in entrepreneurship and rural sociology. In addition, poor leadership commitment to rural entrepreneurship was also identified as a challenge which culminated in government not allocating sufficient resources and attention to rural entrepreneurship in the country. This was also in line with Ayerakwa (2012) who undertook a study on rural entrepreneurship in Ghana. Other challenges identified by the respondents were the dependency attitude of rural people and poor infrastructure. These results also agreed with literature citing Kamal et al. (2015) who explained that some rural people are unwilling to work for themselves choosing to depend on government and donor aid. Dzanku (2015) also pointed out that rural areas in most developing countries have poor roads, lack of electricity and limited internet connectivity which hinder entrepreneurial activities.

Conclusions and recommendations

The research concluded that much of what the government has done in rural areas has been to equip the people with vocational and technical skills through vocational training centres and

other facilities. The government does offer loans and entrepreneurial training to entrepreneurs but the programs have limited outreach thus do not effectively reach rural areas. Consequently, rural entrepreneurs have not benefitted much from government entrepreneurship programs in terms of profitability, productivity, sales and asset growth. This is mainly due to a number of challenges including poor leadership commitment to rural entrepreneurship, corruption, shortage of skills and financial resources, poor infrastructure and the poor attitude of some rural people concerning income generating activities.

Thus the study recommended that the government need to come up with dedicated rural entrepreneurship policies and programs apart from the mainstream entrepreneurship policies so as to effectively target rural entrepreneurs. It has to partner with developmental agents and the private sector in order to access funds and skills to promote rural entrepreneurship. In addition, the government need to deal effectively with corruption by putting in place effective internal control systems to track the use of funds and the following of procedures within its ranks. Also it has to launch awareness programs to sensitize rural people about the importance of entrepreneurship to their livelihood and society as a whole. Future studies should look at frameworks for government involvement in rural entrepreneurship.

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