

## Forgotten Projects in Zimbabwe: Why Developmental Mega Projects Fail and Delay

Blessing Mathabire<sup>1\*</sup>, Prince Dzingirayi<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>Development and Foreign Policy Expert-Zimbabwe<sup>2</sup>Psychology Student PhD, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban South Africa

\*Corresponding author: Blessing Mathabire | Received: 25.09.2020 | Accepted: 04.10.2020 | Published: 17.10.2020|

**Abstract:** Developmental projects are a beacon of socioeconomic and political growth and stability in the developing world [29]. Projects in Africa and beyond are an instrument of achieving the much needed development that makes a positive growth trajectory. Projects can be locally funded whilst others can have international sponsorships. The success indicators of project ventures are what attract project capital in any specific country. However, in Africa most high level projects are faced with a lot of challenges thereby rendering them to fail and in turn cause the flight of project capital. This research tries to understand the psychological concept of macro-projects failure in Zimbabwe. The major objective is to understand why developmental projects are failing and what can be done to change these failure into success stories. The findings were generated through qualitative methods with the use of desk research and secondary data with particular focus to secondary in-depth interviews of key informants involved in the chosen projects. Reliability and validity was arrived at through collaborating data gathered from interviews with those from documentary search. Results revealed that projects operate within certain spheres or environments. The sphere has to be compatible with the project objectives in order for them to be successfully implemented. It was recommended that there has to be a national project policy that addresses how projects should operate and coordinated on the backdrop of the above spheres. Zimbabwe is recommended to develop a National Project Policy that will guide the execution of high level interventions in order to minimise failure and increase the success of all projects.

**Keywords:** Project failure, projects, developmental projects, Harare Airport Road project Jatropha biodiesel project and Tokwe-Mukosi Dam project.

### INTRODUCTION

Worldwide megaprojects are the centrepieces of development in both the developed and the developing countries. Zimbabwe has rapidly embarked on countless mega-projects in a bid to uplift its socio-economic and geopolitical environment. This was due to the fact that megaprojects spur the economic growth of a nation. The characteristics of megaprojects are ringed as colossal, captivating, costly, controversial and complex [1]. The above assertion points that megaprojects are a breed of community development judged by their level of aspiration, lead times, complexity, and stakeholder involvement. The most serious concern in mega-projects is to deliver the goal and objectives within a specified timeline and a given budget [2]. However, mega-projects in the developing countries are not always immune to common financial, environmental and legal setbacks. Therefore, there are a number of factors which contribute to either the success or failure of projects and these vary from the performance of the project team and manager, availability of the project resources, to outside factors, from domestic and international trans-boundary economic and political environment [3].

Globally the wealth of each country is rated by the state of its infrastructure. The success of national projects is a benchmark of socio-economic and political growth and stability. The economic development of Zimbabwe has been crippled by decades of economic quagmire. Over the years Zimbabwe has been recipient of a number of projects with some of them having been successfully implemented but with others failing to produce the desired results. It is agreeable among scholars that projects are crucial building blocks for the development of any nation [4]. Ibid. further stipulates that, developing states need more of developmental national projects for them not to remain stagnant or even regress.

According to Othman [2] megaprojects constitutes a model for goods and services across a wide range of businesses spectrum such as infrastructure, water and energy, information technology, industrial processing plants, mining and many more. Megaprojects are important drivers of society changes. Their impact is an important phenomenon because of the influence on both society itself and its economy [1]. Megaprojects are always shaped as public-private institutional arrangements [5].

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This means that project funding and expert knowledge comes from the elites supported by the local public structures. This was supported by Santamaria [6] who postulates that projects are normally owned by governments and executed by large companies under the lens of the government. However, project outcome vary from place or time depending on the economic, political, legal and social environment of the project. The success or failure of any project is evaluated in terms of time, cost and quality. These three (3) elements constitute what is generally referred to as the project constraints. A shift in any of these three (3) elements will have significant effects in the overall scope of the project. Therefore, the delay in project implementation is common phenomena which affect the financial viability of the project and the projected quality.

The national mega-projects are a key to national development. Once these mega-projects are successfully executed it will result in the construction of economic and social goods for the greater good of the nation. In most developing nations, national-projects are a vehicle for attracting the much needed foreign direct investment. According to Rondinelli [4], "For nearly a quarter of a century, projects have also been the primary instruments for grant, credit and loan and technical aid to developing countries by international assistance." Entities such as the United Nations, World Bank, African Development Bank (AFREXIM) and the US Agency for International Development have extended lots of funds meant to fund particular development projects. This is not to mean that FDI is the only source of funding for projects in developing countries as a whole lot of developmental interventions are also funded locally. Projects involve large sums of money that are pumped in and out of an expectation that they will in return produce greater economic gains after their activation. The failure of national projects is a direct projection of resources wastage.

Zimbabwe is a typical example of an interesting environment under which projects takes place. Interesting, in that projects are subjected toward a series of political, economic, social, technological and ecological underpinnings. What is more striking of projects in Zimbabwe is that most of them are not affected by constrains in financial resources as witnessed by some of the projects that form the basis of the case study for this particular research. But are however, affected by a series of administrative constraints. This research focuses on three (3) mega-national projects which are the Harare Airport Road Construction project, the Jatropa Bio-Diesel project and the Tokwe-Mukosi Dam Construction project. These projects, to a large extent, managed to attract the required financial support. The outcome of these projects are weighed as both failure and success stories depending on how one scrutinises them. Despite the extensive research devoted to project management, there is limited research on the potential reasons for

failure and delay on megaprojects in Zimbabwe. Therefore, the researchers found it prudent to carry out the research on why megaprojects sometimes fail, delay and/or discontinues for good.

### **Project Successes and Failure Indicators**

For any project to be considered successful there should be certain benchmarks toward success, therefore it also follows that for any project to be considered unsuccessful there should also be certain benchmarks towards failure. Enterprise [30], defines a project as a an endeavour that is temporary in its nature with a definite start and end point which is done to meet set goals aimed at bringing beneficial change or add value to the recipients lives. By their nature projects should be temporary but can have permanent footprints in the localities in which they are constituted. From the above definition, one notes that projects happen within the spheres of time, cost and quality. Hence, these three distinctions are very important in determining success or failure of any developmental project. Therefore, any particular project can be said to have succeeded if it manages to deliver what was expected of it in actual timelines, desired design and without much of getting off track. This was reinforced by the Project Management Institute (PMI) [5], "Since projects are temporary in nature, the success of the project should be measured in terms of completing the project within the constraints of scope, time, cost, quality, resources, and risk as approved between the project managers and senior management."

It is on this same benchmark that project failure can be generated. It is fundamental to note that project failure can happen at any stage of the project life cycle, that is, failure can be recorded pre-project initiation, failure during project execution and failure post-project implementation depending on the circumstances of each and every project. Projects fail on the basis of time, or on the basis of cost and that of quality. Projects should be timeous that is if a project was subjected to be complete within two (2) years it should be seen to it in that in two (2) years the project be transmitted to the intended beneficiaries without fail. According to PMI [5], project cost management involves the "planning, estimating, budgeting, financing, funding, managing, and controlling costs so that the project can be completed within the approved budget." This is very vital in determining the success or failure of a project and should be done thoroughly in order to minimise the probability of missing the actual cost of the project. Many developmental projects have failed as a result of missed budgeting when it comes to project financing.

Another important aspect in determining project failure or success is the quality of the project. Fundamental questions to ask will be, was the intended quality of the project met, if no, what was left out and what was the point of disjuncture? Project quality is

more to do with satisfying the needs for which the project was initiated in the first place [7]. Needs of a project basically speaks to the customer satisfaction. It is difficult to come up with a benchmark to define project quality as it can mean different things to different stakeholders. Hence, there is need to be clear from the onset of the project what its scope will be and intended needs to be satisfied. Hypothetically, an example can be given for the construction of a dam in a particular locality, the project sponsor will be concerned by coming up with the dam which is a large reservoir of water but will it be the same satisfaction for the end users who might end up conflicting over the control of the same rendering the whole project useless.

It must however, be noted that it is inadequate to just measure the success of projects using the three benchmarks of time, cost and quality. These are what constitute the micro criteria of evaluating project success or failure [8]. Added to these the macro criteria encompass also the project deliverables emanating from the holistic project environment to include such things as political environment, social environment, ecological environment and technological environment among other variables. An example will be how the social environment affects the success or failure rate of a project. Interestingly, developmental projects in developing countries are significantly affected by the macro criteria long before the micro criteria comes into play. Henceforth, the micro criteria usually form the administrative basis for managing projects whilst the macro criteria constitute the cosmopolitan basis for projects. It is therefore, imperative for this research to have a holistic approach to determine the benchmark for project failure in Zimbabwe that encompass the micro and macro criteria as a benchmark for project failure and the possible way forward for success in the execution of developmental projects.

### **Zimbabwe's Developmental Project Landscape**

From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe, the country has a long history of developmental projects being at the core of the growth of the nation. Pre-independence the country has been recipient to a number of developmental projects which include the Birchenough Bridge, Kariba Dam-Hydropower project of 1955-1959, Matabeleland Zambezi Water project which is however yet to see the light of the day despite having the idea being mooted as back as 1912 [9]. Post independent Zimbabwe has been a beneficiary to a number of capital projects which were initiated with the intention to develop the nation but with little success to their completion due to a number of factors. Some of the projects initiated in post independent Zimbabwe include the Kunzvi Dam project, the Plumtree-Bulawayo-Mutare Road project (which can be considered a success), dualisation of the Harare-Masvingo Road, Tokwe-Murkosi Dam, Jatropa bio-diesel projects, the

Harare Chitungwiza Railway line project and the rehabilitation of the Morton Jeffray Waterworks project among others. The list of initiated capital projects in the country is rather endless but a check list of these will reveal that despite decades in the pipeline most of these still remain far from being achieved.

### **The Harare Airport Road Project**

According to The Independent [10], the Airport Road project was commissioned in 2009, was supposed to include "US\$28, 1 million for the 34 kilometres (dual carriage way and slip roads) and US\$35.7 million for the five flyover bridges with US\$4, 8 million for professional fees and provisional sums to cover items such as street lighting, giving the project a total cost of US\$68, 6 million before value added tax (VAT)." The intervention was given national project status by the Government of Zimbabwe through the Ministry of Finance in 2009. Initially, the project had been granted to a local company Augur Investments, which was involved in the business of developing properties and infrastructure, [11]. Additional information indicated that the project involved the above named company which had a seventy percent (70%) stake and Harare City Council (HCC) through a company called Sunshine Investments. Ironically, the then Harare Town Clerk, Tendai Mahachi was reported to be the Director of Sunshine Investments, with allegations that the then Minister of Local Government and Housing, Ignatius Chombo had a stake in the same company, (the Independent, 2014, para. 4). This scenario makes one questions whether public accountability could have been achievable given the fact that those who were supposed to ensure that public funds that were being utilised for the national project were accounted for where now the ones having huge interests insofar benefiting from same was concerned? However, events that unfolded in the execution of the project proved that transparency was far from this particular project.

The scope of the project was very clear from the onset. The Airport Road Project was supposed to have covered thirty four kilometres including the dual carriage way (20km) and slip roads covering fourteen kilometres [12]. The project was also supposed to have included five flyover bridges including a continuous flyover of about half a kilometre from Dieppe Roundabout leading into Enterprise Road [10, 11]. It was also supposed to include state of the art street lighting which was supposed to cover the entire road. According to one of the Project Managers of Augur Investment who had been assigned to this particular project, proper project costing had been made with the total project cost having been pegged at sixty eight million six hundred thousand United States dollars (US\$68 600 000). The cost was as presented below:

**Table-1: Authors own table presenting Airport Road Project Cost**

ITEM	PROJECTED COST (millions of USD)	TOTAL ITEM COST
Dual carriageway and Slip Roads	US\$ 28.1 million	US\$ 28.1 million
Five flyover bridges	US\$ 35.7 million	US\$ 35.7 million
Street lighting and Contingency Cost presented herein as professional fees	US\$ 4.8 million	US\$ 4.8 million
<b>TOTAL PROJECT COST</b>		<b>US\$ 68.6 million</b>

Initially, when the deal of the project was brokered between City Fathers and Augur Investments. The local authority (councillors) questioned why the project had been so expensive given that similar projects in the country with kilometres far beyond the Airport Road were way cheaper. An example of the Ngezi-Chegututu Road that was constructed by the Zimbabwe Platinum Mines stretching seventy seven kilometres (77k) and valued nineteen million United States dollars (US\$ 19 000 000). However, Augur Investments argued that the Ngezi Road was a rural road which had used inferior construction material whereas in the Harare Airport Road nearly twenty four percent (24%) of the cost had gone to expensive raw material asphalt. The company even noted that it was charging rates that were actually lower at \$1.56 million per kilometre to the regional rates that were around \$1.76 million per kilometre.

Augur managed to win the light of the day and was granted the project; however the problem was that Harare City Council had no liquid money which saw a deal being brokered for the later to pay using land, without going to tender, Auditor General's report, 2015. According to the same report, the City of Harare pledged four thousand hectares (4000h) of land to Augur Investments as part of the Airport Road Construction deal. This foresaw in 2016 efforts being made by the Auditor General's Office and the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) to institute fresh allegations of corruption due to the way this project was handled. According to the Auditor General's Report [14], the project was marred by serious corruption allegations whereby proper tender procedures were not followed, with high level involvement of political bigwigs. The report noted that the then Minister Chombo tempered with transparency mechanisms by propelling doubling of Michael Mahachi as a representative of the City of Harare and at the same time standing as a Project Manager for Augur Investments. Paradoxically, it was Michael Mahachi who superintended the giving of prime land to Augur in his capacity as an official of the Harare City Council yet he was an employee of the beneficiary, that is, the Project Manager of Augur Investments.

Augur investments was not up to the task of the project at hand as it failed to deliver on the project despite having received payment for the work to be done [11], which led the project to be taken over by the Zimbabwe National Roads Administration (ZINARA)

in 2014 which created further problems in as far as the managing of the project was concerned. The Auditor General Report 2015 notes that ZINARA was inconsistent in the project implementation which saw fresh funds that had been injected in the project being misappropriated. Funds were lost in unnecessary procurement and contracting of equipment which was sometimes never used and in some cases never delivered. An empirical example was a crusher worth forty thousand United States dollars (US\$40 000) that was found by auditors lying idle on the road side and bitumen worth twenty thousand United States dollars (US\$20 000) which ended up going to waste, Auditor General Report, 2015.

However, a decade down the line the Airport Road is still to have the five (5) flyovers and the slip roads are yet to be refurbished. The problem was marred by serious corruption allegations which saw certain funds being disbursed but to things that were never done. The project which started under Augur Investment had to be transferred to ZINARA after Augur Investments had failed to activate the project up to its completion. According to Rondinelli [4], projects are severely undermined if cost overruns due to construction, implementation and construction delays. These are caused by delays and inability to procure the needed materials at the required time. This was witnessed in the Airport Road construction where there were reports of delays in procurement and hiring of adequate equipment which saw other expenses such as working hours being paid whilst there was no activity. Henceforth, the Harare City Council [10], concluded that the project 'was not done in the best interests of the country in general and council in particular.

### The Jatropha Biodiesel Project

The Jatropha Biodiesel Project is one good example of a developmental project that had potential insofar economic growth and sustainable development to the country was concerned but seems forgotten. This project became a national developmental agenda in 2004 when the government opted for biodiesel fuels owing to the crippling fuel crisis and dwindling foreign currency reserves in Zimbabwe [15]. The government had opted for Biodiesel over the exorbitant petroleum. Hence, Jatropha which could be grown locally would have saved the country in millions of foreign currency that was being used to import petroleum. This culminated in the National Jatropha Growing Program by the Government of Zimbabwe in 2004 to contract

farmers or non-contractual basis depending on the size and capacity of the farmers [15]. Before, they had been some progress of *Jatropha* farming in Zimbabwe as a biofuel; in 2004 it became a national developmental program with the Government targeting to establish plantations of the *jatropha* crop. The project was a multimillion dollar intervention with funds raised locally and externally, from the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) and South Korea, respectively [16]. As part of efforts to spearhead the project a number of *Jatropha* processing plants were established with the major one being in Mt Hampden and Mutoko [17]. The biggest of the biodiesel Plants was the one in Mt Hampden which was commissioned in 2009 with a capacity to produce seventy thousand litres (70 000l) of biodiesel on a monthly basis [1]. This shows the magnitude and level of importance this project had been granted by the Zimbabwean government. The project was a plus for Zimbabwe's international obligation to reduce climate change through limiting local carbon emission in line with the Montreal Protocol on greenhouse gases reduction agreements as it was going to minimise the country's reliance on carbon fuels.

Meanwhile, a whole lot of stakeholders were involved in a number of activities meant at spearheading the national project. Research on the *Jatropha* was being spearheaded by a number of institutions which include the National Oil Company (NOCZIM), the Scientific and Industrial Research and Development Centre (SIRDIC), Harare and Masvingo Polytechnics Colleges and Environmental Africa. The NOCZIM was the major implementing partner thereby assuming the role of the management of the project. Hence, a number of stakeholders were involved in the National *Jatropha* Growing Program. According to Jepsen *et al.* [14] the project was evenly distributed across the country with main areas of production having been Mudzi, Wedza, Chiweshe, Binga and Nyanga. Government did massive campaigns urging farmers in the country to grow the *Jatropha* seed and aid to the nation's agenda to promote the use of biofuels.

However, despite all these efforts the project just 'suddenly died down', [15]. The reasons behind the collapse or slowdown of this project can be partly attributed to lack of a conclusive policy on biofuels by the government of Zimbabwe, and as noted by Tigere *et al.* [18] there were no coordinated implementation of the project. According to Karavina *et al.* [15] three Government Ministries namely Ministry of Energy and Power Development, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Science and Technology were involved in the *Jatropha* project but however lacked proper coordination. These same scholars attribute lack of coordination as one of the major reasons behind government's withdrawal of funds to the project. However, this was a government induced project from the onset and as such in planning for the project the government should have ensured that duties and

responsibilities of all involved stakeholders were as clear as possible to avoid uncertainties' during the course of the project. However, all this was ignored at the initial planning of this project which made its collapse inevitable.

### The Tokwe-Murkosi Dam Project

The Tokwe Mukosi Dam project is one of the biggest developmental interventions to be executed in Masvingo Province which is one of the largest provinces in Zimbabwe. According to Chazireni and Chigonda [12], "The Dam is built on the point where two rivers namely, Tokwe and Mukosi converge, giving rise to the use of the name Tokwe Mukosi Dam." The project had a total cost of two hundred and fifty five million United States dollars (USD\$ 255 000 000) and an output of being 'the largest inland water reservoir in the country', with capacity of 1,8 billion cubic metre, (Newsday, August 2018, para1)[19]. The overflow of the Tokwe Mukosi Dam project was propelled in 1998 but had to be stalled in 2008 due to hyper-inflation. Salini Impregillo of Italy took over in 2011 to finish the dam. The idea to construct the dam was first mooted by the Rhodesian authorities as far back as 1955, (Newsday: 2018)[19]. According to the Sunday Mail [20], the contract for its construction began in April 1998 and was forecasted to end within four years, that is, in 2002. However, due to shortage of funds completion could not see the light of day up until December 2016.

However, due to lack of prefeasibility and ex-ante evaluations the dam had an overflow in 2014. According the New Humanitarian [21], "The region has received 850mm of rain, nearly double the annual average according to local officials, and there are fears that the unfinished Tokwe-Mukosi Dam, which is being built with government funding by an Italian company, Salini, will not withstand the volume of water." Eventually, the dam failed to withstand such magnitude of rainfall and the dam wall indeed collapsed and more than two thousand five hundred (2500) families were affected. The failure to have forecasted for such an overflow can be attributed to the fact, that Masvingo Province falls under Region IV which normally receives rainfall between 300-600mm [12]. However, during this time there was an increased variation which saw an overflow which perhaps had they been a proper environmental impact assessment (EIA) this could have been averted. The resultant dam collapse which was caused by the overflow was classified a national disaster as thousands of people were affected [19]. People blamed government for having failed to warn them of this impending disaster which saw the loss of life and property. Hence failure to monitor and evaluate projects before, during and after can result in project management failure.

## AIM OF STUDY

To comprehend why merger national developmental projects are failing and what can be done to enhance developmental project success in Zimbabwe.

## METHODOLOGY

The research used the qualitative methods to understand why national economic developmental projects fail in Zimbabwe. The qualitative research methodology focuses on collecting non-numerical data and seeks to give interpretations based on the subjects understanding of their social life [22]. The philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research are that ontologically reality is subjective and epistemologically that same reality can be known through researchers interaction with those involved in the reality [23]. Based on the above, this research was based on the premise that to understand dynamics of projects in Zimbabwe one had to have a strong interaction with those involved in the particular projects in order to understand their experiences. A qualitative research also put attention on getting information from secondary sources such as books and internet searches [22].

### Research design

The multiple case studies were used in the study with the help of the archive-desk research design. Proverbs and Gameson [24] describe case study research as extremely applicable to a project driven industry. Multiple case studies were used to explore the causes of delay, which gave a deeper understanding of the subject under investigation [25]. There were closing interviews conducted with professionals subsequent to the case studies. According to Juneja [26], desk research involves gathering data from already existing resources without actually going into the field. Desk research involves the use of secondary interviews and those that can be done through telephone or via the internet. This design was used to describe essential factors that constitute the success and failure of national projects.

### Participants and setting

This study involves the key personnel of involved in major national projects. The other source of information was taken from the records through the archive-desk research design. The information was gathered until the researcher noted that the information was saturated. The convenience random and purposive sampling was used in the study to select the participants.

## DATA COLLECTION

The researchers gathered data through an anonymous open ended interview questions in which participants answered on social media platforms such as the WhatsApp and Facebook. The research also employed the use of interactions with participants via

text and audios. Responses were recorded in a document form.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Thematic content analysis was used to analyse data. The researcher grouped all the response transcripts into interesting phrases and themes. Data familiarization is a key to thematic analysis as it is used for qualitative methods. Howitt and Cramer 2010 describe that the process vary according to circumstances including the researcher's expectations about the direction in which the analysis proceed.

### Ethical considerations

Stopher [27] indicates that ethics create a morally acceptable research behaviour which is far from human abuse. Ethical consideration promotes respect and dignity of research participants. The principle of respect for research participants forms the base of this current research. The other key ethical principles observed during the study are, informed consent, autonomy, competence, confidentiality and anonymity.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research fished out the following themes from the respondents on why megaprojects delay and fail in implementation. 1) Politicisation of the megaprojects, 2) corruption, 3) deficiency of resources, 4) economic sanctions, 5) bureaucracy, 6) lack of flexible policies, 7) constant change of personalities and lack of flexibility on planning. The results of the research are a clear explanation of why Zimbabwean economy is stagnant. The study revealed that some of the causes of failure are either direct whilst others are indirect.

### Theme one: Politicization of the projects

Some respondents alleged that too much politicization of programs led to delay and failure of proper implementation of planned megaprojects.

*"In some circumstances, projects encounter problems because politicians 'play politics' with them"*

The above response shows that politicians use megaprojects to gain political millage which then cause unnecessary interference and conflicts with the investors especially if the project is funded by external force. Too much political interferences cause significant project as most politicians make political directives which delays the pace of the project. This is being supported by the following response:

*"Project are targeted by politicians to lure electorates and they declare ownership of the project"*

*“Contracts are given based on political affiliations rather than a performance-based system”*

Another respondent noted that the political environment is a catalyst to growth and very key to the success or failure of any developmental intervention. The respondent noted that the political environment heavily affects internal and external mechanisms for generating funding for mega projects. When the politics is bad, it will be difficult to mobilise financing to execute developmental projects. Some further intimated that, the Harare Airport Road construction although a noble idea which could have easily attracted both domestic and international funding failed to do so due to the negative politics in Zimbabwe. This later resulted in a suspicious or dubious land deal being brokered.

However, reasons behind their failure and success goes beyond finance matters as the projects failed to meet the desired expectations owing to a series of political and administrative limitations.

#### ***Theme two: Corruption and bureaucracy hindrances***

All respondents revealed that corruption is a major cause of fallout of national megaprojects.

*“Our country is being dragged back by government corrupt officials”*

*“Key government officials demanded kick back payment for them to sign your tender papers”*

*“No monitoring of the project after corrupt activities”*

Corruption is one of the key issues for public policies. It is one of the major impediments to the development of emerging countries and to further improve the quality of life. This resonates with allegations levelled against the then Minister of Local Government and Housing, Ignatius Chombo had a stake in the same company, how he corruptly with Tendai Mahachi connive in awarding the Sunshine City Investment tender to participate on the construction of the Harare- Airport Road (The Independent, 2014, para. 4). Other companies were then tactfully forced to follow the bureaucratic process which could delay their bid process. Too much bureaucracy in the government led to delay in project progression which would later cause negative desired outcome. Bureaucracy accounts for almost all project delays and partly for most corrupt practices. All the participants revealed that bureaucratic procedures in government project implementation ‘forces the hand’ of contractors to pay bribes or use unofficial middlemen to seek what they want. Too much bureaucracy causes a high lack of responsive decision-making and lack of effective communication. Communication is a panacea to project success and lack of it is a recipe for failure. Lack of communication between project stakeholders causes high degree of

clash of interest. This would lead to lack of human goodwill which led to project failure.

#### ***Theme three: Deficiency of resources***

Lack of material, financial and human resources led to project failure. Lack of resources can create conflicts among various stakeholders associated with a project. The findings show that purchasing of the right material resources is also very important for a project’s success. Most respondents narrates that on the construction of the Tokwe-Murkosi dam, substandard materials were being used which later caused it to break. In this regards the resources were being wasted. Other key notable finding was that the delays in the distribution of the funds and how they are distributed among the various projects’ contractors is a big problem. Some documents revealed that inadequate skills and manpower caused the Tokwe-Murkosi dam megaproject to fail. This resulted in a drastic damage of property which caused an increase in the overall cost of the projects, rework and other multiplier effects during the construction and operational stages. The time factor of the completion of the Tokwe-Mukosi dam project was heavily undermined by the unavailability of resources. During the period 1998 up to 2016 the implementation of the project became staggered along parameters of availability of funds which saw a project which was supposed to have taken only four (4) years ending up taking sixteen (16) years. This is not good for project development as the project was initiated but without proper planning on the cost and how it was going to be met. Poor planning on cost ended up impacting negatively on the time scales of the project as well as the quality as evidenced with findings of one respondent mentioned above. Therefore, deficiencies of resources and failure to disburse them as and when necessary results in projects failure and/or their delays.

#### ***Theme four: Economic sanctions***

The other respondents indicated that project failure is as a result of economic sanctions given to Zimbabwe by the western countries. Sanctions are a dangerous weapon which can paralyse the economy. A finding from the African Development Bank [28] revealed that,

*Many western governments imposed political and economic sanctions on Zimbabwe in response to increasing concerns over respect for the rule of law and protection of human rights.*

This caused the local currency to lose value which resulted in difficulties to budget for developmental projects as there was the always the need to revisit the projects budgets constantly. This will then compromise the project planning and management hence causes a flop in project implementation. As was shown in the discussion of literature most of the projects that form the case study of this article where being directly funded by the Government of Zimbabwe.

One respondent within government noted that, the construction of the Harare Airport Road was delayed due to that government was finding it difficult to unlock the liquidity that was needed due to the sanctions regime imposed on the country. Resultantly, government had to be forced to parcel out land to the contractor as it was not liquid enough to pay on a cash basis. However, it is subject to criticism as to why the contractor after having received the payment in form of land failed to meet the overall project scope as was expected. The Tokwe-Mukosi Dam Project was also heavily affected by the tortoise pace on funds disbursement. A respondent also noted that this could also be attributed to failure by government to unlock the much needed foreign direct investment (FDI) on a mega project of this magnitude. This therefore, shows that although sanctions contributed negatively to the availability of resources there are a whole lot of other factors which contributed and cannot be ignored as evidenced by some of the themes herein discussed.

#### ***Theme five: Lack of flexible policies***

The reasons behind the collapse or slowdown of this project can be partly attributed to lack of a conclusive policy by the government of Zimbabwe. According to one respondent, government seems to have a tendency to initiate more developmental projects but without the capacity to fulfil them. The reasons behind the collapse of the Jatropa projects was partly attributed to lack of a conclusive policy on biofuels by the government of Zimbabwe, and as noted by Tigere *et al.* [18] there was no coordinated implementation of the project. The government stand blamed for massive policy inconsistencies which in turn is attributable to the failure or delay of mega projects. Findings from literature as discussed above noted that the Airport Road construction was heavily affected by policy inconsistencies on the part of government. The project is first tendered to a private company, and later after some works have been done the tender is withdrawn and the project is given to ZINARA. This affected the scope of the project and its delays as the two different contractors would have totally different approaches. Has it been that there was harmony between the local government and central government the project could have been given to one contractor who would have completed the job with due diligence. However, as one respondent noted, there is always friction and unclear policy parameters on who should do what when it comes to the execution of mega projects between local and central government. This in turn has affected the execution of developmental interventions in the country as the two always clash with each other. Some of this confusion can be attributed to the lack of a definite national projects policy in the country which will stipulate how duties and responsibilities should be shared when it comes to implementing such interventions.

#### ***Theme six: Constant change of personalities and lack of flexibility on planning***

The study revealed that change in project leadership in the form of government appointees as a result of a change in government or in the top hierarchy of the local government leads to project delays and sometimes project cancellation. A case in point was the Jatropa bio-diesel project which was instigated by the RBZ under the custodianship of the then Governor Gideon Gono. One respondent alleged that the project did not fail as it is still ongoing but rather on a small scale as the government was involved in gathering expert knowledge before it could be re-implemented on a large scale. However, a key respondent within the RBZ who was involved in the project noted that, it was the then Governor who was pushing through the project as he strongly believed that the fuel import bill had to be cut by supporting any available domestic option. By then the Jatropa bio-diesel was the most prudent domestic option and he ensured that it must be capacitated as a matter of urgency. However, with his departure the project started to die a natural death and it became an inevitable failure. Had the project managed to get the continued support of the RBZ it could have been a success story for the nation, however due to that there is no flexible planning processes that goes beyond personalities in government the project degenerated. However, project planning and management requires that all preliminary investigations and knowledge be laid bare before the project's implementation. Hence, for the project to have been implemented without much research was failure in the planning and execution of the project.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In light to the above findings and how it relates to literature, this article came up with a number of recommendations which if implemented will go a long way in successful execution of mega projects and minimising failure cradles. The proposed recommendations are as follows:

- Developing a National Project Policy that will guide the execution of all developmental projects. The policy will go a long way in setting a guideline on how national projects should be handled from pre-initiation up to completion. Quite several countries including Britain have such policies such as the Project Management Policy. If Zimbabwe manages to create a policy framework to guide the execution of national mega-projects positive results will be yielded. The policy will set the tone for the adoption, priority and governance of mega-projects.
- The policy will then form a basis for the creation of robust National Public Project Implementation Systems that will be governed under an independent institution (Public Project Management Office). It is this institution that will have the mandate of identifying, prioritizing and advising government on which mega-projects to



implement ahead of others. This institution becomes the expert on the managing of all mega projects. It will ensure adherence to set standards and norms when it comes to the issue of national projects. All line Ministries will have to set their proposals on concerned mega-projects and the institution will be the one responsible for overseeing the execution of such in the event of a green light having been granted.

- Robust National Projects Policy and institution will ensure that the government does not come up with many mega-projects before those already under way are completed. As was evidenced the government of Zimbabwe has a tendency of initiating many projects at once but with limited success or delays for same to be completed. Therefore, it is prudent for government to prioritise and ensure that it implements projects according to its capacity at a particular period. It does not make sense to be initiating bulk mega projects which in turn will strain government coffers and end up failing or delaying.
- It is also recommended that the fight against corruption be heightened as this vice negatively affected the fabric of mega projects. Developmental interventions should not be avenues that government officials use line up their pockets as this defeats the whole developmental purpose. Accountability and transparency is key in the execution of developmental projects in any given nation.

As many recommendations can be proffered on how best to minimise failure or delays insofar the execution of mega-projects are concerned. The list can be endless and if some of the above is implemented in the case of Zimbabwe many successes stories will be witnessed in the implementation of mega-projects.

## CONCLUSION

The execution of projects world over can be hampered by a plethora of problems which make short projects to realise their intended objectives, best quality and the intended outcomes/outputs. The success of many projects around the globe is enhanced by the use of good practice that is the application of knowledge, tools, skills and techniques. It is pertinent to note that challenges encountered in managing projects are perceptible at every stage of the project management cycle. Zimbabwe is among a plethora of countries that embarks on mega-projects as a way to achieve economic development. However, as evidenced above it is not a straightjacket that mega-projects will succeed. Certain fundamentals should be met to minimise the risk of failure or delay in the execution of such national developmental interventions. There are various explanations which can result in projects failing to meet the targeted timeframe and these can include lack of the appropriate funds, corruption, political environment, mismanagement of resources and sometimes

bureaucratic hindrances among others as discussed in this retiring article. These elements definitely impacts on the identified three major projects constraints which are time, cost and scope which in turn will affect the overall quality of the project. Failure to meet the project cost can be triggered by many things which include failure to live within the allocated budget, withdrawal of funds or slowness in their disbursement, failure to factor in real contingency costs and lack of stakeholder buy in of budget reviewers among other things.

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