

BORDER TRANSGRESSIONS AS A FORM OF SURVIVAL FOR THE DOWNTRODDEN  
ZIMBABWEANS: THE CASE OF BEITBRIDGE BORDER POST, 2000 – 2020

by

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## **DEDICATIONS**

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Joyce and Sani Muzondo.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The economic meltdown in Zimbabwe forced many people to engage in informal livelihood pursuits. This thesis documents the dynamics of informal cross-border trade and extends a justified contextualisation of this phenomenon by drawing upon government reports, news articles and previous literature. The study starts by tracing the socio-political and economic crisis that led to the proliferation of informal cross-border trade in Zimbabwe. The discussion is guided by the theoretical lens of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach as a framework for analysis. The approach exposes the disconnect between informal cross-border trade as a livelihood strategy and its impacts on the common good for future generations. Its intrinsic individualistic tendencies are a detriment to sustainable development which is more concerned about socio-economic and environmental protection of the society. Although the efficacy of informal cross-border trade in maintaining livelihoods is apparent, its ability to preserve long-term growth at the state level remains doubtful.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

<i>Black Market</i>	The informal sector
CPI	Corruption Perception Index
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IAPF	International Anti-Poaching Foundation
ICBT	Informal Cross Border Traders
<i>Malayitsha</i>	People who transport goods or people illegally across the border
<i>Mbanje</i>	A Shona word for Cannabis
MCAZ	Medicines Control Authority of Zimbabwe
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MMCZ	Minerals Marketing Corporation of Zimbabwe
MMCZ	Minerals Marketing of Zimbabwe Corporation
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SSA	State Security Agency
TIZ	Transparency International Zimbabwe
TTT	Tobacco Task Team
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAT	Value Added Tax
WHO	World Health Organization
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front
ZCLDN	Zimbabwe Civil Liberties and Drug Network
ZIMRA	Zimbabwe Revenue Authority
ZPWMA	Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority
USAID	United States Agency for International Development



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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe has continued to deteriorate, forcing many to engage in informal livelihood pursuits. Street vending, artisanal mining and informal cross-border trade are some of the initiatives commonly adopted by the poor. Given the developmental challenges facing Zimbabwe, informal trade is increasingly seen as an alternative poverty reduction strategy. This thesis responds to a substantial body of literature, including the work of Muzvidziwa (2005), Lesser and Moisé Leeman (2009), Jamela (2013), Duri (2017), and Crush *et al.* (2017) on the perceived significance of informal cross-border trade in poverty alleviation. To be sure, profits accrued from the business have been useful in supplementing household food shortages, land appropriation, medical costs, clothing, and tuition fees, among many other household essentials (Muzvidziwa, 2005; Lesser and Moisé Leeman, 2009; Crush *et al.*, 2017). In this milieu, cross-border trading has become a favoured method of survival adopted by Zimbabweans, both the urban and rural poor, to flee poverty (Jamela, 2013; Duri, 2017). However, many individuals engaged in this sector have taken illegal measures in an effort to raise their profit margins in the flooded market (Duri, 2017). An increase in illegal smuggling activities has become a contemporary phenomenon, with the proliferation of contraband, including drugs, weapons, and illicit vehicles (Crush *et al.*, 2017). Informal cross-border trade is fundamentally individualistic, focusing more on personal gains while ignoring sustainable development which concentrates more on socio-economic growth and environmental protection, and the society as a whole. The effectiveness of informal cross-border trade in maintaining livelihoods on the one hand, and promoting reliable long-term development at the state level on the other, is therefore difficult to reconcile.

## Statement of the Problem

Zimbabwe has been grappling with grinding poverty for an extended period of time, especially from the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. High unemployment rates, hyperinflation, acute shortages of essential commodities, and poor service delivery intensified the increase of poverty in Zimbabwe (Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009; Duri, 2012; Crush *et al.*, 2017). These challenges have primarily been constitutive of the new millennium Zimbabwean crisis (Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009). The problematic situation forced people to become innovative, adopting survival strategies, mainly in the informal sector, in ways that positively changed their lives (Muzvidziwa, 2005). Nevertheless, these innovations have become mostly harmful to the country's economy and society as a whole.

Muzvidziwa (2005) posits that informal cross-border trade has been adopted by the urban poor as a survival strategy in response to insufficient job creation, providing opportunities for purchasing power to the marginalized. Jamela (2013) notes that in most of the world's impoverished regions, informal traders are constantly undermined by the authorities due to their limited contribution to the national economy in terms of tax payments. Thus, informal trade has mostly been absent from the development agenda of most low-income earning countries. The neglect of informal cross-border trade adversely affects the urban and rural poor's livelihoods who depend heavily on this trade. Nevertheless, there is a dearth of scholarship on the long-term impacts of this informal cross-border trade on sustainable development in Zimbabwe.

Informal cross-border trade compromises service delivery due to limited tax revenue inflows (Muzvidziwa, 2005; Wrigley-Asante, 2013). Also, rampant corruption cases at the borders have

become commonplace as the law enforcement and revenue authorities take advantage of the situation to capitalize on their gains, thereby facilitating the smuggling (Munyanyi, 2015; Crush *et al.*, 2017). What emerges is a situation where some state officials' compromised behaviours have aided the need to survive and maximize profits by the transgressors (Muguti and Marongwe, 2017). Moreover, informal cross border trade results in an influx of foreign-produced goods that impedes the local industry's growth (Lesser and Moisé Leeman, 2009; Muzvidziwa, 2005). Informal cross-border trade has adverse effects on national security and socio-economic structures. The youth are drawn to unscrupulous means of survival often engaging in illegal activities and depriving the country of a productive human resource. Some informal traders routinely engage in shrewd practices, destroying the security fences to evade the border officials, thereby exacerbating porous borders, something that may also lead to the risk of potential terrorism in the region (Marongwe, 2015). This has also led to the emergence of people who illegally move goods or people across the border, known as *malayitsha* in the local vernacular. These mainly do this as part of their business, paving the way for the illegal travellers who avoid official ports of entry. I will discuss this in more detail in the coming chapters.

Informal cross-border trade is thus a distinct form of economic activity that can improve livelihoods and be detrimental to Zimbabwe's growth at the same time. Therefore, this thesis seeks to address the questions: Can the adverse effects of informal cross-border trade be effectively mitigated, and can it be considered a vehicle for sustainable development in Zimbabwe?

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- What are the characteristics of the people involved in informal cross-border trade and the factors influencing them to engage in such activities?

- Can informal cross-border trade be conceptualized as a livelihood strategy for sustainable development?
- Do sustainable livelihoods equate to sustainable development?

### **The goal of the study and its objectives**

This study examines the contribution of informal cross-border trade to people's livelihoods and assesses its impacts on prospects for sustainable development in Zimbabwe. The following objectives guide the focus of the study:

- To determine the factors influencing people to engage in informal cross-border trade.
- To evaluate informal cross-border trade as a livelihood strategy using the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach.

### **Provisional argument and purpose statement**

This study assesses the effectiveness of informal cross-border trade as a livelihood strategy for the downtrodden, emphasizing the extent to which these activities affect Zimbabwe's sustainable development. To augment the analysis, I deliberate on the varied aspects of this practice, including the goods traded, the people involved, and the circumstances prompting their engagement in such activities. Informal cross-border trade is a response to the economic challenges that confront people. For the poor, it has become an accepted means for escaping the grasp of poverty. Within the short-term, this trade boosts these citizens' survival strategies, encourages entrepreneurial activity and regional integration, and enhances income earnings and employment opportunities for low-income households. However, in the long run, informal cross-border trade is likely to have adverse economic and developmental effects, further marginalizing the Zimbabwean economy.

The inflow of foreign products hinders the local industry's growth and limits the incentives to innovate. Corruption, loss of tax revenue, and sexual abuse are some of the detriments of informal cross-border trade. As Duri (2012) asserts, the informal sector's rise indicates a lack of accountability for the looting of national resources. While informal cross-border trade seemingly sustains livelihoods, it remains contradictory to sustainable development. Therefore, this thesis argues that informal cross-border can be considered a quick fix economic reprieve for the poor's livelihoods but is detrimental to Zimbabwe's sustainable development.

### **Background: Identifying the root causes of informal trade in post-independence Zimbabwe**

In the aftermath of Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, the new government embarked on various projects to correct the historical imbalances that were prevalent during the colonial era. Emphasis was placed on welfarist programs to improve the black majority's socio-economic well-being (Scoones *et al.*, 2010). During this period, the government focused on establishing an egalitarian society through the equal distribution of resources, fostering income equality, and raising the living standards for all the people (Ndiweni and Verhoeven, 2013). The main idea was to achieve equity, leading to employment creation and redressing the pre-existing racial imbalance in skilled labour employment (Dashwood, 2000; Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009). For this to be successful, a restructuring of colonial-era governance premised on white supremacy and black Zimbabweans' segregation was necessary (Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009). Therefore, the priority was to redistribute the land, improve service delivery, and eliminate racialized employment (Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009; Scoones *et al.*, 2010; Crush *et al.*, 2017). Historically, white colonial farmers owned large tracts of land; a method purposely designed to cause land shortages among the black

peasantry, forcing them to become low-cost wage labourers (Duri, 2012; Geza, 1986, cited in Jamela, 2013). The reallocation of land soon after independence, was therefore intended to restructure the unequal distribution of wealth, land, income and services of Zimbabwe's inherited agrarian economy (Scoones *et al.*, 2010). Moyo (2011: 23) postulates that,

A redistributive agrarian reform would also alter the wider social relations of production and reproduction. It would free peasant part-time labour and farm compound labour from the economic compulsion to provide cheap labour to the white farms, mines and industry, and ensure that the land residency and land use rights of farm labour were detached from the provision of labour, effectively abolishing the exploitative 'farm compound labour tenancy', alongside progressive labour laws, which improve working conditions.

The young Zimbabwean government's concerted attempts to end adverse living conditions for the majority of Black people included the development of rural economic infrastructure with a focus on the expansion of social services and land reform (Jamela, 2013). This entailed the provision of housing, health and education to lower-income groups in both urban and rural areas (Duri, 2012). This meant that the living standards of Zimbabwe's black majority changed immediately after political independence was achieved. As such, informal cross-border trade was minimal and unpopular between 1980 and 1990, not only because the economy was doing well, but also as a result of societal myths surrounding the practice. The social belief was that unskilled and unsuccessful individuals who were scorned, carried out the enterprise. It came as no surprise in the primarily patriarchal Zimbabwean society where most families did not believe in educating the 'girl-child', that women dominated the trade. Besides, it was generally assumed that informal trade was conducted by women who lacked moral standards as perceived by the society, because the nature of the business involved spending days away from home while travelling to sell or purchase goods for resale. This was not common in the patriarchal Zimbabwean society. However, these notions were dismissed by Crush and Peberdy (1998) who noted that many informal traders have attained tertiary education and professional qualifications.



It was only in the wake of the government's failed implementation of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programs (ESAP) between 1990 and 1994 that there was a rise in de-industrialization and consequent unemployment primarily in the government-owned companies such as the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) and Fidelity Printers and Refinery among many others. This saw a massive increase in the number of people who started to participate in informal cross-border trade (Muzvidziwa, 2005; Duri, 2012; Sachikonye *et al.*, 2018). The spike in informal activities was part of the *kukiya-kiya*<sup>1</sup> phenomenon embraced by the retrenched Zimbabweans after the ESAP failed to revamp the economy (Duri and Marongwe, 2017). Therefore, as a consequence of a deteriorating socio-political and economic climate triggered by foreign pressure, weak government policies, and corruption the proliferation of informal activities in Zimbabwe has escalated.

With full knowledge of what it meant for the nation, the young Zimbabwean government initially resisted the ESAPs in the early 1980s. Still, the major Western forces, primarily Britain and the USA, used the Lancaster House Agreement<sup>2</sup> to block any attempts by the Zimbabwean government to redistribute land and transform the provision of social services (Chidzero 1992, cited in Jamela, 2013). The new government had to wait ten years to institute land reform as part of the settlement (Preston, 2004). To facilitate peace, both the British and American governments promised to reimburse white people for any property sold (Preston, 2004; Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009). This was, however, largely focused on the concept of "willing buyer, willing

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<sup>1</sup> Street slang that means getting by.

<sup>2</sup> The Lancaster House Agreement was a temporary pre-independence Constitution, with terms of a truce in Zimbabwe's liberation war.

seller," which proved to be very slow, especially for peasants living in congested rural reserves, who had high hopes shortly after independence (Preston, 2004). Therefore, the new government did not have the legislative authority and financial capacity to redistribute the land equally; thus, it lacked the primary means of production. Consequently, the new Zimbabwean government began slowly losing valuable ground in the poverty reduction battle, with options becoming far between. With the need to improve social services and standards of living, the nation had to borrow funds with prescribed conditions from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), thus the implementation of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programs (Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009; Duri, 2012; Sachikonye *et al.*, 2018).

The ESAP set forth growth requirements that included a restructuring of the civil service and government spending priorities, leading to significant job losses (Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009). In effect, the ESAP ushered in market liberalisation, which led to Multi-National Companies (MNCs), ultimately dominating local markets. Given the productive capacity of the MNCs, their financial capital and their investment, establishment and distribution potential, they ended up replacing many local producers who were unable to compete with them (Scoones *et al.*, 2010). Local producers were further pushed to the periphery, becoming economically marginalised. The local business owners soon became informal entrepreneurs because they could no longer compete and pay the hefty taxes set by the government to accrue revenue from the mostly foreign-owned companies.

While aimed at restructuring government spending and accelerating growth, the implementation of ESAP left thousands unemployed. The resultant increase in unemployment rates and rampant

poverty necessitated the emergence of the informal economy as a livelihood strategy. There was an unprecedented rise in the cost of living (Sachikonye *et al.*, 2018; Marongwe and Moyo, 2015). In a profound sense, the Zimbabwean government became trapped in a bottomless pit of debt from which it has been trying to escape ever since, with the higher cost being a radical shift in their political and economical approach.

Besides, it was difficult to transform the abolition of colonial exploitation into significant social and economic policies soon after independence as both domestic and external bourgeois powers opposed the government's objectives (Dashwood, 2000; Duri, 2012; Duri and Marongwe, 2017). It has therefore proved challenging to achieve a more equitable distribution of national resources, including land, and to transfer ownership of a significant part of the economy to the black majority. Towards the beginning of the new millennium, the economic downturn had worsened, as the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) led government gradually turned to a violent brand of populist nationalism to win the support of people through coercion, as it faced challenges from the new political opposition (Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009; Sachikonye *et al.*, 2018).

The Fast Track Land Reform Program was the last resort to alleviate mounting tensions in the rural areas as the people sought a means of primary production, the land (Duri and Marongwe, 2017). However, this was done hurriedly, in an uncoordinated manner and most cases, resulting in violence, because whites were reluctant to share the land. Mawere (2016) postulates that what ensued was an alienation from the international community coupled with economic sanctions. This worsened the situation forcing a large number of skilled labourers such as nurses, engineers and

doctors into the diaspora in search of better opportunities. At the same time, those who remained in the country witnessed an unprecedented rise in the cost of living. As the socio-economic meltdown escalated, many urban poor resorted to informal livelihood pursuits such as informal cross-border trade (Duri and Marongwe, 2017). The decision to engage in illicit cross-border trading has, therefore, become a sensible one for the poor in search of better livelihood opportunities. It became increasingly apparent that a lot of people were engaging in informal trade as they sought for an alternative means of attaining a livelihood. Thus, migration and a host of informal activities offered a potential escape route from poverty. Migration to neighbouring countries, especially South Africa, meant that the nation's borders became hives of activity as the shoddy smuggled goods either for household consumption or resale (Duri and Marongwe, 2017).

The government, determined to accrue tax revenues from all businesses in the country, regarded the advent of informal activities with suspicion. Thus, instead of the government accepting informal trade as an enabling factor particularly for the poor, the practice was criticised continuously and accused of crippling the country's economy and viewed as a threat to national security (Mutopo, 2010; Mutopo, 2014). As a result, the state began to put many restrictions on informal trade, adhering to policies that made it both challenging and costly to comply with legal trade requirements for low-income urban residents (Chani, 2008, as cited in Jamela, 2013). For example, through Statutory Instrument (SI) 64 of 2016, the government prohibited the import of various products, including dairy products, clothes, furniture, and poultry among many others (*The Herald*, 12 May 2016). The move was intended to boost the local industry by reducing food imports, especially those products produced locally (*The Herald*, 12 May 2016).

Consequently, the importation of many goods and products became illicit. According to Duri and Marongwe (2017), though the Zimbabwean government has historically treated the informal economy with scepticism, it is this segment of the economy that kept the country going in the prolonged difficult times.

### **Significance of the study**

As the socio-economic status of Zimbabwe continues to deteriorate, many people have resorted to informal cross-border trade. Although the exact statistics are difficult to assess, this activity contributes to the Southern African Development Community more than US\$17 billion in annual trade and is estimated to constitute about 38% of sub-Saharan African economies (World Bank, 2014). The study, therefore, exposes the long-term effects of cross-border trade on the economy of the country and to examine the importance of informal cross-border trade. To date, studies have not challenged the viability and sustainability of informal cross-border trade, which has arguably preserved the livelihoods of people at a time when they are struggling with unemployment and a decrease in living standards. Although the study argues that informal cross-border traders are stakeholders in the development process, it also contends that this is only a short-term fix that disrupts sustainable development in Zimbabwe. Informal cross-border trade has ensured the availability of everyday items such as food, clothing, and medicines during difficult times. The trade has also influenced the stagnation of the local industry as people have developed a taste and preference for foreign-produced goods. Thus, a vital inquiry into the importance of informal cross-border trade in the preservation of livelihoods is necessary. Also, a critical study of whether the sustenance of livelihoods can be transformed into sustainable development at the national level is called for. This study significantly complements existing literature and paves the way for other

researchers in this field to further explore informal trade and its unintended consequences on sustainable development.

### Locating the Beitbridge border post



Figure 1. 1 Map showing Beitbridge border post bordering South Africa: Source, Encyclopædia Britannica (2020)

This study centers on informal cross-border trading in Beitbridge, the bordering town located in the Matabeleland South province of Zimbabwe. It is also the border post, which forms the political

boundary between Zimbabwe and South Africa (Fitzmaurice, 2009). The Beitbridge border is sub-Saharan Africa's busiest land port, and it is the gateway to the sea for most of the SADC region (Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries, 2015). The importance of the Beitbridge border post to the SADC area is underlined by the fact that the border serves more than 3 000 vehicles and 9, 000 passengers, daily, with estimates exceeding 20 000 passengers during national public holidays particularly, Christmas (Kwanisai *et al.*, 2014). The International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2019: 1) observed that, “a total of 5,368,783 movements comprising 2,790,051 entries and 2,578,732 exits were registered at Beitbridge Border Post in 2019.” This does not include the many informal and unrecorded movements that are focused on in this thesis, making it complicated to determine the extent of the trade. However, the border helps in the growth of business and plays a trade facilitative role in the SADC region.

As a consequence of this strategic value, the governments of Zimbabwe and South Africa have made strenuous efforts over the years to expand surveillance (Crush *et al.*, 2017). This border protection is done by perceptible police surveillance by soldiers, erecting and maintaining the dual fences installed to reduce leaks, smuggling or other offences (Irish, 2005). Border authorities are responsible for checking people and goods, as well as the identification and monitoring of individuals and goods attempting to cross borders illegally (Duri and Marongwe, 2017).

### **Limitations of the study**

Due to its importance as the gateway to the whole Southern African region and beyond, the Beitbridge border was chosen for this analysis. It is considered the busiest border in the SADC region, and it is vital in fostering regional economic integration and development (Fitzmaurice, 2009; Kwanisai *et al.*, 2014). It is, also, arguably, the most critical border post for Zimbabwe due

to its massive contribution to the country's fiscal revenues (Kwanisai *et al.*, 2014). However, the researcher was unable to perform field research due to resource-related time and financial constraints, instead relying on the government and international organisational records, journalistic sources and previous literature. The nature of the study made it difficult to engage in field research since it is focusing on the informal cross-border trade which is mostly illegal, and the characteristics of the practice would otherwise have posed a danger to the researcher. Again, without risking the protection of the researcher or themselves, most of the persons involved in trade, such as politicians and high-ranking government officials and the border authorities, will not reveal the relevant information. As such, the lack of operating standards in the informal sector can be a constraint in assessing the effectiveness of informal cross-border trade as a strategy to reduce poverty. Therefore, the researcher has relied to a large degree on primary data from government sources and international institutions that have carried research on the subject.

## **Definition of key terms**

### **I. Informal cross-border trade**

Informal cross-border trade is characterised as trade carried out by insecure, small, unregistered traders between neighbouring countries (The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD], 2018: paras. 1-2). Informal cross-border trade is thus often related to vulnerable and impoverished parts of society (Zata, 2016). It is also possible to classify informal cross-border trade as the trade that avoids legislative border formalities, such as customs clearance (Lesser and Moisé Leeman, 2009; Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency [ZIMSTAT], 2019). Therefore, the main objective of informal cross-border trade is to evade charges, duties, and taxes, while maximising profits. These activities include falsifying the amount or value of goods to pay



lower import tariffs and misleading the authorities by declaring the wrong product category in such a way that it is misclassified as being subject to lower taxes (Lesser and Moisé Leeman, 2009). In this regard, the critical determinants of informal cross-border trade are the structured trade-related costs that traders tend to avoid. Therefore, informal cross-border trade is, by definition hard to formalize.

## II. Poverty

The United Nations Development Programme ( UNDP, 2018) claims that poverty is a phenomenon that is dynamic, multifaceted and multidimensional. In this regard, poverty entails the lack of sufficient services to provide food, clean water, housing and clothes, access to health care, education and transportation for the necessities of life (World Vision, 2019). The ZIMSTAT Poverty Report (2017) describes poverty as the inability to achieve a minimum acceptable standard of well-being defined by society. Poverty is defined by Hall and Midgley (2004) as a condition of lacking tangible assets and social deprivation. Poverty is, thus specified as the inaccessibility of essential services such as health, education, clean water and unemployment.

According to the World Bank (2015), poor people are those who live on \$1.90 a day or less. The World Bank uses this standard poverty line to measure poverty. The ZIMSTATS Poverty Report (2017) uses two poverty lines: The Food Poverty Line (FPL) and the Total Consumption Poverty Line (TCPL). According to the ZIMSTATS Poverty Report (2017), “The FPL reflects the minimum consumption expenditure required to ensure that each member of the household eats adequate food.” The TCPL contains an allowance for minimum provisions for non-food needs, such as accommodation, clothes, transportation and health care (ZIMSTAT, 2017). Households or individuals below the FPL are impoverished. The average per-person FPL line was US\$1.04 per day, and the TCPL Line was US\$ 2.30 per person per month (ZIMSTAT, 2017).

In Zimbabwe's rural areas, poverty is much higher than in urban areas, with a prevalence of rural person poverty of 86%, compared with 37% among the urban population using the ZIMSTAT FPL and TCPL thresholds (ZIMSTAT, 2017). The ZIMSTAT Poverty Report (2017) notes that large families and high dependency ratios characterise poor households in Zimbabwe. This study adopts the World Bank (2015) and ZIMSTAT (2017) aggregates for measuring poverty because they are more applicable to the area of study.

### III. Sustainable Development

The UN Sustainable Development Goals Report (2019) describes sustainable development as, "development that meets today's needs without undermining future generations' ability to meet their own needs." As such, sustainable development strives to attain equitable economic growth and environmental preservation. Sustainability, therefore, takes the protection of nature, climate, land, climate, livelihoods, culture, and societies into account (United Nations, 2019).

### IV. Survival Strategies

The UNCTD (2018) defines survival strategies as the activities that poor people adopt during times of stress. These activities are deemed vital for the continued functioning of their households and may include informal business practices. Some notable survival strategies include, among others, debt collection, asset selling, and migration. In other texts, these survival strategies are described as coping strategies and as plans taken up by people in times of uncertainty or when faced with problems (Aluoch, 2012).

## V. Border Transgressions

The Oxford Dictionary describes transgression as an act or action that goes against the law or code of behaviour. Border transgressions can be interpreted in the sense of this study as acts of infringement or going against laws regulating political boundaries between states or countries. Such violations violate states' sanctity and sovereignty as boundaries precisely signify the start or end of statehoods (Tagliacozzo, 2006; Murton, 2017).

## VI. Livelihood

A livelihood consists of the services, endeavors and rights that enable individuals to make a living (Serrat, 2017; Muringai et al., 2020). A livelihood consists of properties of the material, physical, human, financial and social resources available to individuals (Serrat, 2017). In the context of this study, livelihoods are seen as the ability to accumulate various properties and entitlements that empower individuals to make a living (Serrat, 2017). Livelihood strategies are how individuals in different socio-economic and environmental settings pursue distinct survival practises (Serrat, 2017). These strategies usually consist of operations that produce the means of survival of the household. Chambers and Conway (1992) see a livelihood as, "consisting of the skills, properties and activities needed for a means of living". The sustainability of livelihoods is measure by their ability to tolerate and recuperate from daily pressures and uncertainties.

## **Research Methods**

This segment provides a brief description of the methods of the study. Chapter 2 presents a detailed account of the research methods used. It also includes the research approach, research type and design used in the study. The study evaluates the socio-economic impact of cross-border trade on the livelihoods at the household level and the country's sustainable development. The study used

a qualitative research methodology to better understand informal cross-border trade in Zimbabwe, including a comprehensive approach to determine and analyse the impact of border incursions on livelihoods and Zimbabwe's sustainable development. The study endeavored to explain and describe the informal cross-border activities, as it sought to explore and analyse the effects of the trade on both the livelihoods of the urban poor and sustainable development in Zimbabwe. Triangulation, drawing on secondary sources, previous literature and case studies added value to the data collection process.

### **The organisation of the study**

This research is structured into five chapters. The first chapter presents the analysis, the research question and the reasoning of the investigation. It also provides an insight into the study's background and how informal cross-border trade was born out of Zimbabwe's poor governance and economic decline. The second chapter focuses on the theoretical basis on which the argument of the analysis relies, namely the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA), and explores the methodology used to collect data for this purpose. In the literature review, the third chapter extends and addresses the determinants of informal cross-border trade. A more detailed description of informal cross-border trade, its characteristics and the essence of the individuals involved in the trade is given in the fourth chapter. Analysis of the observations and recommendations are found in Chapter 5.

## **CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **Introduction**

To understand the well-being of informal cross-border traders, the aspects of border transgressions and the broader notions of livelihoods are essential. As a theoretical framework, this study uses the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) to explain the context in which informal cross-border trade takes place. I chose the SLA because it aligns with the thinking of sustainable development and focuses on individuals, their wealth, skills and operations. These are all essential components for understanding the causes and effects of informal cross-border trade in Zimbabwe on people's livelihoods and sustainable growth. This chapter will begin by outlining the main features and meanings of SLA. A thorough overview of the research design and methods used in collecting data will also be given in the chapter.

### **Defining the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach**

The SLA emerged from poverty research that was concerned with individual livelihoods. (Chambers and Conway, 1992). The SLA focuses on the way that the poor go about their daily lives. The SLA is, therefore, an attempt to conceptualise and consider the dynamics of livelihoods - the limitations and opportunities faced by the disadvantaged. Put differently, the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach explores the capacity of people to build and preserve their livelihoods, increase their well-being and do the same for future generations (Scoones, 2009; Uddin and Gao 2013; Serrat, 2017). Resources, capabilities, activities, and assets are what make up a livelihood (Krantz, 2001, cited in Mutopo, 2014). The political and socio-economic environment that has prevailed since the turn of the millennium has led the poor to re-orient their livelihood options

venturing into the diaspora, despite the threats and vulnerabilities that this trade poses for their lives (Tshabalala, 2017).

Contextualizing informal cross-border trade within the SLA is essential for understanding livelihoods. A livelihood requires the skills, services and pursuits needed for making a living (Scoones, 2009; Serrat, 2017). A sustainable livelihood is one that can manage and recuperate from uncertainties. It should also be able to retain or boost its capacity without compromising the resources for future generations (Chambers and Conway, 1992, cited in Mutopo, 2014). Unfortunately, as a livelihood strategy, this is not consistent with informal cross-border trade. Informal cross-border trade is counterproductive to sustainable livelihoods in many respects, as will be discussed in this thesis.

The definition of livelihoods is relevant to the study as it examines problems related to people's abilities, resources and activities. Livelihood strategies are understood to be the practises performed by individuals to earn a living (Mutopo, 2014). We may think of agriculture, street vendors and small-scale mining as examples. Local authorities usually undermine these activities because the people who practise them tend to avoid city by-laws, regulations and tax payments. In Beitbridge, most of the livelihoods largely rest on livestock farming, street vending and informal cross-border trade (Duri, 2012). Therefore, being able to rebound from stress and shocks is a necessity for a sustainable livelihood. Nevertheless, it must also be able to retain and develop skills and services in the future (Krantz, 2001, cited in Mutopo, 2014). Therefore, in the face of the shocks and pressures faced in adverse circumstances, livelihood strategies can be seen as coping mechanisms.

The SLA is a system that strives to validate poor people's agency in shaping livelihood outcomes (Scoones, 2009). In the context of this study, agency is not intended to idealise informal cross-

border trade as a poor people's livelihood approach, but to denote how citizens respond to circumstances that face them. It is used to provide a nuanced study of how vulnerable groups react to various factors that inhibit their livelihoods. The SLA recognises that policies and institutions influence the choices of people's livelihood strategies (Mutopo, 2014). For example, in the hope of revitalising the local industry, the Zimbabwean government implemented the SI 64 of 2016 banning the importation of products that are mainly produced domestically, from neighbouring South Africa (Mabuwa, 2016). While such a move was intended to stamp out the influx of foreign-produced goods and ensure the continuity of trade, it inadvertently motivated citizens to begin circumventing the local border authorities, thereby accelerating the rise of informal cross-border trade.

The SLA illustrates the situation that determines the livelihood strategies taken up by the poor (Krantz, 2001; Serrat, 2017; Scoones, 2009). In the context of this paper, the SLA allows the understanding of how various determinants, such as unemployment and low living standards, contribute to the rise of informal cross-border trade and how agency plays a critical role in aiding the informalization of livelihoods. This study offers a nuanced overview of the various complexities under which the practice exists to illustrate its effect on sustainable livelihoods. By critically analysing informal cross-border trade as a strategy for livelihoods, the SLA also shows how it deviates from societal sustainability.

## **Principles of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach**

### **I. People-centred**

The SLA focuses on the improvement of livelihoods at the individual level. The emphasis is on people's engagement in problems that concern them, and this is the fulcrum of social development (Ellis, 2003; Duri, 2012; Mutopo, 2014). Thus, attempts to alleviate poverty should also reflect on

people's possessions, the economic environment that surrounds them and their capacity to adapt (Mazibuko, 2013). Therefore, the SLA is centralised on what people have and how that affects their modes of production. To better understand their experiences, challenges, resilient strategies that support them to optimise their income, an analysis of informal cross-border trade is necessary.

## II. Participatory and responsive

The theory of engagement and transparency dictates that in defining problems that concern them, beneficiaries should be the main actors (Mazibuko, 2013). Cross-border traders understand their livelihoods and prioritise them, thereby forcing the government to formulate policies that impact their trade. In this research, SLA provides the lens through which informal cross-border trade as a livelihood strategy is cross-examined as well as how it forms the path of sustainable development of the country.

## III. Sustainability

Sustainability focuses on, “meeting existing requirements without undermining the ability of future generations to fulfil their needs” (Ellis, 2003; Mutopo, 2014). This definition helps the researcher to determine the effectiveness of informal cross-border exchange in terms of environmental conservation and the shaping of society - sustainable development.

## IV. Dynamic and holistic

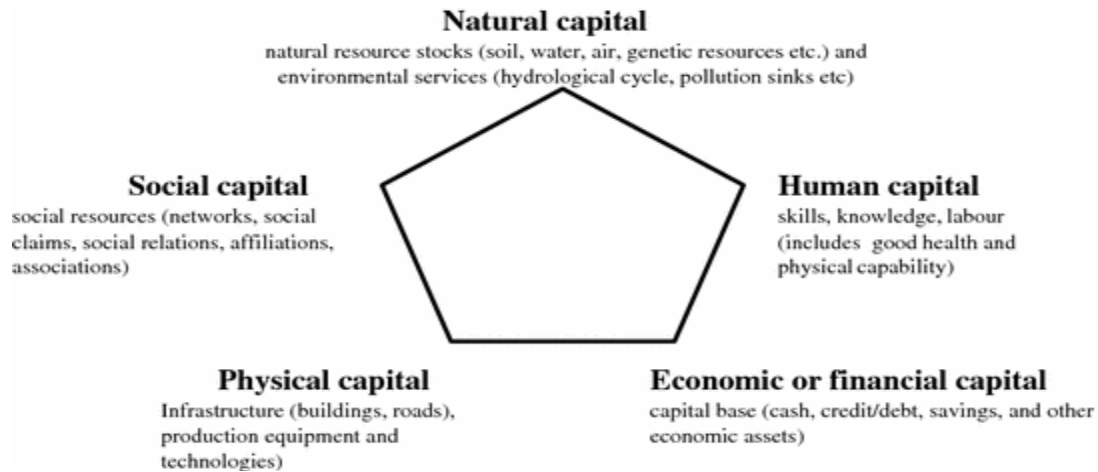
Due to the multi-dimensional and multiple levels of poverty, livelihoods are dynamic (Mazibuko, 2013). Thus, “the construction of sustainable livelihood options should be open and holistic to ensure that people's full potential is realized” (Mukozho, 2011:34). As such, the poverty reduction strategies adopted at the state and individual level in Zimbabwe have been broad and diverse. The



SLA approach recognises that every livelihood is made up of holistically interconnected practises, properties, entitlements and coping strategies (Ellis, 2003; Mutopo, 2014). This approach enables the study to define and focus on the different methods used by informal cross-border traders to maintain their trading activities and their coping strategies, taking into account the challenges faced. In this regard, the appreciation of these values can be used as an aggregate indicator to measure the efficacy of informal cross-border trade as a strategy for improving livelihoods and to assess its effectiveness for sustainable development.

## V. Capital Assets

The SLA explains the reasons for poverty and how this influences people to engage in various livelihood pursuits (Mutopo, 2014). Essentially, there are five categories of capital assets that are exploited by the poor. The social capital, characterised by the useful networks and associations that people have in a community is an essential aspect of the SLA (Mutopo, 2014). This includes the relationships and kinship that the poor utilise in their plight for survival. Natural capital can be interpreted as natural resources, whereas infrastructure such as transport, highways, automobiles and buildings are physical capital (Scoones, 1998). These capitals are the necessary means for making livelihoods, and they enlighten the underprivileged individuals to question the system and find better ways of living (Mazibuko, 2013). Capital is, thus, a tool which enables people to participate more constructively and gain the capacity to change their lives entirely (Mutopo, 2014). In this regard, informal cross-border trade inevitably changes society for the better or for worse. To assess the efficacy of informal cross-border trade from a sustainable development perspective, the exploration of livelihoods across these multiple capitals is essential. The five necessary means that are frequently proposed as critical to livelihoods are presented in the diagram below:



*Figure 2. 1 The five capitals of sustainable livelihood. Adapted from Scoones (1998)*

## VII. Vulnerability Context

The sense of vulnerability relates to the external setting in which individuals reside. In the case of changes in their external climate, the vulnerability can be seen as uncertainty in the well-being of people (Surret, 2017; Mutopo, 2014). This exposure includes trends such as economic changes at the national or international level, changes in the technologies available, and current political structures (Ellis, 2003). Thus, the vulnerability principle is well suited to capturing processes of transition in the lives of informal cross-border traders. For instance, Zimbabwe's poor economic conditions triggered a deprivation of decent livelihoods that eventually led some families to sell significant assets and livestock, while also providing more opportunities for some to prosper by participating in different livelihood strategies. The sense of vulnerability also involves inevitable shocks that occur, among others, such as disease or death, war, climate change, inflation, and development cycles (Scoones, 1998, cited in Mutopo 2014). Shock denotes an unforeseen and immediate pressure on livelihoods (Serrat, 2017). A flood or drought, for instance, may impact the lives of people instantly. Stress describes long-term pressure, such as an economic downturn that

typically happens over the years, causing unemployment and reduced production (Muzvidziwa, 2012). It should be noted that children and women are more at risk to these shocks and vulnerabilities. Therefore, it can be possible to produce meaningful livelihood results only when vulnerability and structural contexts have been taken into account.

### **Critiques of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach**

The SLA has some weaknesses that may limit its effectiveness. As it relates to gender, for instance, the SLA fails to consider power dynamics (Mutopo, 2014). Social capital also ignores the fact that social networks can be inclusive and exclusive, with the poorest and most disadvantaged also excluded (Krantz, 2001, cited in Mutopo, 2014). To this degree, the SLA does not define the criteria that can be used to classify the poor or make a clear differentiation between individuals who seek to build better livelihoods and those who use the situation to maximise their gains. For instance, some corrupt politicians and local authorities, who either took bribes or used their authoritative power to weaken the rules, supported the porosity of the Beitbridge border post (Munyanyi, 2015). Informal structures of social dominance, such as traditional beliefs and power hierarchies within the communities, also influence the distribution of resources and livelihood opportunities (Duri, 2012; Wrigley-Asante, 2013). Gender as an aspect of social relations in Zimbabwe's patriarchal society illustrates the degree to which discrimination and inequality define relations between men and women (Mutopo, 2014). Studies carried out across Africa have indicated that informal cross-border trade is often dominated by women, who traditionally bear the brunt of poverty (Muzvidziwa, 2005; Duri, 2012; Mutopo, 2014; UNCTAD, 2019). These women are usually vulnerable to extreme difficulties and violence such as sexual assaults, murder and robbery encountered in the trade (Jamela, 2013; Wrigley-Asante, 2013)

However, though the criticisms and limitations of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach outlined above are certainly valid, it remains useful in this thesis for evaluating the impacts of informal trade on livelihoods and sustainable development and it can be easily gendered. The SLA is essential for considering the details of people's livelihoods and for assessing the broader context in which those livelihoods operate. The approach also makes it easier to understand the root causes of poverty, putting more emphasis on several reasons that determine or restrict the access and livelihoods of people at different levels (Krantz, 2001). The closing of factories in Zimbabwe during the 1990s and early 2000s, for example, left many people unemployed and they had to search for alternative forms of living, thereby participating in informal cross-border trade. Besides, the delays at the Beitbridge border, the high customs duties and the complicated procedures for obtaining a passport caused border transgressions.

### **The significance of the SLA to the study**

The SLA enhances the understanding of livelihoods and provides an aggregate used to measure whether they translate to sustainable development. It offers a structure for organising the factors that restrict or enhance people's lives. Informal cross-border trade creates livelihood opportunities for the poor, while limiting sustainable development. Lesser and Moise-Leeman (2009) posit that lack of employment and limited access to service delivery are some of the factors that constrain the livelihoods of the people who eventually pursue informal cross-border trade.

The SLA emphasises the significance of recognising the contexts and relationships involved in the fight against poverty. Jamela (2013) stresses that the collapse of the Zimbabwean economy negatively affected the formal sector because salaries could no longer support the average family.

Therefore, the working class had to look for other livelihood strategies, often in the informal sector, to help with family sustenance.

In addition, the SLA offers a lens to investigate whether informal livelihood opportunities can transform or undermine sustainable growth at the state level. Most of the activities taken up by the poor during their time of need, provide sustenance to their livelihoods in the short-term but compromise the resource base for future generations. Therefore, understanding how the underprivileged construct their livelihoods in the absence of, or in contradiction to, state policies is imperative to this study. SLA focuses more on essential issues in sustainability and departs from the modernisation theory's preoccupation with economic growth as a critical determinant of poverty alleviation (Krantz, 2001; Mutopo, 2014).

## **Research Methodology**

As the above sections demonstrated, this study contextualized the phenomenon of informal cross-border trade within the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach. This thesis used primary data in the form of specific government statistical records and publications by international organisations such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Secondary data obtained from newspapers and previous literature was utilised to understand the motivations, challenges faced, strategies and opportunities exploited by informal cross-border traders in cementing their livelihoods. As a research tool, secondary data analysis saves time and resources and prevents needless duplication of research effort (Creswell, 2009). Nevertheless, it is equally essential to consider previously collected data on the research topic. Therefore, there might already be information that can be used to answer research questions (Creswell, 2009). An in-depth

literature review was done, reviewing previous and existing documents, articles and dissertations written on informal cross-border trade.

Furthermore, local informal networks provided valuable information on the practice of informal cross-border trade. I had the benefit of an informal network of friends and relatives involved in the profession as well as a professor who has previously worked on informal cross-border trade. Some research questions in this study align with some of the previous studies conducted on the subject, as they all centred on informal cross-border trade. Professor Ngonidzashe Marongwe (PhD), who previously worked on informal cross-border trade, granted the researcher access to the original findings and raw data from some previous studies. This helped in analysing how sampling, interviews and biases were resolved in the earlier studies (Creswell, 2009). Professor Marongwe's draft texts from the research that he did with Dr Muguti: *The Moral Economy of Border Transgression: Smuggling across The Beitbridge Border Post by Zimbabweans In the New Millennium*, were essential to this study.

Relevant and valuable academic sources involving larger samples, such as those funded by well-known organisations were accessed and utilised in this study. The use of existing data made the research easier because most of the complicated steps were already done, such as data processing (Doolan and Froelicher, 2009, as cited in Johnston, 2012). This provides many opportunities for furthering informal cross-border trade research through extensive re-analysis of existing studies.

However, when using available data to explore new research questions and produce further information, there are special methodological considerations (Creswell, 2009). The knowledge in the previous literature may not have been gathered to address the particular research questions of the researcher (Johnston, 2012). For example, due to the complexities of informal cross-border

trade, some of the trading activities important to this study were not captured by the surveys carried out by previous researchers.

Another significant drawback of the use of secondary knowledge is that the researcher does not know precisely how the data was collected because he did not take part in the data collection process (Johnston, 2012). This limits the accuracy of the research because the original data set may include some hidden biases and distortions arising from possible misunderstandings of particular survey questions by the respondents (Johnston, 2012). Therefore, this information had to be found through other methods, such as technical reports and government publications. The researcher cross-checked data from government sources, details from previous literature, and newspapers to resolve these pitfalls.

### **Data triangulation**

To enhance confidence in the results and add value to the data collection process, this study used multiple sources for comparison. In analysis, Creswell (2009 ) describes triangulation as the use of three or more opposing approaches in a study to generate three distinct sets or even data types. In other words, triangulation applies, using various methods, to the analysis of a situation from multiple viewpoints. This combination of various sources helped to overcome the weakness of underlying biases. The principle of triangulation suggests that if used in tandem with other data sources, any prejudice inherent in a single data source and process will be neutralised (Johnston, 2012). Viewed in this light, the objective of triangulation in qualitative research is to enhance the reliability of the data sources and research material (Johnston, 2012). Therefore, triangulation helps resolve the limitations of a single form of analysis, but it can be challenging; for example, if two data sources are conflicting (Jonhston, 2012).

Further study may result in an even more complicated collection of understandings. Although triangulation is used to solve the problems associated with the use of one analysis tool, these problems are not eliminated. Still, by compensating for one method's shortcomings with the strengths of another, triangulation disguises them (Johnston, 2012).

## **Data Collection Methods**

### **Government published data**

The study used relevant government and non-profit organization sources and documents that were available online. The primary sources included the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTATS), the government of Zimbabwe publications, World Bank, and Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) among others. These documents and records were efficient and inexpensive because the research was already completed. Since the researcher had less influence over the findings, with some articles having incomplete information, there were limitations to the accurate picture of informal cross-border trade.

### **Search Engines**

The researcher used the relevant information from the internet, gathering material directly from various pages to extract the necessary material. Numerous search engines for modulated search, such as Google and Yahoo, provided the critical aspect in developing the research and making the results more promising and meaningful (Johnston, 2012).



## **Conclusion**

The theoretical framework used in this study to conceptualise informal cross-border trade at the border post in Beitbridge has been outlined in this chapter. To provide historical context and an interpretation of informal employment, the research used the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach. The fundamental strength of this approach to the analysis is that the gap between informal cross-border trade as a survival strategy and its capacity at the national level to support sustainable development is evident. Informal cross-border trade has created tangible benefits for the poor, helping them to climb out of extreme poverty and maintain their livelihoods. At the same, the practice seems inherently individualistic, concentrating more on personal benefits. This is at the expense of sustainable development, which puts more focus on the economy, environment and society as a whole. Therefore, the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach is used to measure the efficacy of informal cross-border and lay bare its limitations to sustainable growth at the state level. The chapter also provided a detailed description of the analysis techniques used and an in-depth examination of the strategy and methods of data collection that were triangulated to collect the details.

## **CHAPTER 3: THE DETERMINANTS OF BORDER TRANSGRESSIONS**

### **Introduction**

This chapter articulates some of the factors influencing informal cross-border trade by some urbanites from Zimbabwe. Among others, the restrictive mechanisms at the Beitbridge border have accelerated the increase of informal cross-border trade. Delays associated with numerous bureaucratic procedures at the border have caused a lot of frustrations for those who might use official border crossing, but then feel they have no choice but to circumvent the official routes. Moreover, a rising unemployment rate coupled with a decline in the standard of living, has left a lot of people with limited options, other than to engage in informal cross-border trade to survive.

### **Factors influencing informal cross-border trade**

Increasing poverty levels in Zimbabwe have pushed people into practising informal trade. This poverty was caused by the economic downfall and the sharp rise in prices of food and essential commodities resulting in the rise of the cost of living (ZIMSTAT, 2017; World Bank, 2019). Therefore, because of inflation, access to health care, decent housing, electricity, food, clean water and other essential resources such as insurance remain elusive for many individuals (Kwanisai *et al.*, 2014; World Bank, 2019). The daily per capita International Poverty Line (IPL) is a minimum of US\$1,90 per person (The World Bank, 2018). *The Independent* (13 September 2019) claimed that while the Zimbabwean government submitted a 76% pay raise of Z \$1 023 (US\$90) per month, up from Z \$582, the raise fell well short of the demand of at least Z \$4 750 (US\$450) per month from civil servants. Considering this, the minimum salary of Z\$1 023 (US\$90) condemned almost all civil servants to poverty. Seen in this light, many people started to engage in informal activities, particularly cross-border trade as a means to earn a living.

From a gender perspective, historically, women bore the brunt of poverty, hence their involvement in informal cross-border trade (Zata, 2016). The UNCTAD (2019) estimates that 65% of informal cross-border traders in SADC are women. The motivations for their participation in informal cross-border trade range from the need to ease the burden of family responsibilities to the desire to liberate themselves from the clutches of a mainly patriarchal Zimbabwean society (Jamela, 2013; Mutopo, 2014). Women primarily engaged in small-scale trade because of the gendered colonial socio-economic construction, which deprived them of formal education and employment (Marilyn *et al.*, 2001; Duri, 2012). However, with the continuous decline of the Zimbabwean economy, it became more critical that women take part in economic activities, finding their way into urban centres as street vendors (Duri, 2012; Jamela 2013). Thus women became self-sustaining striving to assist and cushion families against adverse poverty (Marilyn *et al.*, 2001; Muzvidziwa, 2005). Informal cross-border trade provided women with income to make a substantial contribution to the maintenance of their households while encouraging some of them to be financially autonomous and to manage their resources (UNCTAD, 2016). Given the gendered construction of poverty in Zimbabwe, the trade became both an enabling and empowering factor for women's entrepreneurial activities to protect themselves against the prevailing unfavourable socio-economic conditions.

The decline of the Zimbabwean economy caused high unemployment rates that further pushed many individuals into informal cross-border trade. The ZIMSTAT Labour Force and Child Labour Survey Report (ZIMSTAT - LFCLS, 2019) notes that the unemployment rate was about 27 per cent among young people aged 15-24 years and the national unemployment rate was about 16 per cent. There is a lot of controversy about Zimbabwe's actual unemployment levels, with unofficial reports pegging the unemployment rate between 70% and 95% (Hungwe, 2016). In addition to high unemployment, the rise of informal cross-border trade is compounded by the decline in wages

in the formal sector, as stated earlier. Despite hyperinflation, wages in public and private sectors of Zimbabwe have also remained stagnant (Mutombodzi, 2014). Consequently, the unemployed have turned to informal cross-border trade as an escape route from the harsh economic circumstances prevailing in the country.

The decline of the local industry and reduced production led to food shortages. It should be noted that agriculture is the mainstay of Zimbabwe's economy. These food shortages drive the underprivileged to venture into informal activities to provide for their families. Lesser and Moise-Leeman (2009) note that the availability of essential commodities dictates informal cross-border trade flows. Usually, this availability is determined by climatic conditions such as rainfall patterns, drought or famine. This has been the case in Zimbabwe where persistent droughts and foreign debt have adversely affected the economy further driving most people into poverty and forcing many to turn to informal cross-border trade (*New York Post*, October 10, 2019). For example, the drought of 2008 affected crop production, leaving more than 4 million people seeking food aid (Pigou, 2016). In 2019, Cyclone Idai worsened food production in the country's Eastern region that usually account for a significant portion of Zimbabwe's agricultural output (World Bank, 2019). This prompted many to venture into informal cross-border trade as they saw a business opportunity amidst the rampant food shortages. In general, trade flows from net surplus to net deficit countries, from South Africa to Zimbabwe in this case (UNCTAD, 2016).

In addition, insufficient border infrastructure and poor management, causing delays at formal borders in Southern Africa, have contributed tremendously to the rise of informal cross-border trade (Shayanowako, 2013). These setbacks are costly for perishable products such as meat and dairy. In light of this, some traders opt for informal trade routes, circumventing the regulatory procedure in a bid to save time and costs. The delays get longer during the festive season as

Zimbabweans living in South Africa, usually known as *Injiva* (the loaded ones), make the trip home and others travel to shop for goods (Chara, 2019). There are also numerous police roadblocks on both sides of the border that further worsen the delays, stimulating informal cross-border trade (Nshimbe and Moyo, 2017). It was noticed by Munyanyi (2015) that South African immigration officers were often unwilling to assist people coming to South Africa from Zimbabwe and they usually take labour actions, such as "go-slow", making travel much more difficult. In consequence, the traders establish informal trade routes that save them the money and time needed in an already flooded market, hence the growth of informal cross-border trade.



*Figure 3. 1 A general view of the slow-moving traffic and volume at the Beitbridge border post. Gamuchirai Mutasa (Personal communication, 13 October 2017)*

Also, institutional and regulatory barriers influence traders to engage in informal trade. Zimbabwean traders at Beitbridge border are required to obtain import declaration forms, a process that involves numerous agencies to conduct the procedures for the inspection and certification of compliance (Munyanyi, 2015). In Zimbabwe, formal trade is subject to various regulations relating

to the establishment and activity of a company. Compliance with these laws is expensive, time-consuming and have numerous bureaucratic processes that typically go beyond the means of those participating in the informal sector (Jamela, 2013). These regulatory standards consequently increase the cost of trade transactions and encourage traders to circumvent formal trade (Lesser and Moisé-Leeman, 2009). This restriction of the entry or exit of certain goods also causes a deviation from the legal channels of trade.

Furthermore, corruption and insecurity are on the rise due to the harsh economic terrain in Zimbabwe. To avoid delays, formal traders usually have to bribe and pay off the border authorities to allow them to travel in possession of restricted goods such as meat, eggs and milk (Chikanda and Tawodzera, 2017). Many informal cross-border traders bypass trade-related legislation because of the high levels of import and export duties on selected goods. (Lesser and Moise-Leeman, 2009). The failure of law enforcement, in the case of the Beitbridge border post, is a condition that is exacerbated by the low wages paid to border agents, prompting them to participate in corrupt practices in an attempt to increase their income. Informal cross-border trade is thus driven by several factors, both structural and poverty-related.

Informal cross-border trade also reveals traditional relationships that often predate colonial state borders (Lesser and Moise-Leeman, 2009). Traditionally, informal cross-border trade between people of the same ethnic group such as trans-border trade between Ethiopia and Kenya or trade between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Africa and Zimbabwe have always existed (Lesser Moise-Leeman, 2009; Wrigley-Asante, 2013; Titeca and Flynn, 2014). Culturally, the groups living along the territorial boundaries have a lot in common -for example, the *Venda*-speaking individuals of Beitbridge in Zimbabwe and Musina in South Africa speak the same or related languages, intermarry, and own land on either side of the boundaries

(Munyanyi, 2015). Broadly, the *Venda* are a transnational community straddle the Limpopo river. This encourages groups on either side of the border to further their exploitation of available opportunities (Duri, 2012).

### **Restrictive Mechanisms at the Beitbridge Border Post**

This section examines some of the restrictive mechanisms introduced at the Beitbridge border. In doing so, it takes into account some of the legal or other effects imposed directly or indirectly by the Zimbabwean and South African governments. Such structural limitations have intensified illicit trade for individual and corporate benefits along the frontier. Both governments have put in place strict measures calculated to limit border incursions and generate income for their respective countries (Muguti and Marongwe, 2017). Such limitations, however, have done little to reduce these border transgressions, but have facilitated the proliferation of informal cross-border trade. The authorities' restrictive structures ostensibly propelled smuggling, corruption and other illegal activities at the border as informal traders try to bypass them (Muguti and Marongwe, 2017).

These restrictions included, among other things, the South African government's visitor visa requirements and strict enforcement of work permit regimes for all Zimbabweans who needed to work in South Africa (Polzer, 2008). It should be noted that owing to the large proportion of illegal migrants; precise statistics are hard to obtain. However, Polzer (2008) posits that the strict visa requirements were meant to avoid the influx of an estimated 5 million Zimbabwean immigrants, who are the majority of foreign migrants in South Africa. Cross-border traffic at the Beitbridge border grew significantly from approximately 600,000 in 2004 to over 1.6 million in 2010 (Crush and Tawodzera, 2016). However, transient tourists visiting to trade, see family or finding medical attention constitute a large proportion of these figures (Crush and Tawodzera, 2016). The South

African government has been more determined to make it difficult for those seeking travel documents by increasing the fees needed to acquire visas and temporary permits in an attempt to avoid the alleged disproportionate inflow of Zimbabweans (Tevera and Zinyama, 2002). The cost of processing a visa to South Africa was R2,000 in 2000, according to Tevera and Zinyama (2002), and such a fee was too high for the majority of Zimbabweans who were struggling financially. The visa programme was cancelled at a later stage.

On the Zimbabwean side, the government prolonged the waiting period to renew or acquire a new passport. This made it harder for ordinary traders to receive official travel documentation. According to Tapfumaneyi (2019), the government of Zimbabwe printed only 60 passports a day in July 2019 against a waiting list of more than 300,000 applications. The Zimbabwean Ministry of Home Affairs announced that because of foreign currency shortages, they could not procure the necessary materials for producing passports, hence the backlogs (Tapfumaneyi, 2019). Poor institutional changes, seen in this light, have proven to be restrictive, leading people to look for informal and illegal routes out of the country. These acts of border transgression are popularly known as “border jumping”.

Informal cross-border trade is motivated by import restrictions and export bans. Different restrictions on select imports were enforced by the Zimbabwean government, thus triggering their informal entry into the country (Munyanyi, 2015). In 2014, for example, the Government of Zimbabwe adopted Legislative Instrument No. 126 of 2014, which allowed individual travellers and informal cross-border traders to obtain import permits for certain essential commodities, such as milk, cooking oil, detergents and grain (Muleya, 2014). Two years later, the government adopted the Statutory Instrument 64 of 2016 (SI 64/2016), domestic legislation that restricted the importation of forty-three products and required traders to obtain an import permit from the



government before importing certain essential commodities mainly from South Africa (Mabuwa, 2016).



*Figure 3. 2 People queue to apply for passports in Harare (Reuters, 2019)*

The government perceived that the informal imports were counterfeit products sold at lower prices, offering unfair competition to domestic industries (Donga *et al.*, 2018). The SI 64/2016 was later repealed and merged to form SI 122 of 2017, which still imposed some import controls (Donga *et al.*, 2018). Many people opt for foreign-produced goods, and they rely on informal cross-border traders who sneak in essential commodities for resale and domestic use. Consequently, the restrictive mechanisms put in place by the government have also helped to increase informal cross-border trade.

Furthermore, the Zimbabwean government introduced a high import duty that further hindered the ordinary citizens from importing goods. To assist the profitable sector of the country, the government exacts expensive import duties on finished products than on raw materials (*Newsday*, 10 August 2018). In 2019 the government further implemented the Customs and Excise Act, that

meant that traders had to pay import duty in foreign currency (*Chronicle*, 14 August 2019). As a result, many individuals have used illegal routes to avoid paying high import duties by evading the border authorities.

Moreover, the government imposed a strict search programme on cargo coming through the Beitbridge border to curb smuggling and importation of illicit and substandard goods that were getting into the country at low prices. This, however, further aggravated the border delays and prompted traders to evade the authorities, exacerbating informal cross-border trade. Congestion is also a characteristic feature as the Beitbridge border is perpetually understaffed. As a result, the congestion, stemming from the crucial personnel shortage gave rise to many challenges at the border post (Munyanyi, 2015). This circumstance led many informal traders to devise ways to bypass these delays. Seen in this light, this poor management and prohibitive measures implemented by the government to counter its revenue losses influenced many to engage in informal cross-border trade.

At the same time, both the Zimbabwean and South African authorities have continued to strengthen border policing to reduce border leakages and increase revenue collection, restrict the entry of illegal immigrants, and monitor human and drug trafficking, among other things (Muguti and Marongwe, 2017). The South African Home Affairs Department, together with the Border Control Operational Coordinating Committee which is comprised of the South African Police Services and South Africa Revenue Services, conduct continuous operations and surveillance (Irish, 2005). Intensified efforts have been made to strengthen and repair the dual border fence running parallel to the equally imposing Limpopo River, the natural borderline between the two countries (Muleya, 2015). Also, the visibility of the border patrol units, both police and military details, as well as both uniformed and non-uniformed security details, has increased for both nations (Muguti and

Marongwe, 2017). These steps have further exacerbated the ordinary person's urge to circumvent the frontier, thus committing border transgressions.

### **Management and Porosity of the Beitbridge border post**

Border management includes the systems, processes and procedures that a country's border agencies follow or guide in ensuring the flow of traffic across the country's borders with other countries (Shayanowako, 2013). Border authorities are responsible for the processing at points of entry and exit of persons and goods, as well as for the identification and enforcement of persons and goods attempting to cross borders illegally. Supported by skilled and well-trained border officers, adequate border and immigration management policies and systems promote smooth border movement management and deter illegal migration and trade in goods (IOM, 2013).

The following agencies are found at the Beitbridge border on the Zimbabwean side. They are involved with the regularisation of trade, the preservation of public order and security (Shayanowako, 2013).

ZIMRA  
Plant Inspectorate  
Environmental Management Agency  
Zimbabwe National Army  
Forestry Commission  
Zimbabwe Republic Police

Port Health  
Veterinary Inspectorate  
Vehicle Inspection Department  
Medicines Control Authority of Zimbabwe  
Central Intelligence Organisation  
Department of Immigration Control

Despite the existence of all these agencies at the border, there is a lack of coordination between border control agencies, which is further aggravating the situation and worsening delays (Shayanowako, 2013). As a result, each border agency can only do what it considers reasonable - which does not amount to full cooperation with other agencies. These agencies have also neglected to recognise opportunities to increase their performance and effectiveness in controlling their border functions, contributing to the possible degradation or failure of structures at border posts (Shayanowako, 2013).

The Limpopo River is the natural border demarcating the boundary that exists between Zimbabwe and South Africa. There is a protective fence on either side of the border that helps to draw the territorial boundary (Shayanowako, 2013). Furthermore, the border is also defended on either side by soldiers from both nations. However, the fence is punctured, with tracks weaving through it, a testament to the massive human trafficking (The New Humanitarian, 2010 para. 2). This has prompted the Zimbabwean army to deploy troops along the porous border, where unabated rape, theft and the influx of desperate migrants continues (The New Humanitarian, 2010).

Nonetheless, illegal migrants circumvent the immigration and border protection authorities. Munyanyi (2015) observed that the police at the border were unaware of informal cross-border traders sneaking under the broken fences. Munyanyi (2015) further revealed that until 2014 the Beitbridge Border Post lacked any closed-circuit television (CCTV) or electronic surveillance mechanisms. Biometric security equipment was tampered with by staff members working for the South African Immigration Department at the Beitbridge border post in Musina (Tiva, 2018). This means that immigrants may enter and exit the country without proper identification.



*Figure 3. 3 Informal cross-border traders sneak through the security fence at Beitbridge border JULY 2007/ REUTERS/ Siphwe Sibeko*

Therefore, poor law enforcement and management promoted the porosity of the frontier, which encouraged the proliferation of informal cross-border trade.

The Beitbridge boundary is, indeed, one of Zimbabwe's most porous border posts. Owing to the pervasiveness of border incursions and the vast number of people trying to cross the border, border security is seemingly being overwhelmed. The government of Zimbabwe laments the shortage of human resources to protect the frontier (Mabuwa, 2016). The few security details guarding the border are underpaid, leading them to take bribes, thereby perpetuating corruption (Munyanyi, 2015). According to *The Newsday* (10 August 2018), South African officials who have intercepted smugglers in the past appear frustrated and ignore the incursions. Dale-Jones (2019) says

The behaviour of the South African Home Affairs officials seemed like incompetence and laziness. They did not seem to have a properly functioning system in place. By the time I had crossed the bridge into Zimbabwe, I had concluded that the South African border officials at Beitbridge are much worse than incompetent; they preside over a corrupt, xenophobic system that deliberately prejudices poor, black Zimbabweans.

People opt for informal methods of crossing the border given this situation. The popularity of illegal border crossings has led to the emergence of the *magumaguma* and the *malayitshas*. These are people, who for a fee, assist informal traders who wish to pass the border illegally (Duri, 2012). They are easily able to speed up the immigration process by moving travellers to the front of the long queues or bypassing the border authorities entirely (Dale-Jones, 2019). More about the *malayitsha* and *magumaguma* will be discussed in the next chapter.



*Figure 3. 4 The queue at the Beitbridge border (Dale-Jones, 21 October 2019)*

On the other hand, the authorities on both sides of the border continuously accept bribes to ignore smuggling and informal border crossings (Muzvidziwa, 2005). The senior border authorities, however, have been negligent and appear to deny the existence of border incursions and corrupt practices. For example, *Newsday* (10 August 2018) quoted the Police officer in command at Beitbridge District, Chief Superintendent Francis Phiri, denying any reports of smuggling or any informal cross-border traders. At the time, Patrick Chinamasa, the finance minister, acknowledged that the Zimbabwean government lacked the financial ability to fix the security fence on its leaky

frontier, where a lot of informal crossing points exist (*NewsDay*, 10 August 2018). Among other names, these unofficial crossing points have been called *Dumba*, *Mushambe* and *Mai Maria*. The next chapter will talk more about these undesignated crossing points.

## **Conclusion**

The determinants of informal cross-border trade have been addressed in this chapter. The institutional arrangements introduced by both the governments of South Africa and Zimbabwe to root out border incursions have paradoxically intensified informal cross-border trade. In an attempt to maximise profits and avoid delays faced while formally trading, most traders plunged into informal cross-border trade. Competition on the market intensified as more and more people started to choose to circumvent the border authorities, encouraging the traders to pursue more nefarious means of survival. However, while providing a faster and cheaper passage to South Africa, the evasion of border security also compromised the safety of the travellers, because the trade routes are a breeding ground for unregulated crime. Transgressions of various kinds have continued to haunt traders and characterise life along the Beitbridge border, including the influx of contraband and human smuggling.

## **CHAPTER 4: THE CONTRABAND**

### **Introduction**

This chapter provides an account of the dynamics of informal cross-border trade practises at Beitbridge. There is a wide variety of both legal and illegal activities that could not be documented in this thesis, but I chose some of those that I found to be the most common and therefore important to the analysis. The informal cross-border trading initiatives range from small scale and relatively innocuous such as smuggling foodstuffs and clothes, to large-scale, highly organized, and more criminal activities such as drugs and car smuggling . Small-scale traders are more concerned with preserving their livelihoods while the rich take advantage of the situation, widening the social gap further. Although driven by different motives, the activities are essentially inter-connected and all contribute to the negative impacts of the 'shadow economy' associated with informal cross-border trade. The chapter starts by investigating some of the key players in informal cross-border trade and their motives for their presence in this shadow economy. The downturn in the Zimbabwean economy has created a severe resource shortage, resulting in the difficulties faced by many ordinary citizens. The severity of the situation justified the need for survival as people sought alternative livelihoods. Thus, many people indulged in informal cross-border activities as a survival strategy. In a flooded market, this incentive to accrue income meant that individuals had to go to great lengths to achieve their goals, creating a variety of mostly illegal opportunities. Therefore, from the border transgressions, a shadow economy was born. These various forms of trade activity have broadly undermined the function of border control over the movement of goods and people. They have threatened the jurisdictions of both South Africa and Zimbabwe. The practice further weakened border law enforcement structures, as authorities and senior government officials took advantage of the situation to take part in these informal cross-border operations.



Informal cross-border trade seems fundamentally individualistic, focusing more on personal gains while limiting sustainable development which concentrates more on socio-economic growth and environmental preservation, and the society as a whole.

### **Identifying the participants in informal cross-border trade**

The informal livelihood practices are usually taken up by the marginalized in the Zimbabwean society. The study by Duri (2012 ) indicates that women overwhelmingly dominated informal trade during the 1980s and early 1990s. Schooling opportunities for women during the colonial period were minimal, and preparation for professional and formal employment was almost non-existent (Muzvidziwa, 2005). It was only much later that men, both working and unemployed, entered the bandwagon when the economy started to take a nosedive (Duri, 2017). Many individuals, especially civil servants, have quit their jobs because the meagre salaries they received were insufficient to support a family (Crush and Tawodzera, 2016). Some of the key participants in the trade are given below.

#### **I. Civil Servants**

The group that has been most affected by the decline of the Zimbabwean economy is the civil servants. The Zimbabwean civil service's wage bill has fluctuated continuously since independence (Munyanyi, 2015). In 2019, the government tried the transition from foreign currency to a new local currency, but this resulted in hyper-inflation (Mordasov, 2019). Subsequently, the annual inflation rate reached 230% in July 2019, resulting in increasing food prices (World Bank, 2019: para. 3). At the same time, many public sector workers were earning meagre salaries. As a result, many civil servants, primarily teachers, nurses and police officers opted out of the service to participate in informal cross-border trade to provide for their families.

In addition, between 2014 and 2016, there were massive retrenchments. A decision by the Supreme Court of Zimbabwe authorising corporations to terminate employees without benefits led to 20,000 layoffs (Marima, 2015). Arguing that the wage bill absorbed much of the country's revenue, the government reduced the wage bill by USD\$118 million and released more than 25,000 civil service employees from the civil service (*BBC News*, 2016).

The job losses, which amounted to 8% of the civil service workforce, were described in the local newspaper, *The Herald*, as a bold measure to reduce unsustainable spending (*BBC News*, 2016).

Yet, the government neglected to put in place safety nets to cushion the unemployed against extreme poverty. In addition, as the government decreased its workforce, it did not raise the incomes of those who remained or offer subsidies or benefits to those who lost their jobs. The government's negligence of its civil service has, thus, arguably encouraged many to participate in informal cross-border commerce.

## II. Women

Women represent about 70% of the informal cross-border traders in Southern Africa (UN Women, 2010). Muzvidziwa (2005) further reveals that many women involved in the informal cross-border trade were single mothers, divorced, widowed or never married. Jamela (2013) views the involvement of women in informal cross-border trade as empowering, especially because many women in Africa lack formal employment and professional qualifications. Evidence has shown that women were prompted by the need to escape from the clutches of poverty to acquire passports and start business activities that gave them purchasing power. For example, through the sale of agricultural products such as dried vegetables and fruits in South Africa, Zimbabwean women

gained foreign currency (Duri, 2012). The profits from these entrepreneurial activities have been used to purchase in-demand goods such as cooking oil, detergents and flour for resale in Zimbabwe, resulting in informal cross-border trade. Over time women became more imaginative, taking their knitted and crocheted wares for sale in South Africa to earn money needed to purchase goods for resale back in Zimbabwe (Muzvidziwa, 2005; Crush and Tawodzera, 2016).

Since women are the most dominant and yet vulnerable category of informal cross-border traders, some of the difficulties they face are the subject of attention in this segment. Women are continually dealing with the harsh realities of this practice, such as sexual harassment, corruption, and theft (Irish, 2005; Muzvidziwa, 2005; Tshabalala, 2017). Jamela (2013) notes that it is difficult for women to obtain passports, and they are harassed by customs and police officials, especially in South Africa. These foreign authorities take advantage of the fact that women are outside the jurisdiction of Zimbabwean authorities. Other African women who travel to practise informal cross-border trade in Uganda, Kenya, and Mozambique have reported similar difficulties (Titeca and Kimanuka, 2012). Some of the women revealed that they had to bribe the officials by indulging in sexual liaisons with them for them or their goods to be released (Jamela, 2013). This paints a dire picture of informal cross-border trade in Southern Africa.

### III. Government officials, border security and syndicates

The smuggling of goods at the Beitbridge border was facilitated by corrupt state officials who took advantage of the situation to maximize their profits. Muguti and Marongwe (2017) affirm that the high levels of corruption fuelled smuggling at the Beitbridge border post within the law enforcement agents, immigration officials and customs teams. In most of the corruption cases, the border officials were involved in smuggling by receiving bribes, clearing goods improperly, and under-invoicing goods (Munyanyi, 2015). Besides customs and immigration officials, the private

security guards and police details stationed at the Beitbridge border post also facilitated smuggling (Irish 2005; Muzvidziwa 2005; Munyanyi 2015; Tshabalala 2017). Among other examples, the private security guards allegedly allowed the passage of undocumented travellers by charging such travellers a fee (Munyanyi, 2015). In addition, after the enforcement of various forms of import restrictions by the Zimbabwean government, some senior government officials continued to import restricted goods on behalf of their business counterparts (Duri, 2012).

#### IV. The Malayitsha

*Malayitshas* are those persons who illegally move goods or people across the border. They consist primarily of young men between 16 and 35 years of age, some of whom are well educated, but unemployed (Tshabalala, 2017). The "hyena" is used to identify such actors who are knowingly involved in illicit and illegal activities. Tshabalala (2017) introduces the hyena metaphor to describe several actors and activities that make up the economy of assisted illegal border crossings, understood as border transgressions at the heart of this research. In traditional tales, the hyena is used in witchcraft; a covert practice just like smuggling. The *Malayitsha* seldom use formal crossing points for stealth purposes and instead operate in conjunction with border authorities and security personnel to move goods and humans discreetly across the border (Tshabalala, 2017). In this regard, they facilitate the illicit movement of goods and people across borders.

Moreover, the role of the *malayitshas* has become significant because they assist many people who increasingly seek their services to escape Zimbabwe's dire economic situation (Duri, 2012; Crush, Chikanda and Tawodzera, 2015). Tshabalala (2017: 202) describes how *malayitsha* will cross the Limpopo River after collecting several illegal passengers, commodities and other contraband:

During the rainy season, the water levels of the Limpopo River are regularly high and those who wish to remain dry while crossing often takes off most, if not all, of their clothes. One

version of the story is that upon emerging on the other side of the river, members of the group are pressed so closely together that it proves impossible not to steal gazes at each other's exposed bodies. Some women take a license to pass comments about males they find particularly attractive. Some males, for their part, might invoke the idiom that '*ziso harina muganhu*' (the eye does not choose what not to see within its range) to fend off accusations of staring at half-dressed female bodies.

Therefore, the prevalence of *kukiya-kiya* (make-do) border transgressions has become a phenomenon that demands the services of *malayitsha* (Duri, 2012; Crush et al., 2017; Chikanda and Tawodzera, 2017). In other words, the *malayitsha* are an integral part of the shadow economy of informal cross-border trade.

In addition, in their capacity as transporters, the *malayitsha* also serve as mediators and negotiators between illegal migrants and immigration officials at the border (Munyanyi, 2015). However, some *malayitshas* have come to be synonymous with the abuse of their authority, sometimes sexually abusing the susceptible men and women (Tshabalala, 2017). In some cases, if the clients refuse unfavourable *malayitsha* demands, this results in sexual harassment and robbery. The *malayitshas* are also suspected of working with the *magumaguma* who snatch belongings from individuals (Irish, 2005).

## **The Dynamics of Border Transgressions**

The transgressions that occur are quite diverse as the downtrodden seek multiple ways to eke out a living during this protracted time of economic difficulty. The poor are not the only ones undertaking these activities; some influential people in senior government positions and their allies also take advantage of the situation to maximize their gains (Duri, 2017). While both the Zimbabwean and South African authorities have made spirited attempts to control the border transgressions at the Beitbridge border, there are still widespread cases of smuggling. Indeed, these

efforts may increase the profitability of the illegal cross-border trade. The different types of informal cross-border activities are discussed in this section.

## I. Smuggling of cigarettes

Over the years, cigarette smuggling has turned into a significant industry involving both individuals and large syndicates. At the Beitbridge border, it is one of the most prevalent forms of smuggling (Muguti and Marongwe, 2017). Cigarettes are a widely smuggled commodity because they are easily transported in various quantities, primarily from Zimbabwe to South Africa. Specific brands of Zimbabwean cigarettes such as Everest and Madison are in high demand in South Africa, where they are profitable on the black market (Lemboe and Black, 2012). The vast differences in the cost of tobacco products between Zimbabwe and South Africa have primarily motivated the smuggling of cigarettes (Muguti and Marongwe, 2017; Lemboe and Black, 2012; van der Zee et al., 2019).

Cigarettes are more expensive in South Africa because its government charges excessive taxes on them. In 2017, the excise tax for a pack of cigarettes was R16.30 (US\$ 1.22); thus, assuming fair costs of production, any packages selling for less than R20 (US\$ 1.50) are likely to be illegal (van der Zee, van Walbeek and Magadla, 2019). Cigarettes bought at retail price in Zimbabwe and transported to South Africa could still fetch a reasonable profit on the black market, thereby stimulating the smuggling of cigarettes (van der Zee et al., 2019). Broadly, Zimbabwe's tobacco products were cheaper compared to South African tobacco products. Although a pack of 20 cigarettes in the Zimbabwean currency costs an average of R12 equivalent, in South Africa, it costs between R25-30 (Lemboe and Black, 2012). As a result, in 2013 at least 31 per cent of all cigarettes consumed in South Africa were illegal, with 70 per cent of illicit cigarettes being illegally imported from Zimbabwe (van der Zee et al., 2019). In addition, illegal cigarettes from Zimbabwe were also

repackaged and shipped to Asia and Europe, where tobacco is comparatively more costly compared to southern Africa (Lemboe and Black, 2012). This shows the extent of cigarette smuggling at the Beitbridge border.

The small-scale smuggling of Zimbabwean cigarettes was mostly done by women who were usually viewed by border protection as non-threats, thereby receiving an exemption from mandatory searches (Muguti and Marongwe, 2017). van der Zee et al. (2019) revealed that most women smugglers concealed illegal goods in or close to their private body parts. The smugglers often use unlawful secret trade routes, most of which are used by the *Malayitsha* to direct illegal immigrants to escape border control officers. Some of these unidentified points have nicknames such as *Mushambe*, *Dithekangala*, *Makakavule*, *Dumba* and *Mai Maria*, and were also main transit points for cigarette transportation (Duri, 2012; Nshimbe and Moyo, 2017).

Furthermore, some smugglers made use of the *malayitshas* to ferry their cigarettes. They would give the *malayitsha* a few packets or few boxes of cigarettes to transport across the border for a fee (Tshabalala, 2017). The *malayitshas* use trucks and minibuses (*kombis*) to smuggle large assortments of goods. The vehicles are custom made for this shady business, with the passenger seats removed to accommodate more cargo and the windows coloured to conceal what is inside (Haysom, 2019). This process of cigarette smuggling is summarised by Haysom (2019:6) as follows:

The process of offloading cigarettes takes very little time. The cigarettes are brought to the various crossing points to get moved across the river by ‘runners.’ The runners are mostly unemployed young men below the age of forty. This is done at night, between midnight and 3:00 a.m., when most people are asleep. The ‘runners’ physically carry the cigarettes in ‘*shangani*’ (plastic bags) on their backs and cross the Limpopo River to South Africa. The soldiers who guard these crossing points on both sides of the border are bribed to turn the other way. Informants report that it is easy to bribe the soldiers on both sides of the border.

Most of the *malayitsha* pay small bribes to the customs enabling them to leave the border without properly declaring the goods in their possession (Lemboe and Black 2012; Tshabalala 2017). In some cases, on the customs declaration forms, the smugglers would indicate a few items as a formality and omit most of the goods in their possession (Lesser and Moise-Leeman, 2009). In exchange for bribes, the customs officials supported them by reluctantly and inadequately checking the undeclared goods, overloaded and unsecured loads (Haysom, 2019). In his research study, Haysom (2019) alleges that some police officers also go as far as deliberately pursuing illegal goods to collect bribes from smugglers.

In addition to individual and small-scale tobacco smuggling operations, there were also large-scale syndicates involved in the organised smuggling of tobacco. These cartels remain elusive to law enforcement because they have links to high ranking state officials (Haysom, 2019). They manage large consignments of illegal goods transported between Zimbabwe and South Africa. Haysom (2019) found that their trucks forgo all the regular checks at the Beitbridge border because they are owned by individuals with business or relationship ties with the ruling elite. Remington Gold, Pacific Storm, and Everest are some of the most smuggled brands of cigarettes (Haysom, 2019). Lemboe and Black (2012) argue that smuggling tobacco is a lucrative business because the returns are as high as those from drugs, although the costs and fines are comparatively minimal. The *Mail and Guardian* (28 October 2008) described Beitbridge border post as a “golden highway” for tobacco smuggling from Zimbabwe because of weak border patrolling.

Moreover, as Beitbridge continues to become commonplace for informal cross-border trade, so too has tobacco smuggling become widespread. The South African authorities confiscated about 45 million trafficked cigarettes from Masters International Tobacco Manufacturing Company (*The*



*Mail and Guardian*, 28 October 2008). In 2015, cigarettes worth US\$760,000 were intercepted at the border of Beitbridge on the way to being smuggled into South Africa (*The Chronicle*, 8 January 2015). Subsequently, the South African government formed an interagency task force in an attempt to stem out the continued smuggling of cigarettes across the border (Haysom, 2019). Nevertheless, because of their loyalty to the different state officials, these law enforcement units have been compromised and have aided smuggling activities. Haysom (2019) posits poorly implemented initiatives such as the South African government's 'Project Robin', are reflective of how the lack of transparency has led state security agencies to become vulnerable and compromised. Informal cross-border trade thrives within various forms of interstate loopholes meant to benefit the political elite and its prevalence at the Beitbridge border is indicative of a broken governance system. Therefore, while cigarette smuggling and other forms of small-scale cross border trade are economic enablers at the household level, it is almost impossible to translate these benefits to the state level, to facilitate sustainable development.

## II. Minerals and explosives

In addition to the smuggling of cigarettes, explosives regularly find their way across the Beitbridge border post. For border authorities, the smuggling of explosives into South Africa via Beitbridge has become a persistent headache. These explosives are reportedly used for various illegal activities including bank robberies in South Africa (De Wet Potgieter, 2 May 2013). Other explosives are usually sold to illegal gold miners who, in their pursuit of coveted minerals like gold and diamonds, use them to blast mine shafts.



*Figure 4. 1 Explosive seized by the South African authorities (South African Police Service, 2019)*

In addition, precious minerals worth several millions of US dollars have also been reportedly exported, into South Africa. Gold and diamonds are some of the most smuggled minerals because they are highly valued. The former Governor of the Zimbabwe Reserve Bank, Dr Gideon Gono, estimated that;

“...between 2002 and 2007, more than 15 tonnes of gold worth US\$ 400 million were smuggled out of the country annually” (Shumba, 2016).

Other independent sources differ, with some stating that the figure is double the one given by official state figures. Farooqui (2020) argues that Zimbabwe loses about thirty-four tonnes of gold each year to smuggling. This demonstrates the degree to which minerals are illegally transported across borders, costing the country a fortune.

As with other smuggled goods, law enforcement officers assist smugglers in forming deadly syndicates that cost the nation billions every year. These minerals are mainly smuggled out through

highly organised cartels and small scale smugglers. At the same time motor vehicles, electric goods, and groceries cross the border illegally into Zimbabwe (*The Independent*, 21 June 2019). Chrome is another mineral that is smuggled, mostly by artisanal miners, from Zimbabwe to South Africa from where it is transported to China in its raw form or as ferrochrome (Duri, 2012). Artisanal miners are subsistence miners who work independently, sometimes outside of government regulation. Their numbers are difficult to ascertain, but it is estimated that there are over 500,000 artisanal miners in the country, and they are responsible for a lot of dependents (Farooqui, 2020). These artisanal miners are forced to smuggle the minerals into South Africa because the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe-owned Fidelity Printers and Refiners which buys, refines, and exports the gold, does not pay the miners enough money for their minerals (Farooqui, 2020). Farooqui (2020) quoted a young artisanal miner as saying;

“Why shall I sell it to Fidelity? It makes no sense. I may as well give it away for free.”



*Figure 4. 2 Artisanal Miners at work at a popular site in Manicaland: Pindula, 2015*

The low payment schemes by the government leave the artisanal miners with little option but to smuggle the minerals outside the country. In 2019, the Zimbabwean government halted the use of the American currency and South African rand in regular trading in a bid to revive the ailing economy (Farooqui, 2020). This saw the introduction of the temporary dollar under the Real-Time Gross Settlement (RTGS)<sup>3</sup> that only worsened inflation and greatly affected artisanal miners' earnings. Consequently, this prompted the artisanal miners to look outwards, primarily South Africa, thereby facilitating informal cross-border trade. In 2013, *Bulawayo24 News* (29 Aug 2013) reported that a man was caught by the police while smuggling 1.6 kg of gold worth US\$ 67,000 through the Beitbridge Border Post into South Africa.

Another precious mineral that is smuggled out of Zimbabwe via the Beitbridge border post in large quantities is diamonds. *The Independent* (21 June 2019) reports that in the space of three years, Zimbabwe lost over US\$1 billion worth of diamonds due to smuggling by organized syndicates that include foreign nationals. Former President Robert Mugabe disclosed that despite receiving a whopping US\$15 billion in revenue, diamond mining companies operating in Chiadzwa had reported less than US\$2 billion to the Treasury (*The Independent*, 11 March 2016). This is a testament to the illegal externalisation of minerals, primarily through informal cross-border trade.

Another of the frequently smuggled minerals is copper. The scrap copper is allegedly assumed to sell better in South Africa where it fetches more in comparison to other countries in the region. As an example, in 2020, ZIMRA officials intercepted a suspiciously loaded truck smuggling 19.6 tonnes of scrap copper across the Beitbridge border into South Africa (Muleya, 2020). Much of

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<sup>3</sup> The RTGS is the new form of currency adopted by the Zimbabwean government. It consists of bond notes and bond coins

the smuggled copper is stolen from developed infrastructure such as telephone poles and electricity power lines. There were many reports of people caught in the act of cutting down electrical cables and telephone lines made from copper. This is an incredibly risky initiative that may end up with the thieves being electrocuted. Usually, the offenders use the load shedding schedules and steal the electrical cables before the power comes back on (Mabuza, 2019). The stealing of copper cables is rampant during the power scaling period, which lasts for several hours every day. Although not proven, it is believed that syndicates who have political links with some government officials are responsible for these copper smuggling operations. Generally, copper does not compare with other minerals such as gold and diamond in terms of sales, though its sale in large quantities can be profitable.



*Figure 4. 3 The Fiery end: A copper cables thief was electrocuted when the power came back on (Pic: Lenin Ndebele, 2019)*

These practices take place through informal cross-border trade, an activity driven by poverty and which appears to maintain the livelihoods of people. The incidence of these illegal activities is also

influenced by informal cross-border trade itself, as it tends to provide an outlet for the unchecked externalisation of valuable national resources. In the long run, it is very difficult to convert household-level income from these activities into feasible returns for national growth.

### III. Wildlife

The smuggling of wildlife and wildlife products contributes to poaching, and it is significantly influenced by informal cross-border trade. The practice offers opportunities for poachers to escape border authorities and to move ivory with little contact from law enforcement agencies. At the same time, poaching activities have increased as informal cross-border trade has escalated.



*Figure 4. 4 A brutally dehorned rhino at Gonarezhou National Park in Zimbabwe. African Wildlife Foundation (2010)*

Thus, the poaching increased simultaneously with the decline of the country's economy. Rampant poaching, coupled with legal hunting, has decimated elephant populations in Zimbabwe. The poachers poison these wild animals using pesticides and cyanide. This results in the indiscriminate killing of wildlife, thereby disrupting the natural ecosystem.

#### IV. Foodstuffs and other commodities

Some Zimbabweans have been involved in the smuggling of a wide range of foodstuffs, clothes and shoes among other commodities for household use and resale in the country. With the economy in continued deterioration, the local industry collapsed as domestic producers were unable to procure raw materials either due to foreign currency shortages or economic sanctions imposed on the local manufacturers (Duri, 2012). The sanctions were arising from the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZIDERA) [S. 494] enforced by the United States Congress in 2001 (Masiyandima and Edwards, 2018). The trade embargo targeted parastatal companies like Grain Marketing Board (GMB), Zimbabwe Water Authority (ZINWA) and Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA) among others (Jamela, 2013; Duri, 2017). These organisations eventually faced adverse cost shocks.

Consequently, this triggered a shortage of most locally manufactured goods such as cooking oil, rice, flour, sugar, Mazowe orange juice, detergent, dairy products and poultry. In some instances, where these items were available, they were unaffordable for the average citizens, who then saw it as much more advantageous to cross the border for grocery shopping (Duri, 2017). As such, the urban poor began travelling to the neighbouring countries, mainly South Africa and Botswana to purchase food products mostly for resale and domestic use. This saw a wide variety of essential commodities, including, but not limited to, milk, eggs, bread, flour, tinned beans, sugar, detergents, and cooking oil being illegally smuggled into Zimbabwe by informal cross-border traders (Muguti and Marongwe, 2017). The Zimbabwean government tried to rescue the situation by introducing

the BACCOSI<sup>4</sup> scheme, which was a government-controlled procurement program for essential commodities at regulated rates intended to relieve the acute shortages (Masiyandima and Edwards, 2018). Households would receive a package containing flour and sugar, a 750ml bottle of cooking oil, 2kg of rice, candles, toothpaste, detergent, moisturizer, milk powder and sanitary pads, all at the cost of ZW\$100 billion which was not enough to buy a single loaf of bread at that time (Pindula, 2020). The term ‘BACCOSI’ became part of Zimbabwe's vernacular to suggest the extent to which goods were sold at low prices through the scheme (Masiyandima and Edwards, 2018).

Nevertheless, with the massive shortages resulting from reduced production and the 2008 drought, food distribution became a priority, especially in rural areas. As such, the BACCOSI program was quickly overwhelmed, prompting more people to look to informal cross-border trade as a means for survival. At the same time, ZIMRA continued to reinforce restrictive mechanisms at the border with Beitbridge, making it almost impossible for traders to use public transport for bringing goods into the country. The merchants would not be deterred, however, as they resorted to using bicycles as a mode of transportation for smuggled goods (Muleya, 2014). According to Muleya (2014), an average of 40 cyclists cross the border every day, carrying undeclared goods, especially shoes and groceries worth an average taxable value of up to US\$8 000 totally (Muleya, 2014). The smugglers indicated that they paid bribes ranging between R50 and R100 to the border officials (Pophiwa, 2018). Furthermore, some of the cyclist smugglers noted that most of the goods were intended for resale. According to Muleya (2014), another cyclist who favoured anonymity noted that,

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<sup>4</sup> BACCOSI stands for Basic Commodity Supply Side Intervention. Under this program the Zimbabwean government provided food products at reduced prices.



The flea market wares belong to various clients from across the country, especially Bulawayo, Harare and Beitbridge. Cross-border traders hire us and we charge them depending on the goods they want to transport.

The perennial economic problems in Zimbabwe have crippled local industry and exacerbated massive shortages in the country. This has prompted the poor to go for less expensive but illegal and irregular imports (Karombo, 2017). While men often use bicycles to smuggle goods, women carry goods on their heads across the border through the secret trails and dangerous trade routes (Muleya, 2014). There seems to be a division of gender roles within this trade, based on the physical demands of the specific trade items.



*Figure 4. 5. Zimbabwean cyclists cross the Beitbridge border after stocking up on goods for resale (Paballo Thekiso, 2014)*

Karombo (2017), quoted a daily trader as saying;

On a good day, I make five trips, and I am paid R100 to R150 for each trip as I also help with making sure the goods pass the Zimbabwe border without paying tax. I only get my passport stamped on the Zimbabwe side

Detergents, drinks, eggs, cooking oil, baby clothes, including diapers and sugar, clothes, hardware and furniture are some of the most sought-after items on the informal or black market. Not only does this tell the tale of the national economy's collapse, but the lengths to which people were willing to go to survive.

#### V. Illicit trafficking of cars

The economic recession resulted in the deterioration of services such as the transport sector and road maintenance. Ultimately, the Zimbabwe United Passenger Company (ZUPCO), a parastatal company, suffered greatly. This happened soon after the decline of the local automotive industry, which was ravaged by corruption scandals and a drop in sales (Chivara, 2013). This created an incentive for struggling middle-class people to invest in the public transport business, unleashing an influx of imported cheap used cars via the Beitbridge border (Pophiwa, 2018). Many of these vehicles are used as taxis locally known as *zvikipipi*<sup>5</sup>. In view of this, ZIMRA has levied costly duties on car imports. The government seems eager to pounce on every livelihood strategy that the people embark on, siphoning off taxes with ZIMRA charging over 90% import duty for preowned vehicles (Mhara, 2020). In response, the poor, more determined than ever before, identified different ways, mostly illegal, to bypass the authorities. The strict mechanisms implemented by

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<sup>5</sup> Unregistered taxis

the government to accrue revenue from car imports encouraged individuals to seek various means to increase their income in the already flooded market. As such, over the years, there has been an increase in the smuggling of cars into Zimbabwe through the Beitbridge border.

The smuggling of cars is rampant, mainly because the local car assembly industry is barely in operation. ZIMSTAT estimates that an average of 4 000 vehicles are imported from South Africa every month (Mhara, 2020). However, some of the cars are illegally imported and under-invoiced in collaboration with clearing agents and law enforcement officers at the border. Criminal syndicates involving border officials in partnership with vehicle sellers manipulate clearance processes, making these illegal activities possible. Mhara (2020) quoted a dealer for prominent Japanese preowned car exporters as saying;

80% of people who buy cars from us request that we undervalue their invoices for duty purposes. We don't have a problem doing that for them as long as we get our payment. That is one of the reasons we have many Zimbabweans buying from us.

This is evidence of the long-chain of the perpetrators of the illicit importation of vehicles in Zimbabwe. Vehicle trafficking across the border includes various actors who contribute to the smooth passage of vehicles across the border. In certain cases, this includes drivers who transport the cars to the border and then hand them over to the clearing agents who drive the vehicles as though they owned them (Pophiwa, 2018; Muleya, 2019). The vulnerabilities of the structures and the compliant officials who were willing to take bribes have allowed the illegal trafficking of vehicles at the Beitbridge border.

Moreover, many stolen cars have been smuggled into Zimbabwe from South Africa. The increase of illegal activities along the border coincided with the rise of *magumaguma*<sup>6</sup>, which means ‘to get anything the easy way’ in Shona<sup>7</sup>. The *magumaguma* usually smuggle stolen vehicles, and their operations are well organised because they work for syndicates (Duri, 2017; Tshabalala, 2017).

Many of these activities take place during the dry season when the Limpopo river is not flooded, and its riverbed is full of sand, and the smugglers then use donkeys or oxen to pull these cars across the sands (Irish, 2005; *BBC News*, 2 August 2017). Zimbabwe is as a transit route as some of the stolen vehicles are known to make their way to Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania among other SADC countries. In 2018, authorities from both Zimbabwe and South Africa recovered more than 40 vehicles along the Beitbridge border (Muleya, 2019).



*Figure 4. 6 The vehicle and donkeys were abandoned on the Limpopo river banks. Picture by Iavan Pijoos, News24 (2017)*

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<sup>6</sup> This is a nickname given to syndicates involved in a variety of illegal activities along the Beitbridge border, including the robbing of the informal cross-border traders

<sup>7</sup> Shona is one of local languages in Zimbabwe

Regarding the picture above, South African Police Brigadier Mojapelo was quoted by the *BBC News* (2 August 2017) as saying,

The suspects were using donkeys to pull the car across the river, but our members were just in time to pounce on them after the donkeys were no longer able to pull it through the sand.

Many vehicles are transported across the official ports of entry at Beitbridge. These are often placed on the back of container trucks, supposedly concealed behind licit goods to hide the stolen cargo and give the impression that that regular groceries and items are loaded on the trailer (Muleya, 2019).



*Figure 4. 7 Police intercept a cross-border transport operator, trying to smuggle a stolen Ford Ranger into Zimbabwe. Sunday News August 15, 2018*

## VI. Smuggling of drugs

The most trafficked drug into Zimbabwe in recent times has been *Broncleer* (or *Bronco* in street slang), a cough mixture that is abused as an intoxicating substance (*The Herald*, 30 May 2015). Manufactured in South Africa by Adcock Ingram Limited, *Broncleer* contains harmful substances if taken excessively (Chireka, 2015). This cough mixture is illegal in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwean authorities adopted the use of scanners and trained dogs in an attempt to try and contain border smuggling, but this was not successful, but instead forced smugglers to resort to the use of illegal crossing points (*The Herald*, 30 May 2015). The illicit trade of these drugs is facilitated by the involvement of senior government officials and the police force. *Bronco* is transported in cargo trucks or buses as part of transit luggage, which is not searched by authorities (Pophiwa, 2018). Potentially these syndicates may grow to be able to generate their own illegal but well-organized economy and be able to protect their economy (Marongwe, 2015). A good example of the growing networks is the case of an arrested senior police officer who invited well-known drug traffickers to the end of year party for police officers in Harare (Razemba and Maphosa, 2019). It also speaks to the profound findings by a Columbian economist, Francesco Thoumi (2016) who posited that,

profitable illegal economic activity requires not only profitability but also weak social and state controls on individual behaviour... a society where government laws are easily evaded, and social norms that tolerate such evasion.

*Bronco*, among other highly intoxicating substances, have a ready market among the unemployed and vagrants who mix the drugs with alcohol to quicken the intoxication. On the Zimbabwean streets, the pervasiveness of these drugs can be blamed on the effects of the high unemployment

levels and other socio-economic difficulties that generate dissatisfaction and desperation, drawing people in the hope of temporarily drowning the sorrows of daily challenges.

Another commonly smuggled drug is *Cannabis*, which is illegal in Zimbabwe. Research carried out by Moyo (2015) with regards to cannabis or *mbanje* in the Shona dialect, revealed that Zimbabwe was both a consumer and a transit point for foreign-produced cannabis, particularly from Malawi and Mozambique. If cannabis is not sold in Zimbabwe, it is then transported to South Africa by cross-border traders through the Beitbridge border. (Muguti and Marongwe, 2017). Alcoholic drinks such as Zed, Black cat, knock out, Zero Patrao and Tentacao are also commonly smuggled into Zimbabwe via Beitbridge (Nemukuyu, 2019). These beverages contain high levels of alcohol; they can be fatal if consumed to excess.

## VII. Medical Drugs

In addition, the organised smuggling of prescription drugs is increasing, and it is motivated by medication shortages in local clinics and hospitals. This causes the few pharmacies left with drugs to place high price mark-ups on medical prescriptions for wholesale and retail (Razemba and Maphosa, 2018). The scarcity causes several individuals to turn to the smugglers for drugs, some of which are not government-approved (Razemba and Maphosa, 2018). Shingai Gwatidzo, the spokesperson of MCAZ, says his organization is deeply concerned about the proliferation of unlicensed medicine vendors in the country:

"A lot of people try and take advantage of the current situation," Gwatidzo said. "You have a lot of unregulated markets that are coming up; those medicines are being smuggled into the country; we have not tested to see if they are safe. So, one will be taking a risk in buying medicines on the streets" (Mavhunga, 2018).

Mavhunga (2018) quoted the leadership of the Pharmaceutical Society of Zimbabwe, who recognise the incapacity of the health sector to import adequate medicines, as saying:

“The drug situation is pretty dire currently,” Mwendera said. “Our main worry is that if the prevailing situation continues, we get more complications in our patients. And we might lose some patients. What is more worrying is the parallel market for medicines. We are seeing a lot of people advertising that they can sell and send the medication to Zimbabwe.”

Medical drug smuggling is different from other cases of trafficking that are motivated by the desire to avoid tax payments. There are no customs duties levied on licenced medical drugs being imported into Zimbabwe. So the informal cross-border traders are not trying to escape taxes, which is the main reason behind the smuggling. Instead, they take advantage of the enormous price differences between Zimbabwe and most of the SADC region (Chipunza, 2019). Zimbabwe's medical costs are expensive in comparison with other countries. For example, in Indian retail pharmacies, rabies vaccine costs the equivalence of US\$4 at most, while in Zimbabwe, the same medication ranges between US\$25 and US\$30. Antifungal medicines such as clotrimazole cost US\$0.62 for 30 g in India; in contrast, a similar dose goes for \$7 in Zimbabwe (Nemukuyu, 2019). This disparity in prices prompts the average citizen to search for medicine outside the country. They rely on informal cross-border traders who smuggle these drugs to the black market. As such, the high prices of treatment and the shortages have created a demand void, providing informal dealers with an incentive to smuggle medical drugs for resale.

In addition, the shortage of drugs has seen the proliferation of medical treatment on the black market. Vital medication such as Nifedipine, Fluphenazine decanoate and Chlorpromazine are in short supply, but still available on the black market. Ibuprofen, a painkiller once sold in



supermarkets and hospitals, can easily be purchased for a lower price on the black market (Nemukuyu, 2018). This has contributed to the development of pharmaceutical drug cartels, that consists mostly of businessmen with ties to India and other countries where these drugs are cheaper (Chipunza, 2019). However, some medications, such as the addictive *Broncleer* and sex enhancers, have been outlawed by the MCAZ. Sex enhancers are banned in Zimbabwe because of their deleterious effects on people's health (Nemukuyu, 2018). MCAZ also claims that there is no testing of street drugs, and there is no assurance that they are legitimate and have been appropriately stored (Nemukuyu, 2018).

The government laments this unregulated influx of medical drug into the country, stating that non-professionals sometimes administer the medicines. Chipunza (2019) quoted ZIMRA leadership as saying:

Smuggling of medicines is now rampant in this country. Some enter through undesignated points that we are not even aware of. At times, there is connivance with our officers. They are corrupted the same way as those who are involved in vehicle smuggling scams. Another problem is that we can only detect consignments that come through the border. Others are smuggled by water using boats, and with our limited resources, we are not capacitated enough to prevent such occurrences. When the drugs get into the cities, we all see them, but it is difficult for us to tell whether they were smuggled or stolen from hospitals.

The health regulatory authorities in Zimbabwe claim that while these informally sold drugs are relatively cheaper, some of them are expired and ineptly stored, or produced by unethical manufacturers (Chipunza, 2019). Nonetheless, informal cross-border traders continue to smuggle in a variety of medicines. The ordinary person, faced with enormous and unaffordable prescriptions at a licenced pharmacy, takes to the streets for medicinal drugs. In an interview with Chipunza (2019), a Harare vendor said;

“Our prices are reasonable, and more people are now buying from us. We are now forced to restock every week. We are saving lives here, although we are not trained to dispense drugs. People can no longer afford drugs from pharmacies.”

Some people even find it cheaper to travel to neighbouring countries to buy medications (Chipunza, 2019). Nevertheless, restrictions at Beitbridge led more individuals to turn to smugglers who use hidden routes to transfer their cargoes across the Limpopo River (Pophiwa, 2018). Thus, informal cross-border trade continues to thrive because people need medicine, and there is no easier way to sell drugs than on the black market.

### VIII. Touts and the *magumaguma*

The Beitbridge border is thronged by many touts and fake clearing agents who collaborate with immigration and customs officials, facilitating the smuggling of goods and people. These bogus clearing agents target unsuspecting travellers under the pretext of promising to help in completing the formalities for a fee (Muzvidziwa, 2005; Munyanyi, 2015; Moyo, 2015). “However, documents are bureaucratic artefacts that also find themselves at the centre of a complex network of relationships that at Beitbridge, partly rest on the manipulation of their perceived importance” (Cabot, 2012, cited in Pophiwa, 2018). Marongwe and Moyo (2015) disclose that some touts operate outside the customs checkpoints at the Beitbridge border bearing goods on their heads. Some male touts also help to convey undeclared items mainly from the Zimbabwean side of the border. As discussed earlier, there are also bicycle touts who transport undeclared goods, including banned goods such as *Broncleer*, eggs and potatoes across the border.

In addition, there are criminal gangs that prowl the Beitbridge area looking for unsuspecting and desperate informal traders. The *magumaguma* also help “border jumpers” to illegally cross the

Limpopo River into South Africa. They have devised several hidden routes used for moving goods and people far from border security. The *magumaguma* are notorious for evading the soldiers that patrol the border, and they damaged the security fence to making it penetrable for their clients, illegal travellers (Davies, 2008; Munyanyi, 2015; Duri, 2017). For informal cross-border traders, the inability to afford the services of the *magumaguma* facilities typically results in dire consequences. In particular, they are renowned for robberies, murder and rape against those who do not use their services (Tshabalala, 2017).

## IX. Human smuggling

Humans, mostly children, are smuggled across the border to spend holidays with their parents. One woman was quoted by the *BBC News* (12 November 2013) as saying:

I always took my child with me to Johannesburg because she was attached to my now-expired passport. This time I could not secure money to get a passport for my child and hence decided to have her smuggled by the *malayitsha*.

Informal cross-border traders in South Africa often have to find temporary jobs to raise money to buy goods for resale. This suggests that they spend extended periods away from their families. As such, they make agreements with the *malayitsha*, paying them to illegally transport their children across the border, to spend time during school holidays (*BBC News*, 12 November 2013). Some of the children, however, frequently end up kidnapped by criminals and risk being coerced into prostitution (*BBC News*, 12 November 2013).

Some reports have suggested that some humans have been trafficked to South Africa for witchcraft-related purposes. The most gruesome form of trafficking in human beings involves trade in human body parts (Mazuru, 2019). In these cases, individuals are trafficked to remove parts of their body that are combined with herbs to produce different concoctions such as love

potions, spells of enrichment and luck charms (De Sas Kropiwnicki, 2010; Mazuru, 2019). The unsuspecting individuals are promised good jobs and better lives only to be abducted. The people are then transported alive to South Africa to minimise the risk of being caught due to the incriminating smells of rotten body parts (De Sas Kropiwnicki, 2010). What allegedly made the activity appealing to the perpetrators was the lucrative returns for human trafficking. Many in the kidnapping business are compensated with vehicles or omnibuses known locally as *kombis* (Mazuru, 2019). However, the extent of this practise cannot be substantiated because there is a disconnect between the practice itself and the profits accrued from the initiatives.

In addition, in Africa, illicit organ trafficking has become widespread. This generally entails the intimidation of individuals to offer their body organs for sale. Koigi (2018) argues that criminal organisations have engaged in kidnapping individuals, especially children, killing the victims and harvesting their organs for the illicit trade in organs. The precise extent of these nefarious acts, however, is unclear, with the police reporting most of the events. The World Health Organization (2017) reports that the illicit trade in organs, known as the ‘red market’, is worth more than \$1 billion annually. This trade is prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa because of lax laws, porous borders, and poverty. In South Africa, the illicit organ trade thrives because it is the most popular destination for foreign patients eager to get illegal transplants of organs in the SADC region (Koigi, 2018). In this organ trade industry which usually recruits financially disadvantaged people from Zimbabwe as donors, medical practitioners in South Africa play an active role.

### **Corruption and smuggling at the Beitbridge border**

Millions of people were driven into the diaspora by the near-defunct Zimbabwean economy, with South Africa being the most preferred destination because of its vicinity to Zimbabwe. As a result, the Beitbridge border has become very busy with a lot of people looking to travel outside the

country. As such corruption has become pervasive, encouraging smugglers' illegal operations on the border with Beitbridge (Duri, 2017). The high levels of corruption among law enforcement officers, immigration officials and customs teams have fueled smuggling at the Beitbridge border post. In most of the corruption cases, the law enforcement agents were involved in smuggling by collecting bribes and illegally clearing goods (Lesser and Moise-Leeman, 2009; Tshabalala, 2017). As such, this successful circumvention of border control has helped those entrusted with border protection. Munyanyi (2015) disclosed that in several other cases, the immigration officials at the border of Beitbridge had fake South African date stamps in their possession that they used to absolve travellers who might have overstayed. On other occasions, immigration and customs officials were found to be intentionally serving travellers slowly to frustrate them, facilitating bribes to speed up the operation. This provided a need for some passengers, *inter alia*, to jump the queue and for *magumaguma* to serve as intermediaries between state officials and those customers who want to escape the long queues (Muguti and Marongwe, 2017).

## **Conclusion**

The chapter explored the various forms of informal cross-border transgressions carried out by the ambitious and risk-taking Zimbabweans, as well as the urban poor at the Beitbridge border. Multitudes of people have been pushed into informal cross-border trade because of the ever-declining economic situation in Zimbabwe, thereby raising trade competitiveness. As such, what can otherwise be seen as creativity was, actually, a circumstance of the "survival of the fittest" as need prompted. As participants tried to increase income in the flooded market, the section showed how the subsistence pursuits adopted by the oppressed gradually became more sinister. Despite the restrictive measures placed at Beitbridge, informal cross-border traders have become more innovative, taking advantage of the border's porosity and turning it into a corridor of opportunities.

Border transgressions have also triggered the dishonest tendencies of certain border officials and senior law enforcement officers who were secretly, but knowingly, involved in the smuggling of goods. In the end, what then emerged was a strong self-regulating and self-propelling illegal border economy that has become corrosive to the country's sustainable development. This chapter has further highlighted the degree to which the political boundaries generate and encourage clandestine border crossings and trading.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

### Introduction

This chapter provided a grounded contextualization and analysis of the long-term effects of informal cross-border trade activities on sustainable development. The study responds to previous literature on informal cross-border trade by Muzvidziwa (2005); Chani (2008); Lesser and Moisé-Leeman (2009); Jamela (2013) and Chikanda (2017). There is consensus within these academic circles on the perceived importance of the practice in poverty reduction. Informal cross-border trade is crucial in providing the underprivileged and oppressed with livelihood options (Lesser and Moisé-Leeman, 2009; Muzvidziwa, 2005; Crush et al., 2017). Although these claims may be true to some degree, attention should also be directed towards how informal cross-border trade affects sustainable development at the state level. I have described some of the practises that have become pervasive at the Beitbridge border post in the previous chapters. These activities are popular among informal cross-border traders and, due to their profit returns and supposed livelihood impetus, can be considered the primary basis of trade. However, widespread corruption at the Beitbridge border has been triggered by informal cross-border trade, and this has undermined the credibility of the state, further weakening the population's *tax morale*<sup>8</sup>. Informal cross-border trade, as stated in previous chapters, weakens the government's ability to regulate the movement of people and goods across the country's Westphalian borders. As this investigation begins to unravel participants' livelihood strategies, it provides comprehension of how the practices can be connected to the more extensive socio-economic context of sustainable development. Informal cross-border trade enhances the livelihoods of the poor because it provides income required to cover general family

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<sup>8</sup> The intrinsic willingness to pay tax

expenses. Nonetheless, it does so at the cost of Zimbabwe's sustainable development. Hence, informal cross-border trade as a sustainable livelihood option does not equate to national sustainable growth in the long run and is, therefore, ultimately self-defeating.

### **Requirements for sustainable development**

The effectiveness of informal cross-border trade in achieving sustainable livelihoods and economic development depends on its ability, in the short and long term, to make provisions for households (Scoones, 2009; Scoones et al., 2019). The natural, technological, economic and social aspects of livelihoods gained through informal trade must play an essential role in shaping sustainable development. This is why local factors prompting the adoption of informal cross-border trade, and its effects thereafter, should be used to assess its viability in sustaining livelihoods without compromising long term development. Sustainable development is widely known as the concept of achieving a balanced improvement in living conditions and economic growth while protecting the environment and natural resources, taking into account the needs of future generations (Florkowska and Bryt-Nitarska, 2018). This study determines, in other words, the effectiveness of informal cross-border trade in promoting and protecting sound socio-economic and environmentally sustainable growth. A social enterprise approach that improves livelihoods and promotes economic growth is much needed, with millions of Zimbabweans languishing in extreme poverty. Does informal cross-border trade decrease inequalities in the country or have the rich taken advantage of the practice, thereby widening the social divide?

### **The impacts of Informal cross-border trade on livelihoods**

The ongoing idea in many discussions encompassing informal cross-border trade is how and how much the transnational flow of merchandise, capital, and people has improved livelihoods (Muguti



and Marongwe, 2017). Many informal cross-border traders were able to support their families through trade-generated incomes, thus avoiding poverty (Munyanyi, 2015; Tshabalala, 2017; UNCTAD, 2018). The urban poor have been able to cater for the urgent needs of their dependents, such as school fees, medical costs, clothes and food through income generated from informal cross-border trade (Ndiweni and Verhoeven, 2013). In some cases, the informal cross-border traders have built houses and bought livestock and properties that are necessary for a household environment (Chikanda, 2017; Beck, 2019). For Zimbabwe, Muzvidziwa (2005: 31) notes that:

informal cross border trade is not only a source of livelihood; it is also a source of employment, making up for the shortfall as a result of the reduction in formal employment under Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). As a result, informal cross border trade plays a key role in poverty alleviation, complementing the objectives sought under regional integration. For many of the economically poor, informal cross border trade has become a means of survival, a source of income and employment.

Poverty levels have become exceedingly high, considering the parlous state of Zimbabwe's economy. Save the Children (2020) put it in perspective, reporting that over 7 million people, of which more than 3 million are children, are struggling with food insecurity across Zimbabwe. As such, many individuals have resorted to various kinds of informal jobs to sustain their livelihoods. As informal cross-border traders evade government regulations, it remains difficult to come up with an exact number of people employed in the informal sector. What is evident is that for the poor, profits from the trade on a personal level are desirable. However, at the state level, the continued prevalence of informal cross-border trade robs the nation of tax revenue while stimulating illegal activities such as poaching and unregulated mining that will prove costly for future generations. Therefore, the benefits from informal cross-border trade rest on a fragile foundation that is un conducive to Zimbabwe's long-term sustainable development.

However, it is possible to extrapolate some positives from informal cross-border trade. Arguing from a livelihood standpoint, Crush *et al.* (2017) posit that smuggling itself occurs as a result of the shortages of essential goods, and this creates a market for items traded illegally. In this regard, informal cross-border trade is seen as improving the market supply of vital commodities, which reduces food insecurity and poverty (Crush et al., 2017). This was the case during the 2006-2008 period when Zimbabwe experienced erratic rainfall patterns that disturbed agricultural production, as well as hyperinflation that increased the prices of necessary products. As such, a wide variety of goods such as beans, flour, cooking oil, detergents, and mostly second-hand clothes were brought for resale by informal cross-border traders. Local products such as mazoe orange juice, super opaque beer, agricultural produce such as ground/round nuts, and pieces of art like stone sculptures and basketry were smuggled into South Africa for resale. Informal cross-border trade has, therefore become critical in cushioning the underprivileged against poverty. From a poverty alleviation viewpoint, the trade has been an important survival strategy in the face of a severe economic crisis.

In addition, the proliferation of informal cross-border trade is testament to the popularity and viability of the trade, with the majority of traders able to preserve their families' livelihoods. Munyanyi (2015) states that most informal cross-border traders have been able to build houses and send their children to school, while in the traditional Zimbabwean marriage ceremony, others have managed to collect the funds needed to pay *roora*<sup>9</sup>. The value of informal cross-border trade as an enabling factor for traders to acquire decent housing, education and health care for their dependents is evident among the urban poor whose livelihood standards have increased considerably (Duri,

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<sup>9</sup> A bride price, especially one paid with cattle. It is also understood as the practice of paying a bride price

2012). In this sense, informal cross-border trade can be viewed as a strategy taken by the people involved to mitigate socio-economic shocks.

Furthermore, informal cross-border trade improves the flow of goods globally. In Southern Africa, it plays a crucial role in the integration of informal economies (Crush et al., 2017). Thus, informal cross-border traders are critical agents in the trans-national circulation of goods produced within the SADC. Nshimbe and Moyo (2017) estimate that informal cross-border trade constitutes about 40% of the total trade that occurs within Southern Africa. Nevertheless, the benefits from this informal regional trade are not equal across the region because some countries, mainly, South Africa, benefit more at the expense of others (UNCTAD, 2019). The influx of goods through informal cross-border trade creates unfair competition for the local industry. This circumstance results in a forced price reduction to attract buyers, thereby leading to low-profit margins. The local producers also end up selling cheap quality goods in response to the drop in prices. Informal entrepreneurship, which is encouraged by cross-border trade, is thus arguably harmful to the local industry.

As a result, individuals end up transferring their loyalties to the international market. Muzvidziwa (2005) claims that a large majority of Zimbabweans have developed a taste for foreign-produced products and have started shunning local-produced products. In this context, informal cross-border trade has done little to foster change and innovation strategies among local businesses. Therefore, informal cross-border trade does not provide an incentive for a sustainable accumulation of capital and business expansion.

In addition, informal cross-border trade produces an unfavourable market climate that adversely affects foreign investment prospects. In support of this view, Lesser and Moisé-Leeman (2009) posit that informal cross-border trade diminishes confidence in the formal economy. For instance,

it undermines the effectiveness of measures placed to ensure public health and environmental protection (Nshimbe and Moyo, 2017). Many informal traders evade the laws established to promote public health and environmental safety, in their attempt to escape delays at the border and increase income. Muguti and Marongwe (2017) note that most of the agricultural commodities traded informally avoided phytosanitary controls meant to prevent the spread of diseases across borders. In this regard, informal cross-border trade entails health and environmental risks that worsen the country's already deteriorating health system.

Moreover, as informal traders run shadow businesses that evade state regulations, the Zimbabwean government is losing a lot of tax revenue. Taxes are essential to the government's capacity to fund and sustain different socio-economic initiatives. Revenue loss caused by informal cross-border trade compromises the state's capacity to fund public services, with the marginalized communities mostly affected. To an extent, this exposes the government's lack of commitment to provide services to the poorest people. A highly visible socio-economic phenomenon common in Zimbabwean cities is street begging. The majority of these beggars are disabled people and young children (ZIMSTAT and UNICEF, 2019). This is evidence of the government's failure to provide social services that cater to these underprivileged groups. Many of these vulnerable people turn to street-begging as an alternative means of survival, relying on the traditional generosity embedded in the Zimbabwean culture.

In addition, most of Zimbabwe's buildings and institutions lack accessible infrastructure and facilities for the handicapped. Accessible toilets, lifts, parking spaces, signs and wheelchair ramps, among other necessities, are examples of these. ZIMSTAT (2019) estimated that 52% of children with disabilities have no access to education and necessary facilities such as accessible toilets. Disabled people have traditionally been living in government social homes where clothing, food

and education were available. The public funds created from tax revenues kept these institutions going. However, the financial reserves of the government have been drying up, and priorities have shifted, leaving many marginalised citizens to fend for themselves. Informal cross-border trade deprives the government of vital revenues, and this has a direct effect on the provision of social services. Hence this form of trade is detrimental to socially sustainable growth.

Furthermore, the lack of sufficient tax revenues caused by informal cross-border trade threatens the ability of the government to pay its public servants sufficiently. This, in turn, adds to the discontent of public sector employees and also generates corruption. Corruption in Zimbabwe has become cancerous and has had far-reaching effects for the country with a heavy toll on its economic growth. To supplement their meagre salaries, many public service workers have started taking bribes (Muguti and Marongwe, 2017). In most cases, border authorities participate in smuggling activities by accepting bribes to ensure the movement of illicit goods without detection and tax payments (Lesser and Moisé-Leeman, 2009; Tshabalala, 2017). The US Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Brian Nichols (2019) reports that Zimbabwe is losing over US\$1 billion annually to gross national corruption. The key culprits in most corruption cases are law enforcement officers, border authorities, ZIMRA agents and senior government officials.

In certain instances, minerals are smuggled out of the country through syndicates involving foreign nationals, local buyers and high ranking state officials (*The Independent*, 21 June 2019). At the same time, motor vehicles, textiles and groceries are illegally brought into the country by small scale agents such as truck drivers and the *malayitsha* (*The Independent*, 21 June 2019). The delays caused by frequent police checks and endless paperwork required at the border, prompt individuals to pay bribes, thereby exacerbating corruption. In this context, corruption is viewed as both a cause

and a by-product of informal cross-border trade. It is devastating to the country's economy and social morale and is corrosive to Zimbabwe's sustainable development in the long run.

Moreover, as a result of tax evasions by informal cross-border traders, public funds are inadequate for projects such as pensions, unemployment benefits, childcare, and environmental protection which renders Zimbabwe's governance ineffective. Muzvidziwa (2005) makes a case against informal cross-border trade by stating that millions of dollars are lost annually in unpaid customs duties. Such losses have a major effect on sub-Saharan African countries where, on average, trade-related taxes account for an average of 25% of total tax revenues (Nshimbe and Moyo, 2017). Such losses further inhibit the government's efforts to address critical issues related to sustainable development, particularly climate change, health, and education.

Also, the Zimbabwean government has been on the losing side when it comes to the fight against drug abuse, as drugs have been smuggled into society. *Broncleer*<sup>10</sup> and cannabis (still illegal in Zimbabwe) have become pervasive among youths in the country. Drug abuse is associated with socio-economic problems such as crime, the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and poverty (Moyo, 2018). Many young people indulge in substance use as a means of drowning the fears of the harsh realities of life, especially in the face of the alarming unemployment levels (Moyo, 2018). This speaks to the findings by Horvath *et al.* (2013) who attest that people are pushed into substance abuse by poverty and despair, though this is not the only explanation. These drug-related problems increase the burden on the country's already under-resourced service delivery. However, despite this gloomy picture, the sale of drugs remains one of the most popular and profitable

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<sup>10</sup> BronCleer is a cheap medical cough syrup manufactured in South Africa and it contains alcohol and codeine making it one of the most smuggled drugs (Moyo, 2018). It is banned in Zimbabwe

livelihood strategies adopted by informal traders. The informal cross-border traders are principally concerned about improving their livelihoods at all costs. Young people are a critical human resource and essential to achieving the long-term growth of the country. Sadly, because of substance addiction, their capacity is paralysed and might never be realised. As such, informal cross-border trade provides indigent households with income-earning opportunities but brings with it strong detriments to sustainable growth.

### **The impacts of informal cross border trade on family relations**

Women who aspire to better their livelihoods and escape the clutches of poverty dominate informal cross-border trade (Muzvidziwa, 2005; UNCTAD, 2018). Most women who engage in informal cross-border trade have adopted multiple strategies to boost their earning capacity. Crush *et al.* (2017) allege that in the context of interpersonal trans-border business links, success in cross-border trade rests on the growth of social capital networks. Thus, to ensure smooth and unrestricted travel across the border, women have formed informal networks and relationships with border authorities, bus drivers and *malayitshas* (Muzvidziwa, 2005; Tshabalala, 2017). These relationships are sometimes taken advantage of to the disadvantage of informal cross-border traders. Informal crossing border trade is thus a trial of demands and bribes, forcing merchants to adopt strategies to defend themselves from crime, sexual abuse and xenophobic hostility (Tshabalala, 2017). To cross the border smoothly, some women use the *malayitshas* and truck drivers as intermediaries between them and border authorities. Some of the truck drivers take sexual advantage of vulnerable traders, infecting them with diseases in some cases (Muzvidziwa, 2005; Ndiweni and Verhoeven, 2013). Since most of these women are undocumented immigrants, they are reluctant to visit South African health facilities because they are afraid. Therefore, when they get back home, they end up becoming ill, raising the burden of treatment and medical

expenses. In this way, informal cross-border trade offers livelihood opportunities that undermine the country's sustainable development as well as the well-being of its people.

Furthermore, informal cross-border trade often involves regular trips to procure merchandise leaving the family for extended periods. Sometimes informal traders spend long periods looking for temporary employment in South Africa to earn money to buy goods for resale in Zimbabwe (Muzvidziwa, 2005). This causes marital tension and social pressure, resulting in the emergence of households headed by children and grandparents. In the absence of established government-sponsored care in Zimbabwe, some children end up on the streets as prostitutes or criminals in a bid to sustain their livelihoods (Muzvidziwa, 2015). Some of these cross-border trade operations contribute to extra-marital affairs and marriage breakdowns. It is worth noting that the family set-up remains a significant coping mechanism for dealing with poverty and other problems that arise due to the weak economic climate in Zimbabwe. Family support is essential for emotional and mental health. As such, the breakdown of family ties and set-ups, caused by informal cross-border trade has ripple effects and risks that endanger children, altering the traditional familial relationships and thereby negatively affecting sustainable development.

In addition, the wide variety of informal cross-border activities that took place along the Beitbridge border required different types of expertise. These experts, the *malayitsha*, devised the illegal routes and methods used by thousands of informal cross-border traders to circumvent state authority (Tshabalala, 2017). The role of the *malayitsha* has become increasingly significant because of the rise of informal cross-border trade (Crush, Chikanda and Tawodzera; 2015). However, in full knowledge of the desperation and vulnerability of illegal travellers, the *malayitsha* usually impose their will, sometimes sexually abusing them (Tshabalala, 2017). In



some cases, unsuspecting travellers would be abducted and transported outside the country as sex slaves (Tshabalala, 2017). One of the victims narrated to Tshabalala (2017) that,

We reached Johannesburg with all passengers still in the minivan. Almost all of them had requested to disembark at some point or another. None of them had been granted their wish. However, none seemed to realize that they were now in the middle of what might be regarded as a kidnapping. The drivers had succeeded in allaying their anxieties. We were taken to Yeoville, a predominantly migrant inhabited part of inner-city Johannesburg. As we arrived, a group of about ten men was waiting outside a dilapidated apartment building. The driver informed us that these men would be providing transport to each one of those who had missed their drop-off points. It was all the people in the van. It was a well-orchestrated plan. With that, he started assigning passengers to individual 'drivers' of private cars, and they would separately disappear into the apartment building. The private cars were in the basement level of the building, they were told. They needed to enter the building and proceed to the basement.

This is considered the more extreme acts of the *malayitsha* who prey on unsuspecting victims who are desperate to escape poverty in the declining Zimbabwean society. In this regard, it is worth noting that the practice of informal cross-border trade has damaged society because of the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases contracted mostly by women due to sexual abuse and molestation. Therefore, while informal cross-border trade provides the economically downtrodden with a livelihood, it is also counterproductive in the long run to sustainable growth and livelihoods.

### **Informal cross-border trade and environmental degradation**

Cross border movements and trends have evolved within the context of environmental neglect. The pervasiveness of informal cross-border activities and competition within the market prompted a proliferation of smuggling initiatives such as illegal mining and the poaching of wildlife. The pervasiveness of illicit artisanal mining is caused by poverty and influenced by informal cross-border trade. Intermediaries who offer quick cash to artisanal miners encourage the expansion of unregulated mining activities (Maponga and Ngorima, 2003). Artisanal mining itself plays an essential role in providing alternative sources of livelihood for impoverished masses (Carvalho,

2017). Thus, in a way, it contributes positively to social development and the improvement of livelihoods. However, since this form of mining is unregulated, the operations are primarily focused on rivers and abandoned mines, posing environmental hazards that affect both humans and wildlife (Carvalho, 2017). River siltation, water pollution and land degradation are some of the major problems. Another prevalent phenomenon at these mining sites is the loss of vegetation as miners pursue rich gold belts. Trees are cut down for building purposes and use as fuel (Maponga and Ngorima, 2003). Thus, informal cross border trade influences activities that exacerbate environmental degradation and neglect are devastating to sustainable development. As a human activity impacted by informal cross-border trade, artisanal mining responds to social needs in poor communities. Still, it leaves a legacy of environmental negligence that can be catastrophic for future generations, impacting sustainable growth.



*Figure 5. 1 The effects of illegal mining on the environment (Sunday Mail 22 July 2018)*

Moreover, the illegal miners use chemicals such as cyanide and mercury to process the ore, and this too is harmful to the environment. The mercury is not correctly disposed of because of inadequate waste management systems, thereby being a direct threat to the miners' health. The use

of chemicals in water bodies leads to loss of aquatic life and domestic animals, including cattle. Thus, artisanal mining negatively affects agriculture, the mainstay of the Zimbabwean economy.



*Figure 5. 2 Chemical effluent has devastated the Bvumi River in Mvuma. Photo by Eric Mutambanadzo (2012)*

Moreover, the informal cross-border traders destroy the environment and animal habitats when they devise illegal trade routes. The *malayitsha* cut down trees, sometimes even triggering veld fires when they clear their trade routes (Tshabalala, 2017).

### **Informal cross-border trade and wildlife**

Informal cross-border trade provides hidden avenues exploited by poachers to transport wildlife, tonnes of ivory, animal skin and meat to South Africa where they are exported to lucrative markets overseas. Poaching usually entails other offences such as money laundering and illicit trade in weapons to hide its tracks (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020). Poaching as an activity influenced by informal cross-border trade has negatively affected the communities straddling the border such as Gwanda, Hwange, Chiredzi and Beitbridge. Consequently, the depletion of wildlife populations such as rhinos, elephants, and pangolins disrupt the food chain.

In the absence of a natural predator, pests such as locusts have been destroying crops across Africa, resulting in famines. This tells the story of the far-reaching impacts of informal cross-border trade on sustainable development.

Moreover, the extinction of a species resulting from poaching has a negative economic effect on Zimbabwe's tourism industry. The tourism sector in Zimbabwe contributes significantly to the country's revenues. It is worth noting that in 2018, Zimbabwe generated an estimated US\$1,050 billion from the tourism industry, a 7% growth from \$917 million in 2017 (Bepe, 2019). Sadly, poaching is more lucrative than most formal jobs available in the country - a harsh reality that confronts many individuals and communities.

## **Recommendations**

The socio-economic crisis in Zimbabwe has resulted in high unemployment rates and low living standards, further driving most people into poverty. In this context, informal cross-border trade has emerged as a viable way for the economically downtrodden to earn better livelihoods. Research has shown that, during tough times, informal employment provides the poor with a means of survival. However, informal cross-border trade proves to be a quick and illusory fix to the long-term problems facing the Southern African nation. As highlighted in this study, informal cross-border trade can be harmful to the environment, the economy and the social structure of the Zimbabwean community. Therefore, this study suggests some recommendations that are necessary for combating the pervasiveness of informal cross-border trade, or in the least possible terms, utilising it in such a way that it does not compromise sustainable development. In this regard, I propose the following recommendations, highlighting how each helps to rectify the long-standing problems that the country is facing.

Lesser and Moisé-Leeman (2009) postulate that in the fight against smuggling, better education and legislative steps are more realistic solutions. To this extent, I argue that if the border was effectively patrolled and managed, or if the state was able to enforce the law on all individuals irrespective of political status, then smuggling would have been a dangerous and less common enterprise.

### **Employment Creation?**

It is no secret that informal cross-border trade has emerged as a response to the economic difficulties facing the nation. As highlighted in this study, a high employment rate in Zimbabwe forces most people to look for alternative means of livelihoods. However, for a country endowed with a lot of natural resources (land, minerals and human resource), there is a need for the government to create employment. Zimbabwe needs to move away from the heavy reliance on primary industry production because it enhances a consumerist orientation. The country is reinforcing a consumerist ideology and stifling innovation, with the poor resorting to informal cross-border commerce. Indeed, informal cross-border trade is not innovation at all. Acknowledging informal cross-border trade as a viable livelihood strategy is equivalent to accepting mediocrity and a hand to mouth form of sustenance. Although informal trade has many short term benefits such as poverty alleviation and employment creation, it has negative economic and developmental consequences in the longer term. Despite the general agreement within scholarly circles about the perceived importance of informal cross-border trade to the local economy, I dispute this assertion. The acceptance of informal cross-border trade as a livelihood strategy only serves to camouflage the root problems that the nation is facing.

## **Simplified and reduced documentation requirements and formalities**

As highlighted in the preceding chapters, the lengthy and seemingly never-ending bureaucratic procedures needed for acquiring travel documentation and trade permits, have contributed to the pervasiveness of informal cross-border trade. Considering such problems, it is, therefore, necessary to simplify document requirements and formalities for the importation and exportation of goods. The simplifications are essential for decreasing the cost of doing business, thereby enabling informal traders who often lack the financial capital to formalise their trade activities (Lesser and Moisé-Leeman, 2009). The residents of Beitbridge town shun the formal system because it does not make sense for them to go through the lengthy delays to purchase regular consumables such as bread, butter, eggs and milk (Pophiwa, 2018). Among other documentation, the Zimbabwean government requires all traders to have contracts for them to import goods (ZimTrade, 2019). These documents seem very reasonable and appropriate, but for small scale traders, they are expensive, time-consuming and hard to obtain. This, in part, helps explain the occurrence of informal cross-border trade at the Beitbridge border. Reducing unnecessary paperwork will minimise the expense of formal trading and thus provide more incentives for downtrodden traders to trade formally (Lesser and Moisé-Leeman, 2009). Legal trade is much more sustainable because it decreases the flow of illicit goods, such as drugs, as well as exports. It also offers greater protections for vulnerable groups of people participating in informal cross-border trade.

## **Physical and cyber-infrastructure changes**

In addition, to resolve the long queues and corruption at the border, physical and cyber-infrastructure changes are required. This includes a concerted focus on the implementation of

Information and Operations Technology. Efficient monitoring systems such as aerospace warning systems which alarm both South Africa and Zimbabwe of any border incursions and unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) should be used over the restricted areas infested by the notorious *magumaguma* along the border. Technology such as infrared sensors and cameras also help track illegal border crossings (Military and Aerospace Electronics, 2018, Laser technology section, para. 3). This mitigates the crimes that occur in the most remote places in the Limpopo forests.

### **Data Management**

The collection of data on border movements is required to enhance the efficacy of border services. For example, these figures may indicate that entry points are becoming congested, which helps to recognise understaffed posts by administrators (Wilfrid Laurier University, 2020, para 6). The statistics are also useful in painting a picture on the real extent of informal cross-border trade and border incursions. As it stands, the only existing data on smuggling is mainly from independent sources and there aren't any agreed figures on the extent of these activities. The government needs to collect biometrics and information on all citizens crossing the Beitbridge border for possible use in subsequent criminal investigations.

Moreover, there is a need for automated border systems, and the use of modern biometric systems enables fast processing of both people and vehicles crossing the border. As informal cross-border traders seek efficient and cost-effective alternatives for crossing the border, bribery and evasion of the border officials becomes a more viable option, providing authorities with a strong economic incentive to perpetuate a cycle of corruption (Titeca and Flynn, 2014). Munyanyi (2015) notes that internet connectivity at the Beitbridge border post is poor and slows down the clearance process. Therefore, the upgrading of the internet would improve efficiency and allow for the

implementation of automated systems for handling customs data and declarations for traders. This would help shorten clearance times and make all customs functions more transparent and efficient, enhancing the levels of compliance with trade regulations and reducing the risk of corruption.

## **Conclusion**

This thesis offered an evaluation of the informalization processes from a sustainable livelihoods perspective in a country that is undergoing rapid social changes. The study shows a fundamental problem with the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach since its focus on individual and household livelihoods can be self-defeating over the long term. As the state enforced restrictive mechanisms, the traders came up with more nefarious ways to manoeuvre around the system, developing and influencing rewarding relationships with corrupt state officials. In various ways, the state's hard stance on informal cross-border trade prompted the poor to respond in a non-confrontational but subversive manner, with lasting effects on the country. Informal cross-border trade as an income-generating initiative has been able to provide the poor with purchasing power, food security and incentives for medical care and education. To this point, informal cross-border trade can be perceived as both a strategy for survival and profitable trade that increases the well-being of those involved. While the importance of the practice as a livelihood strategy must be stressed, it is imperative to note that the trade itself is only a manifestation of a larger problem facing the country. Informal cross-border trade negatively affects the country's sustainable development, opening avenues for further criminal activities as well as influencing an influx of dangerous products into the country. Nevertheless, the elimination of informal cross-border trade is tantamount to the eradication of poverty in Zimbabwe, and hence unlikely, unless there are massive political and socio-economic changes. Yet, even if some degree of informality persists, greater incentives to formalize will benefit all traders and the economy in general. The proliferation of smuggling



reconnects to systems that continue to benefit South Africa and small segments of Zimbabwean society at the expense of many Zimbabweans. The desire for survival and increased profit margins generated a multiplicity of mostly illegal opportunities. Broadly, the various forms of cross border smuggling undercut the purpose of borders in demarcating the sovereignty of nations and controlling the movement of goods and humans. Unlike other scholars who are sympathetic to informal cross-border trade and see it as a viable subsistence strategy, I argue that the root problems that promote trade in the first place need rectifying.

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