

# Challenges Facing School Children in Rural Zimbabwe: A Case of Tyunga and Luunga Wards of Binga District

Quegas Mutale

Midlands State University P Bag 9055, Gweru, Zimbabwe, Department of Local Governance Studies  
quegasmutale@gmail.com

## Abstract

The article provides insight over the challenges facing school children in *rural* Zimbabwe. A case is drawn from schools in Tyunga and Luunga wards of Binga district. A global overview is given to create a deep understanding of the phenomenon under review. There is rising concern over the hiking *challenges* bedeviling children in rural areas amidst interventions to improve conditions. Challenges range from economic, environmental, social and sanitation/ health based. The research further provides a revelation of the causes of the challenges which impinge success of *school children*. The causes are from various angles with others occurring in vicious cycle. Measures put in place by the community to curb the challenges are not spared in this article. A brief highlight is given on the legislation supporting the protection of children. At the end the article gives the recommendations to redress the challenges, together with the need for future study. Hence forth, this paper aims to deeply explore and share the sorrowful circumstances children in Binga are exposed to. Education in itself is a key *development* driver that, when children get disturbed the development of the country is much demobilized. Such current issues therefore need to be shared on a global scale for the duty bearers to turn their attention to the children in rural remote areas per se. Hence from there on researchers and authorities are tasked to turn their eyes to such apartments so as to gain enough mileage in bringing *sustainable development* in Africa.

**Keywords:** Children, challenges, rural, child protection, sustainable development

## Objectives of the study

1. To identify the challenges facing school children in Binga district
2. To trace the root causes of the challenges facing school children in rural areas
3. To assess the measures used to curb the challenges faced by school children

## Introduction

The aim of the study is to show in greater detail the challenges facing school children in rural Zimbabwe. A case study approach was sought basing on Luunga (1) and Tyunga (22) wards. Although the life of school children is a matter of concern at global level, lack of a similar research in the areas suggested tempted the researcher to unveil the hidden issues there. Children living with challenges are under the threat of lack of social protection and lack of basic services which hinders their future personal development. Therefore, in a bid to meet any development goals, children's issues were unearthed through this research. The paper is hinged on the idea that as long children in rural areas continue to suffer in the education system, the issues of *sustainability* and *sustainable development* in the rural areas remain a pipeline dream. The quality of life of children and the future of Zimbabwe can remain in *theory* than reality and hence struggling behind the motives to meet the *development* agenda. Therefore, to move out of the trap of challenges bedeviled by children such a kind of research seeks to make an informed perspective to incept the interventions so as to help children live better life, access basic services and then it becomes plausible to kick start a talk about development and its sustainability in longer term.

## Background

Children learning in rural schools face a collection of challenges that range from social, economic, geographical and health. Deliverance of social services in rural areas is weaker compared to the urban areas. Gender disparities continue to rise on rural schools. UNESCO (2011) reveals that Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for half of all out of school children worldwide. Both in and out of school children face a multiple of challenges which are inherent in Zimbabwe's rural. This paper is coming at a time when children in rural schools are suffering and getting it hard to both have access and attain quality education. Failure to address the challenges poses an impact to the efforts to fulfill the United Nations mandate on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that are due 2015. Children are at the heart of development of communities as they make the future of societies, and yet if their education continues to be characterized with irregularities the development of rural areas is doomed to fail.

Taking a global tour allows a better comprehension over the concern of children as at the heart of the countries' priorities. Neugebauer (2011) provides the following summary pertaining to children around the world. In Kenya (Africa) both indoor and outdoor spaces are small, resulting in overcrowded class-rooms with poor ventilation. Many children, in Moldova in Europe particularly in rural areas, do not have the needed support for their development and learning due to poverty, neglect (as many are left behind by job-searching migrant

parents), and non-existent or low-quality educational services (Neugebauer, 2011). In Iraq (Arab world) families suffer from economic and political hardships, which then cause depression. There are no school health services for children. In Lebanon the most serious challenge facing young children today is the wide disparity between urban and rural children. Children of the capital enjoy access to the most updated medical centers and services; preschools and schools with specialized teachers and administrators; well-equipped premises to facilitate extra-curricular activities; technology at all levels; local and international concerts and plays; recently released films and DVDs. Children of the villages, on the other hand, suffer from lack of medical, educational, and leisure services, denying them in most cases their basic rights. In Bangladesh parents do not have a concern about the growing of the child. In Fiji, Asian country children face a challenge of the attitude of parents to children. At times when sending children to school they face finance challenges. Providing equal access to quality basic education remains a serious challenge for Costa Rican children in America. Referring to education in Mexico, the schools that children attend are of poor quality and very far away from their residences (sometimes they even have to walk two hours). This is Neugebauer (2011) 's highlights on the challenges facing children, which gives a hint that school children in Luunga and Tyunga wards of Binga in Zimbabwe are not somewhat facing challenges in isolation since children elsewhere across the globe are also in misery.

From a Zimbabwean perspective, many rural school children are at risk of various challenges. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is leaving many children orphaned and vulnerable. The burden and net effects of HIV and AIDS and poverty have continued to have devastating effects on children (Government of Zimbabwe, 2010). A phenomenal increase in the number of households headed by children also suggests that a significant number of orphans are affected through higher dropout rates, erratic school attendance, poor concentration and behavioral disturbances (Government of Zimbabwe, 2005). Commitment to protect children from the challenges they face has been noted in a web of legal frameworks like the constitution of Zimbabwe (amendment number 20 of 2013), children's Act, National orphan care policy, and adoption of international and regional legal frameworks like the United Nations charter on the rights of the child, and the African charter on the rights and welfare of the child among them. A multiple of partners consisting of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and other civil society groups are involved in the play to help children with the problems and challenges they face. However, much concern rises to the country side where rural children continue to face a multiple of challenges. The scenario did not spare the rural district of Binga, particularly to schools surrounding Luunga and Tyunga wards. It is upon such a global, country and area specific background that this research clings and is tied to reveal the challenges facing school children in rural Zimbabwe. Luunga and Tyunga wards were selected basing on the continued acceleration of challenges facing children with regard to lack or too little efforts spent in helping protecting those children. Both of them are located around 150 kilometers north-east of Binga center on the southern part of Zambezi River. Such an informed perspective allows one to feel passion and concern over the challenges facing school children in rural areas from a global scale. Therefore, the paper calls for initiatives that will help reduce the initial causes and resultant effects of the children's challenges so as to transform and uplift their lives for development. It also indicates how local initiatives are failing to reduce the *challenges*.

### **Methodology**

The research involved predominant use of qualitative technique. Kelly (2011) says that qualitative research methods allow the researcher to discover how the social world is constructed by the people studied. The author also reveals the limitations of quantitative social research which requires quite complex multivariate analysis to establish that the contingent relationship between two variables is 'true' or to establish in what contexts it is true. As part of qualitative technique interviews were used among school children, school heads and other teaching staff. The use of interviews is based on their flexibility when collecting data as the researcher can probe and seek detail as compared to other methods. School children were selected among the schools in Luunga and Tyunga wards of Binga district. 1 secondary school and 4 primary schools were sampled for the study. School staff constituted the key informants in the study. A total of 20 respondents were reached. This involved 5 school heads, 6 teachers, both trained and untrained; and 9 school children, both boys and girls. Observation was used to check the learning environment for children. Confidentiality was prominently observed during the research with respondents told not to give their names. The purpose of the research was clearly explained to the respondents before their consent was called for in the interview.

### **Facts and discussions**

#### **Challenges facing school children in rural areas and their causes**

Challenges facing children in rural schools in Zimbabwe have no one specified cause due to complex interlink that the factors create. Problems really occur in a vicious cycle, with some being the result of other causal factors. However, the complexity associated with the causes and resultant effects of challenges facing rural school children need clear-cut analysis across sectors and disciplines. Some respondents revealed lack of political commitment, and non-functioning political and traditional bureaucracies as failing to help attend to some

challenges affecting school children. On health ground, Luunga ward lacks a health institution. Therefore, multi-disciplinary approach may help understanding of these challenges. This can help enhance comprehension of the status quo and the possible interventions that may improve the standards of children and the communities at large to a more desirable state.

Early marriages and pregnancies is a prominent challenge in schools in Binga. This was mentioned by one secondary school head who commented that, *“girl children are more at risk than boys...when girls get pregnant they stop from coming to school but boys who marry continue to come”*. The scenario further provides gender disparities and differences in the life spheres with more males than females completing secondary education. Although the situation occurs in primary schools, it was noted during research that secondary school children are the most affected because of their sexual age during adolescence. Government of Zimbabwe (2005) confirms that girls have also fallen victim to sexual abuse and become pregnant. The cause for early marriages has been blamed to the situation of some girls who are orphans. In some areas in Zimbabwe these are left under the care of step mothers who devote little effort towards the security of the girl child. A lot of teenage pregnancies went unreported in 2013 where many girl children dropped out of school as early as form one. In 2013 alone one secondary school in Tyunga ward of Binga lost 13 girls who were impregnated and left school before completing Ordinary level. At primary school the problem is more rampant to the junior pupils of grades five to seven. School teachers are also involved in impregnating school children although such circumstances occur once in a while in the studied area. This explains how rural areas fail to quickly graduate from extreme poverty to better life. The circumstances are also an indication of poverty and lack of sustainable development.

School dropouts are higher in rural schools as compared to urban ones. One secondary school in Luunga ward experienced dropouts of up to more than 50 children in a single school term in 2014. Girls dropped out due to early marriages. One teacher expressed concern when he said that most girls are already engaged in formalized love affairs with men whilst at school. However, PANA (2003) says that many girls in Africa are forced to drop out of schools because school administrators are insensitive to gender issues, including sexual abuse and intimidation. Research results show that it is a result of poverty that boy children fail to endure the high demands in school and then get forced to go and search for employment in the fishing camps, commercial farms and crocodile-farms. In Tyunga ward there is a problem of accommodation for school children who stay in overcrowded and dirty rooms. Most of them miss a lot of their hard earned school material from theft. Therefore, the last resort for school children becomes dropping out of school. Two children who were interviewed revealed that *“we as learners lack the commitment and self-motivation to go ahead with education”*. The sentiments were in line with what one girl said that *“my colleagues leave school but they are under the support of CAMFED”*. Deep understanding of the phenomenon concurs that despite support received in the school, children who drop out of school are disturbed from the social spheres in the home and community. Problems are not traced from home but rather only in the school by the school authorities. Therefore, a multi-variant of factors leading to school dropouts of school children in Binga is much difficult to be tackled by the community. These pose a burden in future and finally leading to failure of rural development. To bring about sustainable development in rural areas, the causes revealed by the research need proper governance by all stakeholders and for them to put their minds together for sustainability of the education system and development in rural areas.

Failure to pay school fees remains a challenge among children in rural areas. Research revealed lack of employment opportunities in Tyunga and Luunga wards resulting from lack of industries in the area that can employ people to raise money to pay school fees and levies. In Luunga ward there are fishing areas which some young boys go to on weekends and holidays to catch fish to sell and meet school requirements. They then fail to model a clear link with their education as they spend time in fishing and then concentrating less on studies. This has been identified as one major cause of failure in schools in areas under study. One teacher said that *“even if industries are opened some community members have little or no academic and professional qualifications that can enable them slide into the field of industry”*. The cycle of low educational attainment continues to spiral in rural schools in Binga. Rural children are more likely to be poor than children in urban areas and are more likely to be living in deep poverty (Smith, 2010). Neugebauer (2011, 72) explains similar situation on poverty in Nigeria when saying that:

*Poverty... is the most urgent challenge facing young children in Nigeria. Most families are poor, the cost of living is extremely high, and the basic necessities of life are beyond the reach of most families... There is wide-spread ignorance of the needs and rights of young children. Besides, the cultural orientations are not in favor and in line with best practices of childrearing. The culture of children living away from home is a problem for many, depriving them of their basic needs.*

Schools have however sought scholarships that fail to help every child with support. School authorities showed worry on the government's Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) programme funds that may be deposited late in the year when schools are supposed to utilise the funds for school businesses. Failure to pay fees is a challenge both to school and to children due to replica effects associated at both ends. Hence, children's

education continue to be a challenge.

Absenteeism is more rampant in rural schools than in urban areas. Respondents expressed worry on a variable of factors involved in the challenge. One school child said that *"when I go to school I see my friends writing but I remain sited...the next day I don't go to school"*. Causes of absenteeism in school children expressed different concerns for boy and girl children. A female teacher concurred that *"teenage girls do not come to school during their menstruation...they are shy since they don't have sanitary material to use"*. Birch and Wachter (2011) contends that lack of sanitary facilities affect girls more than boys, adding that poor sanitation conditions hinder education of girls. Girls may drop out of school due to lack of safe and clean private sanitation facilities. One girl child said that *"I arrive home late, do domestic chores. Later in the morning I wake up early to cook..."* In some cases, parents absent children from school so as to work in the fields. Mulkeen (2005) approves this by claiming that many rural households are dependent on their children for help at busy times of the agricultural year such as harvest time. Boys are absented from school in order to look after cattle and goats. Some children travel long distances to school. For example before the establishment of annex schools children travelled more than 10 kilometers in a single journey to school. One teacher put the blame to the circumstance involved where parents go and cultivate to areas far away from school. Due to lack of bridges on roads children fail to go to school because of floods during the rain season. To the other extreme, one child said that *"I was absent from school because my food was stolen and I went home to collect food"*. This shows the extent to which children who live far away from their parents lack security when learning in rural environments. Besides absenteeism, due to long distance travelled children arrive at school late and fail to catch up with others who reach school early. A general analysis shows that the same factors that lead to absenteeism are aligned to those that lead to late coming of children in rural school. Again, absenteeism reduces the chance of children to attain best results, and hence causing them to remain trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty thereby affecting sustainable development negatively.

Child abuse issues are a common challenge in rural areas especially among girl children. One advanced level student provided that *"lack of strong child protection intervention in our area enables the acceleration of the child abuse issues in schools"*. One girl appeared depressed when she said that *"teachers come to us and propose love"*. The scenario involves power dynamics where the girl child has no other resort but rather to accept the sexual relation. This risks children of HIV/ AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Most children in Luunga and Tyunga wards of Binga learn far away from their parents and stay in bush boarding and unprotected rooms. Most parents do not trace and assess the environments under which children are exposed. That is why one respondent gave the point that parents are not much concerned on children's safety whilst in school. One school head confirmed that *"we are facing a challenge of abuse of school children by community members surrounding us"*. Much blame was put on the Child protection committees (CPCs) that are sleeping dogs in the protection of children in schools in Luunga and Tyunga wards. However, a question arises to clarify if these CPCs have requisite knowledge and skills needed to protect children. In all schools under research, sexual reproductive issues are relaxed as revealed by the school staff in all schools. Although some teachers were trained on life skills, some of them do not come back after schools close because they are untrained and find other avenues of life. One child blamed the responsible authorities for not taking the stringent measures against the perpetrators of child abuse. Due to lack of child protection intervention and lack of access to state policies and regulations, parents fail to make follow ups on the cases of abuse. However, reporting of cases is minimized by the close relationships between the perpetrators and the victims. In a contrary note, one primary school head noted that *"parents here are not willing to pay school fees for their children...you get surprised to find a parent taking beer year round but failing to pay school fees for his children"*. He expressed concern over the amount of money obtained from fishing. Some parents are constructing standard houses from industrial material but rather fail to pay fees for their children. This therefore unveils that negative attitude by parents can affect their children because failure to pay school fees denies their children the rightful quality services due to underfunding in schools, and hence affecting their education negatively.

Mathematics phobia has been identified by one secondary school mathematics teacher as a big challenge which continues ballooning in secondary schools in the two wards under study. He said that *"children perform well in Mathematics from primary school, but as they reach secondary school they lose interest...their elders tell them that it is a difficult subject"*. The culture of fearing mathematics as the most complicated subject was very high at the time of research among school children. Some respondents shouldered fear of mathematics to lack of career guidance. Most of parents in rural areas lack education and hence fail to guide their children in academic field. Mulkeen (2005) argues that parents in rural areas are less likely to be educated themselves, and so have less ability to provide support for their children. Therefore, children are left at the merciless peer pressure which sweeps away children's concern on some subjects. However, interventions to date have helped reduce the culture of fearing other subjects. One boy child said that *"I don't want to do Ndebele because it is hard for me"*. A similar but worst scenario was heard of in 2008 where one girl child deliberately decided not to register for Ordinary level English language. This sows no doubt that most of the children in rural schools are

not guided and not aware of why they are in school and the careers and professions they want in relation to relevant courses. Such concerns affect children's future as compared their urban counterparts who are highly guided and well versed with knowledge on academic life and careers. In the same way, sustainable development of communities in rural Zimbabwe is affected, bringing it to be an area of concern by the development practitioners.

Lack of infrastructure in most rural schools in Binga is a challenge that affects children's learning. Observation showed that all schools in the areas of study have a challenge of infrastructure. There are few classroom blocks, few toilets, lack of fencing and lack of furniture. Such unpalatable and child unfriendly school



**Figure 1** Luunga primary school classroom block-roof blown off by wind in 2006 and not yet roofed to date

environment create concerns of how children can properly learn. Malhoit (2005) makes it clear that rural areas frequently lack the social services, non-profit, and philanthropic infrastructure which schools in wealthier areas rely on to supplement education services. Learning outside the classrooms enables school children to be disturbed during windy and rainy days. Stray animals disturb children's learning. At one school, community members pass across the school yard playing music on their portable radios, drawing attention of children learning outside. Poor infrastructure reduces children's concentration leading to failure in school. Besides, children's hygiene is poor and making them susceptible to diseases. At Luunga primary school, since 2006 the roof for the only classroom block was blown off by wind. It was only later on that UNICEF donated the construction of another classroom block which however could not close the infrastructural need of the school. Lack of infrastructure thus allows children to learn in crowded class rooms that negatively affects their learning. Focusing on infrastructural revitalization and construction can be one strategic move to enhance sustainable learning for children in rural areas.

Most primary schools around Binga in Zimbabwe are concentrated with untrained and less trained staff. The study indicated that at one school in Luunga ward out of the six staff members, only the school head had a professional qualification at diploma level. This compromises the quality of education that children in rural schools in Binga receive. Trained teachers are attracted to the urban set up where they can get better standards and meet more opportunities than in rural areas. Tyunga and Luunga wards lack access to telecommunication services. Only in some areas on hill tops can one find communication network access. The circumstances enable trained teachers to transfer or initially ignore the areas. In some cases, some university students are the ones who go to rural areas to teach so as to raise their tuition fees for their education after the country's economy is burdened to support them. These leave early and leave the children with no teachers. In some instances, teachers who possess non-teaching professional qualifications are appointed to teach in rural schools in Zimbabwe. This poses a compromise to the education system in Binga and in long term, affect children's future and community development in general.

Schools in rural Zimbabwe are under critical lack of stationery. Due to underfunding resulting from low school fees payment rate, many schools around Luunga ward revealed lack of stationery to properly support the learning of children. Stationery involves textbooks, exercise books and other relevant material. However, schools around Tyunga and Luunga wards were donated with text books under the Education Transition Fund in 2012 which was supported by the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). However, failure to properly store the books due to lack of proper infrastructure enabled some books to be eaten by termites and torn. The challenge is accelerated due to lack of the internet access in rural schools that may enable children access online learning material.

All school heads that were part of the respondents were worried about the low pass rate in schools. Some identified the disparities that exist between boy and girl children. For example, in the past decade at Tyunga secondary school, no girl child from Sizemba area obtained at least five ordinary level passes at one sitting. This is however different from other areas that mark the sphere of influence of the secondary schools where some girl children passed well. A certain primary school in Luunga ward obtained 0 % pass rate for the past 5 years up to 2014 at grade 7 level. This is in contrary to schools in the same district but in an urban set up where children perform well at grade seven.

The findings of the study marks as clear evidence on how one may not downsize the suffering that children in rural schools endure in a bid to attain their much demanded academic education. The challenges are undoubtedly a drawback that acts as a necessary evil that back straps children's access to basic quality education. The paper's mandate at this juncture is to make an awareness of such phenomena and hence draw attention for

duty bearers and other authorities to address the concerns. Findings henceforth call for solutions that this research gives as the recommendation in a bid to attain sustainable development in rural areas.

### ***Measures employed to curb the challenges***

For the challenges facing school children in rural Zimbabwe there are solutions sought by the authorities to abate them although there is a question of success of the interventions. The nature of the solution varies across the spectrum of their cause. Communities and schools under study revealed the measures taken to curb some challenges. However, not all measures yielded much as solutions as they undergo a litmus test in the education system in rural Binga.

For those children who fail to pay school fees, one school head confirmed that they are identified and put under scholarship assistance. Organisations like Capernaum Trust help orphaned children. Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) helps girl children with school fees, uniforms and stationery. Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) is a government programme that helps the orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) obtaining assistance of school fees. At Tyunga secondary school All Souls Catholic Mission based in Binga paid school fees for some children. At one primary school sampled, some children were under the assistance of Chunga fishing Cooperative based in Binga. All the identified scholarships have helped rural school children in Binga. However, challenges continue to diversify with time amidst the interventions. Schools and communities help identify children to benefit under such assistance. However, some children are left out due to identified corrupt activities told by some respondents during research. CAMFED and BEAM rely from primary schools to supply information for beneficiaries at secondary schools. Instances were told where some primary school heads lacked commitment to and failed to supply names of applicants to benefit from assistance. Although measures were put in place, these brought concerns and worries resulting from lack of commitment by some stakeholders involved in the process. Therefore, commitment should be induced among stakeholders to assist children access education as a mileage to cover to reach sustainability of interventions to improve rural situation.

School heads revealed that for late coming school children are given punishment. This was identified as a behaviour change strategy. However, further assessment revealed that failure to manage time by school children enables them to reach school late. The problem is also profound among children living a few hundreds of meters from the school. The idea of punishing children then brings questions on legal grounds basing on the mandated procedures and protocols. The measures have neither been sustainable as noted by continued acceleration of the problem.

Basing on school dropouts the schools in some cases make follow ups to the parents/ guardians. This is done by class teachers. Some parents are called to the school and a platform is created where the parent and teacher discuss the matters affecting school children. However, follow ups are very minimal as noted by some respondents who claimed that *“teachers do not find out why children are no longer coming to school”*. One lady teacher at a certain school said that *“we usually help children with books and pens”*. Although teachers help children with stationery, this has not reached far due to wider gap of needed stationery demand. One secondary school teacher eagerly complained that when they launch a problem of stationery to the school head they are not heard. The schools in Luunga (ward 1) and Tyunga (ward 22) wards sometimes call stakeholders to provide guidance. At one secondary school the guidance and counseling session only appeared on paper but not much time was dedicated to it.

Sending children back home to remind parents is used to solve the challenge of failure to pay school fees. Extreme cases were shown where some children failed to pay school fees throughout their primary and secondary school course. One respondent said that *“people do not pay school fees because of lack of transparency in the utilisation of school funds”*. This was indicated by failure of some school development committees (SDCs) to provide the financial reports at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). At some instance debt collectors were called. This faced resistance as the community regarded it as illegal and un-procedural and hence its failure to reap the desired results.

To curb the problem of long distances, the communities lobbied for the establishment of satellite schools like Njobola and Chibuyu primary schools; and Sizemba and Sinamusanga secondary schools in the two wards under research. On abuse grounds, not even a single provided the reproductive health sessions. One deputy head said that *“we do not offer sexual reproductive health outside that learnt in environmental science but one of the teachers was trained”*. This translates that reproductive health education remains silent in rural schools in Zimbabwe.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

This study identified a lot of challenges facing school children in rural Zimbabwe. The diversity and complexity of the challenges call for local initiatives and other interventions for all stakeholders in the education system and in development work. Commitment for the community in general and parents of affected children together with the government and other responsible authorities should intertwine to redress the challenges. The Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013) suggests that children should *“have access to appropriate education and training”* (section 19

subsection 2 paragraph d). Thus in a much stronger sense there is need for interdisciplinary approaches to help ameliorate the challenges facing rural school children.

Measures should be taken by the parents of the affected children and the whole community to standardize the living conditions for children who come from far away areas. More funding should be sought to improve the infrastructure both in school and in the whole community. These may help attract trained and qualified competent staff. Improving the communication network system may allow rural children access internet services necessary for their research. Rural electrification may even be necessary to allow children enough time to study during the day and night.

The school development committees in the studied schools in rural areas should engage in income generating activities rather than solely depending on the traditional means of school fees payment which is usually lowly paid by most school children. Improving administrative capacities in terms of skills development may help. Additionally, educational strategies that require additional funding to implement and are effective in meeting school children's needs including: smaller schools; preschool; tutoring; after school and summer school programs; smaller classes: accelerated learning programs; and specialized instruction for school children (Carey, 2002) may help improve the pass rate in rural schools. Chewe et al (2010) quoted in Government Of Zimbabwe (2010) assures that, in order to target the most vulnerable children and ensure they can realise their rights, it is important to focus on both orphan hood and other dimensions of vulnerability, including: exposure to violence, abuse and exploitation; household income; and disability, gender and other forms of discrimination and inequity. The Government of Zimbabwe (2010) recommends for the requirement of a multivariate approach to understanding and targeting vulnerability in Zimbabwe that is flexible to the context of transition and recurrent risks and shocks.

Another observed phenomenon was lack of a clinic in Luunga ward. Therefore, political, administrative and individual commitment is needed for the establishment of a health center. This will allow school children access to reproductive health care and counseling services. Lack of female role models is one suggested cause for gender disparities in rural schools. Bernard (2002) expresses that while a number of measures can be shown to have an impact on the retention of girls in school; one of the important factors is the presence of female teachers in the school. Thus measures and strategies should be employed to allow local girls to access quality education and pass so that they become role models to inspire their youngsters in the community. Such initiatives can holistically help improve the circumstances under review. Therefore, it would be easier to talk about sustainable development. The paper helps much in awakening public response to the needs that children cry. It also acts as an instrument to visualize the unseen circumstances bedeviling children in rural parts of the country and elsewhere in the world. Hence forth, more researches are encouraged to be done on specific causes of each of the mentioned challenges so as to generate a deep conceptualisation of the circumstances surrounding school children in rural areas, than this much generalized analysis. A multi-disciplinary approach can help define solutions aimed at attaining sustainable development of communities.

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