

Chapter 36

Urban Economy and Sources of Its Efficiency as Factors Addressing the Challenges Faced by Urban Economy: The Case Study of Southern African Region

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ABSTRACT

Rapid growth of density of population and overcrowded and congested cities in the Southern African region due to urban migration from people seeking a better lifestyle and job opportunities, despite high levels of urban unemployment, infrastructure and sanitation, is embedded by lack of accelerated innovation to create sustainable future for most people. However, in South Africa infrastructure is seen as an enabler weapon of development to cultivate growth and confront challenges of efficient operations that are to reduce costs of production and create access to application of modern society. With this in mind, the chapter aims to look at the extent to which sources of efficiency can be used as a tool to address the urban economic challenges affecting the global economic development in the region.

INTRODUCTION

Rapid urban growth throughout the developing world has seriously outstripped the capacity of most cities to provide adequate basic services for their citizens. Urban congestion and the sprawl are further hampering local authorities in attempting to improve basic infrastructure and deliver essential services, across the border of Southern African region .As a result, urban poverty is a reflection based on high

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rise in urban slums created by lack of standards of housing and proper sanitation. In a regional perspective, high levels of land degradation, deforestation, lack of access to clean water and sanitation services in remote areas lead to poor urban conditions and undermine the sustainability of the socio-economic development of large cities in the region. Urban poverty is also regarded as a major drive of environmental degradation. Due to limited resources in the cities, residents and migrants are unable to compete for these limited resources becoming scarce or either protect themselves against harmful environmental conditions mostly affected by impacts of urbanization. In addition independent female migration has become a major survival strategy in response to deepening poverty. As men increasingly lose their jobs, and incomes become irregular, women, like men are turning to migration to meet their economic obligations (Oppong, 1997).

Driven by poverty, they are now migrating to urban areas in greater numbers in search of wage employment in the face of deteriorating living and working conditions in rural areas. Increasing access to education means that educated women are having greater opportunities for employment in the urban formal sector and are able to participate perhaps more effectively, in both non-domestic and formal sector activities (UNFPA, 2006). The increasing proportion of educated females is also reflected in the accelerated migration of females (especially the young ones) into urban areas to seek further education and jobs. While migrant mine workers in South Africa are living in overcrowded hostels and particularly are vulnerable to tuberculosis infection; dual residence and long absence from spouses have also resulted in migrants contracting sexually transmitted infections through casual partners. All these conditions raise issues of vulnerability of migrants, limited access to medical care, entitlement to basic health services, and the need to incorporate the health care of migrant populations squarely into public health, and social policies. In Adepoju (2008) it is lamented that lack of information on migrant rights in respect of access to social services, immigrants usually experience greater difficulties than other groups in accessing services and hence in exercising their rights, as a result of cultural problems and discriminatory policies and practices in host countries. Often, immigrants are unaware of their rights or are afraid to claim them. They may not understand the local language or are simply unfamiliar with the available social services.

Rural and cross border migration led to the increase indensity of urbanization population, for which by definition, urbanization does not proceed in any orderly fashion, social and economic disarticulation within cities that are intensified by frequently hostile receptions to migrant populations, for example the xenophobia outbreak of May 2008 in South Africa. In its terms of reference, xenophobia allows the exclusion of foreign nationals from vital services that they may be entitled to; for instance, health and education, and further marginalizes and excludes vulnerable communities by increasing inequalities even for foreign nationals who are in the country legally. Often the migrants are perceived as disease carriers and they take up the citizen's employment and other opportunities by hosting countries. Although, the regulatory regime looks relatively protective of migrants, immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, most governments in the Southern African region (including wealthier countries like South Africa) lack the resources to effectively enforce legislation. Over and above, Zimbabwe's economic implosion and political oppression have created a global Zimbabwean diaspora over the last decade. Most unskilled and semiskilled migrants have migrated to Botswana and South Africa. As a result, the xenophobic attack of May 2008 was directed at Zimbabweans. The South African government claims that the number of Zimbabweans is estimated at 3 million and rising. Obviously, the rationale is almost certainly an exaggeration. Most realistic estimates put the number at 500,000 in 2008 by now the number has escalated to more than 3 million (Statistics South Africa, 2011).

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