

# Indigenous Knowledge Systems: A Haven for Sustainable Economic Growth in Zimbabwe

by

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## Abstract

African ways of knowing (Indigenous Knowledge Systems) have not been fully studied, chief among them is *humwe/mukote* (work party). This study investigates *humwe/mukote* among the Ndau people of Chipinge, Zimbabwe. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and focused group discussions; one of the findings was that *humwe/mukote* is a community based development mechanism. The study also argues for using such knowledge for sustainable economic growth.

**Key words:** *Humwe/mukote*, indigenous knowledge systems, economic growth, Ndau people.

## Introduction

African Indigenous Knowledge Systems have not been spared from the onslaught meted out to African cultures at the advent of colonialism and its attendant handmaiden, Christianity. As a result, indigenous ways of knowing (*ruziyo rechivantu*) have been pushed to the periphery. This was done through denigrating indigenous knowledge systems as merely superstition (Ntuli 2002, Nhemachena 2015), unscientific and rudimentary. Regrettably, African people believed these lies and wantonly abandoned their *ruziyo rechivantu* for other people's way of knowing. *Humwe/mukote* (known in other Shona dialects as *nhimbe*) was one of such a knowledge that suffered unprecedented attack. Lack of *nhimbe*'s recognition at national level in Zimbabwe as a community-based development mechanism (Sithole 2014) is evident that indigenous knowledge systems were and are still not being taken seriously.

Recent studies (Odora-Hoppers 2002, Ntuli 2002, Agrawal 2002, Mawere 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015, Mapara 2009, Nhemachena 2015) have illustrated that indigenous knowledge systems are on a resurgent path. Communities in African societies are reverting to their indigenous ways of knowing to solve some existential challenges such as persistent droughts (Mawere and Awuah-Nyamekye 2015), environmental degradation (Tatira 2015) and health matters (Mayekiso and Mawere 2015, Awuah-Nyamekye 2015). This resurgence has resulted in a lot of interest in indigenous knowledge systems, one among many in this regard. The current exercise focuses on *humwe* as a community-based development mechanism and progresses by conceptualising indigenous knowledge systems, reviewing literature, discussing research methodology, discusses findings and ends by way of conclusion and recommendations.

## **Statement of the Problem, Intentions and Key Questions**

It has been noted that *nhimbe* (*humwe/mukote* Ndaue dialect) has been in practice since the 1800s or earlier and is regarded generally as a type of work party (Anderson 2002, Kajese 1987, Kapasula 2010, Leedy 2010, Shutt 2002). Despite this long period of existence, much is known beyond this materialistic aspect (Sithole 2014). The wider importance of *nhimbe* to self-definition, socialisation and reproduction of community relationships (social capital) is largely ignored in the available literature. In addition, *nhimbe* has not been adequately documented leading to little understanding of the practice and the fear is that if this essential indigenous knowledge system continues undocumented, it (and many others IKSs) may become extinct. The elderly, who are the custodians of such knowledge (*ruziyo rechivantu*), are passing on and that means loss of such knowledge systems. It is against this backdrop, the economic and social contribution of *mukote* to community life in specific Zimbabwe rural communities was explored

This work intends to explore and understand *humwe* among the Ndaue people; examine the socio-economic benefits of *humwe*, and to assess the potential of *humwe* as a community-based development mechanism. Thus, the key questions are: what is *humwe/mukote/nhimbe*; what are the economic and social benefits of the *humwe* practice in the communities studied, and what are the potential future benefits of *humwe* for community-based development in Zimbabwe?

## **Indigenous knowledge Systems: A Definition**

The term indigenous knowledge system is in itself a contested concept (Mawere 2015, Altieri 1995, Melchias 2001, Odora Hoppers 2002, Mapara 2009). For the purposes of this paper, there is need to define who indigenous people(s) are in order to put the concept of indigenous knowledge systems into its proper context. Melchias (2001:35) understands indigenous people(s) as culturally distinct ethnic groups with a different identity from the national society, draw existence from local resources and are politically non-dominant.

Almost in the same vein, the World Bank (1991), as cited by Eyong (2007:121) adds a development perspective by stating that indigenous peoples are social groups with a social and cultural identity distinct from the dominant society. United Nations (1994) cited in Cobo (1987:5) has no universally accepted definition but states that “indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them (Cobo, 1987).

Suffice to mention at this juncture is that the concept of indigenous knowledge has often been associated in the Western context with the primitive, the wild, the natural (Semali and Kinchelo1999:3.) This definition draws our attention to the colonial prejudiced idea that indigenous knowledge is a matter of trials and errors while science is characterised by experimentation. From a western perspective, knowledge must be verifiable in a science laboratory for it to be regarded as knowledge. Anything short of that is not knowledge, no wonder that African indigenous knowledge was discarded as simply superstitious (Ntuli 2002:54). For example, Bascom (1965:4) dismisses *ngano* (folktales), which we regard as one of many facets of indigenous knowledge systems, as of little significance which should not be taken seriously. Bascom regards folktales not as history or real life experiences, a misunderstanding that is purely euro-centric. Such representations reflect little appreciation for the insight and understanding of what local indigenous people might provide. Paradoxically what is said not to be knowledge has been ‘stolen legacies’ from traditional communities (Nhemachena 2015). Given such contested issues surrounding indigenous knowledge, the paper concurs with Eyong (2007: 122) who refers to indigenous knowledge as the set of interactions between the economic, ecological, political, and social environments within a group or groups with a strong identity, drawing existence from local resources through patterned behaviours that are transmitted from generation to generations to cope with change.

The common ground from the definitions given above seems to be that these are people with a long history of living in an area, identify with it and have maintained a great part of their distinct linguistic, cultural, social and organisational characteristics that differentiate them from the surrounding populations and dominant culture (Eyong, 2007: *ibid*). The concept indigenous knowledge system is understood in some circles as simply indigenous knowledge (Eyong, 2007: 122). Indigenous knowledge refers to what indigenous people know and do, and what they have known and done for generations-practices that evolved through trial and error and proved flexible enough to cope with change (Melchias, 2001 cited in Eyong, 2007: 121). This paper takes this stance. It uses the two concepts indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) and indigenous knowledge (IK) interchangeably.

## ***Nhimbe*: A Conceptual Understanding**

As to when *nhimbe* became a practice in communities throughout Zimbabwe is still a matter of speculation. Bhila (1982), Kajese (1987) and Munyuki-Hungwe (2011) agree that *nhimbe* has been in existence in rural communities for centuries, dating back to at least the 1800s. *Nhimbe* is known by various names (Chigara 2011, Gelfand 1979, Hampson 1990, Mararike 1999, Tavuyanago, Mutami and Mbenene 2010 and Thompson 2010,) but for purposes here *nhimbe* or *humwe* shall be used interchangeably. The rationale for this is two-fold viz:

- (i) The study took place among the Ndaou people hence a Ndaou term for *nhimbe* is *humwe* or *mukote*. *Humwe/ mukote* was invariably used during interviews
- (ii) To appeal to the majority of the Zimbabwean readership, a standard Shona word *nhimbe* was used. *Humwe* or *mukote* are terms from a minority ethnic dialect (Ndaou a sub-dialect of the Shona language which did not enjoy the privileges accorded to Karanga and Zezuru by Doke (1930-31).

The Shona term *nhimbe* generally means to work collectively. It means people coming together and working to achieve a common goal (Mawere and Mubaya 2015:12). Loosely defined by these two scholars *nhimbe* is a social practice that is usually undertaken during the weeding and harvesting season by generally most of the ethnic groups in Zimbabwe. Despite the different names used, it is claimed that the practice is quite similar throughout the country (Mararike 1999 and Mutunhu 2011).

Sithole (2014) makes an important observation that there was and still is limited literature on *nhimbe*. The limited literature includes works by Gelfand (1979), Bhila (1982), Hampson (1990) Anderson (2002), Kozanayi and Nemarundwe (2002), Thompson (2010) and Madziva (2011). Closely related to this study is work by Sithole (2014) among the Ndaou of Musikavanhu in Chipinge, Gambiza in the Midlands and Tsholotsho to the west of Zimbabwe. *Nhimbe*, for Sithole (2014) is a community-based development mechanism that when tapped can change livelihoods.

Shutt (2002), in a report of squatters in rural communities of Zimbabwe, found out that *nhimbe* was a mechanism the squatters used to help each other on agricultural activities. It has been argued that *nhimbe* gatherings were patronised by missionaries to evangelise. This is what Leedy (2010:483) calls "...agricultural evangelism in colonial Zimbabwe". Leedy (2010: 493) further comments that missionaries viewed *nhimbe* as an immoral community practice since people normally drink beer at the gatherings.

It is these erroneous perceptions about indigenous knowledge systems that resulted in missionaries dismissing beliefs, values and practices of the locals as primitive and unscientific. Contrary to missionaries' misconception of *nhimbe*, Mbenene, Mutami and Tavuyanago (2010) view *nhimbe* as a leisure and entertainment practice in Zimbabwe. For Madziva (2011) *nhimbe* is an indigenous knowledge system and urges people to tap it as a community development mechanism. Kozanayi and Nemarundwe (2002), in their study in Chivi district, Zimbabwe found out that *nhimbe* was a community strategy to construct wells and dams as community water sources.

Furthermore, *nhimbe* is a collective work (Mawere and Mubaya 2015:11) whereby members of community provide extra labour to help each other on farming activities (Anderson 2002, Bhila 1982, Manona 2005, Shutt 2002). Thompson (2010) and Kapasula (2010) view *nhimbe* from a gender perspective. For them *nhimbe* undermines women and favours men in that women seem to provide their labour more than men especially in weeding and harvesting. For some scholars like (Gelfand 1979, Mbenene, Mutami and Tavuyanago 2010) *nhimbe* is a socialising and entertaining practice in the community. In addition, *nhimbe* can be understood as a community development strategy (Sithole 2014) that is applied to address various community needs (Kajese 1987, Madziva 2011, Mararike 1999, and Kozanayi and Nemarundwe 2002).

The above literature review has illustrated that *nhimbe* is an effective strategy of pooling community labour in agricultural activities for many households (Mawere and Mubaya 2015:12, Gukurume 2013). Given this awareness, the million-dollar question is: Why are the indigenes not using their indigenous knowledge such as *nhimbe* in the new agrarian land reform programme? Large farms are not fully utilised and one reason, among others, is lack of labour to work in the farms. Can reintroduction of the concept of *nhimbe* be useful in ensuring fully utilisation of farms for food security? These questions inform the thrust of this exercise.

Therefore, the main assumption of this was that the *Nhimbe* practice is a holistic community-based development model which incorporates social, economic, spiritual, political, leadership and gender issues. This assumption can be further divided into two sub-assumptions, hence: a) *Nhimbe* promotes community involvement in development initiatives as it seems to be a practice imbedded in the community culture and socio-moral compass; and b) *Nhimbe* encourages economic and social sustainability in communities, affecting both short-term and long-term developmental viability, particularly because it is a community-based practice.

## **Methodology**

This study was conducted via: library research to find out what has been done in the field of indigenous knowledge systems particularly *nhimbe* and development/economic growth; fieldwork undertaken in Musikavanhu chieftainship in the Chipinge district and in the villages of Manzvire, Gumira and Muumbe.

I felt that since *nhimbe* (*mukote* in the local dialect) was based on the lives and experiences of a people, there would be no significant differences between data from different villages of the chieftainship. From each village, I sampled the elderly (men and women of 55+ years). The rationale for this was that practices such as *nhimbe/mukote* find more expression within the elderly than the young. Next, participants were grouped into two categories to participate in focus group discussions. These were young adults aged 22 to 35, adult community members aged 40+ years. This was important to establish patterns on how *humwe* is explained, viewed and define people's social world in these communities across generations and community leadership. A focus group discussion (FGD) had 12 participants in order to gain maximum interaction and exploratory discussions. On average, each FGD took between 50 to 70 minutes. The rationale for adult community members in the FGDs was that, as already discussed, they are community leaders who are supposed to be responsible for social, economic, moral and spiritual welfare of the people in their jurisdictions (Zimbabwe Traditional Leaders Act, Chapter 29:17).

Data was collected mainly through using unstructured interviews. This was done in seeking information concerning the meaning of the *nhimbe*, its nature, its socio-economic benefits to the communities that practise it and investigate whether *nhimbe* could be useful in the Zimbabwean agrarian land reform for sustainable food security. During the data collection period I had an opportunity of attending funeral sessions where I observed how Ndaus *humwe/mukote* principle was employed. And the first step in the analysis of data was transcribing data. In the second stage, literal translation of the data collected in the local dialect was carried out because the data were collected in the Shona language (Ndaus dialect in particular). After this, the collected data was divided into groups according to the themes and emerging trends. An analysis was then carried out to find out how *nhimbe* as an indigenous knowledge practice is a hub for economic growth for local communities.

## Findings and Discussion

From the interviews conducted, *humwe*, as an indigenous knowledge system practice, was well acknowledged and, most importantly, the local people genuinely believed that they needed each other in life. In other words, the people indicated their awareness of the practice of *humwe* and cited it as an indigenous practice with socio-economic functions. The *humwe* practice was understood by participants as a socialising agent where members of the community come together and communally assist each other in number of ways. From the discussions, what was abundantly clear was that *humwe/mukote* took place under two scenarios.

First, interviewees made it very noticeable that *humwe* could be used as an emergency (*nyandayeyo* in Ndaus dialect) where one calls out community members to assist in an emergency (for example, in the event of death). Whether one has money he/she stills calls for the community members to assist in the burial of the deceased. This is emergency *humwe* (*nyandayeyo* a Ndaus word for an emergency that happens when least expected).

It was discovered that the Ndaou people in the villages studied come together and assist each other. Times of death were taken as moments of distress and hopelessness but because of the deeply embedded beliefs and practices such as *humwe*, such moments are made less stressful as the community comes together and assists the bereaved. The communal sense that grips the community during times of death was quite evident as the researcher attended a funeral where a sense of *humwe* was illustrated as a rallying point during moments of grief.

To further demonstrate that *humwe* is a rallying point for the Ndaou people, a funeral session is punctuated by unparalleled support. At one funeral attended I observed that some members of community brought with them bowls of mealie-meal on their heads while others brought firewood, buckets of water and in some instances money to assist at the funeral. Asked why this was so, one elder had this to say:

*Unoona mwana. Uku ndiko kuratidza kuti rufu harusi rwepamuzi pano pega. Rufu rwemunharaunda yeshe. Ndiko kuti vaNdaou uku. Kuratidza kuti vantu vakabatana mune zveshe zvavanoita. Vantu vanobva vaita mukote wemene (you see son. This shows that death is communally owned. This is what defines the Ndaou people. It is a show of solidarity in what people do. People engage into mukote/nhimbe.)*

The elder in the above excerpt illustrates that the Ndaou people derive pride in their togetherness which, according to the elder, uniquely identifies them. In addition to this sense of belonging and uniqueness, the Ndaou's gender side was conspicuous at the funeral. Women brought most of the food items with a few exceptions where young boys drove in donkey-driven scotch carts full of firewood or buckets of water. But what was interesting to note was the dexterity with which people carried out duties thereby reinforcing the sense of *humwe*.

### **Planned *Humwe***

On the other hand, it was established that *humwe* could be a planned practice where families prepare beer (*doro* in Shona) and food to feed people who come to assist. This is agricultural *humwe*. *Doro* was used to mobilise people for some field work to be undertaken communally (Mawere and Mubaya 2015:12). As people carry out the work they are served with *doro* and this enables them to work hard. This is why *nhimbe* is at times understood as a beer cooperative party (Mawere and Mubaya 2015). It was also abundantly clear from the interviews that *humwe* ensured food provision.

Instances cited were that once one member realises that his draught power, due to a number of reasons, could not cope with the amount of ploughing to be done or may not have cattle for ploughing therefore he/she brews beer or *mahewu* and invites those with cattle to help him do the ploughing. This ensured that no family starves and creates a sense of an African ideal of the individual's communal responsibility (ibid). This creates a sense of solidarity among the community members.

When I asked more about this agricultural aspect of *humwe/mukote* I learnt that *humwe* could be when community members bring the draught power to assist a fellow or could be assisting during harvesting. The interviews held in this regard were quite touching and emotional as the elders interviewed bemoaned the fast dying concept of *humwe/mukote*. They were nostalgic of the gone days where *humwe* used to be a source of ensuring sufficient food. Participants unequivocally pointed out that if time could be wound back they would cherish their past. One interviewee narrated her memories of *humwe* where no one member of their community could starve from hunger. For her *humwe* ensured that even the lazy ones could have their pieces of land tilled. One only needed to call for *humwe* for ploughing, another one at weeding time and lastly during harvesting. In this scenario one would have a granary full of grain when all work was done through the notion of *humwe*. What I discovered was that *humwe* could take place where no food was provided. This type of *humwe* among the Ndaus is *mubvandarya*, a kind of *humwe* taking place in the afternoon where people would have had their lunch at their respective homes. This meant that the one calling for this type of *humwe* incurred no expenses but would have the work done. Surely this was a show of *unhu/ubuntu* beyond any doubt.

The interviews also illustrated that *humwe* is both a supply and demand driven practice (Sithole 2014). In other words, this means that the drive to participate in *humwe* is in two ways; one seeks assistance from community members on specific development tasks (demand driven) or a person voluntarily provides his/her knowledge and expertise (supply driven) to carry out a development initiative for which *humwe* has been organised (ibid).

### ***Humwe: Modern Dimensions***

During the interviews, it was also discovered that *humwe* among the Ndaus has been extended to the construction of social amenities in communities such as clinics, schools and community halls for meetings. During discussions with participants, it was interesting to note that while I was still confining my questions to *humwe* in agriculture, the respondents made it clear that the local schools are a product of *humwe* organised by village heads, School Development Councils (SDCs) and teachers. The respondents narrated that wards were assigned days and given specific duties to perform in the construction of classrooms. One ward is asked to mould bricks, another collect firewood while the rest may pool resources such as cement for the construction of the classrooms.



Once material is ready, local builders are called under *humwe* to construct and food is prepared for them during the days. Even Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) such as Plan International have been enticed to contribute under the *humwe* concept. This has gone a long way in refurbishing schools and clinics in the villages studied.

Another interesting dimension that the *humwe* concept is that former students of local schools have pooled resources for developing their former schools. Speaking to the president of a former students' association, Manzvire Primary Old Students Association (MPOSA) revealed that they were using the concept of *humwe* inculcated in them by parents as they were growing up. He had this to say:

What we have done is to say to ourselves as former students, we must have a hand in the development of our schools. Many a times we blame the teachers for lowering standards in these schools without giving a hand- a concept of *humwe* we were taught as we were growing up. The association so far has managed to source benches, ball games, window panes and we are still anticipating more to do for the school.

Upon further discussions with the association's president it was discovered that the school community prides itself with having sons and daughters who are able to embrace its teachings from *humwe* and apply it in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for the development of communities. What is coming out here is a sense of togetherness, unity of purpose and a social cohesion that make insurmountable challenges surmountable. This is development that is community-centred and from the interviews it was always 'our' school, clinic and never 'their'. This sense of property ownership is the linchpin of responsibility, accountability and good stewardship- virtues that propel community-induced development.

It can be seen from the findings that the notion of helping one another on planned developmental purposes was strongly emphasised by all the participants in the studied villages. Working together was emphatically expressed by the participants as a means to ensure high production and creation of a communal coexistence, a virtue that defines and identifies an African. What comes to my mind about *humwe* is that it brings *Unhu* (humanness) and the spirit of togetherness in the community; as people work together and help each other (Sithole 2014).

The study also found out that through the *humwe* practice the community members still had a strong conviction that *humwe* is part of their indigenous knowledge where they share resources in the community to accomplish a specific work, nurture and maintain community solidarity and improve households' standards of living (Sithole 2014). Another interesting observation made by the research participants is that *humwe* is indeed a 'bankable' practice the villages studied use in planning and implementing their social and economic household development initiatives.

The findings clearly demonstrate that *humwe* helps communities to nurture and strengthen their resilience in various socio-economic development crises such as drought and famine. One respondent stressed that the purpose of *humwe* is to help those who are struggling like the sick, the orphans and the elderly in the community and in the process this promotes unity among the people. The concepts of children's and old people's homes is unAfrican. *Humwe* practice, in its old sense, ensured that the community took care of the less privileged members of society such as the old, sick, orphans and the widowed. Children of the streets are a clear indication of the death of indigenous knowledge systems like *humwe*, among others.

On the participants' views on the potential of *humwe* as a tool to enhance high food production in future in the new resettled farms, it was discovered that the participants were convinced that even globalisation has failed to do away with people's indigenous knowledge systems. One elder admitted that while their indigenous knowledge systems were under the threat posed by globalisation, they (IKSs) remained resilient and buoyant. For this particular elder, it was this resilience and buoyance that ensured the locals' indigenous knowledge is still useful. The elder bemoaned the lack of high yields in the new farms and even compared them to their small plots. For him the success behind their small plots was the hard-to-die spirit of togetherness evident through the *humwe* practice, a practice whose ethos was conspicuously missing in the new farms where farmers from different culturally backgrounds found themselves living side by side. In a similar research by Sithole (2014), it was found that *humwe/nhimbe* notion can be quite useful in the resettled farms under the A1 model for increased yields.

In the Focused Groups Discussions (FGDs), I found out that the young participants (of ages ranging from 22-35) felt *humwe* was anachronistic in the modern era of technology. This group of participants felt *humwe* was no longer as useful as it used to be in the past. They argue that communities are no longer as intact as they used to be. For this group individualism, which they argue was brought by colonialism and the introduction of cash economy were the factors for the low practice of *humwe*. They argued that no one wants to offer labour free. People are looking to cash in whenever they perform certain tasks. But what was worth noting with this group was their acceptance that, indeed, *humwe* used to be the development driver in rural communities.

On the contrary more senior participants (age-group of 40+) in the FGDs argued that *humwe* can and is still practicable. They cited instances in the communities where the *humwe* concept were evident. Communities engage in collaborative work where beer is used for the workers during work. For this group of participants *humwe* is still being practised but perhaps what has changed are the contexts under which it expresses itself. They even cite instances where illness in one family is still viewed as a community concern. One context is where HIV and AIDS has wreaked havoc in communities was often cited. One old woman said:

*Mukote uchiriyo. Mukaona maitire atinoita madzimai parwariwa munobva maona kuti mukote uchiri kuita. Chirwere chemukondombera chava kuita nani nekuti nharaunda yakuita maonera pamwe sechuma chomuzukuru. Isu madzimai tinobatira pamwe kuchengeta murwere uye kubatira pamwe naana mukoti vanouya mudzimba vachibatsira varwere* (Beer parties are still being practised. We, women assist each other during times of illness especially in the context of HIV and AIDS. We assist nurses as they come in the communities to treat those on home-based programmes.)

The foregoing illustrates that, as members of the FGDs seemed to be disagreeing, *humwe* is still being cherished and practised. What is happening is that the concept has assumed new forms under new contexts as illustrated by the examples cited by different participants in the interviews and FGDs.

## **Recommendations**

This work has shown that *humwe* is more easily practised in some communities with close shared bonds. It is this understanding of *humwe* that it is recommended that: the successful land reform programme could achieve more if land is given with this in mind. Land is supposed to be given in such a way that those communities that share the same culture as well as a working ethic such as *humwe* be given land close to one another so that the practice of *humwe* is easy to implement. What is obtaining in the farms is that ‘strangers’, culturally, find themselves side by side and in the majority of cases are not able to work harmoniously for they are from different backgrounds. This comes out clear from a similar work carried out by Sithole (2014) where he argues that when the government resettles people in any part of the country, it should take serious considerations about kinship ties, traditional leadership and neighbourliness.

Also, the study has established that apart from work at a *humwe/mukote*, people discuss and resolve a diversity of social issues and this is sometimes done through music, dance and cracking of jokes. The social solidarity or cohesion in a community is often possible among people who have shared history, values and worldviews (Madziva 2011, Mararike 1999 Munyuki-Hungwe 2011 and Thompson 2010). This denotes that government resettlement policies and implementation frameworks may need to take cognizance of the importance of social bonds in community-based development. Thus, it would be essential for the government to promote and financially support research and documentation of traditional practices like *humwe* with a view to develop comprehensive livelihoods development strategies in rural communities. And last, policymakers of tertiary education in Zimbabwe may need to review the contribution of traditional practices like *humwe* in community development agenda. If *humwe* principles are properly instituted into Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-economic Transformation (ZIMASSET), livelihoods may change for the better.

## Conclusion

This contribution was exploratory and it aimed at understanding the *humwe/mukote* practice including its contribution to community-based development within the specific rural communities of the Chipinge district in Zimbabwe. Notably, it was established that *humwe* is an internal affective rural community development model used for a variety of initiatives, especially in agricultural activities. Hence, *humwe* is a needs-based community development model, and social support system or social insurance in the community; an extension of the extended family support system (Sithole 2014). Like *Hararambe* in Kenya and *Ujamaa* in Tanzania, *humwe/mukote* among the Ndaou people is an indigenous knowledge system that does not only solidify members of the communities, but it also ensures economic growth as people pool resources for every member of the community to benefit. Also, this study contends that *humwe* has assumed new forms in the new contexts it finds itself in, and to argue that it is now anachronistic shows a lack of appreciation because the practice is flexible, elastic and dynamic.

## Endnote

<sup>1</sup>The word *humwe/mukote* is a Ndaou word for the Shona word *nhimbe*. This is a situation when a community pools all its human capital to accomplish a task. It can be tilling their fields, building community social amenities such as schools, clinics and bridges. Any task that may be deemed too big for an individual or family may result in *humwe* to accomplish. The community carries out the task collectively. Among the Ndaou of Musikavanhu chieftainship *humwe* is also referred to as *mukote* (Sithole 2014). This means people coming together and working to achieve a common goal (Mawere and Mubaya 2015:12). It is a social practice that is usually undertaken during the weeding and harvesting season by generally most of the ethnic groups in Zimbabwe (ibid). *Humwe/mukote/nhimbe* are used interchangeably in this paper for the simple reason that they mean the same thing. They only differ on which Shona dialect is using it.

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