AN ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP AND OTHER FACTORS INFLUENCING THE SUCCESS OF COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES IN BULAWAYO (A CASE OF MASAKHANE TRADERS ASSOCIATION)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study examines the leadership role and its particular importance in achieving cooperative objectives and encouraging or maintaining cooperation between members. The researcher noted that in order to implement the required changes in any cooperative it is important for leadership to develop skills, personal character and behaviours that allow them to establish the commitment of members to the competitiveness of the organisation. Data was collected through surveys of 55 members of Masakhane Traders Association.

Unity Village was established in 1997 by a famous Bulawayo Businessman Mr Manilal Nathoo Naran. The property was structurally erected with Flea Market Stalls to be rented out to Flea Market Traders. In 2004 Mr Naran decided to sell the property, he made the first offer to the tenants, but so many other business people in the city were interested in purchasing the property. This is when tenants decided to form a cooperative association which they named Masakhane Traders Association, this was done in order to elect a management committee to mobilize resources to buy the property. According to Schwettmann (2014) “Full individual development can take place only in association with others. As an individual, one is limited in what one can try to do, what one can achieve. Through joint action and mutual responsibility, one can achieve more. It was then agreed that tenants who were interested, were to contribute an equal amount to raise (the then $2 billion Zim dollars). This was done successfully and now the property is now owned by the association with each member having an equal share to the property. The property comprises of 191 stalls and a restaurant. Soon after purchasing the property members crafted a constitution which governs the running of the affairs of the place.

The co-operative form of business organization began during the Industrial Revolution and Robert Owen is said to be influential in the establishment of the early cooperative movements. According to Wilhoit (2005) “The attempt to solve common problems by combined action is at the root of cooperatives, but empowerment, shared ownership, and democratic control are also key concepts of co-operative ideology”. Co-operatives have played a very important part in business’ success
and alleviating the economically disadvantaged societies, like in the case of Masakhane Traders Association.

According to Schwettmann (2014) With 2.6 million cooperative societies, over 1 billion members and a combined turnover of 3 trillion US-$ the global cooperative movement is the largest organization in the world, bigger in terms of membership than the trade union movement, economically more powerful than several G20 nations, and providing employment to many more people than all multinational companies taken together.

A detailed review of relevant literature highlights a range of strategies used by other cooperatives around the world that have been proven to be effective in running cooperatives successfully and challenges associated with running cooperatives. Like in investor owned businesses, Vision, Mission statements and strategies should be devised during the process of establishing a cooperatives to keep them relevant in business and to help them grow. Whoever is the leader should consider leadership as a set of actions to help determine the goals of the group or develop strategies to achieve them without neglecting group developments and involvement.