

The Path of Cotton-To-Clothing Value Chains to Development: A Mixed Methods Exploration of the Resuscitation of the Cotton-To-Clothing Value Chain in Post

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Abstract : The purpose of this study is to use mixed methods research to create typologies of the performance of firms in the cotton-to-clothing value chain in Zimbabwe, and to use these typologies to achieve the objective of adding to the small pool of studies on Sub-Saharan African value chains performing in the context of economic liberalisation and achieving development. The uptake of economic liberalisation measures across Sub-Saharan Africa has led to the restructuring of many value chains. While this action has resulted in some African economies positively reintegrating into global commodity chains, it has also been deeply problematic for the development impacts of the majority of others. Over and above this, these nations have been placed at a disadvantage due to the fact that there is little scholarly and policy research on approaches for managing economic liberalisation and value chain development in the unique African context. As such, the central question facing these less successful cases is how they can integrate into the world economy whilst still fostering their development. This paper draws from quantitative questionnaires and qualitative interviews with 28 stakeholders in the cotton-to-clothing value chain in Zimbabwe. This paper examines the performance of firms in the value chain, and the subsequent local socio-economic development impacts that are affected by the revival of the cotton-to-clothing value chain following its collapse in the wake of Zimbabwe's uptake of economic liberalisation measures. Firstly, the paper finds the relatively undocumented characteristics and structures of firms in the value chain in the post-economic liberalisation era. As well as this, it finds typologies of the status of firms as either being in operation, closed down, or being placed under judicial management and the common characteristics that these typologies hold. The key findings show how a mixture of macro and local level aspects, such as value chain governance and the management structure of a business, leads to the most successful typology that is able to add value to the chain in the context of economic liberalisation, and thus unlock its socioeconomic development potential. These typologies are used in making industry and policy recommendations on achieving this balance between the macro and the local level, as well as recommendations for further academic research for more typologies and models on the case of cotton value chains in Sub-Saharan Africa. In doing so, this study adds to the small collection of academic evidence and policy recommendations for the challenges that African nations face when trying to incorporate into global commodity chains in attempts to benefit from their associated socioeconomic development opportunities.

Keywords : cotton-to-clothing value chain, economic liberalisation, restructuring value chain, typologies of firms, value chain governance, Zimbabwe

Conference Title : ICTCI 2020 : International Conference on Textile and Clothing Industries

Conference Location : Amsterdam, Netherlands

Conference Dates : September 17-18, 2020