

Full Length Research

Exploring Local Governance Challenges in Zimbabwe under the Government of National Unity era and beyond

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Local governance institutions are poised to foster development in Africa as they are at the centre of people participation. In Zimbabwe, the local governance sector is positioned to stimulate good governance and development, courtesy of the decentralization policy adopted by President Mugabe at independence in 1980. Since then, decentralized local authorities strived to service all areas under their jurisdiction adequately. However, the new millennium saw deterioration in service provision by Local Authorities largely due to the socio-economic and political dynamics and dimensions enveloping Zimbabwe. Such problems manifest themselves through downward trend in water supply; refuse collection; greening, and deterioration of educational and recreational facilities. Gweru city is one of such cities in Zimbabwe hit by local governance challenges even after the introduction of the multi-currency regime in 2008. The unique socio-economic and political stability ushered in by the GNU in Zimbabwe did not commensurate with deteriorating service delivery standards in cities. Through the use of literature review, observations, interviews and questionnaires, the study highlights the following governance challenges; corruption, political interference, incompetence and negation of residence to be behind poor service delivery in Gweru city during and after the Government of National Unity epoch (2008-2013). The paper recommends the alignment of governance laws and local authority laws with the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No.20) Act 2013.

Keywords: local governance, service provision, council, corruption, politics

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INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

Service delivery in Gweru has become compromised and questionable in the 21st century. This is happening despite efforts taken by both central and local governments, donors, NGOs, and private individuals in the provision of basic local services. This has been blamed on the political and economic crisis that Zimbabwe found itself in since the year 2000 to 2008 when the Government of National Unity was mooted to break the economic and political impasse. Accordingly, the GNU stabilized the socio-economic and political situation, and introduced the multi-currency regime as opposed to the valueless Zimbabwean currency. With such changes at glance, people were optimistic for effective service delivery however, not much has changed as the streets and pavements in Gweru are filthy with dirt which takes long to be cleared. In the residential areas, garbage collection is not consistent posing health hazards to residents. When garbage goes for a long time without being disposed of, it poses serious health risks to residents who may end up contracting diseases such as cholera and malaria. Places of garbage are ideal breeding points for flies and mosquitoes, vectors of these diseases (Masocha and Tevera, 2003). In Mkoba North and South, dumping sites have become a common site. In the affluent residential areas like South downs, Kopje, Windsor Park and Harben Park, dumping sites are not so common but the roads are in a sorry state and in some areas without functioning street lights. Potholes have remained a permanent feature in most of the city roads and roads in the High density residential suburbs. Designated pick up points in the cities are being ignored by commuter omnibus and taxi operators resulting in congestion and chaos, especially along Sixth Street in Gweru. Also, challenges like water shortages prevail (Mahlahla, 2007). Recreational facilities are no longer functional. The urban greening is no-longer there and urban agriculture has been overshadowed by NGO-Initiated Cooperative gardens. In light of the deteriorating service delivery, this paper explores the governance challenges at the core of this mayhem.

Emergency services and disaster preparedness mechanisms are poor and deteriorating. The local governance authorities' ambulance fleet has previously been grounded due to shortages of fuel and spares, paralysing the provision of emergency services. Although fuel and parts can now be readily accessed due to dollarization, most council fleet remains depleted and are too old. A spate of fires has ravaged buildings in the city De Brynns along Harare- Bulawayo road and a House in Southdowns belonging to Mai Majon'osi. In all these cases, the fire department has been blamed for failing to save the situation often arriving without water if they turn

up at all.

The status quo in Gweru city is different from the first two decades after 1980 independence in Zimbabwe, when local government was robust and self-financing. Resources from international donor agencies were also available to support local governance. Stakeholders were passionate with the need to create responsive and mobile local authorities. These efforts by donors coincided with Zimbabwe government to embark on an ambitious decentralization and local government reform as a brainchild of President Mugabe's pro-people socialism policy. However, the determinations suffered a number of deep-rooted setbacks that even grew worse in the new millennium. Operating conditions of many Urban Councils have become increasingly difficult (Wekwete, 2006) characterized with ineffective and inefficient service delivery and provision. Implementation of city policy resolutions and by-laws as a way to resolve governance challenges that were bedeviling Zimbabwean city councils did not adequately deal with the problem.

Amongst other things, scholars blame national governance crisis and dwindling resources to the problems in Urban Councils. Generally, the problems affecting local governance started in the last years of the 20th century with the drying up of financing from the international donor community that supported local authorities. In 1990s, the government of Zimbabwe adopted the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) calling for an end to government subsidies to local authorities. Consequently, there was a gradual decline in service provision and delivery due to shortage of capital, vehicles and technical expertise. From the year 2000 onwards, hyperinflation, dwindling of the national economy, shortage of foreign currency and high interest rates become some of the challenges facing urban councils. Gweru City Council has not been spared of these challenges hence the need for this inquiry to analyze the challenges bedeviling Gweru City Council in its governance endeavor.

Justification

Previous studies on governance issues in Gweru city looked on environment and waste management (Mangizvo, 2013), while Dewa (2013) looked at industrial decline in Gweru city without deciphering much on City Council and service delivery. Efforts to unearth governance challenges of local governance by Chakaipa et al (2010) looked at local governance reform in general without much focus on Gweru city. As such, scholars have not bothered to undertake research on governance challenges facing the city of Gweru. This study fills the research void by focusing on the challenges, classifying

them as per their causes and deciphering on the prospects in promoting good governance in the city of Gweru and city councils in Zimbabwe. The responsible ministry and interested parties are envisaged to be helped by the research in comprehending challenges bedeviling the council in particular and prospects for good city governance. The 'city fathers' are envisaged to learn of the challenges from an academic angle and gain from the recommendations given.

As this investigation unearths local governance challenges of the city of Gweru, it helps residents to understand the true socio-economic and political causes of their day to day experiences. In human living, it is paramount to know what affects human beings daily. According to the systems theory, a living organism or human being is composed of interacting components, that should be known at all cost (Gladding, 2000). People and environment live in mutually related equation for one another, if the environment is not functioning up to capacity, people will have difficulty in carrying out tasks. As such, the stakeholders (residents, workers business people) have the right to know what would be the problem cause.

Study Area

Gweru City Council was founded in 1894 by Dr. Leander Starr Jameson as a sanitary board (www.zimbabwe.8m.com). It achieved municipal status on 18 June 1914 and city status in 1911 becoming the third city in then Rhodesia, after Harare (then Salisbury) and Bulawayo. (www.zimbabwe.8m.com). The city was formerly known as Gwelo until 1982 when it was renamed Gweru after Zimbabwe's independence. Gweru city was known for housing heavy industries which included; Zim Alloys, Bata Shoe Company and Anchor Yeast. Gweru is the central, highly accessible city of Zimbabwe and the largest in the Midlands Province. The city has the country's largest Railway marshaling yard by the name Dabuka along Gweru-Bulawayo road. As the city has a marshaling yard, it has a railway link to most parts of Zimbabwe like Masvingo, Shurugwi, Kwekwe, Zvishavane and the major cities of Bulawayo and Harare. Above all, the city has a link to overseas markets through South African and Mozambique's port of Durban, Port Elizabeth and Beira respectively.

In terms of population, Gweru had 124 734 residents in 1992, 141 260 in 2002 and 300 000 in 2012 (ZimStats 2012). Of the population, thirty percent of the population is Ndebele speaking while the remainder are Shona speaking. Residential areas includes high density suburbs for low income earners like Nehosho, Senga, Mambo, Ascot and Mkoba, which is subdivided into village 1 to village 20. Medium density suburbs, for medium income earners include Southdowns, Northlea,

Lundi Park, and Riverside, while Low density suburbs, for high income earners are Harben Park, Kopje, Brackenhurst and Windsor Park which have spacious stands for the elite, affluent residents of the city. In accordance with the Urban Councils Act (State the chapter of the Act)?, Gweru city is governed by councilors who are elected after every five years (Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15, 1996). Each councilor represents a ward and is elected on a political party ticket or as an independent candidate for a period of five years. Historically, cities had Mayors who led the councilors. In 1987, the government introduced Executive Mayors who were elected by a majority vote. However, in 2008, the Rural District Council Act [Chapter 29:13] and the Urban Councils Act [Chapter 29:15] were revised to scrap the post of Executive Mayor. Resultantly, Mayors are now elected by Councilors who would have been elected by eligible residents.

Like any other urban councils, Gweru city council is a local government authority used in the administration of towns and cities in Zimbabwe and other parts of the world (Mosha, 1996). The Urban Councils Act (Chapter 29:15) of 1996 empowers city councils to perform two main functions within their areas of jurisdiction, namely: waste disposal and water supply issues. This entails the measures to construct more water harvesting sources such as dams, weirs, bore holes; and water and sewer reticulation infrastructure as well as solid waste dumps (Bagg, 1992). These services are provided for at a cost in Zimbabwe, forcing urban residents, stakeholders and other clients to pay monthly bills to urban councils for the provision of such services. Accordingly, local authorities derive substantial portions of their revenue from water and sewage disposal bills, which are revised regularly so as to match the rate of inflation (Mapira and Mungwini, 2007). In executing their duties, the Urban Councils are also entitled to government grants for them to effectively provide services.

Conceptual Framework

The study is premised on decentralisation as advocated by the President Robert Mugabe soon after independence in 1980. Coined in his socialist antics, the visionary leader noted that for service delivery, residents' participation and poverty reduction, there was needed to adopt the concept of decentralisation of local authorities from central government. "Decentralisation" is defined as the transfer of legal and political authority to plan, make decisions and manage public functions, from the central government and its agencies to field organisations of those agencies, subordinate units of government, semi-autonomous public corporations or statutorily derived autonomous government units" (Mosha and Mabaila 2006). Though distinctions have been made on

decentralisation between administrative, fiscal and democratic decentralisation, all these sub-sets of decentralisation are meant to ensure that local authorities are autonomous to raise own resources and decide on how to effectively and efficiently spend the raised funds. The paper adopts the broad definition of decentralisation above to assess the challenges and opportunities of local authorities to deliver services to Gweru residents.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research employed naturalistic ethnographic design to gain information for this paper. Researchers become intimately involved with the respondents (Heppner et al 1992) throughout this investigation, collecting data by means of observations, questionnaires, informal interviews with residents, businesses, council workers and 'city fathers'. The case study design was used in this study with the aim to probe deeply and analyze intensively the multifarious phenomena that exist in Gweru city council. As residents of Gweru, researchers used their experience in the city and participation at different forums to inform governance discussion. Interviews were conducted to get the feelings of residents, businesses and city fathers on key governance challenges affecting the city. The research project interviewed 20 gender-balanced residents from 2 low density suburbs, 5 prominent business people from the city, Senga, Mtapu and Mkoba 6 suburbs of Gweru. These were informal interviews as researchers solicited information at public places, meetings and public debates forums in the City. Researchers also administered 30 questionnaires to conveniently sampled council workers to solicit their views on governance challenges bedeviling Gweru City Council. In distributing questionnaires to workers, stratified random sampling technique involving classifying respondents into categories like management, middle-workers, and low-ranked workers was used. A sample of each representative group was given 10 same questionnaires to enhance validity of information. A pilot run of the questionnaire was done and adjusted before adopting the final questionnaire that was later used. In few cases, snowball sampling involving chain referral to potential respondents by contacted workers through the use of their social contact was also used.

Various sources of literature like the Urban Councils Act, the Constitution of Zimbabwe (Amendment No. 20) of 2013, journals, books and other relevant sources of information were reviewed by scholars for corpus view of this issue. The information gathered constituted the contextual background of the study. Specifically, online and print media newspaper articles for government and independent houses was consulted to come up with balanced discussion of the challenges facing local governance of Gweru City.

Challenges to Local Governance

Political challenges

Information obtained by this research clearly decipher political gimmick as one of the challenge bedeviling City of Gweru in its execution of its duties. It is indicated that politics affect the effective running affairs at the Council. Elected Councilors, who are supposed to represent people, are alleged to be acting in partisan way to outwit perceived opponents from another party. In such political battles, they end up passing decisions favorable to the political group they belong instead of making decisions that benefit the city and its residents. Residents of Gweru claim that tenders were being awarded to party activists, who then supplied below standard goods and services to the council. When it comes to promotions at the City council, they are alleged to be based merely on the basis of how patriotic one is in the party rather than merit and performance. Favoritism also takes precedence in the awarding of business stands like tuck-shops to applicants. Such are favors given to party activists at any place they want, rather than to those with the capacity to run them at designated areas. In this regard, the paternalistic and political meddling in local governance affairs has reduced Gweru City Council to more or less extensions of party politics.

Even though local authorities are active in financial matters including planning, revenue mobilization and budgeting, the central government and politicians still exercise strong controls on their matters. Gweru City Council has been hampered by political mudslinging by both MDC – T and ZANU (PF) members limiting their autonomy to effectively execute their mandate. The political interference has been with ramifications to the service delivery endeavor as Bell (2002) noted that politics affects the governance of any institution. Notably, the interference by the Minister of Local Governance, Dr. Chombo under the GNU era, was of calculated deception on the part of the opponents from the MDC-T party to divide and rule them. For instance, when the MDC-T party fired Tedi Chimombe, a Gweru City Mayor from the Council and party in 2010 on allegations of corruption, the Minister reinstated him as the rightful candidate for the post. Members of the public often feel completely helpless in situations where politicians have allowed corruption to proliferate and are unwilling to replace incompetent but well-connected officials (Mumvuma et al., 2006). Reinstating of Mayor Chimombe was an unexpected move by Minister Chombo, with integrity and record of having fired corrupt councilors and Mayors from other cities like Harare (Mudzuri, 2002), Shoko of Chitungwiza (2006) and of late Stanley James of Mutare 2012 (Standard Newspaper 2012). The move had nothing to do with the development of the city, as political gerrymandering proceeded over

the need for competent local governance. Consequently, corrupt Councilors and Mayors take advantage of political polarization in the country and abuse their offices for personal benefit. Thus confirming the adage that “[w]hen two bulls fight; it is the grass which suffers”. This literally means that Gweru residents are disadvantaged as politicians fight for political space, forgetting their primary mandate to provide services to the residents.

Rampant corruption has seen widespread local resource wastage and inefficiency in local authorities in Zimbabwe. According to Kunaka et al. (2002:11) corruption is the behavior which deviates from formal duties of public role because of private pecuniary gains. This selfish way of running affairs has become a cancer in the governance of Gweru City Council. Councilors are alleged to corruptly facilitate access to vehicles, stands and other resources at a lower price than the actual prices. In some instances, they have flouted tender procedures to buy vehicles, stands for personal gain. Investigations by MDCT-T party found councilors to be corrupt in 2012 and suspended eight (8) out of the seventeen (17) councilors from the party for being corrupt in Gweru. The last resolution of the MDC-T party concerning the corrupt Councilors in Gweru was the suspension of four (4) and expulsion of the other four. Such cases of abuse of power for personal gain clearly unearth challenges of the City of Gweru in utilizing their resources to provide services to the people.

Three quarters (75%) of interviewed respondents, especially residents of Gweru point the failure by city fathers to provide services on corrupt tendencies by council workers and councilors. Council workers and councilors use City Council resources meant for public consumptions for personal gain. According to Kunaka, et al, (2002) when someone in a position of authority uses public resources for personal gain it becomes corruption. Residents lamented corruption by council workers on the lack of transparency on how things should be done by different departments of the City Council. This lack of transparency has resulted in workers asking for bribes for services rendered to unsuspecting residents. According to Kelsall, (2004) transparency is limited in most institutions as they lack information dissemination. Gweru City Council is challenged by residents for giving residents and other stakeholder's inadequate information. Information that is disseminated in most cases pertains to informing residents of shortages that would be looming like water cuts due to machinery failure or repair at Gwero water dam. Such information is transmitted through louder speakers mounted on moving vehicles. Though this is worth applause, information by City Council should also pertain to criteria for new opportunities like stands and clearly on selection mechanisms Council.

Respondents were of the opinion that council is not transparent in its governance. However, councilors

interviewed claimed to be transparent basing on the fact that city council notifies residents of any critical issues like annual budgets, water-cuts and developments in the city. Also, the city fathers claim to be transparent enough through notifying the sale of stands and auctioning of dysfunctional council resources to residents through adverts in local press like Gweru Times. However, residents have it that advertisements published in local and national papers are meant to fool the community into thinking that there is transparency yet there would be none of it. Stands, vehicles and other resources like machinery, tools and gadgets are allegedly bought by councilors and managers in deals that are exclusive to them. As such public stories have been written in the press about Gweru councilors and staff alleged to have bought trucks at low prices (Chronicle, 30 March, 2011).

An extreme case being that of a councilor that allegedly brought a Gweru City Council car for \$7.00 (Chronicle, 26 January 2012). Corruption takes precedence in all council activities as councilors benefit by virtue of strategic position. The issue of transparency is contentious in the local governance of Gweru city as residents do not benefit.

Mismanagement of income generating enterprises of local authorities was also found to be a challenge in Zimbabwe. Such facilities like grounds, beer halls and halls among other things are supposed to be hired to raise funds that cushion local authorities of their budgets deficits. However, these premises are not a significant source of the Gweru City Council revenues due to non-repairs and undercapitalization. Often, the management of such premises and funds remains questionable, as it lacks accountability and transparency. In some instances, there have been complaints to the effect that such premises are utilized by council workers and councilors without paying or defaulting paying rentals to the local authorities. This implies that the real benefit from such enterprises is incentivizing council workers, rather than the augmentation of municipal revenues.

Economic challenges

The provision of service in Gweru city like any other cities has been hampered by economic instability in Zimbabwe. The economic climate in Zimbabwe has seen dwindling of resources for the city council to adequately cater for the needs and services of the residents. Unfortunately, the city has been experiencing rapid population growth that comes with the need for more resources and services. Resources such as water painting chemicals could not be acquired on time hence high density; low income residential suburbs experience water shortages for days in Gweru. Weekly refuse collection on Mondays in suburbs like Southdowns, Mkoba 18, 15, 20, 17 and 16 could not be consistent hence dumping sites have

sprouted in those suburbs. Even in the central business district, (C.B.D) heaps of refuse are easily located due to vehicles breakdowns and lack of fuel to do so.

As the city council experience challenges, top-ranked workers are paid hefty salaries and benefits that gulp municipal coffers to the extent of seeing lower level workers going for several weeks and months without pay. This scenario reduces the morale of low-level workers, diverting their concentration at work to corrupt tendencies in a bid to supplement their meager late salaries. Also, this cancer is also affecting the newly recruited council workers to facilitate payment of parking fees in town. The junior-ranked tax collectors are alleged to be defrauding motorists by clamping vehicles at non-clamping zones and demanding bribes to cushion their paltry wages. As Dodo and Mateura, (2011) assert, uncertainty has a tendency to increasing corruption and causing conflict. Whenever there is uncertainty caused by economic instability, the consequence is an increase in corruption and lack of accountability.

Poor and old dilapidated infrastructure burdens local authorities with repairs. Most roads and sewers of the major cities including Gweru in Zimbabwe were initially put in place in the 1980s and 1990s and are constantly calling for repairs by the cash strapped councils. Constant sewer bursts are also blamed on old pumps that have never been repaired. The financial muscles of local authorities are constrained to do an overhaul of the dilapidated infrastructure. Most councils have limited finances as many residents default paying water and utility bills in full due to the volatile Zimbabwean economic situation, characterized by high rates of unemployment. This was worsened by the calls made by the Minister of Local Governance to scrap water and utility debts of the period between 2009 and 2013 for every Zimbabwean resident ahead of the 2013 Elections. Though the move was applauded by many defaulters, it undoubtedly prejudiced and incapacitated local authorities' efforts to repair, expand, and deliver water and effective refuse collection to urban residents. The woes of local authorities are exacerbated by the failure by government ministries and departments to pay for services rendered to them by the city councils, despite being allocated the funds to do so by the treasury. In most cases, defaulters are the political untouchables, thus affecting the willingness and power of local authorities to collect such dues and to effectively enforce sanctions on such defaulters. Jonga (2014) noted that provincial government offices are depriving local authorities of important revenues that are vital in financing effective and efficient service provision by non-payment of bills.

Social challenges

Councilors run cities by virtue of being elected by the

people during elections and are incapacitated and incompetent to embrace the mandates of Councils in Zimbabwe. Most Councilors are elected on a political ticket and are not educated to grasp the concept of good governance as enshrined in the Urban Councils Act. There are no academic or professional requirements for one to contest as a Councilor in Zimbabwe. The Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15 (1996:534) (Part V) in Section 40 (Qualifications for election as Councillors) states that;

Any person who

- (a) is a citizen of Zimbabwe; and
- (b) has attained the age of thirty years; and
- (c) is entitled in terms of section seventy to vote at an election of councillors; and is not disqualified from nomination or election as a councilor in terms of section forty one shall be qualified to be elected as a councilor.

This clearly shows that education is not a requisite for one to be elected a councilor in Zimbabwe, and highly qualified graduates amongst council workers and councillors are a rare species in urban councils (Jonga 2011). This is exacerbated by poor remuneration, working conditions and political bickering. In most cases the educated people do not participate as candidates for Council elections, as they dump politics a 'dirty game' and the post of councilor is considered not lucrative, thereby leaving the uneducated to take chances. Councilors without qualifications are of questionable competency as they cannot understand basic regulations like the Urban Councils Act [Chapter 29:15], the Regional, Town and the Country Planning Act [Chapter 29:12]. Often than not, council workers without qualifications hardly understand how the City Council should operate leading to inefficiency and ineffectiveness. Education and professional qualification entrench a leaders' understanding of issues and is therefore necessary. It is therefore a necessity for Councilors and any personnel employed in any public institution to be educated, so as to comprehend basic laws of Council governance and management principles.

HIV/AIDS scourge will continue to limit the capacity of local authorities in Zimbabwe's efforts to provide service delivery to residents. A Research in Tanzania reveals that the HIV/AIDS pandemic is threatening the efforts of local government to plan and implement service delivery and poverty reduction programmes in a sustainable manner. Though statistics for the prevalence of the disease show a 34% decline in the number of new HIV infections in Zimbabwe between 2005 and 2013 (UNAIDS 2013), the pandemic particularly kill the tax payers or incapacitate them to pay taxes, thereby accounting for many defaulters. In a similar manner, the disease has seen the death of council workers resulting local authorities losing human and financial resources in bereavement costs. Like in Tanzania, the pandemic has

been causing infected individuals to fail to continue managing their businesses and closing businesses, thereby causing the loss of potential tax revenue in the region (Mumvuma et al., 2006).

Strategies for Improving Local Governance in Zimbabwe

Improvement in the local governance of cities depends heavily on the political and economic stability of Zimbabwe. As highlighted, instability breeds corruption and fund embezzlement by those in power. Work towards development or institutional progress takes a back seat as those concerned focus on self-aggrandizement. Even though good city governance depends heavily on stability, other strategies to be highlighted below will also be of paramount importance.

Leadership at any level calls for dedicated and educated individuals with an understanding of the service needs of the people. Councilors should be apolitical in their delivery of duty, ensuring that promotions and demotions are based on merit not political allegiance. Mayors and councilors are expected to be educated so that they comprehend cross-cutting issues relating to council's day to day management. The research noted that councillors' analysis of legislation and the budget is extremely poor as they cannot unpack the relevant pieces of legislation, like the Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15, the Regional, Town and Country Planning Act Chapter 29:12 and Rural District Council Act Chapter 29:13. Five (5) Ordinary level passes should be a prerequisite for one to run for the councilor position. This is not even enough nowadays with the level of education and technological advancement, which calls for one to be well acquainted with them. In this case, the attainment of a professional course would be an added advantage to those seeking to be in position of responsibility.

Effective citizen participation is one variable missing in local governance of most local governance institutions in Zimbabwe. Gweru council gets residents' opinions during budgeting phase at the end of every year, so as to garner residents input. However the problem is implementation of discussed issues. Often than not, Gweru residents find their inputs missing in the final document or implementation stage. In the 2011 participatory budget meeting, residents had proposed the construction of public toilets for high density suburbs of Mkoba 18 and 20 but the development was not implemented as agreed and promised to residents. A clear indication that the council ignored input from its residents. It is against this background that city fathers should strive to ensure people participate and their views are implemented at the end. Whenever implementation of agreed upon policies fails, they should come back to the people to explain what would have caused the failure.

The other means to stop such shortchanging of residents by councilors and workers would be to have strong resident associations. As civil society, residents associations could help advocate for the rights of residents. According to the United Nations Development Projects Conference of 1997, the major role of civil society is to bring out the voice of the voiceless. In Gweru city, the Gweru Residents Association (GRA) and the Gweru Residents and Rate payers Association (GRRRA) should be strengthened and be positioned to petition the city fathers on matters of concern. These organizations should rise above political polarization between MDCs and ZANU PF to be reliable partners in clamoring for better service delivery. As independent non-partisan groups, they should focus on the needs and demands of residents only.

The Residents Associations in Zimbabwe must bridge the information gap between city fathers and residents, disseminating information on what is happening at public institutions. There is security in numbers hence advocating as associations is more powerful and fruitful than complaining while at home or writing newspapers articles. Residents Associations and city fathers should also strive to make sure residents participate in budget consultative meetings through public awareness, distributing posters and flyers when the days of crucial meetings draw close. Input by residents goes a long way in service provision through continuously reminding councilors of their mandate at city councils. Residents who constantly remind city fathers of their mandate are better serviced than those who do not bother to do so. In cases where city fathers fail to implement agreed issues and perform below par, Residents Associations should take advantage of the 2013 Constitution which clearly includes socio-economic rights, to mobilize residents to advocate for services.

Best practices should be adopted to deal with rotten governance of city councils in Zimbabwe. This should start at national level down to the local authorities. Specifically, the Minister of Local Governance should stop interfering with local authorities, especially with narrow political motives. Such intrusion by those wielding political muscles is usually for political mileage as opposed to safeguarding the interests of residents. Punishment of corrupt councilors and workers set a warning to other would be leaders. The suspension and expulsion of MDC-T councilors is commended in the search of good corporate governance. Intervention by political parties in that respect is commendable, as it seeks to bring sanity and smooth running of councils. Parties must be objective enough to control corrupt personnel elected to public offices through political parties to be accountable to electorates. However, political parties should take such moves with efforts for progress than political expediency of their perceived enemies or a mere reflection of internal political-party

squabbles.

City fathers are encouraged to engage the corporate world to capacitate them with resources and managerial skills for improved service delivery to the people. Given the economic woes Zimbabwe is facing in the first two decades of the 21st century, international donors and the corporate world are reliable partners poised to turn around the image of many cities, and wean many out of poverty. The actors are poised to channel resources to the critical areas like water harvesting facilities, refuse collection and repairing of infrastructure among others. Business people should be engaged to take part in renovation of infrastructure like roads, clinics and recreational areas for income generation to the council. Also, corporate businesses maybe a reliable partner in the provision of resources such as trucks needed by council to execute their duties effectively. Together with academic institutions and students, city council of Gweru can partner in research, awareness and clean-up campaigns to keep the city clean.

Re-aligning of the Constitution and local governance laws is paramount in ensuring good local governance in Zimbabwe. The local governance bill should be tailored to make it easier a resident to be engaged with local government through requesting financial statements or audited accounts from the city and even minutes of council meetings or change of use proposals. As such local governance bill should take advantage of the 2013 constitutionally guaranteed right to information to support citizens' informed participation in local governance. The Zimbabwean Constitution (Sec 62) states that;

“Every Zimbabwean citizen or permanent resident, including juristic persons and the Zimbabwean media, has the right of access to any information held by the State or by any institution or agency of government at every level, in so far as the information is required in the interests of public accountability.”

Moreover, local governance legislation must strive to create concrete ways for ordinary people to hold elected officials more accountable. It would be prudent if the local governance bill provides for a citizen to object the councilor on something and in return get prompt feedback rather than for the complaints to pile. There should be a requirement and obligation to respond to residents' concerns and the duty to engage in clear ways that ensure citizen participation. In that way the people 'driven' Zimbabwe's 2013 Constitution would have made things better for ordinary citizens, giving them a stronger voice in the decisions that affect our day to day lives.

Also, this paper calls for revamping of local governance systems and operations through re-introduction of the executive mayor-ship which empowers city fathers to deal with challenges beforehand. Ceremonial mayors

seem to be overpowered by the demands to run big institutions like urban councils. Political bickering and squabbling can be reduced if executive mayors are in office. The problem of political infighting which lead to reduced work performance can be redressed as executive mayors, elected by the people, would be legitimate and not tossed up by either their party or political opponents. In another note, councilors should have regular report back meetings with residents to bridge the communication gap and enhance accountability, transparency and participation of residents.

CONCLUSION

The poor service delivery in Zimbabwean cities is attributed to a combination of socio-economic problems within the country and in City Councils. Corruption, political interference by inter-party and intra-party members, and lack of effective participation mechanisms by the community are some of the political factors hindering effective service delivery. Economically, city fathers lack resources and are constantly gripped with non-payment of bills by government departments and politicians thereby prejudicing their capacity to service delivery. Other reasons also include the immaturity and incompetence of uneducated councilors and workers running local authorities in Zimbabwe and Gweru specific. All of the above problems affect cities in Zimbabwe, in varying combinations and to different extent. It is therefore imperative that local governance system be reformed and related pieces of legislation be enacted so as to revive and enhance good corporate governance, management capacity and financial mobilization. There is need for vibrant Residents Associations to advocate for service delivery, educated and focused councilors, workers and mayors who are adequately remunerated. The local authorities should embark on re-capitalization of their income generating activities. One may propose the devolution remedy as a solution to the governance challenges bedeviling local governance institutions in Zimbabwe. The Constitution (Amendment No. 20) of 2013 sells the devolution gospel and re-aligning Urban Councils Act and the 2013 Constitution must be looked at seriously if Zimbabwean local governance is to be rescued from the vagaries of bad governance.

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