

A clear silver lining: Insights from Citizen Engagement Practices in 17 Zimbabwean Councils

A Research Paper

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ACRONYMS

BPRA:	Bulawayo Progressive Residents` Association
CBM:	Community Based Maintenance
CBOs:	Community Based Organisations
CBP:	Community Based Planning
CE:	Citizen Engagement
CHRA:	Combined Harare Residents Association
CLGF:	Commonwealth Local Government Forum
CSO:	Civil Society Organisations
DDF:	District Development Fund
ESAP:	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
EU:	European Union
HSUP:	Harare Slum Upgrading Programme
JICA:	Japanese International Co-operation Agency
MDC:	Movement for Democratic Change
MITA:	Mutoko Informal Traders` Association
MNRDC:	Mhondoro-Ngezi Rural District Council
MOU:	Memorandum of Understanding
NANGO:	National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
PB:	Participatory Budgeting
RDC:	Rural District Council
SLB:	Service Level Benchmarking
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF:	United Nations Children`s Fund
USAID:	United States Agency for International Development
WASH:	Water and Sanitation Hygiene
ZANU PF:	Zimbabwe African National Union- Patriotic Front
ZHPF:	Zimbabwe Homeless People Federation
ZIMASSET:	Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation.
ZIMSTAT:	Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency
ZINARA:	Zimbabwe National Road Authority
ZINWA:	Zimbabwe National Water Authority
ZITF:	Zimbabwe International Trade Fair

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report follows a study of citizen engagement practices of seventeen (17) Councils in Zimbabwe. Ten (10) of these are rural and seven (7) are urban local government authorities. It captures i) the context within which the Councils are practicing citizen engagement, ii) justifications for adopting various citizen engagement tools and structures, iii) models and innovations, iv) impact of citizen engagement from their perspective, v) lessons, and vi) citizen engagement knowledge management and information dissemination practices. Data gathering used a semi-structured guide administered by the Research Team in each of the Councils. Council officials and purposively identified citizens (other than Councillors) were met during the study.

1.1 STUDY CONCEPTUALIZATION

For purposes of this study, citizen engagement was defined as the deliberate processes that Councils implement to identify different individuals, groups of citizens and organizations existing and operating within their Councils areas for purposes of:

- i) **Informing** citizens of developments in or actions taken by Council;
- ii) **Gathering** citizens' views before making, as they make and after making, during and after implementing policy or programmatic decisions including but not limited to Council Budgets; and
- iii) **Seeking** citizens' material, financial, technical or other support for and working with them on agreed actions.

The study thus conceptualized as non-coercive Council-citizen contact in the course of managing local public affairs. Emphasis was on Council-steered or facilitated contact. Views of Council officials and documents shared were validated through seeking the perspectives of citizens during this study. This perspective was framed within our understanding of local government as community where Councils are expected to engage with citizens as individuals, groups of persons and organizations in the management of local public affairs. Such engagement enables i) the making of effective decisions, ii) informed stakeholder and citizens acceptance of such decisions (including obligations arising therefrom), and iii) broad-based and voluntary support for the necessary actions towards actualizing decisions taken.

In theory and practice this makes for effective local governance defined in relation to democracy, local development, responsiveness and accountability. Implementing participatory governance is impacted by local and national socio-political dynamics, local democracy traditions and the economic architecture of a specific Council. Regional/Council level dynamics dictate the presence and strategic influence of different social, economic and political groups, their interaction and how they mobilize sub-groups like women, those who are disabled, young people and the elderly. Involvement or visibility of weaker and hard to reach members of any society is further affected by engagement and public participation processes and structures in use by Councils.

1.2 CE REGULATION IN ZIMBABWE

At a national level citizen engagement dynamics are generally regulated by the Constitution. Particular provisions of the Constitution of Zimbabwe 2013 have opened up strategic scope for citizen engagement in ways that force public institutions (Councils included) to make fundamental changes to their internal and external liaison as they manage public affairs. These provisions are captured in Sections 3 (1a to h on founding values and principles; 2a, b and f on governance principles), 9 (good governance), 13 (2 and 3 on involving people in formulating and implementing development plans as well as the right of the people particularly women to equal opportunities in development), 16 (3 on due respect for the dignity of traditional institutions), 17 (1a and c on full participation of women in all spheres of society and on access to resources) and 19 to 23 that cover specific social groups (children, youths, the elderly, disabled persons and veterans of the liberation struggle). Chapter Four (4) of the Constitution, particularly Sections 51, 54-62, 67 and 68, 71-77, define rights that local authorities (as a tier of Government, Section 5c) have a clear responsibility to deliver on.

The Constitution provides a framework that goes beyond representation by elected officials as implied in Sections 20b, 21:2a and d, 22:3d, 58-62 where reference is made to individual rights and opportunities to exact accountability from public institutions. These sections provide for different groups to establish structures for the furtherance of their lawful rights (e.g. Section 60:4) reflecting that citizen engagement proceeds in a multi-actor environment where individuals directly exert their agency and also through organizations that they form. The relatively comprehensive framework for citizen rights, the use of the concepts of citizen and community in the Constitution of Zimbabwe 2013 suggests broad participation going beyond but not necessarily contradicting representative democracy.

At the time of conducting the study new local government legislation aligned to the Constitution remained in process. However, policy instruments like the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET) made after adoption of the constitution commit to good governance principles. ZIMASSET refers to social equity, an empowered society (in the vision), creation of an enabling environment, setting up a sub-cluster on governance and performance management, and, among others promises a people-centred and citizen-friendly government and private sector (Clauses 1.2 and 1.7). The Government of Zimbabwe therefore formally commits to openness and good governance as per the Constitution of Zimbabwe 2013.

Newer laws regulating local governance and development institutions particularly on the environment and water sectors have structures and processes for citizen engagement. Local government laws however lack robust provisions for citizen engagement. This leaves the quality of practice to be dependent on the capacity of individual Councils and the level of organization amongst citizens. As such, Councils generally innovate within the confines of the law, local governance traditions and pressure from organized citizens. Participation tools or mechanisms applicable in one jurisdiction for instance with regards participatory budgeting may not work in exactly the same manner in another Council. Citizen engagement in Zimbabwe's local government sector is considered to be poor and practice in this area is

generally shallow¹ and done as a ritual especially around budget preparation. The number of Councils considered as doing well in CE is low. Citizen responses in the 2013 capacity assessment also confirmed this (Chatiza et al 2013a). Councils are not doing any better than central government in terms of facilitating stakeholder engagement and public participation² (see also Chatiza et al 2013). Realizing that the Constitution makes participatory processes mandatory the Ministry responsible for local government is putting pressure on Councils to enhance citizen engagement. Circular 71 of February 10th 2014 on gender and local authorities (Government of Zimbabwe 2014) is a good example of how Ministry was bringing Councils to act on the pressure arising from policy reforms citing the Constitution. Among others, the Circular refers to including gender in the key result areas of Chief Executive officers of Council, appointment of gender focal persons, undertaking gender-based budgeting, training of elected and appointed officials on gender, supporting participation of women officials in the Women Local Government Forum and providing gender reading materials. Ministry has also been able to make budget consultations compulsory (Chatiza et al 2013a).

Unfortunately, there are no common indicators to track CE. This makes support to Councils in this respect difficult. Other than anecdotal evidence, it is difficult to get critical data on which to base design and implementation of effective capacity development programmes on CE. This explains why the experiences of the 17 Councils provide a clear silver lining to the extent that they show something to build on. These 17 confirm that there are some Councils taking CE seriously. Council reports suggest innovations in this area, which justified the current documentation study. For instance, Mvurwi initiated stronger CE in solid waste management. It took initiatives to 'bin the town', improve monitoring of markets and has Solid Waste Monitors assigned to specific zones within the town. The performance and structures of health departments of Councils and also at individual facilities also reflect good practices that unfortunately are not being transferred to other departments. The City of Harare is cited as one Council where few departments led by the health department and followed by housing perform better in terms of citizen engagement.

1.3 STUDY BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) is implementing a project on '**Strengthening Capacity for Local Governance and Service Delivery in Zimbabwe**' with European Union (EU) financial support. The project targets 15 Councils³ in the provinces of Harare, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West, Mashonaland Central and Manicaland. Result three (3) of the project is on documentation of good practices in stakeholder engagement and public participation by local governments. This particular study pursued this result and sought to identify, analyse and document *inclusive strategies, systems and practices of stakeholder engagement and public participation* in seventeen (17) Councils.

¹Interviews with senior officials of the Ministry responsible for local government (November 2nd 2015, Harare)

²Interviews with senior officials of the Ministry responsible for local government (November 2nd 2015, Harare)

³These are Buhera, Chipinge and Makoni (Manicaland Province), Manyame, Marondera and Mutoko (Mash. East Province), Chirundu, Kadoma, Nyaminyami and Zvimba (Mash. West Province), Mbire, Mvurwi and Rushinga (Mash. Central), Harare and Chitungwiza (Harare Province)

Qualitative methodology was used for the documentation process. The 17 local authorities (Table 1) were selected from the 92 local governments (32 urban and 60 rural) in consultation with Ministry of local government officials, CLGF as well as consultation of available literature. Central government officials were asked about the Councils (urban and rural) which they consider to be doing well in terms of stakeholder engagement and public participation. Data gathering was done between November 23rd and December 11th 2015.

TABLE 1: STUDY COUNCILS BY CATEGORY AND PROVINCE

Rural District Councils	Province	Urban Councils	Province
1. Bikita,	Masvingo	1. Bindura,	Mash. Central
2. Chipinge,	Manicaland	2. Bulawayo,	Bulawayo
3. Gwanda,	Mat. South	3. Harare,	Harare
4. Insiza,	Mat. South	4. Kwekwe,	Midlands
5. Manyame,	Mash. East	5. Masvingo,	Masvingo
6. Mhondoro-Ngezi,	Mash. West	6. Plumtree, and	Mat. South
7. Mutare,	Manicaland	7. Rusape.	Manicaland
8. Mutoko,	Mash. East		
9. Rushinga, and	Mash. Central		
10. Umguza,	Mat. North		

Available literature reviewed (Chatiza et al 2013; Centre for Municipal Research and Advice 2010; Kamete 2009; Kwinjo 2009; Marongwe et al 2011) and anecdotal evidence from key informants showed other Councils as worth of including in the sample. Key informants added RDCs like Goromonzi, Runde, Makoni, Buhera, Mangwe, Zvimba, Beit Bridge, Chivi (for the ZIMASSET Village) and Pfura. Additional Urban Councils included Mvurwi, Gokwe, Kariba, Chipinge, Zvishavane, Ruwa and Victoria Falls. In 2015, Victoria Falls was second runner-up in the Service Excellence Awards administered by the Contact Centre Association of Zimbabwe (Financial Gazette 19th November 2015). Key informants noted that towns involved in the 14 Towns⁴ WASH project were receiving support to improve citizen engagement and report on that every quarter. Further, Service Level Benchmarking (SLB) literature was reviewed to explore progress regarding citizen engagement. Clearly therefore, it is fair to observe that there is a corpus of evidence of citizen engagement good practices in local government. The mixture of inspirations aside, this confirms that there is somewhere build from.

For the 14 Towns WASH Project this current study made efforts to access previous quarterly reports through UNICEF without success. Secondary analysis could have yielded useful information in terms of strategies in use, challenges faced and lessons. The study acknowledges the role of projects/programmes in setting up or expanding existing citizen engagement practices. However, this study adopted the perspective of CE being the essence

⁴Bindura, Plumtree, Gokwe, Chipinge, Mvurwi, Mutoko Centre, Chivhu, Shurugwi, Chiredzi, Gwanda, Rusape, Zvishavane, Hwange and Karoi

of local governance and thus not necessarily requiring a specific project to be undertaken. As such, to the extent that any Council exists citizen engagement ought to be visible.

For data collection each Council was covered by a Research Assistant over 2 to 5 days. Each Council write-up, among others included the following:

1. Context and justification of the Citizen Engagement experiences of the Council;
2. Narration of implementation (historical and current relating to what is being done or was done, when, by who, with whom, methods used and facilitating structures);
3. Results of Citizen Engagement implementation (outputs e.g. a policy, MOU etc), outcomes (recorded changes in behavior e.g. increased willingness to pay bills, attend Council meetings etc) and impact (difference at Council and in the community in terms of service delivery, service maintenance i.e. indicators of participation delivering tangible results);
4. Perceptions of citizens and stakeholders (how do they feel about their participation);
5. Lessons related to specific experiences or examples; and
6. Dissemination of good practices.

The process of writing up a Council case constituted the first layer of data analysis. The second layer involved consolidating insights from the 17 Councils. No comparisons were made between the experiences of different Councils. This report is thus a consolidation of different insights from the 17 local authorities organized around the themes as shown in the Report Structure below. A deliberate effort was made to steer data gathering conversations away from general local government challenges to those that relate to an area of good practice. That way the documentation process built on what each Council already acknowledged to be working in terms of citizen engagement to identifying areas for further improvement.

1.4 REPORT STRUCTURE AND ESSENCE

The report has eight sections. The first section introduces the study. It is followed by six sections that present the findings. These are i) the context within which the Councils are practicing citizen engagement, ii) justifications for adopting various citizen engagement tools and structures, iii) models and innovations, iv) impact of citizen engagement from their perspective, v) lessons, and vi) citizen engagement knowledge management and information dissemination practices. The last section starts with reference to generic constraints before concluding the paper.

The paper pulls together the positive citizen engagement experiences and innovations from the 17 Councils. It is not a compilation of 17 citizen engagement cases but an analytical report. Further, there is no attempt to make a bee-line between citizen engagement practices and policy or legislation. This is because Zimbabwe has had delays in the alignment of its laws to the Constitution. In most parts the paper mentions specific Councils whose good practice will have been used. As such, the goodness of the practice is based less on compliance with normative or policy provisions and more on self-reported outcomes and impact attributed to use of various citizen engagement tools and processes. While we

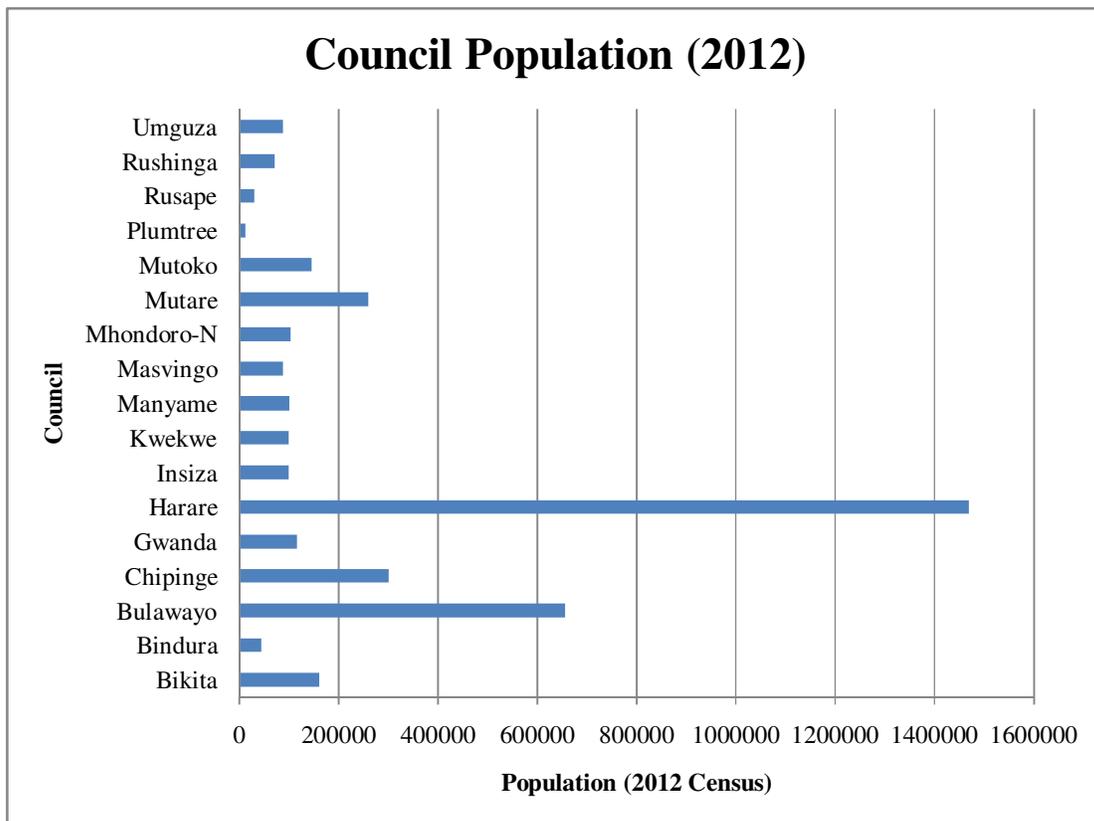
acknowledge that the 17 Councils are leaders on citizen engagement, we are not sending the message that in the 75 other Councils there is nothing happening. The message is that the names of the other 75 do not come up often when citizen engagement is discussed.

2.0 THE CONTEXT: POLITICISED POOR CITIZENS AND INSTITUTIONS

2.1 STUDY COUNCILS: POPULATION AND POVERTY PREVALENCE

The seventeen (17) Councils are of varying sizes in spatial and population terms. The smallest of the Councils in terms of population in the sample is Plumtree at 11 660 and the largest is Harare with 1 468 767. Each of the Councils has a distinct socio-economic architecture both historically and at present. The variation is in terms of both performance and regional-national importance. As a consequence, the kind of actors (citizen and corporate) in the individual Council areas are different making for unique prospects for citizen engagement. The Figure below shows the population variations across the Councils.

FIGURE 1: COUNCIL POPULATION

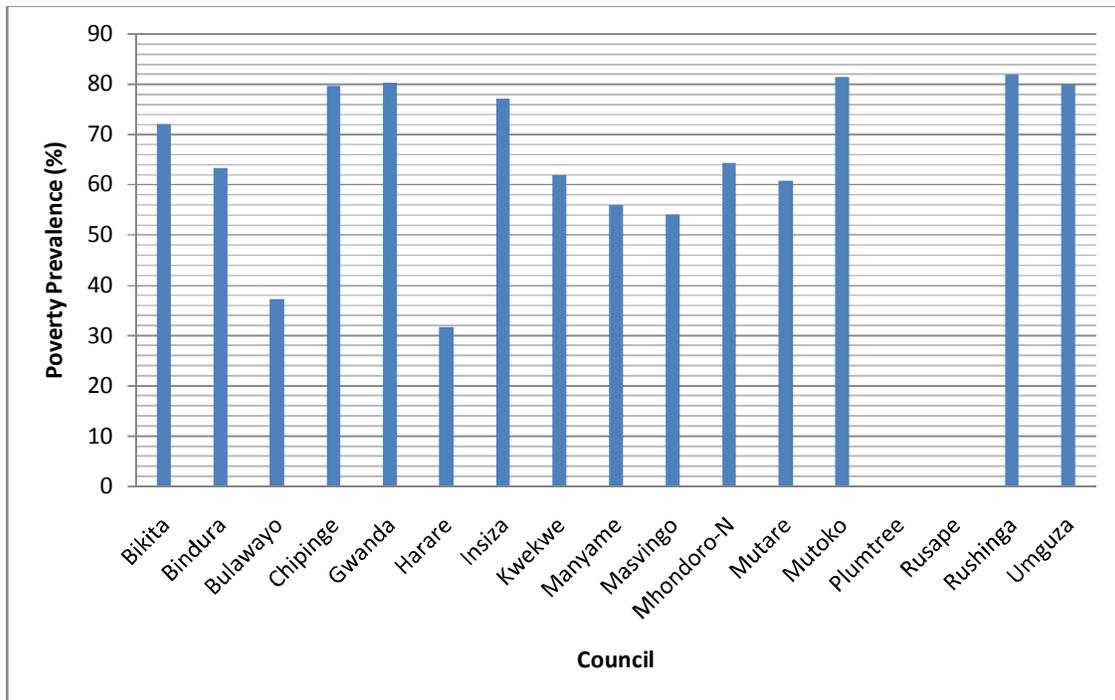


Source: ZIMSTAT (2012).

Using poverty prevalence as proxy for socio-economic performance i.e. delivery of socio-economic goods and services, the richest and poorest Councils are Harare and Rushinga at 31.6% and 81.9% respectively (UNICEF et al 2015). While in general the rural-urban poverty gap is high it is critical to observe that some rural Council areas have lower poverty

prevalence than some urban Council areas. In the 17 Councils for instance, Kwekwe at 61.8% has higher poverty prevalence than Manyame-Seke and Mutare at 56.0% and 60.7% respectively, which are rural. The graph below is based on the Zimbabwe Poverty Atlas-2015 (UNICEF et al 2015) presents the poverty prevalence rates of 15 of the Councils in the sample. For Plumtree and Rusape average prevalence figures were not computed though their poorest-richest wards had prevalence rates of 32.9-45.1% and 30-48% respectively.

FIGURE 2: POVERTY PREVALENCE IN SAMPLED COUNCILS



Source: UNICEF et al 2015

2.2 CE EVOLUTION IN STUDY COUNCILS

Despite the differences there are common contextual factors relevant to citizen engagement that the study found. Council informants painted a picture of their Councils evolving in terms of citizen engagement from erratic and problem or crisis orientation, closed and opaque systems, Council as expert institution making all decisions and ‘ploughing through citizen resistance’ during implementation towards embracing plural competences and decision making in consultation. The evolution was largely involuntary. Spatial, socio-demographic structures, local political layers and economic changes have been driving Councils towards new ways of conducting Council business. Related to these changes has been rising poverty (often used to justify inability by citizens to meet their obligations to Councils) and citizen unwillingness to pay for services both at a time when extra-Council sources (e.g. grants from central government) have become unavailable.

The economic and urban development informalization that started during Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) implementation (in the 1990s) continued post-

2000 as the economy shrunk and adopted a new architecture. The new economic structure was forced on the country in part by radical and extensive land reforms which affected vertical-horizontal industrial linkages, land tenure, ownership and development, food production and agricultural productivity, displaced socio-economic actors, disempowered some local development institutions and generally redistributed the population locally, regionally and nationally often with inadequate spatial and economic planning. Big cities like Harare and Bulawayo have witnessed serious de-industrialisation as availability of raw materials for the manufacturing sector got choked. Rural local authorities' revenue databases and overall legitimacy in the eyes of some of their 'new citizens' have also gone through seismic changes in recent years. Economic changes in the Council areas have eroded social development prospects hence rising poverty. In essence, Councils engage citizens in a context of economic under-performance, socio-political mistrust, poor service delivery by Councils and rising citizen demands for quality services. The emerging economic framework is fragile and seems unable to support effective local government. Social and political interaction has also been polarized post-1999 affecting citizen engagement. While the 2013 Constitution provides sound democratic values their operationalization is dependent on a politically and financially weak national government.

Zimbabwe's post-1999 local and national political landscape witnessed fierce competition between ZNAU PF and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The latter made early inroads into local government raising citizen expectations for local governance improvements. However, this somewhat inspired a ZANU-PF controlled central government to resist any sector reforms. In fact, a number of changes in terms of policy, legislative and administrative imperatives for central government oversight of Councils changed in ways that detracted from citizen engagement in some local authorities. The study learnt of disengagement by some local business people from longstanding support to and interaction with one Council. The withdrawal made political sense as it was considered difficult for stakeholders mobilized/engaged by a ZANU-PF controlled Council to continue with a new political leadership at Council. Senior Council staff (CEOs and Town Clerks) has also gone through difficulties in adjusting to the overly politicized contests to control Councils.

2.3 PROGRAMME-BASED BROADENING OF ORGANIZED STAKEHOLDER CATEGORIES

There has been an increase in the range of categories of individuals and organizations with which Councils engage. Support for citizen engagement for the sample Councils is attributed to programmes designed and implemented by local and international non-state development organizations. The USAID funded Urban Institute programmes, UNDP, UNICEF, the World Bank, JICA, GIZ, European Commission, Sida, Practical Action (ex-Intermediate Technology Development Group), the Municipal Development Partnership for East and Southern Africa, Africa Community Publishing and Development Trust, Women in Politics Support Unit, the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network, Dialogue on Shelter for Homeless People in Zimbabwe Trust, Gender Links, NANGO, Local Governance Community Capacity Building and Development Trust myriad other local non-governmental and community-based organizations are cited as having supported and innovated around

citizen engagement. The support has generally been framed as Participatory Planning and Budgeting, Gender-Based Budgeting or simply as local government and community capacity development. The non-governmental development organizations have brought in international good practices through their programmes with some of the supported activities involving local and international exchange visits.

The socio-economic and political complexity within which citizen engagement proceeds is thus a product of the efforts of citizens (organized and un-organized), state and non-state development organizations. This complexity is reflected in the categories of stakeholders in Council databases. The Table below shows the collated list of stakeholders that Councils engage (not in any order).

TABLE 2: CONSOLIDATED CE STAKEHOLDER CATEGORIES

Stakeholder Category	Presence on Council databases	
	Rural	Urban
1. State-Owned Enterprises or Companies	Yes	Low
2. Individual Private Sector Companies e.g. Mines	Yes	Yes
3. Departments of Central Government Ministries	Yes	Yes
4. Traditional Leaders	Yes	No
5. Residents Associations	Yes	Yes
6. Churches and Platforms of Priests	Yes	Yes
7. Development Partners (mainly national NGOs)	Yes	Yes
8. Local Farmers' Associations	Yes	Low
9. Market Vendors Associations	Yes	Yes
10. Special Populations (OVC, the elderly, the disabled and the chronically ill)	Yes	Yes
11. Artisanal Miners	Yes	Low
12. Informal Traders	Yes	Yes
13. Taxi/Public Transport Associations	Yes	Yes
14. Housing Cooperatives and other Housing CBOs	Low	Yes
15. Groupings of Tenants/Lodgers	Low	Yes
16. Local and National Leaders of Political Parties	Yes	Yes
17. Land/Housing Tenure and Residential Area-Based Groups	Yes	Yes
18. War Veterans	Yes	Low

Source: Fieldwork, 2015

3.0 CE TRIGGERS, MOTIVATIONS & SUSTAINERS

3.1 BUILDING ON EXISTING CE TRADITIONS

One of the reasons cited by key informants during the sampling process to justify selection was that particular Councils had longstanding CE traditions for planning, delivering services, anticipating problems and seeking solutions in a participatory manner. Related was their respect for long-term and strategic planning and a keen interest in being understood by residents especially on new taxes and levies during and after budget consultations. The study was able to gather additional rationales for the increased attention to citizen engagement

beyond budget processes (preparation, revenue collection and accounting). For RDC's the Prime Minister's Directive of 1984 and the structures it created as well as the 1985 Provincial Councils and Administration Act clearly communicated a citizen engagement thrust. Subsequent policy, legislative and institutional reforms in local government including but not limited to national capacity development and other project initiatives continued to anchor citizen engagement. Pre-independence centralized governance and post-1980 de-facto one-party state socialist ideology however sustained a top-down central and local governance framework throughout the first two decades of Zimbabwe's independence. This frustrated engagement but also forced citizens to develop and populate alternative spaces with the net result of creating new reform streams leading up to the Constitution in 2013.

3.2 SHIFTING COUNCIL FUNDING AND CE

Another fundamental influence for citizen engagement is the manner in which local authorities are financed. This explains why the growing interest in citizen engagement particularly for most rural local authorities surged during the height of economic challenges and after the adoption of a multi-currency regime in 2009. Engaging citizens was considered less important when financial support flowed to Councils through project and other grants from central government. Lower-rung participation in centrally planned activities was more prevalent with token local committees involved largely in labour and local material mobilization. The study learnt that the changing (shrinking) financial sustainability of Councils was one factor that forced Councils to engage citizens.

3.3 GROWING NUMBER OF NON-STATE ACTORS

The rising number of non-state actors involved in development activities in Council areas has forced CE onto the local government agenda. Rising associational life due to political liberalization (Kamete 2009) at a time of slowing down service delivery (Musekiwa and Chatiza 2015; Government of Zimbabwe 2010) also resulted in Councils seeking engagement. A number of local and international civil society organizations made efforts to engage Councils and to broker meaningful contact between citizens and Councils in project activities and 'dry capacity development'⁵ initiatives. Engagement has been over local service delivery issues, rights violations and national governance issues including local government and broader reforms (Chatiza et al 2013b; Musekiwa and Chatiza 2015; CHRA 2002, 2007, 2014; BPRA 2013).

The advent of community-established interest groups with some growing into formal CBOs and NGOs also gave impetus to citizen engagement. Some of these have become implementing partners of international development organizations including UN agencies creating further conduits for practical application of good practices in participatory development. This has been through advocacy work, building of Council capacities and strengthening citizen demands for Council responsiveness and accountability. The piloting of Community-Based Planning in Chimanimani and Gwanda RDCs as part of a three country

⁵Concept used to refer to organizational and institutional development that is not accompanied by direct implementation of physical projects of funding of Council or community activities

programme (Ghana, South Africa and Zimbabwe), gender-focused Centres of Excellence in Harare, Rushinga and among others Manyame and Participatory Budgeting in Mutoko are some of the examples of project-installed citizen engagement practices. Non-Council project implementation has become commonplace forcing Councils to engage with CSOs/NGOs and the citizens whose capacity is enhanced by participating in the different interventions. As such, CSO interventions in Council areas have acted as triggers, motivators (through material and non-material incentives) and sustainers of citizen engagement particularly through supply and demand side capacity building activities. The table below shows the different developmental roles that non-state agencies play in virtually every local government area.

TABLE 3: EXAMPLE OF ACTOR AND STRUCTURE MULTIPLICITY IN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT (INSIZA RDC)

Non-state organization	Wards covered	Sectors in which active
1. ORAP	2, 3, 4, 5, 17, 19	WASH, training and small-scale irrigation
2. Zimbabwe Project Trust	14,16, 18, 22	WASH, irrigation development and food relief
3. SNV	15	Capacity building for Rural District Council. Implementing Partner- RWIMS
4. World Vision	1 -9, 11, 12, 17, 19	Area Development Programme (ADP). Implementing Partner- WASH
5. InsizaGodlwayo Aids Council	10	HIV/ AIDS Programming.
6. Stabex'95	All wards	Rehabilitation of dip-tanks.
7. Heifer International	8, 9, 10	Livestock production and development.
8. Calben Trust	All	Capacity Building of School Management in procurement, environmental education and access to quality education
9. Jairos Jiri	3, 11	Rehabilitation services for people living with disabilities
10. Habbakuk Trust	All	Capacity building in decision making at Local Community level
11. Fort Rixon Environmental Education –FREE	14, 18	Environmental Education
12. Family Impact	13, 20, 21	Christian Life Family livelihood support
13. Silveira House	All	Sustainable agriculture and livelihoods, SMEs advocacy & support, local level leadership training
14. CeSHAR	All	Reproductive health, HIV /AIDS programming, mobile clinic
15. Population Services Zimbabwe	All	Reproductive health, HIV /AIDS programming, mobile clinic
16. Capernaum Trust	All	Schools fees support for disadvantaged pupils (OVCs)
17. Phumuza Share the Load	1-12	Educational support to OVCs

Source: Fieldwork 2015

Residents Associations in particular have agitated for citizen engagement often by challenging Council decisions, mobilizing objections to budgets, demonstrations, taking legal action (CHRA 2002, 2007; Chatiza et al 2013b) petitioning and picketing. For instance, the study learnt of how residents' refusal to pay a fire-related charge in 2014 was instrumental in

Kwekwe City Council acquiring relevant equipment. This followed an incident where two houses were burnt with Council being unable to respond as it lacked relevant equipment. It is important to note that such cases of resistance or objections is increasingly not mobilized through Council structures (e.g. Councillors).

Resolving some citizen-Council conflicts is no-longer possible without engaging alternative structures. Appointed Council officials have thus increasingly found the route of Councillors in terms of reaching out to communities challenged at Ward and Village/Neighbourhood level. This has often forced them to consider civil society organizations (business, community, religious and other representatives) and traditional leadership institutions to reach out. The particular case of resilient traditional leadership institutions (Chigwata 2015) alongside growth in the voice of key political groups like the Veterans of Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle has affected rural governance especially in areas where considerable post-2000 land reforms ensued (Hammar 2003). Study Councils acknowledged that multiplicity of actors and structures made citizen engagement imperative.

3.4 COUNCIL RESPONSES

The study found that known CE benefits and that it is a requirement for budget approval, the growing appreciation of principles of democratic local governance by Councils and variable service demands that require multiple delivery models (and actors) inspired adoption of CE. Interviewed CEOs emphasized that the not-for-profit nature of Councils meant revenue collection depended on citizen cooperation more than limited Council coercive powers. The limits are imposed by central government directives, local-national socio-political constraints, sustainability gaps, the socio-moral and financial costs of coercive local governance. On the strength of both push and pull factors the 17 Councils have adopted and somewhat perfected myriad structures and tools to facilitate CE. These are shown in the Figure below.

FIGURE 3: CE TOOLS AND STRUCTURES IN STUDY COUNCILS



Source: Fieldwork, 2015

3.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR CE

The combination of building on existing CE traditions, responding to funding shifts and the pressure from non-state actors characterizes a changing context for local governance in Zimbabwe. CE triggers, motivators and sustainers show different roles plaid by Councils, citizens and civil society organizations. These roles are performed in Council-led as well as CSO-led service delivery processes within an aid-dependent development planning and management environment. This context exhibits a cocktail of service affordability deficits, growth of informal economic and settlement activities, growth of new urban centres in RDC areas, urban sprawl and the shifting Council roles from direct provision of most (if not all) services especially in urban areas to planning and regulation has conspired to force Councils to seek engagement.

The dispersed nature of rural communities often used as a justification for non-engagement no longer holds. As such, the default CE preferences are being challenged by technology and better citizen organization making over-reliance on Councillors and traditional leaders difficult to defend. The rising number of densely populated rural areas including new urban centres and the CBOs working in rural citizens has closed previous CE gaps. In some cases citizens and CSOs have engaged provincial and national structures in ways that forced Councils to reverse or at least reconsider local decisions. Further, the structural changes to local government finance particularly encroachment into traditional sources by national agencies require engagement. Building strong local communities that can then engage central government on critical policy questions is thus getting clearer to Councils.

The background of proven CE benefits and growing citizen demand for good local governance (including active resistance of Council actions) in a context of clear failure of some services has acted to anchor CE practice. CE entrenchment has been relatively easier and farther in Councils with relevant longstanding traditions, lower incidences of political tensions (local-national) and positive delivery track records. The paper returns to this in the sub-section on lessons. Suffice to acknowledge that Zimbabwean Councils have generally lost considerable institutional clout, power and gloss in recent years. Under the politically and financially stressful circumstances obtaining currently the sampled Councils demonstrate clear efforts of going from one-off budget tail-end consultations to Council-wide inclusive governance. CSOs have also transitioned from confrontational advocacy and bandying of corruption accusations to engagement and capacity strengthening. Structures, institutional practices and capacities (skills, attitudes and knowledge) appear to lag but the intention to transform relations with citizens is evident.

4.0 CE INNOVATIONS AND SOME CASES

The framing of CE has evolved from concern with improving the quality of citizens' experience of and acceptance of Council policies and programmes towards enhanced engagement in decision making and implementation. The principal instruments around which

CE innovations have proceeded are budgets and plans. While there has been debate on citizen participation since the turn of the century this did not steer sufficiently robust legislative changes until the Constitution of Zimbabwe 2013. As such, radical CE innovations have not been inspired by formal institutional changes but rather the twin process of citizen agitation (itself in a context of pluralizing local-national politics post-2000) and continued impoverishing of local authorities by the centre. The latter flowed from central government's control of local governance and in its absence (or when reduced) destabilising Councils through a flurry of directives and other actions curtailing local good governance. This manifested in the establishment of national agencies appropriating revenue sources previously at the exclusive disposal of Councils. Development planning and financing model changes particularly inspired by land, water (ZINWA) and road (ZINARA) sector reforms are instructive.

Against this reality CE initiation flowed from 'new' planning and budgeting approaches. The study learnt how the introduction of new ways of planning and financing local development meant establishment of new (and often joint Council-citizen) structures and processes. The specific examples identified by this current study include the following:

- Community-Based Planning with decentralized training/facilitation and action teams in Gwanda, Bulawayo and Chipinge;
- Participatory Planning and Budgeting, Gender-Based Budgeting and Gender Mainstreaming in Manyame, Harare, Bulawayo, Mutoko, Kwekwe etc;
- Child-Centred and Community-Based Maintenance (CBM) programming in Mutare;
- Private-Public Partnerships in Kwekwe, Harare, Bindura etc and public-civil society sector partnerships across all Councils. The partnerships were trained on practically unblocking service delivery challenges;
- Participatory imposition of special levies for specific (and agreed) projects in Masvingo and Bindura related to water, sanitation and hygiene investments;
- District Assembly Forum in Mutare where all relevant stakeholders meet regularly and a Business Platform in Rusape, among other Councils;
- Ward-led invitations of Council to complement community efforts in Chipinge. Under this system a Ward (community and its political, social and other leadership structures) mobilizes financial and other resources for a particular intervention, identifies what Council should help with and invites Council to participate in the implementation process. The financial resources mobilized are not handed over to Council in this regard;
- Service delivery models that allow direct employment of residents on commercial as well as on compassionate grounds in Bindura. In the latter case, artisans are engaged to provide services to Council with part of their payments applied to offsetting what they owe Council. In RDCs ward-based road maintenance teams have also been established as part of employment creation but also to institute cost-effective labour-based service delivery approaches;
- Civil society-Council engagement of external stakeholders especially central government and state-owned enterprises around specific issues in Masvingo;

- Application of the plough-back principle where 10 to 30% of relevant revenue collected in a ward is retained for financing ward prioritized interventions. Chipinge, Bulawayo, Mutare, Bikita and Manyame are some of the Councils applying this practice;
- Agreeing Council-wide budget and actual expenditure priorities in Manyame where Council, among others now annually invests in a borehole per ward and one clinic;
- Participatory preparation and application of Terms of Reference for the community and Council on WASH in Plumtree;
- Clear (and almost standalone) Participatory Budget Performance Review in the City of Bulawayo that has three distinct activities of i) presentation of department or service sector-based performance reports to stakeholders, ii) broad-based invitations to public consultative meetings in all wards with additional meetings for specific target groups (youths, women and business) being held centrally, and iii) presentation to stakeholders to set service priorities. These processes occur prior to budget preparation which is step four (4) in a 13 step process. Other Councils engage stakeholders prior to preparing the budget, which then gets published (in the media and other channels) and acknowledged to the research teams that improvements were needed;
- Placement of ward-based revenue collectors who interact regularly with the community in Mutare. These are part of Council's finance department and regularly engage residents on their obligations, how Councils uses their money; and, among others
- Direct input into Council Committees on technical matters in Mutoko where some groups especially in ward 1 (Mutoko Centre) attend meetings of relevant Committees.

4.1 SOME SPECIFIC CE CASES

The case summaries presented above and in this sub-section neither portray the full extent of CE practices in the Councils nor do they invalidate any CE shortcomings that these Councils have. Their selection was from a richer corpus of cases known and unknown to us.

Civil Works underpinned by community in-kind payments to a private contractor: Insiza RDC

Insiza RDC has maintained 400km of its road network (including two medium-sized bridges) for the past 5 years based on a model where communities pay for civil works through in-kind donations to a private contractor who is also a corporate citizen of the district (J. R. Goddard). Community involvement is through i) payment for cement in-kind (one bag of cement for a bag of maize), ii) mobilizing local materials where needed and iii) providing unskilled labour. The contractor provides cement, brings all heavy machinery and skilled personnel not available at Council. J. R. Goddard recovers part of its investment from selling the maize provided (as in-kind payment) by the Insiza community. Insiza RDC Councillors in partnership with local leaders mobilize the communities and Council's Engineering Services undertakes the necessary planning and project supervision. Because of their active involvement from planning through implementation community ownership of the infrastructure is high. Further, Council's institutionalization of the model has also helped simplify relations. The direct swap (cement for maize) with the contractor is another area where simplification of partnerships has occurred. Pilferage and tender manipulation often

associated with 'Pandora's Box' project management has also enabled the communities to appreciate both the model and its management.

When conflict stalls development: Wabayi-Gqalaza Bridge, Gwanda

Political conflict amongst local institutions can stall development. The *Wabayi-Gqalaza* community and their leadership approached Council for support in establishing the *Wabayi-Gqalaza Bridge* across the Tuli River. Council did not object to the project but neither had financial resources nor were they the road authority for the particular road. Unperturbed the community engaged the District Development Fund (DDF, the authority for the road). However, conflict pitting MDC-T ward Councillors and war veterans in the community seriously threatened project implementation. Resolving the conflict required external facilitation as DDF and Council had made unsuccessful attempts before. Approached by representatives of youth and women's groups it supports in the area the Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights) facilitated conflict transformation. Its efforts resulted in a collaboration that involved Council, the reconciled local community, Zimrights and DDF. The new bridge, commissioned on November 13, 2015 connects the two communities (wards 6 and 7, Gwanda RDC) to vital services at *Simbumbumbi Clinic*, *Gqalaza Primary and Secondary Schools* in Ward 7 and *Mtshabezi Hospital* in Ward 6. This has improved all year round access to key services. Council, through the local leaders (Councillors and traditional leaders) mobilized the community who provided labour and local materials, identified a local builder and paid for their services. DDF designed the bridge, supervised implementation, provided earthmoving equipment and 200 bags of cement.

Upgrading a Neighborhood: Bindura

In 2013/ 2014 Bindura Municipality engaged Chipadze residents (Ward 11) to address the problem of bursting and blocking sewer pipes. Council had failed to resolve the problem for a very long time in the 'Singles Quarters' of Chipadze known as "*Kuma One*". Residents were engaged through Councillor-convened meetings. They volunteered to dig trenches, lay and cover the pipes while Council provided all the material and technical expertise. Other Councils like Gwanda, Shurugwi, Zvishavane, Chikomba, Gokwe, Chipinge and Chiredzi who are part of the 14 Towns WASH Project have visited Bindura to learn from this and other initiatives exhibiting citizen engagement. These include activities of Health Clubs involved in cleaning up unofficial dumpsites in Chipadze Suburb. The Clubs are engaged in peer education to help educate fellow residents on the importance of good hygiene.

It is Our Dam: Rushinga

Residents of Rushinga Rural District Council have long been engaged on street naming at urban centres in the district, allocation of rural land for business centres and infrastructure development especially classroom blocks at Council Schools. This tradition has contributed to citizen-initiated mobilization around specific projects with active coordination by the Councilors. On 09 June 2015 residents of Wards 8, 9 and 13 met to resuscitate the

construction of Katiri Dam. As captured in their minutes, 485 households from 22 villages have started bush clearing on the proposed dam site. The community members set up sub-committees for project implementation. These are for i) Supervision, ii) Material Receiving and Control, (iii) Buying/Procurement, and (iv) Fundraising. The dam site was pegged more than a decade ago but the project did not attract funding for its completion. Residents have decided to resuscitate the project by themselves. Minutes of meetings held indicate deadlines for completion of certain tasks.

Zimbabwe's Most Customer-Focused Council: Bulawayo

Bulawayo City Council has several mechanisms for interacting with residents. These include suggestion boxes, complaints registers, through the area Councillors and writing to the office of the Town Clerk. To tap into new technology for enhanced interaction with residents the City uses platforms like Facebook and Twitter. The Suggestion Box in particular has not been effective and user friendly. That the many different methods still exhibited gaps



prompted the City to establish a 24hr Customer Service Call Centre in 2012 with the support of Australian Government (AusAID). The Call Centre meant enables rapid interaction between Council and stakeholders on local governance service delivery issues. Council was supported with 7 computers and two printers for the Call Centre under a UN Habitat implemented 'Strengthening Citizen's Participation' programme funded by the European Union and Sida. The City also went on a learning visit to the Cities of Johannesburg and Cape Town in South Africa to view established Call Centres under the UN Habitat programme. The Call Centre system uses a computerized system to receive and log calls from residents and forward them to relevant Council departments for responses. Residents can also request for emergency services like fire and ambulance, report burst pipes and sewers, refuse collection, street lighting and make queries on their bills and give feedback to Council.

When a resident calls to make a formal complaint e.g. burst water pipe, the nature of the complaint/issue is logged, the complainant issued with a reference number and those to whom it is forwarded call the complainant for additional details before attending to the issue. Relevant Council personnel attend to issues forwarded to them by the Call Centre and report back to the Centre with an update on their response. The Centre then informs the complainant of the City will have done. Whilst other mechanisms such as complaining through the area councillor, walk-ins are still being used, the Call Centre has improved communication with residents and stakeholders and this has restored confidence in the city. The Call Centre initiative assisted Bulawayo City to win the public sector award as the most customer-focused local authority in Zimbabwe.

Pounsely Community Road Rehabilitation: Mutare

Mutare RDC responded to a community request to rehabilitate a key feeder road by the Pounsely community. The road was in a bad state and was inhibiting the free flow transport slowing down the development of the area. Council's Engineering Department engaged the community in assessing the extent of damage and work to be done. This was done with active community participation and both parties (Council and the community) agreed to raise resources to rehabilitate the road based on an agreed implementation schedule. Council provided machinery and technical expertise during the works. Engineering of Civil Works were demystified allowing for the community to understand the cost of the project further building mutual trust between the two.

Labour-Based Road Maintenance Units: Chipinge

Chipinge RDC has initiated a number of community based projects meant to attract funding for improvement of service delivery. One of these is the establishment of Labour-Based Road Maintenance Units. These were piloted in Ward 18 where a Task Force led by the Engineering Department consulted villagers leading to the formulation of a strategy to directly engage the community in road maintenance. The proposal was adopted by Full Council after which the Task Force facilitated the creation of 120 village road gangs which were provided with a set of relevant tools. The communities in Chipinge where the model is being rolled beyond Ward 18 and Council have set the target of making all access roads always passable through the Labour-Based Road Maintenance Units. Establishing the Units has also generated employment opportunities. Able-bodied residents who are part of the road gangs are paid from resources "plough backed" into their Ward. This development motivated people to pay their development levies as they saw service provision was improving – good access roads and they were also benefiting monetarily.

Getting citizens to see where their money goes (and more should go): Kwekwe

Kwekwe City has developed a culture of engaging its citizen on budget preparation and implementation. The focus of the engagement is slowly graduating from a ritual to ensuring a common understanding on the challenges faced by Council and citizens as a basis for developing the most appropriate strategies to improve the City. The 2013 and 2014 budget cycles witnessed the initiation of deeper engagement on budgeting in Kwekwe. City authorities had realised every year residents resisted upward tariff reviews, which was particularly affecting work on the City's Water Treatment Plant. Council took two (2) resident representatives (1 male and 1 female) per Ward on a tour of the water works. This was to ensure that citizens understood activities at the water works, the facility's current status and proposed works to be undertaken. The tour enabled residents to appreciate the purification process up to when it is pumped to consumers. After the tour the residents who had undertaken the tour provided feedback to fellow residents and were the ones justifying the need for the water tariffs to be raised for refurbishing the purification plant.

From suspicion to collaboration: Mhondoro-Ngezi and its Corporate Residents

MNRDC was created in 2008. Many of its different stakeholders (artisanal miners, big mining companies, small scale and commercial farmers, the general public and leaders of local institutions) had different expectations. For some of these groups the Council had come too close to them compared to the previous Councils from which the area designated as the new Council was excised. As such, they needed to be engaged. It is also within this period (2008-2015) that the politics of the Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Act as well as the Community Share Ownership Trust were hot public policy issues creating both high expectations on the part of communities and some anxiety on the part of mining corporates (ZIMASCO and ZIMPLATS in particular). For Council engagement was for asserting its authority and to plan. Further, Council has not been too legalistic about exerting its influence especially regarding what citizens are supposed to pay. It has used more of open dialogue, which has helped ease tensions with the big corporates. Critically however Council also realized that some of the tensions with companies had more to do with national policy development and implementation that it was itself responsible for or within its purview. Relations have improved between Council and its key stakeholders including the community.

Towards an Inclusive City: Harare's Embracing of Slum Dwellers

The Harare Slum Upgrading Programme (HSUP) is a five-year collaboration that started in 2010. It involves the City of Harare, Dialogue on Shelter for the Homeless People in Zimbabwe Trust (DOS) and the Zimbabwe Homeless People Federation (ZHPF). Funding is by the Gates Foundation's Global Development Program on inclusive Municipal Governance. HSUP has an eight member Programme Management Committee comprising the City Council (4), DOS (2) and ZHPF (2) with a mandate to oversee programme implementation. The HSUP goal is building a partnership between the city and the urban poor and its focus has been on i) assessing/enumerating Harare's Slums or informal settlements, ii) selecting (with Foundation participation) a site in the city for targeted investments, and iii) implementing activities in response to needs identified during assessments/enumerations.

HSUP implementation benefited 480 families in the slum area of Dzivarasekwa Extension who now own houses with secure tenure (249 sectional and 231 individual titles). 37 456 families in 62 Greater Harare area slums have formal contact with the City for the first time with residents of some entering Council's Waiting List. 47 residents of Gunhill Squatter Camp were formally allocated stands by Council in its Chizhanje/Mabvuku project. The slums were identified and profiled improving availability of relevant data for Council and other stakeholders. Further, the 52 000 families who form ZHPF in Harare and other local authorities learning from the project have also grown from the engaging the City, entering into formal agreements on slum definition and upgrading protocols, redefining planning procedures and working alongside the City's professionals to co-design and put up model houses and on-site infrastructure Dzivarasekwa Extension. The urban poor (ZHPF and other

non-members) have also influenced water and sanitation innovations particularly adoption of Ecosan Toilets in Dzivarasekwa.

Councils like Bulawayo, Kadoma, Kariba, Epworth, Masvingo, Chinhoyi and Mutare have visited and learnt from HSUP. Harare City professionals in Housing and Community Services (now Corporate Affairs and Housing), the Chamber Secretary's Department, Engineering, Urban Planning and Health Services were practically exposed to inclusive and pro-poor urban development and governance. The exposure has resulted in some policy shifts to facilitate community-led settlement upgrading and funding innovations for installing housing and basic services with the poor (see Chitekwe-Biti 2014; Chatiza and Nyoni-Mpofu 2014). The transformations were from the top (Mayors Masunda and Manyenyeni) with the former receiving the UN Habitat Scroll of Honor in 2012 in recognition of his efforts of engaging with the urban poor under the HSUP project. A Harare Slum Upgrading Strategy was developed, relevant by-laws reviewed and Council formally approved an allocation of USD120 000 towards a Harare Slum Upgrading Finance Facility set up under HSUP.

There is more to 'the Plough Back': Bikita

For every dollar levied Bikita Rural District Council ploughs back USD0.30 for development in the contributing ward. The localized 'pot of money' becomes a real 'carrot' around which to engage residents. The focus has been on developing and rehabilitating community infrastructure. Council engages communities to identify development interventions. Over the years specific projects have arisen from adoption of this policy by Council. These include Chibvure Clinic (Ward 28), a nurse's house and ablution facilities at Ngorima Clinic (Ward 29), Mapovomhovo Clinic (Ward 9), Odzi Clinic upgrading (Ward 3), Maranganyika Clinic (Ward 18) and Uyerera Clinic (Ward 11). The scheme has also funded repairs to damaged bridges (Gangare in Ward 21 and Chirorwe in Ward 20), storm drainage rehabilitation at Nyika Growth Point (Duma, Ward 13), maintenance of feeder roads and establishment of community gardens in all 32 wards. The civil works financed from the 'plough back' have also strengthened local economies, generated employment, allowed imparting of relevant lifeskills as implementation is often integrated with social development programmes like HIV and AIDS awareness, campaigns against gender-based violence, sanitation and hygiene messaging. Improved access to basic services and better Council-citizen communication also increased payment of rates or levies by the citizens.

The 'miracle' of special levies: Masvingo

Masvingo City has planned and financed a number of projects to completion using special levies. These are agreed upon with residents following engagement on specific projects. Engagement tools used include local and international exposure for both Council officials (elected and appointed) and selected residents. The augmentation Water Treatment Plant was among the first of such projects funded by a special levy following a joint visit to the Zambian City of Kitwe in 2011. Those who went on that were exposed to how the City of Kitwe had implemented a similar project using CE processes complemented by a special levy. The projects saw an increase in the volume and consistency of supply to the growing

population of Masvingo. The second project was the installation of a dedicated power supply line for the Sewer Treatment Plant based on a sewer levy. This investment reduced the number of sewer bursts in the city. CE with the special levy instrument has also been applied to road rehabilitation initiatives in Masvingo. To date three (3) roads have been rehabilitated using roads levy funds. Initial opposition to the roads levy based on the risk of the City double-dipping (from local and national sources through ZINARA funds) were dealt through engagement with the City sharing information on disbursement trends from ZINARA. The special levy strategy has worked in Masvingo largely because residents are able to see where their money is applied and the benefits are traceable.

A Centre of Excellence on Gender-Sensitive Budgeting: Manyame

For the two consecutive budget years of 2012 and 2013 Manyame RDC was recognized as a “Centre of Excellence for Gender Mainstreaming in Local Government”. This was due to Council’s active engagement of women and girls in shaping development priorities. Issues affecting women and girls, previously overlooked now find space in Council development plans and budgets. Women also form the majority at meetings where Council engages communities on development issues. Manyame’s CE good practices flow from the gender mainstreaming support Council received from Gender Links. Further, with a female CEO and Chairperson currently Council has also been effective at operationalizing relevant existing national policies and Ministry guidelines on gender. The building of relevant community capacity to respect women’s rights to participation is also bearing fruit as women and girls now freely articulate their needs at community meetings. Specific priorities that now feature on Manyame RDC budgets include waiting mothers’ shelters at clinics, establishment of new and rehabilitation of existing water points, construction of new health and education facilities.

Decongesting existing services together: Plumtree

Like other fast growing urban centres Plumtree Town Council realised the need to build a new primary school. Children from the new Matiwaza residential area and other suburbs such as Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle and George Silundika were congesting other schools in the town. They were also travelling longer distances compared to the other children in the town. Given limited resources, the Town Council resolved to engage the community for their input. Three cycles of engagement were implemented; first was a ‘donor conference’ was called where the community and other stakeholders including NGOs and local businesses took part, second were separate meetings with stakeholder clusters and a final joint meeting. In each case the focus was on the problem of limited school places, Council’s proposal for a new school, strategies for harnessing resources and implementation modalities. Council’s pitch consistently on how the community could partner it in the construction of Matiwaza Primary School. Facilitation at the final meeting was done by a teacher from a local school as part of promoting citizen participation. An Advisory Committee drawn from government institutions, business, Council and residents was set up to coordinate the school project. The community provided labour, locally available materials including molding bricks with youths

conducting a fundraising marathon for the school whilst the business community provided most of the manufactured building materials.

Qabangisisa i Bulawayo yakho: the real CBP

The City of Bulawayo implemented community-based planning (CBP) between 2009 and 2011 as part of UN Habitat support on strengthening citizen participation. A total of 166 CBP Facilitators were trained. This included the 29 Ward Councillors and up to 5 community members per ward. All wards were able to prepare plans in a participatory and engaging way. Ward residents were involved self-assessments, reflection and planning based on identified priority issues. Techniques on which the CBP Facilitators were trained and used to gather and analyse data were i) historical timelines, ii) livelihood and well-being analyses, iii) institutional Venn-diagrams (institutional mapping and analysis), iv) strength-weaknesses-opportunities-threats (SWOT) analyses, v) visioning and setting key result areas and vi) action planning. Priorities set in the Community-Based Plans included i) improving the cleanliness of neighborhoods, ii) establishment of cottage industries and vending sites, iii) transport and iv) review of by-laws. The contribution of the CBP process to Bulawayo's residents was that they were able to engage with their socio-economic circumstances, reminisce about how certain aspects of their areas came about and used to work, seek to understand the performance of existing socio-economic facilities, understand the roles of different institutions and use relevant insights to come up with plans. The thinking and horizontal engagement processes enabled trans-generational sharing of insights and drew Council and communities closer. It also helped Councillors be visible as champions of participatory ward plans. 21 of the 29 (72.4%) Bulawayo Wards prepared and submitted Ward Plans to Council. Council's Research and Contracts Management Unit helped with the packaging of the plans into documents that are being referred to up to now. The by-law review agenda that Council has followed over the years was influenced by the CBP process.

'Organize and get involved in Council structures': Mutoko

Mutoko RDC is one of the first Councils to implement civic engagement through *Participatory Budgeting* (PB) from 2001. This was under the Pilot Programme on Developing Local Governance by the Zimbabwe Government with USAID funding. The programme sought to enhance citizen participation in economic and political decision-making with intermediate results of i) improved civil society organizations' representation of citizen's interests, ii) more effective and accessible selected sub-national government institutions, and iii) local authorities more capable and open to citizen input. Activities implemented in Mutoko included preparing a comprehensive list of stakeholders by theme, spatial location and interest representation through a consultative process. Council identified informal traders, welders, vegetable vendors, carpenters, transport operators, black-granite miners, farmers, teachers, churches, health personnel, law-enforcement agents, war veterans, commerce, industry, women associations, political parties, government departments, Councillors, village and ward committees and traditional healers and leaders.

The next step was developing a system for the various groups to feed into the local authority system i.e. unobtrusive complementing of the efforts of the elected and appointed Council officials. This resulted in the development of unique links between the existing groups like traditional structures and institutions while engaging (on an ongoing basis) other groupings to become organized. The principal focus at the time was pre budget consultations. Each association in the Council area is encouraged to form an administrative committee to aid communication and consultation with Council in a formal way. All the known associations in Mutoko like Mutoko Informal Traders Association (MITA), Home Industries, Vendors and Residents Associations have substantive committees and constitutions. They have standing invitations to Full Council meetings (quarterly) and other Committee meetings (monthly). Council now holds pre and post-budget meetings annually at village, ward and district levels.

4.2 SYNTHESIS OF CASE HIGHLIGHTS

Opening up spaces for engagement

A number of observations can be made from/about the cases presented above. There is a general opening up of spaces for engagement, shortening the cycles of planning, financing and delivery of needed services. The shortening of the cycles is proceeding from locating development conversations closer to where the services are (i.e. where the citizens are). In the process the often technical walls around service delivery planning, financing and delivery are pulled down. It is like opening the Pandora's Box which Mutare, Bikita, Chipinge, Insiza and Gwanda, Bindura and, among others, Masvingo cases show. Another point to make is that CE helps reduce suspicion and tension (Mhondoro-Ngezi), supports the search for application of more pro-poor and inclusive Municipal governance (Harare) that unblock seemingly intractable service delivery challenges (Bindura) and reorganize the local governance institutional architecture (Mutoko). Local or citizen-established structures in this case (and in Rushinga as well) reflect the ultimate in local ownership of the development agenda including Council itself as direct participation becomes possible (and normal). Further, it enriches if not ease the role of Councillors making for better performance.

Social Inclusion

Previously hard to reach groups like women and girls can be put at the centre of development debate with the weight of Council's technical and financial resources put behind their project choices (Manyame) while conflicts that would continue to stall development get resolved through state-civil society partnerships to leverage real change (Gwanda). The Gwanda case shows a different understanding of the oft-conceptualized enabling environment as formal laws and regulations to one focusing on relations at a much more operational (grassroots) level. The other conceptualization of 'enabling environment' for development is demonstrated in the Bulawayo CBP case. In this particular case the agenda for the review of by-law was generated by the CBP process. In essence these

Institutional reforms & practice transformation

The cases show two distinct areas of transformation. One is internal to individual Councils by staff and Councillor including setting up flexible CE platforms like Bulawayo's Call Centres and Public Relations Unit. Some of these innovations were discussed in section three and amount to a decidedly transformative 'opening up if not demystification' of Councils. The second relates to community-level transformation including growing realization of the challenges being faced by Councils prompting citizens (individual and corporate) to be more approachable by their Councils than hitherto. As such, demand and supply side transformations have ensued across all 17 Councils albeit asymmetrically. As noted earlier the transformation remains incomplete, shallow and structurally constrained by a combination of local-national political polarization and resilient mistrust of Councils amongst citizens. The increasingly formalized stakeholder databases and engagement fora are acting to sustain transitioning from the traditional fixation with elected representatives as principal if not only conduits for public participation.

5.0 ARE THERE CE RESULTS? COUNCIL PERSPECTIVES ON IMPACT

The cases discussed in the section above reflect considerable benefits to citizens and Councils. These CE benefits accruing to the 17 Councils can be clustered into three categories of i) service improvements, ii) relations with citizens and iii) structures and participation. This section discusses these in turn with examples to illuminate how citizen engagement is benefiting the Councils.

5.1 SERVICE DELIVERY BENEFITS

There are specific projects that have been implemented following application of CE in the Councils. The projects span the whole array of services that Councils deliver and maintain. Critically, i) the actual selection of the projects and policies, ii) their location, and iii) the nature and extent of citizen contributions sets apart the projects the Councils cited from others implemented without CE. Specific examples from the study include:

- Installation and rehabilitation of bridges and making roads more passable with community and local private sector input in Insiza, Bikita, Umguza, Rushinga, Mutare and Gwanda;
- Establishment and refurbishment of clinics and waiting mothers' shelters in Manyame, Bikita, Mutare, Rushinga, Gwanda, Umguza and among others in Insiza;
- Establishment of a school in Plumtree, the two classrooms per year plan in Manyame and teachers' houses in Bikita's ward 29;
- Siting a new business centre in Rushinga. Village heads held a minuted meeting on this;
- Rehabilitation of water and sewer lines in the Kuma 1 area of Bindura;
- Community gardens in all wards and road tarring at Nyika Growth Point in Bikita;
- Refurbishing Budiro Clinic and the Green Energy Project (solar traffic lights) in Harare;
- Water and sanitation improvements in Tsanzaguru and Crocodile suburbs in Rusape;
- Enactment of local legislation (by laws) for improved business regulation (including the informal sector) in Plumtree and environmental management across all Councils;

- Initiation of recycling in Masvingo and Bindura, Ingwe Road rehabilitation, water and sewer augmentation in Masvingo;
- Improved sanitation and hygiene standards at the Mutoko Informal Sector Market, which is managed by Mutoko Informal Traders Association (MITA); and
- The Bulawayo Public Transport Policy, establishment of the Solid Waste Improvement Platform, Bulawayo Landfill Development and special water pipeline levies (Insiza and Epping Forest lines).

Improvements in service delivery were reported to be anchored on reduced ratepayer resistance. For instance, some Plumtree residents reportedly come forward uncoerced to negotiate payment plans. The City of Harare was offering a 30% discount on accounts paid up by December 31st 2015. Other Councils noted that CE had improved citizen understanding of Council planning and budgeting in ways that boosted revenue inflows. Bindura, Masvingo, Kwekwe and Bulawayo had started observing reduced vandalism of Council installed facilities and littering. Partnerships with the residents and local private sector contributed to reduced service delivery costs in Kwekwe.

5.2 IMPROVING COUNCIL-CITIZEN RELATIONS

The implementation of CE was seen as reducing tensions and transforming institutional behaviours at Council and within communities. This is helping to empower citizens and communities in terms of relating to Councils. In general this provides realistic scope for inclusive governance. Investments in improving mutual understanding of roles by both CSOs and individual Councils and installation of local facilitation capacity within existing and new structures were reportedly sustaining positive relations. Council-Resident Association relations have also seen marked improvements across the major urban centres.

CE has influenced Councils to institute changes to communication content and process. Increasingly the Councils are communicating their performance regarding revenue collection and application, service delivery outcomes and challenges being faced more than hitherto. Councils are reducing bureaucratic and technical ‘fortresses’. This is resulting in more informed citizens. For instance, the water works tours in Bindura, Masvingo and Kwekwe, among other Councils enabled citizens to understand their cities’ water value chains. For Bindura, this facilitated agreement on water availability scheduling and demand management measures. Bulawayo City has always had this tradition of water availability and demand management transparency. Improvements in this area were also reported and corroborated by non-Council sources in the City of Harare and other study Councils.

Work on gender mainstreaming and social inclusion has strengthened social cohesion. Consequently, budget allocations towards projects targeting women and girls are being supported more than before. Councils reported that citizens were increasingly having confidence in them, CSOs were participating in Council activities more collaboratively, own initiative citizen visits to Council were increasing and traditional leadership support was increasing (e.g. in Bikita). Departmental and Council-wide stakeholder databases were also

facilitating engagement. Implementation of citizen priorities was also communicating stakeholder recognition by Councils easing tensions.

5.3 NEW SPACES AND STRUCTURES FOR PARTICIPATION

Beyond Council and Council Committees a number of more innovative spaces not seen as exclusively controlled by Councils have been created. Some of these are ad hoc and temporary while others are being institutionalized. Issue-Based Task Forces or Committees, Business Platforms and Councils' recognition of a broadening range of voluntary groups (see Figure 3 above) are creating scope for more participation than hitherto. The entering of these institutions on databases further facilitates ongoing contact.

Beyond Committees the Councils have also created spaces that respond to the need for CE. Examples include the Harare Mayor's Feedback Sessions, Budget Advisory and Executive Committees, Bulawayo's General Purposes Committee, the Solid Waste Improvement Platform and the practice of having its Councillors in strategic Corporate Boards (e.g. ZITF) and Mutare's District Assembly Forum. Manyame RDC has institutionalized an Annual Forum with national private sector organizations operating in its area (Econet, Net One, Telecel, Telone and Mining Companies). CBP work in Gwanda is credited with some changes to provincial development planning structures and processes in Matabeleland South.

The study noted limited institutionalization of processes of engagement with citizens (individual and corporate). The Council meeting in form and structure imposes limits on direct engagement beyond observation. As such, the groundswell of CE innovations is anchored on good practice, varies by Council and thus is dependent on the passion and skills that elected and appointed Council officials in place possess. Existing legislation and central government guidance on CE are arguably inadequate.

6.0 CRITICAL CE LESSONS

The 17 Councils have drawn a number of lessons from the combination of CE implementation benefits which include; i) service improvements, ii) relations with citizens and iii) structures and participation). The lessons drawn relate principally to Councils and are at the levels of citizens, Council and at the macro level.

In terms of lessons directly related to citizens a key lesson is *practical and meaningful respect for community priorities sustains citizens' interest in engagement*. Where the priorities are respected citizens feel engaged, respected as a core part of Council activities, begin to value the local authority and tend to start going out of their way to cooperate with Council in support of its efforts. Inviting stakeholders and/or citizens to meetings and other spaces for deliberation is only one part of the process. Strengthening the deliberation processes through implementation of agreed actions and jointly reflecting on outcomes of such implementation enhances chances of future engagement/participation. In general, where citizens understand their Council and their role in its work they tend to work better with it.

Additional to the above lesson is the importance of ongoing mutual learning, general respect and capacity development from as many joint actions as is possible (learning from and by doing) and carefully planned and facilitated training of those in the forefront of CE at Council and the community level. Not all those who are formally expected to steer CE processes (Councillors, appointed officials of Council and different types of community leaders) have the right skills, value and understand its importance. As such, broad or universal and uncritical support for CE should not always be assumed to exist at all levels. Council officials (appointed and elected) need sharper governance skills to effectively facilitate CE.

Attitudes and the practical actions of senior Council management and political leaders (Mayor/Chairman and CEO/Town Clerk) are critical particularly in the determination of who is engaged, allocation of resources towards CE activities and implementation of what is agreed. Successful institutionalization requires senior officials (appointed and elected) to be active in CE processes. Further, they should not be seen to be creating the impression or sending the message that some stakeholders are more important than others. Where Council leadership engages citizens its supervision of subordinates or colleagues improves and citizens feel respected. This is because the strategic visibility of Council leadership at grassroots levels makes Council decision making spaces more accessible to citizens. A deduction made by the study in this respect is that executive stability and clear succession planning at Council aid CE institutionalization. This occurs through building of institutional memory and enhanced capacity to treat different stakeholders fairly.

CE processes require flexibility consistent with learning and interest contests. Care needs to be taken to establish checks and balances as well as institutionalization of ad hoc processes lest CE outcomes consistently reflect interests of more articulate or simply noisier and organized groups ('elite capture'). In balancing and managing competing interests and groups it is critical to avoid the 'tyranny of the majority and better organized' as this tends to exacerbate inequality. As such, systems for orderly and transparent shifting from basic to strategic, informal to formal are needed. A related lesson is balancing devolved ownership and driving of CE and Council-wide vision including considerations for equity. This is because while CE processes are adapted to different social, political and economic citizen clusters the focus of the engagement is on making a whole-of-Council impact. Ensuring that the 'whole is more than the sum of its parts' thus requires framing CE in a strategic manner. CE around vending and urban public transport presents this particular challenge of subjecting the interests of one group (itself disaggregated) to those of others and the Council as a whole. Related to flexibility is the need to practically operationalize the often cited 'open door policy' adopted by Councils. Because the door could potentially lead to no one (and no decisions or responses to citizen demands) care has to be taken to create actual CE structures and systems. The Public Relations, Customer Care and suchlike functions need better attention than hitherto.

Councils that lead on CE have learnt that stakeholders and their interests evolve, new groups and interests also emerge over time and CE processes need to be open to this reality. The different stakeholders understand, affect and are affected by issues differently and view Council responses differently based on their value premises. Because Councils are principally

political institutions and policy makers/Councillors are politicians CE is therefore a political process. The individual and collective politics of Councillors affects their role in Council and the community with implications for Council performance overall. Councillorship is thus an important area for ongoing CE.

Councils' financial propriety and prudence have pride of place in CE. Successful CE processes do not skirt money issues. This is because meaningful CE leads to practical actions or delivery with financial implications. Prudent investment of often scarce resources and providing evidence of such propriety begets further support thus strengthening CE. The provision of evidence implies openness on the part of Council to present successes and failures with reasons and follow-on actions. Such communication is at the core of building trust in Council.

A central or inter-Council Focal Platform for CE learning, action and reflection would enhance the practice including consolidating meso and macro policy making. The Ministries responsible for local government could steer this in a demand-responsive way within the overall framework of policy and law development in light of the Constitution of Zimbabwe 2013. An allied lesson is that the whole governance system has to show commitment to CE. This should be seen in how non-Council institutions at the local, provincial and national levels conduct their business. This can be seen in the way they respect citizens' priorities and institutions including Councils and CSOs.

Lastly, CE is a key instrument for development planning and coordination. Its role in the building of relations and understanding goes beyond statutory structures and processes. A consequence of this is that multiple communication platforms and media are needed as part of boosting and democratizing reach. Going beyond statutory structures and processes found expression in installation of local facilitators providing traction to CE processes.

7.0 CE KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

The lessons drawn by Councils have been consolidated into knowledge products and disseminated using a variety of methods. The documentation and dissemination processes have however not been sufficiently systematic and widespread. The principal dissemination routes have been the formal structures of Council Committees, reports to the Ministry responsible to local government, staff forums, videos and documentaries, newsletters, pamphlets/flyers, Council calendars and the local authority associations. Staff forums hold provincial and national level meetings with some producing and publishing papers like the Housing Directors for urban areas. A 2012 publication by the Forum included CE good practice cases and standardization of procedures on working with cooperatives and other community based housing organizations (Chatiza 2012). Those running Newsletters/Magazines are Bulawayo (*Masiyepambili*), Harare (Sunshine News), Masvingo (*Chindingwana Cheruzivo*), Plumtree (*Tjedza*) and Mutoko (Mutoko Times). The two

Ministries responsible for local government have exhibited gaps in terms of processing CE-related material shared by Councils to distil relevant policy guidance.

ICT platforms are complementing the use of notice boards (Council and non-Council), physical letters and use of social networks to pass on and receive information as part of CE. An increasing number of Councils are including citizens in exchange visits to other Zimbabwean local authorities around specific issues. Bindura, Bulawayo and Harare have hosted other Zimbabwean Councils learning about different thematic issues. Insiza, seconded its staff to Bubi RDC on CE and related knowledge exchange. Teams from Masvingo, Harare and Bulawayo have visited Councils locally and internationally as part of existing twinning arrangements.

Additionally there are CSO/NGO organized learning and sharing platforms. An example is the spaces that Gender Links organizes for the Councils on its programmes (Manyame, Harare, Bulawayo, Masvingo, Kwekwe, Umguza, Bindura, Rushinga and Rusape). Councils also mount pavilions at regional and national trade exhibitions like Agricultural Shows and the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair. The City of Bulawayo is planning its own exhibition to be branded 'My Bulawayo Explore' to enhance residents' ownership of the city. Additional information and CE mechanisms relevant to knowledge management include holding media briefings, inviting the media to cover Council events, holding feedback meetings, press advertisements or notices and sponsoring a regular column in a local newspaper (Masvingo). Urban Residents Associations have also become a key conduit for information dissemination.

The media management framework in Zimbabwe has generally not been open enough to allow more robust engagement. For instance, despite being government at local level Councils are also required to notify the Police to meet with residents. Failing that proposed interactions do not occur. Further, low cost mass media communication (especially community radio stations) controlled by Councils or CSOs existing in their areas is absent. This has limited CE and general dissemination of information. The efforts of two Harare-based private radio stations (ZiFM and Star FM) while inadequate to cover the many Councils that could potentially benefit from this medium is showing how much radio could aid meaningful CE. This gap is consistent with the deficits in the deepening of Zimbabwe's national and local democracy.

8.0 CONCLUSION: DEEPENING CE IN ZIMBABWE

The study shows thriving CE experiences in the 17 Councils and how it can be deepened across Zimbabwe drawing on the lessons highlighted by this study. However, current CE practices are focused more on pre-decision consultations and information dissemination than post-decision and implementation engagement. The good experiences from these Councils are against a background of local and national constraints to effective CE. Some of these challenges relate to closed organizational structures and cultures at Council level and in the rest of government. Inter-agency competition within and across local, provincial and national levels also exacerbates mistrust and entrenches knowledge asymmetries that frustrate

engagement. Some of the asymmetries are deliberately created and sustained in the process of pursuing polarizing party-based political interests. Some stakeholders' scepticism of Council processes arises from a history of having been mobilized by one political party or politician to undermine the functionality of a Council controlled by another party. The case of informal and mainly pavement vendors in Harare is instructive in this instance. As such, the real importance of Councils as public institutions has in some instances been undermined. Non-formalization of some CE methods or mechanisms also creates discontinuities against previous encounters with Council non-responsiveness. These contradictions need urgent resolution.

It is fair to suggest that Zimbabwe has a generation that isn't fully aware of what a fully functional local authority is and more importantly what it means for their livelihoods. The informality around land and housing access, chaotic public transport system not fully run by the state since 1991 and, among others the multi-provider yet generally incompetent model for public service delivery (in the employment generation, economic regulation, water, road and sanitation sectors) has practically unhinged citizens from local public institutions. The practical settings of local governance inherent in good CE have been negatively affected if not destroyed. The 17 Councils show critical resilience in terms of retaining a modicum of local Council relevance and valuing of citizen input as a pillar of good governance.

Because of the recent state-led informalization of public service delivery especially in land and housing citizens may be forgiven for imagining local development being possible without viable Councils. However, the bane of tenure insecurity that firmly detracts from full connection to the formal urban and rural local authority services and by extension the rest of the national economy is decidedly re-asserting importance of viable Councils. National resource pillage and high-level corruption have been a direct result of 'killing institutions' for political expedience. Home demolitions and land dispossession often without full due process reflects the high prices payable when viable and democratic Councils are ignored. The reverse is also true to the extent that Councils that renege on engaging citizens and protecting fundamental rights become so irrelevant as to be ignored by citizens.

As argued in this paper CE is local governance. As such, Council leadership of CE is both a means to local government building and essentially why Councils exist. While the absence of a national policy framework has not stopped the leading Councils on CE from implementing it such a framework will help weaker Councils to embrace the practice. Addressing existing weaknesses in CE knowledge management would help adoption of good practices. This study confirms that good practices exist beyond the few local authorities usually mentioned in terms of having rapport with citizens. More work is however needed to conduct longitudinal studies on CE around the key lessons and impact identified by this current study. The innovative CE structures (both formal and ad hoc or project-specific) also require deeper analyses particularly to draw implications for existing local authority structures, the role and quality of Councillorship as well as inter-governmental relations in a devolved system as provided for by the Constitution of Zimbabwe 2013.

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