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Review

Increasing participatory space in Zimbabwean local governance democracy

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The purpose of this paper is to unpack the extent to which citizen participation has been enhanced in local governance in Zimbabwe. The paper points out that citizen participation in local governance have proved to be of significance to all decision-making processes. Legislative provisions guiding citizen participation in local governance in Zimbabwe are prescribed in the Urban Councils' Act of 1996 which seeks to involve citizens, through Residents Associations and other institutions. In addition, sections of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, which provide for citizen participation were given in the paper. The author concluded that the commandist approach to governance, a mind-set of the liberation movement, has spoiled citizen participation in Zimbabwe.

Key words: Democracy, local governance, participatory democracy, participatory space, third world states.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to establish the importance of citizen participation in decision-making processes at local government level. Concerted effort is required for providing solutions to problems affecting institutions and organisations. Citizen participation in governance processes, in general and in local governance, in particular, affords every citizen the chance to participate in deliberations that would make institutional decisions all-encompassing. Through participation, private individuals get the opportunity to influence public decisions. Communal ownership of decisions seeks to exonerate any one individual from blame and enhances transparency and trust.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Citizen participation is a process which provides private individuals an opportunity to influence public decisions and has long been a component of the democratic decision-making process. Citizen participation and involvement in community affairs varies, ranging from when one's willingness to pay taxes, obeys the law or through getting involved in the electoral processes where the individual contributes to the decision making process. The terms "citizen" and "public," and "involvement" and "participation" are often used interchangeably. According to Mize (1972), the term "citizen participation" and its relationship to public decision-making have evolved without a general consensus regarding either its meaning or its consequences. Mandaza (1998) maintains that popular participation connotes the process by which the efforts of the masses themselves are combined with those of central government. On the significance of citizens' participation, the World Bank (1997) maintains

that people are the means and end of development. The World Bank further points out that "…the centrality of participation and decentalisation arises from a realization that development in Third World states cannot be achieved by bureaucratic means alone (Mandaza 1998).

DEMOCRACY

Mandaza and Sachikonye (1991) define *democracy* as the phenomena based on the participation of common citizens in political debates and consultation Gale and Hendee, 2009) view democracy as citizens' involvement activities in relation to government planning and policy-making. Democratic decision-making, in contrast to bureaucratic or technocratic decision-making, is based on the assumption that all who are affected by a given decision have the right to participate in the making of that decision. Participation can be direct in the classical democratic sense, or can be through representatives for their point of view in a pluralist-republican model (Shar, (2007).. Mandaza and Sachikonye (1991) point out those criteria for evaluating policies in a democratic process are the accessibility of the process and/or the responsiveness of the policy to those who are affected by it, rather than the efficiency or rationality of the decision (1986). In a democracy, the public determines where it wants to go and the role of its representatives and bureaucratic staff to get them there. In other words, ends should be chosen democratically even though the *means* are chosen technocratically (Shar A (2007).

Models of democracy

There are a number of models of democracy. They are representative democracy, parliamentary democracy, liberal democracy, direct democracy and socialist democracy. For purposes of this paper, socialist democracy is relevant in that it encompasses participatory democracy as one of its tenets. Participatory democracy is a process emphasizing the broad participation in the decision making of constituencies. Participatory democracy strives to create opportunities for all members of a political group to make meaningful contributions to decision-making, and seeks to broaden the range of people who have access to such opportunities (Seligman, 1992).

Governance

Governance is the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations

and mediate their differences' (UNDP, 1997), cited in Mandaza, 1998: 30). The UNPD further distinguishes between economic governance, political governance and administrative governance. Local governance falls under political governance because in Zimbabwe, citizen participation in local governance is synonymous with political governance, given the partisan nature of the electoral process in City Councils and municipalities.

Types of citizen participation

Folscher cited in Shar (2007) differentiates between two broad types of citizens' engagement, which are distinguished by the degree to which citizens enter the action space of the state in planning for, allocating, using and monitoring the use of public resources. In the first set of participation, citizens do not attempt to take over or partner with the state in the budget process, but instead undertake activities in the broader public domain that are aimed primarily at improving the transparency of government's actions and the accountability of state actors. This type of participation is within the boundaries of both representative democracy and more autocratic forms of government. The second set of citizen participation, citizens engage in the decision-making processes of public agencies. This set of citizen participation, seen as a form of direct democracy, deploys different intensities and levels of participation, as cited by Mc Gee. McGee (2003), cites in the World Bank (2007) distinguishes four types of participation. These are *information sharing*, where the state puts budget and public policy information into the public domain; *consultation* in which the state puts in place mechanisms such as forums, councils, and referendums or surveys to gather information on citizen preferences. These mechanisms acted as opinion polls, providing for *joint decision-making*. This is a scenario where citizens are given the opportunity to express their views and become involved in the active decision-making process. This process also provides for *initiation and control by stakeholders*, a situation where citizens have direct control over the full process of developing, raising funds for, and implementing projects or policy, as in social fund and community-driven development projects.

Rationale for citizen participation

Marysse and Palmans (2003) argue that deprivation of citizens by the state can bring about vulnerability, powerlessness and voiceless-ness. According to Wright and Hyman 1996), many agencies or individuals choose to exclude or minimize public participation in planning efforts claiming citizen participation is too expensive and time consuming. Yet, it is important to gauge public opinion public involvement. Many citizen participation

programmes are initiated in response to public reaction to a proposed project or action. However, there are tangible benefits that can be derived from an effective citizen involvement programme. Austin et al (1993) identify five benefits of citizen participation to the planning process. These are the availability of information and ideas on public issues; public support for planning decisions; avoidance of protracted conflicts and costly delays; reservoir of good will which can carry over to future decisions; and spirit of cooperation and trust between the agency and the public[1].

Citizens will voluntarily participate in a community activity when they have an appropriate organizational structure available to them for expressing their interests. If they view the organization as cumbersome, time consuming, dictatorial, or grossly inefficient, they will not join, will withdraw after joining, or their dissatisfaction may be evidenced by high absenteeism, or a general unwillingness to be supportive or cooperative[2].

Citizen participation is a desired and necessary part of community development activities. Spiegel (1968) defines citizen participation as the process that can meaningfully tie programs to people. Spiegel further argues that despite the angle from which one looks at citizen participation, it all boils down to community involvement in the decision making process. In citizen participation citizens feel that they have an obligation to both their communities and to future generations. Citizens frequently participate because they feel an obligation/commitment to respond (Babchuk and Booth, 1969; Kreps and Donnermeyer, 1987; Harry). Gale and Hendee, 2009). Passewitz and Donnermeyer (1989) state that "altruism is rarely sufficient by itself to sustain motivation for joining and remaining involved in volunteer associations." Their personal values compel them to support a particular activity. However, Marysse and Palmans (2003) prefer the technocratic decision making process, arguing that citizens often lack technical expertise and can be emotionally involved in issues of concern rather that being detached and rational (Marysse and Palmans (2003).

Facilitating citizen participation

Having seen the importance of citizen participation in policy formulation and implementation it goes without saying that ways and means should be formulated to sustain citizen participation in all facets of life. The foregoing discussion does not exhaust the possible conditions which stimulate or impede participation in voluntary community development groups and activities. However, insight for increasing citizen involvement is suggested.

[1]
[2] http://ohioline.osu.edu/cd-fact/l700.html (Accessed 26 February 2008)

Citizen participation can be facilitated by stressing the benefits to be gained. This will work only so long then the benefits must become obvious. The intangible benefits as well as the tangible should be emphasized. These are frequently omitted and are, by far, the true gains of community action. Citizen participation can also be facilitated with an appropriate organizational structure available for expressing interest. This may require organizing a more neutral group than may be in existence in a community. However, in some situations, existing groups are adequate. Situation judgment is required by persons with appropriate experience and competency.

Helping citizens find positive ways to respond when their way-of life is threatened can facilitate citizen participation. Most people want to act responsibly. These situations can help people find positive ways to deal with threatening predicaments. Citizen participation can be facilitated by stressing the commitment or obligation participants have towards improving the community. However, people will not continue to participate unless the experience is rewarding, or at least not too distasteful. Crisis situations have long been successfully used as a basis for gaining citizen participation. Crises should not be invented but, if they exist, they become powerful motivation. The closing of a major plant, closing of a school, loss of train service, and a major drug problem are examples of threats to a people's way-of-life that have served as rallying points for citizen participation.

The most positive of all approaches to facilitate greater participation is to provide citizens with better knowledge. Obviously, the knowledge has to be in their value system. When it is, experience shows they usually act accordingly. Adequate time and means of diffusing the new knowledge must be employed for satisfactory results. Helping new or potential volunteers feel comfortable with the group probably has the greatest potential for getting and keeping citizens in community development work. This aspect is often overlooked because people are reluctant to say why they are uncomfortable. Reasons often given are that they are too busy or do not have time. But, they really are uncomfortable with the group. Careful consideration of these problems can greatly reduce these concerns.

Improving citizen participation

Having identified the benefits of citizen participation it becomes necessary to sustain it in the community. There are a number of ways that can be manipulated to improve citizen participation in strengthening policy. Citizen participation can therefore be improved by highlighting the benefits to be derived from a given endeavour. It is advisable to identify appropriate groups receptive to citizen input. It is also mandatory to orient and conscientise participants. Facilitators should help citizens find positive ways to respond to threatening situations

and to stress the obligations which each participant has toward community improvement. There is need to provide citizens with better knowledge on issues and opportunities. Lastly, facilitators should help participants feel comfortable within the development group

Factors hindering citizen participation

Participating as a member of a community development group may present a variety of obstacles. Some of these invisible blocks make potential participants uncomfortable. Membership is directly related to socio economic status (Lane, 1959; Milbrath, 1965; Harry et al., 1969; 1971; Stern and Noe, 1973; People with lower incomes, less education, less occupation status, and lower levels of living are less likely to participate in voluntary associations than persons of higher brackets. Marysse and, Palmans (2003) concluded that participation in organizations was disproportional to the upper occupational categories. These differences are reflected in values, expectations, and life styles. As a rule, the differences tend to make people uncomfortable. Stated positively, citizens will voluntarily participate in a community activity when they feel comfortable in the group or when they have vested interest in the objectives that the group or associations seeks to achieve. This will make the participants feel being part of the group and the solution.

Murray et al. (1954) identify "fear" as a condition that undermines citizen participation. Three conditions, associated with fear, often cause people to feel uncomfortable in group activities. First, they sometimes feel inferior. This is a fear of exposing one's ignorance, whether real or imaginary. Most people feel inferior under certain circumstances. The high value placed on education in this society sometimes causes people with less educational achievement to feel inferior. Second, a newly organized group often attracts people of diverse backgrounds, experience, and training. While this diversity is often a good thing, it nevertheless casts people into unfamiliar roles and situations. Familiar situations make most people happy. Thus, when one cannot predict what is likely to occur, the volunteer usually experiences anxiety (fear of the unknown). Finally, marked differences in style of dress and language bring apprehension and a fear of being ridiculed. If the differences are great enough, they may result in a loss of participation.

CASE STUDY: CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN ZIMBABWE

Citizen participation in local governance surfaced in 1980, with the attainment of political independence in Zimbabwe. This is when the new democratic

dispensation in the country introduced the election of municipal and city councillors and ceremonial mayoral portfolios Urban Councils Act(1982). The Act was subsequently amended in 1984, 1986, 1990, 1994 and subsequently in 1996.Citizen participation in local governance manifests itself through legislative provisions of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, specifically the Urban Councils' Act (1996). The local government portfolio falls under the Ministry of Local Government and it is through the Urban Councils' Act and the Ministry of Local Government that all processes pertaining to citizen participation are provided for. The Urban Councils' Act formulates how various Local government institutions in the country should conduct their business and how private citizens should be incorporated in the formulation and execution of policy.

Citizen participation: A historical perspective

In the colonial times, civil society in Zimbabwe operated clandestinely as civic organizations, social associations, labour movements and social clubs. It took the form of passive resistance against colonial rule. From the early 1900s, the majority of these associations had their social and cultural roots in rural and migrant labour communities, and included religious groups. With the advent of greater industrialization and urbanization in the 1940s and 1950s, township residents associations emerged with the aim of challenging the white economic and political order. The increasing number of workers in urban areas during and immediately after the Second World War, coupled with the growing labour crisis of labour reproduction in urban and rural areas, led to the growth of trade unions whose organizational strength was unprecedented (Moyo et al., 2000).

The growth of trade unions in the 1950s and 1960s coincided with the growth of nationalist political organizations and provided Africans with a broad civic forum in which to organize and develop some form of political accountability to constitute a national identity. This saw the formation of reform-minded organizations such as the National Home Movement in Matabeleland, the Rhodesian Bantu Voters' Association, the Rhodesian Native Association, the Southern Rhodesia Native Welfare Association, the Southern Rhodesian Bantu Congress and the Southern Rhodesia Native Missionary Conference. These representative associations continued to facilitate dialogue with the authorities for citizen participation in governance processes throughout the 1970s, simultaneously giving moral support to the nationalist struggle that brought about political independence in 1980.

Remarkable events unprecedented since the massive nationalist politics of constitutional decolonization, have been sweeping through Africa, forcing changes in political arrangements and leading to the emergence of multi-

partyism and political pluralism, a new emphasis on the importance of human rights, dialogue between political opponents, and the liberalization of the erstwhile post-colonial polities (Hyden and Bratton, 1992; These transformations are changing the language and content of national politics and polities and creating new forms of collective social confidence expressed in bolder modes of demand and making a renewed struggle for engagement and participation. Like the waves of nationalist protests of the 1940s and 1950s, the origin and centre of these protests and movements are urban based Christenson and Robinson, 1995). Mandaza and Sachikonye (1991) argues that social movements are that rump within civil society that has demonstrated a capacity to contribute to the process of political transformation. Sachikonye further categorizes residents' associations as comprising locally-inspired initiatives intended to undertake representation and development functions. This is in a context where the state is unable or unwilling to invest its energies and resources (1995). Sachikonye further maintains that these associations are part of social movements that form an important rump of social groups organized from below and in pursuit of goals that challenge established structures and have the propensity to appeal to groups of people beyond a particular boundary (Lindberg, Friedman and Lundberg, 1992).

Garreton (1993) cited in Mandaza and Sachikonye (1991) further points out that resident' associations represent some collective action with some stability over time and some degree of organization oriented towards change or conservation of society. Lehman (1990) argues that residents associations encompass protest and conflict, lobby and pressure government agencies and policies over development and social issues and aim at influencing government policy. Ake (1993) cited in Mandaza and Sachikonye (1991) asserts that central in the core character and identity of residents associations is their representation or projection of social interests, which the existing and other institutions cannot project for one reason or another.

Development of associational life in Zimbabwe

According to Moyo et al (2000), the mode of colonial rule criminalised politics in African communities and sought to restrict black communities to the realm of tribal existence "... where they would identify themselves in terms of ethnic as opposed to national identities". Mamdani (1996), on the other hand, argues that colonial rule developed two centres of power that accounts for the weakness of African societies-*urban power* and *rural power*. Mamdani further maintains that while urban power 'spoke the language of civil society and civil rights', rural power under customary tradition authority was concerned with community and the enforcement of tradition. This, according to Mamdani contributed to the weakening of civil society through the political tribalisation of

associational life and the difficulties of developing rural-urban linkages in citizen participation[3]. At independence in 1980, Moyo et al. (2000) points out that the new democratic dispensation was faced with the task of introducing political structures that would accommodate previously marginalised dissenting voices.

Between 1980 and 1990, most civic participation in local a governance issues in Zimbabwe came through the establishment of ward committees. Simultaneously, in rural areas, village committees (VIDCOs) and partisan cells or village units would feed into ward development committee agenda setting out needs and prioritizing them. Councillors would bring minutes of ward development committees to the Town Clerk who would put issues raised by the wards onto the council agenda for discussion. Councillors would also feedback to their wards through these ward development committee meetings. Thus civic participation has been put within partisan structures which are hierarchical from grass roots.

Creating spaces for citizen participation through legislative provisions

Through the provision of democratic and participatory spaces, the Urban Councils Act (1996) has facilitated citizen involvement in local governance processes. This has been realized through the creation of avenues through which the public can participate in electoral and local governance processes. For urban municipal and city council authorities, appropriate institutions, such as the mayoral portfolio, elected councillors' positions as well as WADCO and VIDCO have given a chance to enhance the involvement of ordinary citizens in the decision-making process and eventually making them part of solutions to societal problems facing their constituencies. Through the Urban Councils Act (1996), local authorities are empowered to the aforementioned offices with the incumbent office bearers being chosen in competitive electoral processes.

The Urban Councils Act (1996)

The Urban Councils Act provides a number of platforms to facilitate citizen participation in local governance. It contains legislative provisions have provided fertile ground for the adoption of a participatory approach to governance through the establishment of a number of portfolios and organs to facilitate citizen involvement. The followings are portfolio that necessitates citizen involvement in decision-making processes at municipal levels and other areas under the jurisdiction of local authorities.

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[3] Mamdani(1996),in Moyo et al (2000:26).NGOs.the State and Politic in Zimbabwe.SAPES Books;Harare

In metropolitan urban centres like Harare and Bulawayo, in addition to Commissions that manage the affairs of the cities, metropolitan governors who wield the same powers as those of a Resident Minister have replaced mayors. This is a partisan appointment portfolio brought about by the latest amendment to the Urban Councils' Act after it was realised that the ruling party was losing all mayoral contests in major urban centres. This move flies on the face of participatory democracy where citizens should partake in the election of those who should run the affairs of the city on their behalf. In smaller urban centres, mayoral portfolios have been allowed to prevail. City Councillors are also elected along political lines to represent the interests of the electorate in their respective constituencies. These work closely with Residence Associations. Both Councillors and residents Associations work alongside Ward Committees to articulate issues bedevilling their constituencies and to bring these to the attention of political leadership.

The Constitution of Zimbabwe recognizes local government and seeks to enshrine decentralisation as a principle[4]. Decentalisation is generally viewed as a technique for broadening popular participation (Mandaza, 1998). Mandaza (1998) cited in Gale and Hendee, 2009) maintain that"…decentralization can empower and enable the poor, permitting greater choice and stricter control over their rights". According to Chikulo cited in Mandaza (1998) "…popular participation and decentralization… are means by which development objectives are to be achieved and have an instrumental value". Through directives and ministerial policy pronouncements, central government continues to encourage civic participation in all the activities of local authorities. The Urban Councils Act is an enabling Act of Parliament which guides the day-to-day management of urban councils in urban areas in Zimbabwe and empowers rate payers in urban areas to form resident associations that would represent ratepayers' interests. These can even summon political leadership to discuss rate payers on issues affecting them, such as the unwarranted hiking of rates, as well as poor service delivery. The Act provides for the direct election of councilors and mayors by the residents of a town for a term of four years. Residents are therefore free to participate in electing their representatives along partisan lines. The Act provides for the election of Councillors, who, through ward development committees articulate community needs and place them on the policy agenda. These councillors also hold feedback meetings and together with management formulate policies for the local area. They approve broadly-crafted Strategic Plans and budgets as well as monitor and evaluate performance. Council provides local leadership in translating community demands into policies and programs as well

as organizing the finances. Under the Urban Councils Act [Chapter 29:15] and other related legislation, various urban local authorities, under the auspices of the Zimbabwe United Residents Association (ZURA) commission their financial audits to the Ministry of Local Government to determine the extent of public participation in urban local government is entrenched within the legal system.

A critique of the Urban Councils Act (1996)

While the Urban Councils Act (1996) is one of the few sections of the Constitution of Zimbabwe that attempts to promote citizen participation in local governance, but it contains elements that impede fluent citizen involvement and participation. The Act is characterised by delegation rather than decentralisation of power and functions. The Act is built upon the concept of upward accountability and not local accountability, with the Minister responsible for local government having a say in many issues and not the local people or civic groups. Related to the above, Central Government retains firm control over all local authorities with powers to suspend the enabling legislation, and put in an administrator and prohibit local authorities from taking active part in local politics[5]. This defies the concept of citizen participation where a mayor chosen by the residents (on an opposition ticket) is single-handedly dismissed by the Minister, in this case, a Minister chosen on the basis of a non-constituency constitutional provision. It is further ironical that no section of the said Act recognizes and acknowledges the existence of civic groups such as residents and ratepayers associations; contrary to Mozambique where election of representatives into councils is not restricted to partisanship. Civic groups are allowed to nominate a candidate to stand for election. However, in recent years, a coalition of residents associations, the Combined Harare Residents Association has fielded mayoral candidates in line with the doctrine of citizen participation in local governance. This has signified an unprecedented interest of urban residents in local governance.

The Act is silent on the process of public consultation with regards to planning for parking within the city. The Act provides for the establishment of a procurement Board of between 5 and 7 members, and further allows for a technical committee to be established to assist the board. In formulating bylaws, the act requires consultation with stakeholders. This means that it is not possible for council to formulate a by-law without seeking the opinion of residents. Cognizant of the fact that residents have vested interest in their respective constituencies, the Act stipulates that residents' opinion be sought with regards to rating of property and provides for objections to be made by residents. There seems to be a tendency for the

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http://www.kubatana.net/html/archive/locgov/030331chra1.asp?sector=LOCGOV&year=2003&range_start=1

[5] A case in point is one of Eng.Elias Mudzuri who was suspended by the Minister of Local Government and subsequently expelled

Act to provide mainly for objections to certain developments, but not so much for initiating development activities or making contributions. It is assumed that such contributions can be made through the elected representative, but when it comes to objections, they are better made by the aggrieved party.

The Act also provides for public notice, through the press, for an application for borrowing powers. The selected medium for disseminating information in the Act presupposes that residents are literate, and that they gain access to the press advertisements. While this is only but a minimum requirement, there is need for wider consultation on borrowing powers and such application, such that residents are able to understand the impact of the burden of borrowing in terms of additional payments that will be required to service the debt. The Act requires that the council bylaws and Act be made available for inspection at its offices, the assumption being that there is a fair understanding of the English language and the legal jargon among the general resident population. The Act should however make it mandatory that council's bylaws be availed in local languages for easy understanding. To residents, financial matters are the most contentious issues, yet no conditions are imposed by the Act for dissemination of information to residents on collection, utilization and balances of moneys belonging to council.

Despite the fact that the Act takes into cognizant the need to involve residents in local governance, but there is need for the Act to decentralize some of the powers of the Minister of Local Government to Residents through their respective Residents Association. The current edition of the Urban Councils Act gives the Minister tremendous power. This power is vested in the minister at the expense of the public. There is an inherent assumption that the civil society is weak, hence requires protection of the minister. While this could have been true in the past, but it requires review given the fact that many urban residents are now conscious of their right to participate in governance issues as citizens. High literacy levels achieved in most urban settlements have also necessitated this need for a review. The residents of a local authority can not dissolve their council, but the minister. There is need for review, so that the powers vested in the minister can be ploughed back to the residents and citizens, where residents can be empowered to dissolve a council. It is sad that the Act does not empower and encourage citizen involvement in civic affairs such as the municipal electoral and budgetary processes.

Consequences of civic participation

A number of positive results have been realised due to public involvement in local authority governance. The following are attributes resulting from citizen involvement in municipal governance.

Effectiveness

Increased civic participation has engendered a sense of ownership in the local authority's programmes. By directly participating in budget-making communities have identified with the local authority's budget and reduced delays in budget-making that come with dealing with objectives. The communities have defined their destiny by jointly setting out the city's vision in the Strategic Plans from which annual budgets are crafted. The consequence is that the community is in charge of setting its priorities, monitoring them and evaluating their own performance.

Efficiency

The participatory processes have increased efficiency in that budgets can now be completed in time with implementation commencing at the beginning of the year unlike when this was not the case where implementation of new charges would be deep into the year. Local authorities used to lose revenue due to delays and were therefore unable to efficiently deliver on their promises. The community-run income generating company turned around its fortunes and subsidized the community through regular dividends to the city. Civic participation has increased budget-making costs as workshops and meetings have to be funded and the administrative support. In terms of time it takes to prepare the budget, the participatory process has shortened the time with a budget cycle that ends in October as opposed to December in previous years. A more understandable budget format has been produced that enables everyone to intelligently make inputs to the budget. By highlighting quantities of inputs in participatory budget making, the city can work out efficiency measures

Power relations

Power relations have changed with increased participation in that the community now directly formulates the budget through its stakeholder taskforce, which used to be done by the local authority, which would sell the budget to it community. Civic society organizations and council are now partners in constructing budgets. The community feels the processes are now more inclusive and transparent. The community feels empowered and the local authority is now truly a servant of its masters. While interest in civic matters have increased, increased participation can not be directly linked to the rise of powerful opposition parties in that in earlier years of independence, there were more opposition parties than now. What is evident is that any political party wishing to stay in power will have to use increased participatory approaches.

Social inclusion and inequalities

Increased social inclusion is evident in the city's participatory approaches as the cities and municipal authorities continue to profile and include a wider spectrum of civic groups. Increased civic participation has tended to eliminate racial inequality. The increasing presence of women in elected offices also points towards increased participation addressing gender inequalities. The absence of gender quotas tends to leave the whole process of gender in equalities to be resolved by the effluxion of time. Poverty reduction among the previously marginalized blacks has increased in that they now own property and vote in the city. Regarding fiscal impacts, there is now increased citizen power to determine their own tax levels through budget formulation.

Inclusiveness

Current increased participatory approaches to planning and budgeting are more inclusive in that they begin from the community profiling its civic organizations by sector including women's groups. The presence women councillors show increasing community awareness of gender equality and women's own improved self-confidence to stand up and hold such offices. Instances of fielding women for the mayoral post, by various political parties break previous traditions points towards increasing inclusiveness. This is in line with the National Gender Policy and testifies to increased inclusiveness. Women contribute to budget formulation more specifically in social issues like women's clubs and children's play centres. Council has heeded to putting more resources in these areas. An example is the composition of *Gweru's Budget Taskforce* which has a 50% women make-up thus achieving a 50% female impact on budget formulation for the city. This goes for other city councils and municipal authorities in country where attempts have been made to incorporate females in the administrative structures of various portfolios, with the Harare Metropolitan has had a female City Commissioner for the city.

Impacts/ outcomes of the participatory processes

In the various local government institutions in Zimbabwe, the participatory processes have changed budget formats into more simplified versions that civic society understand and use to craft a local authority budget. Public involvement in the budgetary processes makes the whole issue more inclusive and exudes citizen power in the determination of their local priorities and how these should be financed. Involvement of private citizens in the municipal budgetary system provides for a broadly-based Strategic Plan that shapes and guides the local authority's future in annual budgeting systems. The result of community involvement is the creation of a sense of community ownership, increased participation, and belonging that would pervade the budget-making process. Increased citizen participation the municipal budgetary process reduces suspicions about abuse of funds and lack of transparency in the conduct of municipal business. Budgets are made quicker and implemented on time.

CONCLUSION

It evident that Zimbabwe has a plethora of policies and legislation framework that seeks to promote and enhance citizen participation. This ranges from the Constitution of Zimbabwe, which is the supreme law of the country. Additionally, the local government sphere has emphasis on inculcating a participatory virtue among citizens, especially in the election of local councillors. Governance democratic practices in the country are both geared towards citizen participation. Despite sporadic incidences of corruption and vivid human rights violations, the country has embarked on the right path for citizen participation and democratic practice. However, perennial electoral disputes over the years have soiled Zimbabwe's democratic endeavours.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is generally agreed that Zimbabwe has one of the best constitutions on the African continent. The challenge has been in the implementation, commitment and political will put the provisions into practice. Citizen participation in electoral processes is provided for in the Constitution, Local Government legislation as well as in the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, but the country has been found wanting in the genuine commitment to implement the provisions of these constitutional and legislative provisions. It is recommended that Zimbabwe should set aside its commandist approach to dealing with policy issues and adopt an internationally-accepted way of promoting human rights and democratic practice, especially in the conduct of its elections. This failure of implementing democratic practice could most likely be as a result by the country's political leadership to transform their mind-set from that of a liberation movement to a normal political party. It is recommended that the political leadership in the country abandon the liberation movement commandist approach to politics.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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