

# Assessing Devolution Gaps in Promoting Citizen Participation and Accountability in Local Government in Zimbabwe

Keith Tichaona Tashu<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Zimbabwe Open University

\*Corresponding Author's Email: [keithtashu@gmail.com](mailto:keithtashu@gmail.com)

## Abstract

The devolution of power as a new governance model in Zimbabwe is premised on the fact that devolution is democratic, it opens avenues for grassroots participation, transparent and more importantly it enables local political representative accountability. Chapter 14, section 264 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No.20) Act 2013 provides for a devolution of government powers and responsibilities to provincial and metropolitan councils and local authorities in an effort to ensure good governance, citizen participation and democracy. The Constitution organizes government at three levels namely, national, provincial and local. However, contrary to the provisions of section 264 of the Constitution the government has not given powers of local governance to the people to enhance their participation in making decisions affecting them and ensure that local government officials are accountable to the citizens. The study adopted extant qualitative literature to gather information. The paper assessed devolution gaps in promoting citizen participation and accountability in local government in Zimbabwe. It examined decades of decentralisation adjustments in Zimbabwe since independence to post 2013 era when the Constitution of Zimbabwe was enacted in order to understand challenges affecting decentralisation and devolution and their effect on citizen participation and accountability. Research findings indicated that a centralised system of governance existed since independence and despite efforts made to decentralise over the years, the government had instead re-centralised and this had affected citizen participation and accountability in local governance.

**Key words:** Decentralisation, Devolution, Accountability, Citizen Participation, Local Governance

## Introduction

The devolution of power as a new governance model in Zimbabwe was premised on the fact that devolution was democratic, it opened avenues for grassroots participation, ensured transparency and most importantly it enabled local political representative accountability. It was only through local accountability and transparency that devolution can realistically be seen as providing a platform for local citizens to effectively influence decision making in local affairs (Strengthening Institutions & Youth Agency (SIYA), 2024:14). Chapter 14, section 264 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No.20) Act 2013 provides for devolution of government powers and responsibilities to provincial and metropolitan councils and local authorities in an effort to ensure good governance, citizen participation and democracy. The Constitution organizes government at three levels namely, national, provincial and local.

However, contrary to the provisions of section 264 of the Constitution, the government had not given powers of local governance to the people to enhance their participation in making decisions affecting them and ensure that local government officials were accountable to the citizens (Bvirindi & Chikwawawa, 2022:62).

In the year 2020, the Government of Zimbabwe introduced a devolution and decentralisation policy for the first time after wide consultation with all key stakeholders that included the civil society. The devolution policy objectives are to promote sustainable, representative, accountable, participatory, inclusive governance and socio-economic development (Government of Zimbabwe, 2020). Although the Constitution provides broad parameters on the Zimbabwe devolution agenda, a policy was needed to guide the process of removing ambiguities, gaps, inadequacies and impractical provisions, which might be inherent in the Constitution, particularly on the operations of provincial and metropolitan councils (Bvirindi & Chikwawawa, 2022:62). Despite this milestone, devolution is still partially implemented and one of the reasons is that the legislative frameworks such as the Urban Councils Act and the Rural District Councils Act, which were enacted before the enactment of the 2013 Constitution, are still in place yet they are no longer aligned with the Constitution as they promote a centralised system of governance (Zinyama, Kuwa & Manyera, 2023:13).

The idea of devolution was to bring the government close to the people. Devolution is anticipated to establish democratic governance that enhances resource allocative efficiency by matching the provision of public goods and services with citizens' preferences, promotes productive efficiency, by fostering public accountability and reducing bureaucratic red-tape and induces public accountability by shifting political, administrative, and fiscal power downwards (Bvirindi & Chikwawawa, 2022:62). Despite the outlined benefits of devolution and decentralisation, Zimbabwe has not utilised the full benefits of devolution by fully decentralising its political, fiscal and administrative powers from central to the local level. It is important to note that a centralised system of governance existed since independence and despite efforts made to decentralise over the years, the government has instead recentralised and this has affected accountability and citizen participation in local governance (Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) 2024:12).

It is against this background that this paper assessed accountability gaps in a devolved local government system in Zimbabwe. The objectives of this study were to examine decades of decentralisation adjustments in Zimbabwe since independence to post 2013 era when the Constitution of Zimbabwe was enacted in order to understand challenges affecting decentralisation and devolution and their effects on citizen participation and accountability. The paper also looked at devolution gaps in promoting citizen participation and accountability in Zimbabwe. The study adopted extant qualitative literature to gather information. This study is structured into four sections and these include conceptual framework, methodological approach, research findings and analysis: decades of decentralisation adjustments in Zimbabwe, devolution gaps in promoting citizen participation and accountability in local government in Zimbabwe and conclusion and recommendations.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Decentralisation**

Decentralisation is defined by Gutheil (2024:6) as a concept that aims at shifting competencies and resources from the central government to territorially-defined subnational levels of

government, including cities and municipalities. Decentralisation defines how actors at different governance levels (national, regional, local) collaborate and provide rules and regulations that guide the organisational administrative, political and fiscal relations between these levels. Another widely recognised definition of decentralisation is that of Smoke (2015:220) who defines it as the assignment of public functions to subnational entities together with systems, processes and structures that support the implementation of specific public-sector goals of impacting positively on the political and economic context. It can be described as the redefinition of structures, procedures, processes and practices of governance to be closer to the citizenry. However, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2024:6) notes that decentralisation is not a stable and linear process but rather an ongoing and contested process in which municipal actors play important roles in negotiating their access to power and resources.

Decentralisation trajectories differ from country to country, and they are pursued at different moments in time and for different objectives (Olowu, 2018:2). However, four forms of decentralisation exist and these includes deconcentration, delegation, privatization and devolution (Gutheil, 2024:6). Deconcentration occurs when sub-national units within line ministries are given managerial and administrative responsibility. Delegation is the transfer of responsibilities by the central government to public enterprises and other semi-autonomous government agencies to operate public utilities and services. Privatization is the transfer of responsibilities and functions from government to non-governmental actors for instance the private sector (Muchadenyika, 2015:106). Devolution as the central theme of this paper is however extrapolated below.

## **Devolution**

Devolution is a concept which has different meanings in different countries and because of that it has multiple definitions; it is a frequently misunderstood and sometimes deliberately distorted term. Devolution according Paun, Pope, McKee, Fright & Allen (2024:2) is a situation where the state transfers legislative, executive, financial and administrative decision-making authority to local governments that have clear and legally recognised jurisdictions within which they provide public services to constituents to whom they are accountable to. ZIMCODD (2023:11) also defines devolution as the devolving of power from the central to local government. Thus, it is the transfer of powers, responsibilities, functions and finances to subnational entities. For Masunungure & Ndoma (2013:1), devolution is a transfer or delegation of power by an upper level of government, often central government, to lower units of governance, for instance, provincial and local governments. The authors emphasize that devolution does not mean federalism where each tier has constitutionally protected areas of power. In devolution, the central authority that grants power can in principle revoke what it grants and the grantee, the devolved government, remains constitutionally subordinate to the power giver. Hence devolution according to Bvirindi & Chikwawawa (2022:63) is the fullest form of decentralisation and is decentralisation par excellence, which aims to strengthen local government by granting it the authority and responsibility to formulate and implement local policies, and resources for services and infrastructure development.

The rationale for devolution is multifaceted and one of its main aims is to capacitate sub-national tiers of government to respond to problems of a purely local nature without waiting for directives and policy instructions from the central government (Zinyama, Kuwa & Manyera, 2023:3). It provides a process at the local level through which diverse interests of different stakeholders and the disadvantaged can be heard and negotiated and resource

allocation decisions can be made based on public discussions (Moyo & Ncube, 2014). To add on, local governments, due to their proximity to the population, are in a better position to be effective and efficient in providing human development services that address the context-specific needs of the poor. This reduces the number of tasks performed by central government, leaving it to concentrate on those services it can deliver efficiently and effectively such as defence, foreign affairs and macro-economic management (Muchadenyika, 2015). Discretionary authority as an element of devolution therefore limits central government to maintaining a supervisory role in which it ensures that local government is operating within national policies. It is however hard to find central governments only confined to supervisory roles, especially in countries with democracy deficiency, as most central governments in devolved countries interfere in local governance (Bvirindi & Chikwawawa, 2022:62).

Literature reveals that citizen participation and accountability are at the heart of devolution. Proponents of devolution argue that devolution enhances good governance through citizen participation and accountability and in turn improves public service delivery (Nhede, 2013:33). The devolution of power to the local level can create formidable incentives by placing the decision making in the hands of those who have local information that distant bureaucrats are unable to have and this enhances accountability (Anosisye, 2017:1). Devolution emphasizes the presence of mechanisms for fair local political competition for citizens to elect competent, trustworthy, transparent and accountable leaders and it enhances government processes that are open to the public, responsible to the public, and governed by the rule of law (Moyo & Ncube, 2014:294). Residents will also get opportunities to play key roles in information sharing, setting goals, allocation of resources, implementation of programmes and this increases the level of participation of residents in local government elections, budget crafting, consultative forums and public hearings (Mapuva & Miti, 2019:17). These citizen participation platforms are crucial as local government officials have to account for devolution funds (Zimbabwe Economic Policy Analysis and Research Unit (ZEPARU), 2019:24).

It is important to note that without citizen participation and accountability, a misinformed public is not able to make any decisions regarding budget crafting, public service delivery among other council decisions as is the case in many countries including Zimbabwe (Zinyama, Kuwa & Manyera, 2023:13). Empowering citizens through devolution enables the local voters to hold the culpable leaders accountable during the local elections. Citizens can remove from political office all individuals they deem irresponsible, corrupt and selfish and elect the new leaders with potential to promote the common good (Anosisye, 2017:1). Chigumira, Chipumho & Chiwunze (2020:5) warn that making information available to the public that does not understand it defeats the aims of accountability. Thus, there is need to ensure literacy of the intended recipients of the information.

## **Methodology**

Extant secondary qualitative literature is the research method used to generate information. This approach aims to identify devolution gaps in promoting citizen participation and accountability in local government in Zimbabwe. Findings, conclusions and recommendations were drawn from documentary search of books, journal articles and working papers.

## **Results and discussion**

### **Decades of decentralisation adjustments in Zimbabwe**

Citizen participation and accountability constraints in local government in Zimbabwe can be traced back during the colonial period. Prior to 1980, the year Zimbabwe gained its independence, three forms of local government existed and these were Urban Councils (established under the Urban Councils Act of 1891), District Councils (African Councils Act 1937) and Rural Councils (Rural Councils Act 1966) (Zinyama & Chimanihire, 2019:152). According to this set up, community participation was limited as most decision-making processes emanated from the centre. In fact, democratic representation was practiced in Urban and Rural Councils and these councils reflected the interests of the European settlers and landowners who were also a key lobby in terms of national politics and they enjoyed a higher degree of delegated authority in their undertaking and provision of services (Mapuva & Takabika (2020:1).

On the other hand, African Councils (District Councils) were linked to traditional authority of chiefs and sub-chiefs and this system did not reflect the interests of the locals, but was rather meant to control native development in the interests of the European economy (Zinyama & Chimanihire, 2019:152). The exclusion of the natives in local governance, where decisions were made from the top instead of emanating from the natives residing in African Councils and no structures established for native participation in local governance, presumably suffocated public accountability leading to a misinformed native society. This system of local governance which prevailed during the colonial period was the motivation towards decentralisation adjustments after independence by the new government to promote equality, citizen participation and public accountability (Mapuva & Takabika (2020:1).

### **Decentralisation period 1980-1990**

The then Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe, and his new government, showed commitment after independence in 1980 to dismantle fragmented colonial structures in local governance to allow local participation in development and decision making as well as promote public accountability. The government of Zimbabwe demonstrated its commitment to the concept of decentralisation and a re-organization exercise of the pre-independence local government system in rural and urban areas was carried out (Zinyama & Chimanihire, 2019:152). Colonial local government legislation were amended and replaced by the 1988 Rural District Councils Act which eliminated fragmentation by amalgamating white rural councils and black rural local authorities into Rural District Councils (RDCs) (Muchadenyika (2015:109). On the other hand, Urban Councils fell under the Urban Councils Act (Chapter 29:15) (Mapuva & Miti, 2019:13).

An important reform during the first decade was the Prime Minister's Directive of 1984 and 1985, which provided the basis for a hierarchy of representative bodies at the village, ward, district, provincial and national level with the aim of fostering bottom-up development planning (Muchadenyika, 2015:109). The elected bodies with responsibility for defining local needs as well as public accountability institutions included Village Development Committee (VIDCO), Ward Development Committee (WADCO), Rural District Development Committee (RDCC) and Provincial Development Committee (PDC) (Chikerema, 2013:89). VIDCO identify and articulate village needs, co-ordinate and forward village needs to WADCOs, co-ordinate and co-operate with government extension workers at village level and organize village workforce to undertake major village work programmes. Additionally, WADCOs provide a central planning authority linking six villages and be an overseer that co-ordinates development plans of the six villages, that is, re-examining and prioritizing projects and programmes that come from the villages (Zinyama & Chimanihire, 2019:154).

The newly-created development committees' roles were information supply, independent planning, and policy-making and review. Development priorities were identified and formulated at village level, and channeled through ward, district, and provincial levels to national level. The national development plan was premised on development priorities discussed and agreed upon at the village and ward level (Muchadenyika, 2015). The bottom up approach through these committees was crucial in enhancing citizen participation and strengthening public accountability.

However, the VIDCOs and WADCOs while being in place did not get resources to support their work and in most cases lacked the requisite skills. Interference from central government in terms of their operation and decision making was also rife and presented challenges and as a result became ineffectual (Mapuva & Miti, 2019). Although the government professed a desire to decentralise power, local government remained subservient to the centre, with local elected representatives operating in fear of contradicting the Minister responsible for local government. Moreso, decentralisation in Zimbabwe was introduced at a time when the ruling party, Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) had relative political hegemony and the approach was to partly decentralise administrative duties to local government, while the central government retained overall supervisory control (Bvirindi & Chikwawawa, 2019). After the first decade of decentralisation, it was clear that the process had failed to yield the desired results and Coenraad Brand likened it to centrally created decentralisation. Central government was evidently not committed to making local government a distinct sphere. Citizen participation and accountability were therefore affected (Muchadenyika, 2015).

### **Liberalisation period 1990-2008**

During the economic liberalization era in the early 1990s, the objective of the government's decentralisation programme shifted to promoting democracy, and the focus of attention turned to elected local authorities. An important vehicle used in the democratization process is elections which started in 1993 in rural district councils and 1995 in urban councils. The introduction of local government elections was a landmark development as citizens became active agents of deciding who runs the local level. This was an important mile stone in enhancing public accountability through local government elections (Muchadenyika, 2015).

Additionally, the introduction of a directly elected executive mayor in 1995 marked a major change in local governance. The move was aimed at strengthening representational democracy as citizens had the right to elect the political and administrative head of local government (Muchadenyika & Williams, 2016). This system gave citizens the power to be able to hold elected officials accountable. However in reality, the Executive Mayor gained no executive authority. Attempts by Executive Mayors to assume executive functions often led to clashes between the Mayor and Town Clerks. Town Clerks mostly look to the centre and are accountable to the state unlike elected mayors who are accountable to citizens. Several practical challenges ensued in cases where the mayor was not from the ruling party ZANU-PF and such mayors were castigated by central government as pursuing parallel policies (Muchadenyika & Williams, 2016).

A twist in the decentralisation effort took place in the formation of a strong opposition political party in 1999, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). During this period, ZANU PF considerably lost its dominance in local government, particularly in urban areas and it virtually lost all parliamentary and local government elections to the MDC. Faced with this grim

political reality, it backtracked on its earlier commitment to decentralise in an effort to retain its increasingly insecure grip on power (Bvirindi & Chikwawawa, 2019:786). Central government reacted by interfering heavily in local government. A strong belief in centralised planning and staffing, along with technical and financial inadequacies and lack of political will, compromised what could have been an effective decentralisation programme. The government's attempts to intervene can be likened to re/centralization (Muchadenyika, 2015).

In an effort to sabotage local governance so that the citizens can blame the opposition which controlled councils for poor service delivery, Mushamba (2010:109) notes that in 2005, the Minister responsible for local government issued a directive for the takeover by Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA) of water and sewerage management. The Minister cited lack of capacity on the part of councils as the major reason to transfer this function to ZINWA. However, local authorities viewed this as a deliberate move by the Minister to deprive the councils of their traditional source of revenue. The power play between ZINWA and councils denied the residents the opportunity to voice their concerns regarding water problems that affect them such as water pollution, supply and sanitation. The argument being that ZINWA as a central government entity doesn't have citizen participation platforms and accountability mechanism such as public hearings, consultative forums as well as elected officials like councilors to give feedback to the residents concerning water and sanitation services.

ZINWA, however, failed to perform efficiently and effectively in the new task allocated to it and eventually, because of the poor performance in 2008, the Minister responsible for local government issued another directive handing water provision back to councils (Jonga, 2014:84). The damage however was already done when Zimbabwe experienced a devastating cholera outbreak in 2008 and at least 92000 cases were reported from mid-2008 and over 4000 deaths were registered in 2008 (Jonga, 2014).

### **Constitutional crafting period 2009-2013**

Democracy was under severe threat in Zimbabwe as evidenced by the political upheavals that emanated from the contested legitimacy of government that followed the violent 2008 Zimbabwe elections. The devolution of power was therefore advocated during the inclusive government to be included in the new Constitution to address the democratic deficits related to the disputed elections, but also broadly to address issues of citizen participation in local development and local government accountability (Moyo & Ncube, 2014:294; Muchadenyika 2015:109). What was enshrined in the 1979 Lancaster House Constitution was a centralisation. Decisions followed a top-down approach and were hardly in line with regional and local needs. Citizens were excluded from local governance participation and local government officials were only accountable to the central government (Nhede, 2013:35).

The debate on the devolution of power was heated throughout the drafting of the new Constitution such that it almost affected the enactment of the new Constitution. ZANU-PF was evidently opposed to devolution and only acceded to it as a political compromise, while the opposition MDC relentlessly pushed for it (Bvirindi & Chikwawawa, 2019:788). In the process, political players and the media both informed and misinformed the public about devolution and its potential benefits to the country. Nonetheless, the constitutional reform, a process which began in 2009 and concluded in March 2013, provided a window of hope for most citizens by outlining a new governance charter and setting out the parameters within which the state is governed (Muchadenyika, 2015:104).

## **Devolution post-2013**

Under the current constitutional dispensation local governments have the latitude to exercise power and authority in compliance with relevant constitutional provisions (Mapuva & Takabika, 2020:2). The preamble of Chapter 14 of the Constitution indicates that devolution of power and responsibility to lower tiers of government must preserve national unity; ensure democratic participation in government by all citizens and communities of Zimbabwe; and must ensure equitable allocation of national resources and the participation of local communities in the determination of development priorities within their areas. In relation to citizen participation and accountability, the second objective of Section 264 provides that “to promote democratic, effective, transparent, accountable and coherent government in Zimbabwe as a whole”. This objective presents the desire to promote the values of democratic governance, openness and responsibility in governance issues across the country. Since local governments are nearest to communities, if these values are adhered to at that level of governance, the population will experience government presence (Mapuva & Miti, 2019:15). Transparency demands that the local authorities ought to be open to residents and allow scrutiny of their activities as well as providing information to citizens regularly.

Additionally, section 274 mandated urban local authorities to superintend over the governance of areas within their jurisdiction. The urban local authorities need to represent the people within their areas of influence. In essence, they need to advance the aspirations of the people. For Mapuva & Takabika (2020:2) representing implies acting in compliance with the directives or aspirations of the people. This implies rule by the people, for the people, with the people. More so, sub-section 2 of section 274 bestows powers to the registered voters of a particular urban area to choose the councilors who would preside over the developmental programmes of the area. The voting system is one of the most effective mechanisms that enhance public accountability. It gives citizens the power to restore performing councilors and oust ineffective ones.

## **Devolution gaps in promoting citizen participation and accountability in Zimbabwe**

### **Constitutional gaps**

Despite the fact that Chapter 14 of Zimbabwe’s Constitution provides for devolution framework and outlines the constitutionally defined three tiers of government as well as some of their powers and responsibilities, the implementation of these stipulations is fraught with uncertainties and constraints (Moyo & Ncube, 2014:299). The Constitution says that ‘whenever appropriate’ governmental powers and responsibilities should be devolved to provincial and metropolitan councils and local authorities which are competent to carry out those responsibilities effectively and efficiently. This immense constitutional power accorded to national government over provincial and metropolitan councils and local governments entails that their initial constitution and survival are at the mercy of the ruling national government, which retains the power and authority of oversight yet power has to be bestowed by local governments who are able to promote grass-root participation (Bvirindi & Chikwawawa, 2019:786).

The government can avoid devolution to further its own political interests by simply arguing that devolution is not appropriate in a given situation. The government may find it convenient to avoid devolution in order to limit democratic space, thereby enhancing and perpetuating its political hegemony (Chikwawawa, 2019:20). Evidently, in 2013, just after the enactment of



the new Constitution in the run-up to the 2013 election, ZANU-PF government gave a directive instructing local authorities to write off citizens' outstanding debts. For local authorities, the decision did not only have serious implications for their financial position and ability to provide services but also cultivated a culture of non-payment. Citizens felt no obligation to pay service charges, rates and fees awaiting another such directive (Zinyama & Chimanikire, 2019:165). This scenario suppressed the ethos of devolution and citizen participation through paying rates.

### **Local government legislative gaps**

Various pieces of local government legislation were enacted before the 2013 Constitution and they were crafted to promote centralisation. These include the Urban Councils Act (Chapter 29.15), the Rural District Councils Act (Chapter 29.13), and the Provincial Councils Administration Act (Chapter 29). For instance the UCA, empower the Minister responsible for local government access to records of councils (section 91), approve by-laws (section 229), approve local government budgets (section 288) and approve local government borrowings (section 290) among other stipulations. In fact there are more than 50 instances where the Minister is required to intervene in local government affairs which go against the idea of devolution which then affects citizen participation and downward accountability. Bvirindi & Chikwawawa (2022:67) note that the central-local government relationship resembles a typical parent-child relationship, defined by policy directives to sub-national governments, which have tended to compromise the autonomy and discretion of the local authorities or to contradict policy positions at sub-national level. There is therefore a clear trend of (re)centralisation of power where the central government is controlling functions that should ideally be performed by subnational governments (ZIMCODD, 2023:12).

### **Fiscal re-centralisation**

Since the adoption of the current Constitution in 2013, there has also been some form of collaboration between the two systems of government in the area of funding of devolution projects (roads, clinics and schools). Suffice to say the collaboration was not voluntary but constitutionally directed and sought to fulfil a constitutional provision which allocates 5% of nationally collected revenue to fund local development projects which in theory are traced back to local decision-making but, in reality, appear to be the result of national government dominating decisions on what projects the funds can be used on (Marumahoko, 2023:358). Whilst in fact the electorate, through participation channels, is the one which has to have allocative decisions on matters affecting them at local level. More so, delays in aligning local government legislation with the Constitution hinders central government and provincial and local authorities in working out a predictable formula for the equitable distribution of 5% of national revenue that is constitutionally provided for local government. Besides, there is no payment mechanism to ensure that local authorities are paid their allocations on time (Bvirindi & Chikwawawa, 2022:68). Hence these funds are left at the mercy of the central government which decides on when and how these funds are distributed and used and this affects citizen participation and accountability (ZIMCODD, 2023:12).

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

The paper assessed devolution gaps in promoting citizen participation and accountability in local government in Zimbabwe. The idea premised on devolution is bringing the government closer to the people. Devolution is anticipated to establish democratic governance that enhances

allocative efficiency by matching the provision of public goods and services with citizens' preferences, promotes productive efficiency by fostering public accountability and reducing bureaucratic red-tape and induces public accountability by shifting political, administrative, and fiscal power downwards. Despite the outlined benefits of devolution and decentralisation, it can be concluded that Zimbabwe has not utilised the full benefits of devolution by fully decentralising its political, fiscal and administrative powers from central to the local level. It is important to note that a centralised system of governance existed since independence and despite efforts made to decentralise over the years, the government has instead re-centralised and this has affected accountability and citizen participation in local governance.

It is, therefore, recommended that legislation needs to be reformed to ensure autonomy of local government in order to promote citizen participation and accountability. There is need to align local government legislation with the Constitutional provisions on devolution. There is need to restrict the overriding powers of the Minister responsible for local government in local governance affairs. Most importantly, all local governments need to be capacitated on how to make use and account for the devolution funds. Local governments have to establish a framework for consultations and engagements with the citizens in the utilisation of devolution funds. There is need to have the law on devolution and fiscal decentralisation which promote citizen participation and accountability so that there are no illicit outflows, no revenue leakages and misuse or miss-prioritisation of scarce devolution funds disbursed by government.

## References

- Anosisye, M. K. (2017). Decentralisation by devolution: Perception of councilors on their exercise of fiscal decision making authority in local government authorities in Tanzania. *Journal of Political Sciences and Public Affairs*, 5(2), 1-5.
- Bvirindi, J. & Chikwawawa, C. (2019). Decentralising local government in Zimbabwe: Prospects and impediments. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 9(9), 785-790.
- Bvirindi, J., & Chikwawawa, C. (2022). Devolving power and decentralising local governance in Zimbabwe: Prospects and impediments. *Innovations in Science and Technology*, 8, 62-71.
- Chigumira, G., Chipumho, E., & Chiwunze G. (2020). Exploring the key success factors in implementing devolution in Zimbabwe. Harare: Zimbabwe Economic Policy Analysis Research Unit.
- Chikerema, A. F. (2013). Citizen participation and local democracy in Zimbabwean local government system. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 13(2), 87-90.
- Chikwawawa, C. (2019). Constitutionalisation and implementation of devolution in Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 9(3), 29-25.
- Government of Zimbabwe. (2020). Devolution and decentralisation policy. Harare, Printflow (Private) Limited.
- Gutheil, L. (2024). Decentralization and its effects on urban governance in Africa. Paris: The French Institute of International Relations.
- Jonga, W. (2014). Local government system in Zimbabwe and associated challenges: Synthesis and antithesis, *Archives of Business Research*, 2(1), 75-98.
- Mapuva, J., & Miti, G. P. (2019). Exploring the uncharted territory of devolution in Zimbabwe. *Journal of African Studies and Development*, Vol. 11(2), 12-20.
- Mapuva, J., & Takabika, T. (2020). Urban local authorities in Zimbabwe and the new Constitution. *International Journal of Peace and Development Studies*. Vol.11(1), 1-8.

- Marumahoko, S. (2023). Can local government facilitate realisation of Zimbabwe's Vision 2030 aspirations, *Journal of Public Administration, Finance and Law*, 29, 348-362.
- Masunungure, E. V., & Ndoma, S. (2013). The popular quest for devolution in Zimbabwe. *Afrobarometer Briefing Paper No. 114*.
- Moyo, P., & Ncube, C. (2014). Devolution of power in Zimbabwe's new Constitutional order: Opportunities and potential constraints. *Law Democracy and Development*, 18, 289-304.
- Muchadenyika, D. (2015). The inevitable: Devolution in Zimbabwe – from Constitution-making to the future. de Visser, J., Steytler, N., Powell, D., & Durojaye, E. (eds) *Constitution-Making in Africa*. Cape Town; University of the Western Cape.
- Muchadenyika, D. (2018). Zimbabwe's new Constitution and local government: Implications for central-local relations. *Us-China Law Review*, 11.
- Muchadenyika, D., & Williams, J. J. (2016). *Social change: urban governance and urbanization in Zimbabwe*. Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht.
- Mushamba, S. (2010). The powers and functions of local government authorities. de Visser, J., Steytler, N., & Machingauta, N. (eds) *Local Government Reform in Zimbabwe; A Policy Dialogue*. Cape Town: Community Law Centre.
- Nhede, T. (2013). Devolution of power and effective governance: The Zimbabwean constitutional debate. *African Journal of Public Affairs*, 6(4).
- Olowu, D. (2018). *New directions in social policy, decentralisation and social innovations in Africa*. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.
- Paun, A., Pope, T., McKee, R., Fright, M., & Allen, B. (2024). How should the next government complete the job of English devolution? Institute for Government Working Paper for Discussion – 13 March 2024.
- SIYA. (2024). *A political economic analysis on local authorities in Zimbabwe*. Harare: SIYA.
- Smoke, P. (2015). Rethinking decentralisation: Assessing challenges to a popular public sector reform. *Public Administration and Development*, 35, 97-112.
- UNDP. (2024). *The state of local governance and decentralization in North Macedonia*. New York: UNDP.
- ZEPARU. (2019). *Exploring the key success factors in implementing devolution in Zimbabwe*. Harare, ZEPARU.
- ZIMCODD. (2023). *Analysis of the 2024 budget strategy paper*. Harare: ZIMCODD.
- Zinyama, T., & Chimanikire, D. P. (2019). The nuts and bolts of devolution in Zimbabwe: Designing the provincial and metropolitan councils. *African Journal of Public Affairs*, 11(2), 147-176.
- Zinyama, T., Kuwa, O., & Manyera, A. (2023). Re-imagining devolution for recapitalisation of local authorities in Zimbabwe: The quest for a better life. *Journal of Public Administration and Development Alternatives*, 8(2), 1-17.