

# A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR IMPROVED MUNICIPAL SERVICE DELIVERY IN URBAN ZIMBABWE

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## **Abstract**

This article reviews efforts to improve the efficiency and responsiveness of urban service delivery in Zimbabwe. It seeks to achieve this by facilitating the utility of the value-based integrated conceptual framework for improved service delivery developed by Bao and others in 2013 and by applying it to urban local government service delivery in Zimbabwe. The conceptual framework has five key components which are (1) contextual setting, (2) core values, (3) structures and processes, (4) leadership and management and (5) service delivery. The use of the conceptual framework offers crucial insights into how the local public administration in Zimbabwe can turnaround declining urban service delivery. The engagement takes place against observations of service delivery inefficiencies in the subnational government and an accumulation over the recent past of gaps, duplications or non-achievement of targets in local urban public service provision. Key findings of the article are the following: (1) the conceptual framework was found to be instrumental in organising municipal institutions to promote greater efficiency and responsiveness in urban service delivery (2) the conceptual framework was found to be suitable as it takes into consideration socio-economic and cultural differences among countries even within the same regional grouping and, (3) its application has the potential to enhance local service delivery in urban Zimbabwe especially now when urban local government is being called upon to manifest resilience and innovativeness in the face of significantly depleted resources; financial, human and material.

**Keywords:** municipal service delivery, urban service delivery, municipalities, urban local government, subsidiarity, conceptual framework, structures and processes, Zimbabwe

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Most, if not all urban local authorities in Zimbabwe are facing formidable challenges in providing services to their communities. It can be easily perceived that many urban councils not only have massive backlogs of new infrastructure requirements but they also need to allocate substantially more resources to maintenance, renovation, and replacement of older, deteriorating equipment. The general perception seems to be that urban local government is struggling to respond to service pressures. In most urban councils, it is not uncommon to see dysfunctional governance systems characterised by piles of waste decaying in the streets; roads degenerating into quagmires, underfunded healthcare, inappropriate allocation of resources, inefficient revenue systems and weak delivery of crucial public services; all undermining the quality of urban life.

Declining local service delivery has caught the attention of national government. Over the past three decades the national level has intervened in the operations of the local level with the objective of reversing the degeneration; with mixed results. Among the reasons prompting its intervention is a portrayal of public administration as a system of government bereft of performance management culture; institutional overlap and duplication of functions both within and across government agencies including those mandated with service delivery.

In 1986, six years into majority rule, the Government of Zimbabwe set up the Public Service Review Commission (popularly known as Kavran Report 1989) to assess the performance of the public service. Led by Professor Kavran, the Commission reviewed the key areas of the public administration relating mainly to service provision with the objective to make recommendations on seven issues (see Figure 1 below).

- (i) enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the structures and functions of Government and the most economic use of manpower
- (ii) ensuring the most effective use of both human and financial resources in the implementation of government policies and a meritocratic system of staff deployment, development, grading, promotion, remuneration and conditions of service;
- (iii) safeguarding public funds and public property through adequate controls;
- (iv) facilitating transferability and best manpower use across the public service, parastatals and local authorities;
- (v) optimizing the structure, functions and status of the PSC;
- (vi) determining the adequacy of training institutions and policies to meet future needs; and
- (vii) recommending a collective bargaining system.

FIGURE 1 - SELECTED ISSUES RELATING TO SERVICE PROVISION  
 Source: Public Service Review Commission Report 1989: 4.

In 2004, four years after the creation of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party which currently controls all the urban councils in Zimbabwe, the ZANU-PF led national government unveiled and adopted the "Revitalisation of Local Authorities Policy". Among other developments, the policy diagnoses the challenges impeding urban councils in fulfilling their service delivery mandate. Its characterisation of declining urban service include uncompleted capital projects, deterioration in the road network, non-collection of refuse and burst water and sewer pipes. Some of the recommendations that the policy suggests to ameliorate the situation include deliberate allocation of one-off grants, purchasing service delivery equipment, reviewing policy and encouraging urban councils to look beyond the traditional sources of revenue hitherto explored sources.

In 2005, the Office of the President and Cabinet of the Government of Zimbabwe issued the (OPC-General Letter No. 6 of 2005) advising the adoption of the Results Based Management (RBM) as a programme for refocussing service delivery at the local, provincial and national levels of the public administration. The adoption of RBM was meant to address challenges surrounding declining service delivery, resource constraints, efficient use of limited resources and the need to orient government agencies toward results and not just preoccupation with procedures and enforcement of rules and regulations. Zimbabwe's RBM is comprised of five modules: the Results-Based Budgeting System (RBBS), Results-Based Personnel Performance System (RBPPS) and E-Governance, integrated Results Based Monitoring and Evaluation System (RBMES) and Management Information System (MIS) (Government of Zimbabwe, 2005). Since its adoption in 2005, RBM has been cascaded to local government and other government agencies.

Towards the end of 2006, the Ministry of Local Government (MLG) increasingly utilised the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) as a strategy of turning around declining urban service delivery (Marumahoko, 2020a). Under this programme, national government advanced generous loans to urban councils for various capital works. Much of the funding went towards the construction and maintenance of infrastructure works such as rehabilitation of water and sewer plants. Even then, the loans were inadequate and insufficient in solving the water supply challenges bedevilling urban councils. Despite additional public funding, water supply has remained in a desperate situation, with most cities experiencing chronic shortages and interrupted supplies. The burst sewers, a key feature of declining capacity of urban councils was not ameliorated. It has remained a formidable challenge in all the cities and towns across the country including in the capital Harare, and Bulawayo, the second major city in the country.

In 2013 there was a glimmer of hope that local public service delivery would improve. Local government (including urban councils and rural district councils) was constitutionalised as a sphere of government; the other spheres being provincial and metropolitan councils and national government (Marumahoko et al., 2020). Constitutionalisation facilitated the autonomy of local government, increased the standing of municipalities and seemingly opened a crucial pathway for optimising service delivery. However, the state of service delivery has

changed remarkably little since constitutionalisation of local government. If anything, it would appear that the capacity of urban local government to deliver services required by city dwellers for a better quality of life continues to experience gradual decline rather than improve. Seemingly, the drivers for the downward spiral range from issues such as the political bickering between the party that controls urban councils and the party in charge of the national level, to the absence of the political will to tackle pressing service delivery issues, declining socio-economic fundamentals, inadequate investment in public service infrastructure and the unavailability of intergovernmental financial transfers.

The article discusses a model that appears to offer possibilities for improving urban service delivery in Zimbabwe. The value-based integrated conceptual framework for performance management, governance, and public service leadership development was developed by Bao and others in 2013. It focuses on five components which are (1) contextual setting, (2) core values, (3) structures, and (4) leadership and management and (5) service delivery. The framework is applied to urban local government in Zimbabwe as the sphere of government closest to the people whose main objective is municipal service delivery.

The article is organised as follows. After the introduction, the article introduces the principle of subsidiarity in municipal service delivery; the objective being to underscore the significance of local government as the sphere of government which is closest to citizens and is therefore indispensable in its role of supplying public goods and services. Following this is a brief appreciation of the state of urban service delivery in the advent of the so-called Second Republic which commenced with former president Robert Gabriel Mugabe's resignation from government towards the end of 2017 and his replacement by President Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa. The article then engages on three chosen challenges that are the basis for declining urban service delivery. Following this is introduction of the value-based integrated conceptual framework for improved service delivery associated with Bao, Wang, Larsen and Morgan. Using the model and applying its concepts, the article suggests ways for improving urban service delivery in Zimbabwe. The article then presents its concluding remarks.

## 2. THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY IN MUNICIPAL SERVICE DELIVERY

According to the principle of subsidiarity, government functions ought to be performed at the lowest level of government (Marumahoko et al., 2020; De Visser, 2008). It is only when local government is not sufficiently equipped to undertake these functions that they should be performed by a higher sphere of government. This arrangement calls into question the clarification of functional responsibilities between national government and local units of government, an issue yet to be fully resolved in most countries, Zimbabwe included. This has facilitated so-called concurrent and exclusive areas of governance between the spheres of government.

In Zimbabwe, although local government was constitutionally accommodated in 2013, clarity and precision in the division of functional responsibilities between the national and local levels of government are not explicitly stipulated in national legislation. Yet a clear division of functional responsibilities is an essential condition of any reform in the structure of urban service delivery. Nonetheless, building on the principle of subsidiarity, it is generally accepted nationally that service delivery should be assigned to local government as the sphere of government closest to the people.

Before it was given constitutional protection, local government in Zimbabwe owed its existence to inferior legislation; the Urban Councils Act (Chapter 29:15) and the Rural District Councils Act (Chapter 29:13), which are still to be aligned to the new Constitution, seven years after adoption of the current Constitution (Marumahoko, 2016; Marumahoko et al., 2020). With constitutionalisation, a three-tier system of government emerged, comprising local government divided into urban councils and rural district councils at the bottom, provincial and metropolitan councils in the middle and national government at the apex. Devolution which is not yet fully implemented was adopted as the principle for organising local government.

## 3. THE STATE OF URBAN SERVICE DELIVERY IN ZIMBABWE SINCE 2017

With the resignation of Robert Gabriel Mugabe toward the end of 2017 and his replacement by Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa as the new President of Zimbabwe and the commencement of the so-called Second

Republic, it was hoped that service delivery would fundamentally improve (Marumahoko and Chigwata, 2020; Marumahoko, 2020b). The great expectation was among other things, seemingly based on three pronged promises made by the new administration which are: (1) the introduction of fundamental reforms that would create an ideal environment for socio-economic development, (2) reforming the public administration, including urban local government to make it more responsive and receptive to the demands for better service delivery and (3) providing more resources for efficient and effective public service delivery.

The pledges were accompanied by a raft of policies that appeared to affirm a skew toward a new beginning for Zimbabwe. In this regard, national government announced the “Ease of Doing Business Policy”, “Transitional Stabilisation Programme” and “Vision 2030”, among other policies that appear to underscore the crucial role of urban local government service delivery in the resuscitation of social development, economic growth and poverty alleviation in the so-called called new dispensation (Marumahoko, 2020). The policies were unveiled at a time when urban local government along with rural district councils were experiencing crunching challenges that are seemingly associated with perceived misgovernance under the administration of former president Mugabe. During the old era, it was not unusual for social attitudes surveys to paint a gloomy picture of depleted service delivery (see Table 1).

Unfortunately, Mugabe’s legacy seemingly continues to characterise and even dominate the face of the so-called new dispensation. Urban service delivery is still a pale shadow of its former self with no visible signs yet of any movement (Marumahoko, 2020). If anything, urban service delivery appears to have entered a new spiral of decline that threatens to take the country’s cities and towns back to the worst days of Mugabe’s era. Indirectly this is inviting the question of what needs to be done to ameliorate declining service delivery (Marumahoko et al., 2020).

TABLE 1 - RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE STATE OF SERVICE DELIVERY TODAY  
(Percentage of total responses)

Service/ Service rating	Health	Education	Transport/ Road	Water and Sanitation	Housing
Excellent	3.3	2.7	1.6	3.8	0.5
Good	18.7	9.9	7.1	7.7	9.9
Fair	41.8	33.5	23.1	24.2	41.2
Poor	30.2	42.3	53.3	54.4	36.3
Non-existent	1.1	2.2	4.9	2.2	1.6
DK/ NA	4.9	9.3	9.9	7.7	10.4
Total	100.00	99.9	99.9	100.0	99.9

Note: N=182 and include only the councillors from 12 local authorities. DK/NA= Respondents who did not know or did not answer the question. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding off.

Source: RTI International and the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for Zimbabwe, 2013: 49.

#### 4. BASIS OF PROBLEMS FACING MUNICIPALITIES

Service delivery is constrained by many challenges. They include challenges of finance, coordination, capacity, governance, inadequate council decisions, organisational instability, insufficient oversight and accountability and a lack of adequate regulatory support (Ndevu and Muller, 2018). These are intensified by the speed and scale of urbanisation. In the following paragraphs, the article engages briefly on bureaucratic corruption, weak institutional capacity and inadequate participation as some of the key components flagged for declining service delivery in urban Zimbabwe.

#### 4.1. BUREAUCRATIC CORRUPTION IN PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS

Corruption in public appointments is a key explanation for declining service delivery. Bureaucratic corruption in public appointments in this context takes one of two forms. In the first form, underqualified individuals pay money in exchange for employment opportunities (Wade, 1989). The second form is usually referred to as patronage, the spoils system or moneyless corruption. Basically, it is a form of corruption, where senior public officials insert relatives, friends, political supporters and so on into public jobs which, without the official's influence, they would not obtain.

In a patronage system, when the candidate of a political party wins an election, the newly elected official rewards his/her political supporters, friends (cronyism), and relatives (nepotism) by appointing them to government positions as a reward for working toward victory, and as an incentive to keep working hard (Obong'o, 2013). Such practices are fuelling the development of corrupt patronage networks within the local public service, facilitating employment of unqualified individuals and undermining the goal of building strong and efficient local bureaucracies.

In Zimbabwe, especially at the local level, bureaucratic corruption in public appointments is facilitated by the fact that urban local government plays a minimal role in the employment and dismissal of local bureaucrats. It is the Local Government Board (LGB), a body controlled by the Ministry of Local Government that moderates the conditions of service of senior municipal employees and not elected mayors and councillors, raising questions about autonomy and control. The role of urban municipalities is limited to making recommendations to the LGB.

Questions have been asked about the impartiality and professionalism of the LGB given that its members are appointed based on the discretion of the ZANU-PF Minister of Local Government and serve at his/her pleasure (McGregor 2013: 793). Seemingly, preventing corruption in public appointments at the local sphere of government involves facilitating the autonomy of urban local government, merit-based human resource and recruitment policies, internal controls, as well as integrity management systems, including whistle-blowing mechanisms, ethics training and the implementation of codes of ethics.

#### 4.2. FRAGILE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

The system of selecting councillors has been blamed for poor urban service delivery by many Zimbabweans. Its alleged weakness is that councillors are mostly chosen on a popularity basis, with some unable to read, write or comprehend basic procedures in council chambers. Giving a perspective on this issue, Ignatius Chombo, former minister for Local Government was quoted saying, "It is our view that there is merit in introducing some minimum educational qualifications for councillors with the view of enhancing their craft literacy and competence" (Chombo as quoted by Mushava, 2012).

Two former Harare Mayors from the opposition MDC, Muchadeyi Masunda and Bernard Manyenyeni have also supported the idea of minimum qualifications for aspiring councillors with Manyenyeni noting that the "work of local government is huge and would require a certain degree of education and ability to tackle challenges faced thereof through acquired skills" (Ndlovu and Ncube, 2018). Bland (2011) has noted that lack of education and professional experience are major contributory factors to inefficient urban service delivery.

According to research done by RTI International and the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for Zimbabwe, councillors and mayors are both less educated and experienced when compared with local bureaucrats, making them ineffective not only in policy formulation but also in policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation (see Table 2 below). Zinyama and Shumba (2013) propose three possible explanations for the declining local service delivery, which are:

- The councillors joined local authorities with virtually no experience and expertise in local governance, especially how to relate with the citizenry;
- The quality of councillors in analysing legislation and the budget is extremely poor. They cannot unpack the relevant pieces of legislation, i.e. Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15, the Regional, Town and Country Planning Act Chapter 29:12 and Rural District Council Act Chapter 29:13; and

- The dearth of policy formulation and budget analysis skills and competencies in the local authorities is deplorable.

TABLE 2 - DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MAYOR, COUNCILLORS AND SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS IN SAMPLED LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Local official	Avg. Age in years	Highest Level of Education Achieved (% of N)				% Female
		Primary School	High School & High School+	University Degree or College diploma/Certificate	Graduate School	
<b>Mayors /Chairs (N=14)</b>	47.5	0(0)	8(57)	3(21)	1(7)	7%
<b>Councillors (N=223)</b>	45.6	32(14)	106(48)	44(20)	1(0.1)	15%
<b>Town Clerks/ CEOs (N=12)</b>	54.2	0(0)	0(0)	6(50)	6(50)	0%
<b>Remaining Administration Officials (N=80)</b>	44.1	0(0)	4(0.5)	49(61)	27(34)	19%

Note: N = Number of officials who provided their personal data. In the age column, N= 13 mayors, 212 for councillors & 76 for other administrative officials because not all answered the age question

Source: RTI International and the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for Zimbabwe 2013: 26.

### 4.3. FEEBLE PARTICIPATION

Involving city dwellers in service delivery is a widely accepted way of broadening public participation in urban service delivery. Not only does it center local democratic governance in ordinary people, it also increases the relevance and appeal of the projects and programmes urban local government is implementing.

Currently in the majority of urban councils, a disconnect is perceived between service delivery and the wishes of the people who are supposed to benefit from local government services (Bland, 2013; Marumahoko, 2020a). Among other issues, the disconnect is characterised by inadequate consultation, disregard for the views of ordinary citizens, failure to incorporate suggestions made by service consumers and paying lip service to the consequences of declining capacity of urban local government.

In addition, participation is frail given that in the majority of the cases, supporters of ZANU-PF which controls the national level do not usually attend meetings called by councillors aligned to the MDC which dominates urban local politics. In the opposite direction, MDC supporters are not known to attend meetings called by councillors affiliated to ZANU-PF. Not only is this poisoning the environment for effective public consultation, it is severely undermining the capacity of urban local government to tap into the considerations of city dwellers on a large scale.

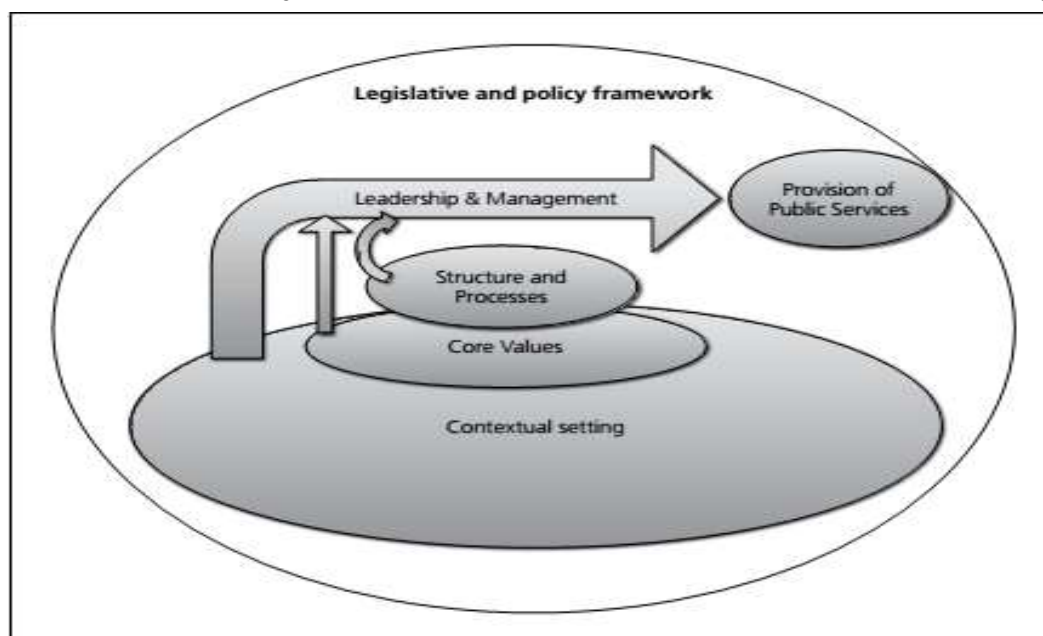
Participation is also fragile as it is centered within the local authority. In many ways this is evident in the budgetary process which is characterised by top-down consultation even though relevant legislation, policy and government directives provide for robust bottom-up consultation when drawing annual budgets for urban municipalities in Zimbabwe (Marumahoko, 2010; Marumahoko and Fessha, 2011; Marumahoko et al., 2018; McGregor, 2013). It is also not uncommon for urban local government in Zimbabwe to deflect community pressures for robust engagement by adopting service delivery proposals facilitated in public meetings and then deliberately undermining those efforts by not allocating any funds in the budget.

## 5. A VALUE-BASED INTEGRATED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR IMPROVED MUNICIPAL SERVICE DELIVERY

Conceived and made popular by Bao, Wang, Larsen and Morgan (hereafter Bao et al.), the framework proposes a value-based model for performance management, governance, and public service leadership development. A product of considerable research and curricular “field-testing” the model integrates an emphasis on values, leadership, management and governance into an organic framework that addresses many criticisms made against New Public Management such as the one that depicts it as a set of practices that can be readily transferred from one culture and one political system to another without variation (Bao et al., 2013).

The value-based integrated conceptual framework, in this regard, appears to repudiate the notion of the one-size fit all model to improved service delivery. It, instead accommodates variations in the values and structures of authority among different political settings and cultural traditions even within the same region, for example. Moreover, it appreciates that local public administrations do not operate in an organizational vacuum, being affected by the general climate and practices which surround them; and, as in so many other areas of the public sector administration.

As can be seen in Figure 2 below, the components of the framework are: (1) contextual setting, (2) core values, (3) structures and processes, (4) leadership and management and (5) service delivery (Bao et al., 2013). In the ensuing paragraphs, the article applies the conceptual framework to Zimbabwe, the objective being to contribute to the broadening of the debate and perspective on improved local urban service delivery.



Source: Author (adopted from Bao et al. 2013: 452)

FIGURE 2 - A VALUE-BASED INTEGRATED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK TO IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY

### 5.1. CONTEXTUAL SETTING

There is no gainsaying that urban service delivery is not facilitated in a vacuum. Understanding the environment in which urban local government operates is seemingly a good starting point in building strong responsive urban councils. In Zimbabwe, there are many dynamics shaping urban service delivery that need increased appreciation. They include intergovernmental politics, power struggles between the local authority bureaucrats and democratically elected councillors, meddling by national government, declining investment in service infrastructure, and the policy and legislative framework in which urban local government operates (Centre for Community Development in Zimbabwe, 2009).

All of the above and other related factors are important in shaping the processes under which local government operates as the closest sphere of government to the people whose main function is basic service delivery. In the following paragraphs, the article briefly explores how an understanding of the political dynamics, socio-economic conditions and policy and legislative framework is important when reforming the structure of urban service delivery to make it more responsive to the needs of its inhabitants.

Understanding the political dynamics influencing urban local government is seemingly important in the scheme of revitalising urban service delivery in Zimbabwe. The scenario that ZANU-PF is in control of the national government while the MDC is in charge of all urban councils is said to be undermining urban service delivery and prompting increased politicisation of local governance (Bland, 2011; Marumahoko et al., 2020; Chigwata et al., 2019). In the struggle for dominance at the local level, national government has often turned to the excessive powers assigned the Minister of Local Government to undermine urban local authority. Using the excessive powers in the Urban Councils Act (Chapter 29:15), the Minister of Local Government can: rescind the resolutions and decisions of councils, appoint the Local Government Board, dismiss a council and replace it with a commission, make directives to councils, approve all subsidiary legislation made by urban local government and enjoy unlimited access to minutes of proceedings of urban councils (Marumahoko et al., 2020; Centre for Community Development in Zimbabwe, 2009). In fulfilling its service delivery mandate, it is important that urban local government is able to navigate this complex governance environment with sensitivity, focus, skill, efficiency and commitment.

As urban councils implement their policies on service delivery, it is important that they factor in the socio-economic conditions under which they are operating. Issues such as thresholds of societal poverty, levels of unemployment, local economic development, foreign direct investment and inflation have a bearing on the ability of urban councils to realise their mandate of service delivery. Over the past few years all of these issues have been known to negatively impact local service provision. It is therefore important that urban councils are innovative and proactive as they deliver the much needed community services against the constraints of limited resources.

It also helps for councillors to familiarise themselves with the policies, procedures, standards and legislative frameworks under which urban service delivery is facilitated. Some of the policies that councillors need to familiarise themselves with to be effective in their service delivery role include the “Revitalisation of Local Authorities Policy”, “Results-Based Management Programme”, the “Ease of Doing Business Policy”, and “Vision 2030” (Marumahoko, 2020c). They may also need to familiarise themselves with local government legislation that define the powers and functions of urban councils. These include the Constitution of Zimbabwe, the Urban Councils Act (Chapter 29:15) and the Regional, Town and Country Planning Act (Chapter 29:12).

## 5.2. CORE VALUES

In implementing service delivery, it is crucial that local government is guided by a set of core values. Basically, core values are the principles, beliefs or philosophy of values adopted and practised in public administration. They assist in the decision-making processes and are the standards by which public sector organisations may be characterised. In the ensuing paragraphs, the article discusses five core values of public administration that are frequently referred to when reflecting on the successes of urban local government in Zimbabwe. They are accountability, transparency, professionalism, ethics, and leadership.

Accountability is one of the core values. It entails adherence to a standard of professionalism in the workplace. It is also based on the understanding that public officials are funded by the citizens living within a certain jurisdiction. Therefore, elected officials and the local bureaucrats are accountable and responsible to ordinary citizens for the decisions they make, including the success and failure of service delivery (Devas and Grant, 2003). Accountability is a crucial element of the functionality of municipal council. Its essence is that while individuals are employed by a public sector entity they will be held liable for their decisions and actions.

Another important core value is transparency. At its center is the ability of outsiders to obtain valid and timely information about the activities of public administration. It includes making a government's meetings open to the press and the public, opening its laws and decisions to discussion and creating a platform for citizens to review local budgets for service delivery. Providing information to citizens about what their government is doing



is important for purposes of holding public officials accountable and in fighting corruption (Krah and Mertens, 2020). It is also important that transparency in service delivery is viewed in good light as a basis for maintaining a healthy relationship between municipal councils and the people they are aiming to serve.

Professionalism is another crucial core value. It includes the belief that administrators are hired to be visionaries, in addition to being stewards of public funds and information. Given that the public service is characterised by unprofessional conduct, professionalism ensures that the governmental goals are achieved through efficient and effective performance of duties (Kroukamp and Cloete, 2018). In this regard, it is important that as urban local government implements service delivery it needs to equip its employees with the necessary apparatus to sustain professionalism and more importantly to increase productivity. Among other things, this could be achieved through building professional competences, establishing the preferred professionalism culture and maintaining professionalism culture and sustainability strategy.

A code of ethics is important for the proper functioning of urban local government and the execution of service delivery. It is essential for purposes of setting the standard for human behaviour in an organisation, promoting a positive image of the municipal council and portraying the values of the community in which it operates (Gilman, 2005). The objectives of a code of ethics include the successful practice and promotion of transparency of governmental services. A code of ethics is also important given that there is an increase in the number of corruption cases involving local government officials especially in the procurement of goods and services. It constantly reminds local officials of the importance of ethics in local public administration.

Good leadership is important to service delivery. It is necessary for urban local government to perform its mission. The point is that there are few public sector agencies that are able to thrive without proper leadership. Among other important attributes, a good leader needs to be able to motivate subordinates to achieve organizational goals and utilise the talents of individuals for the betterment of the public administration. As urban local government goes about providing services, it is important that its processes and institutions are guided by effective leaders. In Zimbabwe where service delivery has been on a downward trajectory for the past few years, it is important that urban councils facilitate good leaders to oversee public service delivery.

### 5.3. STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES

Developing appropriate structures and processes is another way of facilitating local urban service delivery (Bao et al., 2013). In urban municipalities in Zimbabwe, service delivery business is facilitated through neighbourhood committees, ward committees, council committees and the full council (Sections 96 and 97 of the Urban Councils Act). Although all municipal councils have structures and processes in place, the majority of them are not properly aligned to their aims, goals and operations.

A key challenge is that many committees of urban councils are inefficient, ineffective and poorly organised. For example, the committees of urban local government meet once a month to discuss council business and make recommendations to the full council which meets once in three months. In the meantime, service delivery is either delayed or temporarily paused until full council makes decisions and resolutions. It helps to make the structures and processes of urban local government more proficient.

In providing local services, urban local government ought to work together with other institutions involved in service delivery in urban settlements to be effective (Marumahoko et al., 2020). Examples of other institutions involved in urban service delivery include national government, residents' associations, nongovernmental organisations, industry and commerce. Over the past decade or so, service consumers have begun organising themselves into associations devoted to excellence in service delivery. Examples of such bodies that urban local authorities need to work with to be effective in its mandate include the Combined Harare Residents Association, Masvingo United Residents and Ratepayers Alliance and Bulawayo Progressive Residents Association. It may not be a bad idea if urban local government closes ranks, creates synergies and forges working relationships with all these important actors in local service delivery.

A framework for monitoring and evaluating service delivery is another important component of the structures and processes of local government operations. In many urban councils in Zimbabwe, council resolutions and

decisions are not sufficiently implemented (Centre for Community Development in Zimbabwe, 2009). It may be a good idea if all service delivery is accompanied by robust monitoring and evaluation systems and frameworks that are aligned to the visions, missions and resources of urban municipalities.

#### **5.4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

In building a legacy of good governance, accountability and transparency for the prosperity of urban settlements, good leadership is key. Benty (2020) identifies and discusses seven qualities and characteristics that are vital in a local leader. They are relationship builder, a team player, emotionally mature, approachable, a critical thinker, prepared and financial acumen. Good leadership at both the political and administrative levels is crucial in reversing the rampant decline in service delivery witnessed across much of urban Zimbabwe. As servants of the people and not masters of the people, it may be a good idea for councillors and local administrators to undertake their duties with humility, professionalism, compassion and patriotism.

The conceptual framework for improving service delivery seemingly imagines elected councillors and the local bureaucrats always listening to urbanites and seeking to serve them and meeting their needs even within the limitations of inelastic budgets. The environment under which urban local government is operating requires men and women reposed with qualities of innovation, great vision, assiduity, honesty and selfless dedication to duty.

In implementing the conceptual framework, it is perhaps advisable to underscore that the deficiencies in urban services currently experienced in Zimbabwe are not merely a reflection of absolute resource constraints, but also of challenges of compromised leadership and management. Most councillors are not well acquainted to lead and facilitate their roles. They exhibit inability to conceptualise, formulate and evaluate policies on service delivery and other governance issues. Perhaps, it was these capacity gaps that prompted Zinyama and Shumba (2013) to propose the following minimum qualifications for one to become a councillor in Zimbabwe:

- All ordinary councillors must have five ordinary level subjects including English Language;
- Chairpersons, deputy chairpersons and committee heads, in addition to the foregoing requirement, should possess tertiary qualifications (at least a diploma in whatever discipline) and a minimum of three years' experience either in the public sector, private sector or just appropriate experience;
- 18 years old on the day of the election;
- Zimbabwean citizen;
- Registered voter on the day of nomination;
- For 12 months before the date of nomination, the aspiring councillor must have been the owner or tenant of any land or property within the constituency he/she wants to represent.

It may also be a good idea to undertake diagnostic review of the capacity of the administrative authority to manage and implement service delivery programmes and projects. This might require fixing given that some managers owe their positions to patronage and not aptitude. A frequent complaint is non-implementation of council resolutions, with most councillors often attributing this to either, lack of resources, sabotage or dearth of administrative capacity (Centre for Community Development in Zimbabwe, 2009). In attending to any of these challenges and others, it may be advisable that the values of leadership and management are accorded significance. They are: responsiveness and accountability, ethical, trustworthy, integrity and honesty.

#### **5.5. TARGETED SERVICE DELIVERY**

The question of what services are delivered by urban local government is at the center of the existence and relevance of urban local government as the subnational system of government based on democratic participation (Marumahoko, 2020c). Understanding of the state of local public service delivery facilitates the targeting of improvements, provides for the efficient use of scarce resources, better implementation and monitoring and enables citizens to hold local government accountable for specific functions.

As urban local government recalibrates with the intention of getting the best out of its service delivery for the people residing under its jurisdiction, it may be a good idea that it commences by getting a clear sense of the services most in demand. At the heart of this strategy is better targeting, the efficient allocation of scarce resources, facilitation of better project implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Given that urban local government is operating well below its threshold owing to crippling shortages of funding, equipment and other resources, prioritisation of services may be the answer; with more services gradually added as more revenue streams are identified and exploited.

Classifying and prioritising services may entail tapping into the views of service consumers and using data to strategise and facilitate a broad-based approach to declining service delivery. Survey research might be used as a basis for data gathering and analysis. For instance, in 2010, RTI International and the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for Zimbabwe undertook a survey in which they asked service consumers to indicate prioritisation of service delivery. The results are outlined in Table 3 below. However, given that the one-size-fit-all strategy does not appear to produce the best results, each local authority may need to undertake its own research and use the results as a basis for better service targeting.

TABLE 3 - RESPONSE TO QUESTION: WHAT ARE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT SERVICES THE COUNCIL IS PROVIDING TO THE COMMUNITY?

Number of times mentioned among top three (percentage of N)				
Local Officials	Water and Sanitation	Refuse Collection	Road Maintenance	Health Care
Mayors/ Chairs (N=14)	8(57.1)	10(71.4)	n.a.	7(50.0)
Administration Officials (N=15)	14(93.3)	n.a.	5(33.3)	11(78.6)
Councilors (N=194)	103(53.1)	n.a.	64(33.0)	97(50.0)
Totals (N=223)	125(56.1)	10(4.5)	69(30.9)	115(51.6)

Source: RTI International and the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for Zimbabwe, 2010

## 6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Long considered the *raison d'être* of subnational government, urban service delivery is viewed of as being crucial to the revitalisation of the local government system in Zimbabwe. Restoration of public goods and services by urban local government is considered an important means of reconnecting with citizens, rebuilding government legitimacy and stability and facilitating crucial bottom-up approaches to local development. Seemingly, this can be restored through applying the value-based integrated conceptual framework for improving service delivery developed by Bao and others in 2013.

Among other considerations, adoption of the conceptual framework requires facilitating better understanding of the contextual setting in which service delivery is implemented, taking advantage of the set of core values and principles that inform the purpose for its existence and setting the standards for measuring its achievements. Furthermore, urban local government requires a great deal of knowledge and appreciation of the framework, structures and processes through which local service provision is facilitated, well-endowed institutional leadership and management, better targeting of improvements and producing tangible progresses in the quality of life.

The article focused on the value-based integrated conceptual framework for improving service delivery developed by Bao and others in 2013. The model was applied to urban local government service delivery in Zimbabwe. In its introductory remarks, the article began by presenting a grim picture of the state of public

service delivery in Zimbabwe, the objective being to facilitate for the presentation of an alternative model for renewing and prioritising urban local service provision. It then briefly introduced the principle of subsidiarity in urban service delivery; the objective being to underscore the significance of urban government as a local sphere of government that is indispensable in its role of supplying essential goods, services and developing the local areas.

Following the above was a brief engagement of the state of urban local service delivery in the so-called Second Republic. The assessment takes place against the pledges made by the administration of President Emmerson Mnangagwa to work towards the resolution of inadequate public service and to facilitate socio-economic recovery and economic development. Thereafter, the article engaged three challenges undermining service delivery at the local level. After this, the article introduced the value-based integrated conceptual framework for improving service delivery. Its tenets were then applied to the structures, institutions and processes for urban service delivery in Zimbabwe. The conceptual framework was found to be useful for the purposes of facilitating better urban service delivery. Among the reasons for its positive evaluation are that it is a framework whose application takes into consideration the socio-economic, political and cultural variations in which municipalities operate, among other crucial factors.

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