

Performance of Local Governments in Zimbabwe under The COVID 19 Pandemic: A Case of Mvurwi and Harare

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Abstract— The article sought to assess the performance of local authorities in Zimbabwe during the pandemic. Harare city Council and Mvurwi Town Councils are the two local authorities who are considered in the analysis. The article undertakes a wide scope review of literature in order to conceptualise the problem under study. The study was a qualitative study that made use of case study approach. A sample of 20 officials from the two local authorities under study were selected conveniently. Data was analysed using qualitative content analysis. Findings show that the two local authorities are located one hundred kilometers from each other's but they are facing similar challenges. Findings showed that both Mvurwi and Harare local authorities continued to provide services to rate payers. This was despite the challenges emanating from the pandemic. One of the main challenges faced was the decrease in revenue collected by the local authorities. The closure of businesses during the hard lockdown period contributed to this. Service delivery was negatively impacted by the fall in revenue as councils' capacity to provide the same was seriously curtailed. Local authorities were unable to pay service providers. Falling revenue meant that the local authorities were unable to acquire these necessities and the implications for service delivery and performance were expectedly negative. Local authorities have actively participated in the fight against the pandemic. For instance, local authorities have established quarantine centres for all suspected Covid-19 cases. Safe to conclude that the COVID pandemic has grossly affected the service delivery aspect of local authorities in particular Harare City Council (HCC) and Mvurwi City Council (MCC) through depriving revenue collection and setting aside all resources generated by local authorities towards fighting the COVID and pandemic through the procurement of personal protective clothing, construction of isolation centres and procurement of vaccines. The local authorities are engulfed in a plethora of challenges which continuously deters progress. It is best that a political establishments view development with a shared vision. Further it was recommended that a more collaborative approach be adopted by local authorities and the central government in order to optimize service delivery. Local authorities should tap into various forums globally so as to identify best practices in service delivery implementation and emulate these. The pandemic has exposed cracks in the healthcare system at all level and local authorities ought to work to address these.

Keywords— COVID-19, Local Authorities, Service Delivery, Governance, Central Government

I. INTRODUCTION

The pandemic has affected various aspects of life as we know it. All sector of the economy have been negatively affected with healthcare systems facing an existential threat. Local authorities have not been spared. Yet these occupy an

important position in the wellbeing of communities served. Literature shows that these have not fared any better during the pandemic with resource constraints being one of the most notable challenges faced. However, empirical evidence in the Zimbabwean context is scanty despite clearly contextual differences in findings. It is therefore necessary that this aspect is analysed in the Zimbabwean context which this article sought to accomplish. Various sections make up the article with each of these focusing on a particular aspect.

II. BACKGROUND OF STUDY

The covid-19 pandemic has a devastating effect on various aspects of life. This includes the global economy and as Mulenga and Mulenga (2021) note with far reaching consequences of economic, health and social systems. Coronavirus cases have risen globally peaking at 264 million thereby threatening to overrun and decimate health systems globally. The resultant containment measures have affected all the economic sectors (WHO, 2021). This includes key service provision in various countries. Local authorities have not been spared as these have also felt the effects of the pandemic. Yet local authorities are the lifeline of communities in a devolved system of governance. These are mandated with tackling various developmental challenges faced by communities. This has earned them a place in the Sustainable Development Goal as espoused in the United Nation document on the same with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 buttressing their importance (UN, 2015). Yet they have not been spared by the pandemic. Prior studies have shown that the pandemic has compelled local authorities to shift their attention to containment which may have negatively influenced their performance of the core business. In developed countries including those in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the same has been observed to have influenced expenditure on basic service provision as health gained prominence (OECD, 2021).

Closer to home in Africa, local government revenues plummeted by a massive 30-65% (Mabwe, 2020). Service provision even of the basic services has been poor with World Health Organization, (2020) reporting that hand washing facilities and running water remain unavailable to most people in developing regions. In the same vein Grasham, (2019) suggested that 400 million on the Africa continent have no access to clean water, a challenge that towns and cities are faced with. Uganda for example saw local

governments facing resource shortage challenges (Mbabazi et al., 2020). The current article focuses on Zimbabwe particularly on the capital city which is Harare and Mvurwi, one the youngest town in the country analyzing the performance background of the two urban councils before and during the pandemic. COVID 19 pandemic came in Zimbabwe against a devastating drought in 2018/2019 agricultural season due to erratic rainfall. Maulani, Nyadera and Wnadekha, (2020) posit that overall service delivery including water, sanitation and health care has drastically deteriorated in terms of quality on the back of widespread corruption, hyperinflation, mismanagement and other economic challenges. Maulani and Agwanda, (2020) noted that Zimbabwe's health system was struggling even prior to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Makurumidze, (2020) notes that the country has struggled with the resourcing of the health care system which has remained under resourced, overpopulation in urban areas, unemployment and poor service delivery. The author further observed that Covid-19 containment measure may actually prove challenging to maintain and enforce which may have dire economic, social and health consequences. On the 19th of March the Covid-19 pandemic was declared a national disaster by the President of the republic Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa in terms of the Statutory Instrument 76 of 2020 on Civil Protection (Declaration of State of Disaster: Rural and Urban Areas of Zimbabwe). While there is clear evidence of how the pandemic has affected local authorities, there is a dearth of the same in the Zimbabwean context and this necessitates a contextual analysis which the article undertakes.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Background of Harare*

Munzwa and Jonga, (2014) opined that the history of urban development in the Zimbabwean context has strong links to colonialism. The authors add that prior to colonization, human settlement in Zimbabwe were dispersed and sparsely distributed without any towns and cities save for traditional and pre-colonial cities of Dhlodhlo, Khami and Great Zimbabwe, just to mention a few. Muronda, (2008) highlighted that the city of Harare was founded as a fort in 1890 by the Pioneer Column which was a mercenary force put together by Cecil John Rhodes and headlined the colonization of the land. The city was originally known as Fort Salisbury before it came to be known as Salisbury. In 1897, Salisbury was declared a municipality before it became a city in 1935. Kay (1974) avers that Salisbury served as the capital city of the Rhodesian Federation and Nyasaland between 1953 and 1963. Harare can be understood to be a generic city as opposed to being a parasitic city as it has witnessed a heterogeneous transformation and not an orthogenetic one. Salisbury attained city status in 1935 despite having a population below 20 000 (Marongwe, Mukoto & Chatiza, 2011). The first international airport in Rhodesia was

constructed in 1951 in Salisbury thereby cementing the city's status and enhancing mobility of factors of production (www.icaaz.org.zw/CPI/cpi.htm).

Korff (1995) noted that there was need for semi-skilled labour owing to trade development mostly driven by marginalized indigenous people driven from their land by the colonial government in Rhodesia. Rhodesia witnessed a substantial increase in African labour force available to different employers in the cities as rural to urban migration increased. The result was the setting up of high density suburb meant to house these African individuals moving to cities in search of gainful employment and this is how suburbs like Mbare, Mufakose, Highfields and Mabvuku came into existence punctuating the growth of Salisbury. These residential areas have subsisted to date and they remain densely populated by poor black individuals. Conversely, residential areas like Hatfield, Borrowdale, Mt Pleasant and Marlborough among others were reserved for whites while Arcadia, Braeside and Cranborne housed individuals of mixed race (Buckle, 2001).

Wekwete (1988) asserted that the colonial policies on urban development dimension were highly restrictive with regards to movement of people as well as where they could settle. The most affected were black people especially given that the colonial government had measures in place to control the growth of black population in urban areas. More lax policies were in place in the case of growth points in rural areas which enjoyed different level of growth from that in urban areas. Paradza and Mukondiwa, (2005) noted that the Growth Point Policy was adopted at Independence in 1980 to address growth and equity through identifying potential economic growth areas which could help curb rural to urban migration as well as facilitate economic activity decentralization, service delivery and other amenities in a bid to deal with inequality between the rich and the poor as well as colonial imbalances. Since independence, the city of Harare has gone through numerous changes including in its administration and service delivery capabilities.

B. *Background of Mvurwi*

Scoones, (2020) states that Mvurwi was established formally in the aftermath of the Second World War and the same was then known as Umvukwes. Mvurwi then served as an important service centre for colonial commercial farmers while also housing farm labourers including those coming from neighbouring countries to work in large mostly tobacco farms. Mvurwi is dominated by commercial banks, farm suppliers as well as different agencies that are involved in different agricultural activities. These have for a long time served surrounding farms. Commercial farmers in Mvurwi enjoyed the use of different amenities available to them during the colonial era including a country club constructed and run by the Association of farmers since 1946 (Scoones, 2020). However, after the land reform programme in Zimbabwe, there has been a sharp increase in the number of businesses operating in Mvurwi as well as the number of people living in

the area. With this growth has come various government offices, schools and medical facilities.

Scoones and Murimbarimba, (2020) highlighted that in the aftermath of the land reform program, Mvurwi's agricultural economy has undergone serious change. Funds generated from the production of tobacco amongst mostly A1 and A2 farmers have dominated in driving the economy. More conspicuous is the participation of more farmers in this regard as opposed to the hitherto status quo under which a few commercial white farmers participated in Mvurwi's economy. A building boom has also emerged in Mvurwi leading to the allocation of land by the Mvurwi town council to both individuals and businesses for both commercial and residential construction. This has marked the growth of the town during the post-colonial era. Financial inclusion has also increased in Mvurwi and this is attributable to growth in rural income, investment, human development, on-farm and off-farm activities and rural industries all of which have interacted to bring about the enhanced financial inclusion. These are all key to rural development and Mvurwi town council has evolved with the town to continue growing in terms of scope of operations.

C. Challenges faced by local authorities in Zimbabwe

The pandemic perpetuated the challenges already bedeviling the councils like infrequent water provisions, burst water and sewer pipes, deterioration of roads, contamination of water, non-function of traffic lights. Following the announcement of the pandemic as a national disaster it paves way for all donors and resources within the local governance to be channeled towards fighting the pandemic leaving no resources for other vital activities. Chakaipa, (2010) posits that when citizens always face overflowing sewer, uncompleted projects and they ended up organizing and carrying service delivery protests which are will further worsen the challenges facing the nation. Chakaipa, (2010) highlighted that Central Government through Ministry of Local Government should offer not only fiscal support but facilitation, monitoring, oversight, directing and capacity building.

Marumahoko, Chigwata and Nhende, (2018) noted that Central Government in Zimbabwe contributed to failures of local governance through abuse of powers by amending Urban Councils Act to undermine service delivery in opposition controlled cities and towns like for example by making directives to council to rescind decisions and resolutions which are not in sync with the philosophy of the ruling party but necessary to uplift the lives of the majority, dismissal local authorities and replacement by Government Appointed Commissions which are not accountable to the people but rather to the central government resulting in poor governance and poor service delivery. They further noted that the appointment of the Local Government Board (LCB) causes confusion with the opposition run councils as the LCB was seen as disturbing the appointments and running of the

councils.

Centre for Community Development, (2009) highlighted that the appointment of special interest councilors (25% of Councilors under the guise of bringing specialists have resulted in bring mainly candidates who lost the election to come and run the councils thus causing unnecessary disgruntlement amongst the meetings as they tend to oppose all decisions meant for development. Whilst it is a good idea to put councilors with technical competencies it has been observed that most of the special councilors who are appointed have technical competences but are rather chosen based on patronage. The organization also highlighted another challenge of putting a ceremonial mayor who does not have an executive authority following the Amendment of Urban Councils Act No 1 of 2008. This was a major blow to service delivery as the mayor does not have the authority to direct proceedings within councils leaving the horns of power under unelected officials like the town clerk and the management team who are not accountable to the residents.

Chakaipa, (2010) bemoaned the decision which was taken in in 2001 of amending the Urban Councils Act to allow the state run Zimbabwe National Water Authority to manage water in urban and rural councils depriving the councils of their key role in the management of affairs with in an established jurisdiction. Councils were getting revenue from water management but the central government chose to give the ideal function to the parastatal in order to weaken the power base of councils. He also pointed another inherent anomaly in allowing the Zimbabwe National Roads Administration to collect licenses in urban areas taking away an envelope which was critical in constructing new roads and repairing and maintenance of local roads.

Moyo, (1999) avers that towns and cities a serious quandary of various environmental challenges including all sorts of pollution as well as land degradation. These challenges affected towns well before the COVID pandemic thus the coming of the pandemic further exposed the already affected areas. Auret (1994) argues that the increased slum dwellers as well as population have interacted with the various service provision challenges to produce negative environmental challenges. This has been the most synonymous issue between the two councils under consideration that is of rapid population growth leaving the infrastructure trailing to cope up. The pandemic exposes the shortages of health facilities and scholars following requirements of social distancing and washing of hands. Facilities without water and ablution facilities are no longer fit for human habitation.

The most imbedded problem in local authorities is that of corruption. Groove, (1992) suggested that corruption was under developing Sub Saharan countries to an extent that their revenue generation capacity has fallen by half due to corruption. This panacea has affected the two local authorities under consideration but moistly Harare is greatly affected

resulting in poor service delivery religiously. The Harare residents have lost trust in the capacity of the city fathers and have resorted to doing anything for them to survive. The other issue which is gravely affecting the councils is failure by the Central government to implement devolution more than five years after adoption of the new constitution. The statutes require alignment and surprising some laws are still ultra vires the constitution and there is no effort to align those laws. It is prevalent that for the country to compete at the global stage there is need to address a number of administration challenges that are continuously weighing the country down in terms of governance issues.

Holgate, (1999) posits that waste management has been a problem with practices like illegal dumping, burning and related emissions from waste disposal proving to be a contributing factor together with chlorinated organic components, heavy metal and dioxin. These have been persistent issues in urban areas thereby impacting the environment. The same waste management challenges have health implications for urban dwellers and they have been blamed for outbreaks of cholera, typhoid and other diseases in the past particularly in Harare.

D. Performance of Harare City Council (HCC) before the COVID 19 pandemic

Tibaijuka, (2005) described the economic fortunes of Zimbabwe as having tumbled from the drought of 1982 and has having been in a free fall ever since. This has culminated in the massive deindustrialization of the country caused by the International Monetary Fund (MF) and World Bank initiated ESAP program. Chimwanza, (2010) posited that the country went through concomitant shrinkages of the formal economy which compelled many people to switch to the informal sector owing largely to limited opportunities in the formal sector of the economy as well as high rates of urbanization. The informal economy has gained credence as it has been viewed as a panacea to the fast waning economic fortunes of the country as well as sluggish performance of the formal sector. This deterioration has led to the decline of revenues received by the HCC correlating directly with a decline in service delivery. Chirisa, (2012) raised alarm to HCC to deal holistically with the menace of commuter omnibus and illegal vending in the central business district citing repercussions of drainage blockages. He proposed that new vending sites be constructed with ablution facilities to avoid spread of diseases such as cholera which has troubling the city fathers and the whole country since the attainment of independence in 1980.

Section 276 of the Constitution of the Republic of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act 2013 provides for local governments' right to govern on their own initiative all the local affairs of the individuals that are in its sphere of influence or areas of jurisdiction. Harare is run by elected councilors with a ceremonial mayor superintending all proceedings. Mapuva, (2012) asserts that the councilors will form committees like welfare, finance, human resources

amongst others to spearhead developmental issues deliberated in the council chambers. A number of scholars have argued that poor service delivery in HCC has been attributed by councilors who are have less education thus failing to adequately push through strategies which can stimulate sustainable growth in urban areas in Zimbabwe. Whilst this argument has been raging on for almost two decades now, it has been noted that the Constitution of Zimbabwe is also silent about educational qualifications for the Member of Parliament and the Office of the President thus not valid to debate about it.

The administration will be headed by a town clerk who is an accounting officer responsible for implementing council resolutions. An Act of Parliament like for example, the Urban Councils Act may have the effect of conferring certain functions on local authorities including the power to make regulations, by laws or any other rules with a view to ensure effective administration of the areas under their jurisdiction. The power to levy and collect taxes and rates as well as ensure that sufficient revenue for carrying out service delivery is naturally given local authorities through constitutional and subsidiary legal statutes.

Their objects and responsibilities entails amongst other things, waste management, sanitation, road construction, provision of houses, water and health services. Legislation in Zimbabwe gives every citizen the right to access clean water. The Water Act (Chapter 20:24) states that every individuals in Zimbabwe is entitled to water for primary use. It is important to note that the Water Act as well as the national constitution are complementary in terms of provision on water and the right to the same resource. Section 64(1) of the Public Health Act (Chapter 15:09) provides that local authorities are responsible for the provision of sufficient water for drinking as well as domestic purposes to all residents within its locality. Local authorities are further mandated to maintain current water supplies and related infrastructure in good order so that water can be effectively distributed to residents for domestic use and drinking. The Urban Councils Act (Chapter 183) confers a duty on local authorities to ensure that water supply is maintained within and outside the council area. Despite the availability of legislation all suburbs in HCC have dry taps what can be seen by citizens are burst pipes and reports of shortages of water curing chemicals. The question of affordability and accessibility of water which has been guaranteed in legislation have violated for some time now to an extent that citizens are regarding it as the new normal. The situation in HCC points to negation of duty by the Harare City Council in that regard.

Sewages have overflowing the streets of Harare, and the environment is being polluted by sewage affluent. The United Nations Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Report of 2005 defined environmental management as being a purposeful activity that is undertaken with a goal improve and maintain the state of environmental resources which are impacted by human behaviour and activities. The roads in Harare are in a

deplorable state and the actual maintenance has been shelved for a long time now as HCC cite funds unavailability challenges. The provision of houses has been mostly received support by private players and developers like Central African Building Society (CABS) and Infrastructural Development Bank of Zimbabwe (IDBZ) among others. The HCC have lost it in terms of provision of houses, with the Central Government dishing out land to land barons and cooperatives where party cadres are mostly benefitting at the expense of majority according to Machivenyika, (2012).

E. Performance of Mvurwi City Council (MCC) before the COVID 19 pandemic

Scoones and Murimbarimba, (2020) noted that the town of Mvurwi has been able to provide quality water, road maintenance, waste management and development of houses even though they are also taking time to provide electricity. There is little contestations between councilors and management of the councils as compared to HCC where political contestations affect service delivery and appropriate distribution of resources. The 2015 Auditor General's report highlighted that the MCC is a well-run council and the service delivery is very high. Scoones (2020) commended the Councils for vending sites with proper ablution facilities thus leading to a clean environment resulting in sustainable environmental management.

The Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (2015) reports that Mvurwi town had been experiencing rapid growth in its population and total population in the town stood at 10 492 with most of the people being females. Rapid increase in numbers reflects badly as the infrastructure will fail to cope up with the increasing population. Matsa, Alick, Musasa and Defe, (2021) highlighted that the small towns' water and sanitation program launched by UNICEF in conjunction with the Zimbabwean government as well as other partners in 2009 has helped in closing funding gaps in urban water and sanitation in Mvurwi especially the old suburb and the newly build suburbs. Zinyama and Nhema (2015) aver that African states like Ghana, Gabon and Ivory Coast have in place arrangements under which water is provided by private entities in urban areas. This assertion has been taken on board by The MCC with a view to improve service delivery. Matsa, Alick, Musasa and Defe, (2021) highlighted in their survey of population in Mvurwi that most of the residents received piped water on a daily basis and those without piped water access water from nearby boreholes. The town have well maintained road network of tarred roads

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Study design

The study made use of a case study approach that saw the same consider in-depth two main cases. The cases of Mvurwi and Harare are considered and this allowed the researcher to focus on the subject matter. The use of two cases represents multiple case studies. Qualitative research methods were

utilized in carrying out the study.

B. Sampling frame

The study focused on two local authorities as indicated above and these are Mvurwi and Harare. The study drew a sample of 20 officials from both local authorities. The sample size was arbitrary and convenience sampling was utilized given the normally busy schedules of these officials as well as the sensitivity of the matter at hand.

C. Data collection

Data was collected using an interview guide and the same contained open ended questions. These were deemed fit as they allowed the researcher to obtain rich textual data from selected participants. Thus senior administrators and officers were interviewed over the phone owing to the distance between the two local authorities.

D. Data analysis

Collected data was analysed using qualitative content analysis. Presentation and discussion of findings could not be separated and as such were undertaken together.

V. RESULTS

As indicated in the article adopts two case studies in its analysis of the performance of local authorities. Both Mvurwi and Harare local authorities continued to provide services to rate payers. This even in the face of wave after wave of the covid-19 virus decimated the world. It is important to note that both Mvurwi and Harare were faced with falling revenue during the lockdown period as well as after relaxation of containment measures. Most of the interviewees indicated that the closure of businesses during the hard lockdown period saw local authorities' revenue fall significantly. One of the participants stated that:

Despite numerous appeals by the local authorities including adverts fledged in various media, there was little in terms of payments by ratepayers.

Business closure also affected municipal banking halls which were also closed thereby limiting the revenue collection capacity of the municipalities. This was more so in the case of Mvurwi where data collected indicated that most of the ratepayers are reluctant or not in a position to use online payment methods therefore requiring visiting the banking hall. Resultantly, revenues collected by the two local authorities fell significantly. In the case of Harare, various reforms undertaken by the local authority as well as the need for ratepayers to cushion themselves especially given the uncertainty that characterised the period of the pandemic. Gukurume, (2020) noted that most African countries in a bid to contain the spread of the pandemic imposed lockdown restrictions but news circulating revealed that most Zimbabweans feared hunger more than the virus. The author further asserted that the government found an opportunity to push through reforms in the informal sector especially when

they partially lift the lockdown the government allowed business operations to those small and medium enterprises (SMEs) who are registered and are formalized only leaving those who are not registered in the cold. Mutambanengwe, (2020) posits that only those business with a shop license or other operating license, formal lease registered with the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (Zimra), recognized by the National Employment Council. Registration of Smes has been an ongoing issue under debate for some time, but the major undoing was that there was no incentive for registration but there an increase in the costs through payment of a number of taxes and licenses according to Machivenyika, (2020).

Further, findings indicate that service delivery has negatively been impacted by the fall in revenue as council's capacity to provide the same was seriously curtailed. This is more so given that council has to pay certain service providers in order to be able to provide services. One of the officials from Harare City Council indicated that:

We need to be in a position to pay for water treatment chemicals, sewer pipes, electricity, fuel as well as other important utilities which are essential in the service provision by local authorities.

Falling revenue meant that the local authorities were unable to acquire these necessities and the implications for service delivery and performance were expectedly negative. All participants indicated that without funding from the ratepayers to whom service is to be provided, it becomes difficult for local authorities to effectively provide services to communities that they serve. One of the officials stated that:

Water and sanitation as well as solid waste management were the most affected services that local authorities provide.

Yet the pandemic has increased the need for funding as local authorities have been at the forefront of implementing containment measure in their respective jurisdictions. Local authorities have established quarantine centres for all suspected Covid-19 cases and this has meant that local authorities have to acquire testing kits and water for the smooth running of these centres and all these come at a high cost to the local authority. Resultantly, their performance has been sub optimal. The funding challenges have hamstrung operations and this is despite government support in this regard. The same support has come sometimes when it's too little too late. An official from Harare City Council state:

We have not enjoyed a smooth working relationship with the central government and challenges have been faced as a result. Power struggles have disrupted council business and the government has not been really supporting.

Yet faced with the pandemic government support was needed more than ever as local authorities were largely overwhelmed and has limited resources. The central government intervened by placing all nurses employed by the City of Harare on its payroll and this was after it emerged that poor working conditions for the nurses were hampering progress in the drive

to achieve herd immunity.

Dahab, (2020) highlighted that the continuous industrial action by employees in the health care sector as well as low remuneration have all negatively impacted on and limited the country's capacity to respond to the pandemic. The challenge cascades down to local government level. The Covid-19 pandemic was expected to have far-reaching economic, social and health impacts particularly in low and medium income countries like Zimbabwe. This is despite some of the countries having generally younger populations. Walker, (2020) suggested that there are three factors threatening morbidity and mortality rates in Zimbabwe like overcrowding and large household sizes thus increase transmissibility chances, high prevalence of comorbidities, and lack of intensive care capacity, which could increase case fatality rates. This led to increase in vulnerability mainly those in Harare who were directed to stay indoors despite the fact that there was no water, no food and most importantly sewer flowing all over the roads.

Most people in Harare who had other chronic diseases like diabetes and HIV failed to access their medication due to COVID 19 restrictions. Women who wanted to renew or get their contraceptives where denied access thus exposing them to unwanted pregnancy. Vulnerable groups like the elderly, street kids, disabled and disadvantaged were further exposed to harsh conditions which threaten their survival. The Urban councils were supposed to cater for the vulnerable but the urgency of implementation of the COVID 19 restrictions did not give room for preparation nor concern for the vulnerable groups. Councils lost revenue as most of the shops were closed and no one was getting in town thus no parking fees nor any payment was made to the council yet everyone expected service delivery. Adegbeye, (2020) noted that despite calls for social distancing, citizens find it difficult to comply as they often resort to queuing for water, ZUPCO buses and when getting in shops and banks. Service delivery deteriorated during the lockdown period in both Mvurwi and Harare but residents in Harare faced acute challenges as compared to Mvurwi due to their dilapidated infrastructure. Hygiene is required in order to fight the COVID pandemic but for Harare residents is was a pie in the sky as their taps arte perennially dry thus washing of hands was difficult to achieve. Whilst researchers noted that countries from the global north experienced more affections and death countries from the global south suffered more despite young aged population due to poor health care facilities and lacklustre service delivery from malfunctioning local governments.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this paper Harare city Council and Mvurwi Town Councils has between discussed and evaluated. It has been noted that the two councils had a rapid population growth resulting in the infrastructure failing to cope up with the increased population. A number of scholars have agreed to the fact that the central government in Zimbabwe represented by Ministry

of Local government have created a number of challenges for the local authorities which have crippled their ability to withstand the demands and preparation for the pandemics like COVID 19. Other issues discussed which are imbedded in local authorities are corruption, contestations between management and councilors. The writer has admitted that whilst the COVID pandemic has grossly affected the service delivery aspect of local authorities in particular HCC and MCC through depriving revenue collection and setting aside all resources generated by local authorities towards fighting the COVID and pandemic through the procurement of personal protective clothing, construction of isolation centres and procurement of vaccines, there local authorities are engulfed in a plethora of challenges which continuously deters progress of whatever nature. It is the best that a political will be established with a view to come up with a shared vision for the country. Those in power whether at local authority's or central government should priorities a developmental trajectory without politicking and clientelism as this contributes to under development. Further is recommended that a more collaborative approach be adopted by local authorities and the central government in order to optimize service delivery. Local authorities should tap into various forums globally so as to identify best practices in service delivery implementation and emulate these. The pandemic has exposed cracks in the healthcare system at all level and local authorities ought to work to address these.

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