

Citizen Engagement for Urban Resilience in Zimbabwe: Insights and Foresights from a Citizen Engagement in Community Development and Council Budgeting Conference

TINASHE KANONHUHWA³, PRECIOUS SHUMBA² AND INNOCENT CHIRISA¹

Abstract

The article reports and discusses critical insights and foresight that emerged from a workshop on the role of citizen engagement in community development and council budgeting held on the 21st and 23rd of December 2020 in Harare. The article unpacks the reasons behind fake promises by Councillors and Members of Parliament (MPs) to gain public vote, the inability of those in power to represent the public interest and various reasons behind the lack of zeal by the community members to participate in community meetings. The workshop revealed that community members lack unity, in many instances, fail to contribute towards the budgetary process by councils. The workshop recommended the need for community members to come together regardless of party interests and participate in council budgeting for societal interest to be fairly represented. The article emphasises the active role of Councillors and MPs in luring citizens to participate in council budgeting and community development. The workshop concluded that for community development to thrive, citizens ought to be involved in community affairs. This article journeys into the lives of ordinary citizens and the challenges they face regarding participation in community-based development programmes and council budgeting.

¹ Department of Demography Settlement and Development, University of Zimbabwe

² Harare Residents Trust

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INTRODUCTION

Citizen participation is fundamental to the sustainable and resilient development of communities and cities (Matamanda and Chinozvina, 2020). In Zimbabwe, it is well-articulated in the Regional Town and Country Planning Act (RTCPA), the Urban Councils Act (UCA) and the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No. 20 of 2013 (GoZ, 1976, 2013, 2015) and in these, people are given a fairground upon which they can participate in community development issues at local and national levels. Many studies have suggested that since they play an active role in the financing and sustenance of local authorities, citizens ought to be involved in the decision-making process by councils regarding participatory budgeting (PB) and community development issues (Mandiyani *et al.*, 2017; Marlowe and Portillo, 2006). Most studies acknowledge the role that Councillors and MPs play in representing the interests of the people (Aiko *et al.*, 2016). They are then expected to represent the interests of the people as they are selected by the people. Through the Parliamentary Engagement Workshop (PEW), this article reveals the reasons behind the lack of citizen participation at community meetings, the reasons behind the unfulfilled promises by Councillors and MPs and the possible remedies for bringing the two sides together to talk about community development issues.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The history of citizen engagement in Zimbabwe can be traced back to pre-colonial times when people used to participate in customary practices, such as *dare* (court proceedings), *nhimbe* (peoples' gathering for occasional work) and *mukwerera* (rain-making ceremonies), among others. These events brought people together into participating in various community activities. The colonial era, however, brought about dual structures in many facets of social, economic and political spheres by dividing local government on racial lines, in turn making it difficult for the post-colonial national government to address these inequalities without alienating the white race (Stewart *et al.*, 1994).

To enable citizen engagement, the Prime Ministers Directive of 1984 was introduced to reveal the organisational structures for participation in development planning and this enabled people to get representation of their choice from the village, ward and district levels (*ibid.*, 1994; Ndou, 2015). Other legislative documents introduced to support public participation include the Regional Town and Country Planning Act, the Urban Councils Act and the Zimbabwean Constitution of 2013 giving people the power to participate in community decisions that affect them. Today, for people's concerns to be heard, they must follow more formalised channels by getting representation from Councillors and MPs they would have elected (Aiko *et al.*, 2016) and this may be done through platforms, such as community meetings. Community-based organisations have also played a role in representing community interests and people have also found solace in other independent organisations, such as the Harare Residents Trust (HRT) that have been formed to mediate between the masses and those in power.

UNPACKING THE CONCEPTS OF CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT AND URBAN RESILIENCE

The concept of citizen involvement in public affairs has continuously evolved over centuries worldwide and have resulted in people choosing their leaders and, in some cases, deliberating over local issues (Brajaktari, 2016). In many cases, citizen involvement has been associated with good governance (Gaventa and Barret, 2010) also with many advantages, such as increased citizen empowerment, increased capacity of people to do collective action, greater access by citizens to state services and resources, greater realisation of people's rights and greater social cohesion among groups and creation of social networks among community members (Bassler *et al.*, 2008; Gaventa and Barret, 2012). Citizen engagement has been associated with the ability of citizens to accept a project (Bassler *et al.*, 2008). In this case, the voice of the masses is heard and less resistance to change regarding community projects comes from the citizens as they also feel that their input matters in development.

Citizens can be engaged in various ways; for example through collective action, such as civil society organisations, citizen satisfaction surveys,

public consultations, public issues fora, participatory planning, budget consultations and community scorecards, citizen panels and social audits, among others (Bassler *et al.*, 2008; Brajaktari, 2016). Citizen engagement can also be organic or induced, short term or long term, constructive, confrontational, or disruptive and may take place with or without the mediation of civil society (Brajaktari, 2016). In this regard, citizens can be engaged in various ways with engagement from within the community when faced with a particular problem or challenge or may be induced or organised by government bodies to incite policy and this may be done in efforts to promote urban resilience.

Meerow *et al.* (2016) define urban resilience as the ability of the urban system to maintain its functions or rapidly return to its desired functions or adapt to change in face of disturbances. Godschalk (2003) stresses that a resilient city is based on a sustainable network of physical systems and human communities, the latter comprising mainly *ad hoc* human associations that operate mainly in urban areas, such as schools and neighbourhoods. In this way, for urban resilience to become achievable, people must be involved in policy-making and in decisions that affect them for community projects to be less resisted. In this regard, local citizens must be involved in council budgeting, to also know and monitor finance usage.

The Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe (UCAZ, 2013) defines PB as the process enabling local authorities to form community networks and partnerships which enable the community to be at the centre of the decision-making process. In this regard, it becomes essential and mandatory for councils to consult the public during the council budgeting process. In encouraging citizen participation, the Zimbabwean government in 2018 introduced a budgeting system for local authorities where the council would be expected to present programme-based budgets which allow residents to track council expenditure and not give room to hidden costs as it would allow residents to track what happens with council expenditure (Ruwende, 2018). The main objectives of PB have been to promote civic interest and participation in local governance, to involve community members in generating self-sustaining livelihood options, to promote accountability and transparency in budgeting and

local public finance, and facilitate social and political inclusion of traditionally excluded and low-income groups (UCAZ, 2018). It then becomes the responsibility of local authorities to formulate strategies aimed at facilitating effective citizen participation in council affairs (Marango *et al.*, 2018) and through this, residents can build social capital.

The entry of the term “social capital” into the academic discourse can be attributed to the work of Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988) and later on, Putman (1993) who popularised the term among social scientists, further attracting the attention of policy-makers and researchers (Bhandari and Yasunobu, 2009). Putman (2000) defines social capital as connections that form among individuals as relating to norms of reciprocity, social networks and trustworthiness that arise within them. Portes (1998) further explains that for a person to possess social capital, he or she must be related to others and it is those others, who become the actual source of his or her advantage. However, excessive social capital can have more negative than positive implications as shown in Figure 1.

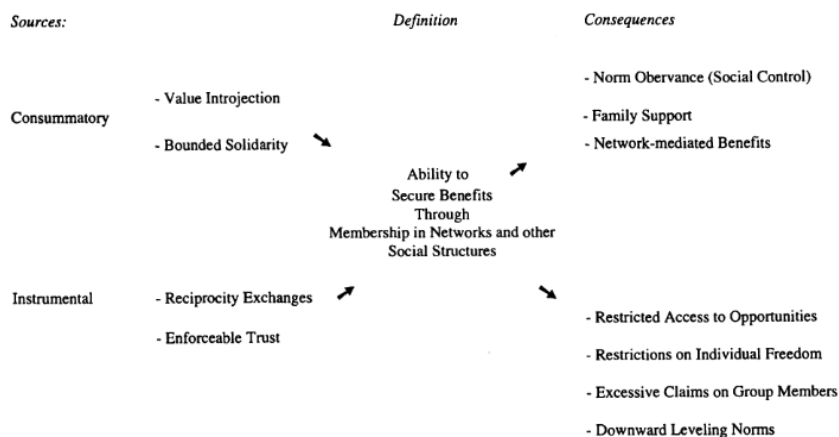


Figure 1: *Actual and Potential Gains and Losses in transactions mediated by social capital* (Portes, 1998:8).

While benefits in the form of trust can be retrieved from social capital, excessive social capital may lead to the exclusion of outsiders, restrictions

on individual freedom and excessive claims on group members (Portes, 1998). This entails that though community members need to rely mostly on social capital to have the power to contribute to the council budgeting process, there is a need for community members to also learn from neighbouring communities and utilise the knowledge of experts (who may be council officials) to understand the budget even further.

Through the Parliamentary Engagement Workshop (PEW), this article reveals the reasons behind the lack of citizen participation at community meetings, the reasons behind the unfulfilled promises by Councillors and MPs and the possible remedies for bringing the two sides together to talk about community development issues.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The PEW was centred mainly on the reasons citizens do not participate in community meetings that relate to community development and council budgeting issues. It also aimed at revealing why Councillors and MPs do not fulfil the promises made to electorate during the pre-election time. Data was gathered through a workshop meeting attended by 160 participants that included MPs, Councillors, council workers, residents' representatives, students and attaches from various non-governmental organisations. Cases of citizen engagement and initiatives by Councillors and MPs to solve community challenges were also identified. Cases to reveal incidents where citizens have been involved in community projects with positive developments are highlighted. Cases to also show differences within party interests were also selected. The article also engaged secondary data sources by reviewing literature related to aspects of citizen engagement, urban resilience and council budgeting.

REFLECTIONS EMERGING FROM THE WORKSHOP

The workshop witnessed heated debate between the people's representatives (Councillors and MPs), council workers and the general residence, some of whom were being represented by HRT representatives. Some of the most important issues raised included the inability of most residents to turn up at council meetings and those held by Councillors and MPs and the inability of some MPs and Councillors to

fulfil promises they would have made to citizens before being voted into power and these shall be discussed at this juncture.

FAILURE BY MPs AND COUNCILLORS TO FULFIL PROMISES

It emerged from the workshop that in many instances, Councillors and MPs fail to fulfil promises they would have made before being voted into power. A Harare West MP admitted that most of the promises made to citizens during the campaigning process are unrealistic and mostly verbal. He emphasised that after being voted into power, the campaigner would still want to recoup what they would have invested during the campaigning process. He also stressed that after being voted into power, party interests usually get represented at the expense of public interest, with another MP acknowledging that if an MP or a Councillor defies party interests, they usually get chucked out of party structures.

REPRESENTATION OF PARTY INTERESTS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF INDEPENDENT ORGANISATIONS

Another participant emphasised that people's needs are, at times, not represented because citizens are not development-oriented as they can even vote an illiterate into power simply because they represent the party they support. As a result, someone who cannot read, understand or articulate by-laws may end up winning an election and in many instances, representing party interests instead. An HRT representative from Kuwadzana emphasised that at times, community development is lagging because of party differences and this has resulted in the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party supporters not attending meetings chaired by the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party representatives and vice versa.

In this way, interests of only one party may be represented and this may not promote comprehensive community development. A retired sales representative revealed that there was a need for independent organisations, like the HRT, to create a dialogue between those in power and ordinary citizens. A people's representative from Warren Park revealed that most people in his area were not even aware that such an organisation exists and this showed the need for such organisations to have more coverage and make themselves known in many areas.

The head of the HRT explained that citizen participation remains elusive for the majority of residents and through the HRT, around a fifth of Harare residents are represented and are enabled to take part fully in council programmes. He emphasised that the HRT works through elected suburban structures where participation starts at individual and household levels by deciding to get more involved in community activities. It was also revealed that the HRT has utilised focus group discussions as the main tool of citizen participation through the organisation of citizens into suburban committees. The elected leaders facilitate these focus group discussions to be held at individual houses of HRT members, thereby cutting venue hiring costs.

He also revealed that in 2020 alone, the HRT contravened nearly 105 focus group discussions where service delivery issues were deliberated on. Four petitions were signed by approximately 10,000 residents for the attention of Parliament and the City of Harare. Key Issues tackled in those petitions included four percent deceased estates duty, high cost of living, illegal sale of council land in Tynwald South and issues regarding high rates for council services. The Master of the High Court and the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs also promised to deal with the issues. The Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights also represented the Tynwald South residents in court and the matter was said to reflect several positives for the residents who want their land for their public school. The case of HRT reveals that residents have become active agents who are acting in unison to get whatever they demand from service providers.

THE USE OF BAD SITUATIONS TO DETER SOME POLITICAL PARTIES FROM MEETING WITH THE PEOPLE

An MP for Harare West raised the concern that in times of crises, those in power sometimes use such situations to deter people of the opposition party to meet with citizens for various concerns. Taking the case of the recent COVID-19 pandemic, political rallies were banned. He, however, expressed disappointment that gatherings, such as weddings and funerals were allowed (though with a limited number). He then explained that such moves would prevent some MPs and Councillors from gathering

particular information about public interests that would, in turn, prevent them from representing the exact needs of the people. The facilitator urged Councillors and MPs to make maximum use of technology and utilise platforms, such as Facebook and WhatsApp to get a wider audience and get the views of the locals.

THE NEED FOR COUNCILS TO PAY ATTENTION TO COMMUNITY CHALLENGES

An HRT representative for Msasa, Harare stressed the need for councils to pay attention first to smaller challenges, such as water leakages and shortages, before trying to solve those with a life span of 5-10 years. She explained that the inability of councils to deal with such small challenges, makes the residents lose interest to attend budget meetings. A council representative explained that if citizens took resources, such as water seriously, they needed to be faithful in paying their dues, as this would help them in valuing community resources.

Paying for a resource would help people value community resources as opposed to getting them for free and this would reduce vandalism of community property. The facilitator then reinforced that citizens had to desist from the misconception that things belong to the government or council as this would promote the destruction of community property. It was also emphasised that for community development to thrive excellently, people had to first speak out on how things were being done wrongly in communities

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES ENCOUNTERED IN ENGAGING CITIZENS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND COUNCIL BUDGETING

A City of Harare (CoH) Revenue Officer acknowledged that service delivery was always done after public consultations. A CoH representative in the Chamber Secretary's Department explained that in making budget consultations, the council comes with no pre-planned budget but with a performance presentation for the first half of the year and after capturing the views of the public, a budget consultation report is crafted and a costing process is done. He, however, expressed disappointment in that

the people who usually attend these meetings are mainly the elderly, with most middle ages coming only to object to the contents of what would have been agreed upon when the budget comes out. This means development would save mostly the interests of the elderly and this may have a bearing on the future development of communities and, hence, the need for economically active groups to be fairly represented by encouraging the youths to attend.

A Councillor for a ward in Chitungwiza added that the same people who attend a meeting in Ward 8, maybe the same people attending meetings in Ward 12. At the end, it is the decisions of these few that would count in both wards. An MP for Harare East stressed the need for the council to lure more people to attend council meetings through various means, such as calling people door to door or using flyers. A Chitungwiza resident added that in their area, they had never seen flyers calling them for a meeting and that meetings are usually announced as an emergency a day before, and as a result, not many people would attend the budget meetings. This shows the need for planned meetings and notifications in time for mass attendance.

THE NEED FOR FEEDBACK FROM PREVIOUS BUDGETS

A Harare resident explained that it was meaningless to attend a budget meeting as there was no feedback on budgets and this is recurrent. A resident from Kuwadzana stressed that after budget consultations have been done, MPs and Councillors sometimes, come telling people of Kuwadzana about developments made in Borrowdale that are of no particular interest to the people of Kuwadzana. An HRT representative for Msasa Park added that the budget is sometimes very unrealistic. She stressed that the agenda could be regarding water provision in Harare, when areas closer to water reservoirs, such as Hwange, that are situated a few kilometres from the Zambezi River, have no water and use communal toilets. She went on to say that such meeting agendas would discourage many people from attending community meetings. This then calls for the

need for the council to formulate realistic budgets to encourage people to attend. Also, for people to keep track of progress, it becomes essential for people to be updated on the progress of the last budget. That way they get to evaluate their input towards the last budget and coming budgets.

THE NEED TO PAY ATTENTION TO SHORT-TERM COMMUNITY CHALLENGES

The MP for Harare East emphasised that people in his community are not aware of what a budget is and during the proceedings of a budget meeting, they start asking about other pressing issues that the community will be facing, such as issues of refuse collection and water shortages. She also stressed that people talk of other issues during budgetary proceedings because that is what they will be facing at that moment and due to limited availability of platforms in that community for members to air out their views. They end up talking of their most pressing issues or concerns at any platform where they think their problems could be heard. This calls for the need for Councillors and MPs and council representatives to emphasise with residents by creating a conducive environment that allows everyone to learn by first conducting lessons on what a budget is and explaining its importance.

THE EROSION OF THE CDF AND THE INABILITY OF COMMUNITY PROJECTS TO BE FUNDED

The Harare West MP further explained that there exists a Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and this traditionally amounted to US\$50,000.00 in previous years. With this amount, MPs developed their respective areas and developments, such as school refurbishments and clinic renovations, would be made possible because the money had much value then. However, the country is experiencing a period of economic downturn and the CDF now amounts to less than US\$1,200.00, very little to do something tangible in communities, presenting a huge challenge. The expectant public will not understand that the lag in community development is not the MPs' fault but the shortage of adequate funds. The MP then pleaded for the government to increase the CDF so that they will not be looked down upon by ordinary citizens.

CASES FOR EXAMINATION

The study examined cases where citizen participation has helped in solving community challenges. They also reveal differences which at times happen within party structures and some cases are highlighted below.

CASE 1: ELECTRICITY CHALLENGE FOR HARARE WEST RESIDENTS

In Harare West residents had no electricity for three months. When their Member of Parliament intervened after the problem came to his attention, by going to the offices, the problem was resolved within a fortnight. This, however, created conflict between the MP and his party as he had engaged a Minister from the opposite ruling party. Usually, if an elected official defies their political party, they get recalled and lose their positions in either the council or parliament. While the MP helped resolve an electricity challenge, he was almost chucked out of the party system.

CASE 2: ZONING OF A PUBLIC MUSEUM WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF PEOPLE'S REPRESENTATIVES IN THE AREA

In another case, it was revealed that in some instances, an MP or Councillor's role may be overlooked by the government in some decisions. A people's representative for Harare West revealed that he was unaware of plans to construct a museum in his constituency. He only saw a billboard being erected. When he attempted to park his vehicle, he was directed to park elsewhere because the area was now being regarded as a protected zone, zoned for the construction of a museum. Central government was in charge. This shows a lack of public consultations since the MP was not even aware that such a programme was about to take place in his area.

CASE 3: THE INABILITY OF RESIDENTS TO PAY COUNCIL BILLS RESULTS IN LIMITED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

A council worker revealed that the CoH introduced a 25 percent ward retention scheme in 2017 to steer community development. This meant that 25 percent of revenues generated in each ward would be retained for use in the respective ward for small community projects. Harare was

divided into eight zones, led by Chief Area Administration Officers. Only Glen Norah-Highfield-Southlea Park and the Borrowdale-Hatcliffe zones performed well. However, the council collected only between 40-50 percent of billed revenues. This made it difficult for the council to allow these zones to retain the 25 percent allocation for community development. The council needed more funds to address pressing issues, like buying water treatment chemicals and paying workers' salaries and allowances. Eventually, the ward retention scheme collapsed. The council officials said they are in consultations to formulate a well-thought-out programme to ensure wards benefitted from the rates paid by ratepayers.

CASE 4: BUDIRO REPRESENTATIVES GONE REBELLIOUS

Sentiment rose from the workshop that council officials ignore community problems that do not directly affect them. After the long persistence of a sewage problem in Budiro, a political activist mobilised a few party representatives, bought 21 buckets, filled them with sewage and led the residents to the council offices where they poured the sewerage in council offices. Within a few hours, the burst sewerage pipe was repaired, thus demonstrating that council workers only reacted when put under pressure or when they feel threatened, or when at risk of inciting public anger.

CASE 5: UPGRADING OF KAMBUZUMA BOREHOLES FROM MANUAL PUMPING TO THE USE OF TAPS

In 2020, the council engaged in citizen engagement programmes by hosting community meetings aimed at soliciting people's views regarding the upgrading of the people's Kambuzuma Section 1 borehole from manual pumping to the insertion of taps for easier handling. Some community members expressed great concern regarding the adequacy of solar power in the pumping of water through boreholes. Most people, however, agreed to the programme and taps were inserted. To date, the place is guarded and people pay US\$1 every month for maintenance of the boreholes. The boreholes are locked at 6pm and opened at 7am, Figure 2 shows the boreholes upgrade.



Figure 2: An upgrade of the Kambuzuma section 1 borehole (Authors, 2021).

In this case, the community has been given the responsibility for their two fenced and tapped boreholes and this provides them with a sense of responsibility and in this way, community resources are better taken care of.

GAZING BACK AT THEORY: DISCUSSION

Defined as a process of empowering the mass by giving them a fairground to participate and the power to negotiate with the development delivery system, citizen engagement forms an important part of the urban development process. It helps in the attainment of sustainable, inclusive and resilient cities (Nekwaya, 2007; Chikerema, 2013; Matamanda and Chinozvina, 2020). This becomes possible because, through the increase of social capital in the form of firm community relationships and shared norms and values, people earn the power to negotiate and make their concerns known.

Social capital is known to create social links, trustworthiness and reciprocity of norms (Putman, 2000) and through civil society

organisations and public hearing fora, people's concerns may be heard (Chikerema, 2013). This brings out the importance of independent organisations, such as the HRT, that may play a mediating role between society and councils, as they sometimes bridge the communication gap between those in power and the masses by making concerns of society heard. The study acknowledges the importance of Councillors and MPs making use of social media facilities, such as Facebook and WhatsApp, when engaging people faced with pandemics, such as the COVID-19. In this way, people's needs may be heard even without making physical contact with the people's representatives. There might, however, be the need for government intervention to assist those people who may not afford data bundles so that there will be inclusivity of people's views in the decision-making process, regardless of societal status.

The article notes the unwillingness of some members of the public to participate in community meetings and the ability of some individuals to appear in community meetings more than one ward. Matamanda and Chinozvina (2020) stress that lack of will to participate by some people is based mainly on classism. There is a need to know that not everyone that attends community meetings is literate and also a need to explain the meeting agenda in simple language. In the workshop, there were claims that in some instances, Councillors and MPs attend community budget meetings with nothing tangible except technical and complicated jargon that makes it very difficult for community members to appreciate a budget meeting or budgeting processes. By making use of the simple language, everyone is included and this may even up the environment for everyone to participate. To guard against issues of the same people appearing in different wards, there is a need for forward-based registers to reduce the same people and same interests being represented in different wards.

The provision of citizen participation in the Constitution, the UCA and the RTCA, empowers locals to participate. In this regard, social capital is built as people feel empowered to come together and contribute towards the development of their economies, through shared vision and understanding. However, the UCA (Chapter 29:15) allows citizens to participate except in situations where the council feels that issues to be

discussed need to be done in private and under subsection (4) of section 307, the public and the press may be excluded (GoZ, 2015). The RTCP Act makes provision for local planning authorities to place the draft master and local plans on public exhibition for two months for the public inspection (GoZ, 1976). It is then argued that in many instances, the public is allowed to inspect an already crafted budget, development plans or by-laws (Madzivanyika, 2014). Matamanda and Chinozvina (2020) further argue that the available legislation provides for limited public participation and through clientelism, politicians at times manipulate the participation process, leaving less room for democratic channels of participation.

In this regard, the real power lies in the executive who determines when, where and how the citizens may be involved. This indicates weak legislation as people usually get involved in the final stages of the crafting of a draft budget and not in the initial stages, which indicates limited levels of participation. A 2015 study on the CoH budget formulation process revealed that public participation is not effective as evidenced by little public participation with evidence showing that residents do not have control over what happens in the CoH except when it comes to the voting for Councillors (Masvaure, 2016). From an Afrobarometer survey, it emerged that the rate of non-contact between the MP and the people of Zimbabwe ranged between 81-86% between 2004 and 2014, while the rate of non-contact between the public and Councillors was lower as it ranged between 58-68% between 2004 and 2014 at a five-year interval (Ndoma and Koreka, 2016).

This shows that Councillors are closer to people at grassroots than MPs and, hence, the need for them to be more approachable by the general public if community development is to be people-oriented. The public must be encouraged to participate on various platforms, including community hall meetings and public hearings and through online platforms, such as WhatsApp and facebook for Councillors and MPs, to get to know more about people's thoughts and challenges being faced in the respective communities that may need immediate attention. Understanding people's problems reduces resistance to change and rebellious attitudes by the masses. The Budiriro case where a few people's

representatives had to go and pour sewage in council offices reveals a rebellious attitude by the people.

The study reveals that due to party differences, some MDC supporters do not attend meetings chaired by ZANU-PF supporters and vice versa. An example is the Harare West electricity case. This shows that, at times, community progress is hindered because of party affiliations and this is not a conducive environment for comprehensive community development. For community interests to be represented, people should put hatred and party differences aside so that they attend community meetings and contribute towards the common goals of solving community challenges and moving forward. The role of mediating organisations, such as the HRT, becomes essential in such cases, to help create a dialogue between different parties which may not see eye to eye.

For citizens to believe in the budgeting process and for them to feel that their contributions are worthwhile, realistic budgets ought to be made and feedback from previous budgets ought to be given. Unrealistic budgets usually discourage community members from participating. There is a need for government to improve the amount allocated to the Constituency Development Fund for community development to be more tangible. To reduce resistance to change and vandalism of community property by the people, a council representative highly recommended the need for the residents to be faithful in paying their dues as this would help people put a value on community property. The Kambuzuma case reveals that if people are put in charge of their resources, resources are better taken care of.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The article sought to understand the rate of citizen engagement in council budgeting and community development issues at grassroots levels by looking at hindrances that deter people from participating and reasons for Councillors and MPs not fulfilling what they would have promised during elections to get the public vote. It is concluded that citizen participation

forms an important part in council budgeting and in stirring community development. It is, therefore, important for Councillors and MPs to engage the community in community-related issues if resistance to change by community members is to be minimised and if positive community development is to be attained.

- There is a need for Councillors and MPs to be approachable, to be good listeners to community outcries and to be able to encourage the public to attend community meetings through various means, such as the dispatching of flyers and posters, to increase the number of attendees.
- There is also need to provide everyone fairgrounds to participate regardless of age or gender. Some cultures may not allow women to speak on public platforms and people should be educated to provide everyone an equal chance to contribute towards the community budget and towards community development.
- The community must pay their dues to council and take full responsibility for community resources.

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