

Devolution, Neighbourhood Form and Structure and Transformations in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, 2018-2021

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Abstract

With the government of Zimbabwe channelling devolution funds through the Minister for Provincial Affairs and Devolution, the paper challenges this channel towards ‘Si Ye Pambili’ the city’s motto, which is translated as ‘Let us go Forward’. The question is who is being taken where, by whom, and how is it going to happen and when. Zimbabwe has selected devolution as the mechanism through which it will achieve decentralisation. The article seeks to understand the Zimbabwe National Devolution and Decentralisation Policy by analysing it in the context of the local government amendment bill and the Constitution of Zimbabwe. In the contexts of neighbourhood organisation structures, neighbourhood management and neighbourhood fiscal resource allocation and neighbourhood information access. The growth of Bulawayo City has been largely unsuccessful, the decision-making process has been met with fluctuations in funding and questionable levels of support from central government and the communities. Devolution is, therefore, an important opportunity to re-examine how the devolution of powers and decision making to neighbourhoods, through the community sector, could be achieved. Using a lucid review of literature, informed by theories, and qualitative research approaches, the paper discusses issues of mechanisms for neighbourhood governance. The article concludes by saying that, although new mechanisms for neighbourhood governance would be

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required, they would have to vary according to geography and local requirements going beyond consultation processes.

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INTRODUCTION

After independence, the histography of Zimbabwean cities extolled more on Harare. Harare became the leading administrative city, and it became the regional diplomatic hub for southern African countries (Kaarsholm, 1994). Si Ye Pambili thus was a positive statement of encouragement amidst past policies of segregation and post-independence political struggles. Post-independence political culture presented different potentials for the development of Bulawayo. It is tempting to assume, that Bulawayo became better in development because of the political polarity and radical oppositional politics (Nkomo, 2017). It can be argued that the nationalist politics of 1987 that led to the unity accord (The Catholic Commission for Justice, 1997), developed or reasserted the city's own specific development trajectory thus Si Ye Pambili, a positive statement of encouragement. People in Bulawayo tend to be proud of their neighbourhoods and claim to be having relatively better standards as compared to neighbourhoods in Harare and the rest of Zimbabwe's cities (Jordan, 1984; Muronda 2018). A more liberal history of administration and council policy dating back to the 1950s can be accredited to this.

Historically, local governance and the local authority in Bulawayo were marred with polarised contestations and divisions manifesting in ways that were racial, spatial, socio-political and economic. Pre-independence Bulawayo local governance space was racialised to support separate development between the white minority population and the black majority population (Mpofu, 2011). This separate development ensured a bifurcation of society and local governance in ways that secured white minority interests and protected them from the vagaries of the market in a mode akin to socialism for the whites or a white welfare state (Ranger, 2009)

Early settlement formation in the city of Bulawayo was influenced by policies of segregation, concentrating on settling the African population furthest from the European neighbourhoods (Beetham, 1999). The Native (Urban Areas) Accommodation and Registration Act of 1946 introduced the beginning of planning and provision of services to Africans (Ranger, 1995). African policy recipients were divided into three groups, the masses, the emergent group and the elite. The masses were considered and described as uneducated, simple in their tastes and completely lacking in initiative and responsibility. The emergent group was seen to be able to do something for themselves but largely depended upon European guidance. The elite was viewed as having a good education, understanding, initiative and practical sense, seen to assume responsibilities (Ranger, 2005). Because of this exaggerated description and classification, African public participation in policy and project formulation was non-existent. In the early sixties, the participatory structures that had been established around township administration in Bulawayo fell apart when nationalist organisations demanded direct representation rather than participation. The introduction of nationalist politics into local affairs was the beginning of the cry for decentralisation in Bulawayo.

SI YE PAMBILI AND MODERNISATION THEORY

Si Ye Pambili was coined as a positive statement of encouragement on a backdrop of high migration from rural areas to urban Bulawayo. From the bushes of war to the peace and tolerance of the city. In 1980 Bulawayo City Council's urban development focused on modernisation. A new master plan was developed that included the redevelopment of new low-income family residences and home ownership. Si Ye Pambili translated to bringing civilisation to Bulawayo by its own residents. Si Ye Pambili suggested the reconciliation of different ethnic groups. The new master plan's framework was guided by modernisation theory. Modernising Bulawayo meant a progressive transition from a traditional to a modern African society. Modernisation theory suggests that traditional societies will develop as they adopt more modern practices (Muchadenyika, & Williams, 2016). Governance and politics in post-independent Zimbabwe was centralised (Chigwata & De Visser, 2018). The decisions the central government made affected the autonomous

functioning of Bulawayo City. Harare seemed wealthier than Bulawayo (Msindo, 2007) and the Bulawayo city council adopted Si Ye Pambili to create a more powerful citizenry who were going to enjoy a higher standard of living. The city had to eliminate pass laws and change traditional methods of transport, communication, and production to make modernisation necessary or at least preferable (Mushamba, 2010). And yet, seemingly paradoxically, it implies that public administration controls the speed and severity of modernisation (Ayres *et al.*, 2017) meaning that central government dictated the pace of Si Ye Pambili.

SI YE PAMBILI AND PARTICIPATION

Section 264(a) of the Zimbabwean Constitution provides for citizen participation in the exercise of the powers of the state and in making decisions affecting them. Sub-section 264(b) provides for the promotion of a democratic, effective, transparent, accountable and coherent Government in Zimbabwe (Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013). These constitutional requirements mirror, in some respects, practices in other jurisdictions but can be enhanced through legislating citizen participation.

Local governance in Bulawayo has been contested and divided as experienced in the neighbourhood organisation structures. The release of the National Devolution & Decentralisation Policy (NDD) did not have as its precursor, effective and meaningful neighbourhood consultation, civil society and general citizen engagement creating the danger that citizens view the policy's references to citizen engagement as "tokenistic" and the policy itself as a hindrance that does not facilitate development. If the NDD policy document is well received and interpreted, it provides opportunities for greater participation bringing devolution to neighbourhoods and facilitating neighbourhood management.

The NDD policy is a key opportunity for a renaissance in neighbourhood-level governance. This includes strengthened community rights and powers that enable local people to shape and transform where they live at the grass root level. Confusion in interpreting the document lies in defining devolution. The policy document clearly states in clause 68 that the transition in the architecture of the Zimbabwean State, from a centralised to a devolved State, will not create a federated system of

Government but will retain the character of a unitary State (Devolution and Decentralisation Policy of Zimbabwe, 2020). In a way, the policy document is aware of the contestation of federalism and devolution. The assertion that the NDD policy will not create a federal state is put as a statement of correction, or as a reminder that Zimbabwe is a unitary state. Though the clarification is well articulated in the document there is still a risk that a ‘top-down’ approach to devolution and the creation of new layers of sub-regional governance could push influence, power and resources further away from neighbourhoods and communities.

The South African Constitution deals with the concept of public participation with much emphasis and scrutiny. The South African constitution holds the national parliament and provincial legislatures with the responsibility of facilitating public participation (Constitution of South Africa, 1996). Section 118 (1) makes provisions for the public to access provincial legislatures and be involved in the legislative processes (Constitution of South Africa, 1996). It also maintains that legislatures must openly conduct their business and may only block access on reasonable grounds. Section 59 (2) of South Africa’s constitution bars legislatures from excluding the public and media “unless it is reasonable and justifiable to do so in an open and democratic society” (Constitution of South Africa, 1996). Section 152(1) of the South African constitution is more explicit, stating that ‘local government must encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government’ (Constitution of South Africa, 1996). This implies going beyond just consulting communities. The Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000, section 16, obliges municipalities to develop a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system of participatory governance, and must for this purpose (a) encourage, and create conditions for, the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality, including in (i) integrated development planning; (ii) the performance management system; (iii) performance, (iv) the budget (v) and strategic decisions relating to services (Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000).

The Government of Zimbabwe and the combined authorities of the Bulawayo Metropolitan Council and the office of the Minister for

Provincial Affairs and Devolution must demonstrate a commitment to onward devolution and then neighbourhoods of Bulawayo have to call for robust mechanisms and community powers to be put in place to achieve this. The NDD policy does well to establish participation. Sections 23, 25, 48, 49, 65 and 72 provide direction for the creation of expanded space and recognition for citizen participation in local governance (Devolution and Decentralisation Policy of Zimbabwe, 2020). The NDD policy also acknowledges the role of Rate Payers Associations, Residents Associations and committees in the local governance matrix. As the city of Bulawayo has noted in its strategic plan, these indications are good practice, and if followed through can create space for meaningful citizen participation in the devolution discourse and operationalisation.

MODELS OF NEIGHBOURHOOD GOVERNANCE

Existing models of neighbourhood governance include formal structures of residents' associations, development committees and informal structures formed on WhatsApp groups. Processes that are already established by the Bulawayo City Council include devolved budgets to ward councillors and local committees. Powers that have been granted at the neighbourhood level include the right to vote and participate in budget consultative meetings, yet the real budget would have been dictated by the Bulawayo City Council. Powers like the right to challenge this process ought to come with the NDD policy.

RESIDENTS ASSOCIATIONS

The process of neighbourhood planning allows residents' associations to be established and take on devolved statutory powers for developing neighbourhood plans. Learning and studying the growth of branches and districts according to the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) administrative structures has been largely successful and can be adopted in neighbourhood administrative structures (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009). Informal mechanisms for decision making at neighbourhood level have tended to have a mixed impact due to fluctuations in funding and levels of support from council members (Nyikadzino & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2022). Solutions should also be focused on devolving power within the existing Metropolitan council and office of the Minister of Provincial Affairs and Devolution. The NDD

policy presents an important opportunity to re-examine how the devolution of powers and decision making to communities, through the community sector, could be achieved. Although new mechanisms for neighbourhood governance would have to vary according to geography and local requirements, there are several options for facilitating greater community powers.

Currently, powers over land use planning in Bulawayo cannot be delegated to communities directly via Residents' Associations, if successfully set up and formally designated the Si Ye Pambili mantra can be revitalised. This model can be extended in two areas- either by devolving powers to upgrade residents' associations, building on and strengthening existing community rights; or by creating a range of neighbourhood committees that can be elevated to have devolved powers. The resident's associations or committees could be upgraded as devolution partners who would then have access to potential powers and rights. The NDD policy has the potential to revive the mantra Si Ye Pambili. For example, a right to review services could be available to devolution partners. This would complement a right to challenge and allow neighbourhoods and communities greater control over service design. The right to review services would allow devolution partners to formally request powers to take on particular services or set up a joint working group with the Bulawayo City Council to review services and make recommendations.

With the NDD policy, there is scope for increasing powers that devolution partners could take on around spending and service delivery. Residents' associations and committees could be given specific rights to initiate negotiations with the Bulawayo City Council obliged to properly consider these requests. However, the process for increasing power and responsibilities would need to include robust scrutiny and assurances around neighbourhood engagement and accountability.

SI YE PAMBILI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD FISCAL RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Local government fiscal decentralisation is mainly concerned with the financial relationships between the various tiers of government (Dube,

2019). It is the devolution of specific functions together with the administrative authority and fiscal revenue to perform those functions that are prudent for Si Ye Pambili to take shape. These elements are especially critical as they define where, how and in what way expenditures and revenues are organised between and across different levels of government in the national polity. The NDD policy provides some meaningful working policy direction across at least ten areas that cover critical areas of expenditure and revenue assignment, along with attendant vertical and horizontal imbalances anchored on broad-based stakeholder consultations (NDDP, 2020). It references the constitutionally mandated central government disbursement of 5% of the national budget to local authorities using equitable and sustainable transfer models, and lists options of that in section 94 of the NDD policy (NDDP, 2020). It commits to assessing the needs and capacities of local authorities prior to disbursement decisions. The general concept of fiscal equalisation is good but while it lists the possible parameters for such equalisation the policy does not commit to a particular model (Chigwata *et al.*, 2019). This leaves the policy and future implementation in a grey zone due to non-commitment to a compelling and appropriate model for Zimbabwe, and thus it affects the city of Bulawayo. In addition, the listed parameters in section 94 of the NDD policy may be ahistorical and fail to account for historical imbalances that led to deficiencies and deficits in things like infrastructure quality, size of economies, and poverty prevalence (Helmsing & Wekwete, 1987; NDDP, 2020). An approach that uses quantitative indicators but also accounts for historical imbalances is suggested for the attainment of Si Ye Pambili to ensure some justice and levelling up historical disadvantages.

SI YE PAMBILI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD INFORMATION ACCESS

It is a common cause that people support what they are part of and often resist what they are not part of. The Bulawayo city council, the NDD policy and legislative amendments that seek to move forward devolution and decentralisation must bear this common cause in mind. They must ensure that there is ample engagement in the run-up to their finalisation and meaningful legal requirements on participation in the Acts of Parliament.

Section 62 of the Zimbabwe Constitution (Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013) confers citizens the right to access information in the hands of state institutions, agencies, and different strata of government. The current administrative structure of the Bulawayo city council does not reflect this right for residents, with serious implications on residents' ability to participate from an informed perspective and accountability of Local Authorities to their constituents. The absence of clear mechanisms on how residents can access information like minutes, tenders, contracts and by-laws limits the extent to which residents can engage from an informed perspective.

DECENTRALISATION AND DEVOLUTION

Decentralisation was a normative priority for the government and was given some direction by the 1984 Prime Minister's Directive on Decentralisation and Development (PMDDD) (Zinyama & Chimanikire, 2019). The directive guided the establishment of grassroots participation and government coordination especially in rural development at the village level (Village Development Committees – VIDCOs), ward (Ward Development Committees-WADCOs) and district (District Development Committees-DDCs); provincial councils (PCs) and Provincial Development Committees (PDCs). There was a clear hierarchy established by the PMDDD as a way of channelling local aspirations into both subnational and national development planning. Nonetheless, the hierarchical nature of the structures continued the trend toward upward rather than downward accountability, and this led to the introduction of Provincial Governors in 1985 in all the provinces except in Harare and Bulawayo. Provincial Governors for Bulawayo and Harare were later introduced despite the initial appointment of Executive Mayors in 1997 and their abolition in proceeding years.

In the early 1980's Zimbabwe immediately introduced black participation in local governance, through legislative reforms. This involved removing the racialised policies in councils. Legislative reforms incorporated African townships into urban councils and amalgamated the African District Councils 'the former native councils' with rural councils (Madhekeni & Zhou, 2012). As de-racialisation was achieved, post-independence reforms had two effects. The de-racialisation and reorganisation of local

governance gave significant control and powers of local governance to the central government (Mapuva, 2014). The government was thus de-racialised and the functions of the state decentralised via de-concentration. This did little for the fiscal autonomy of local government institutions and did not augment effective citizen participation at scale. It, instead, strengthened the upward accountability of Local Authorities to the executive and central government with limited downward accountability of the local authorities to citizens. Suffice it to say that despite the reforms in local governance in the 1980s and 1990s, the sector was not sufficiently transformed to meet the aspirations of accountability, effective service delivery or ensure effective citizen participation in local developmental issues. These deficiencies spurred further government action in 1988 through a cabinet committee on decentralisation.

Post-2018, with the election of Emmerson Mnangagwa as President of Zimbabwe, the government moved towards implementing the devolution provisions of the Constitution. Steps have included a budget allocation of close to 3 billion dollars in the 2020 National budgets and Cabinet approval of the National Devolution and Decentralisation (NDD) policy on 21 July 2020 (Ncube, 2020). The NDD policy seeks

...to guide the process of removing ambiguities, gaps, inadequacies and impractical provisions, that might be inherent in the Constitution, particularly with regard to the modus operandi of Provincial and Metropolitan Councils

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT BILLS, ROLES AND FUNCTIONS IN NATIONAL DECENTRALISATION AND DEVOLUTION

The government of Zimbabwe acknowledges the historical fragmentation around various local government policies and legislation. It presents the NDD policy as an attempt at harmonisation over time to redress challenges presented by conflicting provisions in laws like the Urban Councils Act, Rural District Councils Act, Provincial Councils and Administration Act. The NDD policy adds the Public Finance Management Act and the Regional, Town and Country Planning Act as needing congruence and critical to the local government agenda. Beyond harmonisation, congruence in local government legislation is one of the key blocks that can facilitate an enabling environment for proper devolution. Post-2013, the Government of Zimbabwe introduced two

bills in 2014 aimed at legislating Chapter 14 of the Constitution that is, the Local Authorities Bill and the Provincial and Metropolitan Councils Bill. These bills did not make it to a first reading in parliament amidst opposition from, inter alia, the chiefs council, Local Authorities, and citizen associations.

Amongst the reasons cited for opposition to the bills was the framing of the Provincial and Metropolitan councils bill in a similar spirit to the Provincial Councils and Administration Act (Chap 29:11) of 1985. The act provides for the declaration of provinces within Zimbabwe and the appointment of provincial governors for such provinces; to provide for the establishment and functions of provincial councils; and to provide for matters connected with or incidental to the foregoing. The argument was that instead of devolving, it followed the centralising and upward accountability tendencies of the predecessor law from 1985, with many of the bill's concepts not fitting well with the spirit of devolution contemplated in Chapter 14. With regards the Local Authorities bill, it was acknowledged that it sought to harmonise local government legislation in one Act of Parliament, especially the Rural District Councils Act (Chap 29:11) and the Urban Councils Act (Chap 29:15). However, part of the criticism was that The Local Authorities Bill seemed to curiously ignore the dictates of the Constitution and merely sought to harmonise provisions of the current Urban Councils Act and the Rural District Councils Act and increasing the powers of the Minister of Local Government, outside the spirit of Chapter 14 and the new constitutional dispensation.

In 2020 the Inter-Ministerial Taskforce (IMT) produced three Amendment Bills the Urban Councils Amendment Bill, Rural District Councils Amendment Bill, and the Provincial Councils and Administration Amendment Bill. These bills must avoid the stillbirth of their 2014 predecessors by dealing with some of the challenges that characterised those bills.

The suite of amendment bills envisaged by the IMT has various commendable elements and illustrates a cogent effort by the IMT to move forward the devolution agenda. The suggestions that follow are

underlined by an understanding of the role of central government in setting the overall strategic framework for the economic and social development of the nation, and for all spheres of government. The central government should ensure that local government operates in an environment that best promotes the development of citizens, neighbourhoods, communities, and the nation and develops national priorities encompassing all tiers of government in a participatory fashion. This includes providing for an overall legislative framework for local government within the general legal framework set out in the Zimbabwe Constitution, including:

1. Providing appropriate mechanisms and procedures to facilitate coordination between central government, provincial and metropolitan councils and Local Authorities [section 265 (3)].
2. Ensuring the political neutrality of employees of provincial and metropolitan councils and Local Authorities [section 266 (4)].
3. Providing for the division of provinces into districts [section 267 (2) (a)].
4. Providing for the establishment, structure and staff of provincial and metropolitan councils and the manner in which they exercise their functions [section 270 (2)].
5. Ensuring local government officials are elected and constituted according to the constitutional electoral systems
6. Provide for the establishment and functions of provincial and metropolitan councils [section 273 (1)]
7. Devolving governmental powers and responsibilities to provincial and metropolitan councils and Local Authorities. [section 264 (1)]
8. Providing procedures to be followed by councils of Local Authorities (section 279)

The unitary state position of Zimbabwe continued with the position where the central government has total power over all of its other political subdivisions. Though the governmental powers and responsibilities have been divided, the political subdivisions in this case 'Provinces carry out the directives of the central government and have no power to act on their own. Thus, the continued existence of the Office of the Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution suggests the preservation and

supremacy of the unitary state position of Zimbabwe. The NDD policy and the central government wishes to continue with this office as seen through clause 44 of the NDD policy which states that “Provincial Ministers of State, Provincial and District Coordinators and deployed staff from line Ministries will provide services to Local Authorities, whilst capacity is being built for Local Governments to take over some of the functions which are currently being offered by line Ministries and the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works” for the implementation of devolution (NDDP, 2020). However, this stance and position have created contestation amongst social and civic movements which have accused the central government of undermining subnational councils’ self-government and autonomy, against the spirit of devolution and the principle of subsidiarity.

The NDD policy shows a clear intent on the part of the Central Government to retain some role in the appointment of subnational government officers, at least in the short term. Regarding staff, the principles for the implementation of devolution adopted by the Government of Zimbabwe in 2018 attempted to clarify these roles in,

“Appointment of Provincial and Metropolitan Staff and Clerk of Provincial and Metropolitan Council, which states

- i. A Clerk of the Provincial or Metropolitan Council for the effective execution of the functions of the councils.
- ii. The functions of the clerk of the councils as contemplated in the constitution that an Act of Parliament will provide for this.
- iii. That, “the provincial and metropolitan council, shall with the approval of the Minister fix the terms and conditions of other employees of the provincial or metropolitan council.

The status quo in Zimbabwe is that the Provincial Ministers of State are already in place as appointed by the President (Government of Zimbabwe, 2019). These Ministers are Provincial Governors by another name, and as generally acknowledged, Governors have, historically, been viewed with suspicion due to their accountability to the President rather than residents of provinces and as a power-maximising tool for political control rather than the devolution of power to lower tiers of government (Mapuva, 2014). The creation of these roles is commendable but the

constant reference to the Minister militates against devolved governance as it shifts accountability of these employees from the councils to the Minister. If these employees are provincial and metropolitan council employees, it should follow that their conditions of service, be set and approved by the provincial and metropolitan council. In any case, any effectively devolved state means that the subnational government unit must enjoy some administrative autonomy. The above requires a serious conversation around the nature of public service in Zimbabwe, and how the country in a devolved set-up ensures that devolved units benefit from the existence of the Public Service Commission without taking away the power of devolved units to hire and fire workers that are accountable to them. The NDD policy acknowledges this in section 78 which states as follows:

“Handover of devolved services to empowered Local Authorities also poses issues over the employment status of Central Government officials employed by the Public Service Commission (PSC), who are currently providing the required services. This consideration is not only limited to the funding of salaries and conditions of service of officials but includes employee career path preferences as well as the financial capacities of the new employers to fund existing salary levels being paid to Government employees. Be that as it may, transfers of current Government employees in Local Government domains is a process that will be guided by pragmatic considerations. That said, Section 273(1) (d) of the Constitution, stipulates that recruitment of staff members by Local Authorities is the preserve of the respective Provincial and Metropolitan Councils, presided over by elected Mayors and Chairpersons”.

Noting that despite challenges that may be posed by the presence of central government employees at the local government level, section 273(1) (d) of the Zimbabwe Constitution states that employment of staff for Local Authorities is the prerogative of subnational councils presided over by Mayors and Chairpersons.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department of Spatial Planning and Development in the Ministry responsible for local government currently performs the national spatial planning mandate. Substantive spatial planning powers should be devolved to the sub-national governments. This is consistent with giving local governance power to the people and expanding the decision-making space available to subnational tiers to break down top-down planning

structures. In terms of the law itself, the different Planning Authorities at local, provincial/metropolitan, regional and national will need to be defined as well as their powers concerning specific spatial planning services

Devolution and local government amendment bills must give full expression to the constitution's intent on effective citizen participation in Section 264. Amendment bills must have clear definitions and mechanisms for citizen participation in local governance beyond consultation that should be legally guaranteed with clear sanctions for errant local authorities. Amendment bills must introduce clear mechanisms for neighbourhoods and local communities to be engaged in the participatory budget, policy and development plan formulation and monitoring at local levels to ensure vertical and horizontal accountability. The local government amendment bills must align with Section 62 of the Constitution and democratise devolution by acknowledging and providing practical mechanisms around residents' rights to access local government information on- and off-site and on and offline.

The national government must support and strengthen the capacity of local government to manage their own affairs, exercise their powers and perform their functions. The national government must be committed to cooperating with other key institutions like the Zimbabwe Local Government Association (ZILGA) and local resident's associations that are doing work to transform local government. Also, the national government must develop a comprehensive framework to support an equitable share of resources, consult and agree on a list of exclusive competencies and expenditure responsibilities.

Taxing powers to provincial councils and local authorities should sufficiently raise revenue without reliance on central government funding. While local authorities have been assigned and assumed extensive service delivery functions and responsibilities there is insufficient clarity regarding the assignment of local expenditure responsibilities?

CONCLUSION

If Zimbabwe is to implement devolution in its entirety as stipulated in the Constitution, a lot of things will change in its local governance architecture. For that necessary change to happen there is a need for a transitional authority to deal with the devolution issues within a stipulated timeframe (WPYD, 2020). Instead of the numerous boards that are supervising the local authorities and the Provincial councils, there should just be one authority that sees to it that devolution is implemented.

Kenya School of Government (2015) provides a glimpse of this arrangement using Kenya as an example. The Kenyan law provides for a legal and institutional framework for a coordinated transition to the devolved system of government while ensuring continued service delivery to citizens (Bosire, 2014). Principally, it provides for the establishment and operations of a Transition Authority. The Transition Authority (TA) is established under Section 4 of the Transition to Devolved Government Act of 2012 as a statutory body with the mandate of facilitating and coordinating the transition to a devolved system of government (the Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Devolution and Planning, 2016).

Zimbabwe needs to establish a similar authority that can oversee intergovernmental relations, monitor and assist in ensuring that local authorities and provincial councils have a good understanding of expectations within a devolved framework. Such an authority will assist to deal with the current challenge where devolution design and implementation appear not to be led by an inter-governmental platform but by a Cabinet Committee. The current arrangement is an inadequate platform that has so far proved inaccessible to sector stakeholders and is essentially led by a one-tier government. That the President coordinates (Chairs) the Cabinet Committee on Devolution, which reports to the Cabinet (Chaired by the President) on devolution matters (Government of Zimbabwe, 2018) with Provincial Ministers overseeing implementation and then reporting to the Presidency is fair to conclude that the President and his/her men/women will design devolution and report to themselves. The other tiers of government, especially local authorities, are, thus far, peripherally involved in the design and implementation of devolution.

An independent transitional institution responsible for devolution implementation has to be set up with a full secretariat overseen by the Ministry responsible for local government. This will ensure that devolution implementation is freed from the Presidency. The independent transitional institution should also be mandated with establishing a fit for the devolution Capacity Development Framework to oversee devolution design and implementation (Nyikadzino & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2022).

The current NDD policy framework, the principles that inform it and suggested legislative amendments, are devoid of the urgency required for the timely implementation of devolution in Zimbabwe. The lack of deliberate time framing and benchmarking of progress (including around transitional arrangements) opens the process up and may make it hostage to politically motivated partisan delays that appear to have characterised the devolution and decentralisation discourse and processes (ZEPARU, 2019).

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