

## **PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN ZIMBABWE: EXPERIENCES AND REFLECTIONS FROM HARARE CITY COUNCIL**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Participatory budgeting (PB) presents a direct-democracy approach to budgeting. It offers residents an opportunity to learn about Harare City Council operations and to debate and influence the allocation of public resources. PB incontrovertibly strengthens all-encompassing governance by giving marginalised and excluded groups the chance to have their voices heard and to influence public decision making vital to their interests. Therefore, PB remarkably promotes good governance. PB faces a lot of challenges in local authorities in Zimbabwe. There is serious lack of residents' participation in policy and decision making in council budget formulation. The residents are marginalised. The study found that there are massive institutional capacity, financial and human resources capacity gaps at Harare City Council. The policy, legal and institutional frameworks do not support PB. The study recommends that the legal instruments be amended, e-governance system be installed and the councillors should be capacitated through capacity building programmes*

**KEYWORDS:** Participatory budgeting, Governance, Budgeting, Participation, Harare City Council

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### **THE PROBLEM AND ITS CONTEXT**

Habitually in representative democracies, the supposition has been that citizens express their preferences through electoral politics and in turn, it was the job of the elected representatives to make policy and to hold the state accountable. In both North and in the South, new voice mechanisms are now being explored which argue as well for more direct connections between the people and the bureaucracies which affect them. In the United Kingdom, for instance, the White Paper on Modern Local Government puts an emphasis on more active forms of community governance:

*Local authorities are based on the principles of representative democracy, yet representative democracy has become passive. Rather than expressing a continuing relationship between government and citizen, the citizen is reduced to being a periodic elector.....In fact, an active conception of representative democracy can be reinforced by participatory democracy-all the more easily in local government because of its local scales and its closeness to the local communities (Quoted in Clark and Stewart, 1998).*

Similarly, the Commonwealth study argues that:

*In the past the relationship between the state and citizens has tended to be mediated and achieved through the intermediaries, elected representatives and political party structures. But this aspect of participation in governance for a good society requires direct connection between citizens and the state. This interface has been neglected in the past. The connection*

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*between the citizen and the state must be based on participation and inclusion* (Commonwealth Foundation, 1999).

The foregoing quotations underscore the prominence of local knowledge and understanding, as a basis for local action and direct forms of participation throughout the budget making process. Over the years there has been an attempt to increase people's participation in how they are governed. Hence, the concept of participatory budgeting is one of many participatory methodologies that are designed to allow residents to directly participate and influence local government decisions. The need to draw municipalities closer to their stakeholders was emphasized by world leaders at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit which endorsed the Local Agenda 21. The Local Agenda 21 highlights the need for people from all sections of the community and from all parts of the world, to take joint responsibility for development decisions.

Harare, for decades has been perceived as the Sunshine City of Africa. The sad story today is that Harare has experienced unprecedented decline in infrastructure, financial mismanagement, poor service delivery and dictatorial tendencies during budget making process. Residents' priorities and preferences are not considered during the budget formulation. Harare City Council views residents as users of services not as makers and shapers of decisions at the local level. Participation by Harare residents in budget formulation is very weak. Residents generally are dissatisfied with local services, but they do not trust they can shape them or that Harare City Council can do anything about the problems they face.

Participatory budgeting in City of Harare, despite the benefits it has brought, is still facing a lot of challenges which have to be addressed for it to succeed. It was found that the way City of Harare is implementing PB is not wholehearted. Harare City Council is agonisingly coming to terms with the inescapable need to involve the people in budgeting and budget implementation. The desire to promote good governance with respect to participation, transparency, accountability, quality service delivery and responsiveness to residents or rate payers' needs gave impetus to participatory budgeting. The PB brings together residents and both elected and unelected officials to craft policies, priorities and budgets. Therefore participatory budgeting is an effective policy conduit for responsive governance, offering a platform for residents to learn about public expenditure management and voice their preferences in budget planning, scrutinise procurement practices and monitor the delivery of services and infrastructure.

The study seeks to examine the way residents' participation is handled in the City of Harare budget formulation process and assess the impact of participation on policies and budgets in meeting community needs. The impacts of unresponsive and unaccountable local authority are most harshly felt by disadvantaged residents of Harare where corruption and governance failures are a principal cause of poverty and human suffering. Democracy deficits at the council level result in the gratuitous waste of valuable development resources. They gravely compromise the quality and effectiveness of public policymaking and the provision of public services to meet basic human needs. They disallow residents their intrinsic right to participate in decisions that directly affect their lives and to hold City of Harare officials accountable for the public resources with which they are entrusted. Therefore, participatory budgeting is thought to be the solution in enhancing residents' access to essential information, strengthening residents' voice especially that of disadvantaged and marginalised groups,

promoting active participation in key governance issues such as agenda-setting, policy making, the allocation of public funds and the delivery of public services. The residents need to participate in economic, political and social decision making. This can be attained through genuine participation in the council budget making process. This was verified by seeking answers to the question: How many public meetings at community level for residents to express their views were held? The situation in the City of Harare with respect to revenue generation is pathetic and characterised by:

- Failure of HCC to maximise revenue from existing sources
- The demand for services is high, yet ability of HCC to finance them is low; and
- There is reluctance/resistance on the part of tax/rent payers to pay taxes.

Therefore, the study attempts to assess the role of participatory budgeting as strategy for improving stakeholder participation in resource allocation and revenue mobilisation. This role was investigated by seeking answers to the following questions:

1. How participatory budgeting can be used as a tool for increasing willingness to pay fees, charges and bills; and
2. What are the ways of using PB to maximise revenue generation?

The overall objective of the study is to enhance the capability of Harare City Council to effectively take on different stakeholders (business community, residents associations and ordinary residents) in the expedition for superior service delivery and promotion of transparency and accountability. It is the argument of this paper that without participatory budgeting Harare City Council would find it very difficult to narrow the gap between the demand for services and their provision.

The fundamental factor that has shaped the present state of participatory budgeting in HCC is the requirement to promote residents demand for good governance with respect to participation, transparency and accountability. Local budget preparation is no longer the restricted domain of city treasurers, heads of department and finance committees but increasingly driven by community needs, priorities, demands and preferences.

The case study methodology, like ethnography is a method of immersion. It requires researchers to collect virtually all the data, interpret, analyse and recast the issues and questions as the data collection unfolds (Yin, 1981). The resources (financial mainly) available to carry out this study did not adequately allow the researcher to be “immersed” in the data gathering process and pursue all the emerging issues to their conclusion. This meant that only Harare City Council was used. Therefore, it must be borne in mind that the findings are confined to practices in Harare City Council.

## CONCEPTUAL DISCUSSION

### Participation

The concept of participation used to be applied to social arena or development programmes. In the modern day it is applied to democratic governance. Participation requires all men and women to a voice in decision making either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their interests. Presently, residents' participation in Harare City Council is most visible through voting in council elections or deciding not to vote, paying rates, levies or fees.

### Budgeting

Doerr (1998:45) defines the budget as a statement of expected revenues and expenditures for a fiscal period. Nkala (2004) construes the budget as a public fiscal policy instrument which is essentially a mechanism of how fiscal resources will be mobilised and public goods and services allocated, a chronicle of choosing and prioritising public sector investment programmes to be financed, a statement on the use of public funds in the past and how future revenues will be used in the coming year.

Local government may be unworkable without the annual budget, the centre piece of the financial year. Budgets "are the ways local services are funded, and have great impact on the poorest within our communities" ([www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk](http://www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk)). For this reason transparency and participation in the budgetary process is important. Tenets of good governance indicate that local government activities and decisions should be made openly and with the active participation of those people influenced by them. Thus the budget formulation should be a democratic process reflecting the broader mandate of all stakeholders in society clearly indicating negotiated outcomes of competing and contrasting interests from different lobby groups in society (Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe, 2006:20). The public should feel a sense of ownership of the budget.

According to a Southern African Country report on fiscal transparency and participation(1999), the provision of sufficient opportunity for civil society input in the budgetary process is important because:

- Civil society will better be able to hold government to account if they have information on government budget policies, practices and expenditures
- Involvement of groups can improve policy and allocation decisions by bringing different perspectives and creativity to budget debates
- Participation can lead to better programmes and more efficient allocation of resources.

Participatory budgeting is one means and vehicle used at local level that brings local communities closer to decision making process ([www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk](http://www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk)). According to the UN Habitat ([www.unhabitat.org/governance](http://www.unhabitat.org/governance)), participatory budgeting is an innovative financial practice that helps to enhance participation and improve accountability and transparency in administration of financial matters. It is a mechanism to involve and empower people in decision-making and more equitable distribution of resources.

## Participatory budgeting

Participatory budgeting is “a process of reform that involves shifting from a traditional exclusive method of budgeting by the executive (whether elected or official) to an inclusive method that empowers citizens to play a direct role in the planning and allocation of municipal resources” (Blore et al, 2004). Avritzer (2002) views PB as “a broad representation of people and interests in decision making about the allocation and disbursement of resources for local services delivery”. In the cases of local political reforms relating to democratic representation through elected councillors, PB requires that representation be fair and transparent, encompassing the gamut of class, gender, age interests and special interests of the poor and marginal groups.

PB gives citizens an ample opportunity to gain firsthand knowledge of government operations, influence local government decision making, policies and hold the local government to account. PB entails deliberation, debates and influencing the allocation of resources. This instrument requires education, engagement and empowerment of citizens and strengthening demand for good governance. This study takes PB to mean a decision making process through which citizens deliberate and negotiate over the distribution of public resources. This means that PB is a collaborative activity between residents and Harare City Council.

Why participation is important? The following arguments explain the rationale for participation:

The postmodern discourse theory-citizen participation is viewed as an inevitable outcome of a logical movement from insulated, bureaucratic modes of governance to more open, transparent and participatory approaches (Fox and Miller, 1996; Wamsley and Wolf, 1996). Cross-time and cross-country surveys provide evidence of a wide shift to “post modern values”, including a distrust of formal institutions such as governments and political parties and a desire for more participatory democracies (Inglehart, 1997). Societal change, particularly increased education, leads to greater demand for involvement and access to information (Thomas, 1995).

Disillusionment with bureaucracy: participation checks administrative power. The Weberian hierarchical-bureaucratic model has been attacked from various sides as lacking responsiveness. Bureaucratic organisations have proved unable to create an inclusive relationship with the then citizenry (Zajac and Bruhn, 1999).

In Harare City Council (HCC), the need for participation is very factual. Participation is important because it fosters good governance, promotes transparency, and increases social justice by involving the poor and excluded residents. HCC desperately needs accountability and competent performance, i.e. good governance. This will remove opaque resources allocation and improves service delivery. A system that has a record of poor governance may decide to foster participatory forums in order to increase the government’s legitimacy (Moynihan, 2003). The more representative the budget process appears to be, the more credible it will be in the eyes of residents and external stakeholders. Folscher, Krafchik and Shapiro (2000:43) note that in South Africa “a closed budget drafting process and lack of legislature amendment powers severely restrict legislature and civil society participation in the budget process”.

## Good Urban Governance

The literature available in relation to the definition of the concept governance, stress the complexity and controversy of this task but they all point to the fact that it has to do with the “desired standards of practice”. Good governance has been defined by three recognised international institutions as:

- i. The UNDP indicates that, “the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage a nation’s affairs...governance is, among other things, participatory, transparent and accountable. It is also effective and equitable and promotes the rule of law” (UNDP,2001);
- ii. The World Bank states that “good governance...implies inclusion and representation of all groups in the urban society... and accountability, integrity and transparency of local government actions... in defining and pursuing shared goals” (World Bank, 1999); and
- iii. UN-HABITAT defines urban governance to include “a shift from direct provision of goods and services by government to an enabling approach for achieving sustainable human settlements. It is characterised by three principle strategies, namely, decentralising responsibilities and resources to local authorities, encouraging the participation of civil society and using partnerships to achieve common objectives” (UN-HABITAT, 2002).

Blore et al (2004) formulated the following principles of good urban governance:

- i. Inclusiveness-it requires that mechanisms are in place to allow for representation of all vulnerable groups, for example, the poor, women, children, minority ethnic groups
- ii. Diversity and consensus-in service planning and budgeting a range of diverse interests and needs must be met across the municipality
- iii. Political determination-break vested interests
- iv. Transparency and accountability-explicit reporting on the outcome of the previous budget. Participation leads to expectations of and demands for greater accountability

This study therefore takes urban governance to mean the existence of effective mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights and meet their obligations. The following elements constitute good urban governance participation, transparency, responsiveness, consensus, accountability and strategic vision.

## Historical Background of Participatory Budgeting

The need to draw municipalities closer to their stakeholders was emphasized by world leaders at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, which endorsed the Local Agenda 21. The Local Agenda 21 highlights the need for people from all sections of the community and from all parts of the world to take joint responsibility for development decision The Cotonoun Agreement (200) also underscored the need to extend beyond central government to other social actors principally local authorities, private sectors and civil society. Participatory budgeting

programmes are part of a larger effort in Brazil to extend and deepen actual, existing democracy (Abers 2000; Wampler and Avritzer 2004). Since the establishment of democracy in 1985, the Brazilian politics has continued to be dominated by traditional patronage practices, social exclusion, corruption and clientalism. Participatory budgeting was intended to augment policy outcomes. Open resource allocation decision making processes to public scrutiny and participation (Bloure et al, 2004). Participatory budgeting began in 1989 in the municipality of Porto Alegre, the capital of Brazil's Southernmost State, Rio Grande do Sul. In 1988 the Workers' Party, formed during the fading years of the 1964-85 military dictatorship won the mayoral election. Its campaign was based on democratic participation and the "inversion of spending priorities" (Baiocchi, 2001), that is, the reversal of a decade-long trend in which public resources was spent in middle and upper class communities. The PB therefore was designed to assist poorer citizens to receive larger shares of public spending. PB met some the following challenges in Brazil: citizen apathy, addressing structural inequalities between different sections of the population. In Brazil, PB has at times been used by elected mayors as a way of by-passing the elected legislatures and gaining support for their programmes and directly from citizens.

In Brazil, Porto Alegre is the jewel in the PB crown and is certainly the city that has the reputation for their most successful implementation. In Porto Alegre, 100 percent of the budget is regarded as " participatory, as elected delegates in the PB forum examine and influence the overall budget before it is sent to the Camara de Vereadores or city council" (Beall,2005:131). However, the part of the budget is discussed in assemblies in which all citizens can participate corresponds to only 10 percent of overall resources (ibid: 131). In terms of whether PB reflects the priorities of the poor, there is consensus among most commentators that this has been the case (Abers, 1998a, Santos, 1998). Drawing on evidence from Porto Alegre and Belo Horizonte, Souza (2000: 27) points out that the great majority of poor citizens do not actively participate in the programmes, probably because income and jobs are their priority rather than infrastructure, which is the main focus of PB investment. This suggests, therefore, that while PB might be good for the socially excluded and for marginalised areas, it does not necessarily address chronic poverty.

Souza (2000:23) is convinced that PB encourages participation in highly unequal societies such as Brazil. Moreover, it represents an important step in relation to the state having a role in facilitating citizen participation in policy-making. Implementation challenges abound. There are issues of power in open forums where the better off or more vocal tend to dominate, prohibiting the effective participation of weaker or more marginalised members. There are also issues to do with cooption, whereby council officials can manipulate community groups or delegates. The table below illustrates the strengths and weaknesses of participatory budgeting in Brazil.

**Table 1: The Strengths and Weaknesses of Participatory Budgeting in Brazil**

<b>Strengths of Participatory Budgeting</b>	<b>Weaknesses of Participatory Budgeting</b>
Makes representative democracy more open, involving the participation of more segments of civil society	Interaction with the government puts the independence of communities and social movements at risk
Reduces clientalism, populism, patrimonialism, and authoritarianism; increase transparency and changes political culture	Forms of clientalism still survive
Stimulates associational life	Strength of civil society is uneven and still developing in places
Facilitates a learning process that leads to more active citizenship	Financial and resources limitations limit the scope of PB
Inverts priorities away from the better off towards the benefit of the poor	Communities stop participating once their demands are met
Provides a means for balancing ideological concerns about empowerment with pragmatic responses to citizen demands	Difficulties persist in broadening participation with young people and the middle class being under-represented
Provides a structure that can carry on beyond a government's term of office	Programmes disappoint participants because of the slow pace of public works
Encourages participants to move beyond individualistic concerns to solidaristic perspectives and to see problems in terms of city wide issues	There are cleavages between political parties and officials
	PB risks creating a fuzzy boundary between the role of government and civil society
	Fragmented decisions and short-term demands can jeopardise long-term urban planning

*Source: Souza (2000:31)*

### **Zimbabwean Legislative Framework of Participatory Budgeting**

The starting point for any participatory process is the legal framework within which it is situated. There have been references to decentralisation and people's participation in most of the Zimbabwe Government's policy documents including Growth with Equity, The Prime Minister (PM)'s Directive, Local Government Acts and Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST). Local authorities in Zimbabwe are governed by the Rural District Councils Act and the Urban Councils Act. Local authorities make policy



through bylaws, regulations and resolutions dealing with local planning and development. Ministerial approval must be sought for the bylaws to be effective and enforceable. Local authorities are not recognised by the current constitution of Zimbabwe. The enabling legislation in Zimbabwe advocates for consultation rather than participation. Citizens are allowed to make public objections after decisions are made.

The Urban Councils Act of 1996, Part XX and the Rural District Councils Act of 1996, Part XI contain provisions about budgeting. These Acts deal with local authorities budgeting. It is within this context that PB is dealt with. Part VIII of the Rural District Councils Act of 1996 provides for the formation of Ward Development Committee and Rural Development Committees. The Urban Councils Act, Part XXI, partly covers PB in that if council is to borrow funds for a specific project, it must advertise it. Residents have an opportunity to make inputs.

The instruction from the Ministry of Local Government and Urban Development for LAs to prepare integrated development plans and put in place PB procedures/guidelines. Part V of the Traditional Leaders Act of 1998 deals with functions of village ward assemblies in relation to VIDCOs and WADCOs. People in the village can participate and decide on how to spend money on development proposals in their areas.

The full governing structure is provided by the Prime Minister's Directive of 1984 and the Provincial Councils and Administrative Act of 1985. The PM's Directive set the tone and framework for participatory planning and budgeting especially Public Sector Investment Programmes/Projects (PSIP). This was consolidated in the Rural District Councils Act of 1988.

During the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) period spanning from 1991 to 1995, the Zimbabwean government remarkably cut LAs expenditure. The government encouraged LAs to go into partnerships with the private sector. Parallel to ESAP was the decentralisation programme, which went full steam in 1999 with the pronouncement of the 13 decentralisation principles. The government deconcentrate and devolve power to LAs. Devolution was designed to increase local participation in how funds were allocated.

A NEPC Circular, No.1 of 1992 says the sector ministries are required to consult with Development Committees at District level in formulating and prioritising projects and availing funds for development.

Consulted literature has divulged that the dominance of the executive and the segregation of local governance from the current constitution is a big blow to local democracy and citizen participation in Zimbabwe. There is derisory consultation of local authorities by central government when new policies and laws are adopted which affect local governance. For instance, the Electoral Laws Amendment Act of 1997 repealed electoral provisions under the urban Councils Act and the Rural District Council Act, lowered the age qualification of councillors, altered the grounds on which they could be suspended, gave mayors a different term of office from councillors and transferred responsibilities for elections to the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs and Registrar General. These changes were introduced without discussions with the key stakeholders. These legislative developments are inimical to local democracy and participatory budgeting.

## METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

The research employed a multi-pronged methodology. The research study utilised both secondary and primary data. Secondary data was collected from the many studies carried out on participation, budgeting and public finance. Primary data was collected through interviews with key informants like Mayor, Town Clerk, heads of departments, members of civic society and residents associations such as Combined Harare Residents Association (CHRA), Harare Residents Trust (HRT) and Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe (UCAZ); Minister, Deputy Minister and Permanent secretary for Local Government, Urban and Rural Development. Also questionnaires and participant observation were used for collecting the study data. The participant observation was grounded in the assumption that it is the actors who give meaning to their behaviour.

The methods of data gathering were through participant observation, questionnaires, interviews and secondary data collection. The starting point of the study involved an examination of the professional pronouncements, legislative requirements and the relevant participatory budgeting literature concerning the role and status of participatory budgeting in Zimbabwe in general and Harare City Council (HCC) in particular. Both the print and electronic media have done a remarkable job in providing the information on the above issues. Both state-controlled and independent media publications and reports were searched for appropriate data for this study. The documents sought were studied and analysed as part of the data for this study. Content analysis was utilised in order to give the collected data scholarly interpretation. The underlying budgeting concepts and principles were highlighted in the process. The research on which this study is based was undertaken in three stages.

Firstly, the study used a questionnaire survey aimed at obtaining a broad picture of current value of participatory budgeting in the areas of rate payers' participation during budget formulation, budget preparation, service delivery and revenue generation. The questionnaires were sent out in November/December 2011 to the City Treasurer, Town clerk, Mayor, Chamber Secretary, all auditors, all accountants, all members of the budget and accounts committee, all heads of departments, the chief committee officer of the HCC, six(6) members of Combined Harare Residents Association (CHRA), Harare Residents Trust (HRT), Resident Minister (Harare Province Governor), Local Government, Urban and Rural Development Minister, deputy Minister and Permanent Secretary and other local governance experts. Table 2 below gives the rationale for the selected respondents.

**Table 2: Key Individuals/Institutions in the Participatory Budgeting Process in Harare City Council**

Town Clerk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Chief advisor of council</li> <li>-Attends all committees and full council meetings to ensure policies are consistent with legal requirements</li> <li>-Helps council to achieve its goals</li> <li>-Implement council resolutions made by the full council</li> </ul>
Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Political representation, upholding and safeguarding the interests of the residents</li> <li>-make council resolutions</li> </ul>
City Council Treasurer Department and Finance Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Responsible for regulating the financial affairs of council</li> <li>-Prepares budget guidelines</li> <li>-Prepares the council budget</li> <li>-Undertakes the costing of all projects or programmes</li> </ul>
Chamber Secretary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Provides secretarial and legal services to council</li> <li>-Prepares and distributes council and committee agendas and minutes</li> </ul>
Residents Associations( CHRA, HRT, UCAZ and ZURA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Conduits for residents participation</li> <li>-Watchdogs and vehicles of good governance in Harare</li> <li>-Models for advocacy</li> </ul>
Resident Minister (Provincial Governor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Charged with the general supervision and coordination of local authorities in his/her province in development planning and implementation (Section 10(c) of the Provincial Councils and Administration Act Chapter 29:11)</li> <li>-Performs political, consultative, developmental and coordinative responsibilities</li> </ul>
Minister and Deputy Minister Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Responsible for local government</li> </ul>
Permanent Secretary Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Advises the Minister and Deputy Minister on local Government issues</li> <li>-Supervises and monitors the implementation of local government policies</li> </ul>
Local Government, Urban and Rural Development Portfolio Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-shadows the Ministry of Rural and Urban Local Government Development</li> </ul>
HCC Finance Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Responsible for collection and disbursement of finances to council departments</li> <li>-Produces bills, monitors collections and plugs any leakages for council</li> </ul>
Mayor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Guarantor of services, the public good and residents participation</li> <li>-A political and administrative head of the local authority</li> </ul>
HCC audit department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-ensures that council resources are utilised for the intended purpose</li> <li>-ensures that value for money is realised</li> </ul>

Source: Field Data, 2012

The questionnaires were administered by the researcher to all respondents who were purposively selected basing on their local government knowledge or the stakes that they have in local governance. Respondents with known e-mails were electronically mailed the questionnaires. For the rest whose e-mails were not known by the researcher, the researcher had to physically visit their offices to deliver the questionnaires. The electronic strategy has the greatest response of about forty-four percent (95/215x100). The traditional method had about thirty-eighty percent (82/215x100). The respondents were given ten (10) days to complete the questionnaires. A total of 215 questionnaires was issued. Of these, 177 were completed and returned, resulting in a usable response rate of 82.3% (177/215x100). The response rate is very impressive and striking.

Secondly, the participant observation method was used where the researcher attended the budget consultative meetings focussing on council budget in relation to formulation, residents' participation, service delivery and execution in Harare's low, medium and high suburbs. The results of the participant observation complemented the findings gathered through interviews and questionnaires following a limited survey that the researcher conducted. The Harare City Council had planned to hold twenty-five (25) budget consultative meetings. Only fourteen (13) took place giving a coverage percentage of 52 and twelve (12) were either cancelled or postponed due to poor attendance. The researcher managed to attend eleven (11) City of Harare budget consultation meetings that ranged from 23 August 2011 to 01 September 2011. The other seven (7) meetings the researcher wanted to attend were annulled because the turnout was awfully poor. Sometimes only one or two residents could feature at the place of the meeting. The budget consultative meetings that the researcher managed to attend are illustrated in Table 3 below:

**Table 3: Harare City Council Budget Consultation Meetings from 23 August 2011-01 September 2011**

Suburb/Residential Area	Venue	Date of the Meeting	Residential Area
Kuwadzana Extension	Kuwadzana 8 Primary School	23 August 2011	High density
Glen Norah	Glen Norah Specimen Hall	24 August 2011	High density
Greendale/Mandara	Greendale Sports Club	24 August 2011	Low density
Mufakose	Rutendo Hall	26 August 2011	High density
Mbare	Mai Musodzi Hall	26 August 2011	High density
Highfield	Machembere Hall	27 August 2011	High density
Mabelreign	Municipal Business Centre Shed	27 August 2011	Medium density
Warren Park	Magamba Hall	27 August 2011	Medium density
Highfield	Zimbabwe Hall	28 August 2011	High density
Marlborough	Marlborough District Office	28 August 2011	Medium density
Mount Pleasant	Mount Pleasant Hall	01 September 2011	Low density

*Source: Field Survey, 2011*

The experiences, views, comments and observations obtained from meetings in general informed the discussion of findings. Chapter four (4) provides a comprehensive description of what transpired at each of the budget consultative meetings held in diverse residential areas.

Thirdly, the research was conducted by means of interviews with the Mayor, Town Clerk, City treasurer, internal chief auditor, members of the Budget and Finance Committee, Chief Committee Officer, chairpersons of CHRA and HRT, and all heads of department, three academics, all University of Zimbabwe lecturers. The sample was selected from those respondents to the questionnaire who indicated that they would be willing to take part in this stage. Furthermore, most of the data were gathered through face-to-face structured and unstructured interviews with carefully selected key informants. Care was taken to ensure that the selection of these informants would be adequately inclusive of the various groups within the greater Harare. The interviews consisted of a mixture of structured questions and free ranging discussions of a variety of participatory budgeting issues. However, in addition to those who indicate in the questionnaires that they were willing to participate during the interviews, the study identified and interviewed selected key informants from such groups as the civil society and the business sector. Deliberate sampling of these possible key informants was utilised to focus primarily on those that had significant roles to play in local government policy formulation and implementation. The interviews were designed to solicit an in-depth comprehension of the special problems that the participatory budgeting system is facing in Harare City Council and the strengths and weaknesses of existing practice.

The Documentary search involved content analysis of the identified relevant materials. Data gathered through interviews, participant observation and questionnaires was analysed using a variety of organisational development techniques presented below:

**Table 4: Organisational Data Analysis Techniques**

<b>Technique</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
STEP Factor analysis	To analyse elements of the background environment in which change is meant to occur, including sociological, technological, economic and political factors
Rapid Reconnaissance of Organisations (RRO)	An interview participatory style of data collection and analysis which enables facilitators to understand organisations rapidly by identifying critical actors, coalitions, antagonisms, power relations, etc. It also takes into account both the formal and informal structures, processes, systems and relationships.
Forced-Field Analysis (FFA)	A tool to identify and quantify the predominant forces for and against change. To anticipate the balance of these forces, and to assist in defining strategies to counter negative forces
Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)	To determine individual and organisational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats during a change capacity enhancement process

*Source: UCAZ, 2006*

## QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY RESULTS

Two-hundred and fifteen (215) questionnaires were administered between 16 November 2011 and 31 January 2012. The responses are shown in Table 5 below

**Table 4: Analysis of Responses to Questionnaires**

Type of Organisation	Questionnaires Issued	Questionnaires Completed and returned	Response Rate (%)
CHRA	10	4	80
HRT	8	2	87.5
HCC Councillors	26	19	70
HCC Mayor	1	1	100
HCC Town Clerk	1	1	100
HCC Chamber Secretary	1	-	0
HCC Chief Committee Officer	1	1	100
Academics	8	8	100
ZURA	6	5	83.3
Business Community	40	35	87.5
Residents	80	72	90
UCAZ	4	3	75
HCC officials	17	16	94.1
Local Government, Urban and Rural Development Portfolio	10	8	80
Provincial Governor, Permanent Secretary	2	2	100
Total	215	177	82.3%

*Source: Fieldwork 2012*

As table 5 shows above, the responses were quite pleasing. The respondents mainly from HRT and CHRA informed this study that the councillors are culpable for ineffective participation of the residents in local policy making process. The councillors failed to mobilise residents to attend budget meetings. This explains why residents default when making payments and do not support the city council. The policy of the local authority may be right, but if there is a failure in leadership, in team work, in exposition or in public relations the residents may not support the budget policy not because it's wrong but because the residents do not understand what its aims are. The Harare City Council must know that residents have a long memory for what they consider to be dramatic imperfections or failures. Councillors or HCC representatives must take the mood of the residents into account when shaping their budget policies. This problem of keeping abreast of public opinion can only be addressed through genuine participation by residents. The respondents from stakeholders and

Harare City Council divulged that residents themselves do not want to participate in local authority activities. The arguments put forward to support that are that the HCC follows all the legal procedures that guide the budget formulation process. Well, the study observed that though the HCC usually tries to religiously follow the prescribed procedures, the question is do the residents participate during budget formulation process? The next chapter shows that the residents who attend the budget consultation meetings said that they never saw the schedule for meetings and many meetings were cancelled due to poor attendance. This clearly shows that residents' participation is pathetic.

**Table 6: Importance Attached to Reasons for Preparing Annual Budgets**

Reasons for preparing annual budget	Mean	Rank	Standard deviation	Mode
a)Evaluating Performance	2	9	3,124	2
b)Planning	19	1	1,004	17
c)Fixing the level of charges	10	2	1,261	13
d)Fixing the level of rates	14	4	2,340	16
e)Control	3	6	3,091	4
f)Coordinating	3	8	1,934	1
g)Authorising spending	15	3	1,109	11
h)Motivation	4	7	2,783	2
i)Communicating	7	5	4,643	5

*Source: Fieldwork, 2012*

The following formulas were employed to compute the mean, standard deviation and mode.

- Mean= $\frac{\sum fx}{\sum f}$   
Where f is the frequency and x the score  
Sigma f means the sum of the frequencies  
Sigma fx means the sum of the products fx.
- Standard deviation: square root of variance
- Mode: the number which occurs most frequently

From the table 6 above it is explicit that respondents attach more substance on planning as the main purpose for preparing the budget. Planning was ranked number 1 and has the highest

mode of seventeen (17). This means that the budget is viewed as a planning instrument. Planning is followed by 'fixing the level of rates' for services. Fixing the level of rates has the mode of sixteen (16) but was ranked number four (4). Fixing the level of charges was ranked number two (2) and its mode is thirteen (13). Coordinating, evaluating performance, control and motivation were lowly ranked, i.e. 8, 9, 6 and 7. The study observed that the principal means of securing sound financial administration in authorities is through the annual budget process. Local authorities would be unworkable and impracticable without the annual budget. The budget, legally, its purpose is to fix the rate and managerially it is both a decision making and a control document. The study noted that the Harare City Council budget is dominated by the annual rate fixing exercise. The major problem with HCC budget making process is the process was commenced without clear stated objectives. Generally, the budget should:

- Be related to the council's declared objectives
- Enable the level of the rate, precept or charge to be fixed
- Assist in policy making
- Authorise future expenditure
- provide the basis for the control of expenditure and income
- Provide a benchmark for measuring implementation of policy
- Include an estimation of physical resources as well as cash
- display that the availability of the resources requirement in the year has been ascertained
- Show quantitatively the outputs to be achieved

What loom large in the assessment of councillors and HCC officials is not the wishes and priorities of their localities but the amount of revenue they expect to generate, grants to be received from the central government and donor community. The HCC fails to look at what its locality wants and is willing to pay for. This is the reason why HCC is failing to generate and collect revenue from the residents. More than 68% of council officials in the sample reported that residents' participation in the local government is strong. However, the reality is that participants are weak. Mayor, Town Clerk and councillors tend to take a limited view of participation, for instance, consultations with residents are viewed as participation. The residents association complained of a lack of transparency during the budgeting process.



**Table 7: Perceptions of Good Governance Indicators by Harare City Council**

Loyalty of residents	Number of positive press statements/comments
Unity of purpose	Absence of Ministerial Commissions
Sense of ownership	Reduction in littering on public places
Willingness to pay	Debtor age and levels of under 30 days services
Financial viability	Annual operating surplus of 10%-20% of total operating income
Quality of services	Increased responsiveness to complaints Reduced complaints against the local authority
Absence of mass protest	No demonstrations
Council management stability	Reduced staff turn over
Clean annual external audits	Lack of audit qualifications

*Source: Fieldwork, 2012*

The respondents complained that the City of Harare continued to bill them for services not rendered. They argued that although some suburbs had gone for more than three (3) years without water they had received huge water bills with varying amounts.

It was also alleged that following the introduction of the multicurrency payment system, the city council had continued to charge fifty-one (51) percent per annum interest on accounts in arrears, a situation that was deemed abnormal. This had resulted in inflated amounts due to the Harare City Council thereby overstating its levels of potential revenue. The residents called upon the city council to revamp its information technology system in order to ensure that the billing system was properly reconfigured to enable the production of accurate bills.

The respondents also expressed a serious mortification and disappointment about the non-collection of garbage which has led to indiscriminate dumping of refuse all over the suburbs. The City of Harare informed the study that refuse collection is their second priority service delivery activity after the provision of clean water. However, this activity was fraught by a depleted fleet of refuse collection vehicles. The study discovered that HCC requires fifty (50) vehicles and four (4) front loaders for refuse collection operations throughout the city and unfortunately, only five (5) vehicles were available. Harare residents across all the suburbs perceive Harare City Council as moribund and extremely inefficient institution.

### **The Urban Councils Act**

Many residents and HCC stakeholders lamented that the Urban Councils Act is a draconian piece of legislation which hampers effective and efficient development of local authorities.

They recommended amendment of some sections of the Act, particularly those that give too much power to the Minister of Local Government, Urban and Rural Development and disregarded council committees. It was alleged that sections 88 and 122 indicated that the Act had no regard for the residents associations. As a result local authorities tended to be averse to cooperate with such associations.

### **The Budget Process**

The residents described the HCC's budget process as a non-event and meaningless. They complained that there were no budget consultations and residents did not participate in the budgetary process. Furthermore, the HCC did not consider residents' comments on the budget, to the extent that the 2010 budget was approved despite the residents' numerous thirty (30) objections. The ideal situation should be like this. At the beginning of the budgetary process, councillors are duty bound to consult their wards on those developments and services they wish to be included in the succeeding year. After this, budgetary proposals are advertised in the newspapers prior to implementation and it is a legal requirement that should there be objections from a specified percentage of the community; the council shall consider such objections in relation to the budgetary proposals. The study observed that residents input are usually solicited after the final budget is put together. The HCC views civil society audience as disruptive. Problems are experienced in generating interest in advocacy around revenue collection issues. HCC officials informed the study that the city of Harare has the option or prerogative to take action without involving the people if the situation demands. This is not a passport to act ultra vires.

71, 8% of the respondents' views converged on the following observations. Very few stakeholders participate during budget formulation. The process is not participatory at all. It is cursory, just to satisfy a legal requirement in terms of the urban councils Act Chapter 29:15 and in terms of budget making policies. The key stakeholders in a budget for a local authority should be the ratepayers, residents, business community and industry, and the Ministry of Local Government, Urban and Rural Development. Residents only sometimes actively participate during the period after the budget has been passed/approved/adopted by the full council, for thirty (30) days, a time which they are supposed to make comments, objections and observations on the proposed budget. The study observed that the community consultative meetings are not regulated in terms of what percentage (%) of the residents or registered voters should participate.

On the question: How the City budget is formulated?; the following was obtained:

- City department must come up with their priorities and bids
- Councillors hold ward consultative meetings
- A consolidated budget is the submitted to the Finance committee of council for debate
- The Finance Committee Chairperson then tables before a full council the proposed budget that all councillors debate before they adopt it.
- Once adopted, the proposed budget is available for inspection at Town House and at all District Offices by the residents

- The City treasurer then advertises the proposed budget in two issues of a local circulating newspaper calling on residents to make comments or raise objections to the budget.
- When objecting, residents must write what they object about the budget, indicate their addresses and submit the letter to the Town Clerk at Town House within the allocated time of 30 days from the day the first advertisement in the Media.
- In terms of Section 219 (3) of the Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15,(a) if a statement has been advertised and objections are raised by more than 30 voters or users of the services to which the tariff, charge or deposit relates or (b) where there are less than 30 such users of the service concerned, by not less than fifty percentage (50%) of the number of such users; such tariffs, charges or deposits shall not come into operation unless the resolution is again passed by a majority of the total membership of the council.
- The Minister must approve the proposed budget before it is implemented by the council.

The study therefore observed that residents only participate when councillors hold ward consultative meetings. The elected authorities discuss the departmental bids and allocations as a formality. This scenario indicates that councillors do not know their roles and responsibilities. Councillors play a very important policy making role, requiring the identification of community needs, setting objectives to meet those needs, establishing priorities between competing demands and allocating resources. Councillors to a greater extent are culpable for remarkable poor participation by residents during budget formulation. The chief role of a councillor as an individual elected member is to represent the interests of residents and ratepayers. This role requires a councillor to provide strategic community leadership and guidance as well as facilitating communication between the community and the council. This is what Peters and Waterman call “to steer rather than row”. Residents really feel that councillors are not holding adequate consultative meetings.

Whether participation is consultative or instrumental (Cooke and Kothari, 2001) is an important determinant of the success of participatory budgeting. The study noted that residents are not effectively involved in policy deliberations and making with regard to council budget. Residents have a right to be involved in decision making processes not as choosers but as shapers of policy decisions. This section has observed that councillors who should be at the forefront of mobilising the residents to participate in local decision making seem not to know their roles and responsibilities. The residents categorically made it very clear that they are not participating in local government issues.

## **PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION FINDINGS**

This section presents Harare City Council (HCC) budget consultation meetings from 23 August 2011 to 01 September 2011. The researcher closely monitored, attended and participated in the majority of the pre-budget consultation meetings facilitated by the City Councillors and HCC officials.

## **RESIDENTIAL AREAS MEETINGS OBSERVED**

### **Mount Pleasant: Mount Pleasant Hall: 01/09/11**

The meeting was a catastrophe by all standards. Only four residents turned up, against an attendance of nine council officials including Councillor Masiye Kapare of Ward 7. Residents in attendance castigated the council for its failure to respect the ratepayers by adequately advertising the meetings. The city officials attempted to cancel the meeting but the four residents refused to depart, demanding an explanation of the budget making process. The key concerns expressed by the four residents were around refuse collection which they said was inconsistent, huge salaries to city senior management and general decline in service delivery. The council officials led by the area District Officer Badze gave a summary on the performance of the 2011 budget which they said was underperforming.

### **Marlborough: Marlborough District Office: 28/08/11**

Councillor Charity Bango and council officials conducted the meeting, attended by 50 residents. The local Member of Parliament Jessie Majome attended the meeting. Residents expressed concern on water reticulation and road patching. They demanded that council constructs a primary school in the area and that a maternity facility be added to Marlborough clinic to cater for expecting mothers. Participants emphasised the need for adequate market stalls to provide space for vendors. They demanded that council refurbishes all public toilets at civil centres or possibly build new ones. The lambasted the councillor for failing to organise meetings with residents saying that communication need to be improved between residents and elected members of the community.

### **Highfield Hall 28/08/11**

The meeting was cancelled due to poor attendance and confusion on the starting time. Residents seen at the venue confirmed that the councillor misled them on the starting time. About ten (10) people attended the abortive meeting. These were only Harare Residents Trust (HRT) members in the area. Residents demanded seriousness by council officials and that they wasting residents' time and council resources by attending these ill-planned meetings. The meeting was postponed to 11 September 2011 at 1400 hours at CJ Hall. However, the meeting never took place.

### **Mabelreign: Municipal Business Centre Shed: 27/08/11**

The meeting was attended by thirty-four (34) residents. The meeting was facilitated by councillor Charity Bango of ward 41 Marlborough in the absence of the ward councillor Mudavanhu due to ill health. Residents at the meeting raised concern about poor water supplies, bad road network and inconsistency in refuse collection and other council services which are below the expected standards, given the rates that they are paying to council. Residents heavily criticised council officials present including the councillor for the hefty salaries being paid to HCC senior management, as high as US\$15000 at the expense of service delivery. Residents demanded that the directors of the HCC come and address them because they need clarity on the issues raised and service delivery issues. Residents criticised councillor Bango and her team for failing to provide a clear financial break down of the 2011 budget. No meaningful contribution towards the formulation of the 2012 HCC budget at the meeting. The majority of residents walked out due to disgruntlement.

**Warren Park: Magamba Hall: 27/08/11**

The meeting was attended by the local Member of Parliament Engineer Elias Mudzuri. Council officials present only wanted residents to talk about their problems instead of discussing the performance of the 2011 HCC budget. Residents demanded more boreholes in the area in order to ease pressure on already existing boreholes. Participants demanded that council replaces old water pipes with new ones because water leakages are unbearable. Residents recommended that HCC construct a foot bridge between Warren Park D and Cold Comfort. They emphasised the need for another bridge in Warren Park 1 and Westlea due to ever increasing hit and run accidents when crossing Bulawayo road. The residents encouraged council to close down all unregistered car parks because these activities are fuelling criminal behaviour. Residents raised reservations with ever increasing dump sites which are causing pollution in their neighbourhoods. Public toilets are not functioning in the area. This has compromised community health standards. Some of the toilets at Pfukwa Township are being used as storerooms, depriving the community health of toilets. MP Mudzuri committed himself to embarking on a program to increase the number of boreholes in Warren Park. About 150 people attended the meeting. This meeting had the highest attendance.

**Highfield: Machembere Hall: 27/08/11**

The meeting was attended by eight (8) council officials. They began by giving a breakdown of the 2011 budget. Residents demanded that there must be transparency in the council billing system. Residents emphasised that council repairs all council toilets in the area. Participants demanded that the HCC slashes all debts in their accounts. Other concerns raised include the failure by council to patch potholes. Potholes are becoming a threat to human life. Water shortage is a major concern in the area the residents demanded that council must on a programme of borehole drilling in the community to ease water shortages. 65 residents attendant the meeting mostly were elderly people who were concerned with service delivery in the locality.

**Kuwadzana Extension: Kuwadzana 8 Primary School: 23/08/11**

The meeting was facilitated by Ward 44 councillor Resias Masunda. Present were representatives from the Harare City Council Treasury Department, Urban Planning Services, Department of Housing and community services, District Office and Town House secretariat. Residents demanded that that a clinic be built in the area to enable access to health services. Concerns were raised on road maintenance, establishment of recreational areas for children to entertain themselves so as to reduce drug abuse and other anti-social activities. Residents demanded that proper market stalls for vendors be established. Vendors are being harassed by both the municipal and Zimbabwe Republic Police. There are no tower lights for lighting. Participants at the meeting raised the issue of drainage system in the area raising fears of flooding along roads with the impeding rainy season. Residents demanded a secondary school to cater for secondary school going children. Only 49 residents attended the meeting.

**Mbare: Mai Musodzi Hall 26/08/11**

The meeting was cancelled due to threats of violence. Councillor Muleya confirmed that the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) vigilante group Chipangano reigns supreme power over other development projects. Budget consultative meetings faced a

serious challenge in Mbare and were never re-convened because of the crude politics at play in the area.

#### **Glen Norah: Glen Norah Specimen Hall: 24/08/11**

The meeting was attended by eighty-two (82) residents and eight council officials. Residents raised the issue of road patching, public toilets and tower lights repairing, water reticulation, senior citizen age from 65 years down to 50 years given the reduced life expectancy in the country. Residents said the HCC must attend to piling garbage in the community, clearing of refuse dump sites and reduction of high service charges. Residents demanded accountability and transparency in the budget formulation, elements missing in the current process.

#### **Greendale/Mandara: Greendale Sports Club 24/08/11**

The meeting was cancelled due to poor attendance and was postponed to a later date. Present at the venue was director of Harare Water Engineer Christopher Magwenzi Zvobgo and other representatives from Harare City Council. In discussion with the researcher, the Engineer Zvobgo indicated that water supplies were erratic in the area, saying the HCC has spent millions of dollars on water treatment chemicals, treatment and distribution to different communities.

**Mufakose: Rutendo Hall: 26/08/11.** Eight council officials attended the pre-budget consultative meeting. It was attended by 126 residents. Mr Stonard Majogo from the City treasury department refused to give a summary of the performance of the 2011 city budget arguing that, “it is not the main objective of the meeting”, remarks which sparked heated exchanges between him and residents in attendance. Only the timely intervention of Councillor Joyce Kariwo calmed the situation and apologised for the poor conduct of Mr Majogo. Residents raised concern on potholes, recreational facilities which need refurbishment, opening of the closed swimming pool, closed toilets and clearing dump sites.

### **DISCUSSION OF PARTICIPANT OBSERVATIONS RESULTS**

The City of Harare completed its initial round of budget consultation meetings with the hope of getting residents' views in the budget making process on 1 September 2011. The study observed that the budget meetings were a farce and mockery. Pre-budget meetings of the HCC had undermined real participation of the residents in the policy formulation process. The residents across all the residential areas visited expected to hear: the background to the city budget in particular the performance of 2011 budget, key priority areas for consideration of council in the budget formulation, service delivery and the proposed figures for the 2012 budget of HCC.

A total of 23 pre-budget consultation meetings were held in the communities with eight cancellations. The meetings were organised and facilitated by the elected councillors in collaboration with the city of Harare employees from different departments. The discussion of results is centred on the schedule of meetings, publicity, attendance, facilitation, content of discussion, conduct by councillors, residents' expectations in the 2012 HCC.

## **Performance of 2011 Harare City Council Budget**

The HCC 2011 budget failed to perform according to council as well as residents' expectations. The poor state of service delivery in the communities is clear evidence of the fact that the budget has failed to meet the expected standards. The council officials from the HCCC claimed to have done a lot of work since 2008 for Harare suburbs. The following issues were mentioned as council's assumed successes with the 2011 operational budget. Council officials said road maintenance was a priority of council and they patched Borrowdale road and Fourth Street. HCC has bought twenty (20) refuse collection trucks, two (2) generators to crush stores for pothole patching, repaired water pumping and carriage pipes, for Morton Jaffrey water works, replacement of water pipes in the central business centre (CBD), resuscitation of sewerage plants, improvement in sewer reticulation, installing of solar powered traffic lights.

Despite all this, the council officials noted that the capital budget did not perform according to expectations because residents have not paid their monthly bills on time which has affected revenue flows. It was highlighted that the city is currently owed US\$2.5 million. However, due to the revenue raised council has been able to clear 75% of the illegal dumps of refuse in the communities that had piled up because of inconsistent refuse collection. Council was sharply criticised by residents who felt that its priorities were misplaced. There was heavy criticism for repairing Borrowdale road whilst neglecting the worst roads in the high density areas.

### **Key Objective of Meetings**

At all meetings, councillors said the main purpose for the pre-budget consultation meetings was to enable the citizens an opportunity to indicate what they expected to be done in the communities. The contributions would then be factored in the budget and the capital budget which will determine the cost of services as water, refuse collection, sewer reticulation, housing and e.t.c. There is no doubt that residents' participation in the formulation of the budget is being seriously undermined. It is clear that residents do not have a stake in determining the cost of the services they are going to pay. This becomes the greatest problem in the budget formulation process. What the HCC did was merely a fulfilment of the requirement in terms of the Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15 that states that local authorities should embark on budget consultation meetings involving in the crafting of the budget.

### **Schedule of Meetings**

The HCC published a schedule of the budget consultation meetings in the Sunday Mail of 21 to 27 of 2011. The schedule clearly indicated the name of the ward councillor or councillor responsible for facilitating a meeting, date, time, venue and the respective ward in which the meeting was to be held. In total thirty-four (34) pre-budget consultation meetings were supposed to be held in the communities. From the published schedule, some of the wards were paired for example wards 3 & 4 (Mbare); 11 & 12 (Mbare National); 25 & 26 (Highfield); 39 & 40 (Dzivarasekwa). The pairing of wards brought confusion to the residents who intended to attend the meetings. HCC like in previous years used the Sunday Mail to publicise the meetings. To most vulnerable and poverty stricken residents in the communities, the newspaper remains rare and unaffordable commodity to them. Buying a newspaper is

viewed as a luxury by the resident who is failing to pay his/her rates to council especially in high density areas. This schedule of meetings was not well published. There were several changes and shifts to the initially published schedules for example in Greendale, Mandara, Waterfalls, Mabvuku and Tafara. This gave confusion to the residents as they would reach venues where there was not even a single council official. A total of fifteen meetings, were held as scheduled out of the publicised thirty-four (34). Eight other meetings were held after they had been postponed. Percentage wise, there was 44% adherence to the published schedule. Several meetings were cancelled due to poor planning and poor attendance. There are forty-six (46) wards in Harare, but the HCC plan did not cover some of the wards. This can be exemplified by Borrowdale ward 18, Southerton ward 14, Highlands ward 8 and Budiro 37. There is need to strictly adhere to the published schedule. Changes to the initial schedule should be widely published so as to reduce confusion in the process.

### **Publicity of Meetings**

The HCC produced publicity flyers for the pre-budget meetings in the communities. The flyers were given to elected councillors responsible for meetings in the area. The clear number of flyers given to each councillor is not known. The flyers are said to have been dropped door to door and in the residents' letter boxes as invitation to the residents of a particular ward. The Public Relations department of the HCC is either totally dysfunctional or it dismally failed to recognise publicity opportunities for the HCCC when they see them. The Harare Residents Trust produced at least 360 invitations to mobilise people to attend the meetings. The publicity flyers were not in vernacular language but were in English. Most illiterate residents failed to find the need and importance of attending the meetings. Publicity of meetings was a challenge for councillors representing low and medium density areas. Citizens have lost interest in public affairs, example, in which meetings were well published was in Harare central, Avenues areas where the councillor Charles Nyatsuro ward 2 and ward 6 dropped flyers in many residential flats but residents never showed up for the meetings.

### **Residents' Attendance/Participation**

Residents in the targeted communities failed to attend most of the meetings. Of the 23 meetings held, only six had over hundred (100) people. The attendance at most meetings was very poor leading to cancellations. Overall attendance at the HCC pre-budget consultative meetings was extremely pitiable. This could be an indicator of no confidence in the local authority or people are fed up with seemingly political gatherings that do not bring tangible benefits. It could be that the councillors are unknown or they are too partisan to want to address audiences that they do not control or know. In separate discussions on this, some residents said their voice was not being taken seriously so they found no reason to participate in the meetings.

## **CONTENT OF DISCUSSION**

The content of the discussions at the meetings defeated the whole purpose of budget consultative meetings. There was never meaningful debate on the HCC 2012 budget. Meetings were reduced to mere service delivery meetings and residents exploited then to get to ask important questions to their communities. There has not been adequate feedback on



council's operations hence the criticism that they have not been effectively represented by their elected councillors.

### **Conduct By Elected Councillors**

Most of the councillors exhibited poor leadership qualities at the meetings and appeared to be in shock at the issues raised by residents. They failed to lead the discussions and guide the participants through deliberations especially on the HCC budget. Their behaviour by residents at the meetings clearly should that councillors have not been in touch with the communities. Councillors could not articulate budget issues. They lack capacity to be real effective policy makers.

### **Residents Expectations**

All residents need the HCC to prioritise water supplies to the communities by pumping adequate and clean water to the communities, consistent refuse collection and audited financial statements for previous budgets before a fresh budget can be crafted. This is a clear indication that residents of Harare have lost confidence in council systems and feel that their rates are being diverted to foot management expenses for luxurious life styles at the expense of service delivery. There is increased conflict between residents and the local authority which is bound to affect revenue collection.

### **The Inclusivity Participatory Budgeting Process**

In all the budget consultative meetings the researcher observed that the participation of marginalised groups during the PB process in HCC is very exclusionary and segregatory in character. The inclusion of marginalised groups of community into PB process is imperative to the achievement of holistic development in communities and societies. This implies an extension of the good of PB to vulnerable groups. This should be along the crosscutting lines of age (youth, children and the elderly), gender, health (HIV/AIDS and disability) and remoteness or isolated state of the communities. The study noted with great concern that the PB initiative in HCC has not gone as far reaching and addressing the needs, views and opinions of the marginalised classes then the whole process should be viewed with gross suspicion and scepticism. The PB process is not inclusive at all.

### **Section Synthesis**

The researcher monitored the pre-budget consultation meetings by the City of Harare in the communities. The study observes that the pre-budget meetings were disorganised, shambolic, muddled, there was less adherence to the initially published schedule, the content of the meetings did not discuss in depth the budget of HCC, councillors botched to lead discussions according to residents' expectations, cancellation of meetings due to poor attendance, only three meetings had the participation of over 100 people. This undermined the quality of discussions and residents participation. Although the City of Harare was well represented at the meetings with employees from various council service departments such as the Housing and Community services, Urban Planning Services, Town House, City Treasury, Public Works and Waste management, HCC officials failed to outline the real objective or the idea behind the meetings. Councillors and City of Harare teams identified the key objective of the meetings as a platform for residents to say out what they want in the budget which will then determine the capital budget and ultimately the cost of council services. Harare Residents

Trust Director said that “the problem starts from what was identified as the key objective as it shows that residents had and have little to play in determining the cost of services they will eventually pay for”. There has been a total lack of transparency in the manner in which the City of Harare has handled the budgets from 2008 up to now. There has been a serious lack of transparency and accountability by the City of Harare on budgets. Council officials concentrated on mentioning their assumed successes such as resurfacing Borrowdale road and acquiring 20 refuse trucks and replacement of water pipes in the CBD just to mention a few. The meetings were reduced to pure service delivery meetings rather than budget formulation meetings. The council has ceased to be a public institution where expenditures are supposed to be known to the rate payers.

Participants at the meetings agreed that the City of Harare 2011 budget did not perform well as indicated by the state of service delivery. Residents raised concern on the following issues:

**Water supplies-** Water supply is bad by Harare water. Residents from Mount Pleasant said that they had a meeting recently with the Mayor of Harare Muchadeyi Masunda who advised them that the water crisis will no change in the next 5 years. The residents said that the Mayor is of the view that the water situation is not because there is inadequate water to pump to the communities but it is largely due to the storage facilities. Residents from Kuwadzana Extension said that in their area there are water cuts but water is always available. The problem that is in Kuwadzana is that there are serious water bursts which take long to be repaired. The reservoir in Kuwadzana Extension sometimes spills out causing serious erosion of the dusty roads on the community. Residents from Mount Pleasant said that they get some water at times. They recommended that the City of Harare should make water supply schedules public so that residents actually know when they are supposed to get water supplies.

**Refuse collection-** Participants at the meeting highlighted that refuse collection is not thorough and is inconsistent. Residents said that poor refuse collection has compromised the health standards in the communities.

**Billing system-** Residents at the meeting said that the city billing system is frustrating residents who wish to settle their accounts. Residents from Mount Pleasant questioned why the amount that rate payers are required to pay for water is actually more than the amount that residents are charged for fixed water charges. They said that the billing system is scandalous. Residents said that the billing system has made bills unaffordable for the residents. There is no clear link between Rowan Martin and the City treasury. Rates payment at the District office does not reflect at Rowan Martin at times which makes it difficult to clear accumulated debts.

**Public Toilets** – There are no public toilets in Kuwadzana Extension. This has affected community health. Participants at the meeting highlighted that existing public toilets are in a bad state. It was recommended that all public toilets should be clean at all times and that existing ones be upgraded.

**Education facilities-** Kuwadzana Extension does not have a secondary school which has compromised access of education services. Children from Kuwadzana are forced to travel to Dzivarasekwa to attend lessons. Residents indicated that existing schools in the communities should be expanded to ease the demand for education services. It was also recommended that

for all new settlements, council should reserve space for construction of schools for the locality.

**Recreational facilities-** Residents from Mount Pleasant said that there are no recreational areas in their locality. They said that people entertain themselves. For the communities which have recreational facilities they are not being maintained. Residents recommended that council create space for recreational activities.

**Road network-** Participants indicated that community roads are being neglected. The roads are heavily potholed. They lambasted the City of Harare for failing to fulfil its priority for the 2011 city budget which was road repair and maintenance. It was recommended that the City of Harare repairs all damaged roads to reduce accidents.

**Drainage system-** Participants highlighted that the drainage system is blocked. There are fears that there may be flooding in the CBD and the communities if the drains are not cleared. The drainage system is blocked due to illegal dumping of waste caused by poor refuse collection schedules.

## **LIST IN ORDER OF PRIORITY FOR COUNCILS' ADOPTION IN THE 2012 BUDGET**

Led by Harare Residents Trust (HRT) Director, Precious Shumba, participants at the meeting, organised by HRT on 15 September 2011 at Glen Norah Specimen, identified their priorities in the city budget for 2012 as follows:

### **Constant water supplies.**

Residents agreed that the following should be done by council to ensure water supplies for the communities:

- Borehole drilling and maintenance.
- Construction of water reservoirs.
- Maintaining and upgrading of water infrastructure.
- Resuscitating of Cleveland dam as a way to ease water pressure from the current supply.
- Repairing of burst pipes.
- Equal water distribution
- Accurate water billing system.
- Residents encouraged council to follow the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA) footsteps in installing pre-paid meter readings.

### **Waste Management**

Residents agreed that the following should be done by council to ensure that the communities are free of waste and that World Health Organisation (WHO) standards are upheld in the communities:

- Consistency in the refuse collection.
- Strict adherence to refuse collection schedules.
- Acquiring more refuse trucks to service communities.
- Clearing of dump sites caused by poor refuse collection.
- Removal of sewerage charges for residents using septic tanks.
- Timely response to sewer bursts.

### **Billing System**

Residents agreed that the following should be done by council to ensure that the problems with Rowan Martin billing system be addressed:

- Computerisation of the City Treasury for accurate capturing of rates payment.
- Decentralisation of billing system to the District Offices.
- Residents should be able to acquire information at their District Office without necessarily going to Rowan Martin to seek clarity on their bills.

### **Health Service and Public Toilets**

Residents agreed that the following should be done by council to ensure that the health standards of communities are improved:

- Costing of health services should be reasonable so as to avoid compromising the right to health.

### **Road network and drainage Systems**

Residents agreed that the following should be done by council to ensure that the drainage system in the communities is improved:

- Clearing drainage systems before the rainy season.
- Pothole patching.

### **Education System and Recreational Facilities**

Residents agreed that the following should be done by council to ensure that the education system and recreational facilities of communities are improved:

- Council should build more schools and clinics in new settlements.

- Establishing and maintenance of recreational facilities.

### **Representation by elected councillors**

Residents agreed that councillors should be true representatives of the communities they serve by holding regular meetings with residents.

## **PROPOSED CITY RATES FOR 2012**

### **Fixed water charges**

#### **Proposals**

Residents agreed that fixed water charges be removed. For areas that were not receiving water the charges should be frozen. There is need for council to use pre-paid meter readings.

### **Burial fees**

#### **Proposals**

The meeting agreed that burial charges should be \$50.00 for adults and \$20.00 for children.

### **Community Halls**

#### **Proposals**

Residents should pay a reasonable sum of money for hall bookings especially for residents' meetings. However, for community development purposes residents should not pay anything (nil).

### **Parking fees**

Residents demanded council to charge affordable parking fees.

#### **Proposals**

- \$1.00 for an hour in all CBD parking areas.
- \$0.50 outside CBD and then council introduce a token system to ease problems of change.

### **Septic tanks**

#### **Proposals**

Residents said that \$92.00 is expensive as residents are required to pay for fuel (20 litres of diesel). Residents demanded that council disclose how much it costs to clear septic tanks. This will determine the real cost of the service.

## **Refuse collection**

### **Proposals**

Residents in high densities demanded that the refuse collection fee is reduced from \$6.50 to \$3.00 and in low density from \$9.00 to \$5.00.

## **Market Stalls**

### **Proposals**

Residents proposed that they pay \$25.00 for market stalls with a shade, \$ 10.00 for vegetable markets and \$15.00 for flea markets.

## **Health service**

### **Proposals**

Residents proposed two options.

1. \$30.00 whilst council provides all birth materials needed by mothers.
2. \$20.00 whilst mothers provide their own birth materials.

The residents of Harare have rejected the possibility of a desk centred budget being imposed on them.

## **SECTION SUMMARY**

This section has described the events that transpired at each of the pre-budget meetings held in various residential areas. The findings have disclosed that residents are not happy with the hefty salaries the HCC management is getting at the expense of service delivery. The billing system was also criticised. All the meetings were poorly attended except the Warren Park budget consultative meeting that had 150 residents. The pre-budget meetings of the meetings of the HCC had undermined real participation of the residents in the policy formulation process. The major problem was that HCC published a schedule of the budget consultation meetings in the Sunday Mail. To most vulnerable and poverty stricken residents in the communities the newspaper remains rare and unaffordable commodity. The schedule of meetings was not well published. The pre-budget meetings were disorganised, shambolic and muddled.

## **INTERVIEW RESULTS**

This section presents the findings obtained through interviews. The findings will be discussed under the following themes: residents' participation, service delivery, elected authority, budget process and mechanisms for public participation.

## Residents Participation

Harare Residents Trust (HRT) informed this study that residents are not aware of their rights to participate and they lack an understanding and awareness of policy making and budgetary processes<sup>1</sup>. He further noted that the language used in discussing policy and budgets is too technical and unfamiliar concepts to councillors lead to exclusion from effective participation in the policy and budgetary decision making process. The three (3) Combined Harare Residents Association (CHRA) officials interviewed noted that statutorily, the urban councils Act (1996) provides for budget formulation. HCC should follow this Act when preparing its budget, especially the consultation part. The CHRA officials converged on the view that the HCC does not follow the budget formulation procedures<sup>2</sup>. HCC implements draft budgets. The HRT said that “the 30 days put aside for those who want to object are just but a number”<sup>3</sup>. The study subscribes to this view. HCC went against the residents who objected to the 2010 city budget. There were more than thirty (30) objections and thousand (1000) signed petitions objecting to the budget proposals (The Herald, 12 August 2010). What should have happened in terms of the Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15 was that the city council should have come up with revised figures lower than the objected rates. However, HCC with the backing of a ministerial directive maintained the rates and subsequently implemented the rates objected by the residents. In such circumstances, the residents simply delay paying rates, fees and levies by two weeks<sup>4</sup>.

Harare residents in February 2012 threatened unspecified action against the HCC, if it insisted on adopting the controversial 2012 proposed budget. The HRT threatened to seek the intervention of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development minister and his deputy to immediately stop the HCC from implementing its proposed 2012 budget. The HRT Director urged the residents to organise demonstrations against the HCC for refusing to listen should the latter proceed with its plans. The civil society urged residents to delay payment of rates by two to three weeks. Those interviewed said they could not pay rates for duplication of duties. For example, Dr Prosper Chonzi (City Health) shares the same position with Dr Mungofa. Misheck Mubvumbi (Treasurer) and Cosmas Zvikaramba (Finance Director) share same duties and responsibilities at the expense of the residents of Harare. When the researcher interviewed the HCC Public Relations director on 13 February 2012, he superciliously and snootily said “We passed the budget and we are moving on. We called a special meeting on Thursday and we are now implementing the budget. 345 people honestly cannot speak on behalf of millions in the City”<sup>5</sup>. Such a haughtily is totally unacceptable and defeats the spirit of participatory budgeting. The relevant law states that if objections are just thirty (30) the budget should be revised. What about 345 objections? In any case all Harare residents cannot partake in the budget making process. The Table below explicitly shows that residents are minimally participating in budget making process.

**Table 7: Frequency of Participation in Public Budgeting in Harare City Council**

Numbers of times respondents participated	Number of respondents	% of respondents
One	189	40
Twice	83	17.6
Three times	55	11.7
Four Times	51	10.8
More than 4 times	27	5.7
No response	67	14.2
Total	472	100

*Source: Fieldwork, 2012*

Of the above percentages, the residents from low density and medium densities constitute the bulk. The respondents from high density areas argued that attending council meetings is a waste of time because their comments will never be considered<sup>6</sup>. Getting residents to attend meetings remains problematic and difficult for reasons that plague participation in any public setting, for example, time, and financial cost of attending meetings, general apathy, and the lack of awareness of the benefits of PB. Proposed spending and actual spending are generally mutually exclusive and do not tally. However, during an interview conducted with HCC mayor on 17 January 2012, the mayor argued that the schedule of meetings is usually made publicly available for residents to see and subsequently attend. The study noted that newspapers are not effective in disseminating the information because the poor do not buy them due to extreme poverty. Other means like websites, e-mails and e-governance should be considered.

There is need for more public consultation and participation in policy development for wider ownership of the implementation process. Residents are disappointed by the failure of many councillors to represent local interests, report back on council policies and account for public finance. Party politics does not appear to have been a positive factor in residents' participation in local governance. They were based more on patronage than on competition.

### **Service Delivery**

The interviews conducted revealed that the HCC has a distorted sense of priorities, for example, instead of spending public money on building houses for the homeless, providing adequate water, sanitation and refuse collection services and repairing roads full of potholes and broken street lights, it spends about 70% of total revenue called on recurrent expenditure (wages/salaries) and 30% on capital expenditure<sup>7</sup>. The researcher conducted an interview with the Harare Mayor Muchadeyi Masunda who said the HCC was "failing to ensure smooth service delivery to residents because of the huge debt"<sup>8</sup>. Residents are said to owe council US\$40 million. The private companies, parastatals and government departments owe US\$233 million. But the question that remains is how council allowed such a huge debt to accumulate



and why so little action has been taken to recover the sums owed? This exposes the moribund and incredible inefficiency of HCC and the terrible queues at its most council offices create arrears. HCC spokesperson, admitted during the interview held on 18 February 2012 that residents “had genuine complaints with regards to late disbursement of bills and failure to update payments”<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, residents demanding service delivery before paying for the services. Residents argue that they have huge vehicle service bills as a result of potholes on the roads. The western suburbs and surrounding areas wonder why they should pay for water when they never consistently have water. Garbage is collected after sometime. The list of complaints is endless. However, the study notes that the residents, private and government departments need to realize that they have a legal obligation to honour their bills and do so timeously.

The decade long political and economic condense severely eroded Harare City Council capacity to repair equipment, improve infrastructure and provide basic services. The residents’ incentive to pay taxes and fees for public services they were not receiving crumbled along with their infrastructure and their ability to pay now is restricted by declining incomes and rising poverty. Many local residents, HCC official reported, merely do not pay. The residents defended themselves by saying “wages chew a disproportionate share of the budget, that’s why we are not paying the charges”<sup>10</sup>. The salaries/wages are chewing about 70% of the total revenue collected from ratepayers. This implies that capital investment is anguishing.

The process of budget preparation is very lucid. Councils are supposed to consult ratepayers in terms of what needs to be done and after that the councillors must pass the budget before it is forwarded to the Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development (MLGURD). MLGURD has reportedly been requiring local authorities to provide written evidence of their consultation with residents such as minutes of meetings in order to get the budget approved. This is designed to make sure that local authorities consult their residents<sup>14</sup>. If this process is followed, it means all the critical stakeholders have been involved and there is corporate and community ownership of the council programmes. One of the reasons why most service providers are not raising enough revenue is because there is wholesale resistance from the ratepayers who believe they are being asked to pay for non-existent services. This problem also is faced by Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA). The sentiments from residents were that water is too expensive and simply stop paying. As was rightly pointed out by Mayor Muchadeyi Masunda that “we are standing on our own, with nothing coming from central government and that is why we need revenue to settle our debts and ensure service delivery in the City”. This observation shows the necessity of participation in both budget formulation and implementation by residents.

Responding to the question, what triggered the PB process in Harare City Council prior to 2001, the majority of the key informants converged on the view that Harare City Council has been facing continuous budget deficits and whenever HCC tried to or proposed to raise tariffs and charges there were demonstrations from the community as residents argued that they did not see any justification for increases as the council was providing poor quality services. From this one can glean that participatory budgeting is a critical instrument for enhancing revenue generation by local authorities. Therefore various civic organisations under the influence of the Harare residents associations took to the streets every year resisting and boycotting any increases and charges from the local authority. The confrontational

relationship force the Harare City Council to rethink the way it was doing business and the result was the idea to experiment participatory governance.

Both the Town Clerk and the Mayor informed the study that the chief challenge the Harare City Council is facing in implementing the PB initiative is funding the process. For instance, Harare Residents Trust noted that HCC must have a specific budget earmarked for PB. Financial resources are needed for situational analysis, profiling of stakeholders, and the training and capacity building<sup>11</sup>. This requires a lot of money to hold workshops and seminars. The study noted that resource deficiencies in terms of financial, human, vehicles and equipment are not the major problems facing PB. Organisational deficiencies related to leadership, a sense of mission, management systems and structure, openness and accountability are embedded in Harare City Council. For instance, HCC does not have a specific team for PB. The residents associations noted that the lack of political will and commitment of the council, in particular the mayor is the main stumbling block when it comes to effective PB execution. The residents associations think that this problem can be addressed through a council resolution adopting the use of PB in the planning process and signing a social contract between the residents, business community within the greater Harare and Harare City Council<sup>12</sup>. This really requires rules and regulations for genuine rendezvous and engagement.

### **Budget Process**

The Harare City council officials and councillors as key informants were asked the following questions:

- i. How is the budget organised and how is it conducted?
- ii. Can you take me through the budget cycle?

The study was informed that stakeholder consultation usually starts in September/October. The civic organisations, government line ministries, councillors, business community meet at a workshop to discuss and bring about their priorities and projects which they want to be included in the budget. The costing process is done by council officials. The councillors deliberate on the budget performance and forecast using the central government budget guidelines of national priority inter-organisational fiscal transfers and the priority projects sector by sector. The finance committee and the executive committee give the general local budget guidelines. After approval by the full council, the budget is put in the national paper for objections to be received from the residents. The following stages were visible during the interviews:

- Prepare a draft budget through the Finance Committee and forward it to full council;
- Consult with residents with each ward to receive their inputs or gather a shopping list of needs;
- Prepare a second draft for council consideration;
- Consult further with wards and stakeholders on rates and fee structure;
- Complete and approve final budget;

- Publish budget in local newspaper for any possible final revisions; and
- Send the budget to MLGURD for approval.

This only exists in principle. The practicalities on the ground show that HCC needs to take the PB process seriously if ever it wants to enhance local governance and raise more revenue with minimum resistance from ratepayers.

### **Elected Authority**

The councillors have a lot to be desired. The city councillors are the elected officials who have to stay in touch with the ordinary voter and ensure the sort of services that people actually need everyday such as piped water, pothole free roads, working sewers, open clinics, garbage removal, grass verges cut, parks functional, street lights are working and preventing accidents. The councillors have demonstrated their poor leadership capacity. There was no discussion on the rates for the 2012 budget. The councillors lack the capacity and ability to represent the interests of their electorates and mobilise local energy and resources. They do not understand council structures and procedures. Three quarters of the councillors do not have five (5) Ordinary level subjects because they were elected on party politics ticket not meritocracy. The interviews conducted with the Minister, deputy Minister and the Permanent Secretary of the MLGURD indicated clearly that the councillors are very inefficient when it comes to council business. “We have realised that most of these MDC people running our councils are inept”<sup>15</sup> the minister reported. “From now on my Ministry will take a bigger role in ensuring that our people do not suffer in towns like they were doing under MDC-led councils”<sup>16</sup>. The study noted that the weak skills and experience of local elected officials and the considerable knowledge gap between them and the chief administrator (Town Clerk) explain why the councillors fail to mobilise residents to participate during budget formulation. The effective functioning of the HCC suffers from the lack of capacity. The councillors find themselves fully dependent on the Town Clerk and other administrative staff in the review of policy and general conduct of their duties. However, the councillors complained of being bullied or having no decision making role. This therefore creates friction, suspicion, if not absolute conflict, principally in such a highly politicised environment. One councillor complained of “serious interference”<sup>17</sup> from the Minister in the day-to-day running of the city “even telling us how many teaspoons of sugar to put in the tea”<sup>18</sup>.

When the councillors were asked to describe their roles and responsibilities during the budget making process, the majority (67% of the sample) could not utter anything besides saying representing residents and making resolutions. Councillors must know that they intermediaries between residents and council and heads of departments. Some councillors reported holding formal and informal meetings with residents. They report back to the council. When local officials asked how residents concerns reached the council the majority indicated exclusively that the initial contact is the councillor. Residents associations, clinics, information centers, ward development committees are other options for residents interested in contacting the HCC, but these appear to be used relatively infrequent. “The residents tell their councillor who will submit the concerns to council committees then to the full council or the council will go straight to the head of each department”<sup>19</sup>.

Elected officials widely believed that residents' participation in affairs of the council is strong and while administration officials do not take as a positive view, they report that participation is moderate. When asked to describe the public participation with the work of the HCC 77% responded that it was fairly good- that residents sometimes participate in meetings and share their views. In referring to participation, they often explained the importance of consulting with the associations of ratepayers and other associations on the setting of fees and tax rates.

### **Mechanism for Public Participation**

During the interview conducted with the Town Clerk the following instruments for public participation were outlined. These include government gazette, notice calling for objections in more than one issue of the newspaper, public notices at HCC offices, ministerial commissions, ministerial investigations, councillor input, ward development committees, the right of the community to attend council meetings, budget resolutions and voter rolls and council subcommittees. The study observed that all these instruments are too elitist and top-down in their approach. There is no comprehensive and explicit involvement and participation of the residents. The mayor informed this study that the PB is now "the only way to go in local governance". However, the mayor observed that the process may be hijacked for political ambitions. Aspiring MPs, mayors and councillors may find themselves in a situation where they are at serious variance with the community. This may get the process longer hence delays in budget implementation. Without PB, budgeting according to the Chamber Secretary becomes myopic and driven by managerialism than through and by the community.

When asked to explain the role residents associations play to ensure public participation in council budget making, they said that they develop policy responses to the challenges local officials face and lobbying national policy makers to institute reform<sup>13</sup>. They also provide training and technical assistance to local officials to help them resolve the institutional and other problems they face. UCAZ official informed this study that it promotes the spread of best practices and other information that can improve the functioning of the local administration. There is strong agreement among local officials on the frequencies with which they receive petitions or requests for items from residents associations, for instance, Combined Harare Residents Association (CHRA) on 25 February 1999 wrote a petition to the Minister of Local Government and National Housing to suspend the City of Harare Council in accordance with section 114 (1) of the Urban Councils Act [Chapter 29:15). The petition was signed by 11 950 Harare residents. The petition read "We the undersigned Ratepayers, Residents and Tenants of Greater Harare call on the Minister of Local Government and National housing to immediately remove from office the Executive Mayor and the entire Council of Harare for failure to ensure good governance in the Greater Harare area and gross incompetence and mismanagement"<sup>19</sup>. This contributed tremendously to local governance issues. In a study conducted by Chaeruka and Sigauke, the roles of CHRA include:

- They help the residents to understand the budget through simplifying it and putting it in vernacular language.
- If the City of Harare does not follow procedure, which according to CHRA they often do, they demand the City Council to do so. There are a number of ways they do it i.e. demand council to do consultations, hold peaceful demonstrations if necessary, write and submit petitions to council; lobby and consult those who may help ease the

situation. The association also help residents to layout their objections or provide the means with which to object

- CHRA has divided Harare into areas, 3 wards per area in the 45 ward city. At this level each ward articulates its problems and challenges, which differ from area to area. Workshops are run for each area. Theses 15 areas will then sit together and come up with city-wide development and service needs. The actually prioritise they needs city-wide in line with the one city concept. This is expected to be an input into the city budget. Council seem not to take theses expressed needs seriously basing on the final budget contents.
- The residents association also carries out research within Zimbabwe and in the SADC region to see how others are carrying out PB. It helps to compare experiences.
- CHRA has gone as far taking its concerns and experiences on PB to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee overseeing urban areas for a discussion. In a way parliament needs to understand why LAs need to be included in the constitution (2007:22).

In general the CHRA says HCC does not follow the budget preparation procedures. It implements draft budgets

### **The Laws Governing the Formulation of Budgets in Local Authorities**

Section 1c (1) of Part Five (V) of Council's Standing Regulations: Financial Regulations which states that " In November of each year, the Finance Committee shall submit to Council;

- i. A summary of the draft revenue estimates as amended in terms of paragraph (6) of Regulation 1B.
- ii. A summary of the draft capital estimates as amended or otherwise in terms of paragraph (7) of Regulation (1), together with such detail thereof as will be published in the printed estimate book after approval by Council.
- iii. A summary of the draft capital development plan
- iv. Its recommendations necessary for the approval and implementation of the annual estimates and the plan.

Local Authorities Circular Number 4 of 2011 (Budget Guidelines for 2012: All Local Authorities), dated 4 October 2011, which urges council;

- a. To embark on budget consultative processes in order to give the entire budgetary process the necessary credibility and promote ratepayer participation and ownership.
- b. To integrate gender issues in the 2011 estimates
- c. To commit to the philosophy of Results Based Management (RBM)
- d. To desist from preparing budgets that are inflation adjusted

- e. To budget comparatively more in favour of capital development.
- f. To enforce the employment costs to service ratio of 30 percent to 70 percent of actual income.
- g. To ensure that 2011 budgets are realistic.
- h. To avidly buy into the Public, Private Partnerships and to
- i. Submit the budget to the Ministry by 30 November 2010.

Section 219 and Section 288 of the Urban Councils' Act (Chapter 29:15)

Section 272 of the Urban Councils' Act (Chapter 29:15),

The Local Authorities Circular Number 4 of 2011 (Budget Guidelines for 2011) subsection f requires that employment costs to service ratio must be 30% to 70% of the expected revenue. This was completely mutually exclusive. A monstrous 41% of the proposed/expected revenue has been earmarked for salaries and administration. The residents feel that the budget is merely a gadget for self-enrichment of the city bureaucrats and some councillors. The residents even threatened that they will delay and boycott payment of rates. This would categorically and emphatically cripple the local authority's capacity to deliver quality services.

## **SECTION SUMMARY**

The findings have revealed that HCC does not follow the budget formulation procedures. The HCC is legally expected not to implement a budget if objections exceed 30 but it proceeded to implementing the budget despite more than 1000 objections against the proposed 2010 city budget. For 2012 budget, there were 345 objections but the HCC arrogantly ignored them. The major reason why residents do not participate is that the schedule of meetings sometimes is not known. Residents are keen to participate but the medium used to disseminate the information is not appropriate for the general poor people. HCC is failing to deliver a quality services to residents due to a huge debt. The challenges that PB execution process is facing include inadequate funds and organisational deficiencies in terms of visionary leadership, transparency and accountability. Residents associations are doing a great job in mobilising residents to participate in council business. The councillors who should spearhead the process leave a lot to be desired.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Participatory budgeting allows for the formal and organised participation of residents in the elaboration of local authorities' budgets. PB can be interpreted "as an educative process, as an empowerment process, as a means of increasing transparency and accountability, and as a route towards radicalising democracy by combining representation and participatory democracy" (Beall, 2005:122). The study discovered that PB formalises the participation of residents in decision making processes. This represents a shift from a simple consultation

with residents' representatives over policy towards a formal institutionalisation of a rights-based approaches to development, which gives rise to a deliberative for citizen participation (Goldfrank and Schneider, 2002; 1nd Souza, 2000). How effective the PB process is depends on factors such as nature of participants, the way priorities are decided and the extent of the resources under deliberation. There are multiple factors militating against PB. When the researcher attended the consultative budget meetings, observed that the PB process is very political, not party politics rather in terms of conflicts. That is very normal because according to Harold Lasswell politics is about who gets what, when and how. To David Easton politics is the authoritative allocation of values in the community or society. Hence, the HCC should not perceive the conflicts during budget discussion with residents as bizarre and atypical. The findings in particular the participant observation revealed that sometimes it is thorny to reconcile the short-term demands of the residents with more long-term strategic council wide imperatives. This must not be construed to mean that PB is not practicable. The PB initiative promotes council-residents engagement and offers a positive example of council generated residents' participation and empowerment.

Harare City Council officials are habitually uncomfortable with the idea of PB enhancing governance fearing that the resident political activities would veer into unravelling corrupt tendencies. There is still lack of residents' participation in policy and decision making in particular the council budget. The residents are still marginalised. This is exacerbated by the fact that councillors are failing to represent residents. Residents are disappointed by the failure of many councillors to represent local interests, report back on council policies and account for public finances. More generally, party politics do not appear to have been a positive factor in residents' participation in local governance. There are serious capacity gaps at HCC in terms of institutional capacity, financial and human resources. The policy, legal and institutional frameworks to a large extent do not support participatory budgeting. Residents associations also lack human, organisational skills and financial sustainability to adequately engage in governance at local level. Seventy-six (76) percent of resident category said they never seen a local government budget. Residents want reasonable amounts of revenue to be channelled to service provision not administrative expenses. Corruption, high poverty levels have affected local revenue collections. Residents need to own local government budgets so that meaningfully participate in local developmental issues. Careful analysis reveals that there is insufficient collaboration, transparency and accountability to residents. Hardly were residents taken on board in the decision making process except the mockery consultations. Some consultative meetings are not well attended such that emerging opinion cannot be representative of the constituencies. This is particularly so as some members of the community fail to attend WADCO meetings for fear of being mistaken for sympathising with particular political party. Ratepayers' and representatives' objections of certain policies, especially the budgetary matters were generally ignored by the city fathers. Isn't that participation being hemmed in and circumscribed? Most residents feel that their council is actually the source of their problems. Main forces of conflict between residents and councils are the management of public finance, inadequate provision of services and residents struggling to survive urban poverty through self-employment.

Overall, if HCC implements religiously the PB it can enjoy many benefits such as reducing the number of objections due to consensual nature of the PB process. It can increase revenue collection. Despite increasing poverty there is less default and increased collection of revenue. For instance, the Kadoma City collection rates increased from an average of 40% to

about 60% before and after setting the Budget Task Force (UCAZ, 2006:35). There is correlation between existence of participatory structures and increased cooperation. The PB process can influence members of the community towards reinforcing the residents' appreciation of what the HCC does, sense of ownership of the whole budget process and a sense of appreciation of problems and challenges the HCC faces. The fact that HCC receives overwhelming objections from the community is an indication that the process is not participatory.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15 should be amended to ensure that local authorities are led by elected mayors, who derive their mandate from the residents and not from their political parties. The HCC generally accepted the need to engage other stakeholders in the budget process. However, the main challenge is that the existing statutes do not provide a guiding framework for the participatory process. Indeed some sections of extant legislation the requirement for the Minister to receive all budget works against a sense of local ownership of the participatory budget process. The local governance system framework must be constitutionalised to allow for a participatory budgeting process.

E-governance system should be installed. E-governance requires the Harare City Council to establish a website containing most imperative information on how to apply for a licence or permit, council meetings time table, agenda for full council meetings, help lines and work programmes. This will enable potential business people to apply on line. If an application is made, people can comment on the interaction between councils and residents. Residents can also communicate easily with council on any issue through e-mail. In the context of PB, it means the budget advertised in newspapers will also be posted on the website and comments could come via e-mail plus traditional post and representations at meetings. E-governance facilitates and enhances PB. Critical information technology issues such as general internet use, viewing and comment on the budget proposals over the internet, use of cell phone SMS and maintenance of the local area network and wide area net work have to be considered. This is an area Zimbabwe is found wanting. PB works well where there is a free flow of and easy access to information. The e-government platform is expensive to establish but very useful in local governance.

Council should step up awareness campaigns on residents about the payment plans. Most residents are not aware that they can make arrangements on how to pay their arrears. The council needs to talk to ratepayers and encourage them to come up with payment plans. HCC can introduce a "special Concession" as part of its drive to get all residents, companies and government departments in arrears to pay up. It can give a two-month period to clear their areas and enjoy a 30% discount to be credited to their accounts.

Capacity building of councillors and residents: councillors must be capacitated in order for them to carry out all their functions in a more consultative manner. Councillors also need skills on effective communication, conducting research, documentation and advocacy on vital local issues. The residents must be given well-designed civic education to increase their confidence, their knowledge of development issues and the ability to think critically in negotiation and conflict resolution. This will resultantly encourage residents and councillors



to participate effectively in local governance. This requires HCC to learn to carry out the budget cycle in a democratic way which encourages participation.

Residents awareness and conscientisation: many a time residents shop lists are very large and beyond the amount that the same community can generate from levies and fees. The needs sometimes are ultra vires. The technocrats have the entire task to find modalities of turning the needs come into the scope of the community or donor's resource pool. Therefore, residents should have their awareness raised to the principles of basic economics. This will help them not to produce shop lists of projects which are not practicable, viable and prioritisable for the benefit of the whole community. This prompted some writers to view PB as a social sensitivity analysis mechanism, a dipstick to proposal and a weapon against saboteurs.

### **Endnotes**

1. Interview with a Harare Residents Trust official
2. Interview with CHRA officials
3. Interview with HRT official
4. Interview with a Civic leader
5. Interview with HCC Public Relations Director
6. Interview with a resident
7. Interview with UCAZ official
8. Interview with Harare Mayor
9. Interview with HCC Public Relations Director
10. Interview with a resident
11. Interview with Member of Parliament
12. Interview with Civic leader
13. Interview with Director of Harare Residents Trust
14. Interview with Permanent Secretary of Local Government, Urban and Rural Development
15. Interview with the Minister of Local Government, Urban and Rural Development
16. Interview with the Minister of Local Government, Urban and Rural Development
17. Interview with the Councillor
18. Interview with the Councillor
19. Interview with the Mayor
20. Interview with the Combine Harare Residents Association Official

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