

SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE CITY OF MUTARE: A PERSPECTIVE FROM LOCAL RESIDENTS

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Abstract

As is the case with all urban local councils, Mutare City Council exists mainly to provide services to all stakeholders in an efficient and effective manner as its mission statement highlights it. In the local government elections held on 30 July 2018, the opposition dominated subnational entity received the mandate of the local people to run the civic affairs of the city for another five years. As part of this narrative, Councillor Blessing Tandí of Ward 14 Chikanga was elected the Mayor of Mutare in chambers. In his inauguration speech which was well received by inhabitants, Mayor Tandí promised to revamp sluggish service delivery and improve the quality of life. It is now almost three years since there was handover-takeover of management of civic matters. Using social attitude survey, the article assesses the extent to which the City of Mutare has reversed or failed to significantly impact poor local public service delivery. The results of the study suggest widespread public despondency over the state of local public service delivery; a feat seemingly not only attributed to dismal municipal performance but also underperformance among the three spheres of government.

Keywords: service delivery; urban local government; social attitude survey; efficiency-services model; local public services, Zimbabwe.

1. INTRODUCTION

Being the tier of government closest to the people, local government is best suited to deliver local services. Not only does it have the means and incentives to be more responsive, it can also improve the management of public services through sheer proximity. In addition, it has better knowledge of local conditions and it is also more accessible to inhabitants. Yet local governments (both rural and urban) are not functioning as well as they should be, with many struggling to collect garbage, provide water, upgrade sewer systems and maintain badly damaged roads, among a plethora of other deliverables that need urgent attention. The City of Mutare is no exception. If anything, public dissatisfaction associated with shoddy service delivery is rampant, seemingly suggesting that Mutare City Council is failing to connect with citizens and producing tangible improvements in the quality of life.

At independence from Britain in 1980, Zimbabwe inherited a system of local government with a bias towards robust service delivery, although it was racist and needed democratising. Up until the end of 1999, the local government system was delivering services to the expectation of citizens. By 2000, it

had become clear that there was a need to reform aspects of the urban governance system, resulting in national government adopting the executive mayoral system in place of the ceremonial mayoral system. The change which saw elected mayors engage in service delivery issues on a day-to-day basis considerably improved service delivery. However, in 2008, through Local Government Amendment Act No. 1, the government, with concurrence of the opposition abolished the directly elected executive mayoral position and returned the town clerk to the position of managing the day-to-day civic duties of cities. Its demise is however not attributed to lack of progress by executive mayors but the fact that all urban councils had fallen to opposition parties, irking a governing party which did not countenance the creation of independent urban power bases.

In 2004, national government through the Ministry of Local Government adopted The Revitalisation of Local Authorities Policy which, among other things, admit that local government lacks the capacity to deliver services. In this regard, it notes that the absence of service delivery is “evidenced by the deterioration in the road network, non-collection of refuse and uncompleted capital projects, poor and non-existent street lighting, burst water and sewer pipes, the disposal of raw waste into major water sources and the general decay in the general outlook of our towns and cities (Government of Zimbabwe, 2004).” The solutions it suggests include equalisation grants, strengthening internal management systems, increasing the revenue and expenditure powers of councils and addressing the unfunded mandate.

Although the policy identifies the challenges and articulated supposed solutions, it was not until national government started supporting municipal councils through the Public Sector Investment Programme that we began to see a commitment to address the challenges. In this regard, it gave loans mainly for various capital works including water supply and sanitation. The loans also ensured construction of major capital infrastructure, the acquisition of heavy plant and equipment for the maintenance of roads. Even then, it was clear that the programme could not be relied upon to fundamentally reverse the tide of poor service delivery bedeviling urban councils. The source of the loans soon ran dry, amid an economy grappling with many challenges, including foreign currency shortages, international isolation and rapid contraction of GDP.

In 2005, the capacity of local government to delivery housing came under sharp scrutiny when national government undertook Operation Murambatsvina (also known as Operation Restore Order). It was a large-scale government campaign that forcibly removed slums across the country (Benyera and Nyere, 2015). According to the United Nations estimates, the operation affected at least 700,000 people directly through loss of their homes. The government of the late President Robert Mugabe characterised the operation as a crackdown against illegal housing and commercial activities, and as an effort to

reduce the risk of the spread of infectious disease in these areas (Potts, 2006). In addition, it was claimed that they were merely enforcing municipal by-laws and preventing disorderly urbanization. However, some suggest that the operation which affected thousands of families living on the edge was a “covert operation targeting voters who had shown a preference for the opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)” (Benyera and Nyere, 2015).

Operation Murambatsvina exposed the inefficiencies of the public sector in delivering sustainable services and not just the capacity gaps of local authorities grappling with provision of housing amid increase in urban populations associated with the search for better employment opportunities and more favourable standards of living. Seeking to plug the capacity gaps, national government introduced results based management (RBM) towards the end of 2005. With its focus on results and not inputs, it was envisaged that RBM would facilitate for the public sector, including local government to promote better utilisation of scarce resources, reduce corruption and make service delivery the cornerstone of operation of government agencies. Its success was not immediate and the results suggest resistance to change, an unwillingness to address corruption and the ethics of the new public management system associated with the introduction of RBM (Madhekeni, 2012; Zinyama, Nhema and Mutandwa, 2015).

Service delivery marginally improved from 2008 to 2012 following the formation of the short-lived government of national unity between the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Benefiting from international acceptance, donor funding and stability brought about by fiscal policy reforms, municipal councils somewhat managed to reclaim the capacity to deliver services. Building on this momentum, in 2012, national government partnered with the World Bank and developed a local benchmarking framework for purposes of monitoring and improving urban water and sanitation. This was followed by the formation of peer review teams which visited councils to collect data and scrutinise the operation of each council. In addition to collecting data, the peer review system allowed councils not only to visit each other but to assess issues affecting service delivery in each council. In addition, it facilitated for a citizenship feedback mechanism for periodically communicating the performance of municipal councils.

In 2013 the prospects for optimised local government service delivery improved with the adoption of a new constitution for Zimbabwe (Marumahoko, 2018). It was a milestone achievement when local government was constitutionalised as one of the three tier system of government, the other being national government and provincial and metropolitan councils. Before that, local government was a creation of inferior law and it was prone to variation by those in power. The elevated position of urban councils was buttressed by the division of nationally collected revenue which was provided in the new constitution. Essentially, this provided for urban councils (and rural district councils) to be entitled to five

percent of the revenue collected by national government from lucrative sources of revenue such as customs and excise tax, corporate tax, value added tax and individual income tax (Marumahoko and Fessha, 2011; Marumahoko, 2012). Using this new stream of revenue, local government was expected to improve service delivery. Seven years later, this has not happened. National treasury has not yet come up with a formula for dividing and allocating nationally collected revenue. It is business as usual, with national government not showing much interest in implementing the constitutional directive.

With the ouster of Mugabe towards the end of 2017, hope was rekindled that the new administration led by President Emmerson Mnangagwa would reverse the slide in service delivery through progressive policy formulation. Mnangagwa's inauguration speech **was** peppered with promises of a new Zimbabwe that is prosperous and one seeking to find its place among the family of nations; reawakening hope that restoration of service delivery was not only possible but within reach. Three years into his first term, there is not much to show for that promise. The reality is that service delivery is still a pale shadow of its former glory, with all signs pointing to further erosion and decline.

The article assesses the state of service delivery in Zimbabwe's City of Mutare. It does this through soliciting the views of inhabitants of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) controlled city. In the local government elections held on 30 July 2018, the MDC prevailed over its arch-rivals, the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and retained control of the city, as it has done since 2000. In his inauguration speech, Mayor Blessing Tandi pledged to improve service delivery. The pledge was well received by inhabitants who had for a long time borne the brunt of poor service delivery under previous administrations.

Through social attitude surveys, the article assesses whether city dwellers are satisfied with the quality of service delivery. The article is organised as follows: first, it begins by introducing the City of Mutare. Thereafter, it discusses the theoretical framework and methodology. After this, it presents and discusses the results of the research. It then engages the recommendations for improving service delivery. Thereafter, it presents the concluding remarks.

2. INTRODUCING CITY OF MUTARE IN BRIEF

Situated 260 kilometres southeast of Harare, the City of Mutare is the fourth largest city in Zimbabwe. It is the capital of Manicaland province, one of the ten provinces in the country. The city had an estimated population of 260 567 people as of 2012 when the Zimbabwe Statistical Agency (ZIMSTATS) undertook a national census. Mutare is a diverse city with high population size and density. Its economy is based on mining and industry. Mutare is one of seven cities run by the opposition since the MDC was formed and started contesting national elections in 2000. Prior to that, it was run by the governing ZANU-PF.

Following the local government, parliamentary and presidential elections held on 30 July 2018, Councillor Blessing Tandi of ward 14 Chikanga was, on 10 September 2018 duly elected Mayor of the City of Mutare. In his maiden speech, Mayor Tandi promised to lead fellow city fathers, guide senior managers and bring on-board all stakeholders to rehabilitate and improve service delivery (Zhakata, 2018). It is now almost three years since Mayor Tandi took over the reins at the civic centre, begging the question of whether or not public expectations have been met.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

The efficiency-services model is relevant to the establishment, purpose, function and philosophy of local government. At its centre is the argument that the primary purpose of the local government systems is to provide services such as primary education, sanitation and others efficiently (Chukwuemeka, Ugwuanyi, Ndubuisi-Okolo and Onuoha, 2014). Essentially, the term service delivery is used to denote the distribution of basic communal needs and services, notably housing, water and sanitation, and infrastructure, which communities have taken for granted and become reliant on for their daily existence. It is the duty of local governments to deliver services within its area of jurisdiction.

In 2013, as mentioned earlier, local government, was constitutionalised, a position that elevated its status in governance. The constitution recognised a three-tier system of governance. In this regard, it recognised national government, provincial and metropolitan councils and local government; broken down into urban councils and rural district councils (Marumahoko, Afolabi, Sadie and Nhede, 2020). The constitution also provided for the division of revenue collected by the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority and other national government agencies; an exercise which is supposed to be moderated by national treasury. Under this arrangement, local government is entitled to 5% of the revenue collected by national agencies.

The above arrangement acknowledges the disparities in the capacities to collect revenue between national government and subnational entities. In the past, a common argument was that local government was ill-positioned to deliver local services on a large scale as all the lucrative sources of revenue were under the purview of a national government that basked in monopolisation and was less inclined to share. Nevertheless, seven years after adoption of the new constitution, the disparities are as wide as ever and no effort has been made to implement the equalisation constitutional clause. Arising from this set-up, the delivery of local services has proved to be unreliable at times, greatly inconveniencing and endangering local communities.

The Second Schedule to the Urban Councils Act (Chapter 29:15) outlines 54 functions of urban local government. The large majority of these powers relate to service delivery. The powers can be organised

into legislative and executive classifications. Generally, legislative powers pertain to the law-making functions of urban councils. They include the power to create by-laws and other local laws. The executive powers relate mostly to the power of urban local government to make, adopt and implement council resolutions and other policies; enforce by-laws and administer areas under their jurisdictions (Mushamba, 2010). Local government functions are further divided into mandatory and permissive powers. As the word suggests, mandatory functions are those issues that they are required to perform by law. Although crucial, permissive functions are optional but equally important issues all local governments are expected to perform as part of their mandate. Examples include community development and provisions of social services such as community halls and tennis courts.

Inhabitants have often resorted to various ways to express their displeasure at the absence of service delivery they are entitled to and are paying for without receiving. Some of the ways they have expressed displeasure include service delivery protests. It is pertinent to note that the service delivery protests have taken on several different forms, namely, mass meetings, submission of memoranda, and petitions, processions and election boycotts, prompting the speculation that the service delivery protests are basically a rebellion by the poor against neo-liberal policies. The protests have not only been about service delivery issues. They have also tended to embrace other issues associated with a bad governance culture in local government such as maladministration, nepotism, fraud and corruption and the failure of councillors and administrators to listen to residents.

In 2010, the RTI International and the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for Zimbabwe concluded that public service provision among local authorities was a “matter of trying to make something of a crisis situation”. The study was undertaken in the wake of the government of national unity arrangement between ZANU-PF and MDC. It also concluded that the constraints local government is reportedly encountering include: (a) the lack of financial resources to make improvement; (b) short supply of functioning equipment and machinery; and (c) lack of availability of pipes, tanks, lights and other necessary supplies (RTI International and the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for Zimbabwe, 2010). In addition, the study also bemoaned that service consumers are financially burdened, undermining their ability to afford to pay much, if anything, for the services that are rendered. Respondents in the study also admitted that inhabitants were not paying what they owed subnational governments. The study also classified the services most likely provided by local government (see Table 1 below).

TABLE 1 - RESPONSE TO QUESTION: WHAT ARE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT SERVICES THE COUNCIL IS PROVIDING TO THE COMMUNITY?

Number of times mentioned among top three (percentage of N)				
Local Officials	Water and	Refuse	Road	Primary

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	Sanitation	Collection	Maintenance	Health Care
Mayors/ Chairs (N=14)	8(57.1)	10(71.4)	n.a.	7(50.0)
Administration Officials (N=15)	14(93.3)	n.a.	5(33.3)	11(78.6)
Councillors (N=194)	103(53.1)	n.a.	64(33.0)	97(50.0)
Totals (N=223)	125(56.1)	10(4.5)	69(30.9)	115(51.6)

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

Note: Administration officials, interviewed as a group, include the town clerks, heads of department, and other officials, and the composition of the group varied by local authority.

N = Total number of survey respondents

n.a. = not applicable; issue was not mentioned among top three

According to Ncube (2018), Zimbabwe's current Minister of Finance and former Oxford professor of public policy, improving the capacity of public sector organisations commences with cultivating a culture of effective service delivery. At the centre of this strategy is the acquisition of new skills by civil servants. This entails equipping senior managers in the public service in both national government, provincial and metropolitan councils and local councils with the skills they require to enhance their performance and that of the teams they supervise. As envisaged by Ncube (2018), training could begin with a leadership programme for the heads of government agencies such as permanent secretaries and directors in government ministries and municipalities. At the local government and district level, the skill-acquisition programmes would focus on supporting devolution and decentralised service delivery.

Poor service delivery is also seemingly attributed to the lack of capacity of councillors to perform. In this regard, two former mayors of Harare, Muchadeyi Masunda and Bernard Manyenyeni bemoaned the poor calibre of councillors and appealed to political parties and voters to elect individuals with reasonable educational qualifications to ensure the smooth running of council. In the same vein, a study by Bland (2011; Razemba, 2015) found most councillors lacking in academic qualifications, with some listing their qualifications as farmers, builders, hair dressers and security guards. Questions have been asked about their capacity to understand service delivery issues and the administrative staff who are professionally trained and obtained university education (Bland, 2011; Samukange, 2015). In the same vein, a study by resident's groups under the banner We Pay, You Deliver Consortium found that the performance of councillors was rated as poor by 44,7% of the respondents (Ndlovu and Ncube, 2018). A survey carried out by Mass Public Opinion Institute, an independent research institute on behalf of Afrobarometer found that citizens who live in urban areas are particularly critical of their local councillors, with over 60% disapproval rate (The Sunday Mail, 2018).

Using social attitude surveys, the article tracks the views and opinions of the public on the local public service delivery issues facing the city of Mutare. In this regard, service consumers within the city were invited to share their experiences. In particular, people were asked about their views on a range of topics such as refuse collection, water and health provision. The countries using social attitude survey to assess and inform public policies on service delivery include the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany and France.

Across Europe, social attitude surveys are conducted once every two years and draw on the participation of sampled citizens in the European Union, making them the biggest such surveys in the world. In South Africa, the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) conducts the South African Social Attitudes Survey. This is a nationally representative survey series that the HSRC has been conducting on an annual basis since 2003 and it measures the public's attitudes, beliefs, behaviour patterns and values on a wide range of government performance areas, including urban service delivery.

The exploration of public attitudes is crucial as it provides an authoritative source of data for governments, politicians, private enterprises, think tanks, academics and policy-makers; about the state of service delivery in the City of Mutare. It also has a crucial role in promoting dialogue about improved standards and harmonisation. The participants in the study were randomly selected from across the City. This way the researcher hoped to get a truly unbiased picture of attitudes as everyone had an equal chance of participating and being heard (Almarshad, 2015). In particular, premium was placed on tackling issues such as minimising response bias and increasing the representativeness of data, as well as maximising cost-effectiveness.

Three schools of thought, expectation disconfirmation model, performance model and individual and jurisdictional models are usually relied on to explain the reasons inhabitants might either be satisfied or dissatisfied with service delivery. With its origin in business and the **private** sector, the disconfirmation model is widely used to comprehend customer satisfaction (James, 2009; Elliott and Yannopoulou, 2007). However, it is now increasingly used to understand public expectations about service delivery (Morgeson, 2013). With regard to the performance model, citizen satisfaction is perceived of as a function of the type of decision citizens make about how a government agency is performing vis-a-vis their expectation about how government ought to perform under certain conditions and circumstances (Mangai, 2016). The individual and jurisdictional model focuses on factors such as an individual's social status values and personal background as crucial considerations in judging whether or not individuals are satisfied or dissatisfied with service delivery (Dehoog, Lowery and Lyons, 1990).

TABLE 2 - SAMPLE SIZE

City of Mutare	
Estimated total number of households	47004
Number interviewed	230
Residential area (%):	
high density	65
medium density	22
low density	13

Source: Own data, 2020

Taking part in the study was not only important from the perspective of shaping development debates, it was also crucial from the angle of ensuring that various kinds of opinions and views are represented. The questionnaire was presented in English and other commonly spoken languages in the City. This facilitated better understanding of the questionnaire. All interviews were voluntary and written consent was required where it was necessary to do so. The responses of research participants were combined with others and then interpreted to understand what the inhabitants of the City of Mutare think about the issues of the day. The information that they gave us was treated with the strictest confidence under data protection laws. The participants were assured that the results collected are used for research purposes only. Moreover, they were also informed that their answers would be combined with others and any information that could directly identify them would be removed before analysis and data sharing. The reports written did not identify anyone who took part in the survey.

The researcher started by conducting three small-scale pilots by traditional methods, the intention being to test questions. This important phase ran from January through to February 2020. The household was used as the sampling unit. The respondents were purposively selected and this exercise took into consideration attributes such as age, gender, employment status and social class. The interviewing commenced beginning of March and ran until end of April.

A letter was sent to participants ahead of the interviews. The letter summarily outlined the aim of the survey and provided a brief overview of the questionnaire. It also asked for the co-operation of the interviewees. This way, the researcher facilitated rapport and appreciation ahead of data gathering. Fieldwork was conducted by 10 interviewers drawn from Mutare who had a minimum of high school education. Before deployment, the interviewers attended a two-day training session conducted by the principal researcher. In addition, they also attended a one-day briefing conference to familiarise them with all aspects of data gathering. On average, each interview took 20 minutes to complete for the respondents.

In addition, a self-completion questionnaire was distributed and those sampled asked to fill it in. These were then collected by the interviewer. The data from the face-to-face interviews and the paper self-

completion questionnaires were scrutinised before they were sent for editing. In this regard, experts with backgrounds in editing and coding worked closely with the principal researcher. In addition, the interview questionnaires were also edited using the computer. The self-completion questionnaires were edited by computer and manually. Filter checks were also a component of the edit. Essentially, the coding team, relying on its expertise, scrutinised each questionnaire on the computer and coded the responses.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The thrust of the study was to assess service delivery in the City of Mutare since 2018 when the current administration led by Mayor Tandi took over civic duties following the local government elections held on 30 July. The study sought to achieve this by evaluating the performance of the Mutare City Council through the lens of residents or service consumers. It tapped into the views of inhabitants through social attitudes survey.

As Table 3 below illustrates, 60% of the respondents were female and 40% were male. The gender distribution reflects the situation in Zimbabwe where females dominate their male counterparts in terms of numbers. The age group of participants ranges from 18-80 years. The study finds high levels of education with all respondents indicating they attended and completed primary education. In the same vein, 90% of the male respondents attended and finished secondary education. With regard to female respondents, 95% indicated they went through secondary education and graduated. The study also sought to find out whether the respondents were employed or not. In this regard, 30% indicated that they were in formal employment, 60% were in informal employment and 10% were unemployed.

TABLE 3 - SOCIO- DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF RESPONDENTS

Gender	% Male	40
	% Female	60
Age	Range (years)	18- 80
Education	% Male Primary	100
	% Female Primary	100
	% Male Secondary	90
	% Female Secondary	95
Employment	% Formal Employment	30
	% Informal Employment	60
	% Unemployment	10

Source: Own data, 2020

The discussion in this section of the article is based on the argument that individuals are best placed to determine their own lived experiences and that assessments of their satisfaction regarding government

performance areas reveals a lot about whether or not they are satisfied or dissatisfied with public service delivery (Mattes, Bratton and Davids, 2002). Respondents were asked whether or not they were satisfied with service delivery. Specifically, they were asked: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way that the government is handling the following matters in your city? The areas of local government performance were listed as follows: (a) portable water supply, (b) disposal of waste water, (c) solid waste disposal and management, (d) emergency services, (e) protection of the environment, (f) pollution control, (g) poverty reduction and (h) enacting by-laws. Respondents' choice were: (a) satisfied, (b) dissatisfied and (c) no idea.

The responses were expressed in percentages out of 100. As can be seen in Table 4 below, 85% of the respondents registered dissatisfaction with the state of portable water supply within the City. In the same vein, 70% were not happy about the disposal of waste water. With regard to solid waste disposal and management, 80% expressed disappointment that the city council was not meeting their expectations. When it comes to housing supply, 95% of the respondents were of the opinion that not enough resources and efforts were directed towards accomplishing this crucial responsibility assigned the city.

The study revealed that 16% registered satisfaction with the City of Mutare's management of health care, 80% disagreed that there was none and 4% had no idea. In the same vein, 10% had a favourable opinion about the quality of emergency services in the city, 88% disagreed and 2% had no idea. The emergency services referred to in the study include ambulances and fire-fighting equipment. It is also pertinent to note that 40% thought that environment protection mechanisms were effective, 50% disagreed and 10% were indifferent.

On the issue of pollution control, 38% had a favourable opinion, 50% had a negative view and 2% had no idea. With regard to its role in poverty reduction, 5% had a positive view, 93% had a negative view and 2% had no idea. Regarding the City's willingness to enact by-laws that promote efficient and effective service delivery, 20% were satisfied, 70% were of the opinion that council was failing them and 10% had no idea.

Table 4 appears to paint a bleak picture of service delivery in the City of Mutare. The negative opinions dominate in all the categories of service delivery. Firstly, the responses indicate that there is widespread public dissatisfaction with local public service delivery. The City is not meeting public expectations, thus undermining the quality of life. Related to this is that there is seemingly breakdown of trust between inhabitants and the city; with citizens unhappy about the lack of services they are entitled to.

TABLE 4 - SATISFACTION WITH SERVICE DELIVERY AS PERCENTAGES (%S)

Service delivery issue	Satisfied	Not Satisfied	No idea
Portable water supply	10	85	5
Disposal of waste water	20	70	10
Solid waste disposal & management	15	80	5
Housing supply	4	95	1
Health care	16	80	4
Emergency service	10	88	2
Protection of environment	40	50	10
Pollution control	38	50	2
Poverty reduction	5	93	2
Enacting by-laws	20	70	10

Source: Own data, 2020

Secondly, the state of service delivery appears to point to another much bigger problem. It is the city council's weak capacity to address systemic and institutional challenges that impact service delivery. Throughout the study, it was not unusual for respondents to attribute compromised service delivery to weak revenue collection. The challenge is understood as follows. Owing to poor service delivery, inhabitants were increasingly finding excuses for not paying for the infrequent services generated by council. With its coffers almost dry, council was finding it difficult to provide consistent service delivery.

The situation is exacerbated by the fact that intergovernmental fiscal support is not assured even though the constitution instructs national treasury to allocate five percent of nationally collected revenue to subnational entities. Almost eight years since the constitution was adopted, national treasury has not yet adopted transparent modalities for the division of nationally collected revenue. In the absence of fiscal support, urban councils are increasingly finding it difficult not only to maintain optimal levels of service delivery but also investing more by way of purchasing new equipment, among other issues.

Mindful of the fact that inhabitants are at the centre of service delivery, the study elicited public suggestions about improving local public service provision. The recommendations are presented in Table 5 below. They include restructurising policies and programmes; enhancing democratic decision-making; improving revenue collection; reducing unfunded mandates; public-public sector partnership; public-private sector partnership; outsourcing; increasing transparency; replacing obsolete equipment and increasing the expenditure powers of the City of Mutare.

Although most of the suggestions are not out of the ordinary, three curiously stand out. These are public-public partnership; public-private partnership and outsourcing. At the moment in Zimbabwe, there is a debate raging on about optional strategies for enhancing service delivery. The fact that the respondents put forward these recommendations as options seems to suggest that the public is slowly warming up to the idea of embracing new service delivery strategies and technologies.

TABLE 5 - RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING SERVICE DELIVERY IN PERCENTAGES (%S)

Recommendations	Percentages
Restratgeise policies and programmes	10
Enhance democratic decision making	10
Improve revenue collection	10
Reduce unfunded mandates	12
Public-public partnership	20
Public- private partnership	10
Outsource service delivery	5
Increase transparency	10
Purchase new service delivery equipment	10
Increase expenditure power	3

Source: Own data, 2020

5. CONCLUSIONS

Tapping into the views of ordinary people is one way of assessing whether or not public policies and decentralised government programmes and plans are reaching the people and achieving intended goals and aims. At the centre of this strategy is the issue of whether or not the City of Mutare is making progress towards improving the quality of life for its inhabitants. Added to this is the question of whether public sector institutions created mainly to facilitate public services are doing so and meeting public expectations. Through social attitudes survey, the article assessed the state of service delivery in the City of Mutare from mid-2018 when councillors led by Mayor Tandi took over the management of civic matters and began serving their term in office with promises of improved service delivery. Through soliciting the views of inhabitants, the study found that despite its best intentions and efforts, the City of Mutare has so far not yet succeeded in facilitating better service delivery. There is huge dissatisfaction; with most inhabitants imploring the city fathers to consult more with them as the city searches for more viable solutions to the challenges bedevilling local service delivery. It remains to be seen if there is the political will to confront the elephant in the room, which is citizen dissatisfaction and transform the challenges the city faces into opportunities for improving service delivery.

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