



# Causes of poor participatory budgeting system in Zimbabwe's local authorities. The case of Gutu Rural District Council.

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## Abstract

*The rationale for conducting this research study was to determine the role of participatory budgeting system in the enhancement of service delivery in local authorities. The research was guided by the following research objectives: examining how participatory budgeting system works in decentralized local authorities, examining prevailing contextual variables that are hostile to the implementation of participatory budgeting system, assessing the suitability of strategies presently being used in the implementation of participatory budgeting system and lastly proffering recommendations on how to strengthen the implementation of participatory budgeting system in Zimbabwe's local authorities. The study employed mixed method techniques to collect and analyze data. The study utilized key informant interviews to collect qualitative data while quantitative data was acquired using survey questionnaires. The research findings demonstrated that participatory budgeting system have a very important role in enhancing service delivery however its implementation is adversely affected by factors like flawed legislative system, the COVID-19 pandemic, bureaucratic malaise, political instability and many more. In response to that, the research passed recommendations on the amendment of flawed legislative acts, adoption of responsive mechanisms of conducting budget consultations among others.*

**Key words:** Participatory, Budgeting and Local authorities

## 1 Introduction

Participation and stakeholder involvement have turned to be the cornerstone for local development. The need to draw local authorities closer to their stakeholders was emphasized by world leaders at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, which endorsed local agenda 21. The Local Agenda 21 stressed that key actors in decision making processes like local authorities are encouraged to work hand in hand with stakeholders on the joint implementation of local sustainable development plans. The fact that local authorities are made up of elected members ensures a certain level of representation, but wider public consultation is required (Zinyama, 2014).

In pursuit of the global trend, participatory budgeting is one method that was introduced to allow residents to directly participate and influence local government decisions. Participatory budgeting is generally believed to have originated in Brazil's city of Porto Alegre in 1989 and subsequently spread throughout the world (Wampler 2000 and 2003, World Bank 2008 and Oxfam 2005). The way each country adopted and implemented participatory budgeting varied with different social, political, and cultural contexts (No, 2018). Consistent to that, "in these different contextual environments the results of participatory budgeting vary from place to place and across time" (Manduna et al., 2015). This implies that the success of the participatory budgeting system is depended on the hospitality of the policy context within which implementation is carried out.



Pursuant to that, the Participatory budgeting Unit (2010) identified essential ingredients, both internal and external, necessary for effective implementation of participatory budgeting policy: effective community engagement, adequate resources, money, sound leadership, effective communication, sound planning, learning and support as its internal policy anatomy and democratic governance systems, favorable socioeconomic environment and political will as its external policy anatomy. This implies that the fundamental is inclusiveness in participation and bottom up approaches. Without the above, a council is regarded undemocratic, refractory to public needs and therefore a closed system. Such a scenario is an inhospitable environment where stakeholders are not consulted resulting in an imperfect correspondence between the Council's fiscal expenditure and services actually delivered (Newsday, 20 November 2020).

In Zimbabwe, the participatory budgeting system was introduced as a legislative creature established by the Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15 of 1995 (Chikerema, 2013). This at that point implies that local authorities are guided and lawfully bound to take after and apply the dictates of this Act of Parliament. Chikerema (2013) further stated that in Zimbabwe participatory budgeting was introduced as "part of the overall strategic effort to promote local democracy in local authorities and its main objectives are: to promote civic interest and participation in local governance, to involve the community in generating self-sustaining livelihoods options as well as top promote accountability and transparency in local public finance and budgeting".

Section 288 (i) of the Urban Councils Act states that: "Before the expiry of any financial year, the finance committee shall draw up and present for the approval of the council estimates in such detail as the council may require of the income and expenditure on revenue and capital accounts of the council for the succeeding financial year. When the estimates presented in terms of subsection (1) have been approved by the council and signed by the mayor or chairman of the council, as the case may be, the council shall ensure that (a) copies of the estimates are forthwith made available for inspection by the public". The Act stipulates that all local government budget recommendations are to be distributed in three issues of any daily paper so as to allow the public a chance to scrutinize the budget that will direct public finance expenditure in the forthcoming financial year (Chikerema 2013).

However, majority of Zimbabwe's local authorities are showcasing disinclination and failing to effectively implement the participatory budgeting statutory requirement. This is precise because even when budget consultations are conducted, stakeholders still complain about how the Council had crowded-out their contribution since usually their demands and priorities will not be reflected in the final budget. Community preferences and efforts to influence council decisions are unheeded or viewed as not in line with broader local government objectives. Meanwhile stakeholders keep on raising complaints over non-performance of councils and poor service delivery. (Newsday, 20 November 2020). This is supported by Magura (2014), who noted that Local authorities have been criticized for hapless service provision which is perceived as falling short of the needs and preferences of the stakeholders. Thus, majority of Zimbabwe's local authorities are inhospitable environments for effective implementation of the participatory budgeting system.



### 1.1 Definition of Key terms

This paper adopts the Chikerema (2013) and Mulindwa (2013) definitions of participatory budgeting. Chikerema (2013:3) defines participatory budgeting as “a process of democratic deliberations and decision making in which ordinary citizens decide how to allocate part of municipal or public budget. It characterized by several design features that is: identification of spending priorities by community members, election of budget delegates to represent different communities and vote on spending priorities and the implementation of local direct impact community projects. Mulindwa (2013) defines participatory budgeting as a

*budgeting method whereby all stakeholders in the budget to be developed participate in the entire process of its preparation, approval, management and evaluation*

Thus, an overall conclusion that can drive from the definitions above is that participatory budgeting is a description of a process mechanism through which a local authority and its stakeholders can jointly develop and manage a budget.

This article adopts Chikerema (2013) and UCAZ (2006) definitions of Local authority. According to Chikerema (2013:2) a local authority is a product of devolution as a dimension of decentralization and is subject to the sovereignty of parliament. UCAZ (2006) defines a local authority “as those statutory sub-national structures whose primary purpose is the delivery of service to constituent communities.” Thus, in line with the definitions above it can be noted that Local authorities owe their existence to the regulating statutes and central government that specify their powers, duties, boundaries and utility.

### 1.3 Conceptual Framework

This section of the paper positions the study within relevant scholarly context. Literature review serves as a theoretical and empirical base for conceptualizing the study. Pursuant to that, participatory budgeting is differently defined and conceptualized by different academics, countries and local authorities. To UN-Human Settlement Program- UN-HABITAT (2008) participatory budgeting is argued to have started as an inaugural management practice with excellent potential to promote financial accountability. According to Mulindwa (2013:31) participatory budgeting is a “budgeting method whereby all stakeholders in the budget to be developed participate in the entire process of its preparation, approval, management and Evaluation.” Blore et al (2004) defined participatory budgeting as “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.” This concurs with Chikerema (2013:3) ‘s scholarly assertion that “participatory budgeting is a process of democratic deliberations and decision making in which ordinary citizens decide how to allocate part of municipal or public budget.” Thus, participatory budgeting can be best understood as an innovative management idea in which a local authority and its stakeholders collectively develop and manage a budget. Also, participatory budgeting should be inclusive to everyone who is eligible to participate. In this case, the stakeholders that are eligible to participate “are the general citizenry, residents’ representatives, private sector,



church organizations, civil society organizations and other public institutions with a direct or indirect dependency with the local government” (Manduna et al., 2015).

The concept of participatory budgeting is deeply rooted in the principles of democracy, transparency, accountability and performance (Monfardini, 2005). Pursuant to that, Mulindwa (2013:31) stated that stakeholder participation in budget making process helps to guard against imposition of the budget. Cabannes (2005) stated that participatory budgeting helps to boost transparency in local authorities and embracing citizen participation in decision making pertaining public resources; helps to better the generation of revenues, redirects investments towards basic infrastructure for the poor, strengthens social networks and helps mediate differences between government officials and civil society groups. Grunfelder and Borges (2006) noted that participatory budgeting helps to identify the priorities of the citizens, and therefore helping to better their well-being, through poverty reduction. In its place of origin, Brazil, Wampler (2000) and Shah (2007) noted that participatory budgeting was enforced against the background of “confronting Brazilian undemocratic political legacies of clientelism, social exclusion, and corruption by making the budgetary process transparent, open, and public.” This infers that in Brazil, participatory budgeting was introduced as a way of promoting political accountability, promoting social inclusion and as a deterrent to fraud and corrupt behavior in local authorities. Thus, it becomes very essential for Zimbabwe and its local authorities to amply appreciate and fully utilize the participatory budgeting initiative.

### **1.3.1 The preconditions necessary for effective implementation of participatory budgeting system in local authorities**

Goldfrank (2007) noted that for participatory budgeting to be a success there is need for commitment on the part of political leaders, civil society organizations needs to be active and willing to get involved in policy debates on allocation of public resources, the political environment needs to be conducive and people should be free to express themselves, they should be resources to finance projects identified by citizens during the participatory budgeting process, they should be legal frameworks that provides legal backing to participatory budgeting, they should be fiscal transparency as well as overall effectiveness of the local authority. This concurs with Participatory budgeting Unit (2010) observation that participatory budgeting has got eight ingredients as its internal policy anatomy. These are effective community engagement, adequate resources, money, sound leadership, effective communication, sound planning, learning and support. Pursuant to that, Manduna et al (2015) stated that key success factors for participatory budgeting include “political will and bureaucratic buy-in, favorable legislative and policy frameworks, democratic governance systems, inclusiveness in participation, participatory budgeting adaptability to suit local environments, good communication and effective meeting structures as well as bottom-up approaches.” Thus, the fundament to successful participatory budgeting system is all encompassing citizen participation as well as bottom up approaches. Without these conditions a local authority is regarded undemocratic, refractory to public demands and therefore a closed system. Such a setting is an inhospitable environment where stakeholders are not consulted resulting in flawed correspondence between policies and services actually provided ([Newsday, 20 November 2020](#)).



The absence of these essential conditions is attributable to failure by local authorities to effectively implement participatory budgeting. Empirically, in a study survey that was conducted in Nigeria on how local authorities were implementing approved budgets, Agbakoba and Agbonna (2004) established poor budget implementation was a result of corruption, incompetence of technical staff and high dependence on central government transfer (Mulindwa, 2013:46). Consistent to that, Ebdon, Krane and Franklin (2012) carried out a survey in which they compared participatory budgeting in China, the US and Brazil. From the study, they established that the conditions necessary for effective implementation of participatory budgeting are: a legal framework that provides for citizen participation, a certain degree of independence on the part of the local authority, accessibility to all budget documents and information, vibrant civil social organizations that are willing and able to mobilize citizens to participate in the budgeting process as well as technical officers and government officials who are committed and willing to involve citizens in decision making regarding resource allocation. Thus, good apprehension of the conditions necessary for participatory budgeting is crucial in informing intervention strategies.

Contextual factors that affect the implementation of participatory budgeting policy can either be internal or external. Consistent to that, Manduna et al., (2015) stated that these contextual factors can impact on participatory budgeting policy implementation both individually and collectively. From the review of literature on several studies conducted factoring in contextual variables that affect the implementation of public policies in general and participatory budgeting policy in particular, this paper established that there are seven common contextual variables that affect the implementation of participatory budgeting policy (Meter and Van Horn, 1974; Manduna et al., 2015; Newsday, 20 November 2020). These are: standards and policy objectives, communication, resources, attitudes or dispositions of implementers, characteristics of implementing agencies, social environment, economic and political environment. Below is the classification of these contextual variables as internal and external. Manduna et al (2015) noted that internal factors focus on how the internal arrangements, strategies, characteristics and attributes of the organization affect the implementation of participatory budgeting. External factors focus on how the external environmental milieu affects the implementation of participatory budgeting system.

Primary among internal factors which either facilitate or hinder the implementation of participatory budgeting policy include communication, bureaucratic structures, resource availability and dispositions of the implementers. Consistent to that, clear lines of communication provide a receptive environment for effectual implementation of participatory budgeting in local authorities. They should be clarity on the standards and objectives of participatory budgeting as this makes it easy to make the programme a success. In this respect, with clarity, practitioners of participatory budgeting know what is anticipated from them. Thus, effective implementation of the programme is determined by accurate, clear and consistent communication to programme practitioners (Manduna et al, 2015). Good communication is attributed as one of the key success factors for participatory budgeting policy in Brazil's city of Porto Alegre.



With regards to resource endowment no matter how clear and consistent implementation orders are and how accurately they are transmitted, if the personnel responsible for carrying out policies lack resources to do an effective job, implementation will not be effective. Important resources include staff of the proper size and with the necessary expertise; relevant and adequate information on how to implement policies and on the compliance of others involved in implementation; the authority to ensure that policies are implemented as intended; and facilities (buildings, equipment, land, and supplies) in which or with which to provide services. Insufficient resources mean that laws will not be enforced, services will not be provided, and reasonable regulations will not be developed.” Thus, the availability of resources provides a receptive environment for effectual implementation of participatory budgeting in local authorities.

Looking at the dispositions of implementing agencies, the success or failure of programmes is often determined by the level of support enjoyed within the agency responsible for implementation. How implementers respond to policies depends on their comprehension of the policy standards, the direction of their response towards them, and the intensity of their response. Policy directives may be clear and very well communicated but implementation may be frustrated by implementers who do not know what to do to go there or they may reject the objectives of the policies. Also, negative orientations towards policy may affect implementation.” Thus, effective implementation of participatory budgeting policy in local authorities is determined by the dispositions of implementers towards it.

Broad bureaucratic structures have negatively affected participatory budgeting in local authorities, even if sufficient resources to implement a policy do exist and implementers know what to do and want to do it, implementation may still be thwarted because of deficiencies in the bureaucratic structure. Organizational fragmentation may hinder the coordination necessary to implement successfully a complex policy requiring the cooperation of many people, and it may also waste scarce resources, inhibit change, create confusion, leading to policies working at cross-purposes, and result in important functions being overlooked.” In line with that, Manduna et al., (2015) noted that implementation of public policy is inhibited by two dominant characteristics of bureaucracies: namely standard operating procedures and organization fragmentation. Intelligibly, “Standard operating procedures are developed as an internal response to the limited time and resources of implementers and the desire for uniformity in the operation of programmes and widely dispersed organizations and they often remain in place mainly due to bureaucratic inactiveness” whilst “organizational fragmentation emanates mainly from pressures outside bureaucratic units such as from legislative committees, pressure groups, executive officials, state constitutional charters, and the nature of broad policies influence the organization of public bureaucracy” (Manduna et al., 2015). Therefore, it can be noted that bureaucratic malaise adversely affects the implementation of participatory budgeting policy.

Primary among external factors which either facilitate or hinder the implementation of participatory budgeting policy include the Socio-economic environment and the political environment. Pursuant to that, the implementation of participatory budgeting is dependent on the socioeconomic environment because participatory budgeting policy



is not an independent variable implemented in an environmental vacuum independent of the prevailing external contextual factors (Manduna et al., 2015). Socio-economic factors have got a huge impact on the needs and resources that influence the chances of effective implementation of participatory budgeting policy (Manduna et al., 2015). Therefore, it can be noted that failure by some countries like Nigeria to effectively implement participatory budgeting is attributable to unfavorable socioeconomic environment whilst the successful implementation of participatory budgeting in Countries like Britain is attributable to good socioeconomic environment.

With regards to the political environment, Van Meter and Van Horn (1974) noted that the citizens as well as public policy implementers needs to be rightly politically backed. To this end, it can be noted that political support or opposition has got a bearing on participation, the implementation efforts and results irrespective of the attitude and the quality of the agency (Manduna et al., 2015). Thus, effective implementation of participatory budgeting policy in local authorities is determined by the prevailing political environment.

After going through available literature on contextual variables that affect the implementation of participatory budgeting policy, this paper noticed a research gap. This paper entrenched that a new dominant external contextual variable which adversely affect the implementation of participatory budgeting policy has emerged. The advent of the COVID-19 global pandemic, had a shrinking effect on the conceptual exactness of the existing literature on contextual factors that affect the implementation of participatory budgeting policy. The COVID-19 global pandemic evidenced that there is inadequate face validity in the studied contextual factors. The coming of COVID-19 global pandemic weakened Meter and Horn's Systemic Model of Public Policy Implementation which was once adopted as well as recommended by several participatory budgeting academics and practitioners as the ideal model of implementing public policies, in this case participatory budgeting. This is because the COVID-19 global pandemic is not factored as a hostile contextual factor in the Meter and Horn's Systemic Model of Public Policy Implementation. This therefore calls for the redevelopment of an ideal model of implementing participatory budgeting policy that include pandemics like COVID-19 as hostile contextual factors. Pandemic diseases have a history of adversely affect the implementation of public policies.

COVID-19 proved to be a very serious variable that adversely affect the implementation of participatory budgeting policy in Local authorities. Pursuant to that, the arrival of COVID- 19 and the subsequent lockdown adversely affected the conduction of physical participatory budgeting outreach consultation meetings. Thus, COVID-19 is hostile to the effective implementation of participatory budgeting.

#### **1.4 Theoretical Framework**

In order to have full apprehension of how participatory budgeting works in decentralized local authorities, this study adopted the Contingency theory of implementation. This theory prompts the right questions to be asked that will be answered by the study and at the same time acting as a channel through which the findings can be analyzed. The theory was developed by Ingram (1990). This theory indicates that organizational effectiveness depends on various variables that influence how an organization is managed. This therefore infers that, "to achieve the organizational



objectives, identifying how different Behavior, strategies operate in different setting is important” (Mulindwa 2013). Mulindwa further stipulated that the “theory is also premised on the belief that, that there are various ways of managing and organizing organizations to achieve desired objectives. Thus, the performance of an organization depends on how it is structured to fit in different settings” (2013). As applied to this research study, this theory holds that the success of the participatory budgeting system as an inaugural management practice is depended on the hospitality of the policy context within which implementation is carried out. The rationale of the Contingency theory is that there is no single best implementation strategy since the appropriateness of an implementation strategy is very much contextual in terms of what are the contingencies surrounding the policy issues and how they can best be addressed in terms of implementation. Thus, participatory budgeting implementation strategies should be tuned to suit the contextual variables of each and every local authority and across time. This theory explicates the reason why some local authorities fail to successfully implement participatory budgeting whilst others succeed.

## **2 Materials and Methods**

The research adopted mixed approach which Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) defined “as the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines qualitative and quantitative research methods in a single study.” Pursuant to that, this paper used both qualitative and quantitative methods of sampling, collecting and analyzing data in a single case study. Population is a target group which the researcher is interested in gathering information and drawing conclusions from. Consistent to that, the list of targeted population in this paper include Gutu RDC, City fathers, relevant academics, participatory budgeting policy makers and implementing agencies, civil society groups, Gutu residents, social artifacts and other relevant stakeholders. The research adopted the use of both non-probability and probability sampling techniques in the selection of units for data analysis. Data was collected using documentary search, key informant interviews and Survey questionnaires. The research study made use of thematic data presentation and analysis to present as well as analyze data collected through key informant interviews. Content analysis was used to analyze data collected from documentary search while descriptive statistical tools were used to present and analyze quantitative data from surveys. Lastly, the study made use of qualitative illustrations to give extra meaning to quantitative data. In respect of research ethics, the researchers explained the aims of the study to the informants whilst soliciting their voluntary consent to participate in the process. Moreover, the researchers respected cultural norms and values of the informants as well as observed confidentiality where required.

## **3 Results**

### **3.1 Conceptualizing Participatory Budgeting System**

Probes from different key informants, survey questioning conducted with Gutu residents, data collected from literature review broadly alludes to an accordant definition of participatory budgeting. Participatory budgeting was generally conceptualized as a multi-sectoral approach characterized by the involvement of all stakeholders in the





whole participatory budgeting process. One resident hinted that the participatory budgeting should be comprehensive, representative and equitable to all residents. This concurs with what was revealed the Chairman of the finance committee who noted that:

*participatory budgeting is a bottom-up management strategy whereby the Council 's budget is mainly emphasized on measurable results that are based on predetermined projects, programmes and are measured by outputs and outcomes on the welfare of residents. In this regard, participatory budgeting consultations have to be done with the residents and other stakeholders from formulation stage up to evaluation and scrutiny stages with a view to transforming the district*

Findings from a survey conducted with Gutu residents broadly revealed that most residents view participatory budgeting system as a budgeting strategy that involves all relevant stakeholders in all budgeting processes (planning, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and review). In the main, most respondents were in conformity in viewing participatory budgeting as a bottom-up budgeting approach that embraces the involvement of all stakeholders in the whole participatory budgeting processes.

### **3.1.1 Participatory Budgeting Cycle at Gutu RDC**

The research findings established that there is little inclination between what is suggested to be the exact participatory budgeting cycle and what practically exist on the ground at Gutu RDC. Consistent to that, probes from Gutu RDC Treasurer when questioned about the existence of participatory budgeting cycle at Gutu RDC admitted that:

*Participatory budgeting consultations with the residents and other stakeholders involved are conducted as mainly a checklist procedure of what has already been drafted. This is apt, due to the fact Gutu RDC usually make use of its final budget draft to conduct participatory budgeting consultations.*

Therefore, it can be noted that there is a great disparity between what practically exists on the ground and what the participatory budgeting cycle entails. Stakeholder involvement is said to be ignored during the early stages. Consistent to that, there were reported delays in the conduction of budget consultations for 2021 Council's budget in most of Zimbabwe's local authorities due to COVID-19. COVID-19 induced lockdown stalemated the convergence of more than 50 people in 2020 which consequently disrupted schedules for physical consultation meetings in most local authorities. This saves to inform that in 2020, participatory budgeting cycle was not followed in accordance with its full dictates.

### **3.2 Contextual Factors Affecting Participatory Budgeting**



### 3.2.1 Resource Constraints

The survey findings established that the majority of the respondents are of the view that the scarcity of resources is one of the major deterrents to participatory budgeting at Gutu RDC. Pursuant to that, one resident wrote that:

*The emptiness of our pockets silence the voice of our demands as residents because you cannot demand for much when you do not have much to pay.*

Therefore, stakeholders can not effectively contribute in participatory budgeting when they do not have money.

Gutu RDC treasurer noted that:

*The scarcity of resources is one of the major attributes that is adversely affecting the execution of all development projects and programmes, including participatory budgeting system.*

Inclination to that, the Chairman of the finance committee (Councilor) highlighted that:

*The issue of resource constraints in the Council has been further worsened by the general economic hardships amongst the residents and other stakeholders involved which compelled the Council to compromise, and set fair charges not exceeding the economic volatility prevalently obtaining.*

Consistent to that, he noted that:

*The Council finds it hard to fulfil certain dictates in the Council's final budget draft because the revenues that are collected from the ratepayers cannot sustain the implementation of all planned for programs and projects.*

He further lamented that:

*Nothing is being done by the central government to subsidize on behalf of the ratepayers.*

Lastly, he revealed that:

*There was failure by the central government to timely disburse the allocated grants.*

Thus, resource deprivation is adversely affecting participatory budgeting activities. On this, Moyo (1993) argued that money is the oil of administration. Contrary, some respondents including an academician, a senior official from Gutu Residents Association and Gutu residents were of the opposing view. They hinted that resources at Gutu RDC might not be exceeding but they are adequate for the Council to execute participatory budgeting. Pursuant to that, a senior official from Gutu Residents Association noted that:

*Corruption and self-aggrandizement have become an order of the day at Gutu RDC up to an extent that a high percentage of money collected from the rate-payments is illegally devoured by the management while there is desperate need for improved service delivery.]*

This concurs with a disclosure from one resident who wrote that:

*We cannot say that Gutu RDC is resource constrained when it recently parted with \$5.6 million in purchasing motor bikes for our ward councillors.]*



Therefore, it can be noted that the council's management team is misappropriating funds which end up adversely affecting the implementation of initiatives like participatory budgeting.

In respect of human resources, inquiries from an academician from Great Zimbabwe University and Gutu RDC Treasurer revealed that the Council have got quality personnel suitable for the job however the number is small in terms of quantity. Gutu RDC Treasurer revealed that his office and other public participation departments have to go an extra mile when it comes to executing participatory budget because Gutu RDC numerically in short of implementing agencies. In relation to quality personnel, an academician at Great Zimbabwe University said that:

*The recruitment and selection procedure in local authorities is usually talent based however the recruited personnel at times tend to be reluctant in executing their mandated duties.*

This was confirmed by inquires with Gutu RDC Treasurer who revealed that he is a holder of an accounting master's degree.

### 3.2.2 Bureaucratic Structures

Inquiries patterning the impact of bureaucratic structures on the implementation of participatory budget revealed that the bureaucratic structures at Gutu RDC are symbolic. A key informant from Gutu Residents Association said that:

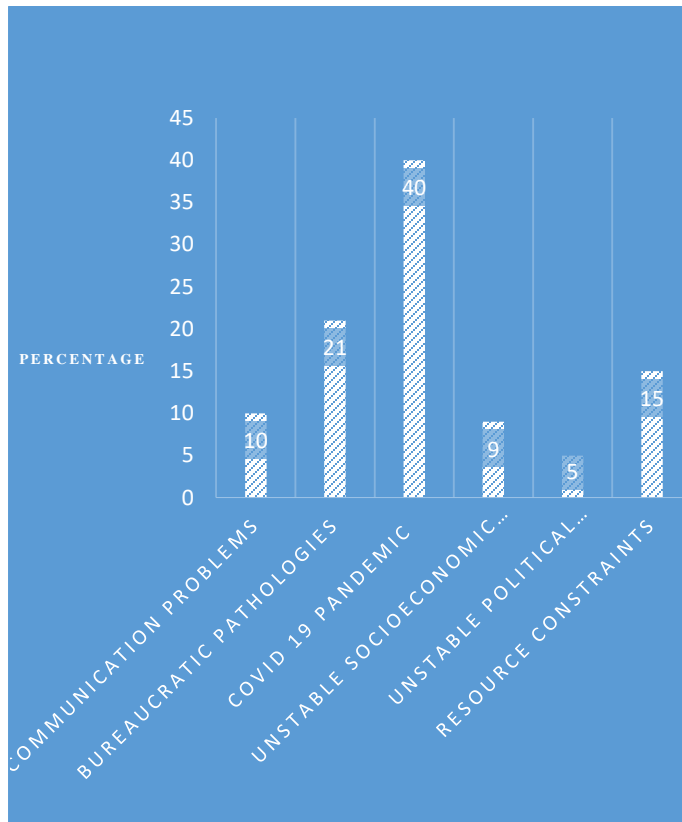
*The bureaucratic structures at Gutu RDC are sleeping on duty.*

Consistent to that, one respondent wrote that:

*Timing for the conduction of outreach participatory budgeting consultations is questionable.*

This therefore implies that the bureaucratic arrangements are mainly characterized by reluctance and delays in the execution of duties. Implicitly, this means failure by the local authority to properly schedule for budget consultation meetings can be emanating for lack of coordination amongst the responsible bureaucratic structures. Findings from the survey conducted with Gutu residents illustrated in **Figure 1** below demonstrates that 15% of respondents attributed failure by the local authority to implement participatory budgeting to bureaucratic malaise.

#### Figure 1: The Major Deterrent to Participatory Budgeting



In **figure 1** above, COVID-19 is perceived to be the major deterrent to participatory budgeting.

### 3.2.3 Political Environment

Survey findings as well as inquires with two ward councilors (one from the MDC Alliance and another one from ZANU PF) revealed that Zimbabwe 's prevailing political context adversely affect the implementation of participatory budgeting. One resident in Chomfuli wrote that:

*Residents are afraid to openly criticize the Council 's budget expenditure because the political environment is politically changed up to an extent that open criticism is not tolerated and viewed as plying politics of the opposition.*

Implicitly, the prevailing political environment have divided people along political lines such that effective implementation of participatory is compromised. This owes to the fact that participatory budgeting can only succeed in political environment where collectivism and democracy is guaranteed. Most residents perceive Zimbabwe's political environment as undemocratic hence making it hard for them to pass their contribution on financial management. This concurs with the contribution of a ward Councilor from MDC Alliance who revealed that:

*It's hard to mobilize stakeholders for a budget consultation meeting since this is perceived by the ruling party as a political rally.*



On this, a ward councilor from ZANU PF said that:

*Opposition councilors have got a tendency of turning outreach budget consultations into political rallies hence we bar them from doing that.*

Thus, political polarization is hugely disrupting stakeholder participation since the interests of political parties are superseding the interests of stakeholders.

### **3.2.4 Dispositions of Participatory Budgeting Implementers**

Views from Gutu RDC Executive and Gutu RDC Chairman of the finance committee (Councilor) revealed that the implementation of participatory budgeting is directed the treasury and public participation departments. This implies that the actual execution of participatory budget policy is entrusted to middle and low ranked officials from departments that did not participate in the original policy making procedure. Thus, the Council's upper ranked officials lack commitment towards implementing the policy since they are leaving it to be executed by personnel that are not fully disposed to it. On this, Edwards (1980) wrote that:

*If implementers are well-disposed toward a particular policy, they are more likely to carry it out as the original decision-makers intended. But when implementers' attitudes or perspectives differ from the decision-makers], the process of implementation becomes complicated.*

To this extent, negative dispositions of implementing agencies is equally responsible for the failure of effective implementation of participatory budgeting policy at Gutu RDC.

### **3.2.5 Flawed Legislative Framework**

Probes with an academician established that through the Urban Councils act (Chapter 29:15) Section 314, the Minister of local Government is constitutionally vested with corrupting powers to endorse Council 's budget, reverse it, suspend, rescind resolutions/decisions of the local authority, appoint Council commissioners to act as Councilors and approve subsidiary legislation. Pursuant to that, an academician perceived these powers as a:

*high sounding nothing because such excessive powers are not being utilized to put a nail to corruption but rather taken as loopholes by majority local authority executives to engage in acts of corruption hiding under the wings of the Minister.*

She further explained that:

*As a result, flawed legislative law, majority Council executives are naturally inclined towards supporting and impressing the minister, and are popular for hiding under the guise of the minister's name when corruption allegations are being raised.*

Thus, it can be noted that Zimbabwe has a flawed legislative framework that adversely affect the execution of participatory budgeting.



### 3.2.6 Good Corporate Governance

Many respondents lamented general lack of good corporate governance at Gutu RDC. Consistent to that, a senior official from Gutu Residents Association noted that:

*[The smooth execution of participatory budgeting has not been spared by general lack of transparency and accountability at Gutu RDC.]*

This was supported by several responses issued by Gutu residents. Therefore, it can be noted that poor corporate governance at Gutu RDC adversely affect the implementation of participatory budgeting.

### 3.2.6 Corruption and Participatory Budgeting implementation

The research grooved that corruption is a deterrent to effective implementation of participatory budgeting. Pursuant to that, an academican from Great Zimbabwe University revealed that:

*Council officials are using the money of the ratepayers self-aggrandizing through hefty salaries whilst initiatives like participatory budgeting are starved of financial support.*

In conformity with that, correspondent concerning Gutu RDC approved Council's budget for 2021 noted that:

*Residents have voiced their displeasure over the decision by the local authority to part with \$5.6m in purchasing motor bikes for councilors.*

Further, Gutu residents complained about thievery of ratepayer's money by council officials. Thus, basing on what was revealed it is just to conclude that corruption through the misappropriation of funds is adversely affecting the implementation of participatory budgeting.

## 3.3 The Impact of COVID- 19 on Participatory Budgeting

### 3.3.1 Impact of COVID-19 on Budget Consultations

Probes with an academican from Great Zimbabwe and a senior official from Gutu Residents Association revealed that the Council's budget for 2021 was almost imposed in most of Zimbabwe's local authorities owing to COVID-19. The academican noted that:

*The adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of participatory budgeting cannot be disputed since in 2020 we witnessed mounting social media complaints from ratepayers over the delayed execution of budget consultations in majority of Zimbabwe's local authorities due to COVID-19 lockdown measures which prohibited physical gatherings.*

She further noted that:

*Local authorities had impunity over the delays as they blamed the delays in budget consultation process on the prohibiting lockdown measures.*



Therefore, it can be noted that the COVID-19 lockdown measures adversely affected the conduction of budget consultations. This concurs with what was revealed by a senior official from Gutu Residents Association who noted that:

*only a gathering of people not exceeding 50 was allowed per meeting under the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown measures which made it an impractical task for the Council to come up with physical budget consultation meetings as each ward carry at least 7000 residents.*

To this end, it can be underscored that COVID-19 lockdown measures seriously affected the conduction of physical consultation meetings hence hinting to poor implementation of participatory budgeting.

### **3.3.2 The Impact of COVID-19 on implementation of the Budget**

Inquiries from Gutu RDC Treasurer and Gutu RDC Chief Executive revealed that COVID-19 pandemic adversely affected the implementation of the budget. On this, Gutu RDC Chief Executive Officer noted that:

*The council's final budget draft for 2021 had channelled \$148 million towards the construction of eight clinics around Gutu district while \$37.5 million was channelled towards purchasing a new water drilling rig however as we are speaking right now the Council is yet to achieve those two goals owing to the adverse impact of the pandemic on both manpower and financial resources.*

To this end, it can be noted that Gutu RDC is failing to implement 2021 Council's budget due COVID-19. On this, Gutu RDC Treasurer noted that:

*The COVID-19 pandemic has seriously posed unworkable conditions on the implementation of the budget because even we the practitioners are threatened.*

Therefore, this underscores that the COVID-19 pandemic adversely affected the implementation of the Council's budget.

### **3.3.3 The impact of COVID- 19 pandemic on Participatory budgeting Mechanisms.**

Probes with an academician from Great Zimbabwe University and Gutu RDC Treasurer revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic adversely affected the physical mechanisms of conducting participatory budgeting consultations. On this, Gutu RDC Treasurer revealed that:

*Traditionally as Council we used to make use of physical gatherings to conduct budget consultations however due to COVID-19 lockdown measures which prohibited public gatherings we ended up resorting to virtual pre-budget consultations.*

Thus, it can be noted that COVID-19 adversely affected the use of physical gatherings to conduct budget consultations. This was supported by findings from a key informant interview conducted with an academician at Great Zimbabwe University who noted that:



*Councils should embrace the use of virtual methods of conducting budget consultations because it is becoming practically impossible to rely on physical gatherings to conduct budget consultations.*

Implicitly, it can be noted that the suitability of physical gatherings as a mechanism of conducting budget consultations have been compromised. Constant to that, she added that:

*In this COVID-19 era instead of being utilized as a mechanism of advancing budget consultations, it has been turned into a mechanism of running away from budget consultations.*

Implicitly, this means that physical meetings alone are no longer a reliable mechanism of conducting budget consultations hence hinting to the need to embrace the use of virtual mechanisms. Nevertheless, there is no mechanism of approaching budget consultations that is without weakness as revealed by an academician from Great Zimbabwe University who noted that:

*High cost of data will place the virtual budget consultation beyond the reach of what poor residents can afford*

Thus, it can be noted that virtual mechanisms of approaching budget consultation disfranchise ordinary citizens from actively participating in budget consultation. On this, a senior official from Gutu Residents association noted that:

*Majority of the residents in locations like Hwiru and Goniview are widows and pensioners who are not presently available on social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp. This group of people is vulnerable, and our fear as Gutu Residents Association is that they might end up being left out in the budget consultation process if their input is not taken on board.]*

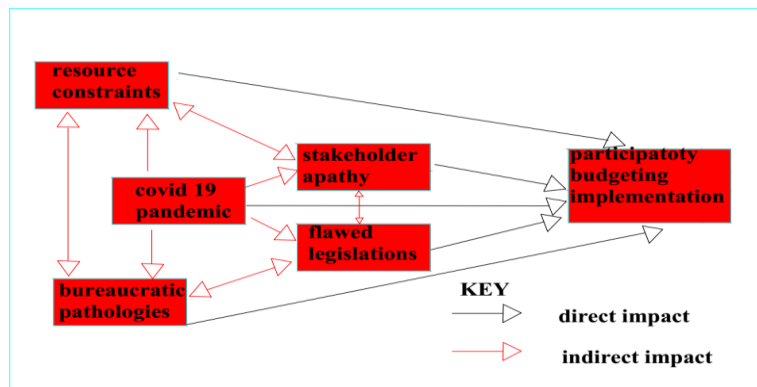
Conclusively, COVID-19 had an adverse impact on the mechanisms of conducting budget consultations hence hinting to poor implementation of participatory budgeting.

### **3.3.4 The Indirect Impact of contextual factors**

As Manduna et al (2015) justly argued, contextual factors that affect the implementation of participatory budgeting have got an intricate connection which either affect participatory budgeting positively or negatively. This is illustrated in **Figure 2** below.

**Figure 2: Direct and Indirect Impact of factors on Participatory Budgeting**





Source: developed from Manduna et al. (2015:20).

#### 4. Discussion

The research established that participatory budgeting consultations are conducted as a signature to an already drafted budget. Thus, one of the conclusions of this research is that the full dictates of participatory budgeting cycle are not being followed. The research also grooved that there is limited fiscal space at Gutu RDC because few resources are availed towards advancing participatory budgeting. Thus, one of the conclusions of this research is that the scarcity of resource is adversely affecting the conduction of participatory budgeting. The research established that Zimbabwe has a flawed legislative framework that adversely affects the implementation of participatory budgeting. Further, the research established that the political context in Zimbabwe is intemperately polarized, despotic and unstable such that participatory budgeting as a brainchild of participatory democracy cannot survive. The research also established that COVID-19 pandemic contextual variable that adversely affect the implementation of participatory budgeting. Thus, it is one of the research conclusions that COVID-19 is adversely affecting participatory budgeting.

#### 5. Recommendations

- In order to effectively monitor and evaluate the budget, stakeholders should demand to see a budget containing the real income figures and expenditure for the preceding year as index to measure whether there was proper handling of money as well as guide the local authority to come up with reasonable budget estimates for the new year. Also, the stakeholders should demand to see the budgeted revenue and expenditure in the budget year as well as staff list of workers employed by local authority to get rid of excess and ghost workers.
- In order to combat stakeholder apathy in participatory budgeting, this paper recommends that citizens should demand for more power to influence budgeting decisions in local authorities through the creation of legislative remedies that promote citizen participation.
- Civil society organizations and other Pressure groups should provide anti-corruption advocacy at Local level.



- The study recommends that stakeholders report alleged acts of corruption by Council employees to the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission and the Zimbabwe Republic Police.
- The study suggests the establishment of Anti-Corruption Department at RDCs as this help to root out corruption and fraud.
- Council employees should undergo training on the right ethical practices as way of instilling ethical consciousness and edifying skills of defining ethics dilemmas.
- To strengthen the execution of participatory budgeting consultations, this paper recommends that local authorities should make use of both virtual and physical methods of conducting budget consultations.
- Gutu RDC should increase the number of implementing agencies as this will go a long in ensuring that there is a huge residential coverage in deliberating participatory budgeting issues.
- The Council should advocate to be given full autonomy to generate revenue through legislative amendment because financial endowment is a requisite for the effective implementation of the participatory budgeting.
- Policy makers should enforce that all the dictates of participatory budgeting cycle are followed according to plan.
- The Local Government Legislative Framework needs to be amended so that it supports the priorities of the Council of residents currently it is biased towards supporting the interests of the Minister of Local Government.
- There is need to develop clear rules of engagement.
- There is need to garner support from Non-Governmental Allies.
- Need to build accountability measure that ensure government representative to be recalled by the public for poor performance.

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