

**CHALLENGES FACING MASVINGO LOCAL COUNCIL IN IMPLEMENTING THE
URBAN COUNCILS ACT [CHAPTER 29:15] OF 1996 WITH REGARD TO SERVICE
DELIVERY IN ZIMBABWE**

by

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ABSTRACT

The study focused on the challenges facing Masvingo local council in implementing the Urban Councils Act [Chapter 29:15] of 1996 with regard to service delivery in Zimbabwe. The participants of the study were Masvingo Local Municipality public officials. The study was conducted at Masvingo Local Municipality offices. The study is premised on the notion that local government in Zimbabwe confronts varied challenges which inhibit their ability to provide quality services effectively and efficiently. This is as witnessed by the deteriorating of standard and quality of service being provided. One obstacle prevalent is the absence of an effective legislative framework for local government.

The study is going to use a mixed methodology whereby both qualitative and quantitative research methods will be used. The researcher is going to use both methods because quantitative method they give in-depth information about the phenomenon under study while qualitative broader understanding of the phenomenon under study. The research will use a non-probability sampling and its subtype purposive sampling method. Two instruments of data collection namely, questionnaire and interview will be used to gather the data from the respondents. The data collected by the questionnaire will be analyzed using the SPSS while data collected using the interview will be analyzed thematically.

The majority of the respondents revealed that Masvingo local council is not legally protected by the Urban Council's Act. The study further revealed that the council does not have the autonomy to make its own by-laws independently. Additionally, the majority of the respondents also revealed that the local authority does not have fiscal generating power. Moreover, about two-thirds of the respondents indicated that urban council's workers or public officials are not elected by the electorate. The participants also revealed that most of the Masvingo urban council workers are not skilled enough to be able to deliver the basic services to the people. The study also pointed out that Masvingo local municipality does not have enough funds to run its activities. The majority of the elected councilors in urban councils are not skilled enough to provide relevant services to the people. Nearly three-quarters of the participants indicated that most residents or rate payers do not pay in time leaving the local authority with no revenue.

The recommendations of the study are:

Appointment of public officials must be done based on merit rather than any other criteria such as political affiliation. In addition, some sections of the Urban Council Act must be repealed in order to curb abuse of power and mismanagement of public services by the public officials. Masvingo local municipality should be allowed to charge for the services and rates within their areas of jurisdiction in line with the guidelines provided by the central government. Budget consultation must be made mandatory and elected personnel should account for previous revenues as basis for justifying financial obligation on citizens.