



# Impacting Local Democracy

## Capacity Building of Local Governments in Zimbabwe

Kudzai Chatiza and Virginia Makanza



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### RESEARCH REPORT NO 9



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## ABSTRACT

Local governments are key democratic institutions. In Zimbabwe, they have received considerable capacity development since independence through programmes using different approaches. One of the actors providing capacity building for local governments in Zimbabwe is Sweden, through the Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD). Since the turn of the century, capacity building for local governments has proceeded within a context of i) rising poverty, ii) rapid urbanization, iii) stressed governance performance and iii) contested political reforms.

Having run four international training programmes reaching 83 alumni since 2011, ICLD commissioned a study to consolidate the emerging impact of this training. The study was conducted between December 2016 and May 2017 and is based on insights gained from 70 alumni of these training programmes. They responded to a questionnaire and 11 of them took part in face-to-face interviews. Our analysis highlights the relevance of the ITPs regarding closing leadership gaps, building networks, and enhancing

participatory leadership. All these are critical to local development needs.

Drawing on some alumni's suggestions, this paper consolidates ideas for future initiatives by ICLD and other actors interested in fostering local democracy. There is scope to improve the design and delivery of ITPs by i) introducing local platforms to sustain change and increase their reach, ii) adapting relevant ITP aspects when designing local councillor inductions, iii) exposing key national institutions such as the Portfolio Committee responsible for local government and thus expanding the spaces within which alumni apply their local democracy skills, iv) developing a framework for councils together with ITP participants to identify and support change projects and strategic issues, and v) strengthening the selection of trainees, their preparation and support (during and after training). Additional research is needed to further ground some of the suggested improvements both in Zimbabwe and in other (comparable) countries where relevant ITPs have been implemented.

## ACRONYMS

ACBF	Africa Capacity Building Foundation
ADB	African Development Bank
ARDCZ	Association of Rural District Councils of Zimbabwe
AU	African Union
CBO	Community Based Organization
CCMT	Centre for Conflict Management and Transformation
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CLGF	Commonwealth Local Government Forum
DDF	District Development Fund
DFID	Department for International Development
ECAZ	Elected Councillors Association of Zimbabwe
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EU	European Union
FIDA	<i>Phathalamatshelo</i> Youth Development Association
FPL	Food Poverty Line
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICLD	International Centre for Local Democracy
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
ITPs	International Training Programs
LACEP	Local Authorities Capacity Enhancement Project
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MSU	Midlands State University
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OPC	Office of the President and Cabinet
RDC	Rural District Council
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation
SLB	Service Level Benchmarking
SME	Small to Medium Enterprise
TCPL	Total Consumption Poverty Line
UCAZ	Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe
UCLG-A	United Cities and Local Governments of Africa
UN	United Nations
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USD	United States Dollars
WASH	Water and Sanitation Hygiene
WFP	World Food Program
ZIMREF	Zimbabwe Reconstruction Fund
ZIMSTAT	Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency
ZINWA	Zimbabwe National Water Authority
ZUNDAF	Zimbabwe United Nations Development Assistance Framework

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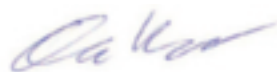


## PREFACE

The mandate of the Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD) is to contribute to poverty reduction by promoting local democracy in low and middle-income countries. In order to fulfil this mandate, we offer decentralized cooperation through our municipal partnership programme, capacity building programmes through our international training programmes and exchange of knowledge through our Knowledge Centre. ICLD documents and publishes key lessons learned from our ongoing activities, initiates and funds relevant research and engages in scholarly networks and organizes conferences and workshops. We also maintain a publications series. This report, “Impacting Local Democracy: Capacity Building of Local Governments in Zimbabwe”, by Kudzai Chatiza and Virginia Makanza, is the ninth report to be published in ICLD’s Research Reports series. The report is a unique publication as it examines the impact of ICLD’s International Training Programmes in Zimbabwe. By researching the institutionalization of knowledge from the ICLD Training Programmes conducted in the country, the authors make a valuable contribution not only to future initiatives by ICLD, but also to other actors interested in supporting capacity development in local governments in Zimbabwe.

Until 2017, 133 local politicians and local government officials have participated in ICLD’s training programs. This report illustrates the challenges and opportunities faced by local government representatives in Zimbabwe and how ICLD’s training program contributed to improve their awareness and understanding on different issues related to local democracy. For many of the women interviewed in the report, simple things such as realizing that their voices should be heard equally as men voices was a main achievement. Others became aware about the need to transcend from authoritative leadership to a more participatory and inclusive form of governance. While these changes may seem small, they tackle social norms and everyday governance and therefore represent an important achievement to long term change. I hope the study provides the reader with an increased understanding of the role of local governments in contributing to more democratic and inclusive societies.

Visby, Sweden October 2017



**Olov Berggren**  
Secretary General, ICLD





## AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHY

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Virginia Makanza: PhD candidate in Community Development at UKZN in South Africa. Makanza holds a Masters in International Development from the University of Bradford, UK. Makanza has worked in the sector since 1988, among others as a District Community Development Officer. Among Makanza's research interest are capacity development, participatory development, sustainable livelihoods and the informal sector.



# IMPACTING LOCAL DEMOCRACY

## CAPACITY BUILDING OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN ZIMBABWE

KUDZAI CHATIZA<sup>1</sup> AND VIRGINIA MAKANZA<sup>2</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

#### Local Democracy Institutions in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is a multi-party democratic republic with an elected president as the head of state and government, and legislative power is vested in both government and a two-house parliament with an independent judiciary and independent commissions<sup>3</sup>, completing the set of state institutions. The government has three tiers of national, provincial and local government. Local government institutions form the core of Zimbabwe's local democracy. These include a relatively established system consisting of i) 92 councils: 60 rural and 32 urban, ii) ministries<sup>4</sup> responsible for local government, iii) a Parliamentary Portfolio Committee responsible for local government oversight, iv) traditional leaders<sup>5</sup> in rural areas (headmen or chiefs and village heads, respectively), and v) other service ministries and state enterprises. All councils are legally established, have clearly defined boundaries and are divided into wards (1,958 nationally), thousands of villages (rural) and neighbourhoods (urban).

Citizens of a ward are represented by a councillor elected based on universal suffrage. Thus, democratically elected councillors run councils aided by appointed staff/officials (Chatiza et al 2013). Central government agencies and non-state organizations often deliver local services such as roads (e.g. DDF) and water (e.g. ZINWA) within relations of complementarity but also, at times, in conflict. Depending on the quality of

their relations with councils such overlapping responsibilities for and contributions to service delivery and good local governance affect what, and how, services are delivered, and the quality of the outcomes. The system therefore has institutions endowed with direct and indirect responsibilities for local government-related policy making, implementation and public participation (Ibid). They include:

- Local Authority Associations<sup>6</sup> (the Association of Rural District Councils, ARDCZ and the Urban Councils Association, UCAZ);
- A Parliamentary Portfolio Committee responsible for local government oversight,
- Central Government (Cabinet and the Office of the President and Cabinet [OPC<sup>7</sup>], the Public Service Commission);
- Knowledge institutions (universities, training centres etc.);
- Civil society organizations (community and religious leaders, labour and business lobby groups) as well as political parties; and
- Donors, UN agencies and international non-governmental (development) organizations

Local governments (councils) exist to govern and develop areas under their control. They plan and provide, maintain and expand public goods and services. As the public institutions closest to citizens, they are responsible for promoting public participation in governance (local democracy) and regulating the environment for socio-economic development (Ibid).

1 Researcher and Consultant at the Development Governance Institute, Zimbabwe ([www.degi.co.zw](http://www.degi.co.zw))

2 Lecturer in Local Government Studies at the Midlands State University, Zimbabwe

3 Electoral, Gender, Media, National Peace and Reconciliation and the Anti-Corruption Commissions

4 Two at the time of conducting the study (one responsible for urban and another for rural local governance)

5 272 chiefs (7 women), 484 headmen and about 30,000 village heads

6 Since 2005, there have been attempts to establish one local government association. Besides these two, an Elected Councillors Association of Zimbabwe, ECAZ, existed briefly in the period after 2010

7 OPC steers the work of ministers for Provincial Affairs and individual ministers who administer laws impacting on council functions

## Local Democracy in Context: Poverty and Fragility

The country has experienced socio-economic and political challenges reflecting stressed governance performance for a number of years. Efforts at better structuring the state since 1980 have not produced good results. This explains the country's low income and food insecurity status with a poverty<sup>8</sup> prevalence of 63% (WFP 2017<sup>9</sup>, UNICEF, World Bank and ZIMSTAT 2015<sup>10</sup>, Government of Zimbabwe and UN n.d.<sup>11</sup>). Governance stress and overall fragility have been more evident since 2000 and peaked in 2008 by which time the national economy had shrunk by 50% (Government of Zimbabwe 2013<sup>12</sup>). Most analysts cite macro-governance constraints to explain Zimbabwe's governance fragility and failure. A key theme has been the unresolved question of presidential succession (Tendi 2016).

For local government, bright periods of democratization and associated capacity

development<sup>13</sup> were witnessed from 1980 to 1996 (Chatiza 2008; 2010, Makumbe 1996, Wekwete 1990, Brand 1991, Gasper 1997, CPIA 2005, Hammar 2003, Conyers 2007, Matyszack 2010, 2014, 2016; Zimbabwe Institute 2005). However, the national government has consistently subjugated local government institutions, thereby weakening local democracy (Chatiza 2010). Reforms anticipated after the adoption of the 2013 Constitution have not been sufficiently rapid or deep enough in both pace and scope to erase the enduring effects of what Raftopoulos (2013a:1) refers to as 'the lethal and pervasive use of violence and coercion' by a government whose '...hegemony has been contested throughout the post-colonial period'. Zimbabwe's national and local democratization to a certain extent has stalled, resisted or both. A 'waiting for the future' (ICG 2011; 2014; Raftopoulos 2013b) has strained democratic governance with implications for politics, development and citizens' well-being.

There is a normative intention to devolve governance in Zimbabwe as formally codified in the 2013 Constitution. It defines self-government powers for local government regulated by sector and allied legislation, a 5% intergovernmental fiscal transfer and an independent tribunal to address disciplinary issues for elected officials. However, intergovernmental relations remain steeped in structures where central government retains considerable powers in the daily affairs of local authorities, including recentralization of local revenues (Christensen and Mbetu 2017). Ministries responsible for local government have sub-national staff and manage traditional institutions that impact on council activities. Oversight roles tend to subordinate local government

8 Two measures of poverty are used in Zimbabwe. One is the food poverty line, FPL, and the other is the Total Consumption Poverty Line, TCPL. The FPL is the monthly income required by an individual to meet basic food requirements of 2,100 kilocalories a day. TCPL is the monthly income required by an individual to meet the basic food and non-food (health, transport, education, clothing, housing etc.) requirements. Individual FPL and TCPL figures are converted to households by multiplying with the average household size (4.2 currently). Individuals or households below the FPL (USD32.70 and USD164 respectively) are considered extremely poor while those below the TCPL (USD76.70 and USD384) are considered poor (Government of Zimbabwe 2016:27, Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper: 2016-2018)

9 World Food Programme (2017) Zimbabwe Country Strategic Plan (2017-2021)

10 Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (2015) Zimbabwe Poverty Atlas 2015, ZIMSTAT, UNICEF and World Bank

11 ZUNDAF 2016-2020, Zimbabwe United Nations Development Assistance Framework: Supporting Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development (not dated)

12 Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation: Towards an Empowered Society and a Growing Economy

13 At present, main local government sector capacity development interventions include EU support to two projects (Local Authorities Capacity Enhancement Project, LACEP and Commonwealth Local Government Forum, CLGF), World Bank support to Urban Service Level Benchmarking (SLB), ZIMREF support towards water, sanitation and hygiene activities, DFID funded and UNICEF implemented rural water, sanitation and hygiene, AusAID support towards water, sanitation and hygiene in 14 small towns, UNDP implemented Capacity Building for Local Government and Service Delivery in Zimbabwe. Previously a Rural District Council Capacity Building Programme and Urban I and II constituted flagship capacity development programmes alongside activities run by the Associations of Local Authorities and some NGOs.





institutions (policies, laws and organizations) to national government interests, rendering elected councils impotent. Capacity development initiatives including policy and law reforms have fo-

cused on securing local self-government.

Support towards local democracy has therefore existed within a context of i) rising poverty, ii) rapid urbanization and iii) contested (and

centralising) political reforms. Cumulatively, these experiences have weakened local democracy institutions. This is the context in which Swedish support (including ICLD interventions) has been provided, as discussed below.

### History of Swedish Support to Zimbabwe's Local Government

Local government development in Zimbabwe has enjoyed Swedish support since its independence in 1980. The support has been consistent with Swedish international development policy and global commitments such as the Millennium and Sustainable Development Goals (MDGs and SDGs). Based on the view that local governments are key democratic institutions with an important role in Zimbabwe's development, components of the support have included i) technical and material support to the ministry responsible for local government and the local authority associations, ii) contributions towards the amalgamation of rural and district councils, iii) councillor training, iv) strengthening women's representation (and participation) in local government, and iv) tailor-made capacity development initiatives for specific councils. Alongside helping local government institutions, Swedish support has targeted civil society organizations (NGOs, cooperatives, residents' associations etc.) considered critical to democratic and accountable governance.

### Context of the Paper

In 2016, the Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD) commissioned a study to consolidate the experiences and impact of the International Training Programmes (ITPs), implemented by ICLD in Zimbabwe. The ITPs benefited local government officials (staff and councillors). This paper is a consolidation of the experiences and the emerging impact being made by ICLD alumni.

ICLD is a hub for exchanges of local democracy experience and knowledge. It believes in using democracy to fight poverty. The organization's activities fall into three categories of i) training programmes, ii) municipal collaboration and iii) knowledge generation. In this context, ICLD has supported four ITPs since 2011 directly benefiting 83 Zimbabweans. The ITPs include i) Towards Local Democracy and Local Development

through Local Government, ii) Symbio City, iii) Local Leaders- Capacitating Women in Zimbabwe, and iv) Local Leaders – Capacitating Local Politicians in Zimbabwe.

ICLD alumni who took the above courses had interactions in Zimbabwe, other African countries taking part and in Sweden. They were exposed to different situations and developed change plans as part of enhancing their learning but also to enable them to impact on their work-related situations. All participants identified strategic issues or change projects to work on as part of the programme. These were related to the challenges and obstacles they faced or the ambitions they had. Each issue was defined in a way such as to provide a tangible task to work on throughout all phases of the ITP. Targets and indicators to monitor progress of the identified project for change were developed with the assistance of ICLD assigned resource persons (ICLD, 2014).

The alumni of the four ITPs took part in this study on which the present research paper is based. They consisted of past and present elected officials (councillors) and technical staff in councils, associations of local authorities, ministries responsible for local government and associated state institutions. The governance context described above influenced the framing and execution of their learning (before, during and after the training). Further, the analysis in this paper also acknowledges the constraints as well as the opportunities that the context provided.

## STUDY METHODOLOGY

The study was undertaken between December 2016 and May 2017 to consolidate lessons and establish the change attributable to the ITPs in relation to capacity development for local democracy. In undertaking the study, attention was paid to the ICLD theory of change, which suggests that *increased knowledge for individuals in politically run local and regional organizations positively contributes to local democratic development*. The theory is that knowledge and experience i) build organizational capacity, ii) improve awareness of important issues and iii) increase support for action towards the attainment of eq-

## BOX 1: SUMMARY OF THE ITPS

### *Towards Sustainable Development and Local Democracy through the Symbio City Approach*

ICLD runs the course in collaboration with SKL International targeting urban development professionals and managers of local or regional authorities. Symbio City is a Swedish government initiative that contributes to ongoing and newly established reform processes for sustainable urban development. Learning outcomes include i) the ability to use relevant tools to analyse constantly changing urban complexity, ii) a more robust understanding of sustainable urban development within the context of climate change, urban growth, gender equality and youth needs, and iii) urban planning and change management using multi-stakeholder and multi-level processes within public sector institutions. The Symbio City Approach builds good local governance, i.e., sound urban management, accountability, exchange and a free flow of information and establishment of institutional frameworks promoting respect for human rights, liberties and justice.

### *Towards Local Democracy and Local Development through Local Government*

ICLD runs this ITP with UNCDF. It targets urban development professionals and managers of local or regional authorities. The ITP focuses on ongoing and new reform processes impacting the local government sectors. It seeks to foster institutional change through capacity building and individual learning. ITP participants are expected to gain understanding and use relevant tools to support local development using decentralised governance and reform approaches. Key modules include local development finance, inclusive service delivery, decentralised public finance and accountability, local economic development and inclusive and equitable local development.

### *Local Leaders: Capacitating Women in Zimbabwe*

The local leaders programme seeks to promote a higher degree of involvement of women in politics at the local level through strengthening the capacity of locally elected leaders and relevant networks. The focus is on improving local leaders' skills in i) strategic planning, ii) presentation, iii) knowledge of the new constitution, regional and international conventions relevant for promoting women, iv) knowledge of the different gender and development challenges in Zimbabwe, v) the ability to build and sustain professional networks, and vi) the ability to engage with civil society actors. Other areas covered include negotiation techniques, affirmative action, domination techniques, sexual harassment, networking and engaging with civil society. This ICLD programme is run together with Gender Links and MSU's Local Government Studies Department. Councillors in all the provinces and across political parties are eligible. It started in April 2014 and accepts 25 participants for a period of 1.5 year training. As a "national" training programme, it is financed through the Swedish Development and Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the Swedish Embassy in Zimbabwe.

### *Local Leaders: Capacitating Local Politicians in Zimbabwe*

This ITP promotes involvement of local politicians in politics at the local level in Zimbabwe (ICLD, 2016). It added male councillors (not more than 20% of participants in each programme round) to the ITP initially focused on women leaders to pursue the same expected outcomes. Inclusion of male leaders was part of ensuring that women local leaders learn together with their male counterparts to become change agents at the individual level and in their councils (ICLD 2016). The ITP promotes gender inclusiveness in local politics. Further, it covers issues of gender equity in administrative issues such as budgets, the provision of services and planning to ensure that municipal resources are spent effectively and efficiently to meet the needs of the poorest.

uity, participation, transparency and accountability, four of ICLD's core result areas. In the long term, this contributes to targeted local governments being better equipped to base decisions on these core principles and allowing equal opportunities for citizens to influence the design of public activities and services. This focus is consistent with other Swedish aid efforts that seek to help poor women, men, girls and boys develop the potential to improve their living conditions and exercise their rights. The specific objectives of the study were to:

- Improve the design and implementation of future ITP's;
- Generate knowledge on capacity development approaches;
- Learn more about the work of ITP alumni individually and collectively; and
- Generate reading material for students of local democracy.

The study used emergent evaluation and qualitative methodology focusing on the change pursued by the alumni and the basic models of social change adopted. It sought to highlight

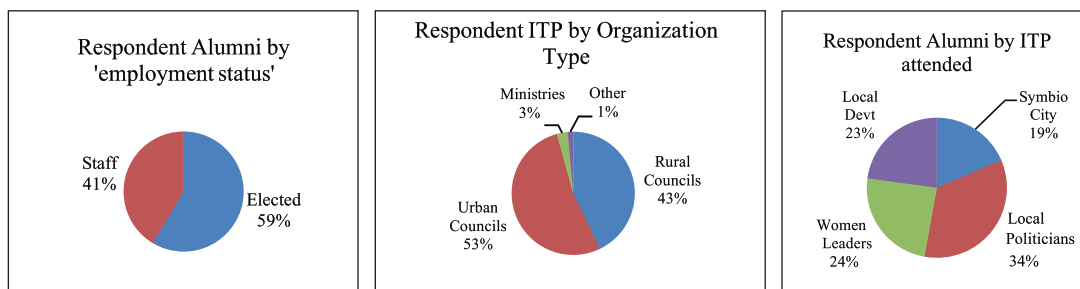


Figure 1: Respondent Employment Status, Organization Type and ITP Attended

how the 83 participants (54 female and 29 male) sought and applied gathered knowledge to expand local democratic practice. Data were gathered on participants' engagement with processes of professional growth, network development, change design and management. Some 70 of the 83 alumni (84.3%) responded to a questionnaire and 11 of the 70 alumni (15.7%) had follow-up interviews in their workplaces. Two questions guided this study. The first focused on whether the project generated an impact on local democratic policies and practices. The second concerned how alumni were connecting their actions as individual professionals.

Of the respondent alumni, there were more councillors than staff with a combined 58% (n=70) compared to 42% staff. Nearly all (96%) were from councils confirming the ITPs' focus on these as institutions for local democracy. The majority of the 83 alumni (100% of sample) were females (65.1%) suggesting that, overall, the ITPs took in more women. At the time of the reunion in March 2017, an additional 25 local politicians were starting on another ITP.

The specific research tools used to gather data from the alumni included a self-completed questionnaire (70), 11 detailed case follow-ups, key informant interviews and attendance at an alumni reunion in Harare on March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2017 where alumni, new participants and other stakeholders were in attendance. The figures below show the level of education of the 70 respondents and the provinces in which their organizations are located. More than half have tertiary education. The province with the greatest number of alumni was Mashonaland West followed by Harare Metropolitan. 88.6% and 45.7% were between age groups 31-60 and 41-50 respectively.

## CONCEPTUALIZING CAPACITY AND LOCAL DEMOCRACY

### Capacity and Its Development

Capacity relates to the ability of individuals, institutions and societies 'to plan and achieve' and therefore it is considered to be 'the engine for human development' (UNDP

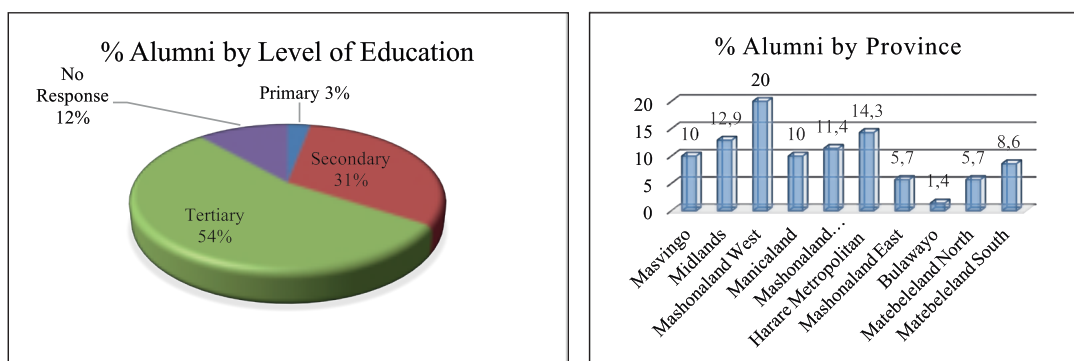


Figure 2: Alumni by Level of Education and Province



2009<sup>14</sup>). Capacity development is ‘the process through which individuals, organizations and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time’ (Ibid). Agenda 2063<sup>15</sup> (Africa’s development vision) highlights the importance of appropriate infrastructure, skilled personnel, institutional structures, competent leadership, policies and laws (African Union, AU 2014). For Greijn et al. (2015), capacity resides in people, organizations and society, while the Africa Capacity Building Foundation, ACBF (2013:xi) highlights that ‘capacity imbalance...can result in mismanagement, abuse of office, corruption, criminality and exploitation’. Capacity development is affected by conceptual and practical progress in community and participatory development including concepts such as self-help, empowerment, sustainable livelihoods and societal resilience (Hammar 2003) that shape state-society relations.

For the study, clarification of the relationship between decentralization and local self-government was critical. Olowu (2009:102) observes that ‘the totality of local governing organs (government, private, civic, community) in a community constitutes the local governance architecture’. The ITPs opened up alumni to the diversity of governing institutions and models while simultaneously challenging them to engage in improving their own realities. Olowu (2009) advances notions of good governance that were considered relevant for the study. These are i) increasing participation in governance processes, ii) forming the basis for more coherent representation in national institutions, iii) increasing governmental accountability to citizens, and iv) framing experimentation, innovation and partnership for more meaningful citizenship (Ibid).

Failure to structure, manage and function within a diffuse architecture for local governance agents is often at the centre of weak governance in

most African jurisdictions including Zimbabwe (Sako 2003, Africa Progress Panel 2014, ACBF 2013, Beall and Ngonyama 2009, Fombad 2011; Letfwich 2009; Huff et al 2001; Kauzya 2007; Ribot 2001, 2011; Rao et al 2014; Michels 2011; Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability 2011). Sako (2003:6) summarizes the institutional challenge in Africa as one of ‘oversized, patrimonial and predatory organizations riddled with corruption, mismanagement, ineffectiveness and inefficiency’. This explains why public institutions end up lacking credibility and reputability (Huff et al 2001), fail to avoid indiscipline and collusion with powerful forces (Ibid, Fombad 2011) and cannot effectively harness human agency (Leftwich 2009, Grebe and Woermann 2011).

The study understood the alumni as catalysts for human agency (as leaders, elites and coalitions) for the mediation of political processes at local levels to determine development outcomes. Their participation in the course was therefore meant to boost their competence not as an end but a means for activating the agency of women, youth, the elderly, disabled persons and other social groups in their areas of work. The construction of the courses/ITPs to include change projects and strategic issues confirmed this for the study. As such, the study framed its focus as consolidating the contributions in terms of local development outcomes that could be traced or linked to the ITPs.

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*Our simplified conception of capacity for the present study was one of being able to do, to be, to relate, to influence and to reform public policy.*

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Further, the capacity is invested in and is deployed by people, organizations and society. This explains why the inquiry connected these three levels. In undertaking the study, we were mindful of Zimbabwe’s recent history of informality, conflict and disengagement in urban, peri-urban and rural areas. These have impacted negatively on the social and political capital necessary for good local governance (Marongwe et al 2011; Marongwe 2002, 2003; Musekiwa and Chatiza 2015; Hammar 2003; Government of Zimbabwe 2013b). In justifying the study, our appreciation,

14 UNDP (2009) Capacity Development: A UNDP Primer

15 Agenda 2063 is an African Union document defining African aspirations for ‘The Continent We Want’ by year 2063. These aspirations include shared prosperity and well-being, unity and integration, a continent of free citizens and expanded horizons, where the full potential of women and youth is realized.



if not outright assumption, was that the ITPs were somewhat stitching back such multiple-capitals as part of building local government capacity or local democracy, which we discuss below.

### **Local Democracy as Local Self-Government**

National and local democracy practices are co-produced through interaction amongst state and non-state institutions on the one hand and with citizens on the other. As noted above, institutional interactions in Zimbabwe's recent history have been tenuous, unhelpful and have threatened the key pillars of local and national democracy.

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#### **The key pillars of democracy are:**

- a. Use of the vote to effectively reward and/or punish public officials;*
  - b. Generating responses to collective needs by the state; and*
  - c. Ensuring fair or equitable treatment at all levels for all citizens (Grindle 2011).*
- 

Often, there is a paradox in that electoral competitiveness may not always improve the performance of public institutions. Grindle (2011) suggests that corruption and non-responsiveness may result in part because citizens do not always have sufficient knowledge to link their rights and demands for good local level performance. Decentralization (political, fiscal and administrative) is usually the favoured policy framework in terms of creating the conditions where the three pillars are institutionalized (Turner and Hulme 1997; Ndegwa 2002; Olowu 1990; Conyers 2002, 2003, 2007; Cheema and Rondinelli 1983; Wekwete 1990; Makumbe 1996, 1998; Brand 1991; Mutizwa-Mangiza 1991; Grindle 2011; Ribot 2001, 2011; Tendler 1997). Grindle (2011) observes that when decentralization and democratization coincide, citizens are able to hold local officials accountable for their actions (see also Jorgensen et al 2011).

Decentralization is often pursued for improved citizen participation and thus local democracy (Chatiza 2008), yet results are often mixed and inadequate (Chatiza 2008, 2010, 2012; Matyszack 2013; CCMT 2014; Jackson 1997; Mbeki 2005; Ayittey 2005; Feltoe 2006; Bond and Manyanya

2003; Craig and Porter 1997; ICG 2011, 2014; Raftopoulos 2013a, 2013b; Nyqvist et al 2014; Manor 2011; Domingo and O'Neil 2014; Batley and Harris 2014; Jones et al 2014; Makumbe 1996, 1998, 2001). Generally, powerful actors with interests and means rarely known in full beforehand often feel threatened by change and tend to resist democratization (Booth 2014; ICG 2011; Manor 2011).

Democratization reforms require that functions and powers are transferred to elected local governments (Ribot 2011) as well as other local institutions within frameworks such as co-governance (see Ackerman 2004; Chatiza 2010, 2012). Recipients of such powers and functions include field agents of central government, state enterprises (parastatals), private bodies, traditional authorities and NGOs (Ibid). Manor (2011) argues that the variations in the content of decentralized systems are influenced by politics with real implications for local government performance and legitimacy (Ribot 2011). Challenges are seen in weak local democratic consolidation in terms of representation, configuration as well as leadership of public spaces and production of citizenship (Ibid).

For the present study, we understood these as the challenges the alumni sought to address by acquiring new knowledge. As elected representatives and bureaucrats that work with (and within) political parties, citizens, user committees, traditional leaders and local elites, the ITP alumni operate in diverse vertical and horizontal connections. The issues the alumni grappled with at personal and strategic levels reflect a search for internal and external measures for local democracy. These measures are invariably defined in relation to local and national political economy conditions that alter power relations between the state and citizens, different social groups, men and women while also creating accountable and representative institutions that deliver and expand citizenship.

Local democracy is not just dictated by national frameworks and actors but by local dynamics through citizen initiative and participation (IDEA 2013). Manor (2011) suggests that local dynamics often imperceptibly affect national democratic dynamics but also require mobilization (Domingo and O'Neil 2014). Elected representatives and

staff of the ICLD ITPs pursued activities related to social mobilisation (of poor and marginalized people) for pro-poor change in policy, law and regulation of service delivery. Consciously or otherwise, the efforts were contributing to grounding local democratic processes, advancing the realisation of rights and helping to address rights violations while contesting unjust and illegal practices of resource allocation and power relations (Ibid).

In conceiving the present study, we suspected that individual alumni did not consciously think that through their learning actions they would be able to ground local democracy beyond their immediate environments. For some, it may have been simple compliance with course requirements. This is the ‘suspicion’ that inspired the study, i.e., the need to consolidate and initiate interpretation of the collective meaning of the actions. This is based on the notion of local democracy as a dynamic interaction that occurs in structures such as organizations, processes such as planning and implementation and, at times, are issue or service dependent (Chatiza 2008; Jones et al 2014; Batley and Harris 2014). The core of local democracy rests with the ‘...appointment of deliberative and executive local bodies

through democratic elections’ (Cities Alliance and UCLG-A 2013:11). This creates the basis for the accountability of local government leaders to citizens.

The operational environment for local democracy depends on constitutional and legislative frameworks, the capacity of local democratic organizations, local traditions, central government support, volume and reliability of local resources, transparency, citizen participation and overall local government strategy and performance (Cities Alliance and UCLG-A 2013). These environmental factors vary across the different organisations from which the alumni were drawn. Even national frameworks are operationalized differently as it is not only national policy and law that shape local democracy but also service delivery models that shift state-citizen, inter and intra-group relations (see Chatiza 2008, 2010, 2012; Batley and Harris 2014; Jones et al 2014; Wild and Foresti 2013). As such, the study took note of the usual constraints such as the incentives for, and accountability of, local democracy actors (elected politicians, policymakers, providers, potential and actual users) in service provision. From this perspective, it is important to note that accommodating people’s



agency in service delivery, while political, does not always require changes in laws but rather requires ‘...delivering in ways that integrate the capacities of users...broadening models and actors’ (Chatiza 2012:54). Further, the factors discussed by Cities Alliance and UCLG-A (2013), Batley and Harris (2014) and Chatiza (2012) are useful in assessing the health of local democracy. While constitutional and legislative parameters tend to be uniform across national jurisdictions, the experiences and responses in different local areas vary significantly.

### ENHANCING LOCAL DEMOCRACY: INSIGHTS FROM THE ALUMNI

#### The Alumni’s Justifications/Appreciations of Learning/Training

The study explored the individual alumni’s justifications for participating in the ITPs. Questions asked in this respect went beyond the administrative process of having been selected to attend the courses. Alumni responses were clustered into three categories of i) self-development, ii) enhancing facilitation of community development, and iii) steering council/sector-wide changes, as shown below. The motivations reflect a nexus between personal growth and institutional change or development.

25% of the alumni who focused on self-confidence cited fear, including stage fright and lack of

skills to address large crowds and socio-religious inhibitions imposed regarding women addressing men, including ‘women standing in front of men’. While the majority who justified their focus on self-confidence were female councillors, this was an issue that male officials (elected and staff) also highlighted as lacking prior to the training. In addressing self-confidence, the focus included both soft skills and acquisition of formal qualifications. This appears consistent with a national psyche that accords respect to those holding formal education as a basis for participation in decision-making.

Interestingly, the study also established that facilitating community development or service delivery was an area of weakness prior to the training. Related to this was the issue of role clarity amongst stakeholders on the one hand and in terms of working with citizens on the other. The alumni clearly acknowledged the lack of meaningful participation by citizens in local development. The findings suggest that both personal and institutional factors affect the effectiveness of local democracy practitioners. Considered together, it seems fair to suggest that the way local government institutions are designed and function is ill adapted to making the best use of officials as individuals and groups. As will be discussed regarding challenges, political parties and individual councils do not sufficiently invest in addressing the challenges in a systematic and continuous manner. Societal challenges regarding limited



Figure 3: Alumni’s Learning Rationale. Source: Fieldwork 2017

community self-sustenance and taboos stalling the participation of women, youth and children constrain the development of local democracy.

The alumni also highlighted poor communication amongst local democracy actors and with communities as something that inspired their learning. Indications of weaknesses cited in this area were the suppression of others' ideas, unhelpful male mind-sets and poor plans that face challenges in terms of implementation. The study showed how decision-making, access to knowledge and information, addressing service delivery and stakeholder interaction were negatively affected by poor communication. The alumni thus sought to understand the implications of poor communication for women's empowerment, community mobilization, and the selection of projects as well as models of service delivery. A number of alumni focused on specific projects, in particular clinics, to address health issues hitherto unaddressed owing to poor planning, weak community mobilization and communication.

Learning justifications show the importance of capacity development approaches that combine personal growth needs, stakeholder interaction and clearly defined (and implemented) change projects. This is because local democracy actors who are not confident can neither influence their own organizations nor enhance the performance of other individuals and organizations critical to local development. Further, emphasizing an actor's agency defines institutionalizing local democracy as more than understanding existing rules to setting and executing new ones. Training and orientation of councillors, for instance, could include devoting time for personal development assisted by support on specific deliverables (change projects).

Study findings show that a focus on personal leadership skills had implications for the alumni's organizations. This was initially undertaken through activities and later in terms of changes in policy and organizational structures sought. Skills acquired were applied to ongoing activities.

As such, pursuing self-development objectives progressively expanded to challenging social norms standing in the way of equity, for instance. Critically, study findings suggest a continuum from personal competency issues (styled strategic under the ITPs), actual projects (styled change

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*Challenging social norms of gender roles became important. For instance, gender awareness was applied which led to a growing insistence by mainly female alumni that their women constituents become more than preparers and servers of meals at meetings.*

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meant to address community-level issues to institutional development or policy changes.

In essence, the study observed that personal growth (addressing strategic issues of fear, time management, etc.) was validated through working on project initiatives. This progression had the effect of blurring the distinction between strategic issues and change projects. The two alumni cohorts did not therefore show the difference that the distinction suggests or as envisaged during the design of the ITPs. Alumni involved in change projects (mainly officials) were in equal need of personal growth and development support for their projects to lead to the expected change. This was equally true of alumni (mainly councillors) who eventually implemented change projects that had started by tackling personal development gaps. As part of one system, councillors and officials contribute to common local democracy results, albeit from different vantage points.

### **Choice and Impact of Strategic Issues and Change Projects**

Our initial understanding of strategic issues as personal problems hindering one's effectiveness and change projects as being about institutional development (i.e. focused primarily 'on external social goals', Thomas 1996) was challenged as the study progressed. As discussed in the paragraphs above in the context of the practical expansion of local democracy through capacity development under ICLD's, ITPs strategic issues and change projects somewhat converged. This explains why the analysis does not separate strategic issues from change projects at the level of ITP impact, which the study sought to consolidate.

As with justifications for learning, the choice of issues and projects focused on the three levels of individual, community and council/sector. The local governance impacts that emerged from the ITPs relate to service delivery (actual projects being implemented), improvements in revenue generation, enhanced community and stakeholder





mobilization, growing openness on the part of the alumni to new ideas, including enhanced feedback to constituents for councillors, and freeing residents and citizens to participate. Councillors who initiated projects attributed this to 'listening to community needs', which the study interpreted as confessing to being less participatory prior to taking part in the ITPs.

Chief Executive Officers interviewed during the reunion confirmed transformations in councillors enrolled in the programme (Interviews, March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2017). Female alumni confirmed that improved skills enabled them to be better heard by their male counterparts and constituents. This is because even when an alumna's strategic issue related to time-management or self-confidence, it was in relation to their local democracy and development work with communities. The issues were therefore not exclusively about the self, devoid of an interest in their roles as councillors and staff (e.g., an official of the ministry responsible for local government). Stakeholders mobilized in the implementation of strategic issues and change projects came from a broad category with an em-

phasis on the community (57.1% of respondents, n=70) followed by council (35.1%) and councillors (22.9%). As such, more than half of all alumni focused on communities in implementing their strategic issues and change projects. The diversity of stakeholders involved reflects an appreciation of capacity and interest differentiation.

Thirteen (13) categories of change projects were implemented by the staff of 28 individuals that responded to the questionnaire. More than a third (10 alumni, i.e., 35.7%) focused on increasing *community participation* in budgets (2) and projects (8). The other main project clusters<sup>16</sup> included spatial planning (4 alumni), solid waste management (3) and council revenue generation (2). All alumni confirmed receiving a number of benefits from the ITPs and the change projects they implemented.

16 Clusters of one alumnus each included strategic plan, e-governance/ICT, livestock sales for community empowerment, time management, improving the council's development structures, infrastructure development, capacity development of local authorities, income savings and lending, and tertiary institutions' collaboration with local government for service delivery.

## BOX 2: SUMMARIES OF COUNCIL/ORGANIZATIONAL BENEFITS

1. Improved relations of trust between councils and residents based on improved appreciation of council role and performance;
2. Adoption of inclusive and consultative approaches resulting in successful projects, e.g., water metering in Kadoma, cattle sales in Rushinga and, among other things, solid waste management at Gokwe Centre;
3. Improved service delivery and revenue inflows in some wards as councillors worked better with residents and stakeholders;
4. Community support, higher sense of ownership and participation in council activities;
5. Better coordination and communication with stakeholders;
6. Cleaner and more sustainable settlements (e.g. decongested Masvingo City Centre);
7. Introduction of new systems (e.g. billing module in Nkayi), structures (e.g. budget committee in Chegutu) and infrastructure partnerships (e.g. Kwekwe); and
8. Appreciation of citizen engagement and transparency at the council level;

Source: Fieldwork, 2017

These included recognition as drivers of change in their institutions, improvement of leadership styles, personal growth including applying skills learnt in own lives and networking with fellow alumni. Benefits were also reported at the council/organizational level in connection with strategic issues and change projects (see Box 2).

Key sector benefits included i) work on a local authorities bill in 2014-2015, which involved stakeholder consultations, ii) better interaction amongst stakeholders, iii) increased appreciation and visibility of the sector, and iv) adoption of citizen engagement and good dialogue practices by the ministry responsible for local government through the efforts of other alumna. Another alumnus noted benefits to the Midlands State University's Local Government Studies Department arising from i) direct interaction with, and participation in, ICLD activities, ii) agreements entered into with nine knowledge and development institutions, and iii) improved teaching performance. The two alumni created sound bases for extending ITP benefits to the local government sector. However, the extension was neither properly designed and incorporated into the ITPs nor properly supported.

Without a national capacity building programme, as had been present in the past, and structured local Alumni support, the selection of lessons for national consolidation meant that the 'extension' remained dependent on the positioning and the passion of individual alumni. This study was inspired by the desire to close that gap. The analysis in the present paper and specific cases in Box 3 (below) summarise selected cases of ITP impact. The ITP impact is communicated in

terms of personal growth as well as results arising from the application of acquired knowledge. Box 4 divulges other experiences.

Considered in context, the ITPs have impacted local democracy at the different levels as discussed in this sub-section. Box 4 (below) shows four encouraging before and after situations or stories by some individual alumni.

### Challenges Met, Solutions Adopted and Their Capacity Development Meanings

Alumni reported challenges they had faced during the training. These were categorised into i) those associated with the actual training, ii) setting up and running projects and resolving strategic issues and iii) sustaining the momentum for change. Training period challenges related to the quality of pre-training preparations including understanding training duration, institutional arrangements, concepts and expectations, as well as requirements. Some of the alumni responses captured by the study include:

These concerns suggest knowledge transfer challenges which could be explained by the level of pre-training preparation and the qualifications held by the alumni. Specific constraints related to knowledge of, and access to, journal writing skills and an inadequately developed culture of documentation, especially among politicians, given

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*'...short training duration, too much to learn over a short period...compressed delivery, especially in Sweden...did not understand what was going on...difficult terms used during the training' (Decoded from returned questionnaires, 2017).*

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### BOX 3: ALUMNI VIEWS ON ITP RELEVANCE & IMPACT

1. John, a rural councillor addressed his dictatorial leadership and has facilitated women's access to leadership positions in his ward. He has seen citizen participation with the implementation of a clinic improving in the process. The ITP thus initiated a process of converting a local autocrat into a democrat.
2. Susan, another rural councillor mobilized her community to build a local clinic, address gender-based violence (GBV) and has also worked more closely with traditional and other leaders than before in her ward.
3. In another case, the head of a rural local authority introduced formal cattle marketing, which realised USD93 570. His council realised USD5 080, government USD2 540, local community USD84 680 and auctioneers USD1270. This boosted the council's relations with key stakeholders.
4. A city official, Steve helped set up a council website to provide information. He has also worked on decongesting the city centre by creating free and prepaid parking zones/lots. A free newspaper column negotiated with a local newspaper in his city has enhanced information dissemination. The council benefited from increased revenue and better informed citizens.
5. Mrs N, a rural councillor spearheaded the construction of 3 classroom blocks at a school in her ward, an ECD block and acquisition of school furniture. She also facilitated the pegging of a clinic and has ensured that roads are repaired regularly in her ward.
6. In one urban council, two employees who had attended different ITP's contributed to setting up new citizen participation structures to facilitate the council's work. The Budget Planning and Review Committee has improved budget consultations and related council operations. Funding from the African Development Bank (ADB) has been sought and investment in water purification has started.
7. Joyce implemented a project to increase revenue to improve service delivery in her urban local authority. By installing 797 new water meters at resident properties (adding to the previous 200 meters), council revenue increased.
8. A planner and a health services official in one council influenced the acquisition of refuse receptacles (7 metal and 11 concrete bins) and helped set up vibrant ward based clean-up programmes as part of their solid waste management projects.
9. Mary, a rural councillor helped set up a secondary school, an Early Childhood Development (ECD), and an ablution block at one primary school. She also used her acquired skills to facilitate the drilling of 3 boreholes through enhanced community participation in her ward.
10. Councillor Mavis facilitated the installation of a bio-digester, a rural hospital and a mother's waiting shelter at a local clinic. The bio-digester success influenced 5 households in her ward to adopt the renewable technology option at their homes.
11. The political leader of one of Zimbabwe's fast growing towns focused on empowering men and women to pursue SDG 11. Ellen supported sporting and social clubs, a restaurant (with 29 co-owners of which 25 are female) which makes USD 80-100 a day and a plastic smelting (waste recycling) enterprise with 20 members (16 female) which realizes USD 700 a month from sales of plastic art and craft products. She now holds monthly consultative meetings with the government, NGOs and communities and holds ward level gender awareness meetings addressing gender-based violence (GBV), and coordinates regular clean-up campaigns.
12. An alumna in one of Zimbabwe's biggest cities, Makanaka, focused on inner city urban renewal and regeneration. Marilyn used her planning knowledge (enhanced through her attendance at ICLD's Symbio City ITP) to initiate a building renovation and city greening project. Project achievements include introducing solar traffic lights and one-way streets. Further, the City has committed to reviewing its City Centre Local Development Plan, its Master Plan and to prepare a Transport Master Plan drawing on influence from the alumna's change project.
13. In another smaller town, two staff alumni worked to improve coordination between council and stakeholders. Additionally, they helped set up a club which recycles waste in the town, thereby improving cleanliness. They also impacted residents who are now paying their bills in a timelier manner. The two made contributions to ongoing initiatives in the town, most notably i) the preparation of a local development plan, ii) completion of a client charter, iii) instituting participatory budgeting, and iv) strengthening health clubs.
14. Another official in one of Zimbabwe seven cities focused on infrastructure development. Shamiso facilitated a local private investor who built 35 small shops, a garage, a public toilet, an information centre and a restaurant in exchange for council land. She also facilitated the accommodation of SMEs in the city centre by sponsoring necessary council policy changes.
15. Visibility and council-resident interaction have improved in one town following the efforts of an alumna (the town's head, Nelly) to establish an e-governance system focused on council-citizen interaction, and setting up committees for water, roads and budgeting. These changes improved citizen participation and

- responsiveness. A council Facebook page, an sms platform, an online magazine, a What's App platform and a council website have been set up to improve communication.
16. Urban councillor Valerie's confidence building is now seen in her being able to support and monitor an organization of youths in her ward. The organization supports youths in her border town, helping them stay away from drugs, crime, prostitution, early marriages and child labour. The councillor has also encouraged six women to be active in politics with one preparing to run for elected office in 2018.
  17. Another female councillor, Anna, spearheaded gender mainstreaming in her area. She is now the Deputy Chairperson of the Human Resources and General Purpose Committee in her urban council. She was a Guest of Honour at the Women's Day Commemorations for 2016 in her council where she confidently addressed guests. Anna noted that she had improved in how she conducts her business as a leader. Before the training, she used to be late for meetings, but after the training, she has become very punctual. She sees herself as strategically positioned to make use of her acquired skills.
  18. Councillor Siphosami has gained skills and the respect of her peers who now take her seriously as Chairperson of the Finance Committee.
  19. An official of one of the associations of Councils helped with development of an integrated results-based management (IRBM) compliant strategic plan for his organization using ITP-acquired skills and insights.
  20. Mayor Tafara benefited as an individual from the ITP he was part of. He helped empower his organization and the whole urban community starting in his ward before influencing fellow councillors to initiate appropriate initiatives in the town. He has been involved in i) setting up gardening projects to empower women, sustain livelihoods and reduce poverty, ii) adopting and rolling out prepaid water metering, iii) establishing a maternity clinic in the town based on a land-for-investment transaction with a private firm, and iv) has been active in promoting local economic development (LED) in Zimbabwean urban areas. Tafara is using ITP skills to present, engage, network and negotiate, as well as SDG and other knowledge in his daily work. He is aiming to ensure a better run council and a satisfied electorate.
  21. Rural councillors Amanda and Gwendolyn attributed improved leadership and report writing skills to the ITPs.
  22. Cheryl, a big city councillor, appreciated the course, saying she used to work alone (did not delegate), but the course helped her understand how delegating could enable her to achieve more together with others. The exercise of journal writing taught her discipline and planning.
  23. ITP participants acquired and applied key skills in their regular work as well as life. Rural councillor Mathew found conflict resolution to be very useful. This has helped him deal with 'teething issues' at the council as chairperson. Another rural councillor, Ivy, benefited in terms of leadership and interactive skills. She used the skills to assist marginalized women in conducting self-sustaining projects. Councillor Beauty gained listening and resource mobilization skills, which she applied in the implementation of her strategic project. For urban councillors Tapiwa, Trevor, Theresa and Joyline, ITPs helped them i) appreciate their roles/duties as leaders, ii) self-assess their performance against expectations by interested parties - i.e. residents, council, the Ministry/Government and their political parties, iii) involve women in development projects, and v) to be effective in local democratic processes.
  24. One alumna at the ministry responsible for local government, Jairos, confirmed that the courses expanded and deepened his appreciation of the contribution of citizen participation in local governance and Local Economic Development (LED).
  25. A former rural council CEO, Stanley, confirmed that the ITP enhanced his project planning and management practices. This was also the case for a female official working in an urban council who noted that she acquired managerial and leadership skills which enabled her to lead and strengthen her teams, thereby improving service delivery. Presentations helped her gain confidence. For Abel, a city official project management, presentation and writing skills were very important as they have helped him improve the quality of his work. Engineer Moses indicated that he had acquired skills in project planning (with stakeholder involvement). He has become proficient in implementing citizen participation, leading to a significant reduction of public resistance.

Source: Fieldwork 2017



#### BOX 4: OTHER ITP-INSPIRED STORIES

1. Susan worked on strategic issues related to a lack of knowledge, weak time management and low self-confidence. She remembered how '...I would be paralysed by fear each time I had to address the community' adding that '...neither did I have any confidence when in council...not knowing what to do or say, confused about what processes to follow'. Local leaders and women interviewed as part of the study confirmed that '...the training given to our councillor helped her a lot...before there was chaos with no one listening to her...she found it hard to work with the community...now she confidently chairs ward development committee meetings and plans with local leaders, the community and engages with the council'. For her, the challenge was that her ward brings together people from different parts of the country under the post-2000 land reforms, resulting in an absence of community cohesion witnessed in other wards in her district.  
The ITP helped Susan with ICT, negotiation and presentation skills. With these skills, the councillor stated that she had '...started working on encouraging gender equality in community leadership, and I have influenced the council to build market stalls and cattle pounds'. A senior council employee added that the councillor's chairing of the Environmental Management and Agriculture Committee had improved. Further, her leadership of development in the ward had also changed for the better in terms of planning and implementing projects. The ward clinic project, the campaign against gender-based violence, and a fish farming project at a local dam benefiting three (3) cooperatives were cited by the community and council staff as evidence of the growing performance of Councillor Tambara.
2. Nelly acknowledged that the ITP she took part in consolidated her 27 years' experience. This spurred her to implement a change project on increasing interaction between council residents in order to reduce misconceptions. Her argument was that '...ICT/e-governance improves council revenue collection as residents get connected to their council'. For that to work, Juliet recalled how the ITP had helped her with interpersonal and decision-making skills. These skills improved her interactions with, and the involvement of, communities on 'issues of concern to them', she added. By working on the change project, Juliet identified and tackled employee attitudes towards e-governance/ICT in the council, transparency blockers, stakeholder and resident misconceptions, as well as project monitoring and evaluation.
3. '...I am satisfied with my change project as I got the city to commit to the review of the Local Development Plan and the Master Plan...and approval of a proposal to develop a Transport Master Plan', were Makanaka's opening comments in response to a question on her change project. As a planner, Makanaka applied stakeholder motivation and participatory development skills acquired from Symbio City to implement the city centre (urban) renewal and regeneration project. She was able to involve the offices of the Town Clerk, Director of Works, the Mayor and the rest of the council as well as residents and business people. She cited changes from '...only offices to mixed uses in city centre buildings...cleaner central business district' as proof that her ITP-inspired work had made a difference. She also added that problems encountered included '...resistance from the council, lack of resources for research and outreach activities, and a lack of time as I have a huge workload, and the generally poor economic environment'.
4. David, an urban councillor confirmed that the ITP '...really dealt with my strategic issue of time management, especially in balancing work and family'. According to the councillor '...the training improved my time management, leadership skills, community mobilization, conflict management, and planning and running of meetings'. He quickly added that he was now able to implement gender equality initiatives as well as monitor and evaluate activities in his ward and in the council. Based on his experience, David recommended the training as part of a councillor induction as well as MSU moderation of training sessions held in councils.

Source: Fieldwork, February 2017

their context of oral history/records. Since English was the medium of communication, it took some alumni longer to understand the complex issues explored during the training. Adding to this complexity was the issue of mixed participant attitudes towards the training varying between disinterest (feeling disturbed in their regular business) and full/excited engagement with the opportunity. The table below shows some of

these challenges faced by the alumni.

Cases of unhelpful inter-participant relations including looking down on each other and conflict where there was no 'participant structure' affected some alumni negatively. Additionally, inadequate support by some local authorities made affected participants' introduction to the course somewhat of a case of 'being thrown into the deep-end'. The challenges faced were thus



consistent with the continuum from personal to institutional or sector-wide ones. Issues of trust, polarization, stigmatization and lack of adequate support are systemic issues whose resolution is beyond the ITPs. Clearly, environmental or policy conditions need to be established to enable the participants to learn effectively so that their learning delivers real change. Without that, the effectiveness of the ITPs will be limited. The governments of Zimbabwe and Sweden may do well to reflect on the minimum thresholds needed to sustain both learning and its application.

It is also important to acknowledge that some of the environmental factors are less structural as they relate to soft aspects of capacity development such as having a culture of reflection, self-assessment, organizational learning, self-development and conscious capacity development investment both individually as well as collectively. Further, that alumni confirmed that they struggled with identifying strategic issues and change projects may suggest that issue-based policy development and implementation are lacking in Zimbabwe's local government and national political culture.

Table 1: Summary of challenges faced

ITP	Challenges
Local Leaders Capacitating Women in Zimbabwe	Short program duration with condensed learning content, failure to understand delivered ITP content, ICT challenges (computers and smart phones), failure to write journals, poor access to transport and communication, poor communication with the ITP facilitators (language),
Local Leaders Capacitating Local Politicians in Zimbabwe	Trouble selecting, funding and ensuring success of strategic issues, poor time management, religious and cultural barriers to women's leadership participation; Lack of organizational support to share and apply skills gained, resistance from colleagues and community, burden of political affiliation, gender bias in community mobilization, large coverage areas, trust issues
ICLD and UNCDF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Variable interest in the ITP, failure to apply ITP concepts in practice, less interaction with the facilitators;</li> <li>•Absence of design framework and project methodology, uncertain project success, lack of organizational support (resistance), conflicting work engagements, poor time management;</li> <li>•Negative stakeholder perceptions and suspicion, anticipating direct benefits from Sweden, raised hopes and misconceptions</li> </ul>
Symbio-City	Short program duration with condensed learning content, looking down upon each other (stigmatization), lack of financial resources and general organizational support, Slow change project approval in agency, community resistance (not mobilized to support), poor cooperation, political 'labeling' of projects;

A culture of continuously asking one's organization what it should do differently, what it should change and whether the direction it is proceeding in is appropriate (critical questioning) appears weak. The study found that alumni experienced personal and collective fears as well as uncertainty regarding the results they were pursuing. Our interpretation is once again that this is associated with an inadequate development of accountability for results at all levels including at the community level.

Alumni responses also confirm the limited extent of e-government in Zimbabwe. Further, the support provided to serving councillors also appears to have been exposed to be inadequate by the ITPs. Some councillors took time to respond to the questionnaire and confessed to reliving 'nightmares' when preparing and sending journals due to inadequate ICT. The learning and change projects were also inadequate for staff resourcing. Cases involving one alumna who sought to improve sub-district governance structures and others working on environmental issues raise this issue. Related to this is the dichotomy between seeking to improve ways of doing things (learning and reflection) and actually 'working'. Current workloads out-compete learning and reflection. This reduces the time available for critical thinking which is necessary for system improvement.

Study findings also suggest that chief executive officers and mayors/council chairpersons do not effectively and consciously plan and manage the pre-training and re-entry phases of the ITPs to ensure that the alumni benefit the most and are able to use their acquired skills. Cases of alumni not receiving timely policy support for their initiatives demonstrate this challenge. Councils need to present platforms for alumni to undertake and share their work with colleagues as part of organizational improvement. Re-entry support is crit-

ical in light of accusations levelled against some alumni that they were 'abandoning established pre-training values' and were generally resisted in areas where methods of doing business needed to be changed.

As with environmental conditions, governments may do well to reflect on this and enable ICLD to support more effective learning. The broader lesson from the challenges is that the environment is less supportive to learning, does not resource change (i.e. prefers continuity even where results are unsatisfactory). At the personal level, the culture of learning for change remains to be fully developed. Councillor resourcing is also a challenge considering the complexity of the issues they deal with and the areas they cover, especially in rural areas. The alumni provided diverse responses to the challenges they faced during and after the training. The box below presents the solutions adopted.

### **Sustaining Changes and Applying Lessons**

Various skills have been gained by the alumni from the ITPs and changes have been initiated in their organisations after the courses. On strategic issues and change projects they worked on, they implemented some measures to ensure sustainability. The measures were mainly at individual and organisational levels. The emerging themes were as follows:

- Setting up new or adjusting structures within organisations;
- Setting up new rules/policies (institutionalisation);
- Broadening dissemination of information-feedback sessions and ongoing awareness raising (meetings, workshops and training sessions);
- Structured community mobilization;
- ITP-related and other local networking for support/solidarity and getting new ideas;

#### **BOX 5: SOLUTIONS TO CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED**

Teamwork and networking, acquiring new and more skills and knowledge, self-motivation, further confidence building through practice, influencing the budget process, research, change of systems (e.g. more regular meetings with departmental heads, motivating communities, engagement etc.), resource mobilization from stakeholders, awareness campaigns, convening public meetings and workshops, increasing transparency and honesty, institutionalization of the change project, positively influencing higher level leaders to expand the space for change, and working better with other organizations including central government

- Seeking further training or personal development of individual alumni; and
- Personal changes in how alumni approached issues and dealt with others.

In one rural council, the alumna adopted continuous facilitation of reviews of development plans by the development structures as a sustenance measure. Other alumni set up informal teams at ward levels to which they delivered the capacity to organize and run activities in a participatory manner.

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*The study found new structures in:*

- *Murehwa RDC (stand-alone gender committee),*
  - *Chegutu Municipality (a budget committee),*
  - *Gokwe Town Council and Kwekwe City Council (project-specific committees),*
  - *Masvingo City Council (a unit with dedicated staff working on city decongestion),*
  - *Ruwa Town Council (improved reporting lines),*
  - *Nyanga RDC (community-selected female junior councillor),*
  - *Norton Town Council (women's clubs) and*
  - *Bindura Municipality (community-based water, sanitation and hygiene, WASH clubs).*
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Institutionalisation included:

- Making the projects part of monthly reports tabled before the council, including them in annual budgets and also integrating them in council plans (Ruwa Town Council),
- Sponsorship of a council resolution/policy to fully operationalize gender equality (Makoni RDC, Nyanga RDC and Bulawayo City Council),
- Developing a strategic plan to ensure that the ideas learnt were expressed in organizational plans and budgets (Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe, Gokwe Town Council, Chinhoyi Municipality and Chegutu Municipality) and
- Inclusion of gender budgeting in the council's financial planning at Mbire RDC.

The cattle auctioning project in Rushinga was incorporated into the council ensuring that they own and benefit from it. This guarantees continued implementation and refinement of the activities as the council realises revenue and other

benefits.

Improved planning of alumni activities has also been a way of ensuring sustenance of the changes initiated. For instance, one of the Guruve alumni has developed a calendar that clearly allocates times for each programme. The Nkayi RDC alumnus sponsored a policy on staff development in order to retain staff, while the CEO of Marondera RDC created a service charter that gives rights to the citizens to demand services. This has institutionalised community engagement and the provision of satisfactory services. An alumnus from Kadoma City Council introduced a revolving fund to support water metering, making it continuously available to property owners. The City is benefiting from an increasingly updated ratepayer roll.

Councillors and officials reported that they were holding regular meetings with the community and other stakeholders to sustain changes initiated. The meetings are now better planned and facilitated with a focus on monitoring compliance with the implementation of planned activities (Gutu RDC, Sanyati RDC and Karoi Town Council), improving stakeholder input to plans and their implementation (Bikita RDC, Harare City and Kadoma City), and creating space for external resource persons to help communities (Chirumhanzu, Nyanga and Makoni RDC's). The better management meetings also serve a community mobilization purpose surrounding gender issues and, in some instances, girls' empowerment specifically (Chitungwiza Municipality, Goromonzi RDC and Mberengwa RDC).

The alumni have established different and continuously improving ways of applying and learning from the ITP knowledge acquired. It is therefore fair to suggest that the investment in the skills and knowledge is likely to have an impact at the individual and organizational level for some time. The duration of the differences will vary depending on whether the issue was personal, communal or organizational, related to individual passion and drive of the alumni and the extent of the institutionalization of the changes. In regards to politicians, it may also be affected by whether they continue to be formal leaders after future elections and whether any changes to their social positions present new opportunities to apply knowledge and skills gained. The discussion



that follows summarizes key lessons and engages with how the ITP impacts highlighted above can be sustained and scaled.

## LESSONS AND IDEAS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMES

### Lessons

The study identified a number of lessons that the alumni drew from the ITPs. Some of these are consistent with existing theories on adult learning. ITP participants learnt that ordinary people (those not in leadership or not in positions of authority) matter and can make important contributions to policy and local development. This was captured best by councillor John's observation that:

In essence, ITP participants generally acknowledge and better appreciate that others working with leaders can think or reason themselves and are thus not captives to what leaders think or seek to do. Related alumni lessons include the importance of learning by doing and that funding of development initiatives is easier to secure where targeted partners are involved in the assessment of needs and design of interventions. The alumni

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*'...I used to tell people what to do in an authoritarian manner...I would appoint people into committees rather than get residents to voluntarily and freely make their own choices...but that all changed after I went through the ITP...now I listen, communicate and I am realising more cooperation' (Interview February 2017).*

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also observed that defining as well as sticking to objectives, logical thinking and approaches help focus implementation.

For Zimbabwean local leaders and technical staff involved in the training, a somewhat unique lesson learned was that one can make a choice regarding the type of leaders they want to become. Capacity development, particularly the type that unlocks personal potential, assists in making relevant choices. Through being exposed to alternative local democracy settings in Sweden, various alumni were able to challenge the socio-economic pressures (or context) that framed their pre-training leadership choices. The inclusion of strategic issues and change projects allowed the alumni to deliberately create innovative learning spaces. However, not all found it easy to create the necessary spaces.



Nevertheless, as they slowly developed this skill, the learning rewards at the personal level, complemented by the recognition of peers, spurred them on towards creating more spaces and networking outside their organizations. The networking allowed a sense of uninhibited exploration with the pursuing of real development outcomes, thereby diffusing tensions. As observed by the town secretaries of Ruwa and Chegutu, being open or transparent 'pays off'.

### **Ideas for Future Programmes**

The ideas discussed in this sub-section are not only intended for the consideration of ICLD. Our analysis suggests that all the strategic institutions involved in ITP implementation have a role to play in exploring them. Institutions that have an interest in these matters include: the governments of Zimbabwe (ministries responsible for local government) and Sweden (Sida), ICLD, MSU and Gender Links. They are not written as evaluation recommendations considering the study was not a review of the ITPs *per se* but, rather, a consolidation of emerging impact. They flow from our analysis of the study's general confirmation of the relevance of the ITPs while also drawing suggestions for necessary improvements directly from some alumni. Firstly, the Government of Zimbabwe (in collaboration with local authorities) could adapt relevant aspects of the ITPs to improve induction training for councillors. Specific aspects include i) strategic planning, ii) presentation, iii) knowledge of the new constitution, regional and international conventions relevant for promoting women, iv) knowledge of the difference in gender and development challenges in Zimbabwe, v) the ability to build and sustain professional networks and, vi) the ability to engage with civil society actors. Current councillor induction/orientation programmes are not sufficiently robust. It is possible that the government could seek (or ICLD could offer) relevant technical expertise to strengthen councillor induction/orientation. The ITP design, content and some of the approaches can greatly improve the manner in which Zimbabwean councillors are prepared to serve, and frame how they are supported during their tenure. This is critical since the ITPs are not able to include all councillors as well as

sector staff, given their intensity (technical and financial).

Second, a framework is needed to ensure that councils are involved in identifying change projects and strategic issues being pursued by the alumni. This will make it possible for these to be included in annual plans and budgets to provide funding. Such a framework as well as the adaptation of ITP aspects for the induction of councillors will allow full support of ITPs and the changes they bring about. Related to this is the need for research-based identification and effective development of local resources as part of improving the performance of councils. ICLD-supported work could also structure local and international municipal twinning or partnerships as part of the process of building a strong national and international alumni network.

There is an expectation that ICLD's support reaches all local authorities in Zimbabwe. A model with low-cost aspects may be needed. Examples shared by the alumni include training/reading material accessed on an online/distance basis, annual reviews that involve sector stakeholders while keeping the group of alumni in touch with each other and increasing the responsibility of a core of local trainers that offer components of the ITPs. The alumni suggested that ICLD could explore the expansion of platforms for the delivery of parts of the ITPs working locally with MSU, Gender Links and other partners. The local platform will help ICLD to closely oversee or support application of the learned skills, monitor change projects/strategic issues, coordinate in-country exchanges or peering and co-facilitate an alumni network or association.

Our analysis suggests that ITPs have inspired changes which, nevertheless, remain isolated and thus do not support scaled-up sector development. This is partly a product of the ITPs being designed to focus on a cohort of trainees at a time with scant information about post-training follow-ups on how the changes initiated during training are being sustained and scaled up. As observed earlier, this difficulty is increased due to the lack of a proper repository for sector lessons and knowledge as well as the coordinated distillation of such for national application (in policy-making and performance monitoring). Future ITPs could therefore explore how local entrench-

The Zimbabwe experience also shows that the selection of trainees, their preparation and support (during and after training) need strengthening. As already noted, this does not need to entirely rest on ICLD and thus the Government of Sweden and the Government of Zimbabwe as well

as individual councils have scope to do more than is currently being done. Associated with this is the need to ensure that critical or strategic changes with regards to, for instance, council revenue and service delivery performance are made part of the core purpose of the ITPs. This is because the effective capacity of the alumni is often curtailed by inadequate resources within their councils. The work by Mayor Tafara and Makanaka, for instance, has not been sufficiently deep and broad since their councils have not been able to not provide sufficient resources. Mainstreaming municipal finance across all ITPs could be worth considering. Related to this is the need to include the revenue impact of strategic issues and change projects when evaluating ITP impact. Once this connection is made, the Government of Zimbabwe will find it more reasonable to provide additional support and supervise implementation of the ITP aspects in the country. Councils and other institutions from which participants are selected need to make a commitment to practically and financially support the successful participation of the alumni.





## CONCLUSION

83 Zimbabweans directly benefited from learning fundamentals of local democracy and impacted the immediate systems within which they work. An additional 25 were enrolled in March 2017. Individually and collectively, those already trained are making a difference in terms of their post-training personal performance and interaction, approach to socio-cultural issues, particularly gender and social inclusion, and for some, their visibility and performance in national local development and governance spaces is rising. MSU training programmes have been influenced by ICLD's work. The support to and partnership with the University's Local Government Studies Department have aided its sector influence, and established clear prospects for sustainability. ICLD can be credited with the difference being made especially amongst female technical and political leaders who are the majority of those who benefitted from the ITPs. Clearly, the local democratic environment is constrained and equally limits the impact of the ITPs at the different levels.

The Alumni reported challenges before and during the training with particular light being

focused on support towards implementation of the strategic issues and change projects. The challenges were at personal and organizational levels. Alumni reported using the skills and knowledge that many of the Alumni applied to address the challenges to generate real change. ICLD support remains relevant given the absence of significant capacity development initiatives in Zimbabwe at present. Further, the ICLD approach is unique particularly in terms of starting with a personal development focus that allowed the Alumni to acquire new leadership skills.

Scope exists for ICLD, its Zimbabwe partners and the Government of Zimbabwe to improve the design and delivery of the programme while also introducing local platforms that allow increased reach not at the financial intensity that the core ITPs are delivered at. Strategic or policy foci including exposing key national institutions like the Portfolio Committee responsible for local government could potentially expand the spaces within which Alumni apply their local democracy skills. All considered additional research to inform suggested improvements is required. A comparative analysis involving another (comparable) country could also help adequately inform some of the ideas presented in this paper.

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