

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE PROFILE, STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS OF THE BEITBRIDGE RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter describes the basic features of the Beitbridge District. It looks at the organisation of the Beitbridge Rural District Council and explores its operations as provided in the Rural District Councils Act of 1988 and the by-laws of council. The chapter then looks at performance measurement in the public sector and local government, in particular. This is followed by a discussion of democratic participation, service provision and managerial excellence including highlights of their relevance to this study.

#### **BEITBRIDGE DISTRICT PROFILE**

The Beitbridge District is located in the most southern part of Zimbabwe. It is one of the six districts of Matebeleland South province. It shares borders with Botswana in the west, South Africa in the south, Mwenezi District from the north to the east, and Gwanda District in the northwest. Its geographical area is a result of amalgamating the Beitbridge District Council and part of the Mwenezi-Beitbridge Rural District Council. The other part of the latter was amalgamated with the Mwenezi District to form what is now the Mwenezi District Council. Significant to note, from the onset, is that Beitbridge District is one of the least developed districts in Zimbabwe. Worse still, it is located in region five (5), which is characterized by poor rainfall and very hot conditions. As such, it is not suitable for crop farming, although this takes place through irrigation schemes.

The district is made up of an undulating landscape with shrubs, isolated hills and four big rivers. The rivers are the Limpopo river (which forms the southern border with South Africa) and its tributaries, the Shashe from Botswana and the Umzingwane from the interior of Matebeleland South. The fourth river is the Bubi on the northern side and forming a border with Mwenezi District. It is significant to indicate here that although the rivers have potential for tourism because of their richness in flora and fauna, this potential has not been tapped until now. The land area is approximately 1 269 665 hectares. The land is divided into five land categories: Communal Land Area, Commercial Farming Area, Resettlement Area, Tuli Safari Area, and Beitbridge urban sometimes referred to as Beitbridge town. More is discussed about these later in the chapter. The population of Beitbridge District is approximately 120 000 (BRDC Annual Report, 2001:1). It is significant to note that the next census survey is scheduled for 2003. Of these people, about 79% are found in the communal land area. About 14% are in Beitbridge urban while the other 7% is in the commercial farming area. Of these, approximately 1% is white. Below is a table showing the distribution of the population by land area and the size of each land area.

Table 4.1 Land categories and population distribution in Beitbridge

Land Category	Area (Hectares)	Percentage (%)	Population	Percentage (%)
Communal Land Area	677 800	53.3	94 670	79.0
Commercial Farming Area	468 979	37.0	7 960	6.7
Resettlement Area	91 721	7.2	#	#
Tuli Safari Area	22 699	1.8	—	—
Beitbridge Urban/Town	8 474	0.7	17 170	14.3
TOTAL	1 269 665	100.0	119 700	100.0

# - Included in Communal Land Area

Source: *The BRDC Annual Report, 2001:1*, Land categories and population distribution.

As indicated earlier, the Beitbridge District is one of the hottest districts in Zimbabwe. Its temperatures range between 25 degrees Celsius and 35 degrees Celsius. Summer temperatures are mostly around 38 degrees and 40 degrees Celsius. The air is hot and dry with windy conditions. This makes it almost unbearable for human life. Rainfall is variable. In good years it can be as high as 650mm and in bad times it can be as low as 80mm. The hot weather coupled with poor rainfall, makes it difficult for communal farmers to engage in crop farming (BRDC Annual Report, 2001:2). This situation poses a very big problem for the community, as it has to buy food every year. This means that those who have no cattle and goats to sell find it difficult to make a living. Besides, poor rainfall poses yet another problem, i.e. that of water supply.

Communal farmers depend on water from dams and boreholes. The latter is the main water supply option. Several boreholes are scattered throughout the district. There are about 68 earth-filled masonry dams, which supply water for human consumption, livestock, wild life and small-scale irrigation. The biggest dam is the Shove dam, which was completed in 1994. This dam has become a major source of fish for domestic consumption and trade. This has gone a long way to improve the standard of living of the communities in Beitbridge. There are five irrigation schemes in Beitbridge, the Shashe, Jalukanga, Bili, Khwalo and Chikwalakwala. The Ministry of Agriculture and Water Development manages these irrigation schemes. Although water is a problem in the district, the current supply in the form of dams and boreholes has helped some communal farmers to diversify their farming (BRDC Annual Report, 2001:2). A large number of these farmers are now engaged in both cattle and crop farming and this has had a positive effect in uplifting their standard of living.

The vegetation in the Beitbridge District is that which is typical of savannah grasslands with bushes and large panoply of woodlands, acacia species such as the colophosperum (mopane – the dominant tree in the district), the thorny

acacia (umbrella thorn) and the sickle bush (*dichrostachys cinera*), *Adonsonia digitata* (the baobab tree) and others. There is no information of commercially attractive trees and this remains a gray area for research. Communal areas are overgrazed and this is becoming a threat to the vegetation.

Beitbridge District has a low animal population due to extensive periods of draught, land pressure exerted by an increase in human population and subsistence poaching. Five wards seem to enjoy considerably large numbers of wild life species. These are Maramani, Machuchuta and Masera in the west, and Chipise and Dite in the east. These areas are influenced by their proximity to Botswana, South Africa's national parks and Zimbabwe's Gonarezhou National Park in the east. Wildlife species such as elephant, buffalo, lion, leopard, eland, waterbuck, nyala, zebra, kudu, impala and bushbuck are found (CAMPFIRE Report, 1996:15). The Rural District Council through the CAMPFIRE project manages this wildlife. While wildlife is a source of income for communities in these areas, it is also a source of distraction for communal farmers' agricultural produce. There are reported cases of elephants and baboons destroying crops. Lions, jackals and hyenas are also devouring livestock.

The district has several mineral deposits such as coal, diamonds, magnesium, dolomite and other precious stones. Pande mine (magnesium), Kimberlitic mine (diamonds) and Chituripasi mine (coal), which were the three major mines, were closed down during the liberation struggle for Zimbabwe in the 1970s (BRDC Natural Resources Survey Report, 1992:2) This deprived the Beitbridge communities of a meaningful source of income. Consequently, income from mining undertakings is negligible.

Beitbridge District is divided into twelve (12) Communal wards, four (4) Urban wards, two (2) Commercial wards and three (3) Resettlement wards. Altogether there are 21 wards. The population density in the communal wards is variable, ranging from 6 to 29 people per square kilometer. In some communal areas like

Dendele, Siyoka I and II, and Mtetengwe, there are concentrated settlements. In other wards, households are scattered all over the ward. This makes it difficult to provide service infrastructure for electricity, water, telephone and road communication. Table 4.2 below shows the distribution of the population according to ward, population density and the size of each ward.

Table 4.2 Population distribution per communal ward

<b>Name of the Ward</b>	<b>Hectares</b>	<b>Population</b>
Chipise	72 200	6 470
Dite I	75 400	9 400
Dite II	104 000	7 370
Mtetengwe I	52 400	6 070
Mtetengwe II	68 900	9 311
Mtetengwe III	67 200	7 412
Maramani	49 000	3 787
Masera	33 400	2 206
Machuchuta	64 000	3 558
Dendele	33 000	5 278
Siyoka I	21 900	6 359
Siyoka II	39 400	6 290
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>677 800</b>	<b>63 963</b>

Source: The BRDC Annual Report, 2001:1

Commercial areas cover more than one-third of the district, yet their population is an insignificant 5 500. Most of these people are farm workers who now live on these farms on a permanent basis. There are no specific figures to indicate how many white farmers are found in these areas. Estimates put the number at fifty (50). It is important to realize that all these commercial farming areas belong to white farmers. These farmers are engaged in ranching, safari operations, cotton farming, wheat cultivation, and citrus farming through the assistance of irrigation. These farms provide employment for the local communities. In fact, they are

considered to be the engine room of economic growth in the district.

There are three resettlement areas in the district. These cover an area of approximately 121 416 hectares. They include River Ranch, Jopembe and Shobi Block. The first two are for human resettlement and the last one is for animal grazing (Agritex Report, 1996:7). A negligible number of families have been resettled in these areas. The question is, how is this area and the people within it administered? The next section provides answers to these questions through an expose of the organization of the Beitberidge Rural District Council.

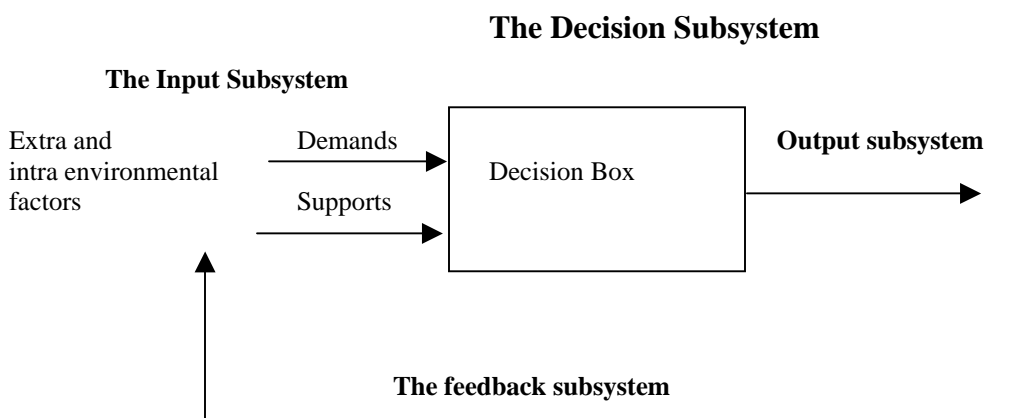
### **THE ORGANISATION OF THE BRDC**

As indicated earlier, the Beitbridge Rural District Council is a result of amalgamating the Beitbridge District Council and part of the Mwenezi-Beitbridge Rural Council. Amalgamation itself was an exercise in restructuring, reorganising and rationalising rural local government in Zimbabwe. While the transitional era (from 1980 to 1993) maintained the dual structure of rural local government that existed before independence, the current dispensation brought about by amalgamation, has merged the two structures to produce a coherent and unified structure seen as essential for enhancing community empowerment and rural development (Roe, 1992:12). Thus, it can be conclusively said that the new restructuring process has led to a new organisation system whose structure and functions should differ from the old order.

Amalgamation is not about the political regeneration of local government only. It is a coordinated, holistic and techno-political process that includes managerial, financial and service delivery transformation (Roe, 1992:12-14). This move was indeed perceived to be necessary, as it is aimed at solving problems and challenges that are facing government, especially, those to do with racial integration, autonomy, functional capacity, accountability and transparency.

The rural local government (RLG) transformation process involved what can be termed the 4Rs of organisation change (reorganisation, restructuring, rationalising, and reorientation). These Rs are intricately interwoven processes that aim to instill functional capacity to institutions. Thus, transformation entails a change process undertaken to correct and realign existing systems, processes and human resources so that they become sensitive and adaptive to the 'new way' of doing things (Swilling and Woodbridge in Fitzgerald, McLennan and Munslow, 1997:491). It is about implementing the 4Rs of change. According to Swilling and Woodbridge, the system thrust of transformation is intended to highlight the holistic approach to change. It should be looked at as a rational process of decision making aimed at dealing with the external environment of organisations, the strategic decision making apparatus, all internal dynamics of an organisation including the personnel systems, the products or output of the organisation as well as the impact these have on communities and consequently, the latter's reaction to these impacts. This can be illustrated through the open systems model, which is represented by means of a diagram as shown in Figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1 Easton's Dynamic Response Model



Source: Anderson, J. *Public Policymaking*, 1990:26

Transformation makes an attempt to revitalise the whole system. It is holistic in

nature. It is both a reactive and proactive process, driven by a rational analysis of the objective conditions of issues of governance and what can be done to improve a given situation. Within the context of rural local government processes of change in Zimbabwe, the transformation process, through amalgamation, should thus be viewed as a deliberate policy intervention, initiated by government to redress past and present anomalies in the rural local government system. Furthermore, its objective is to create systems and processes that are responsive, adaptive, efficient, effective and sustainable. According to this study, transformation should include the implementation of affirmative action, the development of employment equity practices, the introduction of people-empowering decentralisation systems, instituting an effective service-oriented ethos, change management design and infusing a new organisation culture that is intended to sustain excellence in the institution's operations.

The fact that transformation, among others, includes change management design, presupposes that it must be a deliberate, continuous or cyclic process that involves a careful analysis of problems at hand, designing intervention mechanisms, developing these mechanisms in operational terms, implementing and monitoring these interventions and evaluating the mechanisms to see if the desired change has been achieved. Where there are problems, the whole process should be started again. However, although in actual practice, such a process cannot follow a smooth cyclic pattern, its iterative nature is noted. The point is that the cyclic process provides a diagnostic and analytic tool that indicates what takes place at each stage of the design process. It is an ideal model of planning, which indicates deliberate intervention through the use of human reason, to set up systems that are geared towards redressing problems that affect a particular organisation. This study illustrates the change management process diagrammatically as shown in Figure 4.2 on page 189.

Among other explanations, transformation can be explicitly explained in terms of the four core change processes indicated above, namely restructuring,





However, changing structure alone may not be sufficient as it can result in new structures operating within old traditional values that may be inconsistent with the new ethos. What is required is an in depth system transformation that is aimed at changing the content of the structure, hence reorganisation. This means that the purpose of reorganisation is to change the internal operations of an organisation. According to this study, this includes changing decision-making traditions, communication channels, the existing culture, the nature of relationship that internal components have and the manner in which the organisation should relate to the external environment (Swilling and Woodbridge in Fitzgerald, McLennan and Munslow, 1997:490). This is both system and culture oriented change aimed at building institutional capacity.

Reorientation involves realigning the organisation with the current trends of doing things. It entails the sensitisation of an organisation to the new demands brought about by the nature of societal dynamism, economic and political changes, and continuous modernisation trends that are part of the imperatives of globalisation. It is about enhancing the capacity of an organisation to respond to the communities it serves. Thus, it is a customer or client driven strategy as well as a response to competition from other service providing institutions. It helps the organisation to keep abreast with modernity and current temperatures of governance, societal development, and efficiency and effectiveness needs. This means that reorientation is aimed at transforming the 'engine-room' of organisations, that is, its management, in order to keep it informed and able to cope with new demands that may affect organisations. Reorientation also underlines the ubiquity of change and the need to constantly evaluate existing systems to realign them with these changing trends and events.

Rationalisation involves a thorough assessment of systems to see what can be adjusted to suit the current needs of communities. It is a transformation strategy that involves change actions such as organisational downsizing, service delivery improvement, the implementation of cost reduction measures and the alignment

of such costs with the value of organisational output. It is a strategy that uses benefit cost analysis and effectiveness analysis criteria in the employment of scarce financial and human resources. To rationalize is to organise the most favourable form of production that gives the maximum yield and uses the minimum effort, time and money. It is a deliberate renewal action with the aim of making government services as efficient as possible, by means of effective actions with the economic use of funds. To this end, Swilling and Woodbridge in Fitzgerald, McLennan and Munslow (1997:490), view rationalization as the process of streamlining the size and productivity of staff so that human resource costs are commensurate with the value of the output of the organization. Thus, rationalisation includes business process re-engineering. This includes financial management redesign, service provision reorientation, information systems development and reform, and changing project management systems. It also includes reconsidering options for outsourcing service provision, structural integration, rationalising functional areas, and rightsizing. Rationalisation also calls for the formulation of implementation strategies (in this case RLG implementation strategies) with specific reference to service design and delivery, programme development, and the development of appropriate internal and external institutional arrangements that can lead to efficiency in service provision.

The focus of the rationalisation strategy indicates a clear overlap with restructuring, reorganisation and reorientation. It is about:

- building an efficient structure for making decisions and carrying out functions;
- placing emphasis on system renovation to facilitate effective utilisation of resources; and
- reconsideration of governmental activities to avoid unnecessary and wasteful duplication of functions among different governmental tiers, that

is, central government, provincial government and local government (Public Service Commission, 1997:38-39) .

As can be seen from the above explications, the 4Rs are intricately intertwined processes that complement one another in coming up with a new system of doing things. Thus, ignoring one R normally results in piecemeal changes that may serve to destabilize other processes and still render an organisation ineffective and inefficient, in the final analysis. Reference to these strategies is fundamental to the exposition of Zimbabwe's policy of amalgamating rural local government systems. This is because the aim of amalgamation among others is to develop new institutions of rural local governance that are sensitive to the changing socio-economic and political trends of this country. To highlight the importance of the 4Rs, Craythorne (1994:247) states that:

An organisation bears some semblance to the human body. it requires a structure (the skeleton); muscles to perform tasks (staff); a brain to make decisions; and nerves to communicate with the various muscles. When a body becomes sick or is injured, it does not perform properly and it has to be taken to the doctor or surgeon. If the illness is severe, drastic action is required.

This situation resembles pre-amalgamation structures. It is within this context that the Forum for Rural Development (FRD), the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), and the Government of Zimbabwe (GOZ) have combined their effort to remedy the structural problems of local government in Zimbabwe.

The mention of government here indicates that public sector transformation is mostly driven by central government. It is central government that is in charge of the public sector. In addition, revamping any aspect of government, at whatever level, would require an authoritative base of operation that can only be provided by central government. This argument acknowledges the state as a principal actor that is essentially rational and uses its authoritative base to diffuse power and mobilise public/private cooperation in charting a nation's development

initiatives. The argument is that the state as a facilitator, integrator, driver, thinker and in possession of authoritative power should create a conducive environment for mobilising varied inputs from different sources so that this information pool can be reviewed, analysed and sifted to produce what is considered best for a particular system of governance. Alford and Friedland (1992:9-10) refer to this kind of state as a development or managerial state. The authors advance the notion that the state is a dominant force within society. It is at the apex of the political system. It includes government, its coercive apparatus, and leaders of politically co-opted institutions such as business leaders, trade union leaders, leaders of opposition parties, traditional leaders and politically active intellectuals. The state's main functions are to instill order and ensure that development takes place in the whole country. From this analysis, one can indicate that the major characteristics of this state are that:

- It is dominated by elites who determine resource allocation and utilisation. Their dominance allows them to make decisions whether to centralise or decentralise power.
- The state is autonomous, coercive, and technocratic. It always negotiates with private organisations and social elites as it realises their economic and social power respectively. Behind such negotiations is the need to mobilise these institutions so that they can assist it (the state) with achieving its development agenda.
- Following the point above, the state is constrained by the complex nature of the society it leads and limited of resources. Society is complex in the sense that there are ethnic and racial cleavages, a prevalence of many poor citizens and a few who are rich, high levels of illiteracy and a lack of skills seen as essential for development.

Consequently, the state has to determine the development pace both at national

and local levels. Some of these elites are willing to decentralise while others decentralise by word and are not committed to the success of this sub-national development imperative. One would add that while many governments talk about decentralisation, their commitment to the process is suspect although they are aware of the benefits of this practice. In spite of this, it is significant to note that the state undoubtedly plays a leading role in the transformation process, guiding the national flagship while at the same time, welcoming the whole of society aboard and sharing ideas with it on how it should guide this development ship.

In the transformation process of RLG in Zimbabwe, the GOZ also took the initiative to champion this venture. The centrality of central government in these transformative and development processes does not, as indicated in the above analogy, downplay the critical role of state/civil society interactions in policy development and effectuation – what is referred to as the ‘politics of inclusion,’ which emphasizes grassroots participation in policymaking. This analogy allows one to understand the role of central government in instituting RLG transformation processes. It also allows one to understand whether central government has the commitment to uplift rural communities and drive peripheral development to new and greater heights that can lead to sustainability and the reversal of the flow of migration from rural areas to urban centres that are already reeling from the effects of overcrowding. Thirdly, it allows us to understand whether the pioneering nature of central government should just be viewed as a form of lip service to society where nothing materialises for the benefit of all or that, whatever is achieved and gained is centralised and utilized for the ultimate benefit of the former, a scenario tantamount to engaging in the politics of deceit or self-interest. In coming up with the new RDC structures, government among others, had to consider the following:

- i) The type of product or service the organisation is intended for. In this case, consideration is for an RDC that is mainly a public service provider and one capable of running business units and

projects which it could operate on its own or, in conjunction with other interested parties (creating partnerships and contracting out).

- ii) The nature of human resources that can be employed to service the organisation. The question is, should the organisation rely on specialists or generalists? What departments should it have and what is the nature of personnel who should run these departments?
- iii) The number of operating units the organisation needs taking into cognisance efficiency and effectiveness considerations (organisation centralisation and decentralisation imperatives).
- iv) The basic administrative unit which may be organised in one of two ways, that is, either:
  - a) the work may be divided up into functional stages of horizontal levels, each of which is assigned to an individual official or group of officials acting as specialists on that part of the work which flows in the process from one group to another; or
  - b) the work may be divided into units in such a way that each official or group of officials deals with all processes needed to complete the task of the unit, which in this way is divided vertically and assigned to the subsections on an alphabetical or numerical basis (Craythorne, 1994:250).
- v) The type of Chief Executive Officer needed. Ideally he/she should, as the name suggests, be the chief decision maker of all administrative issues and tasked with a coordination function where he/she facilitates contacts with different departments and arranges meetings to discuss policy matters. The effectiveness with which

he/she exercises his/her functions depends on his/her personality and the craft literacy and craft competence he/she has in relation to the organisation where he/she is chief.

- vi) The nature of structure required, that is, whether it be a flat or steep hierarchical structure.
- vii) The type of organisation system required, that is, whether it should be an open or relatively closed system.

Altogether, fifty-seven RDCs were established to take charge of rural life, estimated to be about 70% of Zimbabwe's national population of 11 000 000 people (Leistner and Cornwell, 1996:125). The estimates for 2001 put the figure at 13 million people. A brief analysis of the composition of the fifty seven-RDCs indicates that they are a result of an amalgamation of former Rural Councils (RCs) made up of the large white commercial farming sectors. These were white dominated and included urban settlements established to oversee the administration of these commercial areas as well as act as local commercial centres. These areas were administered through the Rural Councils Act, 1980. The RCs had reasonable autonomy, as compared to their counterparts, DCs (Namusi, 1998:12). In fact they had all the characteristics of devolution and their administration was considered to be more efficient and effective.

The RCs were combined with former District Councils (DCs). These DCs were made up of communal lands, which were divided into small-scale commercial farming areas (former African Purchase Areas and Tribal Trust Land) and resettlement areas (Former commercial farming areas bought by government to resettle landless peasants). District Councils were established through the District Councils Act, Chapter 231 of 1980. These were established to revitalise the former African Councils that existed before independence in 1980. District Councils were dominated by government as witnessed by the fact that District



Administrators were the Chief Executive Officers of these local authorities (Namusi, 1998:13). A further breakdown of these RDCs into wards indicates a clear aerial diversity of these local institutions. Each RDC can be found to have some or all of the following wards: large scale commercial farming and/or mining wards. These are wards located within the commercial farming sector or mines as the case may be. Within them, however, are large numbers of workers who are disenfranchised, as they do not own the land they live on. In order to ensure that these workers are represented in council, a system of appointing representatives has been adopted where the Minister of Local Government and National Housing (MOLGAHN) uses his discretion to select such representatives. These farms and mines form what is known as 'special interest areas' and the appointed councillors are known as 'special interest councillors'. Section 31 of the Rural District Councils Act, 1996 (Revised), provides for the appointment of councilors for special interest areas. Section 31(1) indicates that after RDC elections, the Minister, by notice in writing addressed to the Chief Executive Officer of the council concerned shall appoint such number of persons to be councilors as he may have fixed in terms of Section 11. This Section (Section 11) states that each council shall consist of:

- a) One elected councilor for each ward of the council area; and
- b) Such number of appointed councilors representing special interest, not exceeding one-quarter of the number of elected councilors, as the minister may fix in respect of the council by statutory instrument.

This number may vary from time to time as long as it does not exceed one-quarter. Beitbridge Rural District Council has two areas with appointed councilors under these conditions. An RDC can also have small-scale commercial farming wards. These are mainly composed of black farmers who own farms that were designated as African Purchase Areas during the colonial days. These are small in scale in that they do not have much farming infrastructure in place, partly

because of the discriminatory nature of loan procurement that existed during the colonial era. It was difficult for a black farmer to get a loan from a bank or government, as he/she would be asked to produce collateral security, which he/she did not have. However, his/her counterpart, the white farmer did not have to go through this rigorous process as he could use his land as collateral. Most of these farms (small scale farming areas) were family dependent plots with not even a tractor to assist the farmer in tilling the land. This means that for most of the labour, the farmer depended on the family's manual labour and drought power from his cattle and donkeys.

Resettlements wards can also be found in an RDC. This is independent Zimbabwe's development. These wards came into being through the land acquisition process, where central government bought some commercial farms, mostly those that were not productive. These farms were bought to resettle landless people after independence. The farms lacked the necessary infrastructure like roads, schools, business centres and any forms of communication with the 'civilised world'. As a result, people who were resettled in these areas experienced problems in making a living, as they did not have any animals, like cattle and donkeys to depend on for farming. It is not surprising that up to this day, most resettlement areas approximate communal areas or are even worse off, in terms of development. Those resettlement areas that are bordering communal areas have been invaded by the communal folk and now face the same problems of land degradation being experienced in communal areas.

The other important type of ward that can be found in an RDC is a communal ward. Communal wards are basically wards located in the former Tribal Trust Lands brought about by the Land Apportionment Act of 1930. These areas are mostly overpopulated with black Zimbabweans who are economically poor. These wards are home to the millions of Zimbabwe's peasantry. It is within these areas that the majority blacks are supposed to determine their development and

change. It should also be noted that communal areas, apart from being conspicuous by their large population, are easily noticeable by their aridness, poor rainfall patterns, overgrazing, and their general failure to support the peasant population. Altogether there are twelve wards in Beitbridge as outlined earlier (Roe, 1992:5).

Finally, RDCs have urban wards. These are located in the local urban centres, which grew up as administrative and commercial establishments during the colonial era. Most of these centers have not attained town status, although they are frequently referred to as towns because of their urban characteristics. They have an ever growing urban population and elaborate housing schemes. They are the nuclei of rural development and hubs of peripheral commercial enterprises. Most of these are now referred to as 'Growth Points' pending their upgrading into being towns. Growth points are rural centres that are being developed by government to serve as administrative and commercial centres for rural areas. These centers are 'mini towns' so to speak. The growth points are expected to act as coordinating points for rural development. Over time, one would expect them grow into towns. Wards in these areas are administered by what are called town boards. These are committees composed of councillors tasked with the responsibility to oversee the development of these centres.

According to the RDC Act of 1988, Part IV Section 28, each ward elects a councillor who becomes the ward's representative in council. These councillors, together with the appointed councillors constitute the RDC's lawmaking body. It is also important to indicate that among the appointed councillors, there are traditional leaders. These are the custodians of the culture of the black people. Before the colonial era, they were the traditional heads of tribal groupings within the country. Colonialism failed to completely destroy these African leaders and their structures. It only managed to subordinate them for the benefit of colonialists. They are Zimbabwe's cultural heritage and will remain intact for the foreseeable future.

In a bid to pacify these leaders or offer them formal recognition as paramount in post-colonial development, the GOZ has recognized them and has worked relentlessly to integrate them into modern structures of governance. In fact, some of the chiefs are appointed as Members of Parliament where they are expected to air their views on issues related to tradition and black culture. This enables traditional leadership to be represented at both the national and local levels. Section 11 and 31 as indicated earlier, provides for their appointment. The issue of appointed councillors raises controversy from the beginning as it is about people who are disenfranchised within a given area, yet local autonomy, self-determination and democracy are pronounced as the reasons for coming up with devolved local government structures.

Apart from the aerial and legislative composition of each RDC, the Rural District Councils Act of 1988, Part VII, VIII and IX provide for an administrative system that is made up of council committees and a council bureaucracy headed by a Chief Executive Officer. Part VIII of the Act provides for the establishment of Committees. These include the Finance Committee, Area Committee, Town Boards, Ward Development Committee, Roads Committee, Rural District Development Committee, Natural Resource and Provision for the Conservation Committee, and a provision for others as approved by the Minister (stipulated in Section 62). The RDC bureaucracy is drawn from the two amalgamated councils (DCs and RCs). The process of establishing the RDC's bureaucracy was reasonably smooth, as no serving employee was dismissed or laid off. The Chief Executive Officer is an appointee of Council. However, his appointment is subject to the Minister's approval. This is stipulated in Section 66, which also discusses the appointment of other council staff. Consequently, it is not possible for this person to be a member of the opposition party, unless he/she becomes such a member after his/her appointment. On appointment in 1993, the Chief Executive Officer relieved the District Administrator who acted as CEO during the amalgamation period. Appendix II shows the map of Beitbridge District with all

the wards, their numbers and names.

Part X of the Rural District Councils Act of 1988 outlines the powers and duties of RDCs. While the Act specifies certain powers, it also provides for additions to such powers by the responsible Minister as he/she sees fit. This means that a council can incur expenses for the purpose of executing the powers and duties allocated to it. Fundamental to this process, is that the council has power to:

- a) establish and regulate a sewerage system in an urban area;
- b) award title deeds to individuals who purchase land and its area of jurisdiction;
- c) promote development within its area;
- d) prepare among others, annual development plans;
- e) monitor the implementation of policies and plans;
- f) scrutinize the annual district development plan prepared by the district development committee. Consequently, the council can approve, amend, or modify such plans;
- g) forward district development plans to the provincial development authority;
- h) charge those who own property within the council area, for services rendered by council;
- i) levy taxes, rent, and so on for the issuance of certificates, licenses, permits, and inspections within its area. It can also fix rent for property let by council to individuals and companies; and fix deposits for services

- provided by council;
- j) acquire land within or outside its area but with the written consent of the minister;
  - k) enter into contracts with other agencies for the purpose of enhancing its performance;
  - l) receive, analyse, approve or reject tenders;
  - m) engage in income generating projects of a commercial, industrial and agricultural nature;
  - n) establish cooperatives to carry out any commercial, industrial, or other activities that it considers as important for its members. The council can assist such cooperatives with funds. However, the Minister has to provide written approval for such actions;
  - o) enter into cooperation with the State, other local authorities and persons for the betterment of the council and communities within its area. As a practice, the Minister should give his approval for such activities; and
  - p) make, execute and repeal by-laws. Once council has resolved to pass a by-law, it has to submit such a law to the Minister for approval. The Minister may decide to publish such by-laws as he sees fit.

Just like all other RDCs in Zimbabwe, the Beitbridge Rural District Council is expected to have been performing these duties and functions since 1993. The question is, has it managed to do so in line with council and community expectations or it has performed below this level? Are communities, councillors, the provincial administration, MOLGAHN and central government pleased with

BRDC's performance? This can only be ascertained through carrying out performance measures on issues considered to be important in gauging the accomplishments of BRDC. The question is, what is performance measurement and on what issues should one focus when measuring a local authority's performance? What follows is an attempt to answer these questions.

## **PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

The 1990s have seen a lot of criticisms leveled against the public sector. This is mostly attributed to the poor performance of this sector during the 1970s and 1980s. During this time, it has been observed that the public sector particularly, in developing countries, lacked accountability and responsiveness. Communities received what the centre determined. There were very few attempts to mobilise communities so that they could participate meaningfully in their own development (Kaul, 2000:2). Participation was mostly at the programme implementation stage. This meant that whether the programme was seen as meaningful or not by communities, they had to see it through. They had to comply with decisions made by the centre. Non-compliance would lead to sanctions that were too ghastly to contemplate. Thus, whatever government departments did, communities could not ask the former to answer for their actions. This means that communities were, to an extent, subservient to functionaries of these institutions (Kaul, 2000:2-5).

Apart from lacking in responsiveness and accountability, the public sector was known for inefficiency and ineffectiveness. This has mostly been through bureaucratic ineptitude, the pursuit of self-interest by government functionaries, nepotistic tendencies, and a lack of foresight (Hughes, 1994:91). As a result, there has been wide spread resource misuse and the conception and implementation of programmes and projects that were not viable. A telling picture of this inefficiency can be seen from the performance of parastatals in several

African countries. Instead of mobilising resources for government through the profits they were expected to make, most of these entities became a conduit for resource drain. These parastatals were being subsidised on an annual basis, and their mammoth losses were continuously being written off through government grants. This has reduced the capacity of the state to concentrate on other community oriented development projects. Consequently, the state failed to effectively offer services to communities. Whatever, was offered has been inadequate and unfairly distributed among these communities. This has exacerbated development inequities that have led to abject poverty at grass-roots level. This situation is now proving difficult to undo.

Many governments have noticed these negative results and have adopted agendas to try and correct this situation of non-performance. The current wish is to instill democracy and good government, in order to be able to serve society well. The Commonwealth (a group of countries that were colonies of Great Britain, Great Britain itself and other countries who have opted to join this group of countries) has come up with an elaborate programme to assist in enhancing the performance of member states. Concrete efforts started rolling in 1991 when the Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOG) met in Harare. At this summit, CHOG noted that the public services of member states were under-performing and this led to continued poverty and underdevelopment in these countries. Consequently, they issued a communiqué that was intended to instill democracy and good government in these countries. The communiqué reads:

We pledge the Commonwealth and our countries to work with renewed vigour, concentrating in ...(inter alia) democratic processes and institutions which reflect national circumstances, the rule of law and independence of the judiciary, just and honest government (Harare Communiqué of CHOG, October, 1991:1).

A similar communiqué was issued in Cyprus in 1993. It reads:

Heads of Government ... reaffirmed, inter alia, their commitment to democracy, fundamental human rights, the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary, and just and honest government, as essential ingredients of the Commonwealth's fundamental political



values (The Cyprus Communiqué of CHOG, October, 1993:1).

The emphasis of these communiqués was on building democracy, entrenching the rule of law in their systems, ensuring the independence of the judiciary, promoting human rights, and just and honest government. In November 1995, CHOG endorsed the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Secretariat, Chief Emeka Anyaoku's initiative entitled "Towards a New Public Administration" (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1996:5). This initiative was aimed at assisting member countries in their efforts to improve the performance of their public services. Pursuant to this initiative, the Secretary-General indicated that the changing responsibilities of government required a radical reshaping of the public service. These responsibilities required governments to position themselves strategically to deal with global socio-economic competitiveness and customer needs. According to him, these could be met if the old equation of government was replaced by the new equation of government which requires value added production, open markets, dynamic enterprises, a skilled workforce, delivery of service that are consistent with public expectations, and financial prudence. To this, the Commonwealth Secretariat (1996:6) indicates that:

In the new equation of government, the public service is no longer seen as a constant, to be taken for granted when things are working well. The role of the public service has entered the equation as a key variable, particularly its ability to deliver the economic and regulatory services that underpin competitive success. In this equation, rising public expectations, previously seen as a drain on the resources of government, are now to be seen as one of the drivers of quality services.

Thus, the need for the competitiveness of government institutions has taken centre stage in this era of globalisation. Government institutions find themselves entering the new equation of government as vital agencies for the promotion of democratic good governance, quality service provision and enhancing the capacity of communities to participate proactively in their own development. This new equation is different from the old or apparently, traditional equation whose emphasis was on primary production, managed markets, a stable workforce,

public acceptance of institutions of government without question and the ability of governments to know what the people want, thereby deciding on the mixture of goods and services for different communities. This led to non-performance. The conviction is that the new equation of government would inherently lead to socio-economic and political success in member countries. A comparison of the two equations of government is shown in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 A comparison of the old and new equations of government

The old equation of government	The new equation of government
Economic and competitive success = Primary production <i>plus</i> managed markets <i>plus</i> industrial capacity <i>plus</i> stable workforce <i>plus</i> public acceptance of the institutions of government <i>minus</i> public expectations	Economic and competitive success = value-added production <i>plus</i> open markets <i>plus</i> dynamic enterprise <i>plus</i> skilled workforce <i>plus</i> public expectations of quality services <i>plus</i> responsive public service <i>minus</i> public expenditure

Source: The Commonwealth Secretariat, 1996:6

It is significant to indicate that the new equation of government is not limited to central government institutions only, but echoes through all institutions whether they be parastatals, provincial government institutions or local government institutions. Although the new equation of a government is a remarkable prescription for good governance, its success would depend on how different each governments implement it.

In order to promote this new equation of government, public agencies find it imperative to incorporate performance measurement systems so that they can convincingly assess their capacity and progress towards meeting these cherished goals. It is these measures that can help them to determine their

strengths and shortcomings and consequently, enable them to develop capacity enhancing initiatives that would catapult them to greater heights of performance. This means that establishing performance measurement standards is not much of a witch-hunting exercise where the interest is to find faults and show how bad one agency is compared to others in a similar business. Instead, it is very much a tool for capacity building used by both the private and public sector institutions (Hughes, 1994:205-206). To this, one should note that if performance indicators are comparable or represented to be comparable to other institutions, then, it is possible for one to check the performance of his/her agency against others. He/she can then determine whether his/her agency is performing well or not. This is important if one wants to improve the performance of the agency of concern.

From this, it is evident that even nascent institutions like the BRDC need to gauge their progress, successes and failures. In fact, it should be realised that the need to measure is part of human life. People measure children when they are born to determine their weight, height, and temperature among others. These measurements become a basis for determining the rate at which the child should grow and whether the child needs medication to correct some anomalies that have been detected. When people want to loose or gain weight they have to continuously measure ourselves to see if we are changing for the better or worse. When children are at school, assignments and tests are given to them. These act as a measure of our intellect and ability to understand what has been taught. Joy is derived when after continuous measurement improvement is noted. Lack of improvement may first leave people dismayed but later it may spur them on until they achieve their cherished goals.

From the above, it can be easily ascertained, that even at an organisational level, the measurement of the performance of an agency is vital. It only helps the agency to strive for better results. Thus, performance measurement is a process that organisations use to ascertain the level at which they are carrying out their tasks in order to meet set objectives. It is also an attempt to find out whether the

organisation is meeting certain standards, be they quantitatively or qualitatively defined. For example, achieving a profit of \$ 20 000 per day; serving 200 customers per day; treating 1 000 patients per day; or building 500 low-income houses per year, are quantitative standards that are easy to measure. On the other hand, if the objective is to improve service provision, ensure that development takes place, or to provide clean air or security to the residents, it is difficult to develop concrete standards and this makes it even harder to use performance measurement criteria to determine success in concrete terms. These rather broad and vague objectives are said to characterise the public sector. As a result, the use of performance measurement in this sector has been delayed.

However, whatever the case, performance measurement is an invaluable asset for institutions. It provides answers to performance questions that can be posed by individuals, management and communities (DeJesus, 2001:3). It makes it easy to pinpoint difficulties and create solutions to deal with them. It helps managers to initiate change and even get support for such change initiatives from senior managers and subordinates. Through performance measurement, it is easy to understand one's organisation and its human resources better. Such information can be used to motivate employees to exert more effort in their duties. It can also motivate managers to develop new systems that can enhance the performance of their organisations.

Going through reports detailing how other agencies have performed overtime, can bring benefits to an agency. Such comparative information acts as a cross pollinating agent for managers who may want to emulate or do better than these organisations. Thus, performance measurement may also enhance an agency's competitive spirit and the need to survive and be at the cutting edge of excellence. The contention in this study is that performance measurement:

- can be used as a diagnostic tool to reveal specific areas that fall below

- acceptable limits.
- can be used to justify programmes and projects.
  - can lead to staff promotion or a raise in salary.
  - makes it easy to develop cost saving mechanisms.
  - can serve as a marketing tool for an entire organisation, highlighting savings and achievements.

While performance measurement was carried out on an ad hoc basis and specifically when there was a crisis, it has now become an integral part of an organisation's life. In some organisations, performance measurement is done routinely at monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly or every six months. However, others carry out such measurements once a year. In addition, DeJesus (2001:4) says that making a commitment to performance measurement:

... makes everyone 's job easier. First it keeps organisations and their projects on target, so less time is wasted on off-goal activities. Second, problems become apparent before they get out of control. Finally, the spirit of performance measurement with its orientation toward professionalism and results sets the tone for the organisation's programmes – people are aimed for success and positive accomplishments.

In the same manner, DeJesus concludes by emphasizing that:

Performance measurement exists to support change and activate creative solutions. Taking a proactive role toward performance measurement results in numbers that can improve your department, your organisation and your careers. Improvement often can appear rapidly, as well as form a foundation for long term and sustainable progress (2001:4).

It is with this perception that the need to gauge performance is seen as important in this study. Whatever the perception though, this analysis indicates that performance measurement is critical to the operational success of any institution. More so to local government institutions that are facing shrinking central government grants and an ever-increasing demand for services from communities. However, the question is, if performance measurement is vital, even in local government, what exactly can be measured?

Mukwena (1999:46), in his analysis of performance measurement in local government, tries to answer this question in the context of local government institutions in Zambia. In his analysis, the author confirms the need to measure performance of local government units. Mukwena indicates that such measurement should focus on the objectives to be achieved (effectiveness) and the capacity of local authorities to mobilise resources and offer a certain mixture of services within the existing financial constraints (efficiency). Mukwena also notes that for performance measurement to be meaningful, it should take place where there are appropriate systems of monitoring, reporting and record keeping. Mukwena's analysis supports Flyn (1986:393) who indicates that any optimal local government performance measures should focus on effectiveness and efficiency.

There is, of course, general agreement that measuring the performance of public sector institutions is rather difficult (Hughes, 1994:208). Firstly, the difficulty stems from the fact that there is no agreement as to the standard measures of performance that can be used in local government. This is unlike in the private sector where profits, volume of sales, output per employee, sales growth, earnings per share, changes in stock price and return on investment can be used (Mukwena, 1999:47). Secondly, it may be a consequence of lack of the goals to be achieved such that people can interpret these differently. Thirdly, it may be a lack of political commitment to establish standard measures for local authorities and fourthly, because of the nature of services provided by local authorities. For example, where public goods are provided, it is difficult to come up with a narrowly defined performance criterion.

While the concentration of most scholars is on efficiency and effectiveness measures, this study broadens the horizon of local government performance measurement to include equity, responsiveness and adequacy as integral components of this imperative. The need for equity measures stems from the

realisation that in Zimbabwe, communities in communal areas were marginalised. These communities occupied land that was not suitable for sustaining farming enterprises, yet these people were supposed to survive through animal and crop farming. Besides, these semi-arid regions were overpopulated and overgrazed, thereby diminishing their chances of offering a better livelihood to the communal folk. In fact, the communities' condition of abject poverty is a result of the type of land that was allocated to them through the draconian Land Apportionment Act of 1993 as explained earlier in the study. The question is, what have RDCs put in place to try to address this problem?

Another second important issue to consider is that side by side with communal farmers can be found white commercial farmers with vast lands some of which are not utilised fully. These white owned farms, particularly in the Beitbridge District, are sparsely populated and enjoy a concentration of basic resources that are critical for district development. These include an abundant water supply, irrigation infrastructure, vast grasslands for grazing cattle, well maintained roads, electricity and telephonic services. Now that the two are part of the same Rural District Council, are the two people who were separated by apartheid policies now sharing the benefits of these local resources, or is access and benefit accumulation still skewed? What has the RDC done to try to equalise resource distribution and development? One, of course, would expect many distributive and redistributive policies to be in place, to advantage the formerly disadvantaged folk but without seriously harming those who were advantaged. If these policies are there, are they fair and reasonable?

From the above, it can be seen that equity has to do with issues of social justice and fairness. Thus, equity measures the manner in which the effects of policy efforts have been fairly distributed among members of the community. Once this is achieved one expects a reduction in hostility and pressures of animosity, harboured by the two ethnic groups toward each other. In fact, one of the fundamental purposes of amalgamation was to allow blacks and whites in one

district to coexist as brothers and sisters, equally enjoying the benefits offered by their locality. While it is appropriate to achieve equity, the problem is that it is difficult to tell whether one has managed to distribute or redistribute resources fairly. However, John Rawl's utilitarian justice idea is that a social welfare situation is preferable if it results in a gain in welfare for members of society who are worse off (Dunn, 1994:330). The target here is the oppressed masses and the poor. Once they are made to gain, then the distribution or redistribution is fair. This is, indeed, the basis of equity in this study.

Responsiveness highlights the ability of a policy to provide a mixture of services that is satisfactory to those who need them. Such a provision can only take place if communities are empowered and have the capacity to make decisions on issues that affect them. These people should be capable of making demands to the RDC, which should become an instrument for satisfying the needs of these people. This can only happen if there is a system of organic planning that is encapsulated in participatory discourse theories. This means that to be responsive, the local authority should engage local communities in policy discourse and planning. This does not only humanize communities but it gives them a chance to say what they want and prioritise these needs as a basis for policy.

Adequacy is a measure of the extent to which a solution or selected option satisfies the needs, values, preferences and opportunities of communities (Dunn, 1994:271). Thus, a course of action is satisfactory to those concerned if it is in line with set objectives and manages to meet these. Note should be taken that this is not the same as effectiveness. Effectiveness focuses on objectives while adequacy focuses on satisfying those who were affected by a given problem, that is, whether the problem is satisfactorily and sufficiently solved is the focal point here. Communities may be provided with services such as water, electricity, telephones, education and health facilities. But the question would be, is the community satisfied with these services? The adequacy criterion helps the study



to determine these levels of satisfaction. The BRDC has made inroads in providing a host of services to the Beitbridge communities. The question is, are these services sufficient or are there any deficiencies that can still be noted? The five-criterion approach to local government performance measurement offers a rather holistic framework that can provide meaningful information for programme support or for the generation of innovative and creative ideas for enhancing the performance of the district. In order to carry out these measurement exercises, the study focuses on three variables: democratic participation; service provision; and managerial excellence. What follows is an analysis of each of these three foci and an indication of their relevance to this study and performance measurement in the BRDC.

## **DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT**

The concept of democracy has assumed centre stage in all development literature in the Third World. Even donor agencies, international financial institutions like the IMF and the World Bank, and governments of developed countries who wish to provide aid to developing countries emphasize this concept before they can give any assistance. Any developing country that does not convincingly apply the principles of democracy in its governance process may actually be denied such aid (Wanyanda in Hyden, Olowu and Ogendo (2000:242).

All regimes in Africa have realized that the transition to democracy is inevitable. In fact, it is key to their development and prosperity. Without delving too much into the explications of this concept, this study adopts Ntalaja (1997:5-9)'s approach to analysing this concept. In his analysis, Ntalaja (1997:5) indicates that democracy is a political concept premised on value, process, and practice. The value premise indicates that democracy is a moral value demanded by all freedom-loving human beings. It is an aspiration of all who want a better socio-political order that protects humanity and advances the interests of the latter. The

thriving of individuals is to feel free and be able to strive for a better life. Any regime that advances and protects this project is democratic. Democracy, as a value also encapsulates issues of tolerance of one another, acknowledging people's diversity and the ability of these people to coexist harmoniously amidst diversity.

Democracy as a social process is viewed as the tendency of a political system to continuously promote equal access to fundamental human rights and liberties such as:

- the fundamental right to life and security;
- the fundamental right to basic socio-economic necessities of life;
- the freedom to worship, assemble, express oneself, move and associate with others; and
- the freedom and right to engage in self-determining endeavours that raise one's consciousness to remake his/her world while acting within the confines of social parameters (Ntalaja, 1997:7).

Thus, according to Ntalaja (1997:7), democracy becomes that social process through which people strive to expand these rights within a given political order and seek to promote and defend them effectively, in line with notions of the social contract of humans. It is acknowledged that most African countries have failed in this agenda. These countries have not managed to promote and expand human rights and freedoms. Economic development and social justice have remained an illusion. Self-determination is a far cry from being in place. People are inundated with programmes and projects emanating from political leaders. The communities are not given the opportunity to determine and pursue programmes related to their own priorities. Consequently, there has been a decline in the standard of living of the people and gross social inequities. The process of promoting the standard of living of people and addressing social inequities has now become a priority for democratic good governance and social stability.

Democracy as practice implies a way of organising and exercising power in a given polity. A democratic exercise of power hinges on legitimacy or authority emanating from the people; the rule of law where government power and authority are defined to allow others space of socio-economic and political action; respect for other institutions of government like the judiciary; enhancing accountability; guarding the right of citizens to participate in the management of public affairs; and protecting the rights of people to change a government that no longer serves their interest (Dye, 2001:13)

Combined, these three: value, process and practice, produce a holistic type of democracy cherished by all free nations. All regimes in Africa have realised that the transition to democracy is inevitable. Even authoritarian regimes have now started processes leading to the re-democratisation of their political systems. This transition process is premised on the following theoretical foundations, which can be attributed to Leftwich (1994:371-373)'s analysis of 'governance, the state and politics of development' in the Third World.

- a) The self-realisation or functional theory. This means that authoritarian regimes sooner or later realise that their systems are not sustainable. Their methods, functional needs and operational modes become outdated. Invariably, they create tension and conflict among the ruling elite, i.e. conflict that can actually destroy these regimes. In the long run, they tend to accept the need to democratise their institutions and political dispositions to enhance humanity and people's participation in government.
  
- b) The loss of legitimacy theory. Overtime, authoritarian regimes tend to lose legitimacy. This scenario lowers their ability to survive and perpetuate themselves. Once the pillars of community support begin falling apart, the regime's life is threatened. Its ability to rise from such a situation becomes dependent on it embarking on a process of re-

democratisation.

- c) The international and foreign pressure theory. International pressure emanating from financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF, developed countries, and Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), may force authoritarian regimes to capitulate from their anti-democratic agendas. These external pressures reduce the regimes' external support in terms of ideological comradeship and military assistance. Ultimately, the regimes' backbones may begin to crack thereby opening up avenues for re-democratisation.

A closer look at these theories indicates that each cannot adequately explain the movement of African countries towards democracy. One would rather propose an integrated theoretical approach. This is because African initiatives towards democracy are driven by a complexity of factors, both internal and external to the state. It should be realised that most oppressive regimes have functioned under the direct tutelage and advice of neocolonial forces that have benefited tremendously from Africa's misrule. However, as soon as they see that the predisposition of the regime is becoming a threat to their self-interest, they are quick to dissociate themselves from it and begin pressuring it to embrace democracy. Thus, their 'push for democracy' is not premised on their interest in African communities, but on that of furthering self-interest, that is, that their interests cannot be fulfilled under a situation of political turmoil. Of course, some political analysts tend to deny this type of analogy and one can only say that this is nothing but a denial of reality.

African societies have suffered considerably under oppressive regimes so that they have realised that it is incumbent upon them to install governments that derive power from them. Thus, the process of change towards democracy and development should be for Africans and should be driven by them. Through this realization, revolutionary actions initiated by the masses and armed forces have

been witnessed, and cleavages within the ruling parties have been noticed. All these, one can argue, have led to managed-transitions to democracy. Hence, the need to adopt an integrated theoretical framework to try and understand democratic processes in Africa.

It is significant to realize, however, that the concept of democracy is not a national government concept only. Instead, it pervades all institutions of government, be it at regional/provincial or local/district level. In fact, it has been used to bring about devolved local government structures in many developing countries. This is because devolved decentralisation is designed to allow greater representation in council from different ethnic groups and people of different socio-economic status. It is also expected to expedite direct participation in issues of governance by the local people hence, the term 'democratic local government'.

From the above, one can see that there can be no talk of democracy without reference to participation. The two are intricately intertwined, as a measure of freeing people and allowing them to determine their development process. The heart of democracy lies in civil society. There are two Zimbabwean proverbs that also indicate the need for participation in any democratic polity: 'The river is only important because of the streams that feed it' and 'A king is a king only through the contributions of every citizen around him.' In the same vein, Pacere in Hofmeister and Scholz, (1996:221) indicates that:

National construction cannot come about without the constructive participation of the lower structures, namely, the towns, communes, villages, rural communities and civil society, which are alongside the holders of power and the constituent bodies.

The words "participation", "popular participation", "community participation", "people's participation", and "democratic participation" are often used interchangeably in current development parlance. Community participation is an active process by which beneficiary/client groups influence the direction and

execution of a development project with a view to enhancing their well being in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance or other values they cherish (Campbell and Marshall (2000:321). Community participation involves a dynamic process of mobilizing communities to take part in the socio-economic and political activities of their locality or country, making them effective participants and beneficiaries of the collective decisions that have been made and implemented (Lennon in Fitzgerald, McLennan and Munslow, 1997:120-121). This kind of participation, also referred to as democratic participation focuses on:

- involving people to contribute to the development process;
- involving communities in decision making in respect of goal-setting, policy formulation, planning, implementation of social programmes and projects and evaluating them; and
- allowing people to share equitably in the benefits derived from this development.

These factors can only be meaningfully achieved where there is a devolved local government system. In a democratic local government system there is a transfer of responsibility and authority for self-governance to local communities rather than the local bodies as representatives of the people. In this case, the communities wield actual power and local institutions become highly accessible and accountable to these communities. According to Blair (1998:1-3), these local citizens enjoy full political rights and liberty. These citizens have the consciousness to determine the composition of council and the mixture of goods and services council should provide to them. In this case, the flow of decision information should be bi-directional rather than uni-directional between the people and their representatives at the local level. Thus, the notion of democratic local government (DLG) has been advocated for what it is and for what it does or what it should do, that is, as a process or end-in-itself and as a means to further ends, in this case the outputs of DLG. On the process side, at the heart of the DLG rationale are the twin ideas that it will enhance meaningful citizen's participation in governmental activity that affects them and that it will improve

people's ability to hold local government to account for how it is affecting them (Campbell and Marshall, 2000:321-323). This means that DLG can lead to increased popular input into the activities of local government at the same time, it can increase popular control, that is, the ability of local communities to take charge of what local government has done or is expected to do. On the output side, DLG can be justified in that it can improve local service delivery and contribute significantly to poverty reduction. This means that DLG has the capacity to empower the local people, protect them and enhance their resolve to improve the quality of their lives.

It is evident that the history of rural local government in Zimbabwe, particularly black rural local government, was not about the promotion of local democracy. It was mainly a governance system put in place to advance the process of controlling and subjugating blacks within the confines of the 'whiteman's rule' that was evident at the time. Thus, in the 1960s and 1970s, black rural local government in Zimbabwe was placed under the Ministry of Internal Affairs who was able to monitor what was going on in black areas and if there was something suspiciously contrary to the interests of the whites, the Minister would undertake measures to swiftly end the 'deviant behavior' since he also controlled the police force. Rural local government institutions were actually established by this Ministry. Consequently, more than two hundred small and fragmented local authorities were set up. These were deliberately made smaller so that they could be weak. This in a way, was a move to avoid them becoming 'centres of power,' a situation that was considered detrimental to white rule.

This approach to rural local governance has since changed, hence the consolidation of African Councils into 57 RDCs only. Nowadays, the political thrust of rural local government, among others, is to mobilize community participation for developmental purposes. It involves a process where communities are involved in planning, implementing and evaluating policies, programmes and projects that affect them. Thus, devolved local government is

premised on this need for community involvement. Without it, there is no decentralization. There are many forms of community participation in which rural local government in Zimbabwe should be interested. According to this study, there are several aspects of participation that are critical.

- i. Participation where councillors consult with the people in their constituencies (wards), specifically on development issues in order to enable people to air their views on what they would like to have done in their localities to improve their quality of life. This consultative process allows communities to input their opinions on issues of development. It also helps raise community interest in local development matters that make it easy for RDCs to launch programmes and projects of a local nature. In fact, the talk of “government of the people, for the people, and by the people” can never be meaningful without community participation. Thus, the sustainability of democracy is dependent on people’s participation in matters of governance and self-determination.
- ii. Participation where communities take part in providing labour and sometimes finance for major infrastructural development projects like dam and road construction. This input by the community is vital as it can have the effect of cost reduction to the implementing agent. It also gives people that degree of ownership of the project that makes them want to contribute more each time there is a project to be implemented in the localities. Of importance to note here, is that such a process raises the level of responsibility of the local communities.
- iii. Participation where people are mobilized into development councils or committees so as to encourage them to come up with their own projects and seek funding from NGOs and other donor communities



or even finance houses for the purpose of implementing their projects. RDCs come into this process to try and help people secure the needed finances and then help these people in the management of their projects. This participation helps to build the much-needed entrepreneurial skills of local communities. It should also be noted that these councils or committees such as WADCOs, VIDCOs and Youth Councils also act as local assemblies, which apart from giving people participative fora, also help to train people in issues of governance and political discourse. This is helpful to those who acquire higher political offices in future.

- iv. Participation where those who manage the process of development realize the need to mobilize ideas from different sections of members of the community. This is important, as it makes these managers realize the heterogeneity of society and makes them inclined to mobilize these differences as a source for varied ideas that are a vital input for decision making.
  
- v. Participation where local communities choose their own councillors through the electoral process. For these elections to be meaningful to the people, and the whole democratic process, there has to be minimal interference from central government in local electoral processes. If for example, the political leadership decides on candidates for the party in each locality, this effectively means communities have no power of making local choices. The result is a local authority full of party representatives who owe their allegiance to the 'top brass' in the party rather than those communities who elected them to these positions. This defeats the whole concept of DLG, as the fundamentals of democracy will have been violated. Elections would just have been a process of authenticating party candidates. However, where local choice is made for primaries and

actual elections for councilors, communities would have been given the much-needed autonomy for self-determination. This also increases the capacity of council to function with clear local objectives in mind rather than with divided focus, which includes a focus on those who had the political clout to push incumbent councillors into their positions.

Thus, the electoral process provides individual choice, which is vital for democracy. Moyo (1992:6-7) explores the issue of electoral choice and consent and tries to show how different scholars view these issues. Moyo's analysis shows that choice and consent go hand in hand. However, there are situations when people consent to choices made by others, such as for example, when people consent to institutional arrangements made by others. The issue is that for consent to make sense, it must be prefaced by choice of what one needs. Following this argument, Hermet in Moyo (1992:11-12) defines elections with choice as:

... those in which the voter has an opportunity (1) to have his franchise recognised through registration; (2) to use his right to vote without being segregated into categories dividing the electorate and revolving the idea of popular sovereignty; (3) to cast his ballot free from external hindrance; (4) to decide how to vote, even to spoil his ballot, without external pressure; and (5) to expect his ballot to be counted and reported accurately, even if it goes against the wishes of those in power.

This means that elections that do not fulfill one of these conditions tend to violate the element of choice and minimize voter autonomy. The question to ask therefore is that, does such 'voting purity' as indicated in the definition exist in RDCs or is choice always compromised for some other preferences which the political system puts in place as a symbol of free choice. Voter choice and consent, although one may argue that they are difficult to instill in any electoral system, are compelling concepts for analysing voter behavior, just as democracy is a concept, though difficult to attain completely, in practice. What is important is to determine the degree of rationality exercised by those in authority to make the

electoral process as rational as possible in order to enhance choice.

It is evident from the above, that participation is the foundation of DLG. Without people's participation there cannot be effective local governance. Participation gives people power to influence and understand decisions that affect their lives. People develop the feeling of having power over their lives and that they are not alienated from the governing process but are an integral part of this process. Participation fosters responsibility for policy, programmes and projects. This is because communities tend to develop a high sense of ownership of these instruments and therefore, feel compelled to defend them. It can be argued that local democracy, the essence of participation, consists of the expressions of and conflict among diverse views and values held by contending groups attempting to shape local government decisions to meet their ends, with all-important groups having the ability to gain access to and exercise some degree of influence over decision makers. The question is, has BRDC enhanced community participation? Do communities have the right to make choices about programmes, projects and their local representatives? These questions are answered in Chapter five of this study.

It is interesting to note that that the Rural District Council Act, Act Number 8 of 1988 provides for community participation. The first such provision is contained in Section 15, which specifies the qualifications of voters. Section 15(1) states that:

- ... every person who, on the first March in the year in which a voter's roll is prepared
  - a) is of the age of eighteen years or more;
  - b) is a citizen of Zimbabwe; and
  - c) is an owner or occupier of immovable property in a commercial ward or an urban ward;
- shall be entitled to be enrolled on the voters' roll as a voter in that ward.

However, it should be noted that Section 5(1) Part C indicates that only those who have movable property in a commercial ward, are allowed to vote. This

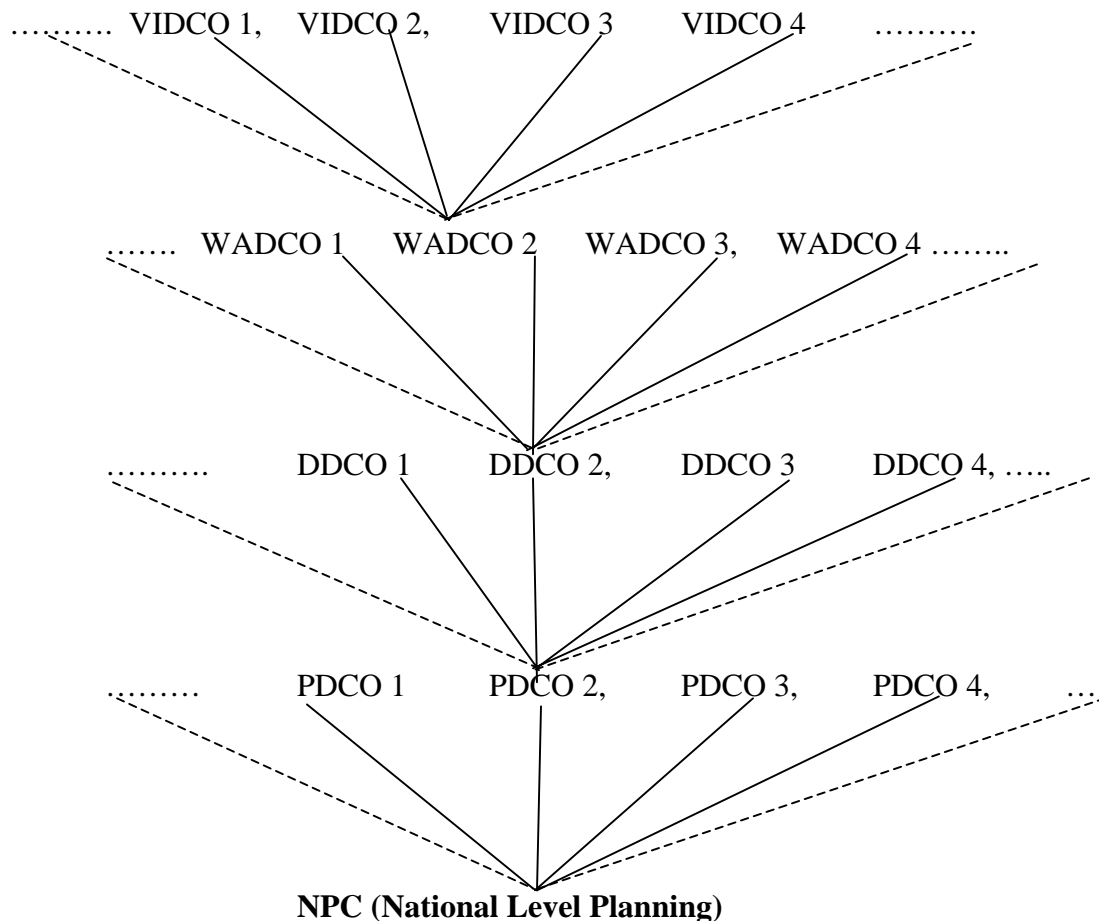
means that commercial farm workers, although they have appointed representatives are disenfranchised. This is the same with lodgers in urban wards. Section 15(5) states that:

... the number of persons that may be enrolled on a voters' roll by virtue of their occupying as lodgers any one property within a specified area shall not exceed such number as the Minister may describe in regulations, either generally or in respect of any particular class of property or any particular specified area.

In addition to these legal requirements of community participation, grass-roots structures of participation exist in Zimbabwe. These are the VIDCOs and WADCOs established through the Prime Minister's directive of 1984. While VIDCOs submit their community plans to WADCOs, the latter submit them to District Development Committees (DDCOs) and these are in turn sent to PDCOS – Provincial Development Committees. Ultimately they are taken to the central planning agency, the National Planning Commission in the Ministry of Finance. A simple functional model of these structures shows that the GOZ made every attempt to establish structures for grass-root participation. Thus, decision-making on programmes and projects of a local nature are expected to originate from the grass-root. Grass-root proposals are expected to filter through the political system, being refined at each stage, until they get to the national level. This study illustrates this filtering process diagrammatically as shown in Figure 4.3 on page 225. In this model, elected local structures are given the chance to participate in programme prioritization. Their functions include:

- identification and articulation of village needs;
- coordination and forwarding village needs to the WADCO;
- coordination and cooperating with government extension workers in the operations of development planning;
- coordination and supervision of all activities relating to production and general development of the village area; and
- organising the people to undertake projects that require a considerable workforce.

Figure 4.3 The proposal/planning filtering process



The WADCOs on the other hand, are expected to be the central planning agencies for VIDCOs. They are expected to think critically about VIDCO proposals and to make appropriate recommendations to the DDCOs. However, the practice has been that WADCOs, instead receive plans from central government and ZANU-PF and then channel them to VIDCOs, thereby offsetting the whole functional structure and reducing the decision making capacity of rural communities (Mushauri in Hofmeister and Scholz, 1996:255-256). This means that the two local level assemblies are now used as political mobilisation structures for the ruling party rather than for community initiated development strategies. The question however is, does the BRDC have these structures in place and are they still functional in a manner that enhances local participation? Are these structures capable of providing excellent services to the communities of the BRDC? This question emphasizes the paramountcy of service provision in

local government. This aspect is dealt with in the section that follows.

## **THE PROVISION OF SERVICES**

Rural District Councils are expected to provide a considerable range of services to communities within their areas of jurisdiction. This is in line with the major tenets of decentralization, that central government should shed some of its workload to local level institutions of government, so as to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in making services available to local communities. Besides, allowing local institutions to provide local oriented services is a democratic gain for society. The initiative empowers society and enhances the democratic concept of self-determination. This is because communities can easily make decisions on a mixture of services that they see as desirable to them at a particular time. Thus, services become easily customised and those who provide them are likely to have an inclination towards providing quality services to those customers.

Legislative provisions indicate that RDCs have certain specific services that they have to provide. Consequently, this shows that local authorities generally have many powers, duties and responsibilities that they use as a basis for carrying out their functions. Their responsibilities are clearly defined in the First Schedule, Section 71 of the RDC Act of 1988. They are sixty-four of them but they can be grouped into three categories:

- i. The provision at a local level, of essential services such as education, health, water, sanitation, housing, roads and road services, recreation facilities, and civil protection.
- ii. Acting as catalysts for planning, promoting and coordinating development, especially the development of growth points, Rural

District Service Centres, and Business Centres, the conservation of natural resources, and providing agricultural services.

- iii. Policing and controlling the use of local resources and monetary benefits arising from the development process.

This section is concerned with the first category. The other two categories are discussed later under managerial excellence discussed on page 236 of this study. The question is, do RDCs have the capacity to provide services of a local nature? How have they managed to provide them since 1993? Are communities satisfied with the mixture of these services and the way in which they are provided?

It is significant to note that deciding what services local authorities should provide depends on several priority decisions. These include answering questions of obligation, responsibility, the value of community growth, and personal values. Within this light, Hale and Franklin (1997:384) indicate that in making these priorities, the following questions should be asked and answered:

- a) What is government mandated to provide?
- b) What conditions can be found in communal, resettlement, commercial and urban wards that can affect the mixture of services to be provided?
- c) What condition do service providers wish to promote?
- d) What image do communities themselves wish to promote?

According to Hale and Franklin (1997:385), once these questions are answered, local authorities are expected to make final decisions on their priorities and start the process of making these services available. Although this seems to be a fairly easy process, its complications arise from the fact that there are fundamental approaches that can be used to ascertain this mixture of services. Adopting one of the approaches may in fact, bring a set of results that are different from adopting another set. Hale and Franklin (1997:385) further indicate that there are

three approaches for ascertaining the mixture of services. These are incrementalism, the conceptual approach, and the performance approach. Under the incremental framework, decisions are made based on the need for marginal increases each year (Anderson, 1990:113-114)). The past is used as a guide for the future. Thus, increment or decrement is based on previous funding. This approach is favoured in certain local authorities because it emphasizes stability and routinised decision-making. In addition, it minimizes uncertainty. It accommodates the 'politicalness' of the prioritization process through allowing a series of trade-offs within what existed before. This means that there is a yardstick for decision-making in this approach. This yardstick is the combination of goods and services provided in yesteryears. However, one should indicate that the approach tends to have some policy draw backs, as it is not highly responsive to community demands. Besides, it offers little substantive and procedural answers to new situations that need policy action.

The second is the conceptual approach. This approach answers questions of service mix and prioritisation by focusing on the fundamental concept of the purpose of service provision. The questions that need to be answered are as follows: Is service provision designed to enhance the self-sufficiency of citizens? Is service provision only for basic needs? Is it a way of complementing other service providers and individual communities themselves? Hale and Franklin (1997:386) say that there are three major guidelines that should be used to answer these questions and prioritize services. These are the societal view, the structural/governmental view, and the humane perspective.

- The societal view: In this view, local authorities should meet mandated responsibilities, then offer optional programmes which provide important services for large numbers of people or help government to meet its legal responsibilities. The issue here is that local authorities should help individuals to achieve a desirable modicum of self-sufficiency. This can be through offering them basic needs such as low income housing,



education, health, sanitation and engaging in programmes that would train them to be better and responsible citizens. The interest in these answers is in improving the welfare of society as a whole. This is in fact, the fundamental mission of government: to improve social welfare and make life good.

- The structural/governmental view: This is where decisions are made, taking into cognizance, programmes with long term benefits and the ability to multiply these benefits to communities at the local and national level. These should also have the tendency to sustain themselves where possible. The realisation here is that local authorities are structures of government. As such, they are expected to provide services where it is impossible for communities to do so on their own. Thus, programmes and projects should meet the basic needs of the people. These include skills training programmes, offering public security, housing, health, education, water, sanitation services, and environmental sustenance programmes. Fundamental to this view is that it is the duty of government through its structures to provide a combination of these services. It can do so by delegating to local authorities with the power to make such provisions on its behalf.
- The humane perspective: This is where local government is expected to support communities who do not have the physical, mental and emotional capacity to do work. Thus, the combination of services is only through compassion and empathy. It is only based on humane values, where responses to crisis situations are made, for example, the provision of food in times of drought, shelter to squatters, clothing and health care to the poor, and so on. The whole focus of service provision is guided by compassion and a moral responsibility rather than as a legal duty.

Although these are plausible views, the problem is that they seem to be elitist.

Those with authority are involved in making decisions on a combination of services, which they see as appropriate for a rather voiceless community. One can argue that these centrist driven strategies tend to reduce democratic participation and community choice, the very basis on which devolved local government is based.

The third approach is the performance-oriented framework. This approach focuses on results rather than inputs, as happens with most traditional approaches. Thus, the performance approach implores local government to focus on goals, programme values, the needs of communities and their satisfaction with services that have been provided before. The performance approach calls for rationality in decision-making where there is need to use managerial skills and knowledge to assess community needs and formulate goals that are achievable. The contention here is that it is through this rational assessment that programmes that can maximise positive impacts while minimising the negative ones, can be formulated. This means that the performance approach would greatly rely on the professional nature of managers. If these managers were professionals, they would not make decisions without a broad based consultative framework. For the performance approach to work properly, one can argue, there is need for minimal political interference and manipulation. Clear measures of success should be built into every programme to facilitate the measurement of success or lack of it. However, because of the nature of public services, one would ask, is it possible to exclude politics? Local authorities derive their powers from political authority and thus, this authority provides these organisations with their livelihood. Trying to exclude them would raise suspicions and create divisions between managerial and political incumbents, to the detriment of the local institution and the communities they are expected to serve.

In the light of these approaches and their basic deficiencies, one would advocate for an integrated approach to be able to deliver a combination of services. This is

where the advantages of each of the above approaches are considered and integrated into a single approach that is accommodative and contingent upon all local situations and their variable and dynamic environments. This is because all the approaches are not diametrically opposed. The approaches are mutually compatible and complementary. Thus, incremental considerations to improve service provision, together with a conceptualisation of the being of local authorities within a given polity as well as the need for appropriate information to measure performance and determine future service needs, are all vital for decision making. It makes the whole regime of service provision well thought out. Besides, the integrated approach should be value based, meaning that it should include popular participation as one of the cardinal points for decision making. Here communities are empowered to influence the prioritisation process, as well as provide performance measurement information on whether they are satisfied or not with a particular combination of services and how each has been provided. The Social Services Inspectorate's (SSI) Management Guideline in the United Kingdom (UK), as cited by Stewart and Stoker (1996:161) states that 'all users [of local government services] should be encouraged to participate to the limit of their capacity because a passive role will only reinforce a sense of dependence.'

It is needless to say that the role of local government is to deliver a combination of services in an efficient and effective manner and to take into cognisance equity, responsiveness and adequacy criteria. In this light, advocates of Municipal Reform in the UK indicate that:

Local government exists to perform functions and render services which the people of the community demand and which can be performed more cheaply by government than any other way (Stewart and Clerke, 1996:162).

Thus, when the communities are assessing the desirability of these services they should ask the following questions:

- a) Am I receiving all the services which local government should, by reason

of economy and convenience rightly perform?

- b) Are these services being efficiently and effectively rendered?
- c) Is local government sufficiently subject to democratic control, sufficiently responsive to public opinion, in performing those services?
- d) Are the services being fairly distributed among all members of the community?
- e) Are these services sufficient to address the needs of communities?

Whatever the approach or perception, it should be acknowledged that most social services are subject to legislation. Local government Acts prescribe what services local government has to provide. Additional services can only be provided through the instrumentality of by-laws. The question always is, how do these come to be prioritised? It can be argued that the prioritisation should take into cognizance the fact that a carefully mixed bag of services:

- enhances the development of equal opportunities among local citizens;
- is politically expedient as it reflects a caring government in the eyes of communities and the consequently enhance its (government) legitimacy;
- shows that local government has the discretion to determine the volume of services it has to offer;
- minimizes state involvement in the periphery. Conversely, it frees the state from decisional and functional overload; and
- emphasizes individual responsibility and community care by any local government institution.

The BRDC also provides a range of services highlighted in the enabling Act, the Rural District Councils Act of 1988. Prominent among these are those that have

been enumerated earlier in the first category. These are education, health, sanitation, roads and road services, water, recreation facilities, and civil protection. Below is a brief analysis of each of them.

**Educational Provision:** As a matter of policy, the management of the school system in Zimbabwe is a partnership among central government, responsible authorities (who can be churches, boards of governors of privately owned schools, and local authorities namely, RDCs and urban councils), and local communities. It is within this spirit that RDCs have, as one of their functions, the power, 'subject to any other amendments, to provide, operate and maintain schools and other educational institutions and facilities and amenities connected therewith, and for such purposes, to levy and collect fees and other charges.' (Section 71, subsection 45).

The Education Amendment Act of 1991 also makes it clear that the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) still maintains the following responsibilities:

- i. to make additional regulations providing for the responsibilities and duties of responsible authorities; and
- ii. to prescribe, through the Minister, the functions of the School Development Committee (SDC) established by the responsible authority.

These provisions clearly indicate that, as far as education is concerned, the MOEC leads. In order to make sure that this leadership is understood, by RDCs. The MOEC has tasked these RDCs to set up SDCs whose role it is to administer schools (secondary schools only) in their jurisdiction, and particularly on issues of finance. These SDCs are expected to be directly answerable to MOEC through its field officers. This is an interesting management scenario, where RDCs who actually use their funds (although partly granted by the MOEC) to construct

schools, and use their time to create SDC structures, suddenly in a practical sense, give away the responsibility to run these schools to these committees. What is interesting again is that these SDCs are not answerable to the RDCs which created them, but to the MOEC. Of course, one would argue, that SDCs are instruments for enhancing community participation. Although this is true, the decentralisation imperative would expect them to function through RDCs.

The MOEC channels grants, especially per capita grants, to the SDCs. The latter are expected to work closely with the headmaster or headmistress. Together, they determine how funds should be used. Apart from being the custodians of educational grants from the ministry and managing school affairs in any locality, SDCs are also in charge of fund raising for the schools and administering finances through financial subcommittees which they have to establish. The subcommittees are also tasked with taking appropriate measures to preserve and maintain school facilities. School Development Committees also have power to collect fees as well as borrow money. These are critical functions of SDCs which really give them power to develop schools as they see fit. It is of interest to note the following about the provisions for education:

- i. While RDCs are in charge of the process of establishing SDCs, they do not have power over these SDCs. Once established, SDCs work in consultation with the MOEC rather than the RDCs. These committees work directly with the Ministry of Education in running the schools on a daily basis.
- ii. Although RDCs are the owners of the secondary schools they have built, they do not seem to play an active role in running these schools on a daily basis.
- iii. The establishment of SDCs seems to be a move by the MOEC to centralise power and run schools without the interference of the

actual owners of the schools. It appears the partnership concept is sacrificed here as one of the partners is made to play second fiddle in the whole process of administering secondary schools.

- iv. While RDCs receive grants from the MOEC to build and equip schools, the MOEC also builds its own schools within the localities. This seems to be an unnecessary duplication of services. It would be plausible if instead, the MOEC would add to these grants and ask RDCs to meet certain targets that it wants to achieve each year.

The BRDC operates under this general framework. Despite some of these constraints, they have managed to provide education at primary and secondary level. They also provide and operate crèches or kindergartens (Education Amendment Act of 1991, Section 71(37)). However, the question is, are people satisfied with the facilities for education? Are these facilities sufficient to cater for BRDC communities? Are schools properly staffed with trained teachers so as to provide quality services? These questions are answered in chapter 5.

**The Provision of Health:** The Ministry of Health and Child Welfare (MOHACW) has adopted a complementary approach to health service provision at the local level. In this endeavour, local authorities, churches, and any other private health providers complement it. The provision of health is expected to meet MOHACW's goal of providing health for all by the year 2000. As a matter of policy, these partners are not expected to compete with one another, as this may be detrimental to the attainment of their cherished goal.

A referral system is used as a basis for availing health to everybody, without the danger of denying other people a chance of being treated in better equipped hospitals. The referral system is arranged in such a manner that people who are seeking medical attention should go to their nearest clinic, and if the clinic cannot

handle the type of ailment, the patient is referred to a higher institution, for example, a District Hospital, which can also refer the patient up the ladder to the Provincial Hospital and ultimately to the National Hospitals. This approach, among other reasons is designed to avoid unnecessary congestion at the national hospitals, which are more equipped than those in peripheral areas.

As part of the health provision policy, RDCs are empowered to build, maintain, equip and conduct clinics, maternity homes and dispensaries, as well as take any measures that are aimed at health provision subject to the approval of the Secretary for Health (Section 71(34)). The Health Act, Chapter 328 of 1981 provides in Section 14 that:

- i. Local Authorities should take necessary precautions within the law, to prevent the occurrence of any diseases within their areas of jurisdiction and that they should exercise their powers and perform their duties in order to alleviate the problems to do with the spreading of diseases especially in the rural areas where medical facilities are not as sophisticated as in the cities.
- ii. Local Authorities should employ Officers for Health and request for a 100% grant to pay the salaries of these officers.
- iii. Local Authorities should apply to the Ministry for grants that will enable them to set up health facilities in their localities.

As indicated above, the MOHACW provides councils with grants to build clinics and any other health facilities deemed necessary by both the RDC and the MOHACW. Besides, the MOHACW provides RDCs with an expenditure grant of approximately 100% to use for their recurrent expenditure, which covers the maintenance of health facilities and the payment of salaries of health personnel.



The BRDC has one District Hospital and twelve clinics spread throughout the district. The question is, are these facilities sufficient for communities in the district? Are they able to provide effective services to the sick? Are the facilities equipped with enough well trained medical personnel and are do they have sufficient equipment and medicines required by the local people?

**The Provision of Roads:** The Roads Act, Chapter 203; Section 15 confers power on RDCs to construct and maintain all local roads that are not national in character. Within the same Act, RDCs are empowered to construct bridges and culverts, in line with the Ministry of Roads and Transport Services (MORTS). Within the same framework, RDCs are empowered to maintain roads, bridges and drains, and also to guard against any acts that may vandalise or damage this infrastructure. Thus, RDCs are charged with maintaining former DC and RC roads that fall under their areas. The provisions of this act are concretised in Section 71 (20) of the RDC Act. Subsection 20 indicates that RDCs are empowered:

- (1) Subject to this Act and any other enactment, to provide and maintain, by itself or through any contractor or agent, roads, bridges ... and culverts.
- (2) To name roads and streets and to number and renumber premises and buildings.
- (3) To maintain roads including buildings and culverts ... for access to or in connection with any facility or amenity provided or operated by the council, and either solely by council or jointly with any other local authority or with the State or any statutory body.

Instead of giving RDCs all grants for the construction and maintenance of roads, central government inherited the African Development Fund (ADF) from the former government. This department was used for constructing and maintaining

roads in rural areas. The GOZ christened it the District Development Fund (DDF). The responsibilities of the DDF include the construction and maintenance of roads, providing water to rural communities and building dip tanks. The DDF is currently the recipient of central government grants for road construction and maintenance. It is a fully-fledged government department, or so to speak, a public enterprise which has an Act – the District Development Fund Act No. 55 of 1981, which governs its operations. Apart from being funded through the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP), DDF has an annual allocation through the national budgetary process. It also receives donor funds to help it carry out its activities. So far it has benefited from the Zimbabwe Coordination and Development (ZIMCORD) funds, German Bank loans and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) funds.

The DDF, as an institution, is also independent of RDCs in its decision-making. Thus, on an annual basis, it makes decisions as to what areas it has to involve itself in, in road construction and maintenance. It has its own operation programme which is independent of RDC planning and prioritisation. As a result, some RDCs feel robbed by this institution as they can go for a year or so without their roads being maintained, yet, as most are gravel roads, they need annual maintenance in order to cope with the road traffic demands in each area.

It appears that the existence of the DDF marks a major area of role duplication by central government. One would have expected that the government would have given RDCs all the road construction and maintenance grants, in accordance with the annual budgets of these institutions and that these RDCs would, in turn, put to tender any services that they required. In this way, using the efficiency criterion, they would identify the most appropriate construction company. This would in turn, perceivably, reduce the size of government in terms of capital expenses and recurrent expenditure, as they would of necessity, dismantle the DDF.

The BRDC has been serviced by the DDF on several occasions. Whether the roads, bridges and culverts it has constructed and maintained on behalf of the BRDC are consistent with the needs of communities and the BRDC itself, needs to be the subject of this evaluation.

**The Provision of Water:** The RDC Act, 1988 has a standing provision that RDCs should provide water to the local communities. The RDCs are empowered to provide, maintain and control supplies of water for domestic consumption, irrigation, industrial or mining purposes (Section 71(28)). Central government also assists local authorities in the provision of water through direct funding. One should also note that complementing RDCs, the DDF and the Ministry of Energy and Water Development (MEWRD), are Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) such as Christian Care, the Lutheran World Federation, the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). Their presence in Beitbridge is evident and their assistance is acknowledged by the BRDC (BRDC Annual Report, 2001:3).

The ugly head of service duplication manifests itself again, in the provision of water. Tendencies towards centralisation of service or competition between the MEWRD and RDCs are evident. Since there is in existence, well established local government structures, logic and instrumental rationality seem to suggest that all water provision undertakings should be the responsibility of RDCs with the MEWRD and any other organisation coming to assist, only by invitation. This would avoid much unnecessary conflict. For example, it is common to hear that the local community and the MEWRD are in conflict over the location of a dam where the local authority has its own site and central government also has its own point site. This is a clear case of lack of consultation between central government and local communities. One can argue that the fact that central government decisions prevail, this makes a mockery of the whole democratic process, which government wants to establish in Zimbabwe. Such cases exist in Beitbridge and chapter five provides an indication as to whether the current

operational mechanisms has enhanced or eroded the performance of BRDC in its attempt to provide this vital service.

**The Provision of Housing:** Urban migration in Zimbabwe, has brought with it serious problems of providing accommodation to local authorities. It should be realised that this problem does not only affect urban councils. RDCs are equally affected, since most of them have urban wards. RDCs normally provide housing through loans from the MOLGANH. Housing schemes have to be approved by the responsible Minister before such loans can be applied for. Once approved, the RDC can use its borrowing powers to obtain loans from the National Housing Fund (NHF), which operates under the auspices of the MOLGANH. After the construction of houses, these are let out to the communities who are charged an economical rate to enable the RDC to pay back the loans. The NHF offices expect each RDC that has been given these loans, to make payments every six months. These payments include interest charges.

Before the MOLGANH established the NHF in 1997, the provision of houses was somewhat problematic, in that the then Ministry of Public Construction and National Housing used to construct its own houses side by side with RDC houses, in this way, and creating competition between the two authorities. Of course, the term 'complementing' was used rather than competition to create an aura of assistance through invitation (MOLGHAN Report, 1998:5). Apart from eroding profits, which could accrue to RDCs through rentals, the Ministry created a dislike of RDCs by the local people who felt that the Ministry was better than RDCs in terms of house provision. This undermined RDCs, which are not well liked by communities, who feel that government departments are more efficient than these institutions of local governance. This does not help decentralization, but destroys the whole concept of government from below as well as popular participation.

Besides these schemes, RDCs can invite interested parties such as banks,

building societies and private contractors to build houses for people, subject to the conditions laid down by RDCs and the MOLGAHN. The significant factor here is that housing provision applies to urban wards. The question is, has the BRDC managed to supply a desirable combination of housing services to its urban population? Are communities satisfied with the council's supply of this vital commodity? Answers are provided in Chapter five of this study. The third aspect that is considered in this study is managerial excellence. An explicit discussion of this aspect follows below.

## **MANAGERIAL EXCELLENCE**

It is common practice nowadays to find government practitioners and communities using the words public administrator and public manager to refer to the same incumbent of a public sector organisation. Such a dual reference, in most cases, indicates minds that are immersed in a conceptual quagmire. The emergence of the latter concept (public manager or public management, for that matter) and its consequent wide use has not been matched by efforts to explain it vis-à-vis public administration particularly to most practitioners. Even scholars do not draw a valuable comparison between the two to enable those interested in public sector organisations to understand them better. The result has been an astigmatic acceptance of this concept as a replacement of public administration and with some, still resisting this change. A closer look at this scenario indicates that both parties (those who replace and those who resist); hardly have any scholarly explications to buttress their standpoints. Hence the need for conceptual clarity in order to remove the 'cocoon of mist' surrounding these rather formative elusive concepts.

Public administration denotes that part of government that has to do with the direct provision of goods and services in a government setting. Thus, the concept applies in all government institutions be they central, regional, or local in nature.

Its evolution as a field of practice indicates that it derives its operational powers from political authority. Its generic functions include:

- participating in policymaking, advocacy and analysis. By that very fact, it is fundamental that the public administrator realises that he/she is not only responsible for the daily management of institutions placed under his/her command, but has responsibility to support and advise political office bearers on future policy alternatives. For this reason, the public administrator has been given the power to determine, within his/her own right; exactly what is good or bad for society as a whole (Botes, 1995:5). Thus, in its conduct of duty, public administration has the power and authority to continuously shape public life to improve social welfare and make life good. Consequently, public administration is the practice of governmental efficiency and effectiveness. This is the *raison d'être* of its existence.
- setting up appropriate institutions for mobilising and distributing resources in order to fulfill governmental action as determined by policy. This is an organisational function indicating the reliance of politicians on the skills of public administrators to come up with operational departments geared towards efficiently and effectively achieving the goals of government;
- collecting and disbursing government finances as well as ensuring their prudent use;
- ensuring that government institutions are provided with appropriate, well-trained and judicious personnel who are capable of executing tasks without bias or favouritism;
- designing appropriate work systems, methods, and procedures to

enable government employees to work in accordance with predetermined standards expected to promote efficiency and effectiveness; and

- controlling and monitoring government business to ensure that the purpose of public policy is attained.

The etymology of the word administration itself, presupposes that administrative functionaries are servants of organisations. The Latin word '*ad*' means 'to' and '*ministrare*' means 'serve'. Thus, this fundamental role of the public administrator is encapsulated in Hutchins' statement, cited by Botes (1995:6), that:

The mere fact that mankind appoints rulers to rule over them means that there are those who rule and those who are ruled. This is not only expedient, but also necessary. Where man rules and another is ruled, it may be referred to as a reciprocal duty. The administrator comes in as a servant, to facilitate the ruler – ruled relationship with a view to maintaining order, peace and good government. In all his/her activities, the public administrator should be conscious of the fact that his/her powers and authority are derived from political society who may demand an explanation of their choices aimed at enhancing good life and happiness if they are not being pursued in an effective and efficient manner.

This quotation also underlines the importance and pervasiveness of public administration in the process of governing and that administrators are servants or messengers of politics. However, they also have the power to direct and manage government affairs in the best possible manner to ensure the good life of all, hence Fox and Meyer's (1995:105) definition that a public administrator is 'a public employee with managerial responsibilities'.

A significant fact is that orthodox public administration seems to reduce the capacity of public administrators to make decisions for public sector institutions. Servants cannot have ultimate authority to make independent decisions. These servants have to consult with the owners of agencies who may override administrative decisions in preference of their political ones, no matter how

inefficient these may be. The fact that it derives its authority from politics also suggests an overly compliant, docile, and rule bound administration with very little room for manoeuvre. This can also be understood from the fact that public administration is modeled along traditional Weberian bureaucracy and the maintenance oriented classical POSDCORB principles of Gullick and Urwick. While Weber's bureaucratic type of bureaucracy was first developed in theoretical terms, it was promoted to the status of guide to organisational design and management by the scientific management school and has since then been adopted by governments throughout the world as the perfect model of a public sector organisation (Denhart, 1993:33-35). This traditional organisation operates under the dictum 'trust is good, control is better, fear is best'. This dictum can only be maintained where there is centralised decision making, top-down control mechanisms that limit discretion, reliance on strict rules and regulations to delineate action, formality, conformity, and a concern for inputs rather than outputs. These attributes have led to public sector organisations characterised by rigidity, lack of responsiveness and accountability, corruption, a lackadaisical attitude to work and general non-performance.

The bureaucratic dysfunctions have led to a worldwide movement to reinvent government. The common theme has been the use of market mechanisms and terminology similar to what happens in private sector organisations. Thus, reinvention by importation became the guiding *modus operandi* of those who had an interest in building government capacity and its ability to provide goods and services to society. This new invention came with the New Public Management (NPM) concept (Hughes, 1994:2).

While some scholars do not agree on the distinctive nature of the New Public Management concept, others indicate that there is an epistemological difference that is worth noting (Denhart and Denhart, 2000:551). This difference makes the new public sector appealing, both theoretically and practically. Roux, Brynard, Botes and Fourie (1997:240) indicate that public management is part of public



administration. Public management is narrower than public administration. It only serves as an 'oiling function' that gives public administration the capacity to make rational decisions, coordinate all operations, evaluate performance and institute corrective measures to the public administration organisation. Cloete (1993:24), on the other hand, argues that public administration and public management are similar and can be performed by the same government functionary. According to this analysis, the use of public management is a matter of taste and a borrowing from private management. Consequently, there is no theoretical shift but a cultural shift. These arguments tend to minimise the importance of the New Public Management, just as one would play down the difference between globalism and internationalism. The mixed views also make it difficult for practitioners to know what term to use, hence the freedom to use any of them as a matter of personal choice.

The contention here is that there is a difference. The knowledge bases differ. Though the two may perform similar generic functions, their theoretical standpoints differ. Orthodox public administration is based on Weberian bureaucracy, political theory and social arguments proffered by some scholars. On the other hand, NPM is based on economic theory, sophisticated dialogue and positivist social science (Denhart and Denhart, 2000:550-551). It is based on discontent with public sector performance particularly in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s; the managerial ideology; the new equation of government; and the democratic wave sweeping across nations.

The dysfunctions of traditional public administration premised on its rigidity, central control, corruption, unfairness in resource distribution, inefficiency, ineffectiveness and a lack of customer care, has left governments and scholars thinking of new ideas that could be infused in public sector practice in order to enhance its performance. This has come through managerialism, the new equation of government and neo-managerialism. All these are based on economic theory, particularly public choice theory and economic rationality

arguments. The contention here is that for the public sector to perform as expected, it has to define itself in economic terms (Terry 1998:194). These scholars postulate that once the public sector has defined itself economically, it will inevitably need management which is a distinct organisational function and one that plays the crucial role of planning, implementing and measuring the necessary improvements in productivity. Thus, the success of the public sector will depend on the quality and professionalism of its managers. For these managers to perform the best they can, they should be granted reasonable 'room for manoeuvre' that is the right to manage (Pollitt, 1990:2-3). This means that 'better management will make institutions perform, provide the key to national revival, help to identify and eliminate waste, to concentrate resources where benefits can be seen to be greatest, and give a clearest display where money is spent' (Terry, 1998:196). Pollitt and Terry's arguments also indicate that in an ideal world where managerialism is recognised, objectives to be achieved are always clear, staff are highly motivated, prudent use of resources is cherished and red tape is eliminated. According to Pollitt (1990:3), such management already exists in the private sector and should be tapped by public sector organisations.

There are different approaches to NPM, but all these emphasize his economic focus. Lynn Jr. (1996:56) talks of the quantitative/analytical management approach which tries to infuse rational decision making in public sector management. The contention is that public administration is averse to the use of quantitative analytical approaches, yet they are critical as they free decision making of socio-political values and personal interests that have led to poor performance of public institutions. This means that public sector decision-making should lean towards these techniques such as linear programming, cost benefit analysis and other forecasting techniques. The contention is that it is only public management that has such capacity. Roberts (1995:293) advocates for the political management approach, which seeks to empower, public managers by allowing them to participate in public policy, set goals and determine the pace of

their implementation. Larrymore in Terry (1998:195) argues thus:

In traditional conceptions of 'public administration,' the fundamental responsibility of public managers was to develop efficient, programmatic means for accomplishing well-defined goals ... In contrast, our conception of 'public management' adds responsibility for goal setting and political management to the traditional responsibilities of public administration ... We think it is inevitable and desirable that public managers should assume responsibility for defining the purposes they see to achieve, and therefore to participate in the political dialogue about their purposes and methods.

This means that the political management approach rejects the politics/administration dichotomy. It says that public management should be involved in politics and consequently, policy making should be part of their *raison d'être*. To them, a successful public manager's one who can guide an organisation through the maze of the political milieu within which he/she operates. There is also the liberation management approach of Thomas Peters and Paul Light cited in Terry (1998:195). These call for the deregulation of bureaucracies to give public managers the discretion they need to make decisions for the organisations they lead. This is closely followed by Guy Peters (1996:28) who advocates for market driven public management, which should emphasize efficiency, effectiveness and economy.

Some scholars have argued that the public sector should instead embrace an entrepreneurial ethos, which will enable public managers to run public institutions as their own. Entrepreneurialism is premised on the public choice theory and the rationality of humans to want to maximise gain in whatever they do. This means that once public managers claim ownership of institutions of government, the decisions they are likely to make would ensure excellent performance by these institutions. To complement these approaches Denhart and Denhart (2000:554) indicate that the NPM cannot be complete without incorporating theories of democratic citizenship; models of community and civil society; and organisational humanism and discourse. This focus, allows public managers to foster

community participation in decision-making, policy design, execution and evaluation. It helps managers to realise that serving the public should be premised on dialogue with those who need the service. It is only then that public managers can be responsive, accountable, and fair in resource distribution and provide adequate resources to communities. To this, Berkich (1998:17) says:

It seems to me that the key ... is to encourage communication and dialogue with as much of the population as possible and to involve as many citizens as possible in strategic planning on issues of the future. The burden is on those of us in local government management to be proactive in steering the communication process, to develop the dialogue and involvement so critical to sound local government management.

Denhart and Denhart (2000:554) refer to this new democratic approach to public management as the New Public Service (NPS). They proceed to give a vivid scheme, which compares traditional public administration, NPM and NPS. Of importance here is that local government institutions should no longer be administered, but they should be managed. The NPM and the NPS should guide local government managers so that they can catapult local institutions to greater heights of performance. Berkich (1998:18) adds to this assertion by saying that 'the new demands of running local government institutions requires that local government managers be reoriented to enhance their managerial competence.' This would enhance their flexibility, personal choice and ability to learn new ideas and implement them for the benefit of their institutions and the communities they serve. This would also develop their interpersonal skills, adaptability, ability to work with peers and subordinates, and the capacity to mobilise communities so that they feel as part of the process of local government. It would also raise their desire to achieve results and disposition to organisation excellence. It would humanise citizens and give them control over their destiny. In fact, it is significant to note that citizens' control over the operations of public agencies is at the core of democracy. Thus, those who manage local government institutions should have sufficient information on what the citizens desire and what governments offer. This can only happen if local government management systems are

reformed.

From the ensuing discussion, it would not be sufficient to gauge the performance of the BRDC without focusing on managerial capacity to plan, collect and disburse resources, initiate new programmes and projects of a development nature, motivate subordinates so that they can provide an excellent service to communities, maintain council resources and its ability to mobilise communities and empower them to determine their future. The performance of management in these areas affects institutional performance as a whole. While all these variables are critical for managerial excellence and measuring institutional performance, the ensuing section focuses on finance as a critical variable in the performance of the BRDC.

- **Rural District Council Finances**

The establishment of local authorities (RDCs) and the conferment of powers upon them to undertake certain tasks, entail making decisions about them to collect/receive revenue. The process of collecting and expending revenue is political in nature. Despite this, it has far reaching implications. This calls for properly conceived administrative and management processes of handling financial transactions and ensuring that the goals and objectives of the local authority are realised. All these processes should be conceived and outlined within considerations of financial management, which is a requisite component of the whole management process of organizations, whether public or private.

Local government management should realise that public funds, whether central or local belong to the people. These funds are entrusted upon government institutions to engage in activities that are beneficial to communities. Of importance is the fact that public funds are a scarce resource. Consequently, their utilisation requires well-established management procedures to avoid misuse. The funds should be guided by efficiency motives in order to maximise the return of every dollar that is spent. All revenue collection and expenditure

patterns must be calculated to fall within a specific time frame for the convenience of the public as well as the institution. All these figures should be reflected in a budgetary frame that takes cognisance of the economic tempo of the locality vis-à-vis the social demands of the people. The budgetary process should be transparent and allow communities to participate in order to indicate their needs and how they ought to be met.

While local authorities are tasked with providing services to communities, they face a similar problem of insufficient funds. As a result, they rely heavily on central government funding although such reliance, more often than not, leads to increased central government control. In fact, local authorities would achieve greater status and independence if they could meet the whole of their expenditure from local sources. Unfortunately, this is not practicable. They receive considerable funding from central government. Unfortunately such funding has increased the role of central government in local socio-economic activities. In fact, it has given the center greater control of local activities (Chingosho, 1995:12). In spite of this, one should also add that the nature of local government units, that is, that they are subordinate government structures in charge of smaller geographical units within a state, is such that they cannot have sufficient funds for services like education, health and water since they require large amounts of both capital and recurrent expenditure. Thus, it is only logical that they seek assistance from central government. Several reasons have been advanced to explain why local authorities seek external support. The following are some of them:

1. Functional decentralisation, which is not met by an accompanying financial decentralization: This leads to a situation where there are too many tasks to be performed by the local authority yet its sources of revenue are such that it cannot undertake such tasks.
2. The apparent rigidity of property rates, which lag behind inflationary

changes: The issue here is that property rates provide a substantial amount of council revenues. If the cost of living goes high while this revenue remains constant, the chances are that the council will not be able to meet the requirements in terms of service provision, as the finances would have.

3. Most rural areas are made up of black rural folk who are basically poor and have very little sources of income. The land they occupy is also basically poor and fails to sustain them. This, plus the relatively stagnant rates amidst changing living standards, negatively affects the financial base of local authorities.
4. Local authorities have limited borrowing powers. All such powers are retained by central government. The latter is responsible for rationalising these institutions' demands and making decisions as to whether they should borrow or not (Chingosho, 1995:13-14).

With this scenario manifesting itself, it is clear that local authority units have no room for maneuver, financially. Any such financial maneuvers can only be provided by central government. It is indeed true that finance is the glue that holds any institution together and RDCs are no exception to this rule. Failure to harness sufficient funds may lead to the disorganisation, disintegration and death of a particular institution.

RDC sources of revenue are diverse. The Rural District Councils Act No. 8 of 1988 Part XII, indicates that these they can be derived from:

- i. Grants from central government, which go mainly to health, education, and general administration including council allowances and staff salaries. These are normally tied grants, which assist council with its recurrent expenditures. Other grants may be made

available as will be indicated later in this chapter;

- ii. Licenses, which include vehicle, liquor, shop, and hawkers' licenses;
- iii. Rates, which are mainly in the form of unit tax paid by the communal folk and property rates which are mainly paid by commercial farmers. These include both land and property taxes;
- iv. Royalties, these are mainly for sand extraction and timber exploitation depending on the local authority of concern;
- v. Wild life proceeds;
- vi. Leases from stands; and
- vii. Profits mainly from the sale of liquor and other income generating projects.

While this looks like a diverse revenue base, all is not rosy as there are annual complaints from local authorities that their finances are inadequate. This means that the wide resource base does not necessarily mean an abundance of resources. Maybe a more detailed discussion of some of these sources of revenue for local authorities should be made. This is important in order to gauge the ability of BRDC to collect revenue from these sources and use it in the most effective manner.

- **Local Tax Revenue**

Local taxes include rates (property and land tax) and development levies (per capita tax). Property is an important source of revenue. Property tax is that tax levied on fixed capital and land. Such tax in the new RDCs affects commercial farmers who own large tracts of land and fixed property (capital). Such a tax is not normally present in communal wards. As a result, residents in these wards pay a development levy instead. Property tax follows the rating system where the property is evaluated by professional evaluators. The current market value is used as the value of the property. A tax value is then attached to such properties or land and the owner pays the tax to the RDC (Hlatshwayo, 1992:38-39).



Four rating systems can be used, that is, site rating (for land only); flat rating; composite rating; or differential rating. Site rating is about taxing the land. Whether the land is improved or not, is immaterial since acquisition of the land means an interest in working on it and therefore, failure to fulfill this obligation is detrimental to the landowner not council. The second is flat rating. This implies making a total assessment of both the land and improvements and then fixing a single tax rate on all of them. While this method is easy to use, it has a disadvantage in that those who do not want to improve the land can still get away with it. The third, composite rating is about rating both land and improvements, using different tax rates. Normally improvement rates are lower than the land rates, a situation that encourages landowners to improve their land. The fourth is differential rating, which uses a standard rate for all property whether improved, or not. However, this is followed by a tax rebate, which is consistent with the type of usage to which the land has been exposed. Thus, classes are established which indicate how land can be used. If land usage falls into a category that qualifies it for a rebate, then this is awarded within this system of rating. This is a tax relief system and is normally taken advantage of by landowners for example, in building residential houses and schools on their land.

In addition to property tax, is the development levy. This is a form of poll tax charged on every adult; that is, every person eighteen years and above. This is payable by the communal people and is generally anything between Z\$6.00 and Z\$20.00 (1996 estimates), depending on the financial viability of council and the ability to pay of the general public. To encourage payment, some RDCs use the receipts indicating payment as a passport to providing any other services to individuals. However, it should be realised that this method may have serious incriminating legal implications on the part of the RDC instituting such measures. Some RDCs have incorporated traditional leaders particularly kraal heads to act as development levy collection agents. This gives them the status of tax collectors, an assignment given them during the colonial days, which made them

very unpopular with the masses. Because of this historical factor, kraal heads were kind of ostracised at independence and thus had no legal status in the Chiefs and Headmen's Act as well as the RDC Act. Kraal heads work in liaison with VIDCO chairpersons to mobilise this resource. Because of their traditional power and influence, the scheme seems to be working although there are neither legal provisions nor punitive measures for defaulters. Councils may also impose a special development levy. This is raised in the same manner as the development levy except that it is raised for specific purposes, in a specific area and for a specific period, for example, a levy such as for road construction and building schools or clinics.

- **Service Charges (Fees and Licenses)**

Fees are mostly charged for the provision of electricity, water, and sewerage, cleaning and refuse collection, education provision (school fees), health provision (hospital/clinic fees), boarding, leasing premises and equipment. This constitutes a significant amount of council revenue (Hlatshwayo, 1992:43-46). The problem is that it is committed revenue, in that a large proportion of it is used to defray the expenditure incurred in the process of providing these services. In addition, royalties can be included under this section, as these are fees or charges to entrepreneurs for the exploitation of natural resources like timber, game, quarry, sand, fishing and mining within the council area. House rentals, where councils have elaborate housing schemes to assist semi-urban dwellers with accommodation, can also be classified under this category.

There are also licenses. These are mostly regulatory charges on vehicles, liquor, shops, dogs, carts, cycles, and hawkers' licenses. The state, through the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) helps in the enforcement process. These are normally paid annually. The hawkers' licenses are somewhat problematic to enforce. People do not normally want to renew them and, secondly, they want to use these licenses as passports to do anything even to open tuck shops. When administrators try to intervene, these hawkers cry foul and the whole issue

becomes political in which case these hawkers approach politicians for support, and not only local council politicians but also those at national level. Normally, they get this support. The bureaucrat is then considered as a person without feelings for communities hence, the negative image he/she carries in society. As a result, bureaucrats tend not to enforce any council laws because of the awareness that politicians can override their decisions.

In addition to the problem of hawkers, councils do not normally enforce dog, cycle, and cart licenses, as these normally engender resistance from the communal people, mostly because of the colonial history where they were seen as an instrument of further subjugating the black people. It should be noted, at this point, that the most revenue that council accumulates is through council charges to its communities. These charges are in general terms, a form of tax to the people. As such, the levying of such charges should follow general tax principles with which RDCs should comply with to make their taxes acceptable to the communities who are required to pay such taxes. According to these principles, a good tax must be:

- **Productive:** This means that the tax should be efficient; meaning, it should produce sufficient revenue to cover the general expenses with which it is associated, with the most minimum of costs, while it maximises the utility of the revenues collected. It must minimise tax evasion and be as broad as possible, to include all those who have to pay it.
- **Elastic:** This means that the tax must have some element of flexibility, such that any slight variations will be acceptable and minimize disruptions on the part of those who pay and those who receive the revenue.
- **Certain:** Those who are required to pay, should know in advance what they should pay; where they should make payment; and in what form. They should also know how tax is calculated. The tax regulations should

also be designed in such a way that those who are required to pay cannot easily evade it.

- **Impartial:** This means that the tax system must be just, reasonable and without favour. This is a call to tax fairness, a situation where the tax burden is equitably distributed among the paying public, in accordance with their earnings, and other obligations they have within society.
- **Convenient:** There is need for the taxpayer to know the time, place and method of payment that is used for a particular tax. An element of convenience to the taxpayer should be taken into consideration. A rationalisation of how the tax should be paid should be reached with the paying community where possible.
- **Simple:** This is important as it enables both the taxpayer and collector to understand and apply it regularly without any irregularities.
- **Stable:** This is in spite of the economic changes and inflationary tendencies that may cause unnecessary fluctuations in the economy. These unnecessary changes may increase dissent by the paying public, a situation that may lead to the erosion of resources, which local authorities normally get from this public.
- **Perceptible:** This means that the taxpayer should ultimately develop an appreciation for paying tax. Such appreciation is normally high where the receiving institution is accountable and transparent in its actions, making people realise and appreciate the services that it provides through the tax that the public pays (Hlatshwayo, 1992:33-37).

It is with this in mind that a local government tax system should be designed. Although Zimbabwe is expected to use these principles in designing local

government taxes, one would argue that the whole process is not transparent. Consequently, these taxes usually generate a lot of resistance from communities since the taxes appear to be an imposition from authorities with no explanation of the desirability and utility of such taxes.

- **Government Grants and Loans**

RDCs rely to a great extent, on finances from government, which come in the form of grants and loans. These are financial transfers from central government to RDCs, which are intended to finance activities such as education, health, general administration, heavy vehicle purchases, the construction of houses and any capital ventures that require large outlays of money and are considered by central government to be essential and developmental in character. Of particular note is that it is to be so considered by central government not the RDC. Grants normally contribute the largest share of RDC funding (Chingosho, 1995:59-60). These grants usually take several forms, for example, block grants, equalisation/deficiency grants, per capita grants, and revenue matching grants. The question which needs to be answered more elaborately maybe is, why grants? Several reasons have been suggested for this scenario:

- i. The spillover effect of certain social services: There is in existence, scenarios of spillovers, which affect people outside the borders of the RDC. Central government should be in a position to assist RDCs, which are faced with such problems. For example, car owners from other regions or RDCs who are in a position to enjoy road services provided by another locality such as if they frequent that locality, like the Beitbridge Rural District Council, which is an RDC servicing Africa's busiest border. The chances are that Beitbridge may not be able to cope with properly maintaining the road system, as the deterioration rate would be faster than what it normally would have been if mainly the local people used the roads. As such, the benefits of their road system spill over and above the intended customers who actually pay for such services.

Central government should be in a position to provide relief to such an RDC, by extending some grant to it so that it can undertake the additional road maintenance activities resulting from this spillover use.

- ii. Grants also assist in satisfying horizontal equity objectives. The rationale is that individuals with the same socio-economic status should receive similar benefits, regardless of the RDC to which they belong. Thus, if two RDCs have natural differences in income generating ability, government should equalise the availability of financial resources, so as to minimise such differences and to ensure the attainment of equity, thus upholding the principle of treating equals equally within a state.
- iii. To avoid unnecessary upward local tax rate fluctuations, which may be determined by factors such as inflation as in (i). The intervention is indeed political, as drastic fluctuations would affect the RDC and the government of the day, in terms of popular support from the masses affected by such tax hikes.
- iv. To stimulate new services which are considered as essential to an RDC. Thus, grants can also be an economic incentive and can serve to incentivise the local authority to get into new ventures, which are considered viable in a particular district. As such, these are not blanket grants but are determined by different RDC situations.

It can also be mentioned that government grants, particularly unconditional or block grants play a major role in the welfare of people within the various RDCs. Grants provide councils with the much-needed funds to augment their meager resources, as well as enable councils to keep local taxes down, thus allowing

individuals to spend more on private goods. This is undoubtedly a health situation, which improves the welfare of the community.

Central government also gives loans to RDCs. These are ordinarily for special projects, such as for housing construction. The RDC uses its borrowing powers approved by the Minister to get such loans, which are directly disbursed, to the receiving RDC. Although it seems as though RDCs can get a lot of assistance from government, this is no longer the case. Such grants and loans are dwindling. This is mainly because central government itself has a shortage of funds and is not in a position to meet the funding requirements of other national projects. Thus, the growing fiscal stress on central government itself is making it more and more problematic for central government to continue subsidizing RDC operations on a large scale. For example, while central government used to provide salary grants for the Senior Executive Officer, three Executive Officers, two clerks/typists, an Executive Secretary, and two drivers, these provisions have since been cut and, what remains, is a paltry lump sum just labelled as grant-in-aid of salaries. However, RDCs still receive full aid for health staff.

- **External Loans**

The RDCs may also apply for loans from banks and other financial houses. However such applications have to go through the Minister who decides whether or not such loans should be availed to the RDC.

- **Interests on Investments**

RDCs also run businesses, which they create, mostly in their areas of jurisdiction. If councils accumulate funds, these can be invested with the ministry. The most common investment is in beer outlets. These in fact, rank as some of the first infrastructure to be put up by councils once they are established. In addition to these, some other projects like shops, butcheries, wildlife management, poultry, ostrich farming and piggery projects are thriving in Beitbridge.

- **Other Sources of Revenue**

This revenue category includes revenue from reconnection fees especially for water and electricity, sale of building plans, inspection fees, interest on arrears, cemetery and cremation fees as well as donor funding. Donor funding can be quite substantial as it depends on the project(s) that is/are to be undertaken. However, these donor funds have to be approved by central government before anything is signed.

The various sources of revenue indicate how RDCs access their revenue. Such monies, once collected are expended in order to attain the social goals that councils are obliged to fulfill in line with their enabling Act. In order to collect and utilise funds, councils need viable financial management procedures, with capable financial personnel who understand the need for prudence in controlling public monies. This prudent financial control often comes through proper budgeting procedures and the ability to stick to such budgets. A budget is thus, an instrument of financial control, which every organisation should have. In ordinary usage, a budget is a financial statement, which reflects the estimated revenue and expenditure of an organisation over a given period of time, normally one year and is usually, termed the financial year. The budgetary process is a political process, which shows what those who run organisations want to achieve in a given year (statement of expenditure) and how they hope to finance what they want to do for that period (statement of revenues).

The budget is a legislative instrument that guides RDCs in their social, economic, and political activities. It is an enforceable document, which means that those who are required to pay taxes, are compelled to do so in order to realise the budgeted-for revenue and those who administer such funds, have to do so within the context of the provisions of such budgets and, in turn, utilise such funds accordingly. This means that every budget must have in place an effective



auditing system that shows detailed council expenditures and funds collected. Auditing is thus, an important function of the overall financial management system as it helps to prevent fraud and wastage while, at the same time, enhancing accuracy in handling finances in keeping with the economic problem of scarcity. Besides, communities must be mobilised to participate in the budgetary process. This makes it easy for them to hold councils accountable. It is only through such involvement that communities can also gauge the performance of their councils. This study looks at these issues with interest. It endeavours to determine the performance of BRDC in collecting resources, prioritising projects, budgeting and controlling the use of these resources.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, it is significant to note that Beitbridge district is made up of people from different ethnic groups. Consequently, there is a high demand for the BRDC to continuously promote equal access to fundamental human rights and civil liberties. There is need for the BRDC to exercise power, which legitimately should emanate from the diverse community it leads. This means that the socio-economic and political actions of the BRDC should be based on popular participation and be consistent with the values of transparency, accountability and managerial excellence. To ensure adherence to the fundamental requirements of democratic participation, excellent service provision and astute management, there is need for benchmarking and continuous measurement of performance of the BRDC. Such measures would enable the BRDC to be aware of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It is from such information that the council can design appropriate strategies for change and development in the district.