

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND SERVICE  
DELIVERY IN THE THIRD REPUBLIC: A CASE STUDY OF  
LUSAKA CITY COUNCIL, CHOMA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL  
AND LUWINGU DISTRICT COUNCIL**

BY

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## DECLARATION

I, Peter Kaumba Lolojih, do hereby declare that the contents of this thesis represent my original work and that this thesis has never been submitted before for a degree at this University or indeed at any other similar institution.

Signed: -----



## CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This thesis of Peter Kaumba Lolojih has been approved as fulfilling the requirements for the award of the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Public Administration by the University of Zambia.

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis examined the performance of local Councils, with regard to administration and service delivery, during the Third Republic (1991-2001). The study is based on a Case Study of Lusaka City Council, Choma Municipal Council and Luwingu District Council. The focus of the study was not so much as on comparing the three Councils with regard to their ability to deliver services. The selected Councils simply represent their respective categories in the hierarchy of local government structure namely City, Municipal and District.

The study utilised structured and semi-structured research instruments to collect primary data from respondents which were randomly and purposively selected. Secondary data was collected through desk research. Quantitative data was analysed using computer soft ware, the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS). The narrative approach was adopted for the analysis and discussion of qualitative data.

The Central argument of the thesis is that, "*a central government predisposed to centralising tendencies cannot create an enabling environment for efficient and effective service delivery by local Councils.*" The study design aimed at capturing as many thematic areas as possible with a view to providing a 'broad' understanding of how the local authorities have performed during the period under review.

The thesis has shown that the performance of the local authorities with regard to the delivery of public services, during the period under review, has been poor and raised a lot of concern among residents. Constraints characterising the operations of the Councils include inadequate financing, poor policies and pronouncements, the lack of adequate equipment and qualified staff, bloated workforce, lack of initiative and poor work habits among staff, inadequate supervision of subordinates, mismanagement of the scarce resources, ineffective community representation by Councillors, and the lack of public scrutiny.

The study has noted that in spite of some capacity among the business community (Choma and Lusaka) the local authorities have not utilised contracting-out as an alternative method of service delivery.

Although NGOs have demonstrated some capacity to deliver services, these institutions have not been co-opted into the work of the local authorities. Similarly, the role of traditional authorities in public service delivery has largely been that of mobilisation of communities to undertake developmental activities on voluntary basis and/or ensure the desired community response to externally funded projects.

Overall, the study has found that although there are other factors that have contributed to the poor performance of the local authorities, government's tendency to centralise decision-making on critical matters of local authority operations, is the major constraining factor. This *centralising tendency* has created local authorities whose operations are highly dependent on the centre at the expense of local initiative. In effect, therefore, inadequacies of the centre have translated into the poor performance of the dependent local authorities.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my father, now deceased, and to my wife and children. To my father who not only supported my change of career from the Electrical engineering field to the Social Sciences in the mid-1980s but had faith in me and actually said that I had the ability to pursue any career of my choice. To my wife Beatrice and children (Kamiji, Kaumba, Kasumba, and Ng'olani) for their encouragement and enduring my absence during the fieldwork trips, and/or whenever I spent longer periods at the office, during weekends, working on the PhD. To all of them, I say thank you very much.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AVAP	-	Anti-voter Apathy
CBD	-	Central Business District
CBO	-	Community Based Organisations
CDD	-	Cooperation for District Development project
CSPR	-	Civil Society for Poverty Reduction
DDC	-	District Development Committee
DDCC	-	District Development Coordinating Committee
DDP	-	District Development Programme
DWASHE	-	District Water Sanitation and Health programme
FDD	-	Forum for Democracy and Development
FODEP	-	Foundation for Democratic Process
GTZ	-	German Technical Assistance to Zambia
JCTR	-	Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection
JICA	-	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
LGAZ	-	Local Government Association of Zambia
LGTI	-	Local Government Training Institute
MLGH	-	Ministry of Local Government and Housing
MMD	-	Movement for Multiparty Democracy
NGO	-	Non-governmental Organisation
NIPA	-	National Institute of Public Administration
NORAD	-	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NRM	-	National Resistance Movement
NWLG	-	National Women's Lobby Group
PAM	-	Programme Against Malnutrition
PDC	-	Provincial Development Committee
PLGO	-	Provincial Local Government Officer
PPAZ	-	Planned Parenthood Association of Zambia
RDC	-	Residential Development Committee
TIZ	-	Transparency International-Zambia
UNIP	-	United National Independence Party
UNZA	-	University of Zambia
UPND	-	United Party for National Development
WCB	-	Workmen's Compensation Board
WDC	-	Ward Development Committee
ZAMTEL	-	Zambia Telecommunications Corporation
ZDC	-	Zone Development Committee
ZESCO	-	Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation
ZULAWU	-	Zambia United Authorities Workers Union

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

Government intervention in the provision of goods and services is, among other things, justified by the observation that the competitive market is subject to failure and also that government has an obligation to distribute welfare to its citizens. Market failure is due to the imperfect flow of information; transaction costs; externalities; natural monopolies; the concept of public goods and the nonexistence of markets for some goods (Stokey and Zeckhauser, 1978: 297-303). Although it is not within the scope of the thesis to analyse the market failures a somewhat detailed explanation of one of them (public goods) has been attempted later in the chapter. This is mainly due to the fact that the provision of public goods and services impacts the operations of local Councils in several ways and is clearly central to the existence of such institutions. To mitigate the negative effects of market failure in the provision of services and to also guarantee the welfare of citizens with regard to aspects of life that are not likely to be dealt with by private enterprise governments create public institutions. Local Councils are among some of the institutions that governments use to provide public services. Because of their close proximity to the communities they serve, such institutions are perceived to be well-placed to provide services that adequately reflect local priorities. It is in view of this recognition that governments worldwide constantly conduct reforms aimed at “perfecting” their local government systems in order to enhance their capacity to provide services efficiently and effectively.

However, governments need to have built-in mechanisms for accountability for the quality of goods and services they provide. In order to assess service quality a government can conduct *special evaluations* or carry out *regular performance monitoring*. Special evaluations are usually in the form of “audits”, “programme evaluations” or “Inspector General Studies”- a somewhat recent development in the United States of America that focuses more on evaluating programme implementation than on programme results. Regular performance monitoring of service quality over time

provides valuable information to both elected officials and programme managers (Hatry, 1994:36). Such information is critical in the planning for and subsequent provision of better quality services in the future.

Zambia, like many other countries in the world, has since the attainment of its political independence from British colonial rule on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1964 strived to institute a local government system that is capable of delivering services of high quality in the most efficient and effective manner. Like most newly independent African countries Zambia faced a myriad of problems that needed to be addressed if the citizens were to appreciate the difference between colonial rule and self-government. Among the many problems the country faced were inadequate schools and other institutions of learning, poor health facilities, insufficient and poor road infrastructure, and the lack of skilled manpower. In many respects the creation of an effective local government system was perceived to be a very critical element in the process of addressing the various challenges the country faced.

### **The Development of the Local Government System: General and Zambia**

It is important to note that sustainable development efforts require popular participation in the decision making process. This is because a sense of ownership as regards, among other things, the scope and nature of national policies, and the conception and subsequent implementation of developmental projects and programmes needs to be built among the citizens. Citizen participation in local governance in general and the importance of having elected local councils in particular has been well acknowledged by many theorists of local government. The colonial local government system in the then Northern Rhodesia was perceived to be undemocratic and generally not aimed at providing equity in terms of service delivery. The new Zambian government was thus faced with the challenge of transforming this system with a view to ensuring the effective, efficient, and more importantly, equitable delivery of public services.

Local administration in Zambia may be traced from the pre-independence era when in 1889 the British South African Company (BSA) was granted a charter on condition that the railway line that was being constructed progressed northwards over the Zambezi. The development of small communities along the rail line, as construction

progressed, marked the birth of Municipal administration in Zambia. In 1924 the British government took over Northern Rhodesia and established it as a Protectorate with a Governor and legislative and executive councils. Through the 1927 and 1928 Ordinances Councils were given wide-ranging discretionary powers, among which were the power to establish markets, parks, slaughter houses, sewerage systems, refuse disposal services, and water and electricity supply systems, and the maintenance of order in their communities. By the end of 1962, two years before Zambia gained its independence, the structure of local government administration consisted of 1 City Council (Lusaka); 7 Municipal Councils (Livingstone, Ndola, Broken Hill (now Kabwe), Luanshya, Mufulira, Kitwe and Chingola) constituted under the Municipal Corporations Ordinance; 15 Township Management Boards, 6 African Township Management Boards, and 52 Districts. It is important to note that sustainable development efforts require popular participation in the decision making process. A sense of ownership as regards, among other things, the scope and nature of national policies, and the conception and subsequent implementation of developmental projects and programmes needs to be built among the citizens. All the three major reforms (1965, 1980, and 1991 Acts) that have been undertaken are briefly highlighted in this chapter to provide a historical context to the thesis. Extensive reference is, however, made to the 1991 Act which provides the legislative basis for the administration of local Councils during the period under review.

The administration of local Councils during the post-independence period has been guided by three major reforms namely, the 1965 Local Government Act; the 1980 Local Administration Act; and the 1991 Local Government Act. Local government under the 1965 Local Government Act was based on democratically elected Councils on the basis of universal adult suffrage. This system of local government was adapted from Zambia's former colonial master, Britain, and was considered suitable for the multiparty political system that Zambia embraced at independence. In spite of some amendments to the Act, in the years that followed, it became clear that local administration was not operating as expected and this, among other things, had a negative impact on the delivery of services. When repealing the 1965 Act, in 1980, it was argued that:

1. local authorities lacked financial autonomy as they depended on and were controlled by the central government,
2. local development Committees in local authorities were ineffective because they did not have adequate power to make binding decisions, and
3. too much centralized decision-making of the system limited coordination between and among central government departments.

In 1972 Zambia was declared a one-party state with the ruling United National Independence Party (UNIP) being the only legally recognised political party. The 1980 Local Administration Act that replaced the 1965 Act, therefore, operated under a one-party political system of government. The composition of local Councils, through this Act, comprised non-elective and elective members. The non-elective members comprised political appointees including a District Governor as Chairman of the Councils, representatives of mass organisations such as the Women's League, trade unions operating in the district, and Security Forces. The elected members included all Members of Parliament in the District and all Ward chairmen of Ward Committees in the district. This composition was considered undemocratic because it disenfranchised the public since, for example, only party functionaries who were drawn from the Wards, Branches and Sections were eligible to vote. Party officials that were elected as Ward chairmen automatically become members of the Council (Chikulo, 1983).

Officially the enactment of the 1980 Local Administration Act had three principal objectives. The first embodied the publicly expressed desire of the government and the ruling UNIP to decentralise power to the people. The second objective was to "ensure an effective integration of the primary organs of local administration in the district" (Zambia, 1980: 127). As a result, district party and Council structures were fused. The third objective was to enable district Councils to play a more direct and substantial role in the development process than they had been expected to undertake in the past (Mukwena, 1992). However, the enactment of the 1980 Act did not enhance the operations of Councils as expected. The defects of the Act that justified its repeal may be summed up, among other things, as follows:

1. local authorities were dominated by (one-party) politics,
2. local authorities' administrative, technical and professional considerations were subordinated to political objectives and priorities,
3. decision-making and finance became even more centralized than before,
4. people were appointed to Council posts on the basis of party (UNIP) loyalty rather than their ability to do the job, and
5. the chief officers in the councils literally became tools of their political masters.

The above defects notwithstanding, it is important to note that there were elements in the Act that, if adequately harnessed, would have made a positive impact on the local authorities' ability to deliver services. Such elements included the authority to undertake business ventures, and to invest any monies not required for immediate use in various securities. The Act also emphasised on integration of district activities with a view to ensure the prudent use of resources whether financial, human or otherwise. Such integration, among other things was meant to reduce on the duplication of efforts at the district level.

In December 1990 Zambia returned to a multiparty political system and upon taking over the reins of power in 1991 the new government, under the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) enacted a new local government Act (the Local Government Act of 1991) in December 1991 to replace the 1980 Act. Notable changes brought about by the 1991 Act included the clear institutional divorce of party structures from the Council, the abandonment of the integrative role of the district councils and the reintroduction of representative local government based on universal adult suffrage. Under the 1991 Act the responsible minister is empowered to establish in any district a City Council, municipal council, district council, township council or management board, provided that a township council or management board can only be established on the recommendation of the appropriate city, municipal or district council.

Currently there are 72 District Councils countrywide composed of elected councillors representing wards, Members of Parliament (MPs) in the district and two representatives of the chiefs in the district, appointed by all the chiefs in the district. There is a mayor and deputy mayor for city and municipal councils and a chairman and vice chairman for district councils, elected by the council from among the elected councillors (Zambia 1991a; Zambia 1992a). These officials are elected annually and can only hold office for a maximum of two consecutive terms. The councillors constitute the legislative wing while the appointed officials, headed by town clerks (city and municipal councils) and council secretaries (district councils), constitute the executive wing of the councils. The councillors represent their constituents and are responsible for policy making and supervising the implementation of the policies. The appointed officials are responsible for rendering technical advice to the councillors as well as implementing policies. This system of local government was basically a return to that which prevailed during the 1965 – 1980 period and reflected the majority's wish as contained in the submissions to the Mvunga Constitutional Review Commission and its subsequent report of October 1990. One of the very relevant findings of the Commission's was that:

“at district level there was an overwhelming call to revert to the old Mayoral/Chairmanship system of administration which existed before the enactment of the Local Administration Act of 1980”.

In view of the above popular submission the Commission recommended that, “at the district level, the Third Republic should revert to the Mayoral/Chairmanship system which existed before the introduction of the Local Government Act No. 15 of 1980”.

The 1991 Local Government Act is, in fact, the major legislation that has guided the administration of local councils during the period that has been investigated. However, the 1991 reforms have not made significant improvements in the administration of local Councils during the period under review. Consequently, the ability of local Councils to deliver adequate and quality services in an effective and efficient manner has remained below the expectations of communities. The delivery of services in many areas including the collection and disposal of garbage, water and sewerage, inspections, provision of markets, and road construction and maintenance has been very disappointing. Problems

associated with limited finances, equipment, and the administrative and legislative capacity of local authorities has also adversely affected the capacity of these institutions to deliver services. To a large measure these problems have been exacerbated by deficient government legislation and insufficient commitment, on the part of central government, to enhance the capacity of local authorities to operate effectively.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In spite of the major reforms instituted since the country attained independence in 1964 the local government system in Zambia has failed to create an environment conducive to effective and efficient service delivery. The inability of local authorities to efficiently and effectively provide services to their communities has been noted and alluded to by various stakeholders including the central government. The problems usually noted are in areas such as garbage collection and disposal; water and sanitation; fire protection; inadequate and dirty market places; unkempt cemeteries; and poor maintenance of roads. The poor performance of local authorities has resulted in most residents resisting to pay various council rates and charges further worsening the poor financial position of the authorities. It is clear that local councils in Zambia face similar problems irrespective of their position in the hierarchy of the local government system – City, Municipal or District. Policies and various government pronouncements seem to generally have had the same impact on all the councils. In this respect, therefore, the central argument or thesis of the study is that *“a central government predisposed to centralising tendencies cannot create an enabling environment for efficient and effective service delivery by local Councils.* In the thesis we argue, based on the information collected from the study areas, that regardless of their position in the local government system hierarchy local Councils in Zambia have generally suffered in similar ways due to inadequacies, among other things, in the policy framework, and generally a negative disposition of government towards the local authorities. In other words government has never taken any measures that would be perceived to advantage or disadvantage one category of local Councils whether at the City, Municipal or District level. This argument, which reflects the central thesis of the study, runs through all the subsequent chapters. Supporting the central thesis is the observation that central-local relations are, to a very large extent, determined by the

nature and scope of the relevant legislation. The performance of local Councils with regard to their ability to deliver services, therefore, in many ways reflects the legislative environment in which they operate.

### **Study objective**

The general objective of the study is to investigate the factors that may help to explain the inability of local authorities to efficiently deliver adequate quality services in spite of the many reforms that have been undertaken to improve the performance of local authorities. In this respect, the following are the specific objectives:

- 1) the impact of Administrative and Technical capacity of Local Councils on Service Delivery;
- 2) effect of Local Council financing on service delivery;
- 3) the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the Business community in public service delivery; and
- 4) the role of local governance and politics on public service delivery.

In view of the above specific objectives, we have attempted to investigate the ability of local Councils to attract and retain experienced manpower; the availability of equipment necessary to facilitate service delivery; the nature and scope of fiscal decentralisation; the interactions, relating to service delivery, between the NGOs and the Business community on the one hand and the local Councils and local residents on the other; the relations between local Councillors on the one hand and the Council management officials and local communities on the other; and attempted to establish the role of traditional authority in the administration of local Councils in general and the delivery of public services in particular.

### **Significance of the Study**

It should be noted that decentralising government activities to the local level has great potential to promote democratic governance and effective service delivery. Academic and practical arguments advanced to support this assertion are many and varied (Hicks, U. K. 1950: 160; Maddick, H. 1963:160; Smith B. C. 1985: 160; and Turner and Hulme, 1997: op cit). However, in spite of the recognition of the importance of local government and the subsequent decentralisation efforts made since independence there is no well-documented empirical evidence, emanating from a comprehensive study, to explain the poor performance of local authorities in Zambia as regards service delivery. Consequently the reasons that may help to explain this malaise have been relegated to mere speculation and treated as a matter of course. By carrying out a detailed case study of three local authorities, covering the three levels of local government administration, the study sought to fill this information gap. We are optimistic that the findings of our study will help to shed light on some of the factors that inhibit rather than promote the effective and efficient delivery of public services by local Councils. Generally, we hope that the findings of the study has provided answers to many questions; and will help to stimulate public debate and assist in directing government policy on matters concerning the administration of local government in Zambia.

### **Theoretical Framework**

A well functioning local government system constitutes an effective avenue as well as an instrument through which popular participation and the sense of ownership may be developed and nurtured. Generally local authorities are there to promote, among other things, the social and economic well being of the citizens. Local authorities, by virtue of being very close to the communities, are better placed than central government agencies located especially at the centre to know the needed services and be able to devise appropriate strategies to facilitate the delivery of such services. It would, therefore, be very difficult to justify the existence of a local government system in general and local authorities in particular that fail to perform the cardinal function of delivering services to the local communities.

Local government is that level of government which is commonly defined as a *decentralised*, representative institution with general and specific powers devolved to it by a higher tier of government (central or provincial) within a geographically defined area. Local government is also defined as ‘a political subdivision of a nation or (in a federal system) state which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs, including powers to impose taxes or to exact labour for prescribed purposes. The governing body of such an entity is elected or otherwise locally selected’ – (Ola, 1984:7). Generally the existence of local government reflects a government’s desire to involve the local people in the decision-making process relating to issues that affect them, and also the need to decongest the central government. The decongestion of government frees key officials from routine and usually detailed tasks that deal with purely local problems. The net effect of the decongestion is enhanced speed and effectiveness in the administration of government at both the national and local levels. Specifically, however, local government, among other things, exists for utilitarian as well as democratic considerations. Utilitarian considerations entail the efficient and effective delivery of public services to citizens within a given locality while recognizing that the recipients of such services have an obligation to pay for the services. Efficiency in this respect is referring to the capacity of local Councils to deliver services with minimum wastage of resources whether financial or otherwise. Effectiveness on the other hand refers to the degree to which the local community appreciates services delivered by local Councils. In other words the concern is whether or not the services make a significant and positive impact on the well being of the local residents, and whether or not the services address the priority needs of the community.

In general, therefore, a utilitarian philosophy involves the general principle of greatest happiness, not just of an individual but of society. A utilitarian philosophy observes that the well being of society depends on the well-being of the members of that society. In other words if conditions are created that will enhance local autonomy with a view to ensuring the proper functioning of individual local authorities and subsequently ensure the satisfaction of local communities vis-à-vis service delivery this positive impact will be felt countrywide. Democratic considerations, on the other hand, emphasise civic responsibilities that focus on values of participation, representation, local autonomy,

responsiveness and fairness. What this means in effect is that a well functioning local government system is one that has substantial decision-making powers; one that is sensitive to the needs of the community to ensure effective responses; and one that involves the community in its activities. In order to enhance our understanding of the problems and prospects facing the local government administration it is important that we examine and discuss, albeit briefly, the following theoretical issues:

### *Local Government Management Models*

The basic organization and management models of local authorities are the Councillor-Committee; the City Manager; (e.g. in the United States of America) and the Prefectoral models (e.g. in France). Local authorities operating under the Councillor-Committee model are controlled by elected Councils and utilise the Committee system. The head of the Council is a honorary mayor, and functional departments are run by appointed officials under the leadership of a Chief Executive Officer who is a professional. There is no political executive in such a model. Council authority is delegated to committees and not to individuals. In this model the membership of committees has to reflect all the political parties represented in the Council. Appointed officials are excluded from the committees. In this model, therefore, the Council represents both the legislature and the political executive. Its responsibilities include policy-making, budget preparation, and ensuring that Council decisions are implemented. It is argued that although this model, for example, ensures democracy in the process of decision-making the clear distinction between Councillors and appointed officials denies the necessary Councillor-official interfacing required for effective Council administration.

In the City-Manager model an executive head appointed by the Council or a staff Commission is in charge of administration and is responsible for making many important decisions. The city manager has substantial authority in spite of the fact that he is ultimately accountable to the elected Council. The Manager, for example, appoints his subordinates, assigns them duties and supervises their activities and draws up the city budget. Local authorities using this model are normally expected to benefit a great deal from the expertise and professional experience characteristic of such executives. It is important to note, however, that considerable power is taken away from the elected

officials. The model also overlooks the fact that not all major decisions of Council are based on considerations of managerial efficiency and effectiveness. Decisions that centre around value choices may, in fact, require the involvement of Councillors.

In the Prefect model there is an elected Council served by a political executive appointed by central government. The prefect is responsible for supervising the departments and appointed officials and reports to the appointing authority not the Council. It is argued that local authorities using this model tend to benefit from the presence of the prefect especially in terms of attracting central government funding. It should be noted that in most cases the prefectorial system tends to reduce local government to field administration with government operating at the local level under the guise of a Council. However, where the prefect is only given coordinative rather than supervisory or controlling powers it is possible to maintain the political autonomy of local Councils. In this case the prefect's responsibility is mainly to ensure coordination of policy between the central and local levels of government (Ismail 1997 op cit).

In addition to adopting a management model the local government system ought to choose a personnel system that would facilitate the execution of local authority functions. In this respect a local government system may choose to adopt either the *Unified*, *Separate*, or the *integrated* personnel system. In the Unified personnel system local government staff is separate from the central government staff but is under the control of the Ministry responsible for local government. A separate body, such as a Local Government Service Commission or some other body with an appropriate designation, deals with major issues relating to personnel administration. Local Councils using the Separate personnel system have their own personnel system although certain aspects may be regulated by central government. Under this system conditions of service may be uniform between local units but opportunities for transfers are very unlikely. It is important to note, however, that local Councils using this system are free to enhance their operations through secondments of staff from central government. In the Integrated system both central government and local authorities fall under a single Civil service. Issues pertaining to recruitment, promotion, compensation, transfers, retirements, and dismissals are dealt with by the same Civil Service Commission or an equivalent

institution. There are opportunities for transfers of personnel from one local authority to another.

Whatever the administrative model adopted functions of local authorities worldwide relate to agriculture, buildings, education, public health, liquor, markets, maintenance of public order, registration, industry and trade. Local authorities are normally given powers for promoting agricultural development in their areas including the controlling of animal husbandry. They enforce requirements relating to the building of structures including roads and provide lighting. In some countries local authorities are involved in the running of primary schools. The restriction, regulation or licensing of liquor manufacturing is a responsibility of local authorities. Local authorities are also responsible for the registration of marriages, births and deaths. In their quest to ensure effective and efficient service delivery local authorities may enter into public-private partnerships or fully contract-out the provision of services to private institutions. The general sources of local government finance include taxation, cost recovery/user fees, central government grants, earnings from public utilities/services, borrowing, and voluntary contributions.

It is important, however, to appreciate that the effectiveness of any selected management model with regard, among other things, to the delivery of adequate and quality services may be influenced by the nature of central-local relations vis-à-vis levels of decision-making autonomy at the local level and the generally 'accepted' view of what local authorities can or cannot do. It is in view of the above observation that we proceed to analyse, below, some theories of local government.

### *Democratic Theories of Local Government*

The understanding of local government in general and the management of local authorities in particular can be greatly enhanced through the examination of the democratic theories of local government. These theories are classified into two categories namely, *centralist* and *decentralist* theories. The former includes the Intermediate theory, Utilitarian theory, and the Social Relations theory while the latter group includes the Law-State theory, Local Self-government theory, and the Localist theory. Centralist theories generally argue and justify the need for enhanced central control of local

authorities. However, there seems to be a global consensus to the effect that in order to ensure good governance and sustainable development in general, and to guarantee the effective and efficient delivery of public services, there is need to adopt a bottom-up approach in the decision-making process. In other words advocates of the Law-state theory and the Localist theory, for example, do recognise the strategic position of local self-government in national development. Localist theory, in effect, argues for independent, autonomous and elected local authorities. The theory emphasises that in order for government to respond to diverse local needs and interests, it must itself evoke diverse responses. Concentration of political power should be avoided and the influence of local decision makers (community representatives) should be extended in order to guarantee appropriate local government responses to local needs and conditions. The Localist theory is, therefore, oriented towards maximum decentralisation of functions and powers. Supporters of the theory maintain that the local tier is closest to the citizens, and because of this strategic placement, can be more responsive and accountable to communities. For these theorists autonomous local councils whose decision-making processes are characterized by popular participation constitute effective channels for the delivery of public services<sup>1</sup>.

Critics of the Localist theory argue that the theory does not take sufficient account of the tensions that exist between the regional and national levels and the need for policy making at these levels, as well as the need for meaningful citizen control at the local level. The critics also maintain that the theory does not seem to acknowledge that a bias towards local democracy may result in neglect of issues such as territorial, social and economic justice. Another observation is that the theory fails to appreciate that if the limited resources at the local level were not centrally coordinated then the uneven resources of various local units can lead to serious imbalances in the nation. In effect such criticisms view the theory as one that overestimates the capacity and capability of the local level to single-handedly exercise citizen control and regulation.

These criticisms, as expected, are supported by *centralist* theories that generally tend to emphasise central control of local authorities. The utilitarian theory, for example, stresses that municipal corporations can be dissolved or reorganised from top to bottom, and their historical privileges withdrawn. The utilitarians see local government as a tool

for aiding civic education and thus progress, but stress the responsibility of territorial subdivisions such as local government to the sovereign authority and the technical competence of central government, as well as to the local electorate<sup>2</sup>. In spite of the criticisms, however, the Localist theory does have sound foundations with regard to local government communalism, accountability and democracy. In fact it can be argued that current global debates that espouse the efficacy of devolution, local autonomy and community participation in the decision making process clearly ascribe to the tenets of the localist theory. It can, in effect, be said that a theory that essentially argues for increased central control and seemingly underestimates local capabilities is clearly out of tune with the current global view that, among other things, emphasises the importance of building democratic institutions to enhance good governance.

However, the adoption of or support for any theory of local government, including the localist theory, in itself, does not adequately highlight the reason/s for the intervention of central government in the delivery of public services through local institutions such as Councils. It is for this reason that we attempt, in the following section, to discuss theoretical arguments associated with the problems of public service provision in the light of market failure and the nature of *public* goods.

#### *Market Failure and the Collective Action Problem*

Market failures are situations that violate the basic assumptions of the idealised competitive economy and therefore interfere with efficiency in production or consumption (Weimer and Vining, 1992: 30-31). Market failures that support government intervention in the provision of goods and services, and the regulation of markets include externalities; information asymmetries; natural monopolies; and public goods. Two assumptions for markets to be efficient are that all marginal benefits are reflected in the demand curve for a commodity and all marginal costs are reflected in the supply curve. The failure to meet these assumptions results in externalities a situation where some gains or costs to society are not reflected in market prices (Stevens, 1993: 57). The amount of information reaching individuals and communities, about the characteristic of given goods or services, may vary in various ways. Buyers and sellers in market transactions may have different information with regard to, for example, the

quality of the good being traded or services being rendered. This situation, among other things, results in different demand schedules for those that are “properly” informed and those that are not about the characteristics of the good or service. It should, however, be noted that information asymmetry does not have a negative impact on the consumers’ demand schedule when dealing with what are described as *search goods*. It is easy for consumers to determine the characteristics of a *search good*, such as a table, prior to purchasing.

According to Weimer and Vining (1992: 62-63) a natural monopoly occurs when the fixed costs of providing a good are high relative to the variable cost so that average cost declines over the relevant range of demand. The existence of monopolies usually has a negative impact on the consumers or recipients of the goods services produced by a monopoly. In the absence of competition a monopolistic firm has no incentive to ensure the production of high quality goods or services at a reasonable price. In certain situations a market process that is not constrained results in the good or service being supplied by only one supplier that would ordinarily not survive if it were to produce at the level that is economically efficient. Generally, production under a natural monopoly creates the problem of undersupply. This situation is often a deliberate strategy aimed at keeping high price levels.

Governments, among other things, have a moral and social obligation to ensure that citizens have access to quality goods and services. The market failures, therefore, pose a serious challenge to government in that their effects have to be mitigated in one way or another. The provision of goods and services through public institutions such as local Councils and government line Ministries is one option. Government rules and regulations that forbid the existence of monopolies can also be used to reduce the incidence of market failure in the provision of essential goods and services.

Voluntary contributions, whether in cash or kind, have a positive impact on the revenue base of local Councils. In order to benefit from such contributions, however, it is important for local Councils to ensure effective coordination with voluntary groups as well as institute measures specifically tailored to sensitise local communities on the importance of making contributions. High levels of civic responsibility can also enhance the ability of local Councils with regard to the maintenance of public utilities such as

roads, markets, streetlights, play parks, and cemeteries. Civic responsibility, among other things, reduces the incidence of vandalism. It should, however, be acknowledged that most services provided by local Councils have the characteristic of *pure public goods*. Such services are *non-excludable* in use and/or *non-rivalrous* in consumption. A good or service is non-rivalrous in consumption when more than one person can derive consumption benefits from a given level of supply at the same time. A good or service, on the other hand, is non-excludable if it is physically or legally impractical for one person to maintain exclusive control over its use (Weimer and Vining, 1992: 41-43). The provision of pure public goods is often vulnerable to vandalism and the effects of the *free-rider problem*. In many instances some people have the 'I don't care' attitude towards public property, a situation that often leads to vandalism. In other cases some people would like to benefit from a good or service without making a contribution towards its provision even when such a contribution had been requested. The *free-rider*, also known as the *collective action* problem, argues that individuals may have a common interest, but they are also likely to have private interests that inhibit the individual's support for the voluntary organization. Even if they might each gain from the formation or existence of a group, they might not act to promote their common interest. In other words even though a group has a common interest, its members won't necessarily engage in collective action (Stevens, 1993: 100). The *free-rider* problem has a negative impact on the attitude of local communities as potential sources of local revenue and overseers of public property.

Given the above discussion the intervention of government in public service delivery may not be a subject of serious debate. However, the actions of central officials may have a bearing on the behaviour of local officials that are entrusted with the responsibility of delivering services on behalf of government and subsequently affect the efficiency and effectiveness with which such services can be delivered in various ways. The implications of such actions and resultant behaviour can be explained by the Principal-Agent theory which we discuss below.

### *Principal-Agent theory*

Local government institutions are created by central government through various statutes. This, in effect, means that local Councils are in fact agents of the State. In this respect it is, therefore, plausible to argue that the Central-Local relations are vulnerable to principal-agent problems. The principal-agent model is an analytic expression of the agency relationship, in which one party, the principal, considers entering into a contractual agreement with another, the agent, in the expectation that the agent will subsequently choose actions that produce outcomes desired by the principal (Moe, 1984: 739-777). The two general types of problems that plague principal-agent relationships are known as *adverse selection* and *moral hazard*. The problem of adverse selection is due to unobservability of the information, benefits, and values on which the decisions of others are based. Moral hazard arises from unobservability of the actual behaviour of an agent (Moe, 1984: op cit.). According to Stevens (1993:282) the risk of adverse selection is simply the situation where the principal may not know which agent would be best to hire or how to define the terms of a contract or the scope of authority. The risk of moral hazard, on the other hand arises when an agent, once hired, changes his behaviour to the detriment of the principal.

It is important to mention that the principal-agent analogy, with respect to the administration of local Councils, is valid because it is supported by legislation. National constitutions normally provide for the creation of local authorities and through various pieces of legislation clearly show that central government (principal) is superior to the local authority (agent) in the hierarchy of government authority. Information asymmetries may enhance the aspect of moral hazard manifesting itself in shirking among officials in local Councils. The values of Council officials, upon which decisions are based, may sometimes be in conflict with those of central government further increasing the incidence of moral hazard. Laws governing the administration of local authorities need to be carefully formulated with a view, among other things, to ensuring that appropriate authority is granted to these subordinate units in order to limit the agency problem of adverse selection. The two agency problems are real and principals need to find ways to deal with them. The two ways, relevant to the administration of local Councils, a principal may employ to deal with the agency problem include *monitoring and reporting*,

and utilizing *institutional checks*. It should, however, be appreciated that monitoring an agency to reduce moral hazard is often difficult and costly, especially if output is hard to define. In the same vein the questions of how to monitor, how much to monitor, and conversely, how much risk might rationally be incurred by a principal need to be addressed. Institutional checks must be designed and implemented in such a way that desirable action, by the agency (Councils) is not unduly blocked (Stevens, 1993: 285-286). The validity of a by-law passed by a local authority may, for example, be subject to determination by the courts if and when a given by-law is challenged by a plaintiff.

We recognise the need for decision making autonomy in the administration of local authorities. However, we argue that in order for the agents to perform in an efficient, effective, transparent and accountable manner the principal should have the means to ensure this kind of performance without unduly interfering on progressive local initiatives and decisions that are aimed at enhancing service delivery. Besides monitoring, reporting and other institutional checks, the principal should generally provide an environment that supports optimal performance of the agents. However, because of information asymmetries and other costs it is difficult for the principal to ensure effective monitoring and control. Gruber (1987), for example, noted that government (principal) should be aware of the costs associated with the control of bureaucrats (agents). Such costs may be divided into two broad categories namely *effectiveness costs* and *enforcement costs*. The former constitute costs which arise when bureaucracies follow the constraints placed on them but by doing so impair the bureaucrats' ability to achieve public objectives. In other words such costs occur when controllers tell bureaucrats to do wrong things – that is to behave in ways that will not achieve the goals or when controllers impose constraints that are unduly restrictive, preventing bureaucrats from doing their duties successfully. The latter costs arise when constraints are not followed, and controllers have to make a choice of committing resources to establish why, or of punishing bureaucrats for the failures. These costs occur due to the need to monitor the activities of bureaucracies and when sanctions have to be imposed in lieu of failure. If it is clear that a bureaucrat has deliberately ignored the constraints/directives the decision to impose sanctions may be easy. But if it is not clear, the controller is faced with a choice between ignoring violations, and in the process

weakening control, or punishing bureaucrats for failing to do things that were not in their power to do.

We generally argue that any efforts aimed at ensuring the effective and efficient delivery of public services, in a transparent and accountable manner, must be anchored on the availability of institutions that have adequate power to make decisions based on the participation of those that are affected by such decisions. In other words selected models of management, theoretical frameworks, arguments about government intervention in public service delivery, and the behaviour of controllers and the controlled are only good in as far as they are able to enhance a genuine dispersal of authority, responsibilities, and resources with a view to promoting participatory decision-making (decentralisation). In the next section, therefore, we briefly analyse theoretical issues related to the transfer of decision-making authority from the centre to the periphery (decentralisation), community involvement (participation), and the insurance of well-functioning public institutions (good governance).

#### *Decentralisation, Participation and Good Governance*

The extent to which responsibilities, functions, and resources are delegated by central government (decentralisation) to the Provincial, District and Community levels has a bearing on central-local relations. Decentralisation can take many forms that include functional, areal, horizontal and vertical. Generally local Councils are granted authority through vertical decentralisation in the form of either deconcentration or devolution. Deconcentration involves the transfer of selected functions within the central government hierarchy through the shifting of workload from central ministries to field officers, the creation of field agencies, or the shifting of responsibility to local administrative units that are part of the central government structure. It is important to note that although deconcentration results in some dispersal of power, few decisions can be taken without reference to the centre. Devolution on the other hand involves the transfer of legislative powers and institutional autonomy to sub-national units of government. The sub-national units include local governments, local authorities, district councils, provincial governments and state governments. Local governments, in a devolved system can do what they want, bound only by the broad national policy guidelines, their financial,

human, and material resources. In a devolved system of administration local government is perceived as a separate level over which central authority exercises little or no direct control; local units must have clear and legally recognised geographical boundaries over which they exercise authority and within which they perform their functions; and local units must be given corporate status meaning that they can sue or be sued, be involved in business ventures and raise funds from their own resources, and should be free to revise rent charges.

In spite of the global demand for decentralization it is important to note that if not properly handled decentralization can increase disparities; can undermine the implementation of fiscal policies; and can enhance corruption (Prud'homme, 1995: 202-211). A detailed analysis of this argument is beyond the scope of this thesis, suffice to state that the adoption of a good decentralization policy and other government rules and regulations should be able to effectively mitigate the adverse effects of the perceived dangers of decentralization. Generally the benefits associated with decentralisation include the strengthening of democracy and management efficiency; promotion of transparency, accountability, and sustainable development projects; and the fostering of political education and training for political leadership. Clearly, the benefits of a decentralised government epitomise the tenets of good governance, a concept we discuss later in this section. Community participation in the activities of local Councils can help to enhance transparency and accountability. Our main concern here is participation. The concept of participation may be defined as the organized effort to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations on the part of groups or movements hitherto excluded from such control. This definition captures the aspects of empowerment, control, and decision-making. Participation may generally be seen as both an *end* and a *means*. Human development stresses the need to invest in human capabilities and then ensure that those capabilities are used for the benefit of all. Greater participation has an important role to play here: it helps maximize the use of human capabilities and is thus a *means* of increasing levels of social and economic development. But human development is also concerned with personal fulfillment. So active participation, which allows people to realise their full potential and make their best contribution to society is also an *end* in itself (HDR, 1993: 21-22) It is a concept that

represents a vehicle through which desired objectives such as democratization, equity, human rights, and sustainable development can be realised. Benefits associated with participation are many and varied but may be divided into three categories namely *instrumental*, *developmental* and *intrinsic values*. Regardless of the level or type of participation, there is significant evidence that participation can, in many circumstances, improve the quality, effectiveness and sustainability of projects, and strengthen ownership and commitment of government and stakeholders. These are attributes of good governance.

The notion of good governance (good government) is associated with the need to institute fundamental changes in political and administrative structures as a prerequisite for development. There are a variety of interpretations relating to the nature of the concept of good governance. However, typical of bilateral donors is the UK's Overseas Development Administration (ODA), for whom the promotion of good governance is a prime objective. According to the ODA there are four main elements that underpin the concept: the *legitimacy* of government; *accountability* of both the political and official elements of government for their actions; the *competency* of government to formulate policies, make timely decisions, implement them effectively and deliver services; and the respect for *human rights and the rule of law*. To achieve good governance there is need for many institutions, and other stakeholders, in any given society to interact effectively by way of sharing ideas and being accountable for certain responsibilities. The process of interaction should, as much as possible, be free from intimidation and only characterized by a spirit of interdependence and mutual respect.

The delivery of services, whether by private or public institutions, depends on the effectiveness with which such institutions are managed. An organisation may have all the resources at its disposal but how such resources are managed is very critical to the service delivery process. Local authorities, like any other institutions, have to be well managed in order for them to deliver the desired results. The examination and understanding of the relevant theories is, therefore, very important not only to academicians and theoreticians but also to those that actually manage institutions whether public or private. According to Fox et al (1991: 8-11) the trend in the evolution of management theory has been a shift from a closed system approach searching for principles of management to an open system

approach selecting management strategies in relation to the particular situation within which the organization finds itself. Management and organization theory is linked to at least four schools of thought namely, the *Classical School*, the *Behavioural School*, the *Open Systems School*, and the *Contingency School*.

The Classical School was based on the belief that rationality in structure and process could be attained by building a theory around what was defined as the “one best way” of doing things. The school maintained that it was possible to devise a set of principles of management which should be applied to improve management performance and that these principles could be applied in any type of organization. Three observations can, however, be made and constitute a critique of the classical approach. First, the school utilises a mechanistic analogy for the studying of management and organizational phenomena. There is a narrow view of task performance and the human element is not effectively considered in the process. Second, the school emphasises a search for universally applicable principles of management. However, the notions of universal ‘principles of management’ and the ‘one best way’ that are applicable in all management situations, are explicitly rejected by the Systems School. Finally, the school focuses on internal efficiency and does not give significant attention to the environment and factors in the environment (Fox et al, 1991: 10).

The behavioural school aimed at enabling management to understand human behaviour in order to be capable of modifying it for the improved effectiveness of the organization. The school emphasised the importance of studying people as behaving individuals in an organized setting (Fox et al, 1991: op cit.). The behaviouralists sought to adopt an integrated and interdisciplinary approach, for according to them all human actions are motivated by social, economic, political, or psychological environment from where they come. This approach aims at substituting empirical and realistic judgments for the purely value oriented. This approach has been criticised for being of limited utility in the analysis of all types of administrative phenomena mainly because it is value-laden and consequently less likely to effectively and realistically respond to management challenges related to human behaviour. It is also noted that behavioural sciences appear to be largely valid and applicable to small groups, whereas the study of public administration deals with larger communities. The behavioural approach, therefore,

appears to be of limited relevance in dealing with many types of administrative problems and their solution, since the complexity and variability of human nature, motivations and behaviour preclude the attainment of precision that is so characteristic of the physical sciences (Basu. 1994: 39).

The Systems School views an organization not merely as a formal arrangement of superiors and subordinates, or a social system comprising informal organization and people's influence on each other, but a total system of formal organization, individuals, social system, the physical setting, and the environment, all constantly interacting with each other (Goel, 1994: 18). An open systems approach like the Contingency School views the environment as a very critical component to the successful management of organizations. It is generally accepted that the total situation of the relevant environment has to be taken into account in organization theory. The relevant environment has undoubted influence on organizational processes such as management. The environment is of such importance that it should be regarded as the starting point in understanding any internal subsystem (Kast and Rosenzweig, 1974: 26-30). It should be noted, however, that the system theory in management has many limitations as it deals with complex and ever-changing phenomena. It is observed that the selection of variables and their interconnections are not subject to control. The theory does not offer a unified philosophy. Models based on the system theory of management cannot comprehend social phenomenon. With the help of new electronic gadgets, however, it is possible to develop and perfect the system theory of management over a period of time (Goel, 1994: 119).

According to Weiner Contingency theory, regardless of its particular expression – situational organization form, situational leadership style, or situational decision-making – is generally accepted as the dominant emerging theory of organization and management of societal institutions (Weiner, 1982: 73). Carlisle (1973: 32-33) argued further that the contingency theory approach to management supports the notion that there is no one best way to lead people, organise groups, arrange tasks, or manage an enterprise. Also there is no one best system for planning, controlling, budgeting, coordinating, or integrating the operations of an organization. Management strategies have to be selected and/or adapted for the particular situation facing the organization (Fox et al, 1991: 11). In other words

the tenets of the contingency school uphold the need for managers to be adaptable, flexible, analytical and ingenious in their decision-making and management.

In responding to clients' needs for services organisations strive to find how best such services can be delivered without adversely affecting the quantity and/or quality. In some instances public organisations, for various reasons, may not be well-suited to effectively provide a given service and yet it is their responsibility to do so. One of the solutions to such problems is to allow other institutions (contracting out) to provide the service on terms that are agreeable to both parties. The historical record, according to Esman (1991: 91), has demonstrated convincingly that most governments, including Third World states, tend to be poor economic entrepreneurs and even worse managers of economic enterprises. It is this line of argument that lends support to the idea of contracting out the provision of services to private firms. As a matter of fact Kettl (1993: 247) observed that of all the privatization strategies that state and local governments have tried, contracting out is by far the most used and the most important adding that local government officials generally find that contracting out produces good-quality service.

Esman (1991:97) has noted that the process of contracting for private operation of activities sponsored and financed by the state is an expression of the movement toward privatization. The argument for contracting out stems from the presumed efficient and effective management capabilities, technical skills, and the operating flexibility of private firms and their freedom from political interference. Generally local officials will be less willing to contract out certain basic services for various reasons including political considerations. However, the benefits associated with contracting out services generally tend to outweigh the disadvantages. Separate surveys, of local governments, carried out by the International City Management Association –ICMA and the Mercer Group (1990: 31-34) indicated that contracting out does save money. The ICMA survey, for example, reported that 40 percent of the 1,681 local governments, in the survey, saved 10 to 19 percent of the total cost for service provision through contracting out. The surveys generally indicated that cost savings ranked as the top most advantage for contracting out services.

When Richard M. Daley took office in 1989 as Mayor for the city of Chicago he was confronted with a personnel system that he perceived as neither politically helpful to

him nor performed particularly well on the job. Among other things Daley immediately embarked on the process of turning the provision of city services over to private contractors with a view to lower taxes but ensure high quality services. In 1990, for example, Daley privatized janitorial services in a variety of city buildings. This strategy saved \$1.7 million in the first year but grew to an estimated \$4.2 million in 1993. Before the O'Hare airport parking garages went private in 1993, the city spent \$15 million each year to run the operation. The private contract cost \$12.5 million realizing a saving of \$2.5 million. For window washing, the city spent about \$500,000 in 1991, compared with \$150,000 under the new private contract (Mahtesian, 1994: 28).

### *Guiding theory for the Thesis*

The various theories and models presented can clearly help us to understand the intricacies of the many issues related to the provision of public services by local authorities. However, we acknowledge in our thesis that local authorities are institutions that are created by central government to provide public services to the citizenry. The two main actors in this process of public service provision, therefore, are the central government and the managers of the local authorities. Local authorities, therefore, are the *Agents* of central government in as far as the delivery of public services is concerned. Central government being the creator of these authorities, and the institution with the overall mandate to ensure the provision of public services, is the *Principal* actor. The nature of interaction between these two parties has a direct bearing on the process of public service provision. Policies and directives emanating from central government, including the disposition of senior central government officials towards local authorities, may have a direct or indirect impact on the operation of such authorities. The nature of the *Principal-Agent* relations can thus lead to the *centralising tendency* in the sense that the behaviour and disposition of local officials, both appointed and elected, is influenced and nurtured by the actions of the central government. In this respect local authorities would exhibit dependency on the centre in their day-to-day activities. Alternatively, *Principal-Agent* relations may, in fact, promote local autonomy in the decision-making process so that local officials are able to adequately exhibit initiative without undue hindrance by the centre. It is in view of these observations that we have chosen the

Principal-Agent theory as one that, in many circumstances, helps to explain the issues associated with the provision of public services by Zambian local authorities. According to this theory, therefore, the policy choices and any other dispositions made and adopted by central government have an influence on the abilities as well as the behaviour of the local authority managers which ultimately has a bearing on service delivery. Within the local authorities, the applicability of the theory may be associated with the Councillors, who form the Council as well as the employers, as being the *principal*, while the appointed officials who implement Council policies as being the *agents*. The nature of their *internal* relationships is also very critical to the functioning of the local authorities. However, in integrating the selected theory with the central thesis, we are more concerned with the interactions between central government and the local authorities. This, as stated earlier, is because central government provides the policy guidelines and pronouncements to which local authorities respond in the course of their operations.

### **Literature Review**

A great deal of literature has shown that there are several problems that make it very difficult for local authorities to ensure effective and efficient service delivery. Such problems include the reluctance of local politicians to impose fresh taxes in order to maintain their popularity (Manor, 1999); the desire to maintain central control, and inadequate legislation to support reliable financing of local authorities (Turner, 1997; Hyden, 1983; Wraith, 1972; and Kasfir, 1983). According to this literature the African experience has shown that under the banner of decentralisation, the 1960s and 1970s actually witnessed the clawing back of the power by the center with attempts to exert even greater central control over local decisions. Although the claim has been made that Africa experienced a second round of decentralisation (Kasfir, 1983; Conyers, 1982) in the late 1970s and early 1980s, there is no evidence that recent policies have significantly reversed the post-independence trend (Turner and Hulme (1997: 164).

The pronounced preference that governments have shown for deconcentration and converting locally elected bodies into mixed authorities has meant that 'the participative quality of decentralised institutions has been especially prone to erosion' (Smith, 1985 op cit). Arguments against decentralisation (Prud'homme, 1995; and Turner and Hulme,

1997) have also exacerbated the inertia to devolve power and authority to lower levels of government. It is within the context of such challenges that we examine, in this section, literature which is relevant to our study with a view to enhancing our appreciation of the problems associated with the delivery of public services by local authorities. In doing so, we examine literature related to Zambia as well as to other countries.

### *Zambia*

In spite of the recognised importance of local authorities in national development there has not been adequate empirical investigation in their performance as regards the delivery of services in Zambia. However, works by Momba (2002), Pelekamoyo (1977), Tordoff (1980), Greenwood and Howell (1980), Chongwe (1994), Chikulo (1983), Mukwena (1992), the Cooperation for District Development (CDD) pilot project sponsored by NORAD and the Zambian government (1997-2000), and the District Development Programme (DPP) sponsored by UNDP and the German government are quite informative and provide useful insights on local administration in general and the administration of local authorities in particular.

Momba's study on the problems of effectiveness in service delivery, accountability and transparency of local authorities in Zambia, commissioned by Transparency International – Zambia (TIZ), is worthy noting. The study interviewed a total of 450 respondents drawn from Lusaka and Chongwe districts. Some selected officials and councillors of the two local authorities were also interviewed. The respondents, officials and councillors in the study raised several concerns that were seen as being some of the major contributing factors to the dismal performance of local authorities in Zambia. The excessive powers of the Minister of Local Government and housing and certain government directives and pronouncements were viewed as constituting political interference and generally tailored to stifle rather than enhance local initiative and democracy. The lack of adequate and reliable sources of revenue was especially noted as a major stumbling block to efficient and effective service delivery. Most respondents in the study bemoaned the lack of a government policy for financing local authorities. Central government grants were generally considered as inadequate and not capable of enhancing financial planning, by local authorities, given their irregularity.

The study also revealed serious concerns regarding the lack of transparency and accountability in the activities of local councils. Poor accounting systems and the lack of receipting and/or use of fake receipts especially for revenue collection from markets were cited as factors that eroded financial accountability.

There is no doubting that the study has made a significant contribution as regards the understanding of the problems facing local authorities in Zambia and achieved the purpose for which it was intended by Transparency International – Zambia. It is important to note, however, that the nature as well as the scope of the study exhibits substantial limitations. The relative close proximity of the two councils, in the TIZ study, to each other and to the Local government head quarters, for example, may have an impact on several issues including the people's perceptions about the responsibilities of a local authority and the ability to lobby central government for funding and/or administrative approval. Clearly the study was for advocacy purposes and not designed to collect data in a comprehensive manner comparable to that expected of a PhD thesis.

In his Masters Dissertation on *Local Autonomy and Central Control in Zambian Urban Authorities* Pelekamoyo (1977) provides a detailed description of the development of local government in Zambia and its structure. He examined central control over finances and man power; local authority functions; and sources of revenue. The dissertation noted the problems associated with the various sources of local revenue; over-dependency on central funding; and the lack of autonomy in the decision making process. To this effect some respondents in the study acknowledged that local authorities cannot be independent of central government per se. Their only request was maximum discretion to make their own decisions within the broad national policy guidelines. In fact many of the respondents held the view that government was doing the opposite of what local authorities requested it to do. They noted that some of the powers and functions of local authorities were being taken away from them and the Ministry of Local Government and Housing was constantly interfering in the work of the councils. The study also noted difficulties in terms of the inability of councils to train as well as retain their staff due to insufficient financial resources, low salaries and generally poor conditions of service.

Tordoff's (1980) work on rural administration is more of a comprehensive description of the various institutions meant to coordinate development such as the District and Provincial Development Committees (DDCs & PDCS); the structure of the administration of rural councils; and the avenues for popular participation such as the Ward Development Committees (WDCs) and the Village Productivity Committees (VPDs) as they existed variously mainly from 1965 until the late 1970s. He, however, observed that decentralization, understood as the political devolution of power by the (legally supreme) central government to subordinate authorities, was limited. He noted that the situation was likely to remain so as long as executive authority is concentrated at the center, the provinces are granted only a very small share in the Government's annual capital and recurrent expenditure, and rural councils operate within a context of 'central control and local impotence', yet independently of a hierarchical system of provincial and district administration. With regard to rural development Tordoff observed that urban advance had been at the expense of the rural sector, with the result that while the rural population made up nearly two-thirds of the total population, it received only one-third of the national income.

Greenwood and Howell's work (1980) on Zambia's urban local authorities provides useful insights with regard to central-local relations, the calibre of Councillors, and the problems relating to administrative capacity in the councils. They noted the encroachment by the Ministries of Local Government and Finance as successful attempts to limit Councils' financial, personnel and functional autonomy. Specifically financial control through a system of grants and the statutory powers of the Minister to approve estimates of expenditure on scheduled functions was cited as detrimental to the well functioning of the councils.

According to Chongwe (1994) local councils typify the grassroots representation of the people in any given country. So, if government *of the people by the people, and for the people* is to be achieved, it will be at the local government level, where every adult is afforded an opportunity to participate in public affairs. Without participation at the local level, there can be no democracy at the national level; people's power and participation are fundamentally related to local government. Chongwe's work, mainly helps to understand the various sources of local revenue at the disposal of local authorities in

Zambia and the problems associated with such sources; Zambia's experimentation with the three broad categories of local government personnel systems (the Separate system, the Unified Local Government Service, and the Integrated system) noting that none of them has succeeded in revitalizing local administration; and also emphasizes that the major problems facing local authorities in Zambia can be attributed to either poor financing or poor management.

Tordoff's work was not only general but also more concerned with the description of the institutional structures rather than how the activities of such institutions impacted on the delivery of public services. Consequently Tordoff did not capture the various constraints that local authorities faced with regard to service delivery during that time. The major limitations of Greenwood et al, Chongwe, and Pelekamoyo's works also lie mainly in their generality as regards the problems and prospects of local government administration in Zambia. The issues cited then are still the same issues that constitute public debate about the impact of the local government reforms that have been instituted since Zambia gained her political independence in 1964. As expected their analyses do not benefit from the strengths associated with comprehensive empirical data collected using the case study approach adopted in our study. The qualitative research process adopted in our study combined well with the case study approach and has resulted in a comparatively deeper understanding of the issues and concerns raised in their works. However, like in the case of the study conducted by Momba the revelations of the above works are very critical to our study. Consequently we found the works very beneficial with regard to the selection of our research design and they enhanced our focus quite significantly in terms of the questionnaire design.

In his PhD Thesis Chikulo (1983) examines the administration of government in Monze, a rural District in the Southern Province of Zambia. Chikulo observed that in spite of the many efforts by government to create appropriate political and administrative structures and a policy commitment to decentralise political and administrative authority to the Provincial and District levels a wide gap had emerged between the rhetoric and reality in rural development in the country. Not much devolution to the Provinces on both substantive and administrative matters had taken place resulting in Provincial Ministries not being able to undertake their development functions effectively. With specific

reference to the operations of Monze Rural Council, Chikulo observed that in spite of the full staff complements, the shortage of skills was a serious constraint on the local authority's effectiveness and its ability to carry out development projects. Although central government agencies also suffered from such shortages, the Council staff had the lowest status in the district and was generally considered to be of 'poor' quality. Like most other local authorities Monze Rural Council also suffered from strained staff-Councillor relations. According to Chikulo, this problem emanated from the exaggerated view which Councillors had of their own power – they believed they can engage and fire Council staff. Dependence on central government for resources was yet another problem faced by the Council. In 1980, for example, the Council only had two graders, one lorry, one tipper truck, and three land rovers. According to Chikulo, the limited resources at the disposal of the Council meant that only a limited range of services can be provided to the rural communities.

Chikulo's work was done under a different context with a focus on issues related to *field* administration. The 'development front' in Chikulo's work, with a setting specific to Monze District, did not cover local authorities. Most importantly, the study took place during the one-party state period when central-local relations, by virtue of the existing legislation, tended to support vertical rather than horizontal reporting and the local authorities were under the chairmanship of a political appointee in the name of a District Governor, a situation that tended to stifle rather than enhance local initiative. But with the establishment of democratically elected local Councils, during the period under review, our study provided an opportunity to investigate similar issues under circumstances that are supposedly expected to support popular participation and a bottoms-up approach in the decision-making process. It is clear, however, that Chikulo's thesis revealed many important observations that are very relevant to and in many ways supported the need for our study. This is especially the case on the observations relating to the operations of the Monze Rural Council. To this extent Chikulo's study has helped to provide very useful insights and consequently made a contribution in terms of directing our study on issues that needed to be investigated.

Mukwena (1992) endeavoured to appraise the 1980 Local Administration Act with a view to establishing its contribution to the administration of local authorities. This

was especially important given that this legislation was aimed at replacing the 1965 Local Government Act that was considered 'faulty' on a number of aspects. As opposed to improving local administration through the decentralisation of power to the people, integrating the primary organs of local administration in the district, and ensuring that local Councils played a more direct role in the development process, Mukwena argues that the Act failed to achieve these objectives. Mukwena cites the composition of local Councils, brought about by the Act, as undemocratic since most of the members were appointive and the elections that brought a few of the members as being restrictive since only fully paid-up members of the only legal political party, UNIP, were eligible to take part in such elections. According to Mukwena the recommendation by a working party headed by Mr. A. J. F. Simmance, appointed by government in December 1971 to review Local, Provincial and district government, that the position of District Governor be retained and that the Governor be made the chairman of the Council was incorporated in the Act because it served the desire of the ruling party to cement in place a structure of close party supervision over the institutions of local government. Mukwena also argues that the decline in party support as evidenced, among other things, by growing apathy in towards general elections (1973), local election (1975) and party elections (1977) also prompted UNIP to, "devise new means of implementing its policies at the local level, of communicating its message to the people, and, indeed, of retaining support for its existence". In fact Mukwena observed that, "a careful examination of the provision of the 1980 Act reveals that the hidden objective of the Act was that of increasing political control over local Councils and other organs and creating benefits for local party functionaries in order to revive the demoralised and ineffective UNIP organisation at grassroots where unpaid local party officials felt they had received next to no benefits from independence". The failure of the 1980 Act to achieve the intended objectives was not entirely surprising. Mukwena, for example, cites Chikulo (1983) who observed that, "from the time it was conceived, the 1980 Act met with considerable opposition. In the Zambian National Assembly, the bill had a stormy passage, with members apprehensive about what was perceived to be the marked centralisation of political power it entailed".

Mukwena's appraisal of the 1980 Act highlights what can be considered as policy contradictions on the part of central government. On the one hand government

pronounces its desire to enhance popular participation in local governance and to ensure that Councils play a significant role in development process and yet on the other the legislation embraces features that greatly undermine the desired objectives. These revelations underscore the folly of policy initiatives that are not anchored on a genuine commitment to revitalise local administration based on community participation. Clearly the appraisal brings out issues that are very relevant to our study in as far as local government reforms during the Second Republic are concerned. To this extent the appraisal served its purpose. However, unlike our study which examines the activities and performance of local Councils under the 1991 Local Government Act, the appraisal of the 1980 Act was not meant for such a purpose. The appraisal, therefore, does not provide insights of the direct implications of the Act on the performance of local Councils neither does it discuss, even in general terms, the issue of public service delivery by local authorities during the period superintended by the Act.

In his PhD Thesis entitled “Constraints on Administration of Rural Development in Zambia”, Maipose (1984) observed that since independence Zambia has undertaken many administrative changes aimed at making local administrative machinery more responsive to the demands of development administration and economic management. One of the early decisions the government of Zambia made was the abolition of colonial native authorities and the establishment (in their place) of popularly elected rural district Councils. In organisation terms, the creation of these Councils, according to Maipose, was significant in two main ways. First, they became an additional or second local administrative structure. Second, they represented the ‘devolved’ or democratic decentralisation of the local administrative system, even though their functions were very limited. Though the Councils began with limited functions, hope was expressed that they would expand their functions as their capacity increased. The study noted, however, that the steps to change the inherited system of local administration resulted, among other things, in a sudden multiplication of parallel institutional structures or channels of authority, as well as the proliferation of field representatives of technical departments and parastatal bodies of the central government. Instead of the ‘dual’ system of the colonial period, the post-colonial local administrative system had four parallel administrative and political structures: the Provincial and District government; the party; the popularly

elected rural Councils; and many technical departments and parastatals, each pursuing its own interest and answerable only to the higher authority along its administrative hierarchy. The proliferation of administrative structures, according to the study, was problematic in various ways. First, this proliferation occurred without an adequate focal point of local authority or an effective in-built institutional system to direct and coordinate the various political and administrative structures. The second and probably the main obstacle was the tendency towards over-centralisation. The study also noted that the various committees created at the district and Provincial level, and the village productivity committees and Ward development committees did not function as effectively as envisaged at the time of their creation. Officials of the Provincial and district committees, for example, had no executive and statutory powers to issue directives and to enforce compliance. Similarly the village and Ward committees had not developed into an effective two-way system of communication. The study argues that by the middle of 1968 it had become increasingly clear to the government that the local administrative system was suffering from fundamental structural problems associated with the lack of effective coordination and, most importantly, over-centralisation. At the district level, for example, the District Governor's presence posed a threat to democratic decision-making and the promotion of local initiative. The Governor's relationship with the rural Council chairman, as with other district politicians, was not well defined. Strategically, it depended more on the cooperation, attitude, good sense and tact of individual governors than on the formal or institutional links. Commenting on the 1980 reforms, Maipose observes that in creating the district Councils the government (among other reasons) intended to establish organs which were capable of deciding more or less independently all matters of local policy and development and to which all agents of government had to be subordinated. However, the actual power and capacity of these Councils to plan and implement development programmes, and to use their statutory autonomy vis-à-vis the centre seem to have improved only very marginally.

The study observed that over time and "as soon as the political leadership gained some experience in government, they became suspicious of the representative local Councils, taxing them with parochialism which was seen to hinder nation-building activities. Hence they were reluctant to strengthen rural Councils and resorted instead to

another instrument – the party”. Generally the study noted that the limited nature of the functions of rural Councils, the impoverished state of their finances and their poor staffing led them to be overwhelmingly financially dependent on, and tightly supervised by the central government. The study observed that “for rural Councils like Samfya, whose annual estimates of expenditure was based almost completely on the expected grants from central government with very insignificant local or other sources of revenue the ‘small size’ of money that was finally allocated was not only inadequate but illustrated the continued futility of rural local government planning”.

Maipose’s study, like most of the works cited on Zambia in our Thesis, brings out very fundamental issues that seem to have dogged the administration of local Councils in Zambia. Although administrative changes aimed at improving local administration have repeatedly been on the government’s agenda it is clear, as noted in Maipose’s thesis that more still remains to be done. Granted that the chapter we have reviewed in Maipose’s study focused on problems as experienced in Luapula Province with examples mainly from only Mansa and Samfya districts. However, the revelations of the study were very critical to consolidating our resolve to carry out an investigation, on a case study basis and with a somewhat deeper analysis of the various constraints affecting the operations of local Councils in Zambia.

The report of the Cooperation for District Development (CDD) programme implemented in Kaputa, Luwingu and Mbala districts of the Northern Province, in Zambia, generally observed that the performance of local authorities can be enhanced if deliberate and appropriate interventions are instituted. With such interventions service delivery by local authorities can be anchored on the good governance principles of transparency and accountability. However, we note that the basis upon which such a conclusion was made is substantially different from the approach we have taken in our study. First, the CDD programme was not designed to delve into the causes of the problems of service delivery by local authorities. Instead, it attempted to address problems that were *perceived* to exist in the three local authorities that were selected for the programme. And second, because of this approach, the CDD report does not adequately address the issue of continuity with regard to effective performance of the local authorities. In effect the report does not effectively deal with issues of government

legislation which are critical to the overall performance of the local authorities. However, the report highlights the importance of adhering to the principles of democratic governance in the administration of local authorities, a subject matter which is very critical in our study.

#### *Literature on other experiences*

The importance of devolving power and authority to local institutions with a view to enhancing the delivery of public services is 'universally' recognised (Rothchild, 1994; Turner and Hulme, 1997; OECD, 1997; and Dwivedi, 2002). The devolution of power and authority requires to be accompanied by matching resources and supporting legislation to ensure the sustainability. Such devolution enhances local participation in the decision making process, provides opportunities for transparency and accountability, and consequently ensures the prioritisation of community needs in public service delivery. Because of ineffective devolution, however, the provision of public services by most local authorities in most countries is adversely affected. It is in view of these observations that we attempt to review related but different experiences from other countries.

In their effort to understand how South Africa's government structures have fundamentally and inclusively transformed in the post-apartheid era Storey and Wooldrige (2001) break down the transition process into four chronological phases to examine the nature of civil society participation during each phase. During the first phase (1985-1993) the study noted the effective mobilization in opposition to apartheid local government and the building of local-level civil society organization and capacity. The mobilization was linked to the broader struggle against apartheid and issues discussed were therefore both constitutional (who decides/represents) and distributive (who benefits) in nature. The result of the mobilization, coupled with the absence of negotiations with those in control of resources (whose legitimacy was in question), was a stalemate in the ability of local governments to provide basic services and the acceptance by the state of the need for, and legitimacy of, including civil society in decision-making.

During the second phase (1993-1994) the Local Government Transition Act (LGTA) entrenched local negotiations as the key vehicle for affecting change at the local

level. This development effectively represented a break with racially defined apartheid structures and set the stage for the joint governance of South Africa's cities, towns, and rural areas. The LGTA's staggered process both guided the local level transition and radically affected the dynamics of civil society participation. The enactment of the LGTA and "power-sharing" by civil society in local forums led to the establishment of interim or "appointed" councils and a negotiating forum in each local area, consisting of representatives of statutory and non-statutory parties.

Emphasis of the third phase (1994-1995) was on joint decision-making which entailed the involvement of those that were previously excluded in taking responsibility for a system that they had not created and had limited scope to change. The conclusion of the major constitutional issues allowed more distributive issues to come to the fore, although this phase marked the beginning of a period of internal focus whereby organizational change was seen as crucial to improved service delivery. The last phase (1995-2000) underscored the values of democratic local government. In this phase newly-elected democratic local government embraced co-operative governance approaches and encouraged civil society participation. The adoption of a participative approach in this phase can be explained by both a principled commitment to the idea of grass-roots consultation as well as the experience base of the ex-activists – now Councillors. It is important to note, however, that the complexity of organizational transformation and the pressure to provide infrastructure and deliver services has meant that participation has been easier to talk about than to implement.

Ordinarily local government reforms are meant to improve the administration and management of local authorities to enable them perform the functions for which they are created, the delivery of services being the major function. Undoubtedly the study undertaken by Storey and Wooldridge is very useful in understanding the salient features of the transformation of the local government during the post-apartheid era. Important aspects that underpin local-level democracy such as the need for civil society participation and elective Councils characterised the transformation in the study. These aspects, among others, are very critical to the provision of demand-driven services that adequately reflect the priorities of local communities. A number of elements in the South African study helped to consolidate our perceptions on the need for popular participation

in the decision-making process at the local level. Particularly we note the study's emphasis on the need to build civil society organisation and capacity; recognition of the legitimacy of including civil society in decision-making; the need for democratic local government (elective Council); and the desire to promote the adoption of participative approaches to decision making with special emphasis on encouraging civil society. The study, therefore, had a tremendous influence on our desire to include civil society organisations in the study and helped to sharpen our focus with regard to the scope of our investigations relating to community participation in the affairs of local authorities in general and with special reference to civil society in particular.

Mukwena and Godana's (2003) analysis of Namibia's intergovernmental relations arrangements and efforts at fiscal decentralisation is highly informative and makes very interesting reading. They define 'intergovernmental relations' as the relationships between the various levels of government, i.e. national (or central), regional and local. They argue that in any form of government, unitary or federal, the national level remains the most important because it generates the bulk of national income and distributes it to the other levels. They also note that the core variable in determining the success of the lower levels' performance is the nature and impact of their relations with the national level. Mukwena and Godana subscribe to Bird and Freund's (1994) conception of fiscal decentralisation which refers to the transferring of some authority over expenditure responsibilities and financing from national to sub-national government units and to their view that if appropriately designed fiscal decentralisation will lead to improved public service provision. It is noted that a proper and clear allocation of functions to different levels of government should clearly also include allocating sources of revenue to each level. The cardinal principal in this case is that adequate and sustainable revenue sources should accompany the allocated functions. In the Namibian situation, the allocations of functions to regional and local authorities require more clarity. There is need for clarity, for example, on which level of local government takes over specific tasks such as teacher training, employment of teachers and administrators, and curriculum development, which are components of the broad function of primary education. It is argued that generally the accepted principle of Subsidiarity, whereby taxing, spending and regulatory functions are left to lower-level governments unless there is good reason for a function to be

centralised should be applied. With regard to residual power (power over functions not explicitly allocated to any level) it is contended that if a government is seeking to entrench democratic governance and local initiative, this power should be given to lower-level governments even in unitary states like Namibia. It is argued that exercising of residual power by local governments increases their initiative in finding new ways and introducing new functions to respond to local needs, preferences and priorities. It has been observed that the financial base of all regional Councils in Namibia, and to a lesser extent local authorities, is inadequate and uncertain, and outside the control of the regional Councils. Apart from the expenditure which is determined and administered by the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing (MRLGH), the only income of any substance to which regional Councils are entitled is 5 percent of the rate income from local authorities which varies considerably from region to region. The beneficiaries of obligatory services such as water and electricity, sewerage services, street lights, urban roads, and recreation facilities, provided by Local authorities pay for such services instantly, monthly, or periodically, depending on the service. Local authorities can also levy tax on a variety of services or sellable items. Most importantly, these authorities enjoy fiscal authority, which gives them a more meaningful operational status than regional Councils.

The issues raised by Mukwena and Godana are very cardinal to the effective administration of local government and subsequently the provision of public services by local authorities. The emphasis placed on the observations relating to the centrality of the national level in resource generation and distribution; the need for clear allocation of functions and matching resources; the exercise of residual power by local governments; and the inadequacy of financial resources especially at the regional level are of great relevance and benefit to our study. They, in many ways, underscore the problems and prospects that countries, including Zambia, face in their efforts to ensure a functioning local government system which is capable of delivering public services in an effective, efficient and accountable manner. We, therefore, value these contributions greatly in spite of the fact that the analysis is not based on a case study neither does it explicitly focus on the problems associated with service delivery by local authorities per se.

The Zimbabwe country paper presented at the fifth Africa Governance Forum (AGF-V) in Maputo, Mozambique on Local Governance for Poverty Reduction provides very useful insights with regard to the administration of local authorities.<sup>1</sup> Following the attainment of political independence in 1980 the Zimbabwean government has undertaken various initiatives to restructure the administration of local authorities with a view to improving service delivery. The structural changes were aimed at making the system of local government democratic and more responsive to the needs of the people. Government abolished the African Councils and in their place established fifty-seven District Councils which were democratically elected. In 1988 the Rural District councils Act was promulgated with a view to unifying District and Rural Councils. The major objective of the exercise was the rationalisation of local government in the rural areas. The amalgamation of the rural and district councils was seen as necessary to dismantle the former racially based local government system and to create for the rural areas a local government system that would promote nation building through interaction across the colour line. This reform is the basis upon which the current system of local government, comprising Rural District Councils and Urban councils, is administered.

Post independence local government in Zimbabwe should be read within the broad context of the decentralisation policy. Within that broad context Government has sought to increase the decision making power of local authorities and transfer added functions to them so they could respond more effectively and efficiently to the needs of their electorate. Sub-district structures were set up to enhance the democratisation of the development process through the active involvement of the stakeholders in the planning and implementation of development projects and programmes. These structures comprised Village and Ward Development Committees and were considered the basis for local initiatives in the formulation of developments proposals.

With respect to fiscal distribution between central government and local government, all national taxes such as those on companies and individuals' incomes, the sale of goods, commodities and services, excise duties, fees and charges in respect of

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<sup>1</sup> Zimbabwe country paper on Local Governance for Poverty Reduction presented at the Africa Governance Forum (AGF -5) in Maputo, Mozambique – May 23-25, 2002. See [http://www.undp.org/Africa/agf/country\\_reports.html](http://www.undp.org/Africa/agf/country_reports.html)

nationally provided services are collected by central government agencies. On the other hand, local authorities, are empowered to raise taxes based on the capital value of properties to collect non-tax revenue such as fees, licenses, rents, user charges and profits from trading ventures and receive grants-in-aid for key services such as health, education and roads. Urban local authorities have been more financially autonomous than the rural district councils especially in respect of their recurrent expenditure. Generally, however, government increased its level of fiscal support to the rural based councils to enable them and government to embark on the massive provision of services and the major reconstruction of the war ravaged infrastructure.

Over the years, however, various problems began to surface. Incompetence, improper practices, lack of coordination in Council business, and the lack of loyalty on the part of Councillors to a common cause started to undermine the administration of Councils and adversely affecting service delivery. Government realized, for example, that the governance of Urban Councils was weak and full of flaws because of inappropriate structures, weak institutions and slack procedures. As a result, there were unclear lines of accountability, council activities were not transparent, and consequently efficiency suffered. The mayor, whose functions were ceremonial in nature, was elected by his fellow councillors and therefore owed loyalty to them first and his own constituency second rather than to the entire electorate. The government embarked on further reforms that included capacity building in both rural and urban Councils and the repealing and subsequent replacement of the Urban Councils Act in 1995. Although these reforms did not result in an overnight progressive impact on the administration of local Councils a foundation had been built for a more responsive and more accountable system of local governance in the cities and municipalities (AGFV – 2002).

The Zimbabwean story, like many other stories told and untold, underscores the trials and tribulations of Public Administration associated with the problems of local administration. The persistent initiatives of the Zimbabwean government to undo the wrongs with a view to ensuring a functioning local government system help to exemplify the importance of local authorities in the delivery of public services. The identified issues relating to the lack of coordination, lack of loyalty and/or accountability of civic leaders, fiscal support to local authorities, and the need for capacity building are all of great

interest to our thesis. These are the issues that make or break the administration of local authorities and subsequently determine the extent to which such authorities are able to provide public services. The review of the Zimbabwean experience, like the other reviews, added impetus to our study and helped the focus of our inquiry. Unlike in our study, however, the Zimbabwean country paper was not 'designed' to capture the problems facing local authorities in that country through the use of a case study approach. Rather it was more of a general presentation on local government reforms, central-local fiscal relations, and problems of incompetence and the lack of transparency and accountability in local authority affairs.

The booklet published by the Ugandan Decentralisation Secretariat (1993)<sup>2</sup> on that country's Decentralisation Policy and its philosophy, and the National Local Government Capacity Building Policy document (2005) published by the Ministry of Local Government provide insights on the efforts President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni's government has made since coming into office in 1986 in terms of reforming the local government with a view to enhancing serviced delivery and local democracy. We consider Uganda's efforts at revitalising local governance as being unique in many ways and a potential model worthy being emulated by other African countries which desire to promote efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability in public service delivery. It is in view of this consideration that the experiences of Uganda have been given comparatively more space and illumination. Before Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) took over the reigns of State power Uganda's local government system was administered through the 1967 Constitution and Local Administrations Act. This Act centralized powers and severely constrained Local Authorities. Between 1967 and 1970 local administration political offices were appointive. Discipline in Councils deteriorated because there was no direct accountability to the electorate to facilitate efficient and effective service delivery. The 1967 Act gave the Minister of local government very close control over local spending and sweeping powers to intervene whenever political or administrative problems arose at the local level. Upon assuming office the NRM government immediately appointed a Commission

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<sup>2</sup> The Decentralisation Secretariat was given the responsibility to publish booklets to inform policy makers, implementers and the general public on the progress of implementing the decentralization strategy.

to look into the operations of the local government system. The recommendations of this Commission formed the basis for designing the new system. Other consultative forums include the May 1990 Committee of Experts on Democratic Decentralisation and an interdisciplinary Task Force of Uganda Technical Experts in 1992. The report of the former and the activities of the latter paved way for, among other things, the implementation of the Decentralization policy. Generally, however, Uganda's local government emanates from the enactment of the Resistance Councils and Committees Statute of 1987 which, among other things (Decentralization Secretariat, 1993: 2):

1. created Resistance Councils and Committee from the Village up to the District level, and granted them wide ranging powers;
2. created District Development Committees;
3. fostered political accountability by holding the Resistance Councils fully accountable to the electorates and investing them with powers to recall their representatives; and
4. fostered administrative accountability by requiring district officials to be answerable to Councils.

There are five levels of local Councils in Uganda namely Local Council I (Village), Local Council II (Parish), Local Council III (Sub-county), Local Council IV (County), and Local Council V (District). Local government proper is at the Sub-county and District levels which constitute autonomous bodies that are legally constituted and are, therefore able to sue or be sued. The other levels are more of administrative units. It is important to note, however, that governing bodies at all these levels, including the Village, comprise elected Councillors. Although the term of office for Councillors is five years, an individual Councillor or the entire Council may be removed for various reasons ranging from ineffectiveness to issues of discipline. Only individuals with a minimum of Junior Secondary education are eligible to contest for the position of Councillor. Generally the Ugandan experience has shown that only people with relatively high levels of education and some form of skill do contest for Councillorship. The inclusion of the

Village in the hierarchy of local government has helped to enhance popular participation and ensured a 'bottom-up' approach in the decision-making process.

With regard to fiscal decentralisation, the transfer of responsibilities to local governments in Uganda goes hand in hand with the transfer of finance. A minimum level of 50 percent of locally raised revenue, for example, is retained at the Sub-county level. District and Urban Councils approve their revenue and expenditure budgets drawn against locally raised revenue, and such Councils also set the levels of and charge fees for any service or facility they provide. Central-local relations in Uganda emphasise the role of the centre as that of facilitating and supporting the Councils to fulfil their obligations. Decision-making on all matters of local significance is the responsibility of the local government Councils. The civil servants are expected to provide the necessary information, and act as advisers to the Councils to facilitate decision-making. Line Ministries support local government Councils and influence efficient and effective service delivery by:

- Setting of professional performance standards and policies;
- Providing technical supervision and inspection;
- Developing guidelines and generating professional information that is of operational value to local governments;
- Conducting professional training; and
- Monitoring progress where responsibility has been delegated or deconcentrated.

In an effort to devolve significant powers to the local Councils the powers of the Minister of Local Government have been greatly reduced:

- The Minister no longer approves the budgets of local government Councils;
- The Minister no longer approves local government by-laws;
- The Minister does not have the power to revoke local laws;
- Local government Councils employ and have full power over their employees; and
- The Minister can only effect amendments to local government rules and regulations after approval of the Legislature.

According to President Museveni Uganda's Decentralisation measures aim at undoing the harm that was done to the local system of government by Centralisation. The ultimate goal of the measures is to unleash local initiative and invigorate the local democratic process which, together, will sustain development and enhance local

capabilities for self-governance and delivery of services. Museveni argues that Centralisation tends to weaken or override local mechanisms and centres of public accountability. It undermines opportunities for evolving sustainable development because such development can be nurtured only if (1) the needs of local people are articulated and prioritised by their local participatory organizations; (2) development efforts are supported by their resources (human, material and financial); and (3) such efforts continuously build local capacity. These attributes, according to Museveni, are clearly absent in Centralised systems. From a philosophical point of view Museveni argues that human beings can govern themselves in peace and dignity in pursuit of their collective well-being (public good) once they are entrusted with their own destiny through the medium of popular local democratic institutions. Some of the distinguishing features of Uganda's Decentralisation policy include:

- the levels of local government that are bodies corporate enjoy a substantial measure of autonomous local decision-making power and political visibility. This partly explains why district Councils attract well-qualified and competent Councillors who compare very well with members of the National Resistance Council;
- powers of the Minister to unilaterally revise lawful decisions of Councils or to disband them have been eliminated;
- local governments are the employing authority of their officers, a situation that ensures undivided loyalty. It means employees are accountable to the Councils; and
- traditional and cultural institutions have been given wide latitude of action to promote development and good local governance, using cultural institutions to supplement the endeavours of civic authorities.

In spite of the many challenges Uganda has resolved to build strong local institutions and appreciable local capacity. The government is prepared to allow the people - who are short on experience, systems, and practices of local governance but long on their commitment to a democratic order - to experiment with new structures, systems and procedures as long as the capacity to recognise and correct errors is maintained (Museveni, 1994: 13-16). Capacity building in local governments in Uganda has

generally been supply-driven and lacked effective coordination. This realization has prompted the government to institute a National Local Government Capacity Building Policy that supports and follows the following principles:

- an integrated approach to local government capacity building, incorporating the important elements of both demand and supply-driven capacity building;
- well planned, rather than ad-hoc, training and capacity building activities;
- addressing a balanced mix of individuals and institutional needs;
- a balanced mix of qualifications and job performance; and
- a balanced mix of theory and practice.

The Capacity building initiatives include short-term and long-term skills development, training, mentoring, retooling, attachments, systems development and understudies, among others. All these aim at enhancing the efficiency of local government personnel to deliver services to the people. The Policy is being implemented through a number of institutions at both Central and Local government levels. At the national level there is a Local Government Capacity Building Policy Steering Committee chaired by the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Local Government with membership of Permanent Secretaries from other government Ministries. The Committee's tasks include:

- approving the National Policy/and standards for capacity building in Local Governments
- providing a forum for coordination and harmonisation of government and donor funded capacity building initiatives directed towards Local Governments; and
- advising and reviewing alternative National Strategies for Capacity building in Local Governments.

The implementation process of the policy is an inclusive effort involving many stakeholders and institutions such as: the Local Government Capacity Building Unit (LG-CBU); technical working groups with membership from NGOs, CBOs; government Ministries; local government associations etc. The target groups for human resource development, among others, include: Councillors, Executive Committee members,

members of standing Committees, local government staff (District/City Council level); and Village/Parish Executive Committees, Parish Councils, School Management Committees, County Local Council Executives (Administrative Units). Other target groups include NGOs, Civil Society organizations, CBOs, Women groups, Environment Committees, and Water user Committees - (*National Local Government Capacity Building Policy, 2005:6-9*).

The efforts made by Museveni's government clearly show that meaningful local government reforms are attainable as long as there is adequate commitment and political will on the part of government and the desire to embrace the responsibility for local decision-making on the part of the citizenry. The power to recall representatives, enshrined in the reforms, enhances accountability of the representatives and offers the electorate an opportunity to disassociate itself from individuals that cannot perform according to expectations without necessarily waiting for the next local elections. The centrality of local Councils, in national development, is underscored in the Ugandan reforms as exemplified by the provision that requires district officials to report to local Councils. The reduction in the Minister's powers enhances local initiative and helps to promote a sense of responsibility among those that are entrusted to administer local Councils. The Zambian local government system is generally perceived to be in a '*coma*' with local authorities lamentably failing to carry out the major functions for which they were created, service delivery. The Ugandan story, therefore, is a source of hope and great inspiration to many stakeholders including policy makers, local government practitioners, civil society organisations and researchers interested in governance issues in general and local democracy in particular. The Ugandan efforts were very critical in the design of our data collection instrument and assisted in sharpening the focus of our study with a view to ensuring a deeper understanding of the factors that have a bearing on the ability or inability of local Councils with regard to service delivery. In many ways the initiatives taken by the Museveni government to improve local governance helped to consolidate our resolve to carry out a study that would, as much as possible, '*unearth*' the constraints that have negatively impacted on the ability of local Councils to deliver adequate quality services. Most importantly the Ugandan revelations literally '*dictated*' the choice of our study design which, as mentioned in the methodology section, offers an

opportunity for the researcher to understand fundamental issues by tapping from the perceptions and experiences of those that are affected by such issues.

In his presentation of the paper entitled, “City/Municipal Development Strategy: the case of Jinja Municipal Council”, Mulindwa (2003)<sup>3</sup> observed that in order to improve the financial management of Jinja Municipal Council (Uganda) it is necessary for the local authority to upgrade sources of revenues; improve revenue collection mechanism through tendering and contracting out; sensitise tax payers and users; and involve local authority officials in enumeration and assessment. The paper also noted that in order to reduce corruption the Council was, among other things, planning to put in place transparent and accountable systems; strengthening the audit department by reviewing existing internal controls; and enforcing the leadership code of conduct. We argue that ensuring effective financial management and guarding against corrupt practices is of paramount importance to the prudent utilisation of local authority resources. It is very difficult for a local authority to deliver services in an effective and efficient manner in a situation where there is poor revenue collection and financial mismanagement. Mulindwa’s paper, therefore, addresses issues that are very central to a local authority’s capacity to secure optimality and integrity in the collection and subsequent use of financial resources. However, although Mulindwa’s paper is based on a case study (Jinja Municipal Council), his efforts, unlike those of our study, were not meant to capture the problems he cited in as far as they relate to local authorities that are at different levels in the Ugandan local government system.

A United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) study, published in the Human Development Report (1993), disclosed that until 1960 Morocco was basically organised through traditional assemblies called Jmaa based on ethnic groups. This has since changed resulting into territorial regions, prefectures or provinces, and rural and urban communes. The responsibilities of communes in the provision of local services include in the areas of water, sanitation, electricity, transport, primary education, health, and vocational; training. The communes have, since 1988, been given financial autonomy

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<sup>3</sup> City/Municipal Development Strategy: The Case of Jinja Municipal Council – Uganda. A paper written by Saturninus Kasozi-Mulindwa under a World Bank supported Municipal Development Programme. See <http://www.info.worldbank.org/etools/docs/library>

unlike in the past when government made grants to help local authorities balance their budgets. The government also gives local authorities a share of the proceeds from value added tax (VAT). According to the study decentralization has certainly changed the character of spending by local authorities. The proportion of their budgets devoted to capital expenditure, for example, rose from 26 percent in 1977 to 53 percent in 1987.

In order to ensure an adequate supply of qualified personnel the government established several vocational and administrative training centers. Between 1991 and 1992 alone a total of 1,571 people were being trained, a number equivalent to 12.5 percent of those that were trained over the previous 35 years. Although there was still a marked disparity in the caliber of personnel between rural and urban areas rural communes were usually given special attention with regard to the allocation of professional staff. It is important to note also that the study was concerned about the low education levels of councillors. The study revealed, for example, that a survey in 1983 had found that 16 percent had no schooling at all with 39 percent of the rest having no more than primary education and without the necessary experience in critical areas such as finance and administration. From the point of view of the ordinary people, however, many features of the decentralisation initiatives have resulted in considerable improvements such as reduced time in getting official certificates and licenses, enhanced opportunities to air their views to communal assemblies. The study also noted that while between 1979 –1980 only 51 percent of households could reach a health center in less than one hour the number increased to 78 percent between 1990 and 1991. And where as more than half of the patients previously had to wait more than one hour for a consultation, ten years later that proportion had dropped to less than a quarter (HDR, 1993: 82).

Clearly the above study highlighted very important developments in Morocco's local government system. We note, for example, the increased capital budgets; importance attached to training of personnel; allocation of professional staff to rural communes; and the improved access to health facilities. As indicated in the subsequent chapters of our thesis these are critical issues that local authorities in Zambia are grappling with in an effort to enhance performance. In this respect the UNDP study, like our own, underscores the desire to understand the problems that local authorities face and

in the process seek information that can help to stimulate public debate and direct government policy on matters of local government. Consequently the findings of the study had a significant input with regard to our decisions regarding the identification of the type as well as the appropriate sources of data upon which this thesis is based.

However, the UNDP study, that was cross-country in their nature (involved several countries), adopted an approach that looked at the general problems and prospects of decentralisation and local government initiatives in the selected countries. Unlike the study which forms the basis of this thesis, the UNDP studies were not concerned about the impact of decentralisation measures on the various tiers of local government in the respective countries (including Morocco) and whether or not government legislation and pronouncements, in any way, tended to be biased against or in favour of certain tiers (our central argument). The examination of these issues is critical to the understanding of the problems associated with local governance in general and the delivery of public services by local Councils in particular. And most importantly the studies did not focus on the impact of the decentralisation measures on selected local authorities in the countries of the study but instead opted for an 'over-view' assessment of the situation. We, therefore, argue that although this approach probably achieved the objectives for which the study was intended it does not provide the opportunities to unravel the constraints as well as potential opportunities facing individual local authorities or tiers within a local government system. We hold the view that this unraveling is very critical to the effective understanding of local government administration and especially with regard to directing the policy-making process.

The study undertaken on fifteen countries in Asia and the Pacific by the United Nations Commission and a Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP, 1995)<sup>4</sup>, revealed very interesting issues in critical areas such as finance, administration, legislation, and central-local relations. The study comprised Australia, Bangladesh, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kyrgystan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. The study recognised that the ability of local authorities to control their finances constitutes the hallmark of local self-government. Of the countries examined, New Zealand came closest under the terms of its

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<sup>4</sup> Reporters from respective countries carried out the studies commissioned by UNESCAP.

new financial management legislation. For the rest there were varying degrees of dependency on central allocation and control of financial resources. For some countries there were simply not enough financial resources to provide their communities with anything beyond the basest essentials. The bulk of expenditure by Fijian local government, for example, is spent on maintenance with few funds available for new work or major reconstruction. Similarly, Philippine local government has considerable administrative autonomy, but central government retains control of the "purse strings". The study noted that sound financial practice entails that local governments must explain to the public why they are incurring expenditure instead of just advocating for autonomy. With autonomy comes greater responsibility and accountability and some local governments do not want that responsibility and accountability, preferring to leave it to higher levels of government.

According to the study administrative reform is widespread in the region. This type of reform seeks to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of local authorities as mechanisms of service delivery. Three types of reform emerge from the country reports: sharing of administrative responsibility; separation of powers; and integration of civil services. The decentralization, deconcentration and co-administration reforms in Indonesia exemplify moves to share administrative responsibility. In the Indonesian context decentralization means a transfer of higher level responsibilities to a local entity or province or local government (called an autonomous entity/province/local government); deconcentration means delegation of administrative functions from a higher to lower level entity (called an administrative entity). The study, however, observed that none of these reforms seemed to reflect the autonomous right of a local community to determine its own destiny. The reforms constituted more of a transfer of administrative responsibility, which can always be retracted, rather than moves towards greater local governance. A key manifestation of this lack of commitment to reform local government is the plethora of organizations and agencies, either central or sub-national, often with overlapping or conflicting mandates, that have been created to manage large cities. The achievements and/or failures of decentralisation in Indonesia are dealt with in a somewhat more detailed manner, using the findings of a different study, at the end of this analysis.

Local government in all countries operates from a legislative base determined by higher legislatures. In some cases this is the central government, in others it is the state legislature (parliament) that determines the powers, authorities, duties and functions of local government. The study revealed considerable expectation of comprehensive reform on one hand, but reluctance of central government to effect significant change, on the other hand. Although local government systems have different histories their similarity in the end is marked. They all must relate to higher levels of government, either state or provincial level, or to national governments. The higher levels, by and large, dominate relations. The study noted that being a line agency of higher levels of government does not in itself constitute local self-government. In the Korean case, for example, it was observed that even having freely elected councils does not mean self-government if all the local politicians do is administer central commands. Central control, even to the determination of local authorities themselves, is marked in Sri Lanka. Local dependency on centrally allocated funds reinforces the respective weakness and strength of the two levels.<sup>5</sup>

The study undoubtedly provides a lot of information regarding the problems and prospects of decentralisation in general and the difficulties that local authorities face in particular. A cross-national comparison naturally poses a great challenge with regard to the determination of the nature as well as the amount of data that need to be considered in the study. What this means, in effect, is that the probability of overlooking certain data and/or over-emphasising various issues at the expense of others is much higher. Consequently such studies are less likely to provide a comprehensive understanding of the problems and prospects of a local government system as experienced, "first hand" by respective local authorities. The detailed examination of qualitative data collected from individual local authority areas, operating under a similar economic, social and political environment as the case is in our study, provides a much more comprehensive basis for understanding the impact of decentralisation and other central government measures on the delivery of services by local authorities.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.unescap.org/huset/lgstudy/comparison2.htm>



However, the UNESCAP study alluded to many critical issues of local governance that were of great relevance and interest to our study. These issues, among others, include the observation that the ability of local authorities to control their own finances is the hall mark to self government; the dependency on central government for finances; need for local authorities to be transparent and accountable to the communities on matters of financial expenditure; need for administrative reforms that would enhance effectiveness and efficiency in local government; and the observation that reforms conducted in many of the countries of the study signified a mere transfer of administrative responsibilities and not a move toward genuine local governance. These are indeed fundamental issues whose examination, by policy makers and/or other stakeholders interested in ensuring an effective, efficient, transparent, and accountable local government system, is a must and not an option. Undoubtedly, therefore, the study made a significant contribution in directing our study especially with regard to the determination of the participants and the type of data to be collected.

A study by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) found that Indonesia's widely dispersed territory argues both for a unifying central state to hold the country together and for extensive decentralization to match government to local needs. The study noted that government, in power since 1965, initially placed its emphasis on national unity and economic stabilisation. But since the mid-1970s, it has paid increasing attention to economic growth, regional development and decentralisation. In its effort to improve service delivery the government of Indonesian provides two types of block grants to each Province of locality. First, there are the "general" funds intended to promote regional autonomy and improve local infrastructure. These are not centrally controlled, but are subject to "general guidelines", strict for Provinces but less so for districts. Within this category of funding there are also lump sums directly channeled to the villages. The Village grants are small but can be used for almost any purpose. Second, there are "specific" grants that only go to the district level and are earmarked for specific purposes such as the construction of schools of catering for their running costs. Provincial authorities do not, on average, have much financial autonomy, though the position varies considerably. At the provincial level, "own" funds as a percentage of the total range from 8 percent to 70 percent. At the district level, own funds controlled by local governments

range from 4 percent to 56 percent of the total. The study observes that in spite of the wide variation in “own” funds among local authorities, the system of decentralising expenditure seems to have produced substantial improvements in basic services in areas such as health and education.

However, a major problem is that many local authorities have proved to be ill-equipped to implement development projects. It is noted that the strengthening of local capacity has mostly entailed improving the professional standards of central officials stationed at lower levels of government, not those of local people. Most importantly it has been observed that since local government officials are paid out of central government allocations and their promotion and pay depend on central government decisions, a real devolution of decision-making is difficult. The study concludes by observing that by international standards, the real degree of decentralisation in Indonesia is not high, but it is substantial for a large country with a unitary form of government. Greater decentralisation is, however, inevitable as the economy becomes more complex and regionally specialised. Such a movement will, among other things, enhance the efficiency of local tax collection to provide local governments with additional revenue and autonomy (Human Development Report, 1993: 81)

Once again the importance of decentralisation, a key administrative and political strategy for improving governance and service delivery, has been acknowledged in the Indonesian review. This acknowledgement and the problematic revelations arising from ‘inadequate’ decentralisation in Indonesia illustrates the importance of devolving authority, functions and resources to lower level institutions if effective service delivery is to be guaranteed. Although the study provides a general assessment of the situation in Indonesia, (unlike our case study) we nevertheless found its results not only very complementary but also inspiring to our study.

A Country Report prepared by Dainis, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), in collaboration with the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) and Asia-Pacific region (ASPAC),<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Local Government in Asia and the Pacific: A Comparative analysis – A Country Report on the Sri Lankan Local Government System by Mr. A. P. Dainis. See <http://www.unescap.org/huset/lgstudy/new-countrypaper/Srilanka/Srilanka.pdf>

noted that the financial position of local authorities in Sri Lanka is not sound enough to plan services for a larger geographical area as this involves large investments. This is more apparent in urban local authorities where the urban poor, living in shanties and squatter settlements, do not pay any rates. The report also observes that there is excessive financial dependence on, and influence of, the centre in terms of local government finances. There regular funding delays and shortfalls that further exacerbate the negative effects of dependence on the centre. We argue that financial autonomy exemplified by adequate own financial resources and supported by the receipt of adequate and regular disbursements from the centre, is very critical to the effective performance of local authorities. The observations made by the Sri Lankan Country Report, therefore, are indicative of the 'universality' of some of the critical problems facing most local authorities in the world. These observations are of great interest to our thesis as we also note that the ability of local authorities to deliver adequate quality services, to a very large extent, depends on the availability of adequate finances. However, the generality of Dainis' work makes it substantially different from our case study approach and our emphasis on the examination of how problems of service delivery impact on local authorities that are at different levels within the same local government system. This difference in the study design and emphasis is very critical to the effective understanding on issues related to public service delivery by local authorities.

Another Country Report prepared by Akbar Zaidi under the auspices of ESCAP, also in collaboration with IULA and ASPAC,<sup>7</sup> noted that the new local government system in Pakistan was introduced with the intention to ensure genuine democracy at the grass roots level. In this system, power would be transferred to the people's representatives at all levels along with responsibility and administrative authority couples with checks and balances to preclude the abuse of power or authority. In this system, community participation has also been ensured through village/neighbourhood Councils and Citizen Community Board (CCB). The citizens are given a monitoring opportunity by being ensured information about development activities. Citizens can also play their direct role in monitoring the performance of district Councils and the departments

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<sup>7</sup> Local Government in Asia and the Pacific: A Comparative analysis – A Country Report on the Pakistan Local Government System by Dr. S. Akber Zaidi. See <http://www.unescap.org/huset/lgstudy/new-countrypaper/Pakistan/Pakistan.pdf>

through the Citizen Community Boards. To ensure transparency, it is obligatory to display information on various development activities by the local Council for the public knowledge. We argue that good governance at the local level can, among other things, be guaranteed if community participation in the affairs of local authorities is encouraged and natured. Such participation can enhance the effective and efficient delivery of public services, by local authorities, in a transparent and accountable manner. The importance of the characteristics of the Pakistan local government system, made by Zaidi in that country's report cannot, therefore, be overstated. However, Zaidi's work is more of a general nature capturing, among other things, the importance of public participation in building local democracy and good governance in Pakistan. Unlike in our study the country paper was not meant to specifically examine problems facing local authorities with regard to service delivery through the use of the case study method.

## **Methodology**

### *Study design*

The study was both descriptive and explanatory in terms of its design. It was descriptive in that the study sought to provide an account of the characteristics of the selected local authorities with regard to their ability to effectively and efficiently deliver services. It was also explanatory in that the study examined some potential cause/effect relationships between some variables that have a much more direct impact on service delivery. Within the context of a qualitative research process, the study embraced the Case study approach with a view to collecting as much data from the selected Councils as is necessary for our purpose. Data was, therefore, collected on factors, that could facilitate the discussion and examination of the central argument or thesis of the study and assist in making some conclusions.

It is important to note, however, that when carrying out qualitative research some data may, of necessity, be presented in a quantitative format, for example, percentages. This is indicative of the realities that researchers encounter when collecting data on various topics even when a qualitative design, with its subsequent reporting method, is the one that is adopted for the study. In practice, therefore, qualitative and quantitative

research methods tend to reinforce each other both during data collection and analysis, and the reporting of study findings.

#### *Data collection*

Primary data was collected through structured and semi-structured interviews with all the participants except for traditional rulers, former local government practitioners, and other key informants for which only semi-structured instruments were used to facilitate discussions. Secondary data was collected through desk research focusing on documentation especially on issues relating to decentralisation; local government in general; local government in Zambia; and service delivery.

#### *Data analysis and reporting*

Analysis to present and summarise the quantitative aspects and to infer some properties of the collected data was done by using the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS). The *narrative* approach was adopted for the analysis of qualitative data with a view to telling a story and ensuring the recital of facts as told ‘in the first person’ (Mwanje, 2001: 20).

#### *Selection of the target groups and rationale*

Council officials and Councillors; officials from key government line Ministries; representatives of Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Community Based organizations (CBOs); the business community; traditional leaders; and local residents, in the three districts, were the participants in the study. In addition to the above participants, some former local government practitioners and other key informants were interviewed. However, the major category of respondents in the study was the end-users (ordinary residents). A total of 1,000 end-users were interviewed comprising 600 from Lusaka; 250 from Choma and 150 from Luwingu. Residents interviewed in the study districts represented what were considered Low, Medium and high density areas. The total numbers of participants, in the other categories, are as shown below:

- (i). Ministry of Local Government and Housing - 3 (*Qualitative data*)

- (ii). Council appointed officials – 30 (*Qualitative and Quantitative data*)
- (iii). Councillors - 25 (*Qualitative and Quantitative data*)
- (iv). Key government line ministries (Health/, Education, Agriculture & Community Development - 23 (*Qualitative data*)
- (v). Business Community - 20 (*Qualitative data*)
- (vi). NGO representatives - 31 (*Qualitative and Quantitative data*)
- (vii). Traditional rulers - 5 (*Qualitative data*)
- (viii) Other key informants – 14 (*Qualitative data*)<sup>8</sup>

The Councillors and appointed Council officials constitute the policy makers and implementers, respectively. They are the key players in the public service delivery process of the local Councils. Their inclusion, as participants in the study, is logical given that they are the ones that are at the centre of the service provision process. One third of the Councillors in each local Council were randomly selected for interviews; the principal officers were all targeted for the interviews; and a purposive sample of chief officers and other officers at the lower levels was also included in the study. Field Administration, at the district level, is represented by key government line Ministries such as the Ministries of Health, Education, Community Development and Social Services, Information, and Agriculture. Officials from these line Ministries provide various services and are expected to interact with the local Councils in different ways. Such officials are, therefore, a valuable source of information with regard to the various efforts undertaken at the district level to facilitate the provision of public services by local institutions including the Councils.

Voluntary organisations, whether in the form of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or community-based organisations (CBOs), are very critical to the social and economic organisation and well-being of local communities. The inclusion of their representatives to facilitate the examination of the nature of their (NGOs/CBOs') relations with the public service providers (local Councils) and to ascertain the level of

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<sup>8</sup> See Appendix 10 – these informants include former Local; Government practitioners; Zambia's cooperating partners; representative from the Decentralisation Secretariat; and District Administrators from the three Local authorities of the study.

their participation in the service provision process is very critical to understanding the problems and prospects of local communities with regard to public services.

The business community, in most cases, constitutes a significant source of revenue for local Councils through the payment of rates, charges and other fees. In return business enterprises expect local Councils to provide services and create an atmosphere capable of enhancing business activities. It is in view of this interdependency that the importance of including representatives of the business community, as participants in the study, cannot be overemphasised. The business enterprises included in the study were purposively selected in an attempt to ensure that the different lines of business were represented.

Traditional authority in Zambia is greatly respected by local communities who look to it for guidance on many issues including the observance of law and order, and traditional morals and custom. Increasingly, and as a result of government failure to adequately meet the people's needs and aspirations, traditional rulers are getting involved in the organisation of their subjects for purposes of pursuing developmental projects mainly on self-help basis. In Zambia traditional rulers (chiefs) are represented on the local Councils by two people selected by chiefs in a given local authority area. This clearly is a legislative recognition of the traditional rulers as partners in development especially at the local level. We, therefore, considered it very important to include the chiefs in our study with a view to examining the relevance, whether perceived or real, of traditional authority in the public service delivery process. The chiefs included in the study were conveniently selected taking into account logistical constraints especially distance and the poor road network.

The residents, who are the recipients of the services provided by local Councils and payers of various Council rates, charges and fees, are the *major* stakeholders of the institutions deconcentrated or devolved by central government at the local level. The performance of local Councils has a direct impact on the well being of the residents and has potential implications on the relations between the two parties. Similarly the nature as well as the scope of the relations between the local Council and the residents has far reaching consequences with regard to the local authority's ability to collect local revenue. The inclusion of the residents in the study is, therefore, of paramount importance to the

understanding of the constraints and opportunities facing local Councils within the context of Council-community relations. Convenient samples of residents from randomly selected residential areas were interviewed. The focus was on ensuring that the three categories of residences namely High, Medium, and Low density areas in the selected districts were represented.

### *Brief anatomy of the selected local authorities*

The local government system in Zambia is hierarchically arranged from City, Municipal down to the District Councils. The major classification criterion is mainly population density and the complexity of the services the Council is expected to deliver to its community. Generally the location of a given local authority may be described as urban or rural. The focus of the study was not on comparing the three selected councils as regards their ability to deliver services but rather to clearly understand the kind of problems they face and the potential prospects at their disposal that can enhance service delivery if properly exploited. The selected councils, therefore, simply represent their respective categories in the hierarchy of the local government structure, namely City, Municipal and District. We also considered it important to take into account the rural-urban divide hence the selection of the three districts. We wanted to ascertain whether or not there are characteristics typical to the rural or urban setting that have a bearing on a Council's performance, problems and opportunities.

Choma District basically forms the 'heart' of Southern Province because of its central location but more so due to its important role in the economy of the Province. In 1972 the declaration of Zambia as a One Party State also notably took place in Choma where the famous Choma Declaration was signed to usher in the country's Second Republic. According to the 1996 estimates by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) Choma has a total population of 200,225 at an annual growth rate of 2.3%. A large part of the district population is found in the rural rather than the urban areas. The District has a mixed economy consisting of modern and urban-oriented sector confined mainly to the line of rail and a rural agricultural sector. Generally, the district's economy revolves around agriculture, forestry, mining, and commerce. Politically the district is divided into three (3) constituencies for Parliamentary elections and twenty-five (25) Wards for local

government elections. In our study Coma Municipal Council not only represents the second level in the hierarchy of the local government system but also represents a Council that may be considered 'semi-urban' and not too far away (284 kilometers) from the national decision-making institutions in Lusaka. There are five traditional chiefs namely Hamaundu, Moyo, Singani, Macha and Mapanza. The district is inhabited by the Tonga speaking people.

As a capital city, Lusaka is a 'power house' socially, economically, and politically. The head quarters of all government Ministries, and the governing bodies of all major political parties are located in Lusaka. Consequently all major national decisions are really made in Lusaka. According to the 2000 estimates by the Central Statistical Office (CSO) the population of Lusaka stands at 1,084,703. The local language spoken by the majority of Lusaka residents (39 percent) is Nyanja. Manufacturing, commercial, transport, farming and retail industries constitute the most important industries to the city. However, it is estimated that only 9% of Lusaka's population is in formal employment with the remaining 91% being in the informal sector. Another significant factor is that the local economy is drifting towards the private sector and self-employment. Due to its location coupled with being the capital city of Zambia and seat of government, Lusaka plays a very significant social-economic role to the adjoining rural and urban areas. It provides a readily available market for agricultural and other goods.

Besides representing the three other City Councils in the country, its inclusion afforded the study an opportunity to examine whether or not its location, close proximity to the national decision-making institutions including the Ministry responsible for local government, has any bearing on its performance, problems and opportunities. In terms of rural-urban location the Council represents the urban setting. Politically Lusaka is divided into seven Constituencies for purposes of Parliamentary elections and thirty Wards for local government elections.

Luwingu is a predominantly rural district in the Northern Province of Zambia with an estimated population of 83,369 (CSO estimates for 2000). The District headquarter is situated 165 kilometers from Kasama, the Provincial capital, along the Kasama-Mansa road. The predominant ethnic groups in the District are the Bemba and Bena Mukulu speaking people. The economy of the district revolves mainly around

agriculture by small-scale farmers and fishing. Cassava, Maize and Sorghum are the main staple food crops while finger millet, groundnuts and beans constitute the major cash crops. There are basically no big corporations in the district and hence the major formal employer is central government. Most people, therefore, are engaged in informal activities, fishing and small-scale/peasant farming. The Council represents the last level in the hierarchy of local government and it is one of the most rural Councils located far away (745 kilometers) from the Capital city, Lusaka. In the same vein the inclusion of this remote (far from the national decision making institutions) and rural-based local authority provided an opportunity to ascertain whether or not the performance, problems and opportunities of such a Council can be attributed to factors typical to such location. Politically the district is divided into two (2) constituencies for Parliamentary elections and twenty (20) Wards for local government elections. There are six (6) chiefdoms in the district with the Bemba speaking group under senior chief Shimumbi, chief Chipalo and chief Tungati. The Bena Mukulu are under senior chief Chungu, chief Katuta and chief Chabula.

### *Organisation of the Thesis*

Following the presentation of the background to the development of local authorities in Zambia and methodological issues, in this chapter, the subsequent chapters present discussions based on the analysis of data collected during fieldwork. Chapter two discusses the technical capacity of local Councils with a focus on issues related to administrative structures, human resource development and capital equipment; chapter three analyses issues related to the financing of local authorities; chapter four analyses the role of non-governmental organisations and the business community in service delivery; chapter five discusses issues related to local governance and politics with a focus on local elections, supervisory capacity of Councillors, and traditional authorities; and chapter six presents the concluding remarks..

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## CHAPTER 2

### ADMINISTRATIVE AND TECHNICAL CAPACITY OF LOCAL COUNCILS

#### Introduction

Administrative capacity is a broad concept that refers to the managerial abilities of organizations i.e whether they are equipped to do what they are supposed to do. Capacity in government, for example, is the process of identifying and developing the management skills necessary to address policy problems; attracting, absorbing and managing financial, human and information resources; and operating programs effectively, including evaluating program outcomes to guide future activities (Umeh, 1992, p.58). Technical capacity, as used in the thesis, refers to the availability of tools, plant and equipment necessary for efficient and effective provision of services. It is recognized that no matter how qualified and committed a workforce might be the production process of goods, services and works requires various tools, plant and equipment. Depending on the nature of production, organizations, among other things, need various types of office equipment; motor vehicles; tractors; graders; water processing plants; fire fighting equipment; and solid waste collection and disposal equipment. In effect it means local Councils, like all organisations, need to pay due attention to and recognise the importance of ensuring the availability of skilled manpower, and adequate serviceable equipment.

Local Councils in Zambia fall under the Ministry of Local Government and Housing (MLGH). The Ministry is headed by a Cabinet Minister assisted by a Deputy Minister, both appointed by the President. The ministry has a Permanent Secretary ( PS), also appointed by the President, who is the controlling officer to whom the heads of departments (Directors) report. The PS is accountable to Parliament for all the acts of omission or commission of the officials in the Ministry. As a whole the Ministry is responsible for providing policy guidelines, technical support, and administrative advice to the local Councils.

Local authorities are allowed by law to create administrative structures that can enhance their performance and they have the power to change or redesign such structures as and whenever necessary. In effect, therefore, the number of departments may vary from one local authority to another. The administration of local Councils in Zambia, like in most other countries, is accomplished through Committees that ordinarily reflect the work of the Departments of the Council. According to the Local Government Act of 1991 a local Council “may establish standing and occasional committees consisting of such number of members as the Council may determine, for purpose of examining and reporting on any matter and of discharging any functions of the Council delegated to them under the Act”. Appointed officials of the Council, under the headship of a Town clerk (City and Municipal Councils) or a Council Secretary (District Councils), form the executive wing of the local authority. Departmental heads and their deputies carry the designation of Director except in the case of a District Council where the head for the Finance department is known as a Treasurer. It is also important to note that in a District Councils the head of administration is the Deputy Council Secretary. The elected Councillors constitute the legislative wing of the local authority. They are responsible for making the policies and decisions of the Council while the appointed officials are the implementers. The Local Government Act (1991) and the Local Government Service Regulations (1996) provide the necessary guidelines for the activities of the two bodies in particular and the administration of the local Councils in general.

The basic argument in this chapter is that for a local Council to deliver adequate and quality services in an efficient and effective manner it is necessary to have adequate skilled staff, and appropriate equipment and materials. We also note in this chapter, and the remaining chapters, that public service delivery can be enhanced in an environment that is characterised by supportive government legislation; good working relations among the service providers; accountability and transparency in Council operations; and effective interaction between the service providers and the recipients (residents). It is in view of the above considerations that we examine, in this chapter, issues relating to personnel and technical capacity. With respect to personnel matters we examine the local Councils’ ability to recruit and retain skilled and experienced personnel, and their experiences relating to staff training and development. Equity theory generally argues

that an individual feels motivated to continue in employment if he or she feels that the compensation or reward being received is fair and equitable. Compensation is a critical component of employment relations. In addition to direct cash payments (salaries and wages) compensation includes indirect payments that include insurance, pension plans, child care, and other incentives such as the opportunity for career development. In other words organisations that provide such indirect payments, including training opportunities, to the workers are more likely to retain their staff. From a managerial perspective, expectancy theory also suggests that the manager should develop an awareness of employee thought processes and, based on that awareness, take actions that will influence those processes in a manner that facilitates the attainment of positive organisational outcomes (Ivancevich and Matteson, 1993: 151-154) employees, among other things, think about getting opportunities to improve on their skills. It is also important to note that organisations need to keep abreast with changes in technology through the regular training and development of their employees. From the point of view of sound employment relations and effective performance, therefore, issues of staff recruitment, retention, and training are interrelated.

### **Staff recruitment and retention**

Recruitment, according to Prasad and Bannerjee (1990: 26), refers to the art of attracting applicants from among whom the most suitable may be selected. It is important to note, however, that organisations need to create conditions that will be able to retain the staff once recruited. In this respect organisations need to have a reward system that is capable of retaining as many of its recruited staff as possible. This is very important and in line with the tenets of the *expectancy* and *equity* theories briefly alluded to in the introduction to the chapter.

The 1991 Local Government Act provides for a *separate* local government personnel system. Each local Council is responsible for all personnel matters relating to recruitment, remuneration, discipline and separation. The Local Government Service Regulations (Statutory Instrument number 115 of 1996) provide guidelines pertaining to personnel matters. For senior management staff the Regulations are explicit on the

required qualifications for various positions (Appendix 7). However, Councils are free to determine the qualifications and/or level of experience for other positions.

Councils, through a Council resolution, have the power to create any posts that are not given in the Local Government Act. However, they are required to clearly state the title of the post; the salary and salary scale to be attached to that post; whether the proposed post is to be permanent; why the establishment of that post is considered necessary; the required qualification for the post; the functions which the holder shall be required to perform; and whether or not funds to service the post are available. Like any other institutions, Councils are free to accept applications and subsequently employ any suitable candidate. The market forces relating to the supply and demand of labour, therefore, also apply to the local Councils. The transferring of staff between Councils is not allowed. Where an officer employed by one Council is offered an appointment in another Council that officer is required to resign from employment of the Council if that officer wishes to take up the new appointment. However, for purposes of calculating pension or long service bonus the new appointment of an officer, in another Council, does not constitute a break in service. The secondment of an officer from one Council to another is limited to specialised fields and for a specified period.

This section, therefore, examines the experiences of the three local authorities on matters relating to their administrative capacity and their ability to recruit and/or retain qualified personnel. For each local authority, the examination is preceded by a brief outline of the organization structure and a description of the executive and legislative divisions.

### *Choma Municipal Council*

The Choma Municipal Council has four departments namely, Administration; Engineering Services; Planning; and Finance. The decision-making body, the Council, is composed of twenty five (25) elected Councillors, three (3) Members of Parliament, and two chiefs' representatives selected by the five chiefs in the district. For administrative purposes the Council is divided into three (3) standing committees namely, Finance, Establishment and Plans, and Works and Development. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor,

elected by and from among the Councillors, are ex-officio members of these standing committees.

A close examination of the division of labour among the departments and Council Committees indicates that the various functions of the local authority are well catered for. This view is supported by both elected and appointed officials of the local authority as well as other stakeholders. There is a consensus among the various stakeholders that since the local authority has the power to redesign its administrative structures, the failure to perform cannot be plausibly blamed on the number or configuration of the structures:<sup>9</sup>

As at October 31, 2004 Choma Municipal Council had 88 employees. According to the Town clerk,<sup>10</sup> the Council had carried out a 'manpower audit' and would have liked to retrench 35 employees but due to financial constraints the local authority was not able to finance the retrenchment packages. The combination of over staffing and inadequate skills is negatively impacting on the local authority's ability to perform its major function, the effective and efficient delivery of services to the local communities. It was very clear from the discussions with both appointed and elected officials of the Council that even if finances were made available to retrench the 35 employees most of those remaining would still be deficient in terms of skills. Such retrenchment would, however, reduce the local authority's wage bill and save some resources to go toward service delivery and other commitments such as the training of staff. For many years the Council had not carried out a man power audit due to financial constraints. However, even without such an audit revelations from the Town clerk and other heads of departments indicated a profound concern, over the years, about inadequacies in the levels of skills among most of the local authority's employees. Discussions with various heads of department<sup>11</sup> revealed that during the period under study (1991-2001) only approximately 40 percent, on average, of the Council staff met the qualifications stipulated in the various Service guidelines (before 1996) and the Local Government Service Regulations of 1996. As a matter of fact it was noted that personnel in acting capacity occupied most of the key positions during this period. The position at the lower

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<sup>9</sup> Separate interviews with the Director of Planning (November 18, 2004); a Mr. Bright Kawele, a marketer at Makalanguzu market (November 19, 2004) and Mr. S. Sikufweba – Councillor for Sikalundu Ward (November 22, 2004)

<sup>10</sup> Interview with the Town clerk (November 22, 2004)

<sup>11</sup> These interviews took place between 11-22 November, 2004 as variously noted in the chapters.

echelons of the administrative hierarchy was reportedly even more acute with nearly all the staff occupying positions for which they were not qualified.

The Finance and Engineering departments were considered to be the most affected in terms of lacking qualified staff over the period under study. According to the Town clerk the Council has not been able to produce a professional balance sheet for a long time partly because staff in the Finance department is not adequately qualified. It was revealed that the Directors of Finance and Engineering Services departments, although already confirmed in their positions, were not qualified according to the Local Government Service Regulations. Revenue collection is adversely affected because the Council does not have people that are properly qualified for this function. The Finance department was not able to produce financial reports regularly also mainly due to problems associated with the lack of capacity in the department. Problems of record keeping in the Administration department were also associated with the lack of adequately qualified staff especially at the lower levels. The major problem with most Council staff, including senior officials, is that they have not had professional and/or academic training commensurate with their responsibilities or positions. Some technicians in the Engineering Services Department, for example, hold a craft certificate instead of a qualification at a Diploma level. Similarly, at the senior management level the position of Director of Administration, for example, has at best been persistently occupied by individuals who are Fellows or Associate members of the Institute of Local Government Administrators (ILGAZ) but without the required Degree qualification in Law, Public Administration, Economics, and so on. This is the general trend among the estimated 60 percent of the work force of the local authority that are not considered to have the desired qualifications over the period under review.

The district's population growth, over the years, has continued to put pressure on the local authority's ability to provide services. However, the Council has not been able to effectively compete for sufficient man power with the necessary skills to match this growing demand for services due to the lack of finances to ensure attractive salary scales and good conditions of service. The Town clerk noted that:<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with the Town clerk – November 22, 2004

“...with adequately qualified staff the Council’s operations would register an improvement in service delivery. However, it is important to note that even now the Council has some senior officers that are already confirmed in their positions but without the required qualifications. Such officers can only be removed through Provincial restructuring or retrenchment. Provincial restructuring is a central government prerogative while retrenchment, although within the local authority’s powers requires adequate finances which the Council does not have. In effect it means that for the moment, like in the past, the Council is stuck with these officials”.

There is a concern, among appointed and elected officials of the Council and other stakeholders, that in practice it is not easy to follow the Local Government Service Regulations regarding the minimum qualifications for a Principal Officer (Town clerk) and Chief Officers (heads of department) of a Municipal Council like Choma. Such qualifications, although necessary, are perceived to be on the high side given the inability of local Councils with regard to ensuring attractive salaries and conditions of service. One Councillor, for example, observed that:<sup>13</sup>

“.....Our local authority, like most if not all local Councils in the country, does not have the capacity to pay good salaries and provide the conditions of service that would attract such staff but the Council has to operate and provide services in one way or another. So in as much as we may be eager to follow the Service Regulations the reality of the situation is that people with these qualifications simply do not want to work for local authorities because of the low salaries and poor working conditions”.

Since the implementation of the Local Government Service Regulations in 1996 until in 2001 when a qualified Town clerk was employed (left the Council two years later), not a single position at the senior management level has been filled by a person with the approved qualifications. It is for this reason that during this period individuals have persistently occupied such positions on *acting* rather than *substantive* basis. The situation has been the same for middle management and other support positions in the various departments of the local authority. The Council has suffered from the problem of labour turn over, due to resignations and/or retirements, especially at the level of the Town clerk. During the period under review (1991-2001) it was reported that the local

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<sup>13</sup>Interview with Mr. M. B. K Munsanje – Councillor for Pemba Ward (November 26, 2004)

authority has been headed by four different Town clerks. Granted that labour turn over, if not excessive, offers opportunities for fresh ideas that could enhance an organisation's performance. In our view four Town clerks over a period of only ten years has a negative impact on continuity and does not afford the organisation a chance to build a stable working culture that would deliver services taking into account local needs and priorities. A Town clerk, being the overall supervisor of the local authority staff, is key to the building of the organisation's working culture and is very critical to the shaping of the relations between the Council and other stakeholders such as the local residents, business community, civil society, and key officials at the Ministry responsible for local government. Frequent changes at this level, therefore, have the potential to cause instability in the operations of the Council that could lead to inconsistencies in the levels of staff commitment to the process of service delivery. The effect of this turnover on the Council is well articulated by the Director of Administration who, among other things, noted that:<sup>14</sup>

“.....The frequent changes in the Town Clerk's office are a source of concern with regard to the operations of the Council. It is like the Council is always starting afresh in terms of leadership. A team is built around the leader but now if leadership is changing every now and then it becomes very difficult to maintain focus with a view of ensuring consistence in the work culture and service delivery efforts”.

We argue that discipline, especially financial discipline, among officials is very fundamental to the operations of a local authority. The maintenance of financial discipline, among other things, requires that the Principal Officer of the local authority, in addition to the head of the Finance Department, is well versed with the local sources of revenue and the revenue collection process. Such knowledge is critical for the initiation and institution of sanctions against erring officials. It is plausible to argue that the issues relating to financial mismanagement in the local authority, which are dealt with in chapter three, may in part be attributed to this insufficient orientation and knowledge, on the part of the various Town clerks, resulting from the high turnover.

The search for “greener pastures” has also cost the local authority some of its staff, albeit very few, besides the turn over noted in respect to the office of the Town clerk.

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with the Director of Administration – November 18, 2004

Although exact figures could not be provided due to poor record keeping, and especially that the study was being conducted retrospectively, ‘conservative’ estimates by the Acting Director of Administration put the figures at two members of staff, on average, annually during the study period. The departments of Finance and Engineering Services are the most affected by these departures. In most cases the Council has not recruited people to replace those that have left mainly due to the unavailability of suitable candidates while in a few instances the positions have been filled through internal restructuring.

In an attempt to explore the causes of the local authority’s inability to deliver public services the principal recipients, the residents were asked to identify whether it was due to (i) the lack of qualified manpower; (ii) the lack of financial resources; (iii) the lack of equipment; (iv) all the above three reasons; or (v) other reasons – in which case a respondent had to state such a reason or reasons (Table 2.1). Although the problem of unqualified staff was noted by all the appointed officials and Councillors interviewed, as one of the contributing factors to the poor performance of the Council, it is interesting to observe that the “lack of qualified manpower” was not cited in isolation, by any of the 250 residents interviewed, as a contributing factor. However, 114 residents (45.6 percent) cited “all the above three reasons”; 70 (28 percent) cited the lack of financial resources; 26 (10.4 percent) cited the lack of equipment; and 36 residents (14.4 percent) cited “other reasons” (Box 2.1) as the contributing factors to the Council’s failure to deliver services. In other words while some residents singled out either “the lack of financial resources” or “the lack of equipment” as the only contributing factor to the poor performance of their local authority no resident singled out “the lack of qualified manpower” in this manner. This is in contrast to the situation in the other two districts, although somewhat insignificant in Lusaka, where some residents identified “the lack of financial resources” in isolation. It should be noted that the remaining four Choma respondents believed that the Council was not providing any services at all.

Table 2.1: Respondents' perceived reasons for the local authority's poor performance

REASON	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	% <sup>15</sup>
Lack of qualified manpower	-	0
Lack of financial resources	70	28
Lack of equipment	26	10
All the above	114	46
Other*	36	14
Not applicable**	4	2
<b>Total number of respondents</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field work data analysis

\*Refer to Box 2.1 below.

\*\*Residents with the view that the local authority was not providing any services at all.

Box 2.1: Reasons for poor performance, other than those identified in Table 2.1 above

- Poor work attitudes among most officials
- Political interference
- Lack of priority setting
- Lack of community involvement in the activities of the local authority
- Corruption among local authority officials and Councillors
- Mismanagement of local authority resources
- Selfishness and greed
- Lack of accountability for the local authority's resources and materials

Source: Compilation from Fieldwork data

There seems to be a perception, among Choma residents, that no matter how skilled the personnel of the local authority may be the availability of financial resources and equipment is very critical to the service delivery process. This view is buttressed on the argument that service delivery requires the availability of equipment such as fire-tenders, refuse collection trucks, road construction equipment such as bull dozers, compaction rollers, front-end loaders and so on which the local authority cannot afford to have in adequate and serviceable numbers. The revenue base of Choma Municipal Council, like most Councils countrywide, is not sufficient enough to facilitate the acquisition of

<sup>15</sup> Percentages round-off to facilitate a neat presentation

expensive capital equipment. Without central government assistance, therefore, the Council cannot afford such equipment and consequently can fail to deliver adequate and quality services even if it had the necessary skilled man power. This failure to acquire the necessary equipment has characterised the operations of the Council over the years covering the period of our study and beyond. It is important to note that Councillors, Council administrators, and the residents hold the view that the difficulties their local authority is facing typify the operations of local authorities countrywide.

A group discussion with some marketers at Makalanguzu market also produced similar sentiments drawing mainly from their experiences with what the local authority has been able to do with help from the local business community and other well-wishers. Specifically the marketers noted that on many occasions the business community has provided trucks to collect and dispose solid waste from the central business district and strategic points within the community including market places. In this regard one of the marketers observed that, "...the collection of garbage requires trucks and the construction or maintenance of roads requires bull dozers and such equipment and not necessarily people with Diplomas or Degrees. With assistance from the business community, in terms of equipment and sometimes fuel, the same people we have at the local Council have been able to do some of these things".<sup>16</sup>

The arguments advanced by the participants of the group discussions are consistent with the observation that not a single person out of the 250 residents, that answered the structured questionnaire, identified "the lack of qualified manpower", in isolation, as the only explanatory factor to the local authority's poor performance.

### *Lusaka City Council*

Lusaka City Council has seven (7) departments namely Administration; Engineering Services; City Planning; Finance; Legal Services; Public Health and Social Services; and Valuation and Real Estate Management. The Council is composed of elected Councillors (30) and Members of Parliament (7). The work of the Council is carried out through the Committee system comprising four (4) committees namely Finance and General Purposes; Establishment; Plans, Works and Development; and Housing, Licensing,

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<sup>16</sup> Sentiments of a Mr. Anderson Kalungwana – a marketer at Makalanguzu market (November 24, 2004)

Public health and Social Services. The committees are designed in such a way as to reflect the different departmental responsibilities. The Mayor and the Deputy Mayor are ex-officio members of every Standing Committee appointed by the Council.

Like in the case of Choma Municipal Council, the seven departments and the four Council Committees have been carefully designed to accommodate the work of the local authority. We prescribe to the view advanced by appointed and elected officials, as well as other stakeholders that, all things being equal, the local authority's administrative structures are capable of carrying out their responsibilities in an effective and efficient manner. The local authority acknowledges its authority to redesign its administrative structures if doing so would further enhance its operations.<sup>17</sup> The distinction between having good administrative structures on the one hand and the appropriateness of the individuals in these structures and the motivations for their behaviour, with regard to performance, on the other, is well appreciated. In other words while appreciating the relevance of the existing administrative structures, in themselves, the operational problems of these structures resulting from other factors is acknowledged by both elected and appointed officials of the local authority. The power of the Council to restructure its operations was, for example, demonstrated in the year 2000 when the Town clerk together with all the Directors were retired following a Council resolution to reorganise the city Council's administrative operations (Times of Zambia, July 14, 2000).

As at December 2004 the Council had 2,000 employees. The local authority's Town clerk revealed that out of these the Council had ear-marked to retrench 500 but could not do so due to its inability to finance the retrenchment exercise. According to the Town clerk the Council has, over the years, carried on board staff that the authority does not need. However, even after ascertaining the level of staff required the Council is not able to legally separate with such employees because of the financial implications involved. The Town clerk noted the local authority's inability to compete effectively for qualified staff on the open labour market because of the authority's inability to ensure attractive levels of remuneration that is desired by most qualified and experienced personnel. The Council has, over the years, failed to fill the positions especially at the

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<sup>17</sup> Separate interviews with the Deputy Director of Administration (April 5, 2005), and the Mayor (July 14, 2005)

middle and lower levels with appropriately qualified staff in critical departments such as Engineering Services, and City Planning. Ordinarily staff serving at the middle management level is required to have qualifications at the Diploma level and a minimum of two years experience in their respective profession such as Finance, Administration or Engineering. However, the Council's experience during the period under review, according to the Town clerk, is that only few members of staff in this category have met such qualifications. Such members of staff are mainly heads of some sections within some departments such as Committee and public relations sections, and Police unit (Administration); Fire brigade, and parks and gardens (Engineering); pest control, home economics, and library sections (Public Health and Social Services); and litigation, licensing, and deeds registry (Legal). It is important to acknowledge that individuals with such qualifications are usually in high demand and local authorities, including the Lusaka City Council, are not able to effectively compete for such personnel on the open labour market. Only organisations capable of offering reasonable rewards would effectively compete for this type of personnel and local authorities are not in this category of organisations. The Council is not able to cope with the rising demand for services given the increase in population and business houses over the years. Like any other local authority in the country the Lusaka City Council has not received adequate support from central government to enhance the authority's capacity to meet the increased levels of demand for services.

From the discussions with the Town clerk, the Mayor, heads of departments, and some Councillors it was clear that the local authority has been operating with a bloated workforce, most of which is unskilled and not capable of performing according to the authority's expectations, for many years. Although all the officials interviewed, both elected and appointed, did not seem to be very keen to explain the reasons for this over-employment, the general perception was that outside interference had negatively affected the local authority's ability and desire to ensure transparency and accountability in the recruitment process. However, the background to this can be traced back to the Second Republic during the era of the One-Party state. During the reigns of governors in particular, the Council was influenced to employ party cadres in order to appease UNIP supporters. The employment of party functionaries had nothing to do with the need to

boost output apart from simply being Cheer-Leaders. Along the way, therefore, the number of employees increased to the level where the option was to re-organise the Council and retrench some workers (LCC Annual Report, 2000-2001: 11).

It is important to note, however, that Lusaka City Council is comparatively better than Choma Municipal Council in as far as the availability of qualified staff is concerned. Although precise figures could not be provided to show the exact trends regarding staffing levels with respect to qualifications, over the study period, it was clear from the discussions with Council officials that the local authority had fared well. As a matter of fact the Town clerk and all the chief officers interviewed separately made estimations of qualified personnel, over the study period, ranging between 60 and 75 percent of the labour force. Especially notable is the revelation that for the most part of the period under study the local authority's departments have been headed by individuals that have met at least the minimum qualifications required for the positions. The problem of administrative capacity for the City Council was mainly reported at the middle and lower management levels in all the departments especially in the departments of Finance, Engineering Services, Public Health and Social Services, Valuation and Real Estate Management, and City Planning. At these levels most of the departments were reportedly operating with only 40 to 50 percent of their staff having the required qualifications for the positions they were holding. All the heads of department interviewed held the view that under the circumstances the operations of the local authority were adversely affected.

According to the Director of Public Health and Social Services, the maintenance of public health is very critical to the well being of the city. The department, like other critical departments such as the Departments of Engineering Services, and City Planning offers specialised services which can only be effectively delivered by highly skilled personnel. The inability of the Council to engage such staff has had a negative impact on the local authority's capacity to deliver services effectively. Over the years residents have complained, and continue to complain, about erratic water supply, poor fire services unkempt surroundings including cemeteries, irregular and ineffective regulatory inspections, the construction of buildings without Council approval, poor sanitation, and the lack of maintenance of roads and street lights.

The lack of sufficient qualified revenue collectors has adversely affected the local authority's performance. The inability to collect all the finances that are due to the Council and to ensure the regular production of financial reports because of the ill-qualified staff has undermined the local authority's capacity to deliver services. The Director of Finance disclosed that there are times when the local authority has had finances that can be used to upgrade the skills of some personnel but that this has been difficult to realise, over the years, because some of those earmarked for training have not met the minimum entry qualifications to the relevant training institutions.

The local authority's policy makers (Councillors) interviewed also bemoaned the institution's inability to ensure that only adequately qualified staff occupied the various positions in the departments. The problem of inadequate finances was especially highlighted by the Councillors and perceived to be a 'stumbling' block to the Council's desire to provide quality services to the inhabitants of the city. This is not to state that the other reasons were considered, by the Councillors, as being of lesser importance to the operations of the Council. However, the general perception among the Councillors, when interviewed individually and also in a group discussion, was that with adequate finances the local authority would be able to, among other things, improve salaries and conditions of service with a view to attracting qualified personnel; procure some equipment; and even enhance its personnel training and development programmes.<sup>18</sup> According to the Mayor the local authority, over the years, has not been able to do these things effectively.<sup>19</sup> Councillors are not able to receive effective financial advice to facilitate objective decision-making over matters that have financial implications for the local authority. Although Councillors, as policy makers, can make progressive decisions aimed at widening the authority's revenue base such decisions are of no great value without effective revenue collection and financial management. It is in view of such realities that the need for qualified staff cannot be overemphasised.

It is interesting to note that only 4 of the 600 residents interviewed in Lusaka identified "the lack of qualified manpower" as the only contributing factor to the local authority's poor performance. Like their counterparts in Choma, 363 residents (60.5

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<sup>18</sup> Interviews with four Councillors: Hamudulu W. (Chakunkula Ward); Chafilwa C. B. F. (Roma Ward); Mumba B. (Mutendere Ward); and Kabungo J. C. B. (Kapwepwe Ward) – April 19, 2005

<sup>19</sup> Interview Mkwandawire L. (Mayor) – July 14, 2005

percent) held the view that all the three factors namely, the lack of qualified manpower, finances, and equipment were contributing to the Council’s observed poor performance. However, 50 (8.3 percent) of the residents identified “the lack of financial resources”; 34 (5.7 percent) identified “the lack of equipment” (Table 2.2); and 91 (15.2 percent) identified “other reasons” (Box 2.2) as the only explanatory factors for their local authority’s poor performance. It should also be noted that 58 (9.7 percent) of the 600 residents held the view that the local authority was not providing any services at all

Table 2.2: Respondents’ perceived reasons for the local authority’s poor performance

REASON	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	% <sup>20</sup>
Lack of qualified manpower	4	1
Lack of financial resources	50	8
Lack of equipment	34	6
All the above	363	60
Other*	91	15
Not applicable**	58	10
<b>Total number of respondents</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field work data analysis

\*Refer to Box 2.2 below.

\*\*Residents with the view that the local authority was not providing any services at all.

Box 2.2: Reasons for poor performance, other than those identified in Table 2.2 above

- Political interference
- Lack of community involvement in the activities of the local authority
- Lack of morale among workers
- Officials lack initiative
- Corruption among local authority officials
- Mismanagement of local authority resources
- Lack of seriousness and commitment
- Selfishness and greed
- Lack of accountability for the local authority’s resources and materials

Source: Compilation from Fieldwork data

<sup>20</sup> Percentages rounded-off to facilitate a neat presentation

One Resident of Chilenje was of the view that Lusaka City Council is among the local authorities in the country that have reasonable levels of qualified staff. In his view sentiments relating to the lack of qualified staff are not only misplaced but constitute lame excuses for the local authority's inability to perform and should not, therefore, be encouraged. According to this resident (*from Nyanja to English translation*):<sup>21</sup>

"I have lived in Lusaka for more than 30 years. I have no doubt that over this period the Council has registered an improvement in the level of qualifications of its staff. But I cannot state with certainty that a corresponding improvement has occurred with regard to the provision of services. If anything I have seen a downward trend – uncollected garbage, unkempt cemeteries, potholes in the roads, erratic water supply etc. Educated people like to work in the towns and cities. Lusaka City Council, compared to other Councils countrywide, has benefited from this desire. I think the problems of the Council lie elsewhere".

Similar sentiments were expressed during a group discussion comprising 6 marketers in Matero and also by a local businessman<sup>22</sup> who held the view that although not every employee of the Council had the required qualifications the local authority had enough qualified manpower capable of facilitating the effective delivery of services. According to the marketers the City Council's inability to deliver adequate services has little to do with the question of whether or not the officers have the necessary qualifications for the positions they hold in the Council. Speaking amidst comments of colleagues' approval one marketer observed that:<sup>23</sup>

"I have a nephew working for the Council who holds a degree from the University of Zambia and according to the discussions I have had with him a lot of his workmates are also holders of good qualifications from the University and other Colleges like NIPA. I know many people that are educated and working for the Council. I do not really think that levels of education or professional skills can be the major problem preventing our Council from performing its duties properly. I think that it's more a problem of scarce resources and poor work attitudes among most of the staff. Government should adequately support the local authority in order for it to undertake its service delivery responsibility effectively. After all local authorities deliver services on behalf of central government"

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with a Mr. Donovan Masumbu – a Chilenje resident (April 12, 2005)

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Mr. David. Phiri, Accountant for Family 24 (May 10,2005)

<sup>23</sup> Comments of a Mr. Philemon Ngulube – a Matero marketer who was a participant in a group discussion comprising 6 marketers (April 15, 2005)

Although many people associate poor service delivery with the operations of all local authorities in the country because of the many factors that have been cited, there are people who believe that with just a little more initiative, on the part of officials, the Lusaka Council is better placed to lobby for government assistance and collect more local revenue for its operations. This argument is based on the local authority's close proximity to national decision-making structures including the parent Ministry of Local Government and Housing. The revenue base of the Council is also relatively broader compared to the other two local authorities in the study. There is comparatively a higher level of industrial and general business activity in Lusaka compared to the Councils in Choma and especially Luwingu. The Lusaka City Council, therefore, is expected to face lesser financial constraints and its capacity to deliver services to the satisfaction of the Lusaka residents would be much higher. However, the Council, for the various reasons examined in the thesis, is not very different from the other two local authorities with regard to its performance as perceived by the recipients of the services, the residents. In fact the Council is seen to be associated with corruption, and mismanagement of the meager resources. From the point of view of many Lusaka residents, therefore, the Local authority's failure to perform according to expectations cannot be convincingly explained by 'the lack of qualified staff'.

#### *Luwingu District Council*

The Council has four (4) departments namely Finance; Administration and Human Resource; Works; and Planning. The governing body of the local authority, the Council, is composed of elected Councillors (20), Members of Parliament (2), and representatives of the six chiefs in the district (2). For administrative purposes there are three (3) Council committees namely Staff Establishment and Training; Plans, Works, Development, Housing and Social services; and Finance, Commercial and General Purpose. The Council Chairman and Vice Chairman are ex-officio members to all the committees appointed by the Council.

There is consensus among Councillors and appointed officials with regard to the appropriateness of the existing departments and administrative committees of the Council. Like their colleagues in Choma and Lusaka the two parties do understand that it

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There is consensus among Councillors and appointed officials with regard to the appropriateness of the existing departments and administrative committees of the Council. Like their colleagues in Choma and Lusaka the two parties do understand that it

is their responsibility to create structures that they believe would enhance the performance of the local authority. To this end we note that the problems being faced by the local authority have nothing to do with how the functions of the Council have been divided among the various administrative structures in existence. In any case it has been noted that the Local Government Act and other central government directives have never been a constraint in as far as the Council's desire to redesign its administrative structures is concerned.<sup>24</sup> This view is equally shared by other stakeholders who believe that an organisation may have very elaborate structures but its performance can be adversely affected if, for example, it does not have skilled staff and/or the necessary materials and equipment to facilitate its functions.

As at September 30, 2004 the Council had 46 full-time employees and 20 casual workers. Although the local authority seemed to be content with this level of staffing, discussions with management and Councillors indicated that if funds were available the Council would have carried out a manpower audit to ascertain the suitability of the staffing levels vis-à-vis skills. According to the Council Secretary, the 1992 government directive to retire people that have been in the local government service for 22 years and above had resulted in the local authority losing some of its experienced staff. Notably the local authority lost two pump mechanics, one driver, and three builders.<sup>25</sup> It was the Principal Officer's view, and shared by the other appointed and elected officials interviewed, that a manpower audit would assist the Council to effectively reorganize itself with a view to enhancing its performance. During the period under review the lack of adequately qualified manpower has been a source of concern for both elected and appointed officials and is perceived to be one of the major contributing factors, besides the lack of equipment and finances, to the poor performance of the Council. This problem was reportedly worse in the departments of Finance, and Works where those heading and their immediate subordinates were not qualified for their jobs. Until 1998, when a qualified Council Secretary was employed, all senior officers of the local authority did not have even the minimum qualifications for their positions. The positions of the Deputy Council Secretary and other heads of department (Works and Finance) have continued to

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with the Director of Works – October 4, 2004

<sup>25</sup> Interview with the Director of Works (October 4, 2004)

be occupied by persons that are not suitably qualified, over the study period.<sup>26</sup> For the positions of Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer the Local Government Service Regulations require someone to be a Registered Member of the Zambia Institute of Certified Accountants (ZICA), or a holder of a qualification acceptable to ZICA for Admission as a Member, with two years post qualification professional finance experience in local government or comparable service. However, these positions in the Council have been persistently occupied by individuals with lesser qualifications at best a Certificate in Accountancy and Business Studies (CABS). Similarly the positions of Director of Works and Deputy Director of Works have, for the most part until 1997, been occupied by individuals with qualifications below the minimum requirement of a Technician or Craft Certificate with at least five years experience in the Works Department of a Council or other comparable organization. The 'maximum' required qualification is a University Degree in Civil Engineering, with at least two years working experience in the Works Department of a Council or other comparable organization.

The Planning department had also been headed by unqualified individuals during the earlier years of the study period until a qualified planner was engaged in 1998. According to the Council Secretary (Principal Officer), the operations of the local authority have been adversely affected by the absence of qualified staff not only in key positions but also at the lower levels. Generally, the Council has, over the years, relied more on people with work experience without the necessary professional qualifications because of its inability to recruit qualified personnel. Critical positions such as those of the Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer, and auditing staff in the Finance department have continuously been occupied by unqualified people. The production of quality financial reports on a regular basis, and the effective collection of revenue has been greatly compromised. Compared to the Choma and Lusaka Councils, the Luwingu Council is worse off with regard to the financial capacity to recruit and retain qualified and experienced staff. The local authority's rural status makes it even more difficult to attract such personnel. The qualified Council Secretary employed in 1998 has since left to work for Mbala Municipal Council which is comparatively urban and as a Town Clerk.

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<sup>26</sup> Interview with the Council Secretary (October 5, 2004)

The sentiments of the Council Secretary regarding the lack of qualified manpower were supported by 18 of the 150 interviewed residents (12 percent) that identified “the lack of qualified manpower”, in isolation, as the contributing factor to the Council’s poor performance. The significance of the 12 percent can be appreciated when it is compared to the other two Council areas, Choma and Lusaka, where none and only almost 1 percent respectively, of the residents identified “the lack of qualified manpower” in isolation as a constraining factor to their local authority’s performance. It is especially important to note that unlike in Choma and Lusaka all participants of the study that were subjected to the unstructured interviews in Luwingu, including group discussions, were very concerned and talked very passionately about the lack of adequate qualifications and skills among the Council employees.

The general perception among this group of participants (those subjected to unstructured interviews and/or group discussions), was that the local Council’s recruitment process has continued to be ‘inward looking’ noting that mainly it is the sons and daughters of Luwingu that have continued to take up positions in the Council. According to this perception, the ‘inbreeding’ is seen to be responsible for the lack of commitment and the ‘I don’t care attitude’ among most of the Council employees.

An example of a young lady whose duty was to receipt customers at the Council’s Rest house but was elevated to an Accounts clerk without formal training, such as a minimum qualification of a Certificate in Accountancy and Business Studies (CABS), was cited as detrimental to financial management of the local authority. The constant breakdown of equipment at the water works is generally blamed on poor maintenance by workers that are not qualified for the job. Some of the equipment at the water works is old but with qualified and experienced staff the breakdown rate can be significantly reduced.

The need for qualified staff is expressed by other stakeholders in the district including officials from government line Ministries and Non-governmental organizations. Local authorities countrywide are known for their inability to reward their workers well. However, the Luwingu Council, being a rural-based local authority is worse of in terms of attracting qualified and experienced staff. The Head for the Department of Community Development, Mr. Kapongolo, noted that the problem of rural-based local authorities, with regard to their failure to attract qualified man power, is historical. Development in

Zambia has generally tended to favour urban areas. Rural areas have lagged behind making them unattractive to potential employees of institutions like Councils that are located there. According to Mr. Kapongolo, with a very poor road network, no Banking facilities, no filling station, and unreliable telecommunications system (phones) Luwingu district is not a favourable destination for qualified job seekers.<sup>27</sup> The implication of these problems is that the local authority has over the years continued to rely on the use of unsuitable staff for its operations. The disliking for rural-based Councils, by the qualified 'outsiders', seem to have worked to the advantage of the unqualified 'insiders' hence the perceived 'inbreeding' in the local authority's recruitment process. However, in order for the local authority to spearhead development in the district it is important to ensure the prioritisation of programmes and projects, and the prudent use of resources. This prioritization and prudence can better be achieved if the local authority has staff that is qualified to perform its responsibilities.<sup>28</sup>

It is, however, important to note that 91 (60.7 percent) of the 150 residents interviewed were of the view that all the three factors (lack of qualified manpower, financial resources, and equipment) reinforce each other to negatively impact on the local authority's capacity to deliver public services. The "lack of financial resources" and the "lack of equipment" were identified, in isolation, by only 19 (12.7 percent) and 5 (3.3 percent) of the residents, respectively, as the causes of the local authority's poor performance. It is also worthy noting that 12 (8 percent) of the residents said the Council was not providing any services at all (Table 2.3). The remaining 5 respondents (3.3 percent) cited "other reasons" to explain the local authority's poor performance (Box 2.3). In this respect most Luwingu residents, like their counterparts in Choma and Lusaka, believe that their local Council's performance can only be enhanced if there is an appropriate 'mix' of the three factors of production namely qualified manpower, sufficient financial resources and equipment.

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with G. M. Kapongolo, Head Community Development (October 4, 2004)

<sup>28</sup> Separate interviews with FODEP District Vice Chairman and the Director of Health (October 4, 2004)

Table 2.3: Respondents' perceived reasons for the local authority's poor performance

REASON	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	% <sup>29</sup>
Lack of qualified personnel	18	12
Lack of financial resources	19	13
Lack of equipment	5	3
All the above	91	61
Other*	5	3
Not applicable**	12	8
<b>Total number of respondents</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field work data analysis

\*Refer to Box 2.3 below.

\*\*Residents with the view that the local authority was not providing any services at all.

Box 2.3: Reasons for poor performance, other than those identified in Table 2.3 above

- Lack of community involvement in the activities of the local authority
- Officials lack initiative
- Corruption among local authority officials
- Selfishness and greed
- Lack of accountability for the local authority's resources and materials

Source: Compilation from Fieldwork data

From the discussions with the various participants of the study it is clear that Luwingu District Council has over the years, including the study period (1991-2001), operated with personnel that are not qualified for their jobs. This state of affairs is a source of serious concern for both Council administrators and the recipients of the services offered by the local authority, the residents. It is also acknowledged by all stakeholders that the remoteness of the district, in addition to the local authority's inability to provide reasonable salaries and good conditions of service, has an adverse impact on the Council's chances to recruit and/or retain qualified staff. Consequently the Council's recruitment process has generally been described as 'inward looking' with the majority of its unskilled staff being born and bred in Luwingu, a situation that is

<sup>29</sup> Percentages rounded off to facilitate a neat presentation

perceived to have negative consequences on the levels of professional commitment and by extension on the Council's ability to deliver quality services in an effective and efficient manner.

It is important to note, however, that there are some differences in perceptions of the Council management staff, residents and other stakeholders in the three districts as to their emphasis on the factors that have a significant negative impact on the performance of the respective local authorities. In Choma both elected and appointed officials are concerned about "the lack of qualified manpower" but the emphasis of the residents and other stakeholders is placed on the need for finances and equipment. In Lusaka Council officials (elected and appointed) acknowledge the need for qualified staff in all the positions but are relatively content with the level of available skills. This perception is supported by the residents and other stakeholders interviewed who observe that the Council has enough qualified personnel to perform better than it is doing. Concerns about the negative impact of having inadequately qualified personnel are comparatively more pronounced in Luwingu with 12 percent of the respondents identifying this factor, in isolation, as the cause of the local authority's poor performance compared to only 0.7 percent of the respondents in Lusaka and not a single respondent in Choma. In Luwingu these concerns are equally shared by the officials of the local authority (elected and appointed) and the other stakeholders including residents.

In this section we have noted the lack of community involvement, corruption among Council officials, selfishness and greed, and lack of accountability for Council resources and materials as some of the concerns of local residents with regard to the poor performance of their local authorities. Communities, as recipients of services provided by local authorities, are the source of local revenue. They are, therefore, an interested party in the process of service delivery and should be well-informed about and appropriately involved in the activities of local authorities. A local authority may have all the resources at its disposal but if its operations are characterised by corruption, selfishness and greed, and the lack of accountability for such resources it is very unlikely that such an authority can provide adequate and quality services to the community it serves. It is, therefore, not surprising that the three local authorities share a common problem, poor service delivery.

We have also examined the various experiences of the three local authorities with regard to staff recruitment and retention. The problems the local authorities face regarding the recruitment and retention of qualified personnel are acknowledged in the National Decentralisation Policy which cites the need for developing capacity in the local authorities to adequately pay skilled labour, and the development of staff recruitment guidelines for Councils countrywide as some of the challenges to be tackled by government.<sup>30</sup> The implementation of the Decentralisation Policy constitutes an official admission that central government, as the *principal* player in public service delivery, has thus far not created an environment in which local authorities (the *agents*) can effectively meet the challenges associated, among other things, with the need ensure the recruitment and retention of qualified personnel. Government efforts being undertaken to enhance performance in local Councils, therefore, recognise that all Councils in the country, whether at the City, Municipal, or District levels, are adversely affected by these problems. We, however, note that staff, once recruited, should be given opportunities for further training and development whilst in the employment of an organisation. Human resource training and development is a very critical factor in employment relations. It has the potential to influence organizational performance. Training and development should be viewed as an organizational strategy to enhance staff motivation as well as to ensure adaptability to changing technology. It is important for local authorities, therefore, to include the training and development of staff as a permanent feature of their operations. The importance of these issues and how the local authorities in our study have dealt with them is analysed in the following section of this chapter.

### **Human Resources training and development**

Training, according to Cascio (1998: 262-263), consists of planned programmes designed to improve performance at the individual, group, and/or organisational levels. Training is generally understood as any learning activity that is directed towards the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills for the purposes of an occupation or task. The focus of training is the job or task. The need to have efficiency and safety in the operation of particular machines or equipment; the need for an effective sales force; and the need for

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<sup>30</sup> See The National Decentralisation Policy: Towards Empowering the People, 2002 pp.12-13

competent management in the organisation constitutes examples of training needs. Development, on the other hand, is seen as any learning activity that is directed towards future needs rather than present needs, and which is concerned more with career growth than immediate performance. The focus of development needs is primarily on an organisation's future manpower requirements, and secondly on the growth needs of individuals in the workplace. Examples of development needs include the need for managers to be able to utilise the facilities offered by microcomputers in the operation of the business; the need for replacing senior staff with potential candidates from within the organisation; and the need for preparing employees to accept change (Cole, 1997: 271).

The importance of staff training and development in local Councils is recognised by central government. Part VI of the Local Government Service Regulations of 1996, among other things provides that:

- ✓ A Council which fails to sponsor its staff for training, whether within or outside the country, may apply for assistance from the Government through the Ministry (Ministry of Local Government and Housing);
- ✓ A Council shall ensure that data on its training programme is submitted to the Ministry; and
- ✓ An officer sponsored for training by the Council shall, after the officer's training, be bonded for the period equivalent to the duration of the training.

Training institutions that offer courses relevant to the administration of local Councils, according to a study conducted by Agder Research Foundation in 1999, are indicated in Table 4 below. The last column of the table shows the percentage share of training between 1999 and 2001 utilised by ten local Councils in a study done by the National Institute of Public Administration (NIPA) and Agder Research Foundation of Norway.

Table 2.4: Major training institutions normally utilised by local Councils

FULL NAME OF INSTITUTION	% SHARE OF TRAINING
Copperbelt University	30
National Institute of Public Administration	25
Local Government Training Institute – Chalimbana	9
Zambia Institute of Management	6
Evelyn Hone College	6
National College for Management and Development Studies	6
Zambia Centre for Accountancy Studies	5
Zambia Institute of Business Studies and Industrial Practice	4

Source: Agder Research Foundation Project Report No. 55/2001, p.38 – remaining 9 percent spread on more than 30 different organisations/consultants/advisors.

As corporate bodies local Councils in Zambia, subject to the local government Act, can engage in activities as any body corporate may do, within the law, to enhance its performance. In this respect local Councils, among other things, can design and institute training programmes for their staff aimed at improving their skills and knowledge. Generally the training needs of the Councils in the study, with regard to appointed officials, are in the areas of: skills and knowledge of their jobs; Time management; financial administration (accounts); and the handling of legal documents. Basically these are the same areas that the study conducted by the National Institute of Public Administration (NIPA) and Agder (2001: 45-62), in 10 Councils in Southern, Central, Copperbelt and Eastern Provinces, reported as being critical in the training needs of local Councils in Zambia. It is plausible to argue, from the Agder findings, that training needs for local authorities countrywide may not be significantly different. The Agder study shows that there are institutions that offer training which is relevant to the operations of local authorities in Zambia. With the availability of financial resources and a genuine commitment to improving performance, therefore, it is possible for local authorities in the country to produce a desirable cadre of staff in terms of academic and professional skills.

In this section, therefore, we examine the experiences of the local Councils in our study with regard to staff training and development activities. Specifically we endeavour to show whether or not the local authorities have the ability to undertake staff training and development programmes as often as they would like to.

### *Choma Municipal Council*

Choma Municipal Council does not have what may be considered as a full-fledged policy to guide the training and development of its human resource. Instead the local authority's training programme is more of an "intention" of what the Council would like to achieve as opposed to a policy that is normally expected to be implemented, for example, annually. The inability to finance staff training and development programmes is cited as the major explanatory factor for the local authority's reluctance to design an elaborate training policy. In other words Council management officials may have ideas of the types of skills that need to be developed but concretising such ideas into a full-fledge training policy, in the absence of resources to ensure its implementation, is a prospect that has been taken seriously. All chief officers interviewed, including the Town clerk, saw no relevance in putting together a policy that in practice would not be implemented as and when necessary. According to the Town clerk, the local authority would like to have a well-organised training programme that can be followed on an annual basis, but because of insufficient local finances and without support from central government it is not possible to ensure a budget allocation for training purposes annually. With sufficient financial resources the local authority would embark on serious training programmes for individuals that are already in the employment of the Council since attracting staff that is already qualified is not easy. However, the Town clerk disclosed that:<sup>31</sup>

".....Another problem the Council faces is that most of our staff that would ordinarily benefit from further training do not meet the minimum entry requirements for the programmes of study in the relevant training institutions. So to some extent even the availability of finances may not be translated into human resource development at all. The Council has been luck over the past few years. Some of our people have benefited from in-house training conducted by the District Development Programme that is funded by the German Technical Assistance to Zambia (GTZ). This assistance has enhanced the capacity of the Council, among other things, to manage its financial resources and to deliver services".

During the period covered by the study (1991-2001), especially between 1996 and 2001 Choma Municipal Council benefited from in-house training of its staff conducted

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<sup>31</sup> Interview with the Town clerk – November 22, 2004

by the German Technical Assistance to Zambia (GTZ) through the District Development Programme (DDP). The DDP in-house training mainly aimed at improving financial and human resource management of the District Councils in the programme, including Choma Municipal Council, in order to increase effectiveness of service delivery to the communities, and Councillor-Official relations. The training also focused on building capacities to implement District Information Systems and Strategic District Development Plans in order to achieve effective data management and strategic planning at the district level. A total of 80 members of staff and Councillors were reported to have benefited from the in-house training in various specialized areas as indicated in Table 2.5 below.

Table 2.5: In-house training beneficiaries by type of skill (broad areas)

AREA OF SKILLS TRAINING	NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES
Leadership and Management/strategic planning	15
Financial Management/revenue collection	10
Information systems	10
Councillor-Officer relations (Councillors & some appointed officials)	45
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>

Source: Interviews with Director of Administration

In spite of being a one-time exercise, the impact of the in-house training initiative can generally be described as positive in all the areas covered by the training. Available figures indicate that revenue collection on *charges*, for example, was generally on the increase having risen from K163,533,568 in the 1998 budget to K251,000,000 in the 1999 budget, and K367,000,000 in the 2000 budget. There were no new sources of local revenue during this period when these increases were being recorded. Council officials, therefore, attribute these increases to improved revenue collection, resulting from the in-house training in the area of finance which, among other subjects, covered book keeping. The decline to K123,440,000 in the 2001 budget is a reflection of the transfer of water and sewerage services from the local authority to the newly created Southern Water and Sewerage Company (SWSC) towards the end of the year 2000. The local authority was no longer responsible for collecting charges related to water and sewerage and the SWSC

had not started declaring dividends to the local authorities in the Southern Province, including Choma Municipal Council, who are its shareholders.

Apart from the in-house training programmes sponsored by GTZ between 1996 and 2003 very few Council officials, during the period under review, were sent to training institutions to pursue various programmes. Due to poor record-keeping the actual numbers for officers sponsored for training to outside institutions could not be established. However, crude estimates, according to the Director of Administration, would only put the figure at three members of staff on average having been sent for training annually during the period under review. The period 2000/2001, for example, only two (2) officers were sent to the Local Government Training Institute – Chalimbana to pursue a programme in Accounts while one (1) member of staff was sponsored to the National Institute of Public Administration to undertake the course for the Institute of Local Government Administrators of Zambia. During the same period one officer declined to be sponsored for training in fire fighting because he insisted on the Council to pay him a salary advance for six (6) months, basically covering the training period. The lack of prerequisite qualifications among the local authority's personnel was especially noted by the Director of Engineering Services who observed that:<sup>32</sup>

“The Department is in dire need of qualified personnel but given the prevailing conditions of service in our Council, just like in many other Councils countrywide, it is difficult to attract such personnel. The Council's inability to employ qualified staff is compounded by its inability to enhance the skills of those that are currently serving but who do not hold the necessary qualifications. I can safely say about 80 percent or so of all support staff in the department does not have the required qualifications for the jobs they are doing. The other departments are facing a similar problem. But the unfortunate thing is that these people do not have the requisite entry qualifications acceptable to the relevant training colleges and institutes. In other words, even if the Council had some funds, it is sometimes difficult to identify suitable candidates to be sponsored for training in the desired fields. As a Council this is a dilemma”.

From the information available it is very clear that not much has taken place in the area of human resource training and development, at the Choma Municipal Council, during the period under review. Given the inability of the local authority to hire the

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<sup>32</sup> Interview with the Director of Engineering Services (November 5, 2004)

desired numbers of qualified personnel as earlier noted, some positions have been occupied by less qualified staff. This has, however, posed a problem for the local authority in terms of capacity building using its existing staff. There is no doubting that Choma's population, and consequently the demand for services, has continued to increase during this period. The adverse impact on service delivery, resulting from the Council's inability to enhance the skills of its personnel, cannot, therefore, be overemphasised. The concerns raised by stakeholders, including Council officials and Councillors, over this matter clearly underscore the importance of skilled manpower in the process of service delivery. However, there is a perception, among some stakeholders, including some residents, that the local authority can explore the possibility of reaching agreements with some training institutions to provide 'tailor-made' training programmes for identified workers who would ordinarily not meet the required entry qualifications in an appropriate training institution. Such programmes can be conducted when such institutions are on recess, and would contribute to the building of capacity among personnel that are already in the employment of the local authority. Although such initiatives also require finances it may be possible to bargain for reasonable concessions. It is important to note, however, that such initiatives should not be allowed to develop into a conventional arrangement in terms of being a long-term solution. Instead, long-term financial planning, on the part of the local authority, and adequate central government support should be the basis for man power training and development in the Council.

### *Lusaka City Council*

The Lusaka City Council has a training policy to guide the training and development of its human resource. The policy, among other things, requires every head of Department annually to recommend two members of staff to be sponsored for training by the Council to an institution of learning. Due to limited finances the Council is not able to sponsor as many members of staff as it would like. However, the Council encourages members of staff with resources to proceed on training on a self-sponsorship basis. Members of staff on self-sponsorship are given unpaid study leave covering the period of study. According to the Director of Administration the Council, on average, has 30 members of staff undergoing programmes of study at various recognised institutions of learning including

the University of Zambia, the National Institute of Public Administration, National College for Management and Development Studies, Local Government Training Institute (Chalimbana), Evelyn Hone College, Zambia Institute of Management, and the Reagent College every year.<sup>33</sup> This was the case in the earlier years of the study period especially between 1991 and 1997. However, as years passed fewer and fewer people could be sent for training due to the declining financial capacity of the local authority. Training needs for the Council are mainly determined by respective departments taking into consideration the need to ensure availability skills that are critical to the administration and management of the Council.

The Council also conducts in-house courses especially in situations where a mass training of supervisors, to equip them with a specific skill or knowledge, is required. The training policy does not cover the training of Councillors since they are not full-time employees of the Council. However, training workshops are organised for Councillors every year on topics tailored to enhance their understanding of the nature of Councillor – Officer relationship with a view, among other things, to promote good working relations between the two groups.

Lusaka City Council is in a much better position in as far as staff training and development is concerned. First, most of the Council's 'ill-qualified' staff is trainable since they have the basic entry qualifications required by many training institutions in the country. Given the larger number of Secondary schools in Lusaka, compared to Choma and Luwingu, the Lusaka City Council is in a much better position to attract Secondary school leavers with good grades and other graduates with various forms of basic training. The few with similar qualifications in Choma and Luwingu are more likely to opt for training institutions or some form of employment, in the case of those with some basic training, rather than associate themselves with the local authority. Second, the Council's revenue base is comparatively much wider and can, therefore, support a relatively stable training programme that caters for a reasonable number of staff per year. Although somewhat dissatisfied with the state of affairs this view was duly noted by the Town clerk who noted that the local authority is trying the best it can under the circumstances but it is not able to sponsor as many of its staff as it would like to because of financial

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<sup>33</sup> Interview with the Director of Administration (April 5, 2005)

constraints. The local authority is especially not able to sponsor its employees for programmes that run into several years as a result focus has been placed mainly on in-house training workshops and short-term training programmes. The Council has, over the years, not been able to access Central government support for training purposes, as stipulated in the Local Government Service Regulations.<sup>34</sup> The increased demand for services resulting from the increase in population and business activities are perceived to have adversely affected the Council's ability to do many things including the training and development of its staff. It may be plausible to argue, however, that an increase in population and business activity can be expected to result into an increase in local revenue for the Council and consequently an improvement in the local authority's capacity to provide services. This, however, does not seem to be the case for the Lusaka City Council. We explore some of the explanatory factors for this observation in the next chapters especially in chapter three.

Available records for the local authority's Annual Report (2000/2001) show that a total of 23 members of staff trained in various fields and got qualifications ranging from a certificate to a Masters Degree. Some of them were sponsored by the Council and others by outside organisation. Others did their training on a self-sponsorship basis as shown in Table 2.6. During the same period 55 appointed officials also attended various workshops and seminars; short courses at which certificates of attendance were issued (10); and International conferences (2) sponsored by the local authority at the cost of approximately K76 Million. The short courses and workshops for appointed officials covered many areas of study including Supervisory Skills Management; International Accounting and Auditing Standards; and Credit Control and Debt Collection. The workshops involving Councillors focused on the role of Councillors in the administration of local authorities and Councillor-Official relations.

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<sup>34</sup> Interview with the Town clerk – April 6, 2005

Table 2.6: The number of staff by training programme, qualification obtained, training Institution, and sponsorship (2000/2001)

PROGRAMME	LEVEL	INSTITUTION OR COUNTRY	SPONSOR	QUANTINTY
Hunan resource management	Diploma	NCMDS & NIPA	The Council	2
Urban Environmental management	Masters Degree	Netherlands	Dutch government	1
Pathology & Microbiology	Certificate	UNZA – Ridgeway Campus	Self	1
Public Administration	Diploma	NIPA	Self	1
Community Participation	Certificate	Chalimbana	The Council & MLGH	2
Water and Sanitation	Diploma	Harare	Self/Institution Water and Sanitation	1
Business Administration	Diploma	Evelyn Hone College	Self	1
Bachelor of Laws (LLB)	Degree	UNZA	The Council	1
Management & Policy Studies	Diploma	NCMDS	The Council	1
Bachelor of Arts	Degree	UNZA	Self	1
ACCA	Levels II & III	ZCAS	The Council	2
ACCA	Levels II & III	ZCAS0	Self/The Council	1
Information Technology	Degree	ZCAS	The Council	1
CABS	Certificate	Chalimbana	The Council	1
Management Studies	Diploma	NIPA	Self	2
Certificate	NATECH	NIPA	The Council	2
IMIS	Diploma	NIPA	Self	2
				<b>Total 23</b>

Source: LCC Annual Report, 2000/2001

From the above Table only 10 (43 percent) of the trainees were fully sponsored by the local authority at the cost of approximately 43 Million Kwacha without any outside financial assistance.<sup>35</sup> In terms of actual numbers this level of sponsorship is almost the same as that covered the 8 trainees that went on self-sponsorship. The situation in the 1980s up to mid 1990s was reportedly better in that at least 70 percent of those that were on training, in any given year, were actually sponsored by the local authority. According to the Director of Administration the local authority's financial base, under the circumstances which prevailed that time, was relatively better. However, this turn of events is a reflection of the continued decline in the financial ability of the Council to discharge its responsibilities including staff development. During the same period (2000/2001) the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) sponsored 2 people for a short course in Local Democracy and Governance in Sweden at a cost of 960 US Dollars while the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) sponsored another 2 for a short course in Environmental Management, in Denmark, at a cost of K4,566,000 (Annual report, 2000/2001).

Although the local authority had not carried out an assessment of the impact of the in-house training workshops the Director of Finance and the Deputy Director of Administration, individuals that have served the Council for a number of years, acknowledged the contribution of the workshops to the operations of the organisation. Given the financial incapacity to ensure the training of staff at levels desirable to the Council, in-house training has been embraced as a characteristic feature of the local authority's operations.<sup>36</sup>

In recognition of the local authority's inability to attract as many qualified staff as possible and/or train its own personnel some participants in the study, during group discussions, suggested that the Council should seriously consider providing internships to College and University students with a view to enticing some of them to join the Local Government Service after the completion of their study programmes. The internships would provide an opportunity for students to learn the practical side of local government administration and perhaps help to stimulate their interest to join the Council.

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<sup>35</sup> See the Lusaka City Council Annual Report, 2000/2001

<sup>36</sup> Separate interviews with the Director of Finance (April 8, 2005), and Deputy Director of Administration (April 5, 2005)

In spite of having a full-fledged training policy the Council faces difficulties of implementation due to inadequate finances. According to the revelations of senior Council officials the local authority has, over the years, witnessed a decline in real terms of its financial capacity to a level where the meaningful implementation of the training policy has been severely undermined. It is clear that with adequate financial resources Lusaka City Council is better placed and has the desire to improve the skills of its personnel with a view to mitigating the local authority's inability to attract already qualified and experienced staff.

#### *Luwingu District Council*

The Luwingu Council does not have a training policy to guide activities associated with the training and development of its staff. Training and development initiatives undertaken by the local authority are based on *ad-hoc* arrangements dictated mainly by the sporadic availability of funds and assistance from outside the Council. The study findings have revealed that only five (5) officials have been sponsored by the local authority for training in short courses during the period under review. Two of these officials pursued a six months training at the Local Government Training Institute (LGTI) – Chalimbana and received certificates in accounts and business studies (CABS) while the remaining three pursued certificate courses in Management Studies at the same institution. Unfortunately, by the end of 2001 only one of the five officials was still employed by the Council, the other four have since left for 'greener pastures'. This experience, according to the Council Secretary, was not new because the Council has experienced it before during the years preceding the study. Financial resource constraints were noted as the major explanatory factor for the local authority's unwillingness to design a training policy.

The Council is not able to marshal adequate funds from the local revenue sources to implement a full-fledged training policy on a regular basis. There is no support from central government to facilitate the training and development of staff. According to the Council Secretary, the Council is 'on its own' with regard to any initiatives associated with staff development. All the Chief Officers of the Council were very concerned about their local authority's inability to train its own staff noting that it was only through such initiatives that the local authority can hope to develop and equip a cadre of staff with the

necessary skills to enhance the effective and efficient delivery of services. The sentiments advanced by the Town clerk and the Chief Officers over this matter can be best captured and/or summarised by the observations of the Deputy Council Secretary who noted that the local authority lacks qualified staff in most of its operational areas. The training needs of the Council are, therefore, well known even without carrying out a comprehensive assessment. Because of financial constraints it is difficult for the local authority to ensure regular payments towards statutory obligations such as the payment of salaries and wages and remitting contributions to the Local Authorities Superannuation Fund (LASF). Setting money aside for the training of staff, therefore, is beyond the reach of the local authority. Having a formal training policy under the circumstances, therefore, only serves to remind the local authority of its financial deficiency. The local authority's priority, albeit not well executed, is to provide services at whatever level with the 'resources' at its disposal because utilising some finances for training purposes can adversely affect the availability of the few services the local authority is able to provide.<sup>37</sup>

However, between 1997 and 2000 the Council utilised financial support from the Cooperation for District Development project (CDD) sponsored by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) to train a few of its staff. Officials that received CDD scholarships for advanced training included: the Internal Auditor and the Chief Administrative Officer for a two year diploma course at the National Institute of Public Administration (NIPA); a clerical officer for a one year certificate course at the Local Government Training Institute – Chalimbana; and the acting treasurer for a 6 months training at a private institute in Lusaka. These scholarships were reportedly valued at approximately K10 million, and financial support from the CDD project, amounting to nearly K13 million was also used to conduct training workshops in revenue collection; job descriptions; organisation culture; and the role of Councillors as indicated in Table 2.7 below.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with the Deputy Council Secretary – October 5, 2004

<sup>38</sup> Interview with the former Council Secretary, Mr. Bwanga K. Kapumpa who was the Principal Officer during the time of the CDD project. At the time of the time of interviews Mr. Kapumpa was Town clerk for Mansa Municipal Council in Luapula Province (September 2, 2006)

Table 2.7: Training activities (workshops) funded by the CDD project

AREA OF TRAINING	TARGET DEPRATMENT/ GROUP	NUMBER OF PEOPLE INVOLVED	1997	1998	1999
Revenue collection	Finance/Administration	10		1)	
Job descriptions	Administration/Councillors	24		2)	
Organisation culture	All the four Departments	22		3)	
The role of Councillors	Councillors/Principal and Chief Officers	30	4)		5)

Source: Interviews with former Council Secretary, Mr. Bwanga K. Kapumpa

Discussions with appointed officials and the Councillors clearly indicated the local authority's appreciation of the workshops financed by the CDD project. Following the implementation of the CDD workshops, the Council chairman noted improvements in the appreciation of the different roles for both appointed and elected officials; improved work relations between elected and appointed officials; and a renewed commitment to the effective collection of the various rates, levies and charges.<sup>39</sup> Clearly, the local authority cannot depend on 'ad-hoc' initiatives conducted through pilot projects such as the CDD to enhance its operational capacity. Instead, the local authority's capacity to deliver adequate and quality services should be anchored on policy-oriented initiatives and programmes which are recognised and adequately supported by central government. Such anchorage can enhance objective planning with regard to man power training and development and consequently ensure the availability of the desired skills in the local authority.

The concerns of Council officials and the Councillors relating to the local authority's inability to sponsor staff for further training are recognised and shared by many respondents of our study who alluded to this subject matter. Although no specific question was asked to the respondents regarding the issue of training it is important to note that those that alluded to it duly noted the importance of manpower training and development in the operations of local authorities. The basic argument is that for a local

<sup>39</sup> Interview with the Council Chairman – October 7, 2004

Council to be able to deliver services efficiently and effectively there is need, among other things, to have skilled manpower. The Council's inability to enhance the skills of its own staff, therefore, is perceived as a serious impediment to the good administration of the local authority in general and the delivery of public services in particular.

The inability of the Luwingu Council to enhance the skills of its personnel through the implementation of staff training and development programmes is evidenced by the very few members of staff that have been sponsored for training, by the local authority, during the period under review. The importance of the initiatives carried out by the CDD project and their reported positive impact on the administration of the Council cannot be overemphasised. However, it was clear from the discussions with the Council management and Councillors that in order to enhance sustainable effectiveness in its operations the local authority desires to have a full-fledged training policy. It is the view of Council management and that of Councillors that adequate and regular support from central government is necessary for this goal to be realised. The situation is comparatively better for the Lusaka Council.

The experiences of the three local authorities with regard to staff training and development reveal a wide gap between public policy pronouncements and implementation. The provisions of the Local Government Service Regulations of 1996, relating to staff training in local authorities are not being implemented. This gap in policy implementation has adversely affected the capacity of local authorities to enhance the skills of their staff especially for the Choma and Luwingu Councils that are relatively more resource constrained than the Lusaka City Council. The 'Principal' player in public service delivery, the central government, is not adhering to its empowering role as stipulated by the Service Regulations. Instead, the 'agents' are left to fend for themselves in spite of the resource constraints they are facing. The Councils are, therefore, faced with an administrative *paradox* over which they seem to have very little, if any, control. On the one hand the local authorities have no capacity to attract qualified personnel from the open labour market while on the other central government is not providing the required assistance for them to up-grade the skills of their existing employees, as stipulated in the Service Regulations. It is recognised in the National Decentralisation Policy that, among other things, central government will develop a comprehensive

National Training Policy which should be adaptable to local needs; ensure that Councils devise appropriate human resource development programmes based on the identified training needs for Councillors and Officials; and strengthen local training institutions for effective training and development of staff (National Decentralisation Policy (2002: 23-24). This recognition underscores the realisation that problems related to the training and development of personnel affects all public institutions including local authorities regardless of their level in the local government hierarchy. The administrative *paradox* facing the local authorities with regard to their inability to train and develop adequate personnel, regardless of their status in the local government hierarchy, therefore, is an illustration of central government's unbiased stance towards its own institutions. In other words government policy is directed at all local authorities and its impact (policy's) thus far is essentially the same on the authorities whether at the City, Municipal, or District levels.

Human resource training and development is very critical to the sustainability of organisational performance. Besides enhancing employee skills training and development also contributes to the morale of employees. However, effective organisational performance is also dependent on the availability of adequate plant and equipment. It is in view of this realisation that we examine the experiences of the three local authorities vis-à-vis the availability of plant and equipment.

### **Technical Capacity**

In this study, technical capacity refers to the availability of capital equipment that is necessary to facilitate the delivery of public services by the local Councils. Given the differences in population size, levels of business activity, and the numbers and complexity of infrastructure we expect that the Lusaka City Council would need more equipment of varying types compared to the Choma and Luwingu Councils in order to discharge its responsibilities efficiently and effectively. However, we argue that in order for local authorities to discharge their responsibilities in an efficient and effective manner they need to have the following principal types of equipment, among others, in serviceable condition:

- refuse trucks – collection and disposal of solid waste;
- Grader – road construction and maintenance;
- front-end loaders – various forms of construction works;
- road compaction rollers – road construction and maintenance;
- tractors – pulling heavy equipment and agricultural use;
- fire tenders – provision of safety associated with fire outbreaks;
- motorised scaffolding equipment – installation and maintenance of street lights, facilitating repairs and access to tall building and structures;
- electrical pump sets and associated equipment – water and sewerage services; and
- utility vehicles (small trucks and vans) – transport requirements;

In this section, therefore, we examine the experiences of the three local authorities in our study vis-à-vis their capacity to deliver services in as far as the availability of the principal capital equipment mentioned above is concerned.

#### *Choma Municipal Council*

Garbage collection and disposal, and the maintenance and construction of roads are among the service delivery tasks that constitute a serious challenge for the Choma Municipal Council. The biggest generator of solid waste in Choma is Makalanguzu market, situated within the Central Business District (CBD). However, it was revealed that during the period under study the local Council has not had a serviceable and reliable refuse truck to collect and dispose off garbage resulting in filthy being littered all around the residential areas, markets and the town centre. Because of the Council's inability to collect and dispose off garbage, solid waste management, at the household level, is carried out through the use of pits to bury and/or incinerate the waste. The road network, including feeder roads, in the district is in a very bad state due to the lack of regular maintenance. Farmers were reportedly facing difficulties in transporting their produce to the markets because of the poor state of roads. Roads connecting the town centre and the residential areas, and within the residential areas, are generally in a very poor state due to the lack of maintenance. The poor road infrastructure is a serious source of concern for many residents who expressed displeasure in the local authority's failure to ensure the

regular maintenance of this infrastructure. The comments of a focus group discussion participant, Abraham Hamusute, noted below typify the views of most residents:<sup>40</sup>

“The Council has ignored its responsibility of maintaining roads. It is faster, especially during the rain season, to walk in these compounds rather than to drive. Our local authority’s failure to perform can be seen everywhere, poor roads, unkempt grass, uncollected garbage, dirty buildings all over the place, and broken down street lighting. Our local authority should address whatever problems it is facing very quickly otherwise I personally do not see the relevance of the Council. There is also need for central government’s intervention and sub-contracting of some services to local companies especially those that are already doing some of the Council’s work such as garbage collection and even mending some of the roads”.

The local authority’s situation with regard to equipment was worsened in the year 2000 when bailiffs sold off most of the equipment because of the Council’s indebtedness to various organisations including the Workmen’s Compensation Board. Equipment sold included one Champion Grader, three Sisu trucks, and seven motor vehicles including the cars for the Mayor and Town clerk. These developments left the Council with insufficient and unreliable equipment, a situation that has negatively impacted on the local authority’s capacity to effectively perform its responsibilities including the maintenance of roads, and garbage collection and disposal. At the time of interviews the local authority only had one unserviceable grader; one unserviceable fire tender; two small pick-up trucks; and one tractor and trailer. With such inadequate and ‘unserviceable’ equipment the local authority is not able to provide the necessary services effectively. The sale of the three Sisu trucks is reported to have seriously affected the Council’s ability to collect and dispose off solid waste while the unreliability of the remaining grader has also negatively impacted the maintenance of roads. According to the Director of Engineering Services, the local authority would need a minimum of the following equipment to operate effectively:<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Sentiments of a Mr. Abraham Hamusute, a participant of a focus group discussion held in Mwapona Compound (November 13, 2004)

<sup>41</sup> Interview with the Director of Engineering Services (November 5, 2004)

- three fire tenders;
- four front-end loaders;
- four refuse trucks;
- four sets of road compaction rollers;
- three tractors and trailers;
- three graders; and
- two motorised scaffolding machines

With the above equipment the Director of Engineering observed that the local authority would be able to keep abreast with the necessary and regular maintenance of existing roads, open up adequate feeder roads to facilitate agricultural activities and improve the general movements of the public, ensure the collection and disposal of garbage on a regular basis, provide adequate cover in the event of a fire breakout, and maintain all the street lighting equipment in working order.

The Director of Finance was very explicit on the Council's inability to procure capital equipment conceding that the local authority simply does not have the financial capacity to do that. He pointed out that the Council knows the type of equipment that it needs to facilitate its operations with regard to service provision. With adequate financial resources, therefore, the local authority would not hesitate to purchase the necessary equipment. However, the Director noted that given the narrow and weak revenue base the Council will, for sometime to come, depend on central government support to procure the needed capital equipment.

In spite of the recognition of its inabilities to provide services in an efficient and effective manner the Council has not taken seriously the efficacy of sub-contracting as an alternative mode to service delivery. There is no evidence of 'major' works done or services provided through sub-contracting. This is ironic given that both Council officials and Councillors interviewed seem to acknowledge the existence of skills, knowledge and equipment among some of the local private business houses. The only plausible explanation for this irony, and as acknowledged by the Principal Officer of the local authority, is that "the Council has not seriously considered sub-contracting as a panacea to the problems it is facing in providing services to the local community".

The concerns of the Council management officials were echoed by Chief Singani who reiterated the poor state of the roads in his chieftdom noting that it was difficult for

the farming community to effectively conduct their agricultural activities when the roads were literally impassable during the rain season. The traditional ruler emphasised on the need to open-up more feeder roads and to ensure the regular maintenance of roads if agricultural activities in particular and development in general were to be enhanced. The chief was particularly emphatic of the fact that people in his chiefdom, like their counterparts in the other chiefdoms in the district, depended on agriculture for their livelihood. It is imperative, therefore, that an environment capable of supporting lucrative agricultural activities is created. Such an environment, according to the chief, would of necessity include adequate and well-maintained feeder roads, boreholes, and the availability of agricultural inputs. These sentiments were equally raised by the other traditional rulers in the study whose situation pertaining to the state of the roads in their chiefdoms was not any different from that of chief Singani's area.

Tall grass and dark streets are a source of concern among the residents of Choma who describe them as a danger to their personal security. A resident of Mochipapa (a low density residential area) and a local businessman, Mr. N. Satish, noted that the Council's failure to cut grass and light-up the streets has created a conducive atmosphere for thieves and other undesirable characters. The resident observed that the Council should not wait to acquire expensive tractors and grass mowers to do the job noting that grass can cheaply be slashed by hired casual workers. According to the resident, expensive equipment such as tractors, and road construction and maintenance equipment cannot easily be acquired by most local Councils using their own resources.<sup>42</sup> It is, therefore, important that where possible the Council should utilise alternative ways of doing the same job, albeit not effectively sometimes.

Clearly there seems to be a consensus among Choma residents that their local authority, like most Councils countrywide, cannot afford to procure the necessary equipment to enhance the delivery of public services. It is recognised that central government support is very critical because the local revenue raised by the local authority is not adequate to facilitate the purchase of capital equipment. An official from Africare, an NGO, observed that to purchase, for example, of a fire tender the Council would need

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with Mr. N. Satish, Manager for Choma Garage and resident of Mochipapa (November 8, 2004)

to save over a period of time, a situation that would significantly reduce the already low levels of service provision.<sup>43</sup> These sentiments were also expressed by a local businessman who observed that would almost be impractical given the weakness of the local currency and the usual price increases for such equipment. The businessman noted that in such a situation the local authority might end up saving for one piece of equipment almost forever at the expense of the few services being provided.<sup>44</sup>

### *Lusaka City Council*

Over the years, low-income settlements have grown and new ones have emerged, presenting a huge challenge to the local authority with regard, among other things, to the maintenance of hygiene. The Central Business District (CBD), the heavy and light industrial areas, and Second Class trading area (Kamwala) have also witnessed a substantial growth in their activities over the years. Several markets have been extended while new ones have also been built. These developments have reportedly resulted in the increased generation of solid waste to levels that have clearly out-stripped the local authority's capacity to manage efficiently and effectively. New and taller buildings have been and continue to be built within the city, a situation that, among other things, requires adequate and suitable fire fighting equipment. The road network in all the high density residential areas, and in most of the medium and low density areas is not tar-marked. The regular maintenance of this network cannot, therefore, be overemphasised. However, the study revealed that the Council is not able to meet these and many other similar challenges due to inadequate and in some cases inappropriate equipment.

The Director of Engineering Services disclosed that during the period under review the local authority had only three serviceable fire tenders; four front-end loaders; five refuse trucks of which only three were reliable; two sets of road compaction rollers which constantly break down due to old age; two unreliable tractors their trailers; and three graders of which only two were reliable. This equipment is directly involved in the delivery of services with regard to solid waste management, fire services, and the construction and maintenance of roads in the city. One of the serviceable bull dozers was

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<sup>43</sup> Interview with the District Programme Manager for Africare – November 8, 2004

<sup>44</sup> Interview with the Director for Choma Milling Company – November 8, 2004

burnt by some angry residents of Kalikiliki in their protest against the local authority's exercise to demolish illegal structures in the area.

In order to ensure the effective delivery of services the Director of Engineering Services estimated that the local authority would require the following principal pieces of equipment:<sup>45</sup>

- six fire tenders;
- ten front-end loaders;
- fifteen refuse trucks;
- eight sets of road compaction rollers;
- four tractors and trailers;
- five graders; and
- four motorised scaffolding machines

With the above pieces of equipment the local authority would be in a position to adequately respond to fire outbreaks in the city, collect and dispose garbage from respective residential areas at least twice in a week, enhance the routine maintenance of existing roads within the city and the construction of roads in areas being opened up for development, and enhance the regular maintenance of street lighting equipment.

The need for central government support to facilitate the acquisition of sufficient equipment is acknowledged by many residents. However, positive work attitudes and the ability to plan effectively for the delivery of services were perceived to be lacking among the local authority staff resulting in the ineffective use of the available scarce resources. This general perception was somewhat well articulated by a resident of Matero township, Collins Tembo who observed that:<sup>46</sup>

“...Yes, it is true that the Council does not have adequate equipment to ensure that these problems are effectively sorted out. I am not sure but I suspect that the Council cannot afford to purchase some of this equipment that is very expensive. Government should support the Council to purchase such expensive equipment. I also think that most Council workers have a negative and poor work attitude. With proper supervision, foresightedness, and a general willingness to perform their responsibilities it is possible for Council workers to plan for the effective use of whatever equipment is available. But the Council can also sub-contract the

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<sup>45</sup> Interview with the Director of Engineering Services (April 7, 2005)

<sup>46</sup> Interview with a Mr. Collins Tembo of Matero Compound (April 14, 2005)

provision of some services as a way of lessening the impact of inadequate equipment”.

Speaking separately all 10 Councillors, including the Mayor, that were interviewed on face-to-face basis, variously noted that with adequate and serviceable equipment Lusaka would be in a much better shape befitting its status as the Capital city of the Country. The inability of the Council and the lack of support from central government vis-à-vis the acquisition of equipment was perceived to have greatly undermined the local authority’s capacity to deliver services to Lusaka residents. Councillor Musonda of Chawama Ward observed that:<sup>47</sup>

“The *will* to provide quality services to our residents is there. But this *will* cannot be translated into reality if we do not have the means. As a Council we share the concerns of the community over poor roads, unkempt grass, poor response to fire outbreaks, dilapidated water and sewerage infrastructure, and so on. But the local authority is handicapped. We simply do not have the necessary equipment to ensure effectiveness in the delivery of these very important services”.

In the year 2000 the Council wrote-off K4 billion, in property tax, because the mainframe computer had broken down. According to the Mayor, the computer had not been working for the past four years and the writing-off was inevitable because the non-billing during this period was not a fault of the residents but the Council (Times of Zambia, June 28, 2000). There is no doubting that the Council was severely affected by this loss of revenue resulting from its inability to ensure the availability of serviceable equipment. The lack of adequate equipment to enhance the delivery of quality public services is clearly appreciated by all the Lusaka stakeholders in our study. Given the poor financial state of the local authority central government intervention is perceived to be very critical to the effective performance of the Council especially with regard to the procurement of expensive equipment. From the point of view of the residents, a positive work attitude, on the part of the local authority staff is necessary in order to guarantee the optimum use of available equipment.

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<sup>47</sup> Interview with Mr. E. E. Musonda - Councillor of Chawama Ward (March 11, 2005)

### *Luwingu District Council*

Luwingu district Council has not had a functioning grader since 1994 making it impossible for the local Council to maintain roads within the district. According to the Council Secretary, and also noted by the Chairman of the Farmers' Association, Mr. Kambone, the lack of a serviceable grader has negatively affected agricultural activities in the district in that the existing feeder roads are not maintained and the Council is not able to construct more roads to enhance agricultural production.<sup>48</sup> The Council is also not able to adequately benefit from fishing activities in Nsombo, along the shores of lake Bangweulu, due to the poor state of the road that makes it difficult to monitor the collection of fish levy done by officials stationed there. Refuse collection and disposal is hampered by the lack of a serviceable refuse truck. Solid waste disposal in the district is generally managed at individual household level where disposal pits are used. However, the Council provides waste disposal services to the markets and bus station only. The waste from these areas is collected, using trucks mainly from line government ministries such as the Ministries of Education, Health, Agriculture, and Community Development and Social Services.

The Council has only two refuse trucks which constantly break down, one small utility van which also constantly breaks down, no fire tender, no grader or road compaction rollers, one unserviceable tractor, and no motorised scaffolding equipment. At the time of interviews the only reliable motor vehicle was a Toyota Land Cruiser which was handed over to the Council after the completion of the CDD project. The management of solid waste is, therefore, not performed according to the community's expectations. Sub-contracting as an alternative mode of services delivery is literally non-existent in Luwingu. In principle both Councillors and management officials recognise sub-contracting as a possible solution to the local authority's problems in service delivery. However, apart from the hiring of casual workers to cut grass or help in the maintenance of roads, using picks, hoes and shovels, the Council does not sub-contract local entrepreneurs to provide services on its behalf. The basic explanation is that there is no adequate local expertise and capacity to facilitate sub-contracting agreements. The Council Secretary acknowledged that to a large extent the local authority's ability to

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<sup>48</sup> Interview with Mr. G. Kambone, Chairman of Shamumanga Farmers' Association (October 7, 2004)

perform is hampered by the lack of equipment. The two refuse trucks which constantly break down make it to ensure the regular collection and disposal of solid waste. The local authority is fortunate that there are no industrial plants which can pose as fire hazards requiring the use of a fire tender. The fire outbreaks the district has experienced over the years are mainly domestic and have had to be dealt with without the benefit of expert intervention. The Council is sometimes assisted by government line Ministries such as the Ministries of Community Development, Agriculture, and Education which are relatively better of in terms of serviceable motor vehicles.

The Councillors also expressed concern about the lack of adequate and serviceable equipment. The Council Chairman noted that the Council's failure to perform according to the community's expectation was unacceptable as it helped to enhance the lack of confidence among the local residents regarding the relevance of the local authority in as far as the improvement of their lives was concerned. In reiterating the need for government support the Chairman noted that the Council's revenue base was weak and cannot, therefore, accommodate the purchase of expensive equipment such as garbage collection trucks, graders, fire tenders, and tractors. This state of affairs, according to the Chairman, is a 'fact' which should be accepted and dealt with by central government.

For effective operations, the Director of Works estimated that the local authority requires a minimum of the following equipment:

- one fire tender;
- three front-end loaders;
- two refuse trucks;
- three sets of road compaction rollers;
- two tractors and trailers;
- two graders; and
- one motorised scaffolding machine

With the above equipment the Director noted that the Council would be in apposition to, for example, ensure the regular maintenance of, among other roads, the Luwingu-Nsombo road which is very critical to the transportation of fish and grain, the opening-up of sufficient feeder roads to enhance agricultural activity would also be facilitated, and the collection and disposal of garbage waste can be done once or twice in a week.

The aspect of poor work attitudes and the general lack of serious commitment to duty, on the part of some Council officials, was cited as a factor that has a negative impact on the Council's ability to perform. Sometimes government line Ministries have gone outside their mandate and provided light trucks to assist the local authority collect and dispose garbage. However, the local authority has, on some occasions, failed to make effective use of the trucks resulting in refuse not being collected. This lapse in the commitment of some Council officials was independently reported by three officials from government line Ministries.<sup>49</sup> Such lapses notwithstanding, the Director of Works observed that the Council should have its own equipment to ensure the efficient and effective discharge of its responsibilities and not depend on well-wishers.

In this section we have noted, among other things, that the residents' perception about the extent of the impact of the "lack of equipment", as an isolated factor, on the performance of the local authorities varies from one Council area to another. It is clear, however, that lack of equipment is a very critical explanatory factor for the ineffective delivery of services by the local authorities in our study. It is, for example, acknowledged by the residents as well as Council officials and Councillors in the three local authority areas that due to the lack of appropriate equipment Councils are not able to maintain and/or install street lights. Consequently, incidents of theft, vandalism, and general insecurity within the communities of the local Councils have posed a serious challenge to the civic leaders including the police. In this respect, the need for central government intervention in the procurement of capital equipment has also been duly noted in all the three Council areas. This is in recognition of the fact that such equipment is expensive and generally beyond the means of individual Councils to procure. Although the Lusaka Council is comparatively better equipped than the Choma and Luwingu Councils, as shown in the table below, the equipment is not sufficient to cope with the demand for services requiring such equipment.

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<sup>49</sup> Separate interviews with District Director of Health (October 4, 2004); District Education Standards Officer and the District Agricultural Coordinator (October 5, 2004)

Table 2.8: Available equipment by local authority

	CHOMA	LUSAKA	LUWINGU
Fire tenders	1*	3	0
Front-end loaders	0	4	0
Refuse trucks	**	5	2***
Road compaction rollers	0	2	0
Tractors	1	2	1*
Graders	1*	3	0
Motorised scaffolding machines	0	1*	0

\* not serviceable; \*\* only 3 small pick-up trucks available; \*\*\* constantly breaking down

What is important to note is the fact that the existing equipments, and its state of repair in all the three local authorities, falls short of the desired estimations for effective performance.

### Conclusion

From the findings of our study it is clear that local authorities have difficulties ensuring the provision of adequate quality services to their communities in an efficient and effective manner due to various factors. From our assessment, however, the local authority's poor performance, with regard to the provision of services cannot be attributed to the nature of the departments or to how functions have been allocated within the departments. Instead, the poor performance may be explained by other factors that have been duly discussed in this chapter as well as in the next chapters. In other words such difficulties have nothing to do with the administrative structures which the Councils have created. In fact the Councils recognise the fact that they have the legislative authority and power to alter the structures if doing so would enhance their capacity to operate effectively. We note that the various structures created adequately reflect the service delivery responsibilities of the respective local authorities. Many stakeholders in the three local Council areas also observed that an institution may have very elaborate structures but still not be able to perform to the expectation of its clients if critical resources such as skilled manpower, finances, and equipment are not available.

The study revealed the Councils are having difficulties to recruit and retain qualified and experienced staff mainly because of their inability to offer attractive salaries and good conditions of service. According to the revelations of Council officials,

Councillors, residents, and other respondents, these difficulties are not peculiar to the local authorities in our study. They are difficulties that are generally associated with the operations of most, if not all, local Councils in the country. Most of the residents that were subjected to the structured questionnaire in Choma, 227 out of 250 (91 percent); in Lusaka, 512 out of 600 (85 percent); and in Luwingu, 113 out of 150 (75 percent) held the view that problems facing their local authorities also affect other local authorities countrywide.

Councils, like other organisations, have to compete for manpower on the open labour market but because of their poor financial capacity they are not able to compete effectively. Despite the fact that large numbers of people graduating from Colleges and Universities are not employed, local authorities are not able to get such graduates because of their inability to offer attractive salaries and good conditions of service. This situation has resulted in the continued utilisation of personnel that do not meet even the minimum qualifications for the positions they hold. The impact of this problem on the performance of Councils in general and the delivery of services in particular, cannot be overemphasised.

There is a perception, among some participants in the study, that some people join the local government service due to the lack of alternative jobs. This situation in part, according to some respondents, accounts for the general lack of serious commitment to duty among some officials in the local authorities.

We have noted in the chapter observations relating to the desire to shed-off a number of staff in the Lusaka (500) and Choma (35) Councils. The Luwingu local authority seems content with the staff in terms of numbers but with the availability of financial resources the Council would like to undertake a meaningful personnel audit to determine its staff requirements in relation to the required skills. The actual cost of the bloated work force in the Lusaka and Choma Councils, during the period under review could not be determined due to poor record keeping, and/or the labour turnover of staff that would perhaps be of greater assistance over this matter. However, the problem of overstaffing and inadequate skills in local authorities countrywide has been variously acknowledged by different stakeholders including the authorities themselves as noted especially in the Lusaka and Choma cases. A project appraisal by the Zambia Social

Investment Fund (ZAMSIF) in the year 2000 observed that Councils are chronically overstaffed, largely with unqualified staff. Up to 60 percent of Council resources are absorbed by the approximately 18,000 staff they employ. Most Council employees are low skilled labourers. Local government service remains a low prestige career path, and unreliable payment of Council employees' wages has not improved its image. Councils lack the resources needed to fund redundancy payments, although many have slowly started shedding employees either through attrition, or by financing a few redundancies at a time when their cash position allows it.<sup>50</sup>

The implication of this revelation is that only 40 percent of Council resources are available for all the other expenses including service delivery. This is clearly inadequate considering that there are many expenditure items, apart from service delivery, such as those involving the repairs and maintenance of buildings and equipment, supplies and services, transport, statutory remittances to institutions such as the Local Authorities Superannuation Fund, Zambia National Provident Fund (ZNPF), and the Workman's Compensation Fund (WCF), and debt servicing, to mention just a few. The income and expenditure pattern of the three local authorities for the year 2001 has been analysed in chapter three. The analysis clearly shows that in all the three Councils service provision is allocated less than 20 percent of the revenue with personnel emoluments taking between 37 percent (Lusaka) and almost 67 percent (Choma). It is plausible, therefore, to argue that an objective *rightsizing* initiative in the local authorities, including the three local Councils in our study, can result in savings that can enhance the capacity for service delivery. This *rightsizing* initiative is advocated for in the third component of the Public Service Reform Programme (PSRP) which is the National Decentralisation Policy assented to by central government in 2002 and officially launched in 2004. The exact figure of such savings would depend on the results of such an exercise.

Apart from the Lusaka City Council (LCC) the other two Councils do not have a training policy to guide activities related to the training of their staff. What these Councils have are what they described as '*intentions*' of what they would like to do if they had adequate financial resources. In the absence of such resources the Choma and

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<sup>50</sup> See ZAMSIF Appraisal Document (20074), vol. 1, 2000 – [http://www.essentialaction.org/labor\\_report/zambia.html](http://www.essentialaction.org/labor_report/zambia.html)

Luwingu Councils considered it irrelevant to devise a full-fledged training policy that cannot, in practice, be followed. Both management and Councillors in Choma and Luwingu regret the fact that even when the Council is ready to send one or two members of staff for further training it is sometimes not possible because most of those requiring such training do not usually meet the entry requirements at the various training institutions. This problem is considered as another factor that is contributing to the unwillingness to put in place a training policy. In spite of having a training policy LCC officials and Councillors bemoaned the local authority's inability to train as many people as possible due to inadequate finances. The increase in the City's population, over the years, has not been accompanied by a corresponding increase in the local authority's capacity to meet the resulting increase in the demand for services. The Council's ability to sponsor staff for further training has consequently been adversely affected.

The availability of adequate and appropriate equipment is a very critical factor in the service delivery process. However, the three local authorities have serious problems in this area. There is a big difference between what the local authorities have and the minimum estimates of their requirements, in terms of equipment. Because of inadequate equipment the local authorities have difficulties, among other things, to ensure the collection and disposal of garbage; maintain old roads and/or construct new ones; effectively respond to community calls relating to out-breaks of fire; eradication of pests; general cleanliness of surroundings; the provision of adequate clean water and sewerage services; and the servicing of land that has been allocated for development. The explicit reference to equipment such as tractors, graders, refuse trucks etc. does not necessarily underplay the importance of office equipment neither does it show that the local authorities are satisfied in this area. The emphasis on such equipment simply reflects its direct and tangible involvement in the various forms of service delivery. The lack of adequate office equipment is also a source of concern for the local authorities especially for the Choma and Luwingu Councils. This poor performance is a very serious source of concern among residents who, in some cases, describe the various fees and charges they pay to their local authorities as 'daylight robbery'. The local authorities are not able, on their own, to acquire the necessary equipment because of the huge financial outlays associated with the purchase of capital equipment.

From the qualitative data it is clear that the problems noted do not only affect the Councils in the study but are rather a characteristic of local authorities countrywide. Speaking at the official handover of two fire tenders donated by a Japanese City, Soka, the Minister for Local Government disclosed that all 72 Councils were ill-equipped for fire-fighting services due to financial constraints. He noted that only 17 Councils had established or approved fire brigades of which only 9 had one or two old limping fire tenders in use thereby rendering unsatisfactory services to the communities (Times of Zambia, September 25, 1997). The following year the Minister for Local Government observed that the use of outdated development plans for towns and cities in Zambia has contributed to the poor urban environment. The Minister also noted that there was no town or city in Zambia which had an approved plan to guide its development as all Councils relied on outdated master plans which did not reflect the reality on the ground (Times of Zambia, April 4, 1998). It is apparent from the above sentiments that central government has not taken sides and unduly supported some Councils at the expense of others. These observations are consistent with the central thesis which basically argues that government has no incentive to discriminate in favour or against subordinate administrative units, within the same hierarchical structure, to which it has deconcentrated or devolved powers and authority. There are no deliberate policies and/or government directives that have the effect of favouring one type of local authorities at the expense of others in as far as government support in the procurement of equipment is concerned. The above difficulties have led to many residents, in the three districts to be dissatisfied with the services being provided by their local authorities (Table 2.9).

Table 2.9: Level of satisfaction with service provision

**SATISFACTION \* DISTRICT Crosstabulation**

		DISTRICT			Total
		Lusaka	Luwingu	Choma	
SATISFACTIC Yes	Count	49	16	7	72
	% within DISTRICT	8.2%	10.7%	2.8%	7.2%
No	Count	121	126	129	376
	% within DISTRICT	20.2%	84.0%	51.6%	37.6%
Not Applicabl	Count	430	8	114	552
	% within DISTRICT	71.7%	5.3%	45.6%	55.2%
Total	Count	600	150	250	1000
	% within DISTRICT	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The above table indicates that only 448 (44.8 percent) of the 1,000 residents interviewed in the three districts acknowledged receiving services from their respective local Councils. The remaining 552 residents (55.2 percent) were of the view that their local authorities were not providing any services at all. Out those that acknowledged the receipt of services only 72 were satisfied with the services being provided by their local Councils, representing only 7.2 percent of the 1,000 residents. According to information arising from focus group discussions (FGDs) such dissatisfaction levels are not a recent phenomenon but rather a characteristic of the local authority areas over the past many years starting from the late 1980s. The following areas of Council operations are a source of concern for many residents in the three local Council areas:

- erratic water supply (especially in Luwingu)
- poor sanitation
- poor road network
- failure to collect garbage
- inadequate pest control measures
- unkempt burial sites
- poor and/or the lack of streetlights (more so in Luwingu and Choma)
- the lack of transparency and accountability in Council operations
- corruption in Council operations

Various views have been advanced, by the residents of the Council areas in our study, with regard to which factors are perceived to be adversely impacting on the operations of local authorities, either in isolation or in combination.

However, in order to enhance effective and efficient operations organisations, including local authorities, have the challenge of ensuring a proper 'mix' of their resources whether human or material. Paying undue attention to only one or two of these factors or underrating the efficacy of the need for qualified staff, like the case is among Choma residents, may prove to be a serious management error.

It is of paramount importance, and in line with our thesis, to observe that central government policy gives various powers to local authorities, and expects them to enforce the various regulations, irrespective of their position in the hierarchy. The powers to create the desired number of administrative structures and posts, and the regulation requiring an officer in the employment of a local authority to resign before taking up employment in another Council, for example, are applicable to and affect all local authorities whether City, Municipal or District Councils. The inability to recruit senior staff in accordance with the Local Government Service Regulations pertaining to the qualifications of such personnel and/or the difficulties relating to the retention of qualified staff, and the general incapacity of local authorities to effectively compete for qualified man power on the open labour market are issues that affect all the three Councils in the study. The inability of local Councils to procure adequate equipment for facilitating service delivery is a problem that is adversely impacting the capacity of the three local authorities to provide adequate quality services. In view of the above observations we note that the disposition of central government to confer decision-making powers to local Councils and its inability to adequately support local authorities on matters related to personnel and equipment has been applied to and affects all types of local authorities in the hierarchy of local government. Similarly, it has also been noted that in as much as the application of rules and regulations across the board may contribute to standardisation of operations in public institutions, we argue that such application is meant to enhance central oversight and control over the local authorities. We have also noted that central government efforts aimed at enhancing performance in local Councils are largely based on the realisation that Councils countrywide face similar

problems irrespective of their place or position in the hierarchy of local government administration.

The examination of the various issues in the chapter has, among other things, brought out the importance of recruiting qualified staff, staff motivation and training, and procurement of the necessary plant and equipment. However, the importance of these issues implicitly illustrates the need for adequate finances if local authorities are to discharge their functions efficiently and effectively. It is in view of this observation that we examine in the next chapter the various sources of local authority funding and other issues associated with the utilisation and management of financial resources in the local authorities in our study.

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