



VOLUNTARY SUBNATIONAL REVIEW (VSR) REPORT ZIMBABWE



GOVERNMENT OF ZIMBABWE



UCAZ

Zimbabwe Local
Government Association



ARDCZ



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United Cities and Local Governments of Africa
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Table of Contents

Acronyms	iii#
Highlights	iv
1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Methodology for developing the VSR	2
Table 1: Sampled Urban Councils.....	3
Table 2: Sampled Rural Councils by Province	3
3.0 Policies and enabling environment for localisation of the SDGs	4
3.1 National strategies for the implementation and localisation of SDGs	4
Table 3: 'Localisation' of SDGs at national level.....	4
Table 4: Justification of the prioritisation of the 10 goals	5
3.2 National coordination mechanisms	5
Table 5: SDG Clusters and their Ministry Leads.....	6
3.3 Enabling institutional environment for LRG's	6
4.0 Local Actions to localise the SDGs.....	7
4.1 Actions to create local ownership and not leave anyone behind	7
Table 6: Zimbabwean Council structures and the SDG Agenda.....	9
4.2 Mapping local governments efforts to implement the different SDGs	10
Box 1: Examples of SDG-related local government efforts.....	12
Table 7: SDG Prioritisation for Masvingo City Council.....	13
4.3 Progress made in the implementation of the goals and targets	13
Box 2: SDG implementation and results, City of Victoria Falls.....	15
Box 3: SDG implementation and results, City of Harare	15
Box 4: SDG Implementation in other local authorities, City of Bulawayo & Beitbridge Municipality.....	16
4.4 Local COVID19-related actions	16
5.0 Means of SDG implementation.....	18
5.1 Funding of local governments.....	18
5.2 Local generation of SDG-related data.....	20
6.0 Conclusion and recommendations	21
6.1 Conclusion.....	21
6.2 Key recommendations	22

Acronyms

ARDCZ	Association of Rural District Councils of Zimbabwe
CAHF	Centre for African Housing Finance
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
DDF	District Development Fund
DFID	Department for International Development
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoZ	Government of Zimbabwe
HLPF	High-level Political Forum
ICLD	International Centre for Local Democracy
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ITP	International Training Program
km	Kilometre
KRA	Key Result Area
LRGs	Local and Regional Governments
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
n/No.	Number
NDS 1	National Development Strategy 1
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OECD	Organisation for European Cooperation and Development
OPC	Office of the President and Cabinet
%	Percent
PSIP	Public Sector Investment Program
RDCs	Rural District Councils
s301	Section
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SLB	Service Level Benchmarking
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
TSP	Transitional Stabilisation Program
UCAZ	Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
UCLGA	United Cities and Local Governments of Africa
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USD	United States Dollar
VNR	Voluntary National Review
VSR	Voluntary Subnational Review
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
ZEPARU	Zimbabwe Economic Policy Analysis and Research Unit
ZIIP	Zimbabwe Infrastructure Investment Program
ZILGA	Zimbabwe Local Government Association
ZIMASSET	Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation
ZIMSTAT	Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency
ZINARA	Zimbabwe National Road Authority
ZINWA	Zimbabwe National Water Authority
ZWL	Zimbabwe Currency

Highlights

Zimbabwe is a constitutional democracy. Its 2013 Constitution defines three tiers of government, i.e. i) national government, ii) provincial and metropolitan Councils and iii) local authorities that have constitutionally defined responsibilities for delivering to citizens. These responsibilities were recently redefined in the 2013 Constitution. Implementation of the new governance model, particularly the operationalisation of devolved governance in full remains outstanding. In performing their exclusive and concurrent competencies institutions within the three tiers, Zimbabwe's government still operates in a national government-led framework, a centralised system.

This centralisation notwithstanding the country's 92 local governments still performs distinct local governance and service delivery functions. One indicator of the level of centralisation is seen in the delays in systematic engagement with SDG localisation on the part of subnational governments. No clear "localisation" strategy has been defined that involves local and regional governments. Zimbabwe's SDG implementation efforts remain centralised and clear "localization" strategy has not been defined. The national coordination mechanisms are neither linked to nor do they steer subnational localisation. These structures involve national government institutions, UN agencies and other development partners. National macro-economic planning, clear Ministry and Parliamentary oversight structures have been aligned to SDGs since 2015. Yet, ZILGA and the Ministry responsible for local government are still to develop and implement a systematic SDG localisation initiative for local governments.

Local governments have seized on piecemeal opportunities to learn and adapt localisation practices based on external funding or facilitation. This has largely been pilot work. Based on these initiatives rural and urban local authorities have adapted their structures assigning SDG-related functions to key departments. A few have gone as far as designing change projects while a smaller cohort has initiated SDG reporting as is the case with the Cities of Harare and Victoria Falls. The context in Zimbabwe is thus one of limited critical and actionable awareness of the SDG agenda.

What exists are fragmented externally-supported 'orientation-type initiatives' with minimal financial support. However, disbursement of devolution funds has begun plugging in local authority funding gaps. Local funding is limited and cannot address gaps arising from decades of inadequate investment. Local fiscal autonomy and performance remain low. Citizen contributions are limited due to poverty and political disengagement. Consequently, resource flows for SDG implementation are weak. Still more, SDG reporting is yet to be initiated systematically.

The current study established the absence of systematic SDG localisation. Pilot interventions had eager local authority uptake but critically constrained by lack of whole-of-government harmony on SDG implementation. Based on the analysis in this paper, three gaps emerge. These are about i) data and institutional fragmentation, ii) resource limitations, and iii) absence of SDG institutionalisation. To address these strategic gaps, it is important for Zimbabwe to:

Develop and implement a systematic institutional framework for SDG localisation connecting national mechanisms to subnational governments.

Build the capacity of ZILGA and the Ministry responsible for local government to support an SDG localisation program.

Prepare an SDG localisation program to address local level critical awareness gaps in a manner that leaves no one behind.

Amplify SDG localisation as part of framing devolution implementation in Zimbabwe.

Review local authority funding mechanisms to facilitate SDG implementation.

These recommendations require national and local government dialogue to be initiated by the Ministry responsible for local government together with ZILGA using the findings of this study.

Zimbabwe is a constitutional democracy, independent since April 1980 and run by a three-tier government (national, provincial/metropolitan, and local authority). A two-chamber legislative arm of Zimbabwe¹, a Judiciary and Independent Constitutional Commissions² work alongside the Executive in delivering to citizens. The year 2020 estimated population was 14.9 million (Government of Zimbabwe 2020a³) residing in 10 administrative provinces (8 Rural and 2 Metropolitan Provinces⁴), 92⁵ local authorities and 1958 administrative wards represented by elected councillors. Figure 1 shows the administrative units into which Zimbabwe's 390 580 km² are divided.



Figure 1: Zimbabwe Provinces and Districts (Government of Zimbabwe (2020a)).

In terms of rural-urban categorization, the population is 32% urban and 68% rural. The population is relatively young with 40% under 15 years and 5% over 65 years. ⁶ Regarding ethnic origin, Zimbabweans are 99.7% African. National GDP is USD43.2 billion. ⁷

As the principal facilitators of development through policymaking and basic service delivery, national government ministries, state-owned enterprises and local authorities are at the core of SDG implementation. They implement the development agenda in partnership with the UN and international development banks⁸, national and international NGOs, the private sector including the financial services sector and subnational civil society organisations. Over the last two decades, Zimbabwe's fiscal space has been inadequate to effectively support MDG and SDG implementation resulting in gaps. As such,

¹ 350 member strong Upper House with 80 Senators and 270 Lower House with 270 Members, <https://www.parlzim.gov.zw/about-parliament/how-parliament-is-structured>

² These are the Human Rights, Gender, Electoral, Peace and Reconciliation, Media and Anti-Corruption

³ National Development Strategy 1, January 2020 – December 2025, 16th November 2020

⁴ Mashonaland Central, East and West, Manicaland, Matabeleland North and South, Masvingo and Midlands (rural), Harare and Bulawayo (urban)

⁵ 32 Urban Councils (8 cities with Harare being the Capital City, 8 Municipalities, 12 Town Councils and 4 Local Boards) and 60 Rural District Councils

⁶ ZIMSTAT (2017) [Inter-Censal Demographic Survey, 2017](https://www.zimstat.gov.zw/inter-censal-demographic-survey-2017)

⁷ World Bank (2021) <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.PP.CD?locations=ZW>

⁸ Mainly the African Development Bank, the World Bank and the Development Bank of Southern Africa

non-state development actors became more visible than state institutions. Yet, development interventions are not fully expressive of an SDG focus. Part of this is due to the humanitarian situation in which Zimbabwe has been for over two decades. As a result of socio-economic regression, the country faces service backlogs. For instance, the housing shortage is estimated at 1.3 million units⁹, 17% of the population lives as lodgers, potable water coverage reaches 81% while 22% of the population lacks toilet facilities and 68% use wood for cooking energy.¹⁰ In informal settlements, self-provisioning dominates and residents of these spaces can generally be classified as off-grid. The efforts of both national and local governments are more about restoring services that were once more readily available in terms of both reach and quality than expanding access and quality.

It is in this context of 'holding the line' where SDGs¹¹ are being 'implemented'. Since their adoption in 2015 focused on ensuring an inclusive, equitable, prosperous, and sustainable future for all, Zimbabwe is amongst the first countries to adopt the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda as a framework. The country has mainstreamed SDGs into national development plans and reported to the United Nations High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) for the first time in 2017. A 2021 national report was also under preparation at the time of drafting the Voluntary Subnational Report.

This current paper was to enable the Zimbabwe Local Government Association (ZILGA¹²) to contribute to the voluntary national report (VNR). By developing a voluntary subnational review (VSR) ZILGA initiated a consolidation of local experiences with SDG localization. This was part of UCLG's global effort to advocate for democratic local self-government in recognition of the important role local governments play in achieving the 2030 Agenda. VSRs also promote local government and international community cooperation. This makes SDG localisation a political process. This VSR details the experiences of local governments with and contributions to the localisation of SDGs in Zimbabwe. VSRs are not only tools that show a static image of the situation in the country at a given point in time, but also as a tool that fosters more localization action at the local level, that encourages and supports lrgs in this endeavour, in parallel to the different advocacy actions, development of an SDG localization action plan or strategy 2021 Voluntary National Review (VNR).

2.0 Methodology for developing the VSR

UCLG defines localisation of SDGs as:

'...the process of defining, implementing and monitoring strategies at the local level for achieving global, national, and sub-national sustainable development goals and targets' [adding that this involves a] 'process of taking into account sub-national contexts in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, from the setting of goals and targets to determining the means of implementation and using indicators to measure and monitor progress' (2019:16).¹³;

Tan et al see SDG localisation as being about translating the global vision for progressing the conditions of all peoples and the planet adopted in 2015 into local contexts.¹⁴ For its part, UN Women elaborates localisation as the process of adapting development policies, plans and strategies at national and subnational levels to SDG targets.¹⁵ It also involves promoting multi-stakeholder ownership of Agenda 2030, that is framing local contributions based on development actions that respond to local interests (ibid). This conceptualisation was applied by focusing on local authorities that as stated in the introductory section are the third tier of government in Zimbabwe responsible for direct engagement with citizens and delivering critical or basic services.

⁹ Centre for Affordable Housing, CAHF (2020) Africa Finance Yearbook, 2020. Zimbabwe

¹⁰ ZIMSTAT (2017)

¹¹ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a collection of 17 global goals set by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 for the year 2030

¹² The constituent members of ZILGA are the Association of Rural District Councils, ARDCZ and the Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe, UCAZ

¹³ UCLG 2019. Towards the Localisation of SDGs: Local and Regional Governments' Report to the 2019 High-Level Political forum, 3rd Report, Global Task Force on Local and Regional Governments

¹⁴ Tan D T, Siri J G, Gong Y, Ong B, Lim C, MacGillivray B H and Marsden T (2019) Systems approaches for localizing the SDGs: Coproduction of place-based case studies. *Globalisation and Health*, 15:85

¹⁵ Oluoch-Olunya S E, Butegwa F and Abebe J O (2017) Gender-responsive localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals, UN Women. Nairobi

A mixed-methods approach was used to prepare the VSR. This comprised of both qualitative and quantitative approaches of capturing meaningful experiences relevant to accelerating SDG implementation. Insights from policy improvements since the adoption of the 2013 Constitution of Zimbabwe (Government of Zimbabwe 2020b¹⁶; 2019¹⁷; 2013¹⁸) were also integrated into the analysis. Conversations relating to devolution implementation were also a key focus given the importance of 'means of implementing SDGs' in this analysis. The VSR preparation also paid particular attention to the following:

1. The national context for SDG implementation especially localisation.
2. Comparative awareness of the SDGs at the central and local government level.
3. The presence of SDG agendas in different local authorities.
4. The nature of local government initiatives (policies, plans, structures, laws) in place.
5. Programs implemented at the local government level.
6. Effectiveness of the initiatives and programmes in meeting their objectives as well as SDGs.
7. COVID19 responses and recovery planning at the local level; and,
8. Existing systems of monitoring and evaluating progress towards SDGs at the local level.

Primary data gathering covered a 25% sample of local governments (15 Rural District Councils and 8 Urban Councils). The actual selection of the 23 local authorities was based on a mixture of criteria in consultation with ZILGA. The criteria included a focus on i) experience with SDG localisation, ii) regional distribution within the country, iii) the type of Councils, and iv) poverty-related indices relevant to SDG progress measurement. These criteria helped ensure that different categories of urban and rural local governments were part of the sample. Table 1 shows the sampled local governments.

Table 1: Sampled Urban Councils

1. Cities	2. Municipalities	3. Town Councils	4. Local Boards
Bulawayo	Beitbridge	Chipinge	Epworth
Victoria Falls	Redcliff	Zvishavane	Ruwa
Mutare			
3 (all submitted)	2 (both submitted)	2 (1 submitted)	2 (both didn't submit)

Table 2: Sampled Rural Councils by Province

Manicaland	Mash. Central	Mash. East	Mash. West	Masvingo	Mat. North	Mat. South	Midlands
Buhera	Bindura	Chikomba	Chegutu	Bikita	Binga	Beitbridge	Zibagwe
Nyanga	Rushinga	Uzumba	Zvimba	Zaka	Umguza	Umzingwane	
2 (both submitted)	2 (non-submission)	2 (both submitted)	2 (Zvimba submitted)	2 (Zaka submitted)	2 (both submitted)	2 (both submitted)	1 (submitted)

Besides the 23 sampled Councils all other local governments were involved by being members of ZILGA. Mutare City Council, a non-sample local authority submitted a completed questionnaire. In addition, detailed experiences were drawn from Victoria Falls and Harare, the first two Councils to develop VLRs with support from the UN's Economic Commission for Africa and the Ministry responsible for local government. These reports were among the first in Africa with the others being from Kenya (4 counties), followed by Cameroon (Yaounde), Ghana (Accra), Rwanda (Ngora District) and South Africa (Cape Town). The Ministry responsible for local government and the Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe shared copies of the two cities' first VLRs as part of the literature review. Additionally, the Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD) shared materials on change projects implemented by Zimbabwean local authorities involved in their International Training Program. Working in collaboration with ZILGA staff the research team was also able to mobilise Provincial Forums of Chief Executive Officers of rural local authorities to share their intergovernmental fiscal transfer experiences.

¹⁶ Government of Zimbabwe (2020b) Devolution and Decentralisation Policy

¹⁷ Government of Zimbabwe (2019) Presidential Policy Guidelines on the Zimbabwe Devolution and Decentralisation of Governance and Economic Development to Provincial Councils and Local Authorities

¹⁸ Constitution of Zimbabwe (Amendment) No. 20

Questionnaires were sent out to local authorities, 6 of 9 Urban Councils (66.7%) returned completed questionnaires while 10 of 15 Rural District Councils (66.7%) did. The return rate was 66.7% (16 of 24). Overall, the 16 Councils represented 17.3% of the 92 local authorities being 16.7% for rural (n=60) and 18.7% for urban (n=32). The return rate was possible through follow-ups by the research team, the Associations, and the Ministry responsible for local government.

The gathering of Council-specific data was done after a review of available literature on the role of Zimbabwean local governments in the articulation and implementation of global agendas. Data collection involved i) administering an Institutional Questionnaire adapted from the UCLG survey tool, ii) conducting Key Informant Interviews, and iii) reviewing of secondary literature. The tools for these research activities were detailed in consultation with ZILGA and UCLG. Participation in three UCLG-run webinars¹⁹ also provided considerable learning relevant to the VSR process. Experiences of agencies like the UNDP and SNV during the MDG era was also reviewed. Additionally, insights were also drawn from the VNR process that consolidated information from national government ministries and departments, donor agencies, relevant UN agencies, local and international NGOs, the private sector, and Universities. A draft VNR was shared for review and input. This was part of a collaborative arrangement initiated through the submission of preliminary input to the VNR by the VSR research team earlier in the process.

3.0 Policies and enabling environment for localisation of the SDGs

3.1 National strategies for the implementation and localisation of SDGs

Zimbabwe has aligned SDGs (and MDGs before) into development policies and plans. Macroeconomic policies for 2013-2018 (ZIMASSET), 2018-2020 (TSP) and 2021-2025 (NDS 1, 2021 to 2025) speak to the implementation and achievement of SDGs. The National Monitoring and Evaluation Policy²⁰ highlights that SDGs form part of the regional and international prioritised commitments to be monitored. ZIMASSET focused on inclusive growth and was adapted in 2015 to mainstream SDGs. Its policy's clusters were aligned to SDGs (see Table 3). TSP was developed to prepare for pursuing Agenda 2030 through National Development Strategies I and II. NDS I integrate the African Union Agenda 2063 and SDGs. Zimbabwe's Vision 2030 of an Upper Middle-Income society is based on sustainable economic growth, socio-economic transformation and overall development.

Table 3: 'Localisation' of SDGs at national level

ZIMASSET Cluster	Corresponding SDGs
1. Value Addition and Beneficiation	Goals 1,2,5,8,9 and 12
2. Food Security and Nutrition	Goals 1,2,5,8,13,14 and 15
3. Infrastructure and Utilities	Goals 1,5,6,7,9 and 11
4. Social Services and Poverty Reduction	Goals 3,4,6 and 10
5. Fiscal Reform measures	Goals 8,10 and 17
6. Public Administration and Governance	Goals 5,7,8,10, 11 and 16

While Zimbabwe has committed to implement all 17 SDGs and 169 targets priority is on ten (10) SDGs. These are SDGs 2 to 9, 13 and 17.²¹ The selection of the 10 goals was influenced by the unfinished MDG issues.^{22; 23} Table 4 presents the justification for the selection of Zimbabwe's 10 priority SDGs.

¹⁹ These were held on March 12th, April 22nd and May 25th 2021

²⁰ Government of Zimbabwe (2020) National Monitoring and Evaluation Policy, 2020

²¹ Government of Zimbabwe (2017) Zimbabwe Voluntary National Review (VNR) of SDGs for the High-Level Political Forum

²² Sibanda D M (2016) Zimbabwe Position Paper on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Ministry for Macro-Economic Planning and Investment Promotion; Zimbabwe Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): 2000-2015 Final Progress Report, Ministry of Macroeconomic Planning, and Investment Promotion

²³ Government of Zimbabwe and United Nations (2015) Zimbabwe Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): 2000-2015 Final Progress Report, Ministry of Macroeconomic Planning and Investment Promotion

Table 4: Justification of the prioritisation of the 10 goals

Goal	Justification
SDG 2 - Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition	Zimbabwe has an agro-based economy. As such, sustainable agriculture was considered as key in meeting the socio-economic development of the country.
SDG 3 – Health	This goal was prioritised because health is key in improving labour productivity and hence economic growth
SDG 4 – Education	This goal was prioritised because quality education is key in imparting the necessary skills required in all sectors of the economy and enhancing labour productivity
SDG 5 – Gender and women empowerment	Economic Empowerment of women and girls is imperative for them to participate in all sectors of the economy.
SDG 6- Water and sanitation	Zimbabwe acknowledges the importance of water in supporting all sectors of the economy. The focus has been given to this goal because no sector can function without water.
SDG 7 – Energy	Zimbabwe recognises that energy is critical for all sectors of the economy to be fully functional and productive.
SDG 8 – Economic growth	Zimbabwe seeks to improve its economic performance as was seen in the ZIMASSET economic blueprint, TSP and currently in the NDS1. As such, sustained economic growth is important for wealth creation that can be channelled to the social sectors, create economic opportunities for citizens to go into business or to become gainfully employed.
SDG 9 – Infrastructure	Previous development plans such as ZIMASSET, TSP and ten-point plan acknowledged the importance of infrastructure, innovation and industrialisation. As such, resilient infrastructure has been prioritised because of the importance of infrastructure to development.
SDG 13 - Combating Climate Change	Combating climate change and its negative impact on the environment is important to improve the performance of key sectors such as Agriculture.
SDG 17 - Revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development	The country outrightly acknowledgement that domestically mobilised resources will not be enough to finance the SDG Agenda. As such, means of implementation and Revitalised Global Partnerships are key in the implementation of the agenda. Financing will require much more players than Government alone.

3.2 National coordination mechanisms

Zimbabwe's institutional framework for SDG implementation comprises a Cabinet Steering Committee, a Technical Committee, and an SDG Secretariat. The Cabinet Committee is chaired by the state President. It considers and approves all policies and reports from the Steering Committee that include the SDG Annual Country Report.²⁴ As shown in Table 5, some ministries have a leadership role concerning specific SDGs. Besides the Cabinet Committee, other structures are as follows:

A **Steering Committee**, chaired by the Chief Secretary to the Office of President and Cabinet. Permanent Secretaries and the heads of the UN agencies are represented in the Committee that provides overall guidance and strategic leadership on SDG policy work.

A **Technical Committee** chaired by the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry responsible for social welfare with its members being Ministry SDG focal persons and representatives from UN agencies, development partners, the private sector, civil society and the Office of the President and Cabinet. The Committee coordinates SDG technical processes including back-stopping implementation.

Thematic clusters. There are three Clusters (Table 5) involving key line Ministries, CSOs, the private sector and other stakeholders leading the implementation of SDG-targeted programs and projects. Cluster members meet quarterly and submit progress reports to the Technical Committee.

²⁴ Chakanya N (2017) Zimbabwe's civil society discuss progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. The Labour and Economic Development Research institute of Zimbabwe (LEDRIZ), <https://www.ituc-csi.org/Zimbabwe-SDGs-CSO-VNRs-follow-up>

Table 5: SDG Clusters and their Ministry Leads

SDG Cluster No.	Chairing/Lead Ministry	SDG Numbers	No. of SDGs in Cluster
1	Ministry of Public Service	1, 4, 5, 8, 16 & 17	6
2	Ministry of Health	3, 6 and 10 to 12	5
3	Ministry of Lands	2, 7, 9 and 13 to 15	6
Totals 3	3	17	17

Besides Committees of the executive branch, Zimbabwe’s legislature also has a Thematic Committee on SDGs. It offers guidance on and receives input necessary for the creation of enabling legislation, resource appropriation, performing Parliament’s oversight and monitoring roles.²⁵ The Committee has all Parliamentary Portfolio chairpersons. ZIMSTAT is responsible for SDG related data collection, analysis and results publishing i.e. coordinates the National Statistical System in measuring progress towards SDGs.²⁶ Institutional arrangements for SDG implementation and evaluation have faced challenges emanating from COVID19. Inadequate infrastructure resulted in the reduction of SDG cluster meetings for coordination purposes.²⁷ Overall, the coordination mechanisms do not yet integrate local governments. The Ministry responsible for local government is yet to develop a system to support localisation.

3.3 Enabling institutional environment for LRG’s

National government support to local governments is through the Ministries leading on specific SDGs. The Ministry responsible for local government helps coordinate this intergovernmental work through its staff at the provincial/metropolitan and local authority levels. The Ministry’s Development Coordinators aid inter-governmental cooperation between national government bodies and local authorities. The key challenge however, is that the national SDG-focused structures discussed above are inadequately connected with local authorities. Key instruments being used to strengthen localisation include program-based budgeting, inter-governmental fiscal transfers, and sector Ministry leadership on specific SDGs.

The 2013 Constitution of Zimbabwe recognises the three tiers of government. The two subnational levels are expected to be progressively empowered to deliver good governance and basic services. Presidential Policy Guidelines in 2019²⁸ and a Policy in 2020²⁹ have signalled the most visible progress regarding the implementation of devolution in Zimbabwe.³⁰ The Inter-Ministerial Taskforce on Alignment of Legislation to the Constitution³¹ observed that the Provincial Councils and Administration Bill was approved by Cabinet and gazetted on March 31st 2021. A legal drafting workshop to finalise the alignment of the Urban and Rural District Councils Acts to the Constitution took place in March 2021. The Ministry responsible for local government, representatives of Municipalities, Residents Associations and other civil society organisations were represented.

There are still issues with the form and content of devolution.³² Gaps have been noted regarding local authorities’ fiscal autonomy, political empowerment, spatial planning authority, development planning leadership and administrative autonomy within their areas. These gaps constrain the participation of local and regional governments in SDG-related functions decelerating progress towards Agenda 2030. One of the analyses acknowledges the emerging positives regarding devolution. They however, note issues regarding the national government’s domination of the institutional arrangements for designing and delivering a devolved governance system as well as lack of clarity on capacity building of

²⁵ Government of Zimbabwe (2017) VNR Report

²⁶ <https://unstats.un.org/capacity-development/UNSD-FCDO/zimbabwe/>

²⁷ Matsinde, G. 2021. Communicating Data in VNRs and Engaging Data Users. User Engagement Strategy for Zimbabwe.

²⁸ Government of Zimbabwe (2019) Presidential Policy Guidelines on the Zimbabwe Devolution and Decentralisation of Governance and Economic Development to Provincial Councils and Local Authorities

²⁹ Government of Zimbabwe (2020) Devolution and Decentralisation Policy

³⁰ Chatiza K and Zivhave M (2020) The Zimbabwe Devolution and Decentralisation Policy: An Appreciative Analysis, CHRA, WLSA and DGI

³¹ The Inter-Ministerial Taskforce on the Alignment of Legislation to the Constitution Quarterly Brief, January – March 2021

³² ZILGA (2021) An Articulation of the Voice of Organised Local Authorities on Devolution: A Discussion Document

subnational governments. These issues constrain the kind of intergovernmental cooperation needed for effective SDG localisation.

The leadership of the Ministry responsible for local government (in close liaison with the national lead Ministry on SDG's as well as the Ministry responsible for treasury) is critical for tracking financing of SDGs and actual local delivery. More analytical work is critically needed in this area. Yet as noted above the coordination mechanisms are still to be connected with the subnational government making joint analysis, let alone the development of appropriate indicators a distant expectation. This is also a proxy indicator of strategic gaps in devolution implementation despite early progress up to 1996 when 13 principles of decentralisation were adopted but not seen through in terms of implementation. The delays in enacting local government laws aligned to the 2013 Constitution has also delayed the kind of local government empowerment critical for SDG localisation.

The widely acknowledged governance and development roles of local authorities are insufficiently enabled in Zimbabwe. The SDG implementation agenda is primarily driven from and by the national government with LRGs generally fending for themselves in terms of the work they do to meet the development needs of their residents. As such, the activities, approaches and progress at the local level relevant to the achievement of SDGs are not yet fully defined in Zimbabwe.³³ The realisation that Decentralisation by Devolution is important for faster, efficient and effective responses to challenges of public service delivery, development, democracy is yet to be operationalised.³⁴

Through decentralised functions, the subnational authorities are responsible for managing local affairs as guided by national development objectives. This enhances sustainable, representative, accountable, participatory, inclusive governance and socio-economic development. Provincial and metropolitan governments are responsible for social and economic development, the coordination and implementation of government programs, environmental protection and promotion of tourism.³⁵ Urban and rural local authorities manage the local affairs of urban and rural residents. Subnational governments share responsibilities with the national level including road traffic control, public transport, environmental protection, water distribution, housing, healthcare services, education and social welfare.³⁶ The financing mechanisms for these sectors are yet to be fully devolved. The implications are that local government financing remains inadequate for the strategic roles they perform generally and SDG implementation specifically. The VSR returns to this important issue in section 5.

4.0 Local Actions to localise the SDGs

This section looks at the actions being taken at the local level towards SDG localisation. It includes policies, actions, and support from state and non-state actors. The challenges and opportunities for SDG localisation are also highlighted. The discussion draws on the results of the inquiry into SDG localisation using a questionnaire. Results show that there are a few examples of focused SDG localisation within Councils. Most of these are also based on participation in externally-supported SDG-focused training. The Ministry responsible for local government and the Associations have not done enough to prepare and deliver initiatives that steer SDG localisation in terms of implementation and reporting.

4.1 Actions to create local ownership and not leave anyone behind

The adoption of SDGs came at a time when Zimbabwe's local government was focused on actualising constitutional provisions on devolution. The political context was one of subdued optimism given that one and half years had lapsed without adequate progress being made. Centralised development planning seemed to continue justified on the lack of adequate fiscal space. In this context, the importance of SDG awareness did not inform the work of key agencies. The opportunity to organise to

³³ Oosterhof, P.D., 2018. Localizing the sustainable development goals to accelerate implementation of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

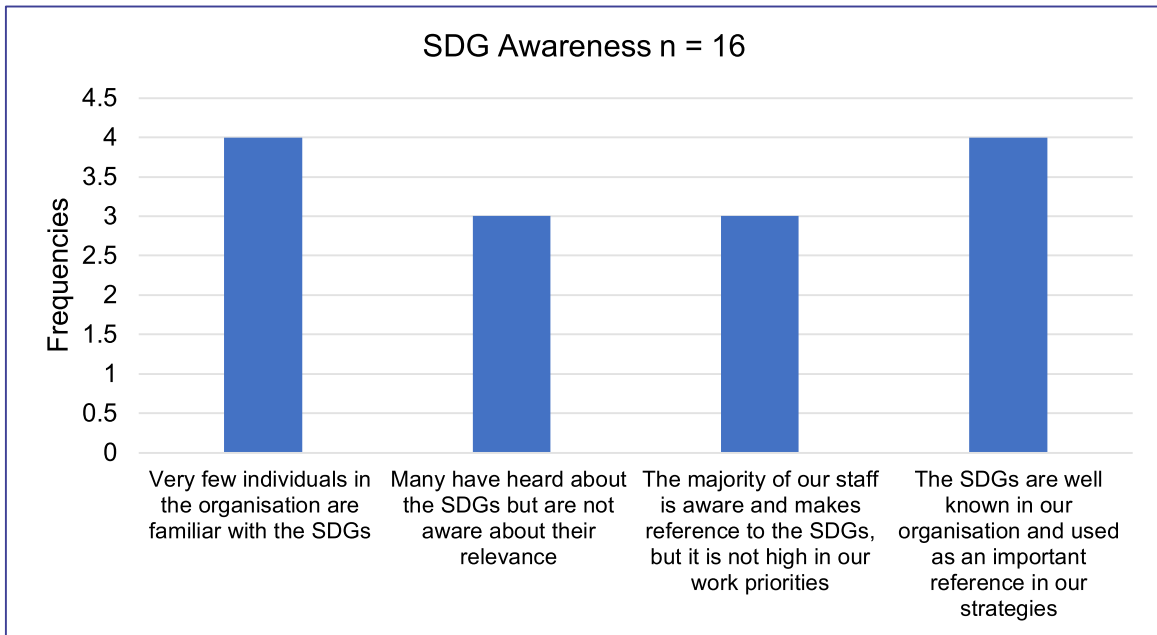
³⁴ Government of Zimbabwe (2020) Devolution and Decentralisation Policy

³⁵ Government of Zimbabwe (2013) Constitution of Zimbabwe, Amendment No. 20

³⁶ Zimbabwe: Unitary Country, Basic Information <https://www.sng-wofi.org/country-profiles/Fiche%20ZIMBABWE.pdf>

prioritise the SDGs at all was missed. This explains low levels of critical SDG awareness and prioritisation at 27% of the local authorities reducing capacity for effective SDG localisation.

Figure 2: SDG awareness in Local authorities



Source Survey (April 2021)

Low SDG awareness was attributed to national processes and structures for SDG implementation without adequate local authority representation. This shows why there are limited activities to raise awareness and disseminate SDGs among the population. Less than 30% of the local authorities that took part in the study conduct SDG outreach campaigns. About a fifth had strong outreach activities or SDG awareness campaigns. Further, Councils are yet to develop and implement SDG-aligned policies. None adopted formal commitments on the 2030 Agenda. There is no rural-urban difference confirming the absence of a systematic national commitment towards SDG localisation. SDGs are indirectly being implemented through day-to-day service delivery activities such as WASH.

The level of SDG awareness, prioritisation and implementation remains low. Scope to deepen citizen participation around local program-based budgets drawing on local development plans is being explored with devolution funds making this possible. Where the plans are prepared with stakeholder involvement inclusive local development becomes possible. Greater citizen involvement in SDG implementation by local authorities allows provision of targeted services in sectors like health, housing and social protection especially as investments are being prioritised in WASH, health and education, road rehabilitation and market infrastructure. It is therefore critical for government and key development partners to address this local awareness and practical SDG implementation gap. At the same time, it is critical to unlock access to and better-coordinated development finance by local authorities

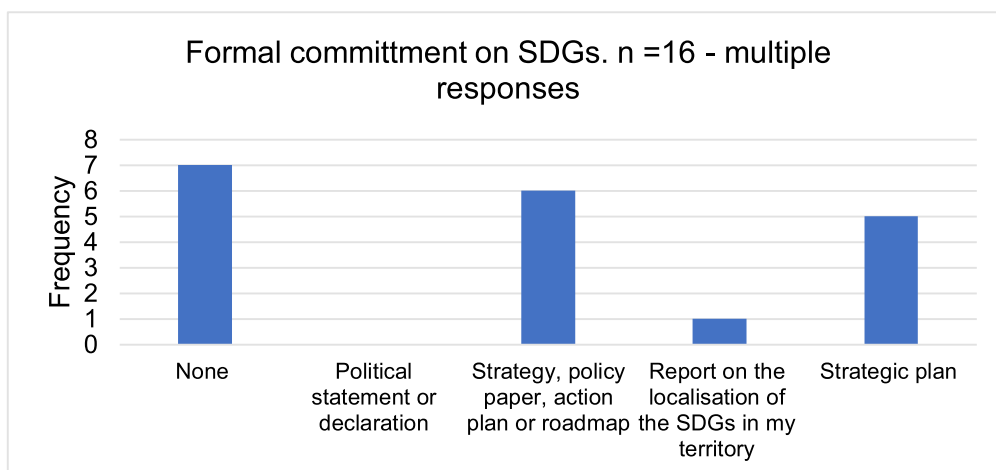


Figure 3: Formal commitment towards SDG implementation, Survey (April 2021).

ZILGA's recent commitment to the localisation process can be built on. Its constituent associations for urban and rural local authorities have dedicated themselves to advocate for and disseminate relevant SDG localisation information to their members. Further, this is important as it is occurring at a time where national government through the Ministry responsible for local government is also keen on the VLR/VSR process. Lessons from the experiences of Harare and Victoria Falls, alongside other cases, shared in the next sub-section (see Boxes 1 to 4) also provide a sound basis for systematic localisation.

Besides specific project and 'everyday' service delivery activities, a few local authorities have established SDG-specific policies and resource allocation mechanisms. However, these innovations are not yet widespread and not formally supported by the national government. In general, it is fair to assert that Zimbabwe's local authorities are aware of the SDG framework. They have different departments and sections tasked with different SDG responsibilities. These departments implement SDG related activities without necessarily stating let alone reporting them as such. Councils (policy makers and employees) recognise that '...the 17 SDGs encompass all the work of a local authority and should thereby be used as a basis for planning'.³⁷ For instance, the City of Victoria Falls (2020³⁸) made this realisation in 2016 and prepared a five-year sustainable development framework (2018 to 2022) that was aligned to SDGs and was developed in a participatory manner. The Local Authority also developed the first VLR in Zimbabwe. Several local authorities have also identified departmental *leadership*³⁹ of SDG-aligned key result areas (KRA's). These structures are a clear means of ensuring SDG implementation as the budget and policy-making processes of Councils that have adopted them find it easy to integrate SDGs in their work.

Table 6: Zimbabwean Council structures and the SDG Agenda

City of Victoria Falls	Bindura Rural District Council
1. Infrastructure development Key Result Area (KRA) is the responsibility of <i>Engineering</i> , Finance, Housing and Central Administration (Council Departments) and aids attainment of SDG's 6, 7, 9 and 11	1. Spatial planning and infrastructure and infrastructure development (KRA) is led by Technical Services and Environment to achieve SDG's 6, 7, 9 and 11
2. Social service delivery (KRA) is steered by <i>Housing</i> , Finance, Engineering and Central Administration and focuses on SDGs 1, 3 to 6 and 10	2. Sound local governance (KRA) is steered by Administration, Finance and Audit to achieve SDGs 5, 10 and 11, 16 and 17
3. Environmental management (KRA) is led by <i>Housing</i> , Central Admin, Engineering and Finance with a focus on SDGs 13 to 15	3. Environmental management (KRA) is the responsibility of Technical Services and Environment with a remit over SDGs 6-7, 9, 11 to 15
4. Corporate governance (KRA) is the responsibility of Central Admin and Finance and aids SDG 16 attainment	4. The Social Services KRA is the mandate of Administration and Community Services with SDG responsibility is over Goals 1 to 5, 8 and 11

Source: Victoria Falls (2020) and Bindura RDC (2020)⁴⁰

³⁷ Guta F and Dube T (2020) Presentation prepared under the ICLD International Training Program (ITP), Manyame Rural District Council-Zimbabwe, 19 October 2020

³⁸ Voluntary Local Review Report

³⁹ The table shows the lead department in italics

⁴⁰ Presentation prepared under the ICLD International Training Program (ITP), 19 October 2020

The Zimbabwe Local Government Association (ZILGA) and its constituent members of ARDCZ and UCAZ have not provided structured SDG localisation support to local governments on SDG localisation. The Ministry responsible for local government had also not instituted a formal localisation program at the time of concluding the study. On their part, local governments have had a limited internally-driven process to raise the awareness necessary for directly implementing and reporting on the SDGs. That civil society and ZILGA-led advocacy and lobbying activities with the national government have focused on devolution implementation has however helped prepare the ground for localisation.

Local authority staff forums that are steered by the Associations are a critical space for sharing ideas and good practices leading to the use of appropriate citizen engagement processes as well as designing relevant initiatives. This also allows greater private sector involvement. The latter is critical to bridge existing financing gaps in terms of SDG financing. Good local policies, enhanced Council leadership of development and practical actions taken by Councils can leverage sustainable private sector participation. Overall attention to increasing public awareness, knowledge and perceptions of SDGs is necessary. This will help to empower citizens to take positive actions in their local communities.

The study findings show that full integration of SDG-thinking into local authority development plans and strategies in Zimbabwe is progressing but remains inadequate. Evidence suggests that it will work best where structures⁴¹ like ward committees and policies⁴² including budgets are SDG-aligned. This makes SDG localisation ‘the way local government business is done. At present, the national and local systems are not properly aligned with subnational SDG-related reporting not established.

4.2 Mapping local governments efforts to implement the different SDGs

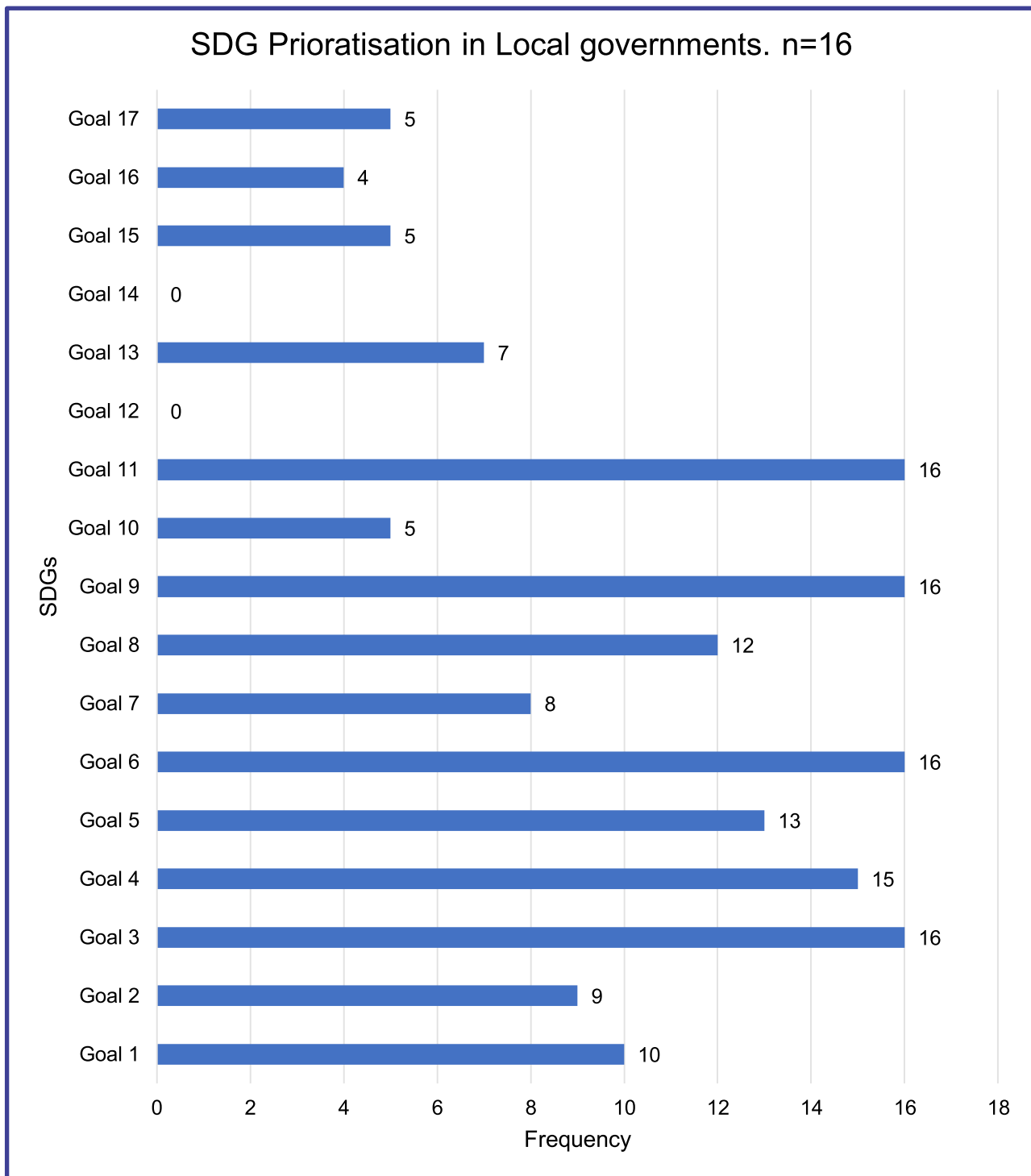
Most of Zimbabwe’s local authorities are not deliberately using the SDG language let alone the targets to inform as well as report on their regular work. The efforts of Harare and Victoria Falls in producing the first VLR’s shows the delays in the actual implementation of SDG localisation in Zimbabwe. As such, only 2 of 92 local authorities (or 2.2%) have been involved in tracking and reporting on SDGs since the adoption of Agenda 2030 in 2015. The study results show that one local authority participated in the SDG reporting (Victoria Falls). Of the 16 local authorities that responded to the questionnaire, 5 (33.3%) had specific SDG strategies, policies and action plans. As such, only a third of the local authorities demonstrated a high commitment to SDG localisation.

To be fair though, local governments in Zimbabwe have been implementing SDGs (and MDGs before) as part of their regular work. This has proceeded from a relatively low base arising from Zimbabwe’s socio-economic regression since the turn of the 2000s. Figure 4 shows local authorities’ choices of priority SDGs. All 16 indicated Goals 3, 4, 6 and 11 followed by 5 where 13 local authorities consider this SDG as a priority. 12 showed that Goals 8 and 9 were a priority. The other SDGs are considered national priority, SDG 11 is missing from the national top 10 priority list. As such, there is no general overlap between the two levels of government.

⁴¹ Harare and other local authority Ward Development Committees play a key role in this respect. They need capacity that can be built by rolling out models like ICLD’s

⁴² The City of Harare came up with a Stakeholder Policy that provides a platform to enable effective stakeholder participation, involvement and partnership in all decision-making processes. Further, the Budgetary Advisory Committee provide a platform for regular feedback meetings between the Council and the residents.

Figure 4: Local authority priority SDGs,



Source Survey,(April 2021).

Box 1 shows other examples of local government efforts relevant to SDG localisation.

Box 1: Examples of SDG-related local government efforts

UNDP and UNICEF are cooperating with the Government of Zimbabwe on an Urban Resilience Program Government. Under the project, a study on the relevance of Municipal Bylaws to resilience was conducted leading to the development of a participatory model for by-law making and implementation. Gwanda and Chipinge have reviewed their local economic and environmental by-laws to enhance resilience under this initiative.

Since 2015, the Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD) has supported 102 local government policymakers and staff on 18-month International Training Programs (ITP) that have used the SDG framework. Participants on that program have implemented SDG-aligned change projects. These include:

SDG awareness amongst Councillors, staff and communities including the elderly in Goromonzi RDC that helped improve civic participation around sustainable solid waste management and climate action. Agriculture, environmental management and conservation by-laws have since been reviewed, and policies on anti-littering, climate change and vendors/hawkers enacted.

In Ruwa Town ITP participants, focusing on SDGs 1 to 3, 5, 7 and 8, 10 and 11, 13-15 and 17 steered construction of waste transfer stations to reduce littering, empower young people and other vulnerable groups resulting in changed community behaviour, increased participation of residents (including private companies) and a higher uptake of recycling in the town.

A Bulawayo City Councillor for ward 17 initiated youth empowerment programs targeting 2500 youths to reduce substance abuse and gender-based violence that has now expanded to four other wards and is being consolidated in Council policy

Bindura RDC officials on the program tackled SDGs 1, 2, 5 and 13 to boost livelihoods and address adverse effects of climate change by influencing the Council's budget resulting in the establishment of a weir and a community nutrition garden as well as adjustment to relevant by-laws

An ITP participant from Chiredzi RDC focused Council's attention on waste to energy to achieve SDGs 6 to 8 and 13 to 15 in a COVID19-linked initiative to address the handling of medical waste.

The Chief Executive Officer and Ward 20 Councillor for Manyame RDC initiated a footbridge access project to enable a farm community to access health, education and economic development services in pursuit of relevant SDGs, and

ITP participants from Beitbridge Town (SDG 11), Makoni RDC (SDG 7) and Umguza (SDG 4) also demonstrated their practical application of SDG frameworks in ways confirming SDG-related work.

Sources: Chatiza,K (2020)

The responding local authorities reported using Council Strategic Plans to localise SDGs. For instance, Masvingo City's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan specifically mentions efforts to implement the SDGs (see Table 7). These are linked to key result areas highlighted in the strategic plan: Infrastructure Development, Social Services provision, Good Corporate Governance, Investment Promotion, and Environmental Management Services. Table 7 presents the specific projects that are aligned with the SDGs.

⁴³ Email sharing of PowerPoint Presentations made by ITP Alumni, March 9th, 2021, Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy

⁴⁴ Chatiza K (2020) The state of by-laws and their contributions to urban resilience in Zimbabwe, Government of Zimbabwe, UNDP, UNICEF

Table 7: SDG Prioritisation for Masvingo City Council⁴⁵

Priority SDG	Content of the SDG	Projects Implemented to achieve the SDGs
2	ZERO Hunger	Social Safety nets: construction of markets, a flea market, fruits and vegetable market and firewood markets (Garikai markets)
3	Ensure Health lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	Free health care for 0-5 years and over 65 years.
5	Gender Equality	A gender policy is available as well as the gender focal person.
6	Clean water and sanitation	Borehole drilling in Chesvingo reticulated into the water supply system
7	Affordable clean energy	Traffic lights have been installed with solar along Robert Mugabe way.
8	Decent work and economic growth	Promotion of local economic development through allocations of commercial stands and trading spaces
9	Industry Innovation and Infrastructure	Road rehabilitation in all Masvingo City primary roads.
10	Reduce Inequality	Council Recruitment policy: equal opportunities by an employer. Housing policy covering equal access to stands and no disposal of residential properties without spouse's consent.
11	Sustainable City and communities	Regular refuse collection, water supply and road network.

The responsibilities for SDG implementation rests on several departments in a scattered and non-coordinated way (See Figure 5). Only one local authority highlighted that SDG coordination is at the highest level of decision-making. This suggests SDG implementation in local authorities is less prioritised. The absence of specific sections deliberately established to coordinate SDG implementation means that monitoring and evaluation of SDG implementation are difficult partly explaining the weak SDG awareness across local authorities.

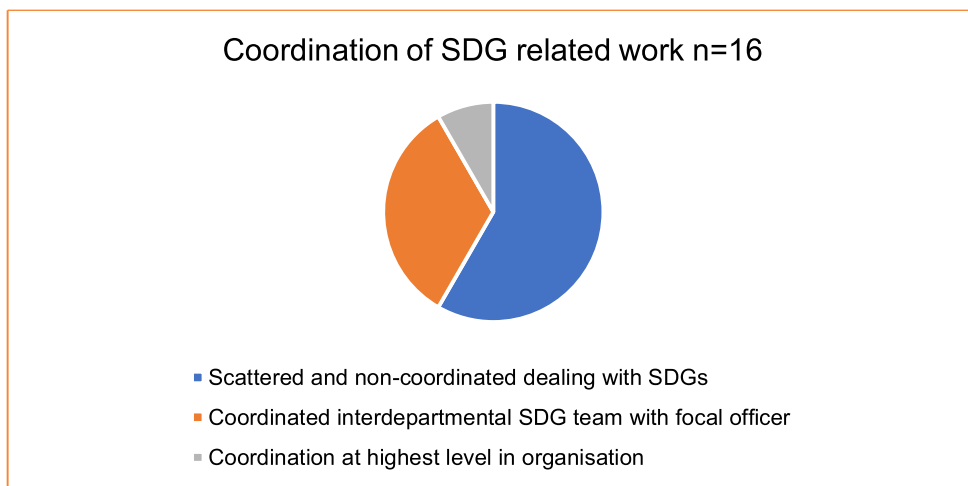


Figure 5: SDG and institutional coordination, Survey (April 2021)

4.3 Progress made in the implementation of the goals and targets

The lack of adequately coordinated SDG localisation arises from inadequate national government support to subnational governments. As such, Zimbabwe’s local authorities passively participate in SDG implementation. The study found gaps in the measurement of SDG-related results at a local level as well as making meaningful contributions to national reporting.

⁴⁵ Masvingo City Strategic Plan 2019 - 2023

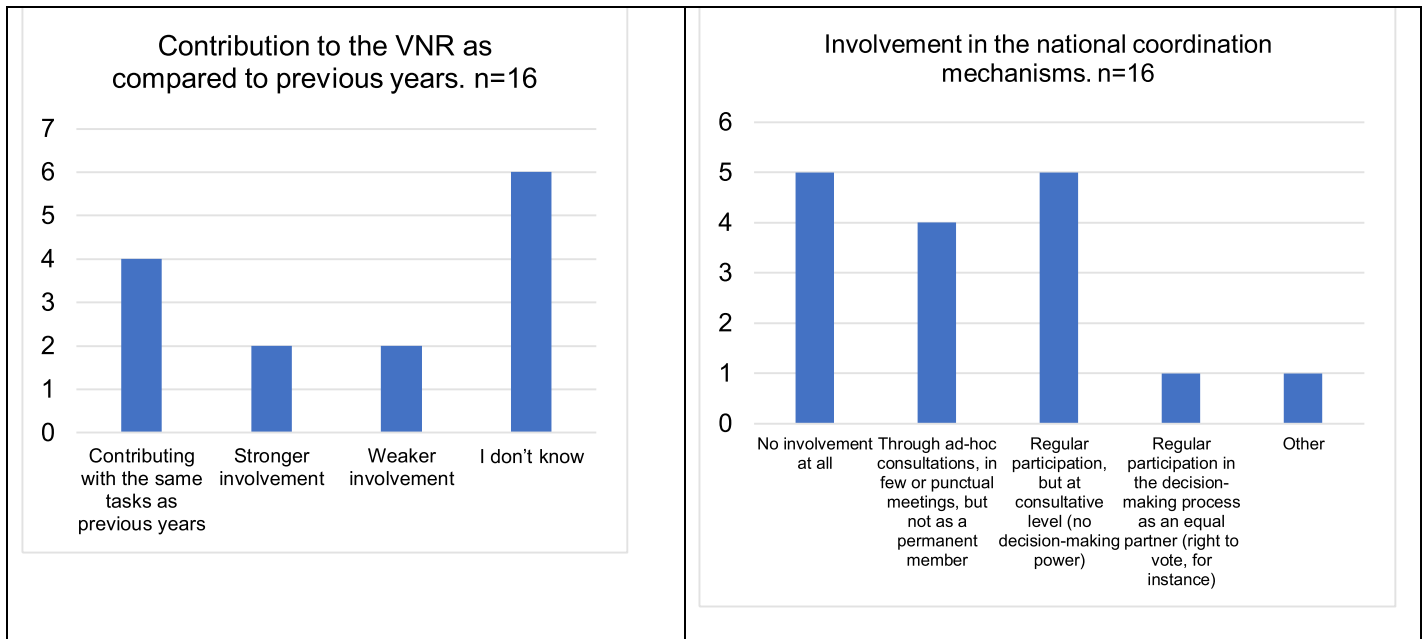


Figure 6: National and local government coordination on SDG implementation, Survey (April 2021).

Monitoring of SDG related activities has not changed much from the MDG era. Local authorities are not yet actively involved. The exception is the cases of Harare and the City of Victoria Falls whose 2020 VSR provide yardsticks on the status of specific SDG's. All other local authorities end at reporting on SDG-aligned activities and organisations structures without commenting on whether their work is aiding achievement as measured based on national indicators or ones they define. Similarly, activities supported by development partners acknowledge in a generalised manner the contributions being made to specific SDGs but performance is not measured and reported in terms of SDG attainment.

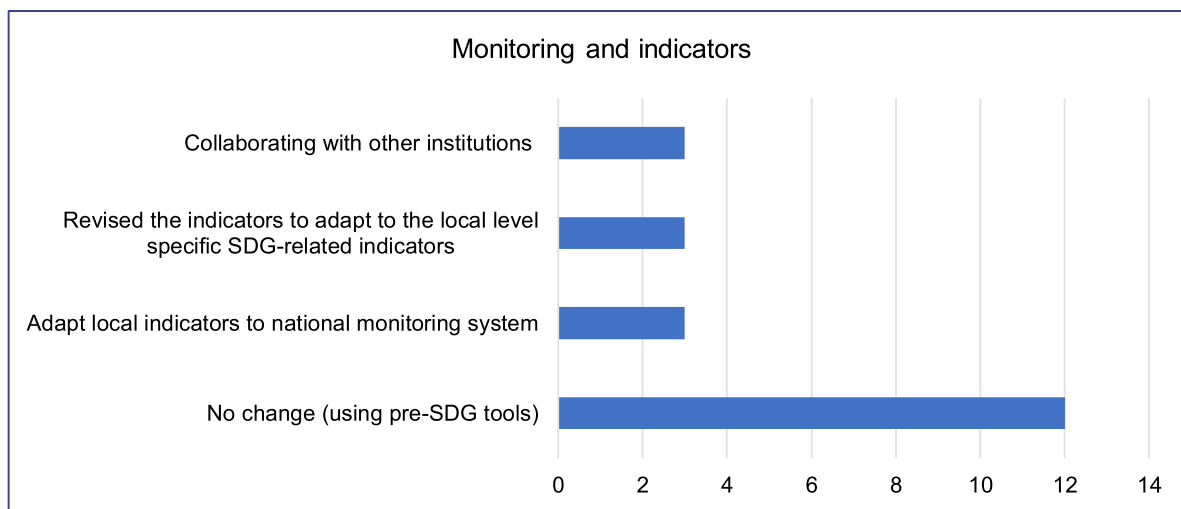


Figure 7: SDG monitoring, Survey (April 2021).

SDG adoption, implementation and reporting are primarily national processes as shown by 13 (86.7%) of the Councils. The gaps notwithstanding the 2020 VLR's by Harare and Victoria Falls show progress in SDG implementation and achievement of relevant targets. Box 2 summarises examples from these and other local authorities. This adds to the examples Box 1 that show the efforts currently not being measured in terms of contributions to SDG attainment.

Box 2: SDG implementation and results, City of Victoria Falls

Victoria Falls priority SDGs are⁴⁶ 1 to 6, 11, 13 and 15. This choice was made following an environmental scan. The city's Voluntary Review details the city's focus on providing efficient, effective, accessible and affordable services sustainably⁴⁷. Efforts by the city include providing safe workplaces for mainly female traders to address poverty, formalising the informal sector and increasing access to safe drinking water.

Maternal health improvements have seen 90.1% of deliveries being attended by skilled staff while HIV and AIDS-focused work has seen the number per 1000 population of those testing positive dropping from 752 to 448 between 2015 and 2019 with youth employment falling from 9.5% to 3.5%. Between 2015 and 2019, malnutrition rates dropped from 6.7% to 2.6% while poverty dropped from 18.4% to 12.8% by 2017. The number of mothers attended to by qualified personnel mostly at Council facilities increased from 86.7% in 2015 to 90.1% in 2019, while mothers receiving antenatal assessments rose from 75.9% to 95.7% between 2015 and 2016 following Council-supported awareness campaigns. The numbers have continued to rise as Council has continued with its awareness programs complemented by improved service delivery.

The city has an SDG-aligned Strategic Development Plan, adopted by-laws, provides free maternal health services, has increased the number of health facilities as well as the quality of care/services, and policies that enhance its ability to adapt to ongoing environmental changes. On gender equality, Victoria Falls removed all forms of discrimination against women and girls. Representation of women in Council has increased from 18.2% in 2013 to 27.3% in 2018. The city has ensured that its gender-related work is consistent with the national and global policy frameworks. Victoria Falls aims for 50/50 representation in Council by 2030.

The City's Mayor receives quarterly updates from the Council Administration. This is used for tracking progress and identifying gaps to be filled. For instance, through these updates, the Office of the Mayor has developed a closer relationship with Tourism and Hospitality Industry players to assist vulnerable members of the city's community while also boosting service delivery

Source: Victoria Falls VSR 2020

Box 3: SDG implementation and results, City of Harare

The city is committed to SDG localisation and has aligned its service delivery activities to the goals. This has been seen in the alignment of policies and plans as well as the institutional set-up of the Council that are supported through resource allocation.

Harare City prioritised SDGs⁴⁸ 1, 3 to 8 and 11. This limited range is a reflection of both the issues experienced as well as the limited resources available to the city. On SDG1 it has developed i) an informal sector development policy, and ii) vendor markets for informal traders. This is strengthening access to economic opportunities for women, the poor and other vulnerable groups. On SDG 3, a Health Strategy for 2018-2021 was developed.

New health centres were developed with 10 or its 12 centres being upgraded into 'one-stop clinics offering specialist HIV and AIDS, diabetes and tuberculosis services while two were upgraded into COVID19 response centres with the capacity to hold more than 300 patients. The city reviewed its gender policy in 2016 to align with SDG targets. 2016 and 2017 budget allocations for gender-related projects were increased⁴⁹. Outside its priority SDG's for localisation, the city has implemented WASH infrastructure projects (SDG number 9) boosting reach and quality including 2000 previously unserved households in Hopley, a largely informal settlement.

Harare City experiences capital expenditure gaps as it has high default rates from its residents (individuals, households, government and private sector). As noted elsewhere in this VSR Harare receives far less than its size deserves from the national government. This is particularly the case with regards to road funding where despite having the highest vehicle population receipts are not commensurate with this reality.

Source: Harare VSR 2020, DFID 2015

⁴⁶ Presentation by the Minister of Local Government and Public Works, Hon. J.G. Moyo at the 7th Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development: 1 to 4 March 2021: Brazzaville, Republic of Congo

⁴⁷ Voluntary Local Review: Victoria Falls Town's Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 For Sustainable Development. March, 2020.

⁴⁸ Presentation by the Minister of Local Government and Public Works, Hon. J.G. Moyo at the 7th Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development: 1 to 4 March 2021: Brazzaville, Republic of Congo

⁴⁹ <https://genderlinks.org.za/casestudies/zimbabwe-harare-city-council/>

Box 4: SDG Implementation in other local authorities, City of Bulawayo & Beitbridge Municipality

Bulawayo City has prioritised SDGs 2 to 6, 13, and 15 though this is not clearly articulated in the City's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan but was filtered into the City of Bulawayo's Master Plan 2019-2034. On awareness the city conducted workshops attended by staff, Councilors and different civil society organizations focused on gender mainstreaming⁵⁰. On SDG 2 the city has an Urban Agriculture Policy while on SDGs 3 and 4 the city's strategic plans⁵¹ provide for outreach or mobile services to unserved areas every month. Gender-sensitive development is guided by the city's gender policy. The has a '365 days of activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV)' initiative led by a Gender Desk. Bulawayo Water Sewerage Services Improvement Project (BWSSIP) launched in 2016 has seen rehabilitation and upgrading of WASH infrastructure and building the city's service delivery capacity. There are improvements in water supply in high-density areas to ensure continuous supply with 55 new domestic meters installed and 507 non-functioning ones replaced⁵².

The Municipality's focus is on SDGs 3 to 9 and 13⁵³. The town's health department is using a rented house as a Satellite Clinic in ward 6 to reduce walking distances, especially for women. Dulibadzimu Clinic has also been expanded. Council is also establishing a new primary school courtesy of 'devolution funds' alongside new Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres. The local authority has also opened a vegetable market at Tshitauze Business Centre and is working on building a clothing market at the same centre. Beitbridge Municipality has a gender policy and a sexual harassment policy as part of its commitment to the implementation of SDG 5. The town has dedicated staff (a gender focal person and gender champion) overseeing these workplace policies. These commitments are elaborated on in its 2019-2023 Strategic Plan that is aligned to SDGs. The Council has a department taking a lead on SDG implementation.

4.4 Local COVID19-related actions

Figure 8 shows the local actions that Zimbabwean local authorities reported taking in terms of COVID responses. Information and communication innovations were undertaken by all local authorities followed by securing access to basic services generally and health systems particularly. Local economic development support was also reported by 12 local authorities. Local authorities upgraded their health centres as the case of Harare shows (see Box 1) and procured personal-protective equipment for their health personnel. They were also involved in awareness campaigns.

Zimbabwean local authorities are facing pressure arising from emergencies. These are occurring against a background of stressed service delivery. Cyclones and other weather-related emergencies and COVID19 have exposed the existing capacity gaps. At the same time, these emergencies have stifled most projects in local authorities, directly and indirectly, meant to accelerate SDG implementation. Climate change has exposed the country and local authority areas to natural disasters with adverse impacts on agriculture, food security, health, water and sanitation.

⁵⁰ Ndlovhu, V., Newman, P., and Sidambe, M., 2020. Prioritisation and Localisation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Challenges and Opportunities for Bulawayo. *Journal of Sustainable Development*; 13(5)

⁵¹ City of Bulawayo, 2020, Bulawayo City Strategic Plan 2020 - 25

⁵² City of Bulawayo, 2017. Service Level Standards

⁵³ These priority SDGs are as per Beitbridge Municipality Strategic Plan 2019 - 2023

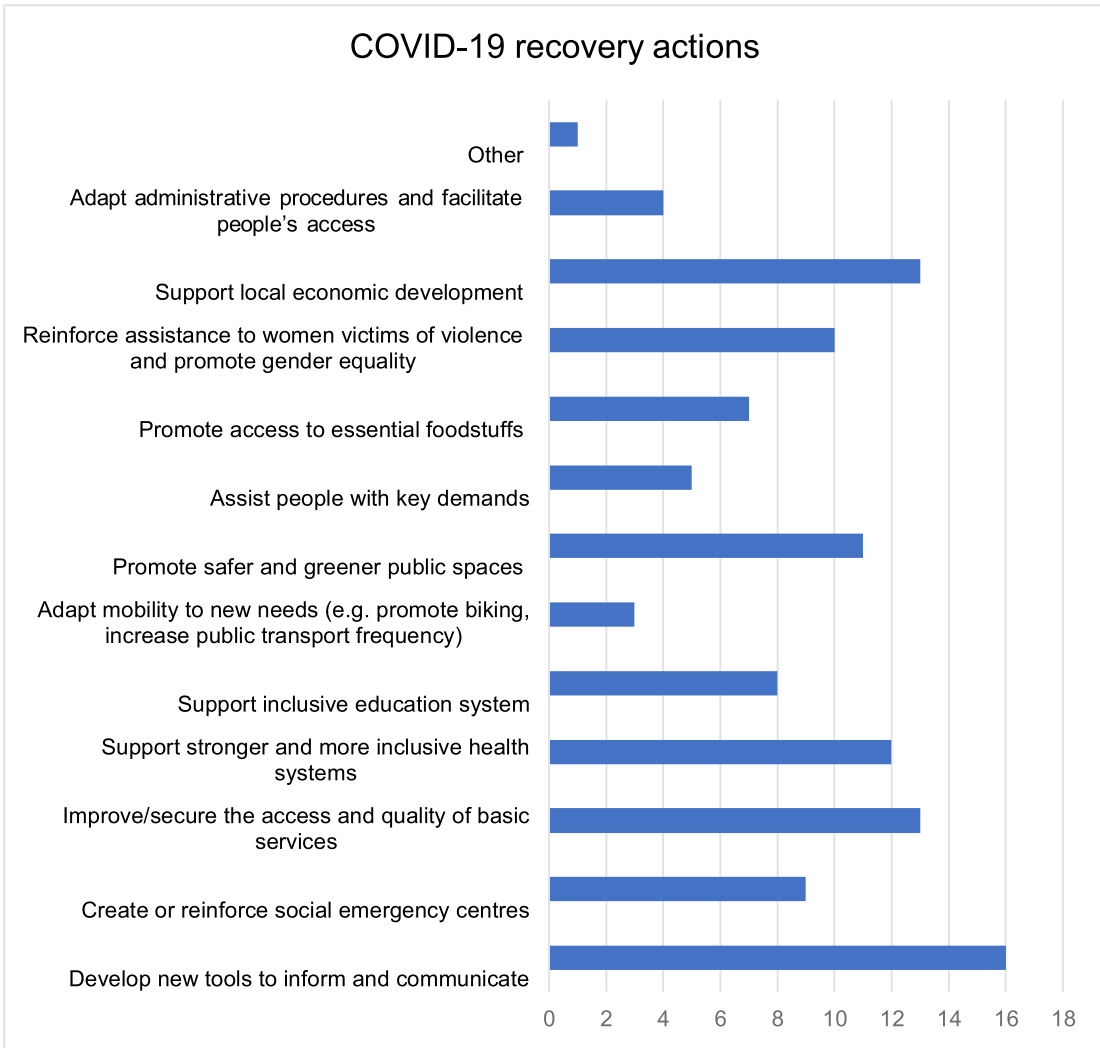


Figure 8: COVID19 local authority actions, Survey, (April 2021).

5.0 Means of SDG implementation

5.1 Funding of local governments

Fiscal decentralisation has been constrained in Zimbabwe mostly by the prevailing political, legal, and economic environment. This has limited the taxing and expenditure powers. Revenue sources for local governments (property taxes, development levies, user charges, license fees and income-generating projects) have not been performing well. As road authorities, local governments get a share of the revenue raised from the registration and licensing of motor vehicles through the Zimbabwe National Road Authority, ZINARA. Additionally, they also receive education, health and other grants.⁵⁴

A DFID⁵⁵ study revealed the limited receipts by Harare from the national government. Other studies have also shown how local authorities are in distress due to falling local revenues (We Pay You Deliver' Consortium 2018⁵⁶) and unsustainable employment costs.⁵⁷ Revenues mainly go into operating not capital accounts⁵⁸ resulting in serious service backlogs (We Pay You Deliver' Consortium 2017⁵⁹). Unit (land) taxes for rural local authorities have collapsed in some jurisdictions⁶⁰. The fiscal space is being eroded mainly due to the competition from national government agencies.⁶¹ Unit tax for A1 and A2 farms, CAMPFIRE proceeds being eroded as National Parks is taking back places formerly leased to Council, and cattle levies are no longer forthcoming. Rural local authorities levy landholders a fee per unit (usually a hectare) of their land. This was mainly on commercial farmland held under the title. With land redistribution, the landholdings have changed in terms of size, ownership and tenure resulting in databases for tax purposes being distorted. The collection of unit/land tax has thus been negatively affected reducing local authority revenues.

When the SDGs were adopted in 2015, most local authorities in Zimbabwe had huge gaps between revenue and expenditure. Between 2011 and 2014, total revenue across all local authorities increased by 41% from USD570 million in 2011 to USD804 million in 2014⁶². During that same period, the total expenditures increased by 132 percent from USD556 million to USD1.3 billion creating a fiscal deficit. There are deep socio-economic and political challenges constraining the implementation of decentralisation in Zimbabwe.⁶³ Borrowing is limited as local authorities require national government approval. At the same lack of an integrated fiscal framework that could underpin a Municipal Bond market constraints the availability of affordable funding.

The absence of affordable loan financing is also a challenge across the country. Some of the local authority revenue sources like vehicle licensing have been taken over by the national government.⁶⁴ Capital expenditure funding through the Public Sector Investment Program (PSIP) has decreased. A recent study observes that PSIP allocations averaged 7.6% of total expenditure between 2010 and 2018 with a noticeable decline between 2010 and 2016 in a context where the development budget was 1.8% of GDP far short of the 25% target in the TSP.⁶⁵ This trend affected local authorities' capacity to maintain let alone expand service delivery infrastructure. In terms of priorities 28% went to WASH, 24% transport, 14% housing, 9% health, 8% energy, and 7% each to education and ICT.

⁵⁴ Zhou, G. and Chilunjika, A., 2013. The Challenges of Self-Financing in Local Authorities the Case of Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Humanities and social science*, 3(11), pp.233-245.

⁵⁵ DFID, 2015. *Urban infrastructure in Sub-Saharan Africa – harnessing land values, housing and transport*.

⁵⁶ *Cities in Distress: Budgeting and Financial Management Survey Report*, Harare, Dan Church Aid https://kubatana.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/wpyd_cities_distress_1808.pdf

⁵⁷ GOZ/The World Bank (2017) *Zimbabwe Public Expenditure Review 2017*

⁵⁸ Berrisford, S., Cirolia, L.R. and Palmer, I., 2018. Land-based financing in sub-Saharan African cities. *Environment and Urbanization*, 30(1), pp.35-52.

⁵⁹ *State of Service Delivery Report: Cities at the Crossroads*, Volume 1, Harare Dan Church Aid

⁶⁰ Zimbabwe: Unitary Country, Basic Information, <https://www.sng-wofi.org/country-profiles/Fiche%20ZIMBABWE.pdf>

⁶¹ Chiredzi RDC (2016) *Commissioning of Council Road Equipment and Other Projects*

⁶² GOZ/The World Bank, 2017. *Zimbabwe Public Expenditure Review 2017*

⁶³ Chatiza, K. 2020. *Integrating Zimbabwe's Local Authorities into the 2021 to 2027 European Cooperation Agreement Analytical REPORT* prepared for ZILGA and UCLG Africa; *ZILGA(2021)*

⁶⁴ UCLG 2019

⁶⁵ Dube C (2019) *Main Bottlenecks and the Local Authority Level that could pose challenges for growth and sustainability*, Zimbabwe Economic Policy Analysis and Research Unit (ZEPARU), November 2019

Another source shows that local government revenue constituted 2% of GDP and 9% of total public revenue with grants and subsidies being less than 4%.⁶⁶ Tier 2 (provincial and metropolitan) has not clear revenue sources despite being allocated functions relating to administration, conservation of natural resources and tourism promotion. On expenditure, local governments are constrained as they have few fully devolved functions that explain why in 2017 staff costs were up to 40% of expenditure while capital expenditure was between 15 and 25% with 80% of this being for civil engineering works (roads, water and sewer works, plant and equipment).⁶⁷

Local government GDP proportion and expenditure patterns have not changed much over the years⁶⁸. Unfortunately, current data on local government per capita revenue and expenditure were not gathered for the study with available literature for instance citing 2014 statistics. These data as well as data on transfers to local authorities by the national government are not systematically consolidated. Further, the framework for tracking the application of disbursed 'devolution' funds are also currently unclear.⁶⁹) The split of the 5% allocated to subnational governments is 25% to tier 2 and 75% to tier 3 (*ibid*).

The study relied on analysis of national budget allocations. These are key in shaping the contribution of local authorities in meeting development goals. On the 2021 Budget, an allocation of USD8.5 million was set aside for water improvement works in Harare, Bulawayo, Marondera, Chegutu and Rusape. The African Development Bank proposed to channel USD6 million under the Bulawayo Water and Sewerage Services Improvement Project to ensure the continuation of works under the project⁷⁰). In addition, to these sources of funding, local authorities through the Inter-Governmental Fiscal Transfers allocation are expected to set aside additional resources for water and sanitation infrastructure. For small towns and growth points, a total of USD2.1 million was set aside for water supply schemes. Devolution funds, as shown below have also become a growing source for capital investments in education, health and transport. The government of Zimbabwe's declaration of the roads sector as being in a state of disaster in 2021 has also seen national resource allocations to the main road authorities of which local authorities are key. Both the Ministry responsible for local government and the associations were not collating the relevant data at the time of completing the study. It is important to highlight in terms of the prioritised allocations at the national level that national disasters including those related to cholera have seen allocations to health, water, sanitation and hygiene service delivery areas. In terms of these services, local authorities have relatively well-defined responsibilities and thus have received earmarked transfers and international development funding.

The 2020-2021 Zimbabwe Infrastructure Investment Program (ZIIP) highlights the government's WASH infrastructure financing and development for local authorities. The government of Zimbabwe has prioritised public infrastructure investment as a powerful tool for sustainable, economic and environmental development in Zimbabwe.⁷¹ In the advent of climate change, COVID-19, the Government of Zimbabwe through the NDS1 and the Zimbabwe Infrastructure Development Programmes demonstrated commitment towards investments that meet the basic sanitation requirements of citizens. The ZIIP acknowledges that inadequate access to water and sanitation services is a developmental challenge, reinforcing disparities between communities and impacting the quality of life for citizens. This is in line with SDG 6 that emphasises improved access to clean water and sanitation for all. Well-integrated national and subnational plans are important for efficient resource use and policy coherence.

The government started disbursement of s301 funding or Devolution Funds to local authorities starting in 2019 with a USD310 million allocation.⁷² The transfers are calculated as a percentage of national revenues raised in a financial year. The provision of the Constitution (s301.3) entitles subnational governments to 'not less than five percent'. This has to be read in a context where over the 1990 to

⁶⁶UCLG and OECD (2019) Zimbabwe-Unitary Country, Basic Information, <https://www.oecd.org/regional/regional-policy/profile-Zimbabwe.pdf>

⁶⁷ Government of Zimbabwe and World Bank (2017)

⁶⁸UCLG and OECD (2019)

⁶⁹ Zimbabwe National Budget Brief, June 2020, see UNICEF (2020)

⁷⁰ Government of Zimbabwe (2020d) ; 2021 Zimbabwe Infrastructure Investment Programme

⁷¹ 2020 Zimbabwe Infrastructure Investment Programme

⁷² USD1 to ZWL1, https://www.rbz.co.zw/documents/Exchange_Rates/2019/jan/Rates%2002%20Jan%202019.pdf

2019 period government allocations to subnational governments rarely exceeded 1% of the total budget making Zimbabwean local authorities mainly self-financed.⁷³ USD13.04 million⁷⁴ or 38.7% of this amount had been disbursed as of August 1st 2019 for community-level basic infrastructure.⁷⁵ By June 30th 2020, USD7.9 million⁷⁶ had been transferred to Provincial Councils and local authorities.⁷⁷ By November 2020, the City of Harare for instance had received USD5.5 million⁷⁸ in transfers that it applied to water and sanitation.⁷⁹) The reporting on as well as direct participation of citizens in planning for the projects supported by the devolution funds needs improvement. This ensures that the national government does not use these to reinforce its subjugation of local authorities based on treating these intergovernmental transfers as if they were favours.⁸⁰ . At the same time, SDG-related progress will be tracked locally and attributed to local authorities appropriately.

2019, 2020 and 2021 national budgets have provided for 301 intergovernmental fiscal transfers to local authorities. The transfers are providing financial means for implementing SDGs at the subnational level. These fiscal transfers have boosted subnational development planning and implementation of actions towards achieving SDGs. As observed in earlier parts of the paper critical areas addressed include road upgrading works, water and sanitation projects, the establishment of new health and education institutions as well as expanding and refurbishing others across all local authorities.

For instance, Gutu RDC used its 2019 and 2020 disbursements to purchase road equipment, set up new clinics including building maternity shelters for expecting mothers, refurbish school structures, establish water facilities for communities and at schools. This has been the case with Zaka, Chivi and Mwenezi in Masvingo that submitted lists of projects implemented using 'devolution funds'. The same is true of urban local authorities as well although consolidated information on the disbursements to all local authorities could not be secured from both the national government and the local government associations. This would have assisted in terms of providing insights into SDG-related work being done.

5.2 Local generation of SDG-related data

Locally generated or disaggregated data for defining local SDG priorities and to inform local strategies and plans, as well as the design of development responses, is generally limited. The value of local authority-relevant data is that it also helps with tracking progress. SDG localisation at a local level is hampered by inadequate collation of local data. This weakness specifically affects policymaking, planning or decision-making and measurement of local progress SDG 2030. National data are rarely disaggregated sufficiently to inform local authority decision-making. This leaves data for development planning and evaluation in a fragmented state. Local authorities are not adequately gathering and utilising data on development locally.

Since 2012, urban local authorities have been gathering data on the state of key services they deliver. They have also been using the data to develop action plans following peer-review processes. This has been done under the Service Level Benchmarking (SLB) initiative supported by the World Bank. At the beginning of the initiative, the gathering and analysis of data lacked rigour. The inclination of those involved was to falsify performance to avoid looking bad. However, there has been the progressive building of capacity allowing the plugging of the data gaps improving the quality of both the data gathered and decisions made. The absence of SLB in rural areas has meant that there is no national system for tracking SDG implementation particularly and local development activities generally. The

⁷³ Dube (2019) Budget proposals on average were under 0.4% for 1990, under 0.8% for 2000, less than 0.3% for 2010 and 1% for 2019

⁷⁴ USD1 to ZWL9.2 (mid-rate), https://www.rbz.co.zw/documents/Exchange_Rates/2019/Aug/Rates-01-August-2019.pdf

⁷⁵ Government of Zimbabwe (2019) The 2019 Mid-Term Budget and Economic Review: Presented to the Parliament of Zimbabwe, 1 August 2019 by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development

⁷⁶ USD1 to ZWL57.4 (mid-rate), https://www.rbz.co.zw/documents/Exchange_Rates/2020/June/Rates-30-June-2020.pdf

⁷⁷ Government of Zimbabwe (2020) The 2020 Mid-Term Budget and Economic Review: Presented to the Parliament of Zimbabwe, 16 July 2020 by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development

⁷⁸ USD1 to ZWL81.4 (mid-rate), https://www.rbz.co.zw/documents/Exchange_Rates/2020/November/Rates-02-Nov-2020.pdf

⁷⁹ (City of Harare (2020) 2021 Budget Speech and Proposals, presented on November 19th 2020

⁸⁰ ZILGA (2021) Chatiza and Zivhave (2020)

considerable analytical gaps explain why local authorities that participated in the study highlighted the need for technical support for SDG localisation with methodological issues and indicator frameworks featuring prominently. Figure 9 shows the specific areas of support identified.

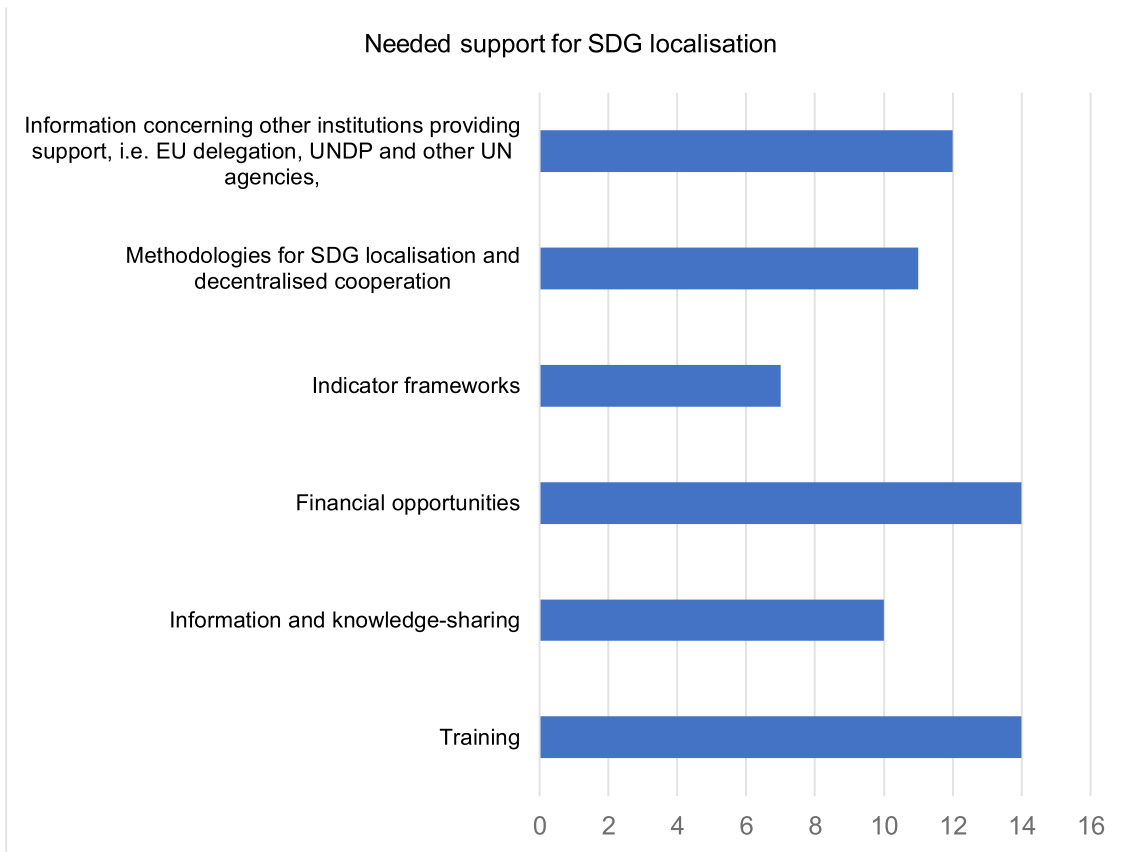


Figure 9: Support required by local authorities Survey (April 2021).

6.0 Conclusion and recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

Zimbabwe's local authorities are important in SDG localisation. They have a track record of delivering services and engaging citizens in ways that are important in terms of SDG localisation. National structures for SDG localisation are clear and drive policy adaptations to enhance SDG implementation in Zimbabwe. This level of SDG localisation is thus proceeding effectively with macro-economic policies and plans bearing this out. The Executive and Legislative branches of the Zimbabwean state have structures focused on SDG implementation. However, the study found that the national SDG-focused structures are inadequately connected with local authorities. This has to be considered in the context of ongoing discussions between national and local governments on the degree of devolution to be implemented including the legislation to govern intergovernmental relations. Legislation alignment to bring clarity to these relations, which have been awaited since 2013 are fortunately under development. Considerable local authority empowerment is anticipated. ZILGA has its work cut out regarding sustaining the necessary devolution implementation momentum. For this, the association needs considerable capacity development.

The current study found that there is progress in selected local authorities on SDG localisation. Regarding level or stage, these efforts are largely at the initial stages. Looked at within the sector it is fair to note that SDG localisation is not yet evident. The key institutions (ZILGA and Ministry responsible for local government) are yet to set up adequate SDG localisation processes. What exists are fragmented externally-supported 'orientation-type initiatives' with minimal financial support. Fortunately, the disbursement of devolution funds has somewhat plugged part of the local authority funding gap.

However, local funding is limited. It cannot address gaps arising from decades of inadequate investment in Zimbabwe's infrastructure. Further, local fiscal autonomy and performance are low. Citizen participation and financial contributions are constrained by rising poverty as well as citizens' political disengagement with local governance institutions. As such, resource flows for local development generally and SDG implementation is weak presently. Reporting is equally ill-adapted.

The study also established the critical absence of a systematic SDG localisation framework targeted at subnational governments. Piecemeal pilot interventions were done. Selected local authorities have taken these up eagerly. Evidence of the uptake is seen in assigning SDG responsibilities to specific structures. Yet, this localisation is not adequately connected to the national mechanisms for SDG coordination. These are essentially national government-driven. National and local governments are inadequately integrated for purposes of whole-of-government harmony on SDG implementation.

There are structural challenges that local governments in Zimbabwe face regarding SDG implementation and monitoring. What is important is to observe that these predate COVID19. As such, while they may have deepened with the pandemic some critical responses needed have been on the table for some time. One of the main challenges relate to local fiscal gaps arising from a combination of underperforming local economies due to rising poverty and macro-economic shrinkage in a context lacking access to affordable development or long-term finance. A related challenge is that residents and institutions are defaulting on rates, levies and service charges. This is a result of the macroeconomic challenges that they experience. This high default rate has crippled the service delivery capacities of Councils. In turn, local authorities have become increasingly mistrusted by ratepayers some of whom have gone 'off-grid in terms of key services like water and thus see little value in Council.

6.2 Key recommendations

Based on the above analysis three gaps were synthesised. These relate to i) data and institutional fragmentation, ii) resource limitations for SDG implementation, and iii) the absence of systematic institutionalisation of SDG localisation. It is with this in mind that the paper recommends the following:

Developing and implementing a systematic institutional framework for SDG localisation. Existing national mechanisms for SDG coordination need to be adapted to subnational government SDG implementation responsibilities. This framework will require applying basic principles of decentralisation (both political and fiscal) critical to the alignment of the local-national SDG agenda from funding to implementation, monitoring and reporting in a collaborative governance framework. This will ensure that Zimbabwe's local and regional governments more meaningfully participate in the VNR process than is currently the case.

Building the capacity of ZILGA and the Ministry responsible for local government to support an SDG localisation program. This will include ensuring relevant staff within the two agencies receive adequate training on SDG localisation focusing particularly on indicator development, data gathering, reporting mechanisms and consolidation of results. In doing so the two institutions will benefit from available expertise regionally and globally so that they meet the needs of the primary constituency of local governments and the secondary needs of the national government.

Preparing and implementing an SDG localisation program that addresses inadequate critical awareness at a local level (amongst local governments, citizens and civil society organisations) as part of building the capacity to develop, implement and jointly report on SDGs in a manner that leaves no one behind.

Amplifying SDG localisation as part of framing devolution implementation in Zimbabwe i.e. use it as a practical platform for taking forward local government policy debates in the country.

Reviewing local authority funding mechanisms to facilitate improved implementation of SDGs. Beyond local fiscal decentralisation strengthening a process of linking the efforts to the global movement for SDG localisation is critical for Zimbabwe. This is critical given Zimbabwean local

governments' limited engagement with the international development funders arising from the country's political risk that has reduced direct state funding by most international donors.

The implementation of these recommendations will require a dialogue between national and local government. The Ministry responsible for local government and ZILGA may organise this dialogue in collaboration with the national SDG lead Ministry (responsible for the Public Service) following validation of the findings of this study.