

**THE DOLLARIZATION OF THE ECONOMY AND SERVICE DELIVERY:  
A CASE STUDY OF MASVINGO MUNICIPALITY IN ZIMBABWE**

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**ABSTRACT**

The much heralded economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe impacted significantly on social service delivery offered by the municipal councils across the country. The quality and quantity of social services being offered by the city council has perpetually deteriorated due to this economic and political conundrum. The fundamental linchpin of this research is on establishing the impact of dollarization of the economy of municipal social service delivery. This research sought to assess local residents' perceptions pertaining to the quality and quantity of municipal social services. The study also investigated the challenges faced by the local residents in accessing social services from the city council. The research further examined the strategies devised by the local residents in transcending these challenges as well as the sustainability of such strategies. The research findings indicate that dollarization of the economy is inundated with ambivalence, with some residents noting that dollarization exacerbated the quality and quantity of municipal social service delivery, while others noting marginal improvement in social service delivery, by the city council ever since the dollarization of the economy. Thus, the perceptions of the local residents are muddled in contradictions. This study utilized a purely qualitative methodology with a triangulation of data soliciting techniques being used. The study employed Norman Long's 'Actor – Oriented approach' an 'Interface analysis' as the analytical insights in understanding the politics surrounding municipal service delivery.

**Keywords:** Dollarization; Social Service Delivery; Inequalities; Residents

**INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Taking Masvingo municipality as the case under study, this study explored the perceptions of the local residents pertaining to the nature of service delivery being offered by the Masvingo city council in the era of dollarization of the economy. The study also examined the challenges faced by the local community in accessing the services such as clean piped water, healthcare services and sanitary related services. The other fundamental focus of this study was on investigating the strategies that are being used by these local people in trying to circumvent some of the many challenges they face as a consequence of the service delivery crisis. Muzvidziwa (2010) noted that since the year 2000, Zimbabwe's economy has been on a free fall and the country lost its status as the bread basket of Africa. The hyper – inflationary environment in Zimbabwe was deemed the highest in the world reaching beyond two million percent. This meant that the country slipped into the lowest ranking economies. Such economic crises cascaded down to various departments such as city councils and eventually incapacitating them to efficiently provide meaningful service delivery to its residents. However, the dollarization of the economy came with relative stability of the economy in the country. Dollarization as defined by Schuler (2005) entails a situation where a country

has no locally issued currency and thus officially utilizes foreign currency instead, although the currency need not be specifically a US dollar. This dollarization was adopted in January 2009 at the zenith of Zimbabwe's economic quandary. This dollarization was thus an attempt to resuscitate the country's economic predicament. The country and by extension city councils utilized the United States dollar for their budgetary purposes, hence the term dollarization. Despite this stability that came with the dollarization of the economy in the country there has however been a continuous decline in the quality of services being offered by the city councils and other predominantly government parastatals in the country. Chigwenya (2010) attributed the ineffectiveness of the city council to provide services to the people to lack of decentralization and devolution as well as the heavy presence of the government's hand in all sectors, as it continued to interfere with their day-to-day running of municipality affairs. He pointed to the decay of town infrastructure and reduction of the range and quality of services being offered by the city council. This had a number of problems especially to the welfare of the local people who are paying lots of money to access those services. The advent of independence in 1980 brought with it a number of necessary political transformation and reforms that were vital for dealing with a plethora of socio – economic and development challenges in Zimbabwe. This independence also saw previously racially divided authorities transformed into a more single and united municipalities. In principle this enabled most of the local authorities to be democratically accountable to their citizens as well as efficiency in dealing with basic social services. The rationale was that these municipalities would become very effective and efficient service – oriented entities. According to Khumalo, Ntlokonkulu & Rapoo (2004) many municipalities around the world are at the forefront of efforts to experiment with innovative forms of service delivery to improve efficiency and minimize wasteful use of limited public resources.

Masvingo is the provincial capital with an estimated population of about hundred thousand people and about 3000 000 residential stands. The city lies in the southern part of Zimbabwe and was founded in 1890 by the British South African Company. In 2002, the town had a total population of 70,000 people (Dube, 2002). The city of Masvingo lies approximately 300 km to the south of Harare, Zimbabwe's capital city. The city is situated in agro – ecological region five, which is a drought prone area with an average rainfall of about 600mm per annum. Masvingo was the first town to be established by the former colonial masters under the name Fort Victoria named after the queen of England. Masvingo thus is the oldest urban establishment in Zimbabwe. Despite it being the oldest town, the city has been relatively backward in terms of development and industry as compared to other towns that were established later such as Harare and Bulawayo. The city of Masvingo is responsible for providing services such as healthcare, refuse collection, water and sanitation, fire protection services and primary education, among others. The town's principal sources of revenue include water charges, land rates, municipal bars, sewerage fees and bus park fees. According to Dube (2002) the city of Masvingo derives its largest income from water accounts by residents which contributed between 30 – 40 % of the council's revenue since 1995. Dube (2002) noted that the city council made about 80% profit on each cubic meter of water sold during 1999 to 2001. However, it has been noted that the supply of services and other infrastructure often hardly keep pace with increased consumption in the urban areas. This has largely been caused by the skyrocketing number of people migrating from rural areas into towns in search of greener pastures. It is paramount when considering municipal service delivery options to distinguish between the concepts of service "provision" and service "delivery". Service provision relates to the role of the local authority in deciding what services should be made available to citizens and delivery of the services selected. Service "delivery" on the other hand, entails the

actual producing of a service for example picking up commercial and residential garbage (Naidoo, 2000). The provision of services to citizens is basic to the mission of all municipal authorities. Under the traditional model of service delivery, the local authorities have assumed responsibility for both the “provision” and “delivery” of services to the local citizens. Naidoo (2000) noted that the local councils may employ alternative service delivery approaches but this does not mean that they totally give up control over service delivery nor abdicate their responsibility to citizens for service quality and effectiveness. However, this idea of municipalities ceding service delivery responsibilities to independent providers has been heavily criticized on the grounds that the socio – economic rights and entitlements of the poor will inevitably be compromised by commercially oriented service providers concerned only on profit making. Shannon (2002) noted that the failures of parastatals to deliver public services are rooted in their managerial and administrative shortcomings. In light of such multiplicity of challenges, the citizens in most cases have to bear the brunt of having to devise coping strategies in dealing with lack of consistent service delivery. According to the Goz (2002) the inequalities imbued in service delivery in Zimbabwe are a direct consequence of the colonial marginalizing legacy which favoured white only residential areas at the expense of the black dominated residential areas.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

After the dollarization of the Zimbabwean economy, hyperinflation in the country was arrested and many people thought that service delivery by the city council and other parastatals would inevitably improve since they are now paying for these services in US dollars (hard currency). The author however noted with great concern that instead there has been a perpetual deterioration of services by the city council and many other parastatals in the country. Refuse and waste go for days, weeks and even months without being collected, people go for several days without water and electricity. Most roads in towns are in a sorry state let alone council clinics, halls and bars, in fact the roads are as worse as ever with potholes even in the middle of the town. Sewage and sewer repairs are posing a health time bomb in most residential areas. Given such a scenario the author felt there is paucity of research on the perceptions of the local people with regards to the deteriorating service delivery despite paying large sums of money for such services. It is thus a paradox that while the economy stabilized, there has not been a follow up of improvement in service delivery by the city council, instead the quality of services being offered has continued to deteriorate. This study sought to unearth the perceptions of residents pertaining to the quality and quantity of service delivery offered by the Masvingo municipal council.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The major objectives of this study are:

- 1) To assess the perceptions of the local community on the quality of services being offered by the city council.
- 2) To investigate the challenges being faced by the local people in accessing such services from the council.
- 3) To examine the strategies used by the local residents to transcend these challenges.

### **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is grounded in Norman Long’s Actor – Oriented approach and Interface analysis in the understanding of the subject matter under study. This conceptual framework is useful for establishing the organizing practices, knowledge

encounters and the relations between service providers in this case the city council and the intended beneficiaries who are in this case Mucheke residents. To this end the actors' responses and standpoints are constructed and reconstructed on the basis of their ongoing interface encounters, struggles and negotiations. In the context of this study residents as well as the city council and other organizations dealing with service delivery are referred to as actors. It should be noted that interfaces typically occur at points where different and often conflicting standpoints intersect in social situations or arenas in which such interactions become oriented around problems of bridging ,accommodating, segregating or contesting social and cognitive standpoints. Although the concept "*interface*" tends to imply the image of some kind of two-sided articulation or face-to-face confrontation, social interface situations are more complex and multiple in nature, containing within them many different interests, relationships and modes of rationality and power. In the context of this study, this is evident in the fact that residents emphasize that at least 70% of the revenue collected by the council should be channeled towards service delivery, while in contrast the city council maintain that at least 75% of that money should be spend on worker's salaries. Henceforth, interface becomes important in this study in that it embraces a methodology that counterpoises the voices, grievances and experiences of all the relevant social actors such as the local authorities and the Mucheke residents. Negotiations at the interface are normally carried out by individuals representing particular interest groups and this tends to place councilors at an intercalary position between different social domains. On one side they are supposed to represent the interests of the residents yet at the same time they are part of the local authority structures. Due to lack of adequate social services, residents create effective strategies for maneuvering these constraining situations. To this end creating room for manoeuvre may imply a degree of consent and negotiation. This analytical insight was important in conveying the idea of contested arenas in which actors' understandings, interests and values are pitched against each other (Long, 1992). In this study there is a battlefield pitching Mucheke residents against the city council, emanating from poor service delivery by the council. Actors thus should be seen as knowledgeable, rational and agentic, which enables them to process there, and learn from others' experiences and ultimately act upon them. Facing service delivery woes, residents innovated and improvised ways of transcending such a problem.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study is purely qualitative in nature and the adoption of this in-depth qualitative approach enabled the researcher to clearly understand the views and narratives of the local residents on the quality and quantity of service delivery being offered by the city council. A triangulation of data soliciting techniques was utilized in harvesting data. Unstructured in - depth interviews, focus group discussions, transect walks and secondary sources of data were used. Key informant interviews with the municipality officials were also done for the purpose of reconciling and corroborating the narratives of the local residents and those of the city council officials. This enabled the researcher to come up with data that juxtaposes the views of both the groups concerned hence enhancing the validity of the information gathered. Transect walks were of paramount significance in observing the nature of some of the infrastructure as well as directly observing some of the strategies used by the local residents. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were also conducted to get the multiplicity of perceptions of various groups of the local people who are the main clients of the city council. Due to its multi-vocal nature FGDs acted as a check and balance on the information provided by the participants in this study. The researcher triangulated a number of data collection techniques so as to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of the local residents pertaining to the subject under study. This

triangulation of research methods was important in reconciling the sometimes conflicting information solicited from such multiple techniques. This acted as a check to misleading information that could have been given to the researcher by informants in in-depth individual interviews. Data was collected using quasi-participant observation since researcher was staying in the area under study. This enabled the researcher to garner rapport with the informants who graced this study. This made it easy for the researcher to carry out in-depth interviews and FGDs since he had established a strong rapport with the residents, some of which the researcher interacted with on almost daily basis. The nature of this study was thus ethnographic, with the researcher having a prolonged interaction with the informants.

## **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

This section serves to provide a detailed presentation and discussion of the major findings of the study obtained from the fieldwork undertaken by the researcher in Mucheke suburbs. Presentation and discussion is done concurrently in thematic format. These themes were selected from the most fundamental emerging issues from the fieldwork that the researcher conducted. The researcher tried to reconcile study findings with those of other authors noting areas of discontinuities and similarity.

### **Provision and delivery of clean piped water in Mucheke**

Water is one of the most fundamental services that are basic to the healthy wellbeing of most urbanites in any country in Africa and the world at large. In fact access to safe water is a basic human right (Shannon, 2002). The United Nations General Assembly in June 2010 highlighted the importance of water as an inalienable right which is intertwined with the right to life. In a draft resolution presented at the meeting, the UN recognize “the right to safe and clean water and sanitation as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of the right to life (Gukurume, 2009). After the much heralded cholera outbreak in Zimbabwe, the parliament saw it fit to return urban water management and provision to the city council from Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA). It was observed that the parastatal (ZINWA) had failed to successfully provide water services in the urban areas and thus should cede this responsibility to municipalities. From this study most residents in Mucheke voiced concerns on the state of service delivery as opposed to the amounts of money which they are required to pay. One elderly gentleman noted that it defies logic for council to make threats to residents when the Council itself is failing to improve service delivery with the money that residents have been paying in rates so far. He was saying this in light of the erratic water supply in the city which is getting worse and worse by each passing day. It was noted that there was intermittent domestic water supply in most areas in Mucheke and residents go for prolonged periods without access to clean piped water. One old lady interviewed concurred and argued that;

*“My son we have to bear the brunt of enduring days or even weeks without water and this is exposing us to a number of diseases like cholera, the council should do something about this urgently lest another cholera outbreak strikes”.*

It was observed that with the current water woes being experienced by the residents, these local people in Mucheke are sitting on a health time bomb if another cholera outbreak strikes. There has been a simultaneous breakdown in the city’s water supply system. Traditionally the city council used to justify its incapacity to provide adequate water supply to the expensive water treatment chemicals and purchase of maintenance equipment, but since residents are now paying in hard currency

(foreign currency) these excuses no longer hold any water in justifying the incapacity of the council. Dube & Van de Zaag (2002) argued that low income people in Masvingo are paying far more than the recommended amount for safe water, despite the supply of water being erratic. The shocking profligacy however is that many of the country's local authorities and town councils are the best paying parastatals, with salaries taking up approximately more than 70% of revenue. This means that very little if any money is left for service delivery, infrastructure repair and other capital projects. Naidoo (2000) noted that such a scenario in most urban areas means that pot holes on city roads increase and widen into dangerous craters, as very little money is channeled towards refurbishment of such roads and other infrastructure. This concurs with the observations made by the researcher that most roads in Masvingo are littered with pot holes that are posing a threat to motorists and the public alike.

One respondent said; *"I have gone for two weeks without having a shower bath and come end of the month you the council craving for money with unthinkable bills; I will not pay anything because I am also not getting tap water"*.

It is however surprising to note that while the dollarization and the subsequent economic liberalization measures introduced by the government ,had managed to reverse the hyper – inflationary trend of the last decade and thus ensuring some form of stability and predictability in the operating environment, but very insignificant improvement in water supply by the council has followed suit likewise. One of the respondents noted that the city council must abstain from cheap politics and pursuing selfish goals at the expense of the lives of the local residents. Most residents noted that the water they sometimes get is rarely treated and shows signs of being contaminated with dust particles. This makes it difficult for residents to drink water straight from the tap without boiling it first. Thus, with regard to the quality of water that is being offered by the council most residents raised concerns that the water is of poor quality and is not safe to drink.

Looking closely at the water crisis in Muccheke, one would get the impression of a kind of socio – economic stasis, characterized by inadequacy and rampant shortages of clean piped water. This water mayhem also impacted negatively on the health of many residents as some would be compelled to drink and use water from unprotected water sources. According to Gukurume (2009) many residents in Muccheke "A" ended up using water from Muccheke River and this exposed them to diseases .The researcher noted that water supply and sewer reticulation for Muccheke residents has been lethargic. Despite the fact that the local residents have a right to access clean piped water and adequate water supply as and when they need it, this has not been forthcoming. Thus the local people have been denied this right for some time, as evidenced by the chronic water shortages hitting the city for the past few years. Rukuni (2006) noted that most of the water challenges been faced in urban areas are a consequence of mismanagement and reluctance by the Ministry of Local Governance to let the city council independently run water supply and sewer reticulation management. In most instances instead of resuscitating regular water supply and efficient sewer reticulation, the city is giving its workers hefty salaries while the local residents bear the brunt of having to live without adequate water supply for ages. This concurs with Chigwenya's (2010) conclusion that decentralization of local authorities has been curtailed by the heavy presence of the government's hand in all sectors, as it continued to interfere with the day to day running of the municipality affairs. This, therefore means that the local authorities lacks autonomy in making independent decisions and policies towards addressing this water crisis .The city council however

should be ultimately responsible and accountable for municipal service delivery of which clean water supply and sewer reticulation should be at the core of municipal service delivery. From the interviews conducted by the researcher, residents believed that the council does not have any justification to demand money from residents when little if any effort is being made to improve service delivery including clean water supply and refuse collection. One respondent noted that instead of demanding money from residents, the city council should compensate them for its failure to provide adequate water services and the costs they incur in looking for alternative water sources. Residents in the Mucheke Suburbs in the city pointed out that they have paid their bills faithfully to the council in spite of the fact that they have been getting little if any municipal services from the city council. This has disappointed many residents to such an extent that they have lost faith in the capacity of the city council to deal with their water calamities immediately. Worse still, the bills charged by the city council in most cases outweigh the average monthly income that local residents get and thus making water services unaffordable to many poor residents in Mucheke suburbs. It has been observed by the researcher that a common perception among the general people is that the council is too unwieldy to deliver meaningful water services in an affordable, reliable and efficient manner to its residents.

One major problem noted by the researcher has been the perpetual “*blame game*” between Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA) and the City Council’. Water supply in Mucheke has ranged from intermittent to ephemeral due to this blame game. The city council contends that for them to pump adequate water to the residential areas, then, they need uninterrupted supply of electricity which has not been forthcoming from ZESA. Thus they have transferred their failure to consistently supply water to residents to the erratic supply of electricity by ZESA. On the other hand ZESA has also blamed the city council and other large parastatals for failing to pay their electricity bills, hence their failure to maintain a consistent supply of electricity in the city. Water supplies have been extremely erratic and residents do not understand why the council is charging so much money for non-existent services. In law, when two parties enter into a contract, if one party does not deliver their end of the bargain the contract is null and void. What case does the city council have against residents to whom they have not kept their end of the bargain? (Gukurume, 2009). The current situation has created a lot of mistrust between residents and the Masvingo city council. Residents are thus withholding their money because they believe that the council is not being fair by demanding money for non-existent services. One respondent jokingly said;

*“It’s like paying rentals for a house that is yet to be built, and that you are yet to live in”.*

In this case the residents have the right to demand value for their money since they are paying large sums of money for such services. It can thus be noted that the threats by the city council to embark on massive disconnections on defaulting consumers is like adding salt to injury. This is so because the issue of water disconnections brings with it adverse ramifications, especially in view of the dangers of spreading of communicable diseases. Most residents interviewed raised concerns that there is no clear relationship between water quantities consumed and amounts (bills) owed by consumers. From the narratives given by informants it was observed that the city council workers who do meter reading do not come to take actual meter readings, but instead just estimate the bills which consumers should pay for water services. The problem with this practice however is that there is marked incommensurability between the bills charged and the water quantities consumed. Thus, in most cases the local residents are compelled to pay exorbitant bills for water. Despite the fact that

residents are paying large sums of money, water cuts in Mucheke have worsened with each passing day. This is largely due to the rapidly expanding demand for water at a time where there has been no commensurate expansion of the city's water storage facilities which were meant to cater for a small populace. This is also confirmed by Chigwenya (2010) who argued that water cuts have become the order of the day in Masvingo and in some cases residents can go for more than 10 to 14 hours without running water. It is thus against such a scenario that the researcher felt that such a situation only helps in obfuscating the attainment of the Millennium Development Goal number 7 that seeks to provide safe drinking water and sanitation by 2015 as residents are compelled to resort to unsafe water sources due to the perpetual water woes in Masvingo. To this end the residents of Mucheke have thus portrayed their council as largely insensitive to people's plight since it was not genuinely prioritizing their most pressing and urgent service delivery calamities.

Due to the perpetual water woes in the city, residents have resorted to rainwater harvesting during this rainy season. One resident who was interviewed argued that; *"We have rediscovered this old method of water harvesting to do the continuous dry spells that we have been experiencing with council supplied water"*

She noted that they have no choice but to harness and exploit this naturally available resource especially during this rainy season when the rains have been in abundance. She also argued that the water she harvests is stored in a large 300 liter bowser and can last her up to a week and half. This has been a means devised by some residents of mitigating the long dry spells that have been experienced in the city of late. Some residents argued that rainwater harvesting is actually better since reports have shown that groundwater is being increasingly polluted and contaminated and thus becoming hazardous to people to consume. It could be seen by the research that a number of residents in Mucheke had improvised a rainwater collection facility for harvesting rainwater during this rainy season. One old lady said: *"Ini ndinoshandisa mvura yemudenga kubika, kunwa, kuwacha nemuchimbuzi mangu"* (I use this rainwater I harvest for drinking, cooking, laundry and also in the toilet)

This strategy of water harvesting is evidence of residents' agency in dealing with a problem of water shortages, since it is benefiting residents who have learnt to live with perennial water cuts and burst sewer system. Rainwater collected from roof tops is used for almost all the daily necessities and this has helped residents to cope with rampant water rationing of council supplied water which has also been inconsistently supplied. This has also force a number of people to purchase large containers that adequately stores water for prolonged use such as mega-litre bowsers.

### **Refuse collection and waste management in Mucheke**

It has also been noted that waste or refuse collection in Mucheke has been one of the most pressing areas of concern by the residents. One respondent noted that the garbage collection crew takes days or even weeks to come and collect refuse from their homesteads. Some people have resorted to dumping garbage in the near-by open spaces. From the researchers' observations, these dumping sites have become a hub and breeding sites for mosquitoes and flies that are posing a health threat to the people residing in adjacent areas. It is thus paradoxical to note that while the revenue collection by the city council is extremely effective, the service delivery system of the city council unfortunately is putrefying. Most shopping centers (especially in high-density areas) such as the Mucheke "A" bus terminus are perpetually inundated with piles of



uncollected refuse for ages. These shopping centers have thus become an eyesore due to the piles of garbage that have been there for weeks if not months. One respondent argued that the fact that the city council is awarding its personnel hefty salaries at the expense of quality municipal service delivery also leaves a lot to be desired. Some elite residents of Mucheke recommended that the municipality should cede some of the service delivery responsibilities to independent private providers. This strategy has been however criticized on the grounds that the socio-economic rights and entitlements of the poor sections will be comprised by commercially-oriented service providers concerned mainly with profit making. This recommendation came in light of the evident lack of institutional capacity by the city council which meant that it was unable to deliver basic services such as refuse collection, water provision and efficient sewer reticulation. Waste management in Mucheke is becoming a growing catastrophe because the increase in solid waste generation in Mucheke has not been accompanied by an equivalent increase in the capacity of the relevant urban authorities to deal with this problem. While Masvingo is held in high esteem as one of the cleanest city in Zimbabwe, such status is under siege due to the inconsistent garbage collection by the city's refuse collection crew.

It has been observed that just like was the case with water delivery in Masvingo; there have been marked disparities in access to sanitation and solid waste facilities for different income groups and residential areas. From the informants' narratives it was evident that waste collection services are geographically skewed, with higher and middle-income residential areas such as Rhodene, Target Kopje and Eastvale being better serviced as compared to low-income residential areas like Mucheke, Rujeko and Runyararo West. Borgman & Wegelin (2005) noted that limitations in access to sanitation and refuse collection services by the poor are largely due to a combination of the financial and institutional incapacity to adequately maintain and even extend existing systems into low income areas. Such a scenario was evident in Mucheke as a low income residential area, thus access to waste collection services by low income neighborhoods like Mucheke presented a major challenge. The researcher observed that about 40 to 50% of the waste generated in Mucheke is collected by the city council; this however means that the balance is left uncollected or disposed of through other means such as burning and dumping in unauthorized places. Such practices like dumping waste in open spaces poses a particular threat, including potential pollution of water sources that people use when there are water problems. These illegal disposal sites take much of the waste generated within the city as people "*Nichodemously*" dispose of their waste in such areas at night. It was observed that such sites are presenting environmental and health hazards as they have become breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

In Mucheke it has been noted by the researcher that waste collection and sewerage management problems have been exacerbated by the densities in some housing areas that are higher than those for which the sewage system was originally planned. Thus, the existing treatment plants for Mucheke do not have the capacity to deal with the quantities of sewage produced. As observed by the researcher most residents of Mucheke have resorted to burning of garbage, this open burning of waste by residents is increasingly becoming a preferred waste disposal option in light of erratic waste collection in the city. However, this strategy has a backlash on the residents; this is because this strategy further compounds the health problems of residents since burning produces hazardous by-products such as persistent organic pollutants which are harmful to their health and environment. This concurs with the findings of Dellinger (1994) who noted that in most cities because of the inefficiencies in waste collection and disposal, there is evidence of widespread indiscriminate dumping of garbage in

awkward places. Despite the waste management function of the Mucheke city council being weak, the very same city's by-laws prohibits illegal disposal of waste and anyone who is caught disposing waste in undesignated areas is penalised. Moreso, the researcher observed that a large number of people in Mucheke make their living in the informal waste-recycling business. Most of these scavenge at dumping sites, household bins and industrial sites. Although this practice of recycling reduces the level of direct removal required from the city council, this practice is however not well integrated into the solid waste collection and disposal system. Research findings of this study also concurs with Chigwenya (2010) who argued that at one time the city went for three months without collecting garbage in the residential areas. The researcher also noted that despite the rapid expansion of residential areas and creation of new residential areas, the city council only has about three refuse collection fleet. In most cases this fleet is grounded and the city council resort to the use of small tractors which rarely adequately collects refuse in Mucheke. It should however be noted that the situation has slightly improved as compared to the pre-dollarization era with the council purchasing new vehicles for refuse collection, although this has not completely ameliorated the refuse collection woes in Mucheke. Some residents were still bitter about the inconsistencies of refuse collection. One resident argued that, *"We are not even sure about the timetable of this refuse collection team or the days they come to collect garbage in our area, as a result sometimes they come on Monday, the next day on Tuesday and even any other day of the week, so this means that when I go to work my bin is not emptied"*

Such a situation has meant that a lot of refuse is left uncollected since people cannot predict when to put their bins outside for collection. It has also emerged that such lack of quality service delivery like refuse collection and water cuts is a fundamental driver of most health related problems confronting urbanites such as the massive cholera outbreak of 2008 – 2009 which left many people dead.

### **Urban Infrastructural Maintenance in Mucheke**

Most residents of Mucheke also face challenges with regards to infrastructure such as roads which are hardly repaired despite being in a mediocre state. It is paradoxical that while the government and by extension city councils places roads amongst their highest priorities for investment, very little attention has been given pertaining to maintenance, rehabilitation and reconstruction of the existing road networks in the city. The researcher noted with concern that most streets that were initially tarred are now looking as if they were never tarred due to lack of maintenance. Most of the city infrastructure is in a sorry state and one good example is the Mucheke hall which was gutted by fire a couple of years ago and up until now it is still to be renovated and refurbished. This hall used to be one of the city council's cash cows as it used to be hired by artists, churches and even for weddings but now the hall looks like a haunted building housing street urchins. One respondent noted that they used to use the hall for sports training but now the hall is no longer friendly for such activities. One city council official noted that most of the existing council facilities were planned to cater for much smaller demand. He acknowledged that there has been increasing population in urban areas, without commensurate rise in the quantity and quality of public infrastructure and services. He attributed this failure to the economic challenges that confronted the country in the past few years.

Rakodi (1997) argued that among the reasons accounting for the failure of many urban authorities in developing countries to cope with demands for service delivery include, the limitations of their political frameworks for city development, the inadequacies of their financing systems and the inefficiencies of their management systems. Street lights in most of Muccheke are extremely few and worse still these few street lights are poorly maintained hence there are rarely functional. Most of the residents interviewed in this study noted that they are now afraid to walk at night in these streets because of lack of light. Thus, street lighting in Muccheke is pathetic and there is a lot of work to be done to improve the state of street lights in the whole of the residential area. Most roads in Muccheke are inundated with large potholes and this is posing a threat to traffic. From the narratives given by informants during the rainy season these pot holes act as breeding places for mosquitoes which further makes them vulnerable to diseases. The city council also has a number of clinics that includes Runyararo clinic, Rujeko clinic and Mazorodze clinic. These clinics are however operating below capacity and most of them lack adequate staff, drugs and equipment to provide meaningful curative treatment and healthcare services. One respondent noted that healthcare services are now only accessed by the rich who can afford the exorbitant charges at private clinics and hospitals. He was saying this in light of the incapacity of the city council and government to provide healthcare services to the citizens. One old lady moaned that these council and government clinics simply give prescriptions and then ask you to go and purchase the medicine and drugs at private pharmacies and clinics. The problem however is that most of these private pharmacies charge exorbitant prices which most of the urban poor cannot afford. Most if not all council clinics do not have doctors; they only have a few nurses hence some of the illnesses and diseases are beyond the nurses' capacity to treat. To this end many patients are simply send back home without being treated while others are recommended for home based care. In rare instances when there is a doctor, the doctor – patient ratio is frightening and in most cases the doctor cannot treat all the patients. One council official noted that the country at large has been losing healthcare professionals to neighboring countries due to the economic challenges that confronted the country. He argued that the city council has also been losing its workers especially nurses who were resigning at a frightening rate as they sought greener pastures outside the country. This has meant that most council clinics are understaffed and thus cannot cope with the number of patients coming for medication and treatment.

From the individual interviews conducted in Muccheke by the researcher, most male informants, especially the youth expressed satisfaction with the public entertainment provided by the city council at its various bars. It should be noted that prior to the dollarization era, the council bars were quickly putrefying, hence most of them looked geriatric due to lack of maintenance and non – use as the council was failing to utilize these facilities due to lack of capital and shortages of commodities in the local market .The dollarization has thus revitalized council bars which also form one of the council's cash cows since these generate a lot of revenue for the city council. The city council has a number of bars that include *Farai*, *Sarudzai*, *Chidavaenzi*, and *Manhede* in Muccheke. These bars have now become a hub of entertainment in Muccheke as people from all walks of life converge for entertainment purposes. At one instance the city council brought renowned music artists to perform live at *Farai bar* ,while a number of their bars like *Manhede bar* are offering English premiership matches to residents free of charge, and even using generators when there is no electricity. It is against such a background that some of the residents noted that the dollarization of the economy ushered in marginal improvements in service delivery, especially infrastructural maintenance in some parts of Muccheke. After repeated complaints from motorists, the city council began

refurbishing major roads in Muccheke by filling up pot holes. However, as noted from one informant the refurbishment of these roads by the council are not sustainable and durable but temporary since no tar is being used, hence when the rainy season comes the earth that is being used by the council will be washed away and consequently re-exposing the pot holes. It has also been observed that roads in affluent residential areas are the first to be repaired, despite the fact that roads in high density areas are actually worse off than those in low density areas. It is against such a scenario that inequalities are still salient in as far as service delivery is concerned in Masvingo. To this end low density areas are by far better serviced by the city council than the high density areas. This confirms arguments made by Zinyama (1993) that the colonial legacy exacerbated the inequalities rampant in most African cities in as far as service delivery is concerned. This is largely because most affluent members of the society stays in these low density and hence they can easily lobby for better service delivery unlike their poor counterparts in high density areas.

It is a paradox that while the government and by extension the city council places roads amongst its highest priorities for investment, in Muccheke there has been very little maintenance, rehabilitation and reconstruction of the existing road networks. Likewise the researcher observed that water distribution equipment and the sewerage system in Muccheke has rarely been renovated or replaced since it was laid down. This has led to a lot of mega-liters of water being lost through leakages. Due to limited maintenance of the sewerage system, sewerage pipes have been continuously bursting, thereby contaminating some of the water sources that are being utilized by the residents confronted with water blues. In utilizing water from such contaminated sources further exposes residents to a number of related diseases and hence threatening their well-being health wise.

Munzwa & Jonga (2010) argued that low – income communities have always experienced a long and protracted process of perpetual disenfranchisement in as far as social service delivery is concerned. Rampant corrupt activities within the city councils and the nation at large also had a debilitating effect on the local authority's capacity to effectively carry out its duties such as service delivery. Munzwa & Jonga (2010) noted that the lack of transparency, corruption and general mismanagement in institutions like the city council has influenced experts to call for the implementation of good governance in such public institutions. This consequently led to a decline in the quality and quantity of services provided by the city council in Masvingo. Most of these problems emanate from the fact that existing facilities in Muccheke were planned and laid down to cater for smaller population demands, but however the rapidly increasing urban population has increased pressure on available facilities and resources. While the urban population perpetually increases there has not been any commensurate increase in the quantity and quality of public infrastructure and services. Wekwete (1992) noted that the inequalities salient in most urban areas are remnants of colonial legacy which created and exacerbated levels of inequality in the delivery of social services and maintenance of street roads and lights as well as other infrastructure. Infrastructural maintenance in Muccheke from the look of things has been relegated to a lower priority arena by the city council. Despite the fact that most low – income neighborhoods like Muccheke house the largest number of urbanites, they are usually not the first targets for infrastructural refurbishment and service delivery. As observed by the researcher, due to complications in direct cost recovery options, infrastructural maintenance is more complicated than all the other services being provided by the city council. Consequently, it has emerged from the study that the city council does not prioritize infrastructural improvement especially

where there is no direct cost recovery strategy. While residential areas continue to expand certain requisite infrastructure such as street lights remains largely a dream for people in most newly established residential areas like Runyararo West and Mucheke 'F'. One council official noted that effective service delivery in town is a project that requires very expensive solutions during a time of limited governmental assistance in terms of monetary resources. He further noted that as a result of political and economic meltdown, almost all the city council in the country are suffering from budget deficits and inadequate financial resources for development, general administration, service delivery and infrastructural maintenance.

One senior council official also argued that it is of paramount importance for the local community and the government to understand that by their very nature, local authorities are not profit – making organizations that can readily access funds and revenue from the open market.

He noted that; *“Our clientele are extremely poor to such an extent that most of them are still to pay their outstanding balances in service charges and water bills”*

He also complained that the local residents demand consistent service delivery from the city council yet they do not reflect their support in the allocation of resources and by the liberalization of tax revenues. Keiner (2006) noted that the challenge for sustainable urban development is to establish good governance. To him ideally governance should be based on the idea of *“social contract”*, in which the city council is determined through *“mutuality”*, where there is a reciprocal contract between the local residents and the local authority. This contract thus implies that the parties involved will have more of a *“win-win”* situation in their transactions such as service delivery .However, in Mucheke local residents were skeptical about the way the city council goes about its duties, complaining that the council is milking them of the little resources they have without reciprocating with adequate and quality service delivery. There is infrastructural backlog in the local municipality; hence to this end the researcher observed that the city council is suffering from serious service provision challenges of proportionate magnitudes. Infrastructure in Mucheke residential area was in a sorry state and lacked essential services and was poorly maintained. It also emerged in this study that some residents have responded to this deteriorating quality of public social services with payment boycotts of the service charges. While the city’s residential areas have expanded rapidly, in contrast the expansion of the social service delivery has not kept pace with the galloping demand; hence most residents in Mucheke have been facing unreliability in service provision despite paying for such services. Residents have argued that the failure of the city council and other related parastatals to delivery adequate public services is rooted in their management and administrative shortcomings. Mucheke residents have thus had to bear the brunt of having to cope with unreliable water supplies, lethargic waste collection, poorly lit streets and decomposing public roads and well as poor quality of social services. Most residents complained that they are also being unjustly billed by the city council. They noted that their meters are not being read correctly if at all and thus they are being charged for extremely high volumes of water which is sometimes much more than what some industrial areas are paying. A number of council houses especially those in Mucheke 'A' are in a dilapidated state since they have rarely been renovated since they were constructed. Sewerage could be visibly seen flowing from these houses and children could also be seen walking and playing with sewerage. This exposes such children to a multiplicity of diseases since this water is contaminated with germs. Residents argued that after the city council got leverage

to improve its service delivery from the multiple currency system which ushered in some economic stability, they were expecting this service delivery malaise to come to an end, but alas this has not been the case. Most residents could not hide their disgruntlement against the city council pertaining to the quality and quantity of service delivery.

One lady said; *“I think the council is taking us for granted because they have not been delivering, we have to endure long dry spells as water remains problematic despite the heavy rains that we have been receiving and our bins have not been collected for ages”*

Some few years ago the council used to decentralize their tuberculosis (TB) testing and treatment at their various clinics in town but these days it's no longer the case, with only a few of their clinics offering such services. This has meant that residents have to travel as far as Morgenster mission hospital for them to access better healthcare services. It is against such a scenario that one respondent argued that the ratepayers remain the gravel – wielding masters who deserve top – shelf social service delivery, although this has not been forthcoming from the Masvingo city council. Complaints have also been raised by the residents pertaining to the scarcity of car parking bays in the central business district (CBD). Due to the increasing number of motorists in town some people have been parking their vehicles far from their workplaces or far from where they want to go and conduct their business, exposing them to thieves. One resident of Mucheke argued that it's high time that the council should start delivering good quality services because people have been paying their bills in foreign currency for over a year now. One council official noted that at least residents should draw solace from the fact that the city council in some areas has begun showing flashes of resurgence after enduring the long and protracted insults of hyper-inflation. He noted that the council is working flat – out to ensure high quality and quantity service delivery. It also emerged that the council was planning on purchasing more refuse collection vehicles and expanding its water storage facilities which could no longer cater for the ever – increasing urban population and subsequently high demand for water. Residents have also been skeptical about the council budget which they have branded as money – making ventures meant to milk the little foreign currency that ratepayers are earning. Many residents complained that the city council expects the residents to pay a lion's share to their budgets through paying rates for water and refuse collection, yet these services have not been offered to them consistently. Despite the fact that the city council is charging exorbitant prices for services, it has fatally failed to prioritize crucial service delivery. The researcher also observed that there is need for expansion of road networks especially into town. During peak hours there is a lot of congestion since there is only one conventional way into the CBD through the Mucheke Bridge. Residential street roads in Mucheke as observed by the researcher needed urgent rehabilitation as most of the roads are littered with potholes. It could be clearly seen that most of the roads in Mucheke had outlived their lifespan and thus needed a complete overhaul. This was also echoed by one of the residents who argued that these roads should be resealed time and again to avoid recurrent potholes.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the narratives given by informants during interviews on their perceptions of the quality of service delivery, their views often provided diverse and sometimes conflicting perceptions but the overall impression however was that in general the dollarization has brought noticeable improvements to their lives but little in social service delivery. Research findings in

this study have convincingly demonstrated that there is an obvious disparity in the access of social services and other facilities between different income groups in Masvingo. The poor tended to have lower levels of access and poorer quality of services. This was evident in the quality and quantity of social services provided to Mucheke residents as compared to those of affluent areas like Rhodene, Target Kopje and Eastvale. These affluent residential areas tended to receive better social services both qualitatively and quantitatively. It was also consistently found that the price of water charged by the city council in Mucheke was a multiple of the price charged to other affluent residential areas, despite the fact that water supply in Mucheke is erratic. This was because the council workers in most cases used estimated rates without utilizing the actual meter readings. This disparity in accessibility and pricing system was a cause for concern to many respondents in Mucheke who felt that the city council was short-changing them by charging exorbitant prices for the services they rarely enjoy and receive. It is of paramount significance however that in the interests of sustainability, social services' pricing be based on marginal provision costs and there must also be a clear relationship between quantities consumed and amounts owed by consumers to the council. Due to the perpetual deterioration of service delivery in Mucheke residents ended up devising individual and collective coping strategies to deal with their problems. Some of the strategies however tended to have adverse after-effects on the health of the very same residents, especially dumping of garbage on open spaces and utilization of water from unprotected contaminated sources. It also emerged from the study that the bills being charged by the city council were too exorbitant and were not reflective or commensurate with the quality and quantity of services being offered by the city council. To that end most Mucheke residents were disillusioned by the quality and quantity of the council's service delivery system vis-à-vis the rates being paid, noting that the city largely remained in a state of dire disrepair with appalling service standards. Taking a comparative analysis, it was observed that during the pre-dollarization era most local residents in Mucheke were not finding it difficult to settling their bills to the city council. This was largely because most of them were into money burning, a practice which enabled them to reap loads of money in local currency. With the advent of dollarization of the economy, household utility bills began to swallow a lot of money despite erratic availability of social services to the residents in question.

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