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AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE FACTORS CONSTRAINING EFFICIENT SERVICE DELIVERY IN URBAN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN ZIMBABWE: THE CASE OF BULAWAYO CITY COUNCIL.

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ABSTRACT
The research is primarily about factors constraining efficient service delivery in urban local government of Bulawayo City Council. Local governments in Zimbabwe are constrained by both external and institutional (internal) factors in the delivery of efficient services. The main objectives of the study were to assess the state of service delivery and the identification of the factors constraining efficient service delivery in Bulawayo City Council. A multiple research approach was used. The study adopted a case study methodology where data was collected from Bulawayo City Council premises, Qualitative research approach was applied through the use of semi structured interviews and focus group discussions in data collection. Council documents and records were conducted with the council officials while the focus group discussions were used to collect data from the residents. The findings demonstrated that there is generally poor and unsatisfactory service delivery in Bulawayo City Council due to socio-economic, political and resource factors under which the local authority operates on. The local authority is affected by limited resources. Because of the adverse business environment, a number of companies have closed shops and those that remain are performing badly to the extent that they are not able to pay wages let alone licenses/rates to the local authorities. Key operations of many local authorities are crippled by shortage of essential, key skills. The economic crisis experienced in the country in the past ten years has pushed most professionals to find economic refuge in other countries leaving many inexperienced staff behind. The studies also found out that, while Council is guided by service delivery rules in the form of comprehensive mission statements and values which uphold the principles of good governance, the principles contained therein only exist on paper and are not fully adhered to. There are low levels of participation by the residents in the local government service delivery process. Little is also being done by the council officials to address the issue and include the residents’ opinions before taking any decision. The research found out that the low level of participation is responsible for lack of transparency and accountability hence many service delivery inefficiencies. Lack of transparency and accountability has created room for corruption and mishandling of public funds. The resources are not directed towards the pressing needs of the poor and other disadvantaged groups of society.