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**AN ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES' BUDGET FORMULATION PROCESS IN  
ZIMBABWE: A CASE OF BULAWAYO'S WARD 14**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE BACHELOR OF SOCIAL SCIENCE  
HONOURS DEGREE IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**

**MAY 2014**

## **ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to assess community participation in local government authorities' budget formulation process in Zimbabwe, a case of Bulawayo Ward 14. The study was carried out in the city of Bulawayo, specifically in Ward 14, which covers New Lobengula and a portion of Lobengula West suburbs. The study assessed the level of input from the communities in the formulation of the local government's budget. The study also demonstrated the reasons that drive the process of community participation in the formulation of the budget. The research also exposed the challenges that are encountered by the communities during the formulation process. The study triangulated quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Under the qualitative approach in-depth interviews were used. Interviews were conducted with key informants and selected influential people in the community. The quantitative approach utilized a questionnaire that was distributed to informants. Questionnaires were used to gather statistical information.

In line with this, qualitative and quantitative data was sought to guide against reliability and credibility. During the course of the study, the researcher reviewed the level of literacy on the budget formulation procedure with the intention to understand whether the people understand what they are doing, what is expected from them and how they can benefit from the process; and the challenges that they face during participation, what hinders their participation, what they think can be helpful to the communities so as to attain better results from the process and also explored other reasons that might be hindering the process and other issues that can be beneficial to the whole process. Thus conclusions regarding the study were outlined based on the data findings and related literature reviewed. However the researcher encountered a few challenges during the collection procedure.

The study revealed that there is a huge awareness of community participation as the people are well aware of the concept of community participation. It was also established that there is still lack of transparency and accountability of funds as the communities are not fully aware of what is happening as there are no mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the budget. The respondents attend these meetings because they want to know how the council is going to use their funds. The other reason that influences the communities to participate in these meetings is poverty. From the findings, it was gathered that the participation of the communities in the budget formation process is largely influenced by local authority. It was further revealed that the process does not reach its intended purpose mainly because there is no budget training prior to the consultation, communities

are not aware of their responsibilities and there is poor attendance in these meetings as a result of poor advertising.

There are also still a number of challenges that need to be addressed with regards to community participation in the budget formulation stage. These include budget illiteracy, financial constraints of the city council, mistrust among other challenges.