



CIVIL SOCIETY CONTRIBUTIONS TO DEVOLUTION IMPLEMENTATION IN ZIMBABWE

A Discussion Paper Presented to the Minister of Local Government Public Works and National Housing

Harare, 30 March 2021

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The paper was prepared by the Combined Harare Residents Association (CHRA) and the Institute for Young Women Development (IYWD) within the auspices of the Zimbabwe Devolution Campaign¹ CSOs and Residents Association for discussion with the Honourable Minister of Local Government Public Works and National Housing on devolution implementation in Zimbabwe. It outlines government efforts at devolution implementation, citizens' concerns at the implementation process and key recommendations aimed at improving the process.

1.2 CIVIL SOCIETY'S RESPONSE TO DEVOLUTION IMPLEMENTATION

Within the scope of the **Zimbabwe Devolution Campaign**, civil society recognizes its responsibility to research and articulate citizens' response to the path and progress of devolution implementation spearheaded by government. It is therefore on this basis that the Campaign is established. Zimbabweans generally expect substantive devolution of power and the Campaign contends that the constitution represents the height of citizen hope in democratic and devolved local governance in Zimbabwe. While, the Campaign appreciates the steps taken by government to implement devolution, it would like to make the following comments and positions.

1. Quota System to prioritize transformative participation

There is need for equal representation of women, young women, youth, people with disabilities and any other special needs groups in the composition of auxiliary structures of the provincial council and all elected and non-elected local authorities' structures.

2. Enactment of subsidiary laws and institutional frameworks that facilitate operationalization of devolution

Ministry to ensure the accelerated enactment of the Provincial and Metropolitan Councils Act in order to ensure there are clear devolution structures in place. The process of crafting devolution legislation must be participatory, inclusive and time-bound.

3. Devolution and democratization of development

The inter-ministerial cabinet committee is inaccessible to the general citizenry and therefore inappropriate as regards the facilitation of citizen participation necessary when embarking on a process of devolution implementation requiring state redesign with such far reaching implications on people's daily lives. It is also reasoned that central government cannot be an independent arbiter in a process of sharing power with other tiers where it is an interested party. *It is therefore recommended that government set up an independent body to preside over devolution implementation as this facilitates a more inclusive process which will gain greater public support.* There is need to ensure that devolution expands and democratizes spaces to facilitate effective participation of all groups in planning, formulation of by-laws/ordinances and budgeting. Devolved structures should aim to facilitate access to information for improved citizen participation, transparency and accountability. In line with the

¹ A coalition of Residents Associations and Civil Society Organisations advocating for a structured and inclusive process of devolution implementation in Zimbabwe.

principle of democratic participation, citizens should have the final say on the recall of elected officials

4. Devolution as a cross cutting governance principle

Devolution is not only a domain of local government. It should be extended to all service delivery functions including environment, natural resources governance, health, water, roads and infrastructure and the attendant fiscal resources to mitigate against unfunded mandate.

5. Recruitment and staffing

Recruitment of senior officials of local authorities and provincial councils should be done at the local level

6. Allocation and disbursement of devolution funds

There is need for government to promulgate a law for the “at least 5%” revenue sharing formula to allow for predictability of the funds that are to be disbursed to other tiers of government. Lack of clarity on the disbursement formulae will result in conflict between citizens and government and this requires enabling legislation to resolve. It would also appear that local authorities in their representative capacity of the local citizens don't have discretion on how the funds are used. Thus, accountability sways more to the top-down than bottom-up planning framework.

7. De-concentration of Central Government

The appointment of a Provincial Minister of State and Devolution in a governance and political space presided by a Provincial Council Chairperson is duplicitous with the potential to create a role conflict and is therefore undesirable apart from being an extra burden to the tax-payer. It is therefore recommended to dissolve the post of provincial Minister of State and Devolution.

Below are the undersigned organizations to this position paper:

Bulawayo Progressive Residents Association,
Chinhoyi Residents Trust,
Chitungwiza and Manyame Rural Residents Association,
Chitungwiza Residents Trust,
Combined Harare Residents Association,
Community Water Alliance,
Deaf women Included,
Epworth Residents Development Association,
Gweru Residents Forum
Institute for Young Women Development,
Kadoma Progressive Residents Association,
Local Government Trust,
Marondera Residents Association,
Masvingo Residents Alliance,
Norton Residents Alliance
Platform for Youth and Community Development
Rural Young Women's Network,
Simukai Residents Rural Residents,
United Chiredzi Residents and Ratepayers Association,
United Mutare Residents and Ratepayers Association,

Wedza Residents development Initiative,
WHANGE Residents Alliance,
Women in Law Southern Africa,
Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe,
Women in Leadership and Development
And
Zimbabwe Institute