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INTRODUCTION - Zimbabwe's 2023 Elections: Linking Elections, Democracy and Inclusive Development

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Elections, the formal process of selecting a person for public office, make a fundamental contribution to the entrenchment of democratic governance and development because of the ways in which they give citizens an opportunity to have a say in their governance and development (Gibbins et. al., 2020). In cases where electoral processes are organised in a transparent, accountable, inclusive and competitive way, elections give every citizen an opportunity to select leaders of their choice and to hold them accountable for their performance in office.

Zimbabwe, alongside Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia, South Sudan, Somaliland and Malagasy, is preparing to hold elections in 2023. Nigeria and Zimbabwe's elections have particularly gripped regional and global attention. These two nations have attracted attention, not simply because they are among important political and economic powerhouses in their respective regions. Nigeria is the biggest powerhouse in West Africa, while Zimbabwe is the third biggest economic, political and military powerhouse in Southern Africa after South Africa and Angola. The two countries have also attracted global attention mainly because their previous elections, particularly in the case of Zimbabwe's elections since 2000, they have been controversial (Muzondidya, 2022; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012; Onapajo & Balola, 2020).

Zimbabwe's 2023 elections are being held at a time when the world is beginning to ask more and more questions about the diminishing quality of elections and their significance in delivering change and creating opportunities for all citizens to participate in governance and development processes in an inclusive manner (Olukoshi, 2022; Fumunyoh, 2020; Luhrmann & Lindberg, 2019). The growing scepticism around elections across the world is emanating from the fact that despite all the hype that surrounds and accompanies elections, the capacity of elected governments to respond to the aspirations of their citizens by way of improved delivery of high quality social and economic services has not been evident (Golooba-Mutebi, 2002). Most governments that have emerged from these elections have struggled to fulfil or respond to the needs of the ordinary citizens which include the need to address challenges of growing unemployment, poverty and inequality, inadequate access to land, markets, healthcare, education, incomes, financing and the continued marginalisation of vulnerable communities, such as the poor, women, youth, people with disability and children, in political and economic development spaces and processes.

The failure by elected governments to address socio-economic and governance challenges, coupled with the unending scandals of corruption and abuse of public offices by elected officials, have led to a decline in citizen trust in politicians and governments. Across the world, there has been a persistent decline in the number of citizens who participate in elections mainly because of the growing decline in citizen trust in elections and elected leaders. Evidence from two studies published by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance in 2016 and 2019 revealed how voter turnout has been declining in Europe since the early 1980s (Beley, 2019) and across the globe since the beginning of 1990s (Solijonov, 2016). Against the backdrop of a continued decline in living standards across the West and the failure of most Western governments to adequately respond to increased demands for redistribution stemming from increasing inequality (Polacko, 2021), Europe has continued to experience low voter turnout in the 2020s with voter turnout for the

region averaging 65 percent (Nishizawa, 2022). The situation has been worse in the United States which has persistently recorded lower voter turnouts over the last few decades, with presidential elections consistently bringing out between 50 and 65 percent (Nishizawa, 2022).

Africa has not been spared by this global 'diminishing voters syndrome'. A recent study on voter turnout trends in Africa that was conducted using data from 317 presidential elections in 40 African countries over the period from 1960 to 2016 concluded that the economic downturn and regression in political accountability experienced in many African countries over the last couple of decades has resulted in declining voter turnout (Lynge & Coma 2022). The declining voter turnout, as aptly described by Yves Leterme "signals the deep problems democracies are facing today" and that "lower turnout suggests that fewer citizens consider elections the main instrument for legitimizing political parties' control over political decision-making" (Leterme, 2016). As Olukoshi has weighed in, "the consequence has been that even governments that claim legitimacy on the grounds of being popularly elected are actually propelled into office by a minority of citizens who bother to vote from among the minority who bother to register to vote" (Olukoshi, 2022).

Popular disaffection with the brutal ongoing energy and economic crises, establishment politics and economics has resulted in growing demands for political alternatives and the ousting of several incumbent leaders in Europe. Examples of leaders recently ousted because of popular discontentment include Boris Johnson who exited office in the United Kingdom in July 2022 and Mario Draghi who was replaced by the far right Giorgia Meloni as Prime Minister of

Italy in October 2022. From Portugal to Sweden, European countries are becoming harder to govern, and economic reforms more difficult to implement, as citizens continue to protest against their governments' failures to deal with a prolonged financial crisis (Taylor, 20 October 2015).

Growing public opposition to mass immigration, cultural liberalization, and the perceived surrender of national sovereignty to distant international bodies has resulted in the strengthening of populist parties and governments as more and more voters seem to be particularly attracted to the political rhetoric of the extreme right, which often blame minorities or foreigners for the current socio-economic crises (Galston, 8 March 2018). The arrival of the largest wave of refugees since the aftermath of World War Two in a context of sluggish recovery from the euro zone debt crisis and a new energy and food crisis sparked by the Russian-Ukrainian war, has accentuated the situation in Europe.

More and more people across the world, including those living in the global South, have been protesting against the widespread failure of elected leaders and governments to deliver on citizen expectations. For instance, financial instability, economic instability and growing inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean has sparked mass social protests plunging the region into political uncertainty and reflecting citizens' growing discomfort with the implementation of rightist neoliberal policies and public discomfort with the deficient role of governments, elites, and political groups to address citizens' social needs and promote redistribution (Penaherrera & Olalla, 2020). In Brazil, a raging economic crisis since 2014 that was exacerbated by the COVID 19 pandemic and resulted in soaring unemployment

and poverty, sparked mass anti-government protests which culminated in the defeat of the incumbent far right president, Jair Bolsonaro by the leftist former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in national elections held at the end of October 2022 (Ramani, 31 October 2022).

The African continent has not been left out of the anti-establishment wave that is sweeping across the world due to growing public discontent with politicians' failure to deliver on electoral promises. The patterns and outcomes of elections that have been held across the continent in the last few years, including South Africa's national and local government elections of May 2019 and 2021, respectively, Tunisia's elections of 2019, Zambia's elections of August 2021, Kenya's elections of March 2022 and Lesotho's elections of October 2022, all reflect the growing public frustration with elections and demands for improved service delivery and redressing social inequities (Bhoukars, 2019; EISA, 2019; Westhuizen, 2021; Shilaho 2022). The public turnout in these elections has generally been low, a possible indication of public disenchantment with elections and mainstream politics, while those citizens who have turned out to vote are opting for political outsiders rather than mainstream parties and their leaders who have proved unable to deliver improved economic and social prospects for the majority through their orthodox approaches to political and economic governance.

Furthermore, the plethora of disputes over electoral results held across the continent in the more recent past, including the elections held in Kenya and Angola in August 2022, the Gambian parliamentary elections held in April 2022, the Senegalese parliamentary elections of July 2022 and the Ugandan elections of 2021,

have all raised important questions about the politics of elections and their significance in building inclusive democratic societies that create opportunities for all citizens to effectively participate in governance and policy making. In recent years, elections have been marred by political violence and disputation of the results. According to evidence from an election violence database that was released by a team of conflict analysts in 2021, while the median annual incidents of election violence going back to 1975 has been 30 percent, 54 percent of national elections that took place in 2020 had some form of political violence (Besaw, 18 February 2021).

A pattern that has become increasingly familiar in Africa when countries go into elections is the outbreak of violence among supporters of the different political groupings before, during and after elections. There has also been a resurgence of coups and rise of armed groups, using Islamism to mobilise popular discontent against the failure by elected governments to deliver basic social and economic services to the masses. Mozambique, Mali, Chad and Guinea have all battled Islamist insurgents gaining popular support by each day in the past few years, while Burkina Faso has experienced two coups within a space of a year. Electoral contests have often created or exacerbated divisions within most countries, undermining social cohesion in Africa's fragile nations. Critics of African elections have further noted that these contests have failed to produce accountable leaders and governments because they "are almost never driven by considerations of what a particular political grouping stands for or what it offers the voters in terms of plans for country and society." (Golooba-Mutebi, 2002).

As Zimbabweans go for another crucial election in 2023, the main question being asked

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by many is how this election will help to resolve the country's critical challenges of political and economic instability, deepening polarisation, growing impoverishment of citizens and increased marginalisation of various social groups from national development. Evidence from recent research reveals how more and more people are becoming disillusioned by the country's political, economic and social direction, with most citizens expressing that their needs are being neglected by the elected leaders and governments (Afrobarometer, 2021; International Republican Institute, 2021). Public disengagement from governance and development processes and diminished collective action by citizens has become part of citizens' response to their feelings of marginalisation and neglect of needs (International Republican Institute, 2021).

A growing number of Zimbabweans are losing confidence in elections as a mechanism for bringing leadership change at both national and local levels. This is partly because of the growing trust deficit in representative leadership that is strongly linked to increased corruption and irresponsible leadership among parliamentary and local government officials. The strong allegations of electoral fraud and growing list of disputed election results since 2000 (Brickhill, 2018) are also fuelling public disillusionment in elections. The disillusionment is fuelling voter apathy, and most citizens feel that it is pointless to vote because it won't change anything politically or socio-economically (Muzondidya & Mushonga, 2022).

Given the above, the main issue of concern is that the 2023 election may be another event to waste public resources as most citizens decide not to vote. Without greater focus on policy discourse, political parties and candidates might also take the occasion to issue grand rhetoric statements and unrealistic electoral promises isolated from the current realities. The special issue on Zimbabwe tries to make the 2023 election much more meaningful by promoting greater debate about the link between elections and inclusive democracy and development. Political, social and economic inclusion in development, governance and decision making has become one of the key hallmarks of democratic governance over the last few decades. The special issue problematizes the issues of inclusivity in Zimbabwe's political and socio-economic governance processes. The issue specifically looks at the political, social, economic pillars of inclusion, and discusses both shortcomings and opportunities for improving inclusivity in Zimbabwe's governance and policy making processes. It also proposes what an inclusive society should look like in order to enhance the country's democracy and development.

Indeed, there is currently no consensus on what an inclusive society looks like or even agreement on the need to work towards one. The intellectual tradition has so far relegated itself to focusing on what has been and rarely postulates on what could be. The special issue seeks to combine the 'what has been" with a 'what could be' approach. What cannot be debated is that democracy and development cannot be sustainable if it excludes large groups of citizens on the basis of population profile issues such as location, class, age, sex, race and ethnicity. Inclusivity is also judged by the extent to which different categories of people contribute to democratic and development processes, as well as the extent of their equal access in benefiting from the fruits of democracy and development (Raharja, 2019, p. 6). Social inclusion is the guarantee of social and political participation for all citizens, part of the living democratic culture and respectively the basis of a functioning democracy (Raharja, 2019, p. 6).

The wide range of articles in the special issue discuss the subject of inclusivity in the various spheres of Zimbabwe's political and economic governance. The specific areas analysed by the issue include the political cultures and practices, the local governance practices, the rural governance and land tenure systems, the financial services and the economic development funding models of the country. The general theme running through these articles is that Zimbabwe's governance and development policies, cultures and practices are largely exclusionary, and rarely and do not promote active citizen participation in governance and policy making processes. In cases where government and other key political players attempt to be inclusive in their governance and development processes or to engage citizens in decision-making, the initiatives rarely consider the diverse interests of the country's different population whose needs and interests are always mediated by differences of class, gender, age, geographic location, occupation, (dis)ability, race and ethnicity.

Eldred Masunungure and Zvoushe's analysis of the existing forms of governance and policy making politics in the country argues that Zimbabwe is characterised by the vertical modality of rule where policies are crafted unilaterally at the apex of the party-state with little or no input from affected stakeholders – including ordinary citizens - and then fed to citizens who are therefore treated as dispensable policy implementers or consumers. Their contention is that the exclusionary forms of politics and policymaking in Zimbabwe's governance culture is a legacy of the country's development history: the inherited colonial governance system which was hierarchical and largely excluded blacks from participation in governance and policy making on the basis of race and the liberation war governance and decision-making practices which were based on military authoritarian control. Inheriting governance cultures from these legacies, the duo further argues, the postcolonial government of Zimbabwe has relied on centralised governance approaches where the central government and the ruling party unilaterally make governance decisions and formulate policy without consulting citizens and other key stakeholders, such as business and civil society. They propose the adoption of a 'distributed problem-solving model' approach to inclusivity which acknowledges and prioritises the unique needs and interests of different groups of the public in governance and policy making.

Analysing the institutional frameworks in Zimbabwe's local governance laws, policies, structures and processes, Delta Sivalo's paper argues that although Zimbabwe has constitutionalized citizen inclusion in local government decision making processes, citizens face multiple barriers that curtail their effective participation in local governance processes and outcomes. The discussion draws its theoretical insights from the rich body of recent literature on inclusion by development researchers and practitioners (Kontos, 2017; Ursin & Lotherington 2018; Virendrakumar et al., 2018) who have deployed the concepts of "political inclusion" and "relational citizenship", understood as the centrality of social group belonging in shaping individuals' relationship to citizenship rights and the larger structures of rule and belonging, to interrogate current approaches to public

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participation in decision making. Using these nuanced theoretical insights, the paper argues that while the Zimbabwe's local governance system and processes have made efforts to promote the participation of marginalised groups, such as women, youth, and people with disabilities (PWDs), in local governance and development processes, the emphasis on participation rather than active engagement of these marginalised groups in both civil society and state centric inclusion initiatives has limited their participation to tokenism. Sivalo further argues that political polarisation and the structure of local and national politics in Zimbabwe further creates a disabling environment for (political) inclusion to be fully achieved. His discussion contends that in highly polarised political environments such as Zimbabwe, those who exist outside partisan politics, alongside vulnerable groups like women, youth, PWDs, Lesbian, Gays, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) groups and the poor, are largely marginalised from electoral contests, local authority planning and policy making. Arguing that the starting point for inclusivity should be the nuancing of the diverse ways in which citizenship, marginality and inclusion manifest themselves in different political contexts, Sivalo recommends the mainstreaming of diversity in the overall framework and practice of local governance and decision making.

The following article, by Tendai Murisa, looks at the political and economic governance framework in Zimbabwe's rural areas, specifically the communal/customary land tenure system, and how it affects citizens' freedom to make choices and capacity to effectively participate in democratic governance processes. He argues that Zimbabweans living in customary land tenure jurisdictions, who happen to constitute the

majority of the national population, not only live under the autocratic rule of traditional leaders but are also economically disempowered to effectively participate in democratic governance. His detailed analysis of the Customary Tenure and Traditional Authority systems reveals how these systems have continue to conspire to deny Zimbabweans who dwell in customary tenure areas direct relationships with the modern justice system, i.e. civil courts, citizenship rights enshrined in the national Constitution and economic independence. His analysis reveals how Traditional Authorities have abused customary tenure to entrench personal power in their jurisdictions and how customary tenure has stifled prospects for democratisation in rural areas. Murisa argues that the ways in which land is held in customary tenure areas and the existing subsidy regimes have played a critical role in restricting rural residents' autonomy to make autonomous political choices. He further argues that the autonomy to choose is mostly compromised in contexts where access to productive resources such as land, markets, mechanical, financial, and physical capital are negotiated through subservience to traditional authorities who are politically affiliated. His main recommendation is that the tenuous relationship between land tenure and democracy in rural areas is perhaps the most compelling for reforms to promote inclusivity.

The last two articles of this special issue focus on the critical issues of the policy choices made by a country in its economic development funding model and the provision of financial services to its citizens in its attempt to promote inclusive development. The first article on this thematic focus area, jointly written by Tendai Chikweche, Belinda Chaora and Rebekah Cross, looks at the issue of Zimbabwe's financial inclusion

policies and practices. The article draws its analytical arguments largely from a study on the financial inclusion of micro-small and medium enterprises in Zimbabwe that was conducted by SIVIO Institute in 2021. The three authors argue that while there has been some notable progress in improving the enabling environment for financial inclusion in Zimbabwe, notably in such key areas as improving the policy environment, improving women's access to financial services and integrating digital technologies to enhance financial inclusion, there are still multiple barriers to inclusion. The wide range of barriers include the limited commitment by political stakeholders to articulate deliberate policies and programmes that support citizen-centred financial inclusion, lack of flexible and affordable financing, harsh compliance laws and the general lack of information on the part of citizens, particularly marginalised groups of women and youth, on the sourcing and effective use of financial products and services. The trio paper proposes a framework for a new form of thinking about financial inclusion, which involves a deliberate process of engagement of citizens in co-designing and co-creating intervention and impact measurement strategies that are responsive to the lived circumstances of the citizens and enterprise.

Drawing on both empirical evidence of the growth of local philanthropy in developing countries and findings of recent

assessments on the effectiveness of foreign aid in promoting inclusive growth and socio-economic development in recipient countries, Eddah Jowah and Bhekinkosi Moyo argue that Zimbabwe's economic resilience in the last two decades of economic isolation from bilateral and international multilateral funding institutions and limited inflows of foreign aid, provides empirical evidence of the critical role that local philanthropy can play in promoting inclusive socio-economic development in developing countries. Their paper provides evidence about the phenomenal growth of associations and informal networks of Zimbabweans, both local and in the diaspora, that have emerged to provide socio-economic support and services to communities in the last two decades of economic crisis and declining capacity of the state to provide essential services, such as health, education, transport, to communities. They show how financial remittances from Zimbabweans have not only increased in the last few years, with recorded inflows running into slightly above USD1 billion between 2020 and 2022, but how these remittances have kept both families and the country going. The duo maintain that the resilience and solidarity displayed by Zimbabwean citizens over the last two decades, including the last two years of the COVID 19 pandemic, serves to highlight the potential that citizens have in spearheading inclusive growth and development for their countries and communities.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

An Analysis of the Existing Form of Governance Politics in Zimbabwe and Proposals for a New Kind of Policymaking

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses Zimbabwe's existing governance politics, specifically focusing on the politics of policy making. We argue that the existing form of governance politics in Zimbabwe is characterised by the vertical modality of rule whereby policies are crafted unilaterally at the apex of the party-state with little or no input from affected stakeholders – including ordinary citizens - and then fed to citizens who are therefore treated as dispensable policy takers. We further argue that the current forms of politics and policymaking are similarly exclusionary in nature, relying on centralised governance approaches where the central government and the ruling party unilaterally make governance decisions and formulate policy without consulting citizens and other key stakeholders. Finally, we propose the adoption of a 'distributed problem-solving model' which acknowledges and prioritises the unique needs and interests of different social groups in governance and policy making.

Key words: **inclusive policymaking, citizens, governance, Zimbabwe**

INTRODUCTION

Two conceptions of politics and policy making compete with each other for dominance in the governance of the political community; one is vertical and the other horizontal. In this paper, the former is treated as 'old' style, unreformed and even predatory politics while the latter is what in prevailing literature is increasingly referred to as 'collaborative governance'. We argue that the existing form of governance politics in Zimbabwe is characterised by the vertical modality of rule whereby policies are crafted unilaterally at the apex of the party-state with little or no input from affected stakeholders – including ordinary citizens - and then fed to citizens who are consequently treated as dispensable policy takers. To illuminate into this argument, the study is divided into two broad parts. The first part of the essay unpacks aspects of the existing forms of politics in Zimbabwe while the second part considers proposals for a new kind of policymaking.

Our discussion implicitly juxtaposes two forms of politics and their attendant two forms of policymaking. Further, we contend that the current forms of politics and policymaking are less than good enough largely due to their exclusionary nature and should transition towards better politics of inclusivity that in turn lead to inclusive policy making. The challenge, therefore, is to move from the politics and policy-making of exclusion to that which is anchored in inclusiveness. Our discussion mainly posits that at the root of Zimbabwe's complex and long-running crisis is the problem of exclusionary governance whose malign effects ramify throughout the country's political economy and society.

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

The most significant historically rooted political fact about Zimbabwe politics is its exclusionary texture, which is integrally linked to two sources. The first source relates to 90 years of settler-colonialism whereby race [Blacks vs Whites] was the organising basis for exclusion and inclusion (Gray, 1960; Bowman, 1973; Bratton, 2014). The politics of exclusion of certain population groups on the basis of race, gender, age and other social group categorization was consolidated in the post-independence era, first under the founding president, the long-ruling and now late Robert Mugabe, and later under Mugabe's long-time lieutenant and confidante, Emmerson Mnangagwa who took the political reins in November 2017.

However, after independence, the basis for exclusion shifted from race to other fault lines such as ethnicity, regionalism, gender, nepotism and increasingly social class. The primordial variables like ethnicity, regionalism and nepotism as the basis for inclusion and exclusion have assumed prominence in the Second Republic under Emmerson Mnangagwa (Ndoro, 2022; Matiashe, 2021; Kanyenze, 2021; Masunungure, 2020).

The Rhodesian government's exclusionary tendency in decision making politics was also reinforced during the protracted war of liberation of the 1970s that not only took a racial faultline, but also strengthened authoritarian politics (Masunungure, 1998; Bratton and Masunungure, 2008). The armed struggle infused into the liberation movement a militaristic 'command and control' modality of doing things which leaves little room for consultation of civilians and those outside the command structures.

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The militaristic command model of governance and decision-making politics was accentuated after the November 2017 coup when the military placed themselves at the heart of Government. Under current military rule, according to Rekopantswe Mate, Zimbabwe's governance system has been dominated by "triumphant hegemonic militarized masculinity", liberation war struggle credentials have been instrumental in determining access to public office for a "shrinking clique of men" and women and young men have been further marginalized from governance and policy making processes (Mate, 2019). The military way of doing things is also now more self-evident in some ministries that are or were headed by retired senior military officers as is the case with the Ministry of Health where the Minister (Rtd General Constantino Chiwenga) and both the Deputy Minister and the Permanent Secretary are ex-military officers. The Ministry of Agriculture also bears the footprints of the militarisation of civilian institutions and processes and Command Agriculture bears testimony to this. From its inception, Command Agriculture has always been run and commanded by military officers, mostly middle level officers (Mwatwara and Nyakudya, 2021).

Exclusion is therefore a historical legacy that runs through the political and policy life of Zimbabwe since its founding as a modern state in 1890. In sum, the history of Zimbabwe's political economy is the history of exclusion, with ghastly consequences for social cohesion and inclusive national development. Exclusion, it can be asserted, is the big elephant in the room. Further, and worryingly is the fact that exclusion is now a systemic feature, exhibiting itself in virtually every facet of Zimbabwean lives. Today, polarisation born out of an exclusionary modality of governing, is one of the most enduring and

problematic features of Zimbabwe. Empirical survey evidence in the last decade confirms the deep and deepening polarisation in Zimbabwe. Afrobarometer data shows that Zimbabwe is the most politically polarized society among all the 30+ Afrobarometer countries (Bratton and Masunungure, 2018). The analysis of Afrobarometer data by Bratton and Masunungure (2018) concludes that:

"
Zimbabwe represents an extreme case of political polarization. In short, Zimbabwe's profound levels of partisan polarization lead not only the Southern Africa region, but also the continent (Bratton and Masunungure 2018, p.12).

In order to understand why Zimbabwe has remained in this exclusionary mode of governance which has resulted in this deep polarization, it is important to have conceptual clarity about the actual nature of the country's governance problem. More specifically, it is about understanding the intrinsic link between politics and its most important output, public policy.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: BACK TO ARISTOTLE

To be clear, public policy and politics are conjoined twins, though analytically separable. They codetermine each other. As a consequence, it is the quality of politics and public policy in a society that determines whether its citizens are happy or sombre. Critically, because public policy comes out of politics, seldom can we have good public policy from bad politics. So, the dictum should be: 'Seek ye first good politics, and all other things will follow'. The question that

comes up is whether the existing form of politics 'good politics' leads to good policymaking. This problematic is not a contemporary one; it is as ancient as civilization as is succinctly articulated in the works of ancient Greek philosophers such as Aristotle (see Miller, 2022).

Aristotle, the classical Greek philosopher wrote his ageless Politics (350BC) widely considered in Western political philosophy as one of the world's most important works in the field. He famously declared that "man is by nature a political animal", just as 'he' is a social animal (Barker, p.28). Aristotle rightfully points to how people are predestined to live as socio-political beings and that it is a vital imperative for citizens to engage in political and social life in search of what the ancient Greeks referred to as the 'good political life'. In other words, Aristotle recognised and agitated for citizen agency, an orientation that is difficult to express in a repressive political environment.

For Aristotle, good politics "...is the way that people from different backgrounds and with diverse views manage to negotiate their clashing interests in order to solve public problems." (Aristotle as cited in Idasa, 2009). Even more than two thousand years before, Aristotle recognised inclusion as a defining feature of good politics and a pathway to the good political life (Idasa, 2009).

We mention Aristotle for the simple reason that, he, together with many other ancient political thinkers like Confucius were acutely aware that societies thrive if they are anchored on good and inclusive politics. They were also attuned to the fact that societies suffer if they are based on bad or exclusive politics and that is why Aristotle proposed his six-fold regime

classification, comprising three bad regimes and three good ones, as depicted in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Type of Regime

A NUMBER OF RULERS	B CORRECT GOOD	C DEVIANT PERVERTED
One ruler	Monarchy/ royalty	Tyranny/ despotism
	Supremely virtuous men	Rule maintained by force
Few rulers	Aristocracy	Oligarchy (force/corruption)
Many rulers	**Polity** (glorious mean)	Democracy (rule by mobs)
	Stable middle class government	Anarchy, degenerate by nature

Of the six types of regimes or constitutions, Aristotle preferred polity, which he regarded as the best average and workable constitution (the "Golden Mean") under most circumstances familiar to human communities. Polity is a form of democracy in which many participate in ruling, and they do so for the public good, that is, for the good of both the rich and the poor. It is a constitution that balances the aspirations of the rich and the poor to the effect that neither group is able to grasp control of the state to further its own ends at the expense of the other.

Going by Aristotle's political concepts, it would be plausible to argue that contemporary Zimbabweans are living under one of Aristotle's perverted regimes or constitutions depicted under 'C' column in Table 1. This kind of regime is based on the old paradigm of politics of command and control where those at the apex of power

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assume that they have a monopoly to govern and know best how to do so. They are the policy makers in the exclusivist sense of the term while those outside the heart of Government constitute the policy takers. In terms of policymaking, this translates to a vertical and linear modality of rule where policies are dictated from above and flow in a hierarchical fashion through various tiers until they get to the bottom of the ladder.

Theoretically, this exclusionist governance style is associated with a conceptualisation of politics that Robert Dahl, an eminent American political scientist, called the 'lump of power fallacy' (Dahl, 2002). This is a situation whereby power is thought of as a "single, solid, unbreakable lump" that can be passed from one person to another but cannot be shared. In his seminal book titled Modern Political Analysis (2002), Dahl explains this monopolistic and binary mode of thinking about power when articulating that:

" Either one has the power or one has no power". When power is conceived of as a value, it has only two values: 0 or 1. In sum, "When power is thought of as a lump ... it can be distributed in only one way: some have all the power, and the rest have none (Dahl, 2002 p.26).

ZIMBABWE'S POLICY MAKING POLITICS

The tragedy of Zimbabwe's politics, like that of many other African countries, has a lot to do with the old-style politics and the attendant centralist policy making, that is, the dichotomous view of power. In this case, those in leadership positions in the ruling party and in the state (often the two are conflated) i.e., the 'chefs' hold

all the power. This is essentially why others have criticized the 'winner-take-all' or a zero-sum game of electoral politics whereby, the winner takes all that Zimbabwe has followed since independence in 1980. Ironically, the attempt to mitigate the winner-takes all by introducing a quota system in the 2013 Constitution and injecting proportional representation into the electoral system diminished the number of women nominated for constituency-based seats as political parties preferred male candidates for constituency seats (Hamandishe, 2018). This was the case in 2018 and is likely to be repeated in the 2023 parliamentary elections as well as local councils which now also benefit from quotas for both women and the youth. In practical terms and in the context of Zimbabwe politics, this means that when the ruling ZANU-PF party gains and exercises all the power, all other parties and political actors have no power. By extension, policy-making is also informed by this paradigm of exclusion. Those in power 'eat' while those outside power 'starve'. This kind of politics is a recipe for rancorous power politics and produces deep discontent among those who are 'out' and are not eating against those who are 'in' and are eating. The land redistribution programme is a case that aptly illustrates this point. Several studies conducted have shown how the Fast Track Land Redistribution Programme has been implemented on a partisan and exclusionary basis, with issues of race, ethno-regionalism, gender and class often used to exclude others. While it is an unstated policy, the reality on the ground shows that it is not enough to be a Zimbabwean to be eligible to get land from the state, the custodian of all agricultural land. In addition to one being a bona fide citizen, one also has to be a member of the ruling party and dangle the party card to be considered as a beneficiary of the land redistribution programme

(Kanyenze, 2021 and Muzondidya, 2007). In exclusionist politics, not only is the ruling class the sole decision-makers, they are also the sole resource allocators. President Mnangagwa captured this ZANU PF majoritarian approach to governance politics emphatically in one of his public addresses delivered in 2020. He declares:

" We must be respected. We are the majority. We are the people. We are the government. We are the army. We are the air force. We are the police. We are everything you can think of. We determine who can do mining in Zimbabwe, we determine who can construct a railway line in Zimbabwe. We determine who can build a road in Zimbabwe. No any other party can do so.[1]

The majoritarian and exclusionary form of politics and policymaking can be modelled by modifying a ground-breaking model of politics developed by David Easton in his book, A Systems Analysis of Political Life.

For Easton, politics is about 'the authoritative allocation of values for society as a whole'. It is instructive to note that Easton's definition of politics is also his definition of policy illustrating the symbiotic relationship between politics and policy. His model, as is clear from Figure 1, tries to describe the American democratic policy making process. It has five components: the environment, inputs; the political system, outputs and feedback.

ENVIRONMENT

ENVIRONMENT
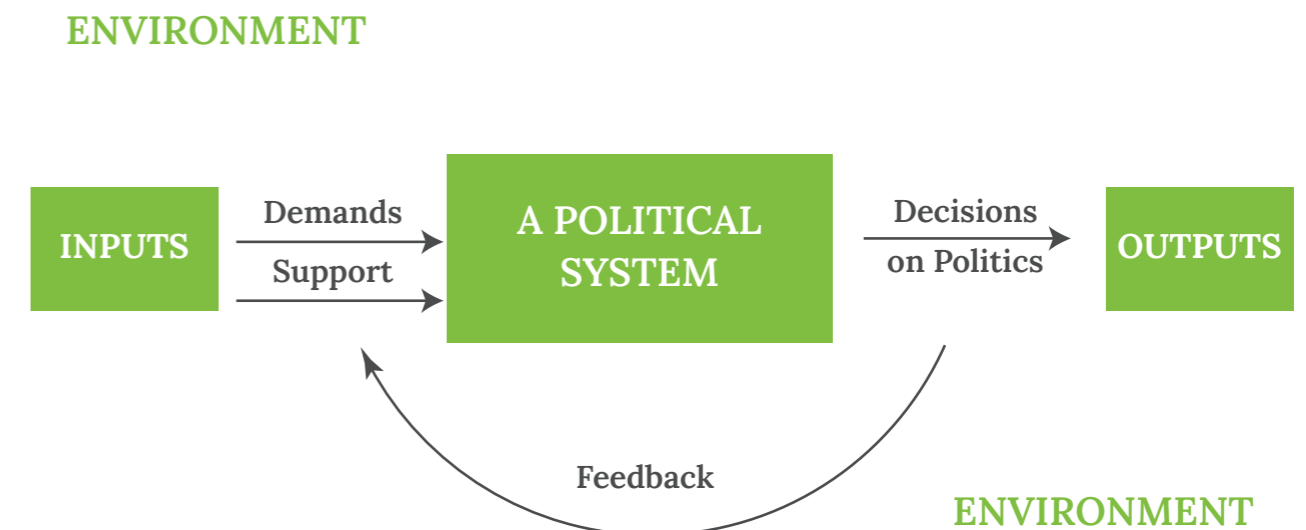
Figure 1: David Easton's Simplified Systems Model of Politics and Policy Making

Source: David Easton (1965, p.32).

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Easton postulates that people in the environment making demand on their policy makers to deal with a whole array of public problems that the citizens have and which they raise for the attention of the policy makers. Therefore, there are demands from citizens to the political system where the decision makers deliberate on the demands and process some of them into outputs in the form of public policy, programmes and projects. These outputs feed back into the environment where the people who made demands in the first place express satisfaction with the policies or programmes or they express hostility if the outputs are unsatisfactory.
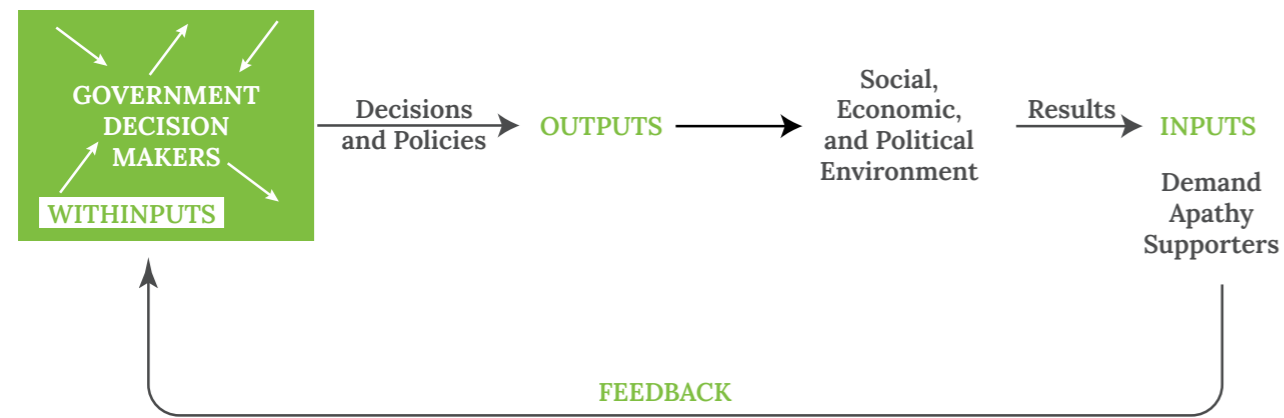
Source: Roskin et. Al. (1988, p.24).

Figure 2: A Modification of Easton's Model of the Political System and Policy Making

This America-centred model is found wanting when it is applied to less democratic countries. In Figure 2, we see how Easton's model is rightfully modified to discern the dynamics of policy making in a more closed and opaque polity like Zimbabwe where, instead of decision makers (e.g., the Zimbabwe Government) waiting for demands from the public, they instead originate the demands. Thus, the conversion box or the 'black box', comes first in the model to illustrate the priotisation in the sequencing; the public reacts only later rather than initiating the policy making process. We see in the box, a lot of demand making inside the heart of power and government. This is the engine room of policymaking and those inside the conversion box actually generate demands within (hence 'withinputs') and process them to produce outputs in the form of decisions and policies. In other words, the policy makers do not wait for demands to come from citizens, instead, they unilaterally produce demands of their own, process them and produce outputs. The starkest illustration of such unilateralist policy making was in the crafting of an array of anti-Covid regulations and Statutory Instruments which the public had no option but to comply with without having contributed to their formulation. Often the effect of such regulations was that they worsened vulnerabilities of both communities and individuals (Magocha, 2021).

Significantly and appropriately, the conversion box should now also be labelled 'Black Box' to demonstrate the opaqueness of the process. Practically, this is the policymaking process taking place inside the Cabinet. In Zimbabwe, the post-Mugabe regime has thrown some light into the dark box by organising post-Cabinet media briefings where one or more ministers (often the Minister of Information) address the media, informing them of the major decisions that the Cabinet deliberated on. This is clearly a big improvement but the partial transparency is being exercised on the output side while on the inputs side, the policy elites do it themselves, consistent with the exclusionist and unilateralist governance style. The ensuing question is whether this is how it should be and the second part of this study is an attempt to answer the question.

In organising human societies, two distinguished paradigms have often stood in opposition to each other. The first defers to the elite as the guiding stars of society and uniquely gifted to rule. As has happened throughout history, this form of politics and policymaking is exclusionary and often, and perhaps inevitably, degenerates into autocracy and tyranny. The second paradigm defers to the inclusionary school of governance where power and governance are shared and the following discussion illuminates into this paradigm

THE CENTRALIST POLICYMAKING LEGACY

Experiences have shown that in the practice of policymaking, over time policy actors come to be associated with distinct styles of policy making to the extent of creating a tradition and definable historical trajectory. When that happens, observers and analysts talk of 'national policy styles' (Howlett & Tosun, 2021) that come to be associated with specific countries and political regimes. In the Zimbabwean context, the national policy style (or approach) should be appreciated from the country's historical background. Postcolonial policymaking approaches in Zimbabwe exhibit strong legacies of both the traditional authority of chiefs and headmen, and the colonial government's authority. Although distinct, the two systems of rulership relied on centralised and unitary systems of governance where the centre unilaterally made decisions and formulated policy without consultations with the base. As a matter of fact, the colonial state was not democratic neither was the traditional leadership system. The two retained hallmarks of authoritarianism, which explained the sidelining of the grassroots in the governance matrix.

Looking at post-independence governance experiences in Zimbabwe, it is apparent that the government has maintained the path of centralism in policymaking that has seen many instances of unilateral policy decisions. For Zwizwai, Kambudzi & Mauwa (2004), the whole scenario points to partisanship in action where the policymaking approach adopted by the post-independence government is based on a "partocracy system", which denotes the dominance of a hegemonic political party that does not only conflate its structures

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and governmental ones (the 'party-state phenomenon'), but also subordinates official state structures to the supremacy of the party. In such a scenario broad-based participation and engagement becomes partisan and not necessarily democratic and equitable.

Sectors such as local government provide evidence of deep-seated centralism where the central government is not showing any interest in relinquishing control over local authorities, which explains the extensive powers that the Minister of Local Government enjoys, mostly at the expense of local councils. Despite the constitutional provision for the implementation of devolution, the central government still retains a tight grip on local government, particularly urban local authorities. There is plain denial of the deserved, constitutionally sanctioned autonomy of local authorities. This is despite the fact that on the occasion of his inauguration, President Mnangagwa articulates the following promise:

" As per our pledge during the campaign, my government will be implementing the constitutional provisions with regards to devolution of government powers and responsibilities. Provinces will now be expected to plan and grow their provincial economies (Sunday News, 2018).

It is now more than four years into his tenure, but all the promises on devolution remain unfulfilled. The government has paid lip-service to the devolution agenda and to date, the provincial and metropolitan councils that, according to the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act of 2013, should run provinces are yet to be installed. Nyikadzino &

Madhekeni (2022) conclude that the scenario of devolution in Zimbabwe pits two competing forces: the constitutionally granted subnational autonomy on the one hand, and the unrelenting strong central control on the other. Hence progress or lack thereof on devolution depends on the dynamics involving the two forces in question.

Outside the centralism that characterises the government's modus operandi in the local government sector, cases of unilateralism and centralism abound in other sectors and policy cases. Some scholars such as Makaye and Mapuva (2016) have criticized the government for failing to consult the public in its preparation of macro-policy frameworks and national blueprints such as the ZIM-ASSET (2013-2018). In other aspects such as labour issues, the government has on numerous occasions acted unilaterally on the remuneration of civil servants. The unilateralism has persisted despite the existence of negotiation platforms for labour issues. Such platforms are often ignored or completely disregarded. In a clear case of open disregard of negotiations in labour issues, in the year 20218 the Vice President Constantino Chiwenga once fired 16 000 nurses in public hospitals and clinics who were striking for better remuneration (The Guardian, 2018). In the education sector, the government unilaterally crafted a new education curriculum in the year 2015 and this was done without consulting the relevant constituencies and stakeholders. Some of the consequences of the lack of consultation surfaced at the implementation stage when the demands of the new curriculum were not matched with resource capacities on the ground. In cases like these, lack of consultation normally contributes to policy failure.

In 2022, the government, through the Minister

of Local Government, July Moyo, imposed a scandalous waste-to-energy deal that has come to be known as the "Pomonagate" or "Wastegate". According to Shumba (2022):

" From the evidence on the project, there was never any consultations done by the government, City of Harare or Geogenix BV [contractor] before the implementation of the project (p.6).

To confirm the lack of public consultations on the deal, there was a public outcry among Harare residents, resulting in petitions to the Minister of Local Government by residents' associations. A Member of Parliament for Harare North, Alan Markham proceeded to write a court application to the High Court appealing to have the deal cancelled citing its unsustainability and long-term harm on the finances of council and the paying residents. These practical cases serve to demonstrate the extent of the damage caused as a result of top-down, elitist policymaking practices in the Zimbabwean context.

TOWARDS INCLUSIVE POLICYMAKING

Against the background of policy making process that are dominated by the elite, bucking the trend of elitism calls for an amplification of grassroots voices. The involvement of grassroots citizens has to go beyond the usual window-dressing civic engagement practices that have thus far, characterised policy making approaches. The weakness of the traditional policy process has been its failure to appreciate that processes of policy designing are deliberative and collaborative, and not top-down and non-inclusive. Unearthing these issues opened an opportunity for a paradigm shift towards the

involvement of the governed in the exercise of policymaking authority. Available scholarly literature, however, shows that the inclusive policymaking approach has been deployed mostly with a bias on marginalised populations, and not necessarily taking a 'whole-of-society' perspective (Lombe & Sherraden, 2008). Generally, the inclusive policymaking approach overlaps significantly with concepts such as "collaborative governance" (Ansell & Gash, 2007), "crowdsourced policymaking" (Aitamurto & Chen, 2017), participatory governance (Bussu, Bua, Dean & Smith, 2022), "beneficiary participation" (Makumbe, 1996), "social inclusion" (Açıkgöz, Haudenhuyse & Aşçı, 2019), among several others.

Inclusive policymaking is not an entirely new approach. Previously in July 2005, the United Nations conducted a workshop under the theme, "Towards an Inclusive Society: Shaping the Policy Process". The workshop delved into issues of inclusivity in the public policymaking practice. Over the years, inclusive policymaking has invariably been thrown around and applied to policy domains ranging from gender, disability, development, education, human capital development and many other forms of policy domains. More recently, the concept has come to be counted among critical issues that are "...at the forefront of the 21st century development agenda" (Beacon, Murthy & Kumar 2022, p.1). What emerges from a cursory review of available literature, however, is that while the approach has been in existence for quite some time now, the existing problem has to do with its successful application in practice. Results of various analyses point to the persistence of an exclusionary policymaking trajectory in many countries (Tuparevska, Santibáñez & Solabarietta, 2020).

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A re-configured policy making process envisaged in this study accords citizens a higher role as co-players and equal partners in policy development, as opposed to passive recipients of policy decisions imposed on them from above. It espouses inclusivity with the intention of embedding people-driven approaches within public decision-making processes and entrenching genuine representativeness at policy level. In this sense, inclusive policymaking becomes some kind of a 'distributed problem-solving model' which acknowledges and prioritises the public as a critical player in governance practice. Inclusivity in policymaking, if executed effectively, comes with notable merits. Involving affected populations and opening the participation process is in line with line with March and Olsen's (1998) concept of "logic of appropriateness" which points to the generation of appropriate solutions to problems because the process of searching for the solution involved exchanges between official policy actors and affected populations from the start. With the logic of appropriateness of policy solutions also comes the legitimacy of solutions. Legitimacy is born out of the deliberative and argumentative process involving citizens and officials, which implies co-ownership of solutions between official actors and citizens at the end of the deliberations. Aitamurto and Chen (2017) used the prism of crowdsourcing in discussing the benefits of inclusivity in policymaking and they concluded that value is created when policymaking is crowdsourced (that is, where there is an open call for participation in policymaking). The two types of value which were noted and are of relevance to this discussion are epistemic value and democratic value. Epistemic value in crowdsourced policymaking means that there is potential for knowledge production as a result of the involvement of crowds from

diverse professional backgrounds with different levels of expertise on specific policy issues. The knowledge—which is often experiential—gathered from the crowd may be expected to lead to significant improvements in policy quality and sufficiency in addressing specific policy problems. Democratic value is realised as a result of the fact that crowdsourcing by its nature espouses some of the constitutive tenets of democratic practice, for example, transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness. In addition, for policies to be holistic and fair, it is necessary that they take cognisance of three interconnected aspects of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), without which they may generate structural barriers that preclude fair distribution of intended policy benefits (Irfan, Arora, Jackson & Valencia, 2020). The DEI aspects are issues that a crowdsourced policy approach can easily accommodate.

The reach of the inclusive policymaking approach is expected to be spurred by ICT-enabled online interactions which practically give citizens a platform to contribute towards the design of policies that are highly likely to affect their lives on a day-to-day basis (Rethemeyer, 2006). With the benefit of wide ICT capacities, inclusive policymaking has a huge chance to achieve active participation of connected populations who, as societal groups, will be exploiting the 'democratising effect' of the internet (Beacon, Murthy & Kumar 2022). As Ranchordás and Voermans (2017) argue, the advent of the internet has triggered a shift in roles in public spheres as citizens move "… from passive observers to active participants in society, economy, and politics. Instead of relying on their elected representatives and other experts, citizens resort to new technologies of participation for example by signing e-petitions"

(p.1). Experience further reveals that active participation of citizens normally follows the crowdsourcing efforts of either political figures or leaders of civic organisations, or the joint efforts of both in getting people to the participation platforms. The implications of embracing genuine inclusivity in policymaking are two-pronged. In the first place, the designing (or 're-designing') of policy making institutions will have to be done in a manner that accommodates the involvement of the grassroots. Secondly, the roles of stakeholders will be adjusted as citizens assume a higher role alongside official policy actors in the development and designing of policy. It is the official policy actors who have to create sufficient space for citizens in the policy designing arena.

REFORMING INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN FOR POLICYMAKING

Inclusive policymaking calls for the reform of institutional design for policy because the traditional designs have for long fostered exclusionary policy making practices. Reforms are necessary, especially considering that traditional bureaucratic structures that are tasked with policy design are often impervious to external societal influences which may be in the form of policy inputs coming from citizens or their representative groups. The same institutions have often housed gatekeepers of change who are usually steeped in non-consultative cultures and organisational silos. Peters (2020) rightfully identifies organisational culture as one of the barriers to effective policy design in the sense that strong internal organisational cultures are not likely to be receptive to change nor to policy innovation. This is practically incompatible with an inclusive policymaking approach which, if

implemented, would tamper with established organisational cultures and cause a culture shift in policy practice. Organisations would therefore have to 'culturally adjust' in a manner that allows access and influence of relevant social actors in policymaking. Ideal institutional reforms are thus, expected to infuse a new participative culture which is underpinned by mass collaboration with relevant publics in respective policy sectors. The recent rise of policy innovation labs (PILs) is a new development in the structures of policymaking. PILs typically espouse inclusive policymaking practices in ways that are atypical of traditional bureaucracies. They are understood as experimental and multidisciplinary structures that apply scientific approaches to the search for solutions to social problems, but doing so by involving target populations in a collaborative manner. International experiences show that PILs can be found within governments, universities, not-for-profit organisations, or as standalone entities operating in complete independence. A distinctive feature of their operations is the generation of innovative solutions through lab-like processes involving measurement, testing and determining impact of proposed solutions before they are implemented in the broader society. Throughout this process, PILs will be collaborating with affected populations and any other interested citizens, and it is precisely on this aspect of collaboration with citizens in designing solutions where traditional policymaking structures fall short.

CITIZENS AS CO-CREATORS AND CO-DESIGNERS

In inclusive policymaking, citizens come across as 'partners' and not mere 'subjects'. This conceptualisation has led to the adoption of the

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terms "co-creation" and "co-designing" from the field of engineering and architecture, to reflect the new role citizens assume under genuine inclusive policymaking. Co-creation refers to an act of collective creativity involving at least two people and co-designing is understood as "...the creativity of designers and people not trained in design working together in the design development process" (Sanders & Stappers, 2008 p.6). While these definitions are directly drawn from the original engineering contexts where the terms are borrowed, the logic remains that of a partnership of equal players in policy development. The different designations that players may bear become silent on the policy making arena because of the homogenising effect of the partnership which binds actors together. However, it is necessary to note that the roles of citizens as co-creators and co-designers in the context of inclusive policymaking has not gone unchallenged. Weaknesses observed on these roles included the challenge of citizen apathy and disinterest. Additionally, citizen participation tends to be inspired if there are unfulfilled demands, but once these are satisfied, citizens may disengage and retreat from the policy participation platforms.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AS A PLATFORM FOR INCLUSIVE POLICY MAKING

The drive towards inclusive policymaking considers the sub-national level of government as crucial because of its potential for fostering local participation and encouraging active involvement of citizens at the lower tiers of government. This position builds from the notion that local government reflects the sense of 'bringing government to the people'.

Implementation of decentralisation—which was promoted internationally as one of the major reforms towards democratisation of the world—further enhances the understanding by pushing governmental functions, powers and responsibilities to lower level in the hierarchy of government. The expectation was that if decentralisation was implemented in democratic local authorities, it would improve responsiveness to local needs and foster greater citizen participation in local development. With that, greater accountability of central and local government to the citizens was similarly expected (Ayee, 2005). In addition, decentralisation offered an avenue of addressing political challenges arising from complexities of pluralism and social diversities by affording officials a close-range appreciation of local needs, challenges and priorities (Steiner, Kaiser, Tapscott & Navarro, 2018). In practice, local authorities in Zimbabwe already have established platforms for public engagement such as consultative meetings, town hall meetings, councillor report back meetings, query desks, participatory budgeting platforms etc. The greatest advantage of these platforms is that they permit a two-way exchange of information and foster deliberation on critical policy matters affecting communities. They further serve as 'tools' of social accountability.

CONCLUSION

Our review of the practice of inclusivity and state-society collaboration in policymaking reveals a long-standing penchant for unilateralism and centralism by the Zimbabwean state. A cross-sector dissection of policy cases reveals centralism as an entrenched practice embraced even by the bureaucratic machinery of the state. We argue that exclusionary policymaking has negative implications on policy legitimacy, appropriateness, acceptance by the public and smoothness of implementation activities in the broader society. Guided by the call for democracy in governance practice, the study makes a case for inclusive policymaking as a necessary move to foster a new kind of governance in Zimbabwe and Africa at large. This would come with new roles for citizens, as both co-designers and co-creators of policies.

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Political Inclusion in Local Governance Processes in Zimbabwe: A Contextual Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Current political inclusion studies focus on creating inclusive policies and platforms that aim to support the political inclusion of marginalised people. Although it is known that the socio-political urban governance landscape can impact on real-life experiences of people living in contexts where civic space is politicised, this can be overlooked when exploring and implementing political inclusion policies. This paper addresses an important gap in the literature by exploring the contextual drivers of political inclusion, and exclusion, of citizens in local governance processes and platforms in Zimbabwe. The paper combined informal conversations with a review and analysis of secondary and primary data sources on political inclusion. The data elicited were analysed to construct key themes. The findings were interpreted through a lens of political inclusion and demonstrated how the socio-political local governance environment both enabled and inhibited political inclusion. Based on these findings, the paper offers recommendations for practitioners, researchers and policy makers wishing to promote political inclusion in local governance.

Key words: social inclusion, local governance, citizen participation, exclusion, electoral accountability, civic engagement

INTRODUCTION

This article is concerned with advancing knowledge of inclusion in the context of inclusive citizenship, and in particular, political inclusion. Its analysis is based on findings of a broader project that drew on the principles of Participatory Action Research (Schneider, 2012) to address the issue of political inclusion of citizens in political (elections) and deliberative processes (dialogue and engagement) at local and national levels (Logan & Bratton 2006). The analysis presented below is informed by opinions collected during face-to-face interviews with civil society practitioners and opinion makers and a review of primary and secondary literature on the subject.

Political inclusion is about recognition of difference and the multifarious ways in which civic and political rights and responsibilities are exercised in everyday life (Lister, 2007). This study achieves this by interrogating how local governance processes and structures promote political inclusion and participation in governance processes in Zimbabwe. The paper posits that Zimbabwe has institutionalized political inclusion by embedding and constitutionalizing provisions that promote inclusion in political decision making at local and national levels. In practice, however, political inclusion faces multiple barriers that curtail participation which in turn adversely affects political inclusion in local governance processes and outcomes. The paper begins by foregrounding political inclusion by examining key definitional aspects of the concept. In addition, the paper critiques current policy trends adopted in implementing inclusion. The paper also interrogates the relationship between political inclusion and public engagement processes, contextualizing these processes using

case studies. In the conclusion, it provides a set of policy recommendations, moored on a context driven approach to inclusion, for consideration.

CONTEXTUALISING POLITICAL INCLUSION

Political inclusion, as a key thought in considering and responding to the experience of participation in decision making has gained increasing currency over the past decade in development, governance, rights and democracy discourse (Mohanty & Tandon, 2006; Hammett, 2008; Meth et al., 2021). Development researchers and practitioners have used it to examine the narratives of marginalized groups (e.g. Virendrakumar et al., 2018) and policy debates (Hammet, 2008) and to highlight the discrimination that marginalised communities face concerning their inclusion in political decision-making processes (Mohanty & Tandon, 2006). Classically, the idea of citizenship is deployed to draw attention to the value of inclusion of marginalized and vulnerable groups in service delivery conversations (Pavia & Mason, 2012) and respect for human rights in public engagement processes (Sen, 2005). Not all scholars use the language of citizenship, but are nonetheless concerned with cognate matters, such as power relations (e.g. Beard et al., 2009; Behuniak, 2010), political inclusion (e.g. Hicks et al., 2019), and access (e.g. Chakrabarty & Jha 2021).

Some researchers have used the term 'relational citizenship' to study dynamics involving people with disability, women and youth (e.g. Kontos, Miller, & Kontos, 2017). As Pols (2016) explains, relational citizenship assumes that people become citizens through

interactions, whereby they create relations and social spaces, citizenship (thus) becomes a matter of politics. This idea has been used to examine how political identities and context act and produce citizenship and political inclusion or exclusion (Ursin & Lotherington 2018). Such work usefully examines the connections between various agents, including persons with disability; however, it is important not to lose sight of wider society and its organisations. Hence, the notion of political inclusion/citizenship is used in this article. Political inclusion typically focuses on a person's relationship to the "larger structures of rule and belonging, which are often but not exclusively nation states" (Koning et al., 2015: 121).

These dynamics are perhaps most evident in discussions about access to civic and political rights; an area that continues to be regarded by many as a central tenant of inclusive political citizenship (Dwyer, 2010). Dwyer (2010), further surmises that there are two main channels of political citizenship (1) conditionality—the relationship between rights and responsibilities and (2) membership—groups who are included/excluded from political arrangements. Each one is significant for political inclusion and participation in governance processes. For example, a recent public opinion poll on local governance in Zimbabwe conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI, 2019) concluded that (political) inclusion in local government decision making remained critically low despite several interventions by Civil Society Organizations, local and national government institutions and actors. Evidently, a disjuncture exists between policy intent and what happens in practice. Several national studies have reinforced the notion that marginalized groups such as women, youth and people with disability are generally under-represented in political

decision-making processes (Rottinghaus & Escher 2020). Together, this work suggests that conditionality, and membership are major, ongoing problems for political inclusion to thrive.

When conducting research on political inclusion, there is often a lack of consensus on what it comprises (Davey & Gordon, 2017; Taket et al., 2014; Bartlett, 2021); thereby influencing how it is communicated as well as how it can be measured (Simplican et al., 2015). As such, to operationalise (political) inclusion for the present study a succinct review of literature was undertaken. This emphasised the need to understand political inclusion as a dynamic rather than a static process, where ordinary citizens in their diversity, have the socio-political, cultural and material means to be included within all aspects of their communities as well as the agency and unconditional opportunity to access, participate in, and personally grow from, social and cultural experiences and interpersonal relationships that are meaningful to them and where they feel valued (Kabeer, 2005, Hicks et al., 2019).

A CRITIQUE OF CURRENT APPROACHES

One of the major pursuits of African scholarship has been the attempt to conceptualize citizen agency and inclusion in political decision-making processes. The central question, and answer, concerns how Africans themselves conceive the contours of new political regimes and, particularly, their own roles in political participation, in events such as elections and local governance, and the extent to which their roles, as citizens, allows for inclusion. On the one hand, the rest of the globe seems to have

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a structured way of ensuring citizen inclusion by adopting a 'moving with citizens' approach institutionalized in civic engagement processes and platforms at multiple levels (Cornwall et al., 2011). Such approaches ensure citizens have a permanent seat at the bargaining table on issues of governance, service delivery and other socio-political decision-making platforms.

Few concepts have gained as much widespread usage (and disparagement) over the past ten or so years as political inclusion. Its popularity is increasing despite challenges associated with understanding or measuring what political inclusion actually entails. Concepts such as trust, electoral democracy, good governance, democratisation, human rights, inclusion, citizen participation, social networks and service delivery have all become synonymous with, or incorporated under, the process and outcomes of political inclusion (Cornwall et al, 2011). In scholarly literature, political inclusion is conceptualised originally as the involvement of citizens, in their diversity in decision making spaces within liberal democracies marked by the active presence of marginalized and vulnerable groups in the fulfilment of civil and political liberties and voluntary social and contractual arrangements (Cornwall & Coelho, 2006). Conceptually, sometimes political inclusion has been delineated along social, political and religious identities mirroring dominant views prevailing at a certain period (Hammett, 2008; Kabeer, 2005; Chakrabarty & Jha, 2021). This embodiment of political inclusion happens in the broader arena of citizen-state dialogue and engagement (Rich-Dorman, 2001; Mohanty & Tandon, 2006). This conceptualisation of political inclusion still exists. However, in the early stages of conceptualizing political inclusion, studies focused on citizen participation (Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Cornwall & Coelho, 2006). As the discourse on inclusion developed, the realisation that participation alone did not equate to inclusion ensured the concept of inclusion was 'scaled up' to the role of inclusive citizenship in policy making through participatory governance (Fung & Wright, 2003; Gaventa, 2006).

Moreover, growing attention to the centrality of state-society relations and its impact on inclusion, underlined the assertion that marginal groups cannot be fully-fledged citizens by merely expressing preferences through electoral democracy, as voters, and must participate more directly in decision-making, as citizens (Pavia & Mason, 2012; Virendrakumar et al., 2018; Rottinghaus & Escher 2020). More recently, the prominence of liberal forms of citizen-state engagement have run parallel with the emphasis on rights-based approaches to development which front-load rights as capabilities and not entitlement (Sen, 2005). Mindful of this, rights-based approaches have created pathways for political inclusion to be incorporated as part of the fundamental rights citizens are entitled to, moving away from citizens and marginalized groups as passive participants to active co-partners in political decision-making processes at multiple levels (Pavia & Mason, 2012; Virendrakumar et al., 2018; Rottinghaus & Escher 2020). A bulk of contemporary literature on political inclusion focuses on marginalized groups such as people with disability, disenfranchised women and youth with little investment in understanding inclusion of a political view-point.

PERSPECTIVES ON THE ZIMBABWEAN LANDSCAPE

Zimbabwean literature on political inclusion remains limited (Rich-Dorman, 2001; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009; Alexander, 2021) and these have focused on inclusion from a political identity (citizenship) and a state-citizen engagement lens. In addition, other literary content further conceptualises inclusion from a political participation viewpoint, which tends to limit the scope of inclusion to political decision making in electoral processes with little to no attention given to post-election civic engagement and inclusion. Cognizant of the increase in rights-based approaches to development and the prominence of donor funded projects that focus more on gender and political inclusion, Zimbabwean literature on the subject has gravitated towards understanding inclusion as the involvement of citizens and marginalized population in collective decision-making processes (Sivalo, 2019, 2021). Participation and involvement in this case is not limited to numbers, representation, but is understood within the entire governance continuum which underlines the need to include citizens from the input to output (results) stage of service delivery and policy outcomes (Sivalo, 2021). One strategy adopted by development practitioners to promote political inclusion in 'moving with the electorate' has focused on local level/governance service delivery issues using social forms of dialogue, engagement and accountability to increase local leader responsiveness and answerability.

The obtaining policy discourse on inclusive political citizenship is moored on the assertion that while Zimbabweans have ardently supported and participated in electoral politics since 1980, they do not, consider elections as a means of achieving, and reinforcing, effective political accountability (Logan & Bratton, 2006). Considering this, when it comes to asserting control and influence over elected leaders, in the long intervals between elections, a significant number of Zimbabweans do not see any role for themselves (Sivalo, 2019). For example, a civic engagement and constitutional literacy survey conducted by Pact in 2018 and another public opinion poll conducted by IRI in 2021 confirmed the low levels of civic inclusion and participation in public processes such as budget consultative meetings and community feedback meeting because they feel their voices do not matter (Pact, March 2019; IRI, 2021). To some extent, this is linked to the partisan political landscape and the general landscape of Zimbabwean politics at both grassroots and national level where decisions, and accountability, are usually the prerogative of the governing and not the governed.

Political polarisation and the structure of local and national politics in Zimbabwe further creates a disabling environment for (political) inclusion to be fully achieved. Due to political polarisation, there is a tendency by the state to associate citizen-driven inclusion discourse with opposition politics. This has negatively impacted political will by local governance state actors to support interventions pushing for the progressive realisation of inclusive decision making at various levels of the governance structure. In this light, the depoliticisation of inclusion becomes necessary, including within state institutions themselves to facilitate the emergence of a will to act in support of citizen inclusion initiatives. Overall, then, the dichotomisation of inclusion issues into a hegemony-counter hegemony binary has curtailed the potential of citizen-driven accountability interventions to improve service delivery and promote good local governance.

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Given this, citizen inclusion interventions have received more resistance than support from state actors both at national and local levels, due to the perceived threat political inclusion poses on the ruling party's grip on and use of state political and financial power.

The current political settlement in Zimbabwe, with all its illiberal democratic tendencies, is not conducive to building meaningful and effective political inclusion processes and procedures. Partly because of the ongoing semi-authoritarian character of the Zimbabwean state, the state executive remains the pivotal centre of power. As a result, the lower tiers of government are selectively and tactically bypassed at times in the making of critical government decisions, thereby avoiding/hampering collective policy decision making. Further, while the constitution highlights the importance of devolution, it remains unclear if the devolution framework (once finalised) will enhance government citizen inclusion or simply devolve exclusion to local levels, creating a continuation of the current status quo.

The field of power relations that shapes social interactions and popular agency within society plays a crosscutting role in shaping the success of political inclusion. This is particularly apparent in terms of the barriers that inhibit people from undertaking initiatives that demand high levels of participation. In Zimbabwe's polity, approaches to inclusion in decision making at local governance levels usually mirror the bifurcated political setting which strongly influences how political actors view, engage and involve citizens in decision-making. While it is certain that state and non-state institutions and actors are key players in promoting and curtailing inclusion, an assessment of the various approaches, tools and methods employed by these actors is key.

The main actors in Zimbabwe's local governance landscape include the Ministry of Local Governance, Local authorities, political parties, councillors, citizen groups and business. As alluded to above, state actors have, to some extent, embedded inclusive government policies that are, on paper, designed to ensure the inclusion of diverse interest groups. On the other hand, citizen accountability interventions that are driven by CSOs have been geared towards promoting inclusion and inclusivity, particularly of marginalised groups such as women, youth, and people with disabilities (PWDs). What this has done is to promote the participation of these groups in public spaces with the intention of making their voices heard in decision making processes. Civil society social accountability interventions, for instance, have helped bring to the fore the complexity of marginality in development programming as this is shaped by various contextual and experiential factors such as gender, sex, disability, income, and literacy, among others. While noble, the emphasis on participation rather than active engagement of these marginalised groups in both civil society and state centric inclusion initiatives has limited the appreciation of marginality to tokenism. For instance, the inclusion of PWDs has been pursued on a minimalist level, and the role of these groups in social accountability has been for the purposes of consultation without much commitment to ensure their voices influence social change and are reflected in policy.

Due to the current governance architecture, citizens are inadvertently reduced to mere voters whose role in governance is to elect leaders. Reflecting on this, Logan and Braton (2006), argued that while Zimbabweans have transformed themselves from the "subjects" of past authoritarian systems into active "voters"

under the present dispensation, they do not appear to have the space and/or prerogative to fully realise their political rights as "citizens," to consistently demand accountability from leaders. As such, Zimbabwean politics and political inclusion encapsulates what O'Donnell (1994) characterises as delegative democracy which is at odds with representative democracy which embodies the essence of citizen inclusion or 'moving with the electorate'. More importantly, the situation described above essentially highlights the challenge of political contexts where political polarization and closing civic space is a key phenomenon. In these illiberal democracies, citizens delegate power to elected political actors and the political landscape inadvertently pushes citizens to the periphery because space to engage, beyond elections, is invariably political and partisan in nature. Given that, most citizens are not only excluded but opt for a broadly delegative form of democracy, granting authority to oversee, account and answer to elected representatives and other political actors diminishing prospects for collective action and inclusion of marginalised voices in critical decision-making platforms and outcomes.

POLITICAL INCLUSION AND URBAN GOVERNANCE PERSPECTIVES

The main premise of local governance in Zimbabwe is the understanding of the inter-relation between democracy and the decentralisation of powers and responsibilities from central to local government tiers. To achieve this, on paper, government has established sub-national institutions, urban and rural councils which are nearer to people and thus promote

political inclusion in decision making and service delivery processes. In Zimbabwe's local governance architecture, elections remain the main political mechanism and platform available for citizens to select their local leaders who make up a core piece of the local governance system. For both local and national elections, the tendency has been to vote along political party lines which has gradually eroded performance/merit-based candidate selection by political parties and subsequently by the electorate. The inadvertent challenge associated with such a bifurcated political system is a tendency, by the electorate, to delegate (delegative democracy) the power to govern to the elected, to represent their interests with minimal oversight, consultation, dialogue and engagement between citizens and their elected leaders. Considering this, citizens abdicate their oversight and accountability roles to become merely voters and not citizens in local and national political and decision-making processes.

Moreover, elected leaders from both the ruling party and the opposition parties are generally accountable first and foremost to their party rather than voters. As demonstrated vividly in March 2022 when the country had to hold by-elections to fill in 28 parliamentary and 105 local government council seats which fell vacant after mass recalls of MPs by both the Zimbabwe African Nationalist Union (ZANU) PF and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) parties, elected officials may end up serving the elite interests of their party, rather than citizens they are supposed to represent, in order to save their political skin.

While elections provide an opportunity for citizens to participate and have a voice in electing their leaders, it is critical to note that elections

in Zimbabwe compel citizens to compress numerous preferences, of political identity, competing policies, and retrospective evaluations and future expectations of performance, into singular choices. In Zimbabwe, voting patterns are commonly partisan or regional in nature and party platforms are weak. Elections rarely offer real programmatic alternatives to voters (Ndakapira, 2020). Because incumbent leaders can easily break promises and resort to evasion, elections constitute a blunt instrument for enforcing accountability. The consequence of this manifests itself in the structural and institutional barriers that hinder political inclusion.

Zimbabwe is one of the highly polarised countries that practises partisan masculinity politics. As a result, those who exist outside partisan politics and vulnerable communities, such as women, PWDs, youth and Lesbian, Gays, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) groups, have largely been marginalised from electoral contests, local authority planning and policy making. Most local government processes are generally configured around masculine politics framed in terms of patriarchal norms and networks. For instance, local government engagement platforms such as budget consultation and feed-back meetings are held during times, usually afternoon, when women are unable to attend due to their gender roles. The absence of collective actions that include pronounced women's perspectives, for instance, undermines the importance of inclusiveness of citizen participation in political processes, thus rendering responses by the supply-side of the chain inadequate due to the absence of the key concerns of marginalized groups. The depiction of marginalized groups, from the perspective of state-citizen engagement, at both central and local government levels, continues to reduce

these groups to "motherly figure" for women, 'troublesome' for youth and 'vulnerable' for people with disability. In this sense, patriarchy systems have in a sense perpetually colluded with state authoritarianism, at local government level, over the years to reproduce marginality and exclusion.

Several studies (Pavia & Mason, 2012; Virendrakumar et al., 2018; Rottinghaus & Escher 2020) have consistently pointed to the fact that marginalized groups have remained on the precipice of political inclusion especially in political decision-making spaces and platforms. For example, the continued exclusion of women in political decision-making, at local government level, processes has hampered the ability of demand side actors (civil society groups) to effectively coalesce as a collective to ensure that local and national authorities are accountable to service users. Addressing questions of gender is central to maximising women's participation, given the double 'burden' that women (especially working-class women) carry as income-earners and care-givers, and the subsequent challenges they face in finding the time and energy to enter a public sphere which tends to exclude them in the first place.

It is noteworthy to highlight that recent literature (Stein & Moser 2014; Broto, 2017) on urban governance has focused on the empowerment of citizens through their inclusion in political processes, such as elections, in the determination of governance priorities and in setting the governance agenda. However, the vulnerability of the urban poor is also recognised. They are regularly exposed to the detrimental implications of specific urban governance policies and processes, but also on the structural conditions that reproduce poverty,

such as economic inequality, lack of political representation, deficient access to services, and lack of participation in decision making platforms (Britt, 2003). Because of this, there is now a wide consensus among urban governance scholars that contemporary urban governance efforts must be directed towards pro-poor forms of urban governance and planning especially in programmes set for upgrading basic social service delivery (Moser & Satterthwaite 2010; Stein & Moser 2014; Bartlett & Satterthwaite, 2016; Baker, 2012).

In the specific case of Zimbabwe, CSOs' efforts to promote inclusive post-election engagement, have focused on creating spaces for marginalized groups, such a women, youth and people with disabilities, to dialogue with elected leaders through social accountability aimed at ensuring citizen driven local service delivery. Such arguments are tempered by the recognition that inclusive urban governance in developing nations is hindered because of the political influence of global trends in politics that act as a determinant of urban governance, which is strongly tied to international aid flows and Western-led democratic urban governance agendas (Broto, 2017).

Enacting political inclusion principles is meant to provide a platform and facilitate pathways for enhancing citizen participation and political inclusion in local governance and thereby entrench representative and participatory democracy (Bartlett, 2021). The form which it takes, and the extent to which it is practiced, is open to considerable temporal and spatial variation. This diversity in part depends upon variations in upward accountability, that

is, the ways in which governing authorities are expected to be accountable to the central state. Because of this, the emergence, development and outcomes that promote and support inclusion are ingrained in urban authority-urban citizen dynamics and urban authority-central state dynamics in complex, contingent and fluid ways. For instance, the uneasy relationship that exists between opposition run urban councils in Zimbabwe and the Ministry of Local Government reproduces political exclusion as the Ministry often issues directives that result in urban councils side-lining citizens in critical decision-making processes especially those regarding the use of public resources. As such, political inclusion in Zimbabwe depends on engaging in (and with) certain preferred communities in Zimbabwe. In some cases, citizens are politically sophisticated and willing to engage in governance but they often experience exclusion from local government processes because of unfamiliarity with the basic principles of political inclusion and the mechanisms which enhance it.

Historically, and globally, political inclusion has emerged and developed primarily through citizen activism and mobilisation, and there is strong reason to believe that this will also be the case if (political) inclusion is to arise in present-day local governance discourse in Zimbabwe. In this light, the presence of a semi-authoritarian state in Zimbabwe alongside incapacitated state institutions does not negate the necessity nor the possibility of citizens constructing and pursuing projects that promote and enhance political inclusion. Though the Zimbabwean state dominates over society, it is not a totalising domination, there are gaps and spaces for citizen pursuance of (political) inclusion.

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AN ASSESSMENT OF THE LANDSCAPE: BARRIERS AND TRENDS

One of the key interests of the paper is to understand the barriers to political inclusion and collective decision making. A review of existing literature, local, regional and global alike, points to the notion that, from a citizen viewpoint, political inclusion primarily involves two issues. There is general consensus in literature, (Moser & Satterthwaite, 2010; Stein & Moser, 2014; Bartlett & Satterthwaite, 2016; Baker, 2012) that inclusion involves both answerability (making power holders explain and give reasons for their actions) and enforcement (increasing the price for people who ignore inclusion). Studies in the areas of social and political inclusivity denote the critical role of supply and demand-side collaboration (Mooji, 2003). Initiatives designed to ensure answerability and enforcement may be demand-side, driven from the bottom-up by non-state actors especially donor-funded CSOs, or supply-side, encompassing legal and fiscal governmental checks and balances. In some instances, interventions may most effectively comprise elements of both.

Sequentially, the practice of citizen-driven political inclusion is broadly shaped by relationships where the state is the custodian of civic space, including certain services, and citizens are recipients of such. In this regard, the state is expected to deliver services to its clients (or citizens) in such a way that it not only delivers goods and services as per its policy promises but is also inclusive of and responsive to citizens' priorities. This contributes to better public service provision while also building a stronger sense of citizenship, promoting inclusion and empowerment. Inclusion, in

this regard, is mainly located within inclusive liberal discourse focused on the achievement of poverty reduction through good governance. At the same time, the specific understanding is that political forms of inclusion are based on a theory of change that does not reflect the contextual realities of governance and development in contexts where civic space is constrained, such as Zimbabwe (Rich-Dorman 2001; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009; Alexander, 2021). For instance, approaches to gender and political inclusion are borrowed from best practice concepts with limited investment to understanding the local contexts in the application of these concepts. In addition, citizens' understanding of inclusion is conceptualised in instrumental and simplistic terms ways (representation, presence, access and participation), rather than political terms, thereby over-emphasising general inclusion to the detriment of analysis of political context. Considering this, analysis of existing literature and promising global practices suggests that citizens view inclusion processes and approaches as one-off interventions compared to understanding the process as the outcome of longer-term iterative processes of bargaining between social and state actors.

According to Anguelovski et al. (2016), understanding political inclusion requires an appreciation of spatial and temporal context, and of the existing power relations and dynamics – involving urban and rural dichotomies – underpinning and animating inclusion as a complex and tension-riddled social process. Like most constructs, political inclusion is context sensitive and is usually subject to dominant political narratives and identities which in-turn delineate inclusion and exclusion. One of the contributing factors is associated with the duality of Zimbabwe's geographic context where

urban usually represents liberalism, modernity, consent and inclusion while rural is associated with illiberalism, under-development, coercion and exclusion. While rural spaces are sometimes understood as monolithic, in the Zimbabwean case inclusion is further conditioned by dominant political identities at play in communal and resettlement areas. For instance, unlike in the communal areas, most new farmers (in resettlement areas) cannot depend on kinship ties for help: thus, they have formed other social networks to respond to service delivery challenges, taking the form of institutions such as farm committees, irrigation committees and health committees to avert service delivery bottlenecks and to promote inclusive decision making.

It is essential to note that in resettled communities, issues of political affiliation, gender, income and age colour the inclusion and exclusion agenda. Considering the use of land as patronage tool, social formations, agency and inclusion are usually centred around land tenure, in resettlement areas. In communal areas patronage usually takes the form of access to agricultural inputs, food relief and access to markets (Chiweshe, 2011). Moreover, the masculine nature of politics in these areas renders the inclusion of women and youth as decision makers and participants in decision making processes impossible. In urban areas, vertical and horizontal structures of local governance offer platforms for citizen inclusion in decision making processes. However, the participation of citizens usually conforms to the macro-political environment's architecture. Most urban councils in Zimbabwe are predominately run by opposition. In Bulawayo for example, public works programs such as road rehabilitation, cutting of long grass and digging of trenches is

usually coordinated by elected leaders who then prioritize the recruitment of party supporters from their areas. In this instance, political identities determine inclusion and exclusion of an economic nature, contrary to collective action premised on moving with the electorate.

Current literature (Pavia & Mason, 2012; Virendrakumar et al., 2018; Rottinghaus & Escher 2020) indicates that inclusion, as a process, in best cases is mutually driven by the state in collaboration and partnership with non-state actors (Alexander 2021). However, a review of the limited literature on political inclusion in Africa shows that the bulk of interventions and platforms to promote inclusion are those driven and organised by CSOs. For example, in Zimbabwe, the bulk of the interventions focused on issues such as voter mobilization, registration and electoral participation are driven by civil society in response to the minimal efforts to push for such by the state. Moreover, in Zimbabwe the success of inclusive decision-making interventions relies heavily on the capacity of CSOs to mobilise citizens and to network effectively, both within civil and political society. In recognition of this, certain state institutions, like the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), rely on civic actors (including residents' associations) as they realise that they are unable to achieve much by acting alone, and that their capacity to develop alliances with those pursuing similar projects is critical to accumulating the power required to achieve political inclusion.

Considering this, political inclusion platforms in Zimbabwe's context have prompted the evolution of a range of CSOs. The type of civil society that emerges as significant from this study is more politicised (counter hegemonic) and relational than associational (hegemonic),

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operating in a distinct sphere from the state. However, the space of civil society in Zimbabwe is not free from the logic of how power and politics operate, as it is a space within which citizens and CSOs often find it very hard to find room to manoeuvre from their projects within the broader politics of patronage, ethnicity, and exclusion. For instance, within the context of civic and voter education initiatives, driven by CSOs, the state disparately closes or opens space based on the perception of direct threat to power. In rural areas, where the ruling party draws popular support, civics face the challenge of entry and access to communities compared to urban areas where voter registration is lower but support for opposition is high (Ndakapira, 2020).

Agency within civil society is closely shaped by the underlying field of power relations, involving forms of inequality and exclusion along economic, social, and cultural lines. Importantly, the capacity of CSOs to be effective in this realm has less to do with their autonomy from the state than with the relationships and networks that they are able to forge with other actors in both civil and political society over time. What appears to matter most is the capacity and commitment of citizens and CSOs to mobilise and act, both individually and collectively, around political inclusion demands.

Review of literature further shows that the complexity of marginality underlines that inclusion of marginalised voices in public spaces alone will not suffice in informing decisions which reflect the diversity of communities. Considering this, programmes and policies that seek to promote inclusion need to be responsive to the different forms of marginalisation and this is currently missing. Given the disparate socio-economic experiences of citizens, in most cases spaces provided by both state and non-state actors have been insensitive to the various needs of citizens. One of the major issues established in the paper concerns the plight of PWD in public processes in general and accountability platforms. In Zimbabwe, PWD constitute a relatively small proportion of the population and this disparate demographic usually pushes disability inclusion and voices to the periphery of governance processes and platforms, including accountability which seeks to promote inclusion. The worst affected are Women with Disabilities (WWD) who have the least coping and adaptive capacity due to reasons owing to their poverty, physiological challenges and social marginalisation from the societies they live in.

RECOMMENDATIONS

FROM 'INCLUSION AS REPRESENTATION' TO 'INCLUSION AS RESPONSIVENESS AND ANSWERABILITY'

In conceptualising the alternative political inclusion framework, it is important to bring to the fore how 'inclusion' can be understood and hence experienced differently in different contexts. Typically, what is called 'inclusion' is understood as 'representation' (inclusion as an entitlement) and not demonstrating inclusion in terms of lived experience (i.e., inclusion as a capability), thus understanding inclusion as being answerable for performance against an agreed set of performance standards, or 'inclusion as responsiveness and answerability'. What would be of benefit is ensuring that social forms of inclusive decision making facilitate and inculcate a culture of responsiveness and answerability where solution holders justify and explain their actions and not merely emphasise representation, through improved services, at the expense of being responsive and answerable to their constituents.

MAINSTREAMING PARTICIPATION OF MARGINALISED/EXCLUDED GROUPS AS CHANGE AGENTS

The starting point for interventions in (political) inclusion projects should be the nuancing of the diverse ways in which citizenship, marginality and inclusion manifest themselves in different political contexts. It is these nuances, of political, economic, and social interactions and bargaining processes, that also reveal the agency possibilities, including identifying the interlocution processes and how they can be supported. The participation of women, people with disability, youth and other marginalised groups must be ensured by mainstreaming their issues and concerns in the overall framework and practice of political decision making. Interventions which consider these aspects have deeper potential to contribute to enhanced participation of marginalised groups. Therefore, the choice of services and issues to be monitored should be made in such a manner that it encourages the participation of excluded groups.

BETTER DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF POLITICAL INCLUSION INTERVENTIONS

Successful political inclusion interventions require a delicate balance amongst the following tasks: dissemination of accurate, verified, and relevant information; galvanizing and mobilizing citizens; monitoring and evaluation; enhancing citizen oversight of services; and organizing interfaces between citizens and solution-holders. A full review of practices on political inclusion in Zimbabwe would reveal that, while many initiatives focus mostly on information promotion or mobilization activities, only a few initiatives concentrate on the monitoring of key national government processes, services and outcomes. Striking a balance, in practice, between the technical know-how of using specific inclusion platforms, tools, approaches and political mobilization of citizens is crucial. Interventions which use structured and/or semi-structured tools for monitoring of service delivery for example tend to better identify, articulate, and communicate service deficits to service providers. Given the prevailing context, these tools may also in the medium term serve as viable routes for accessing inclusive and responsive service delivery information for problem solving purposes serving the interests of both service providers and recipients at the hyper-local level. While a rigid and technically sound political inclusion strategy may generate a great amount of citizen feedback and related data in a rather short period, the participation of citizens may be somewhat limited (as passive information providers), unless their participation is factored into the intervention design. Community ownership and inclusion through collective analysis, reflections and action must be augmented.

CONCLUSION

The chapter provided an analysis of Zimbabwe's current polity, paying attention to some of the contextual drivers influencing political inclusion in local governance processes. Discussions noted the complexity of the relations between the state and citizens and how these continue to

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structure and shape citizen inclusion in decision making processes. The chapter characterized existing barriers that pattern inclusion, and juxtaposed these with emerging and existing trends, as a basis of underlining shifting relations in the civic space and how these pattern inclusion. The chapter plays a fundamental role in setting the context for understanding the tapestry of Zimbabwe's strata in relation to local governance and political inclusion as it provided a presentation of issues central to political inclusion and governance in Zimbabwe.

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Exploring the Tenure - Democracy Nexus on Customary Land Right Holders

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ABSTRACT

In Zimbabwe, as in many African countries, land remains a basic strategic asset for those who live in the rural areas. Particularly, for those people in customary tenured areas, access to land is negotiated through identity. Most Zimbabweans either live or have land rights in customary tenure areas. Here, land is not a commodity that can be traded nor is it regarded as an individual asset. Disputes related to access, ownership and use of customary tenure land are handled in traditional courts presided over by chiefs and their subordinate structures. Those who dwell in customary tenure areas have no direct relationship with civil courts, where private property disputes are resolved, but instead, must go through the traditional courts. In one of my earlier publications, I have argued that the involvement of traditional courts in customary land tenure issues is the hallmark of classical citizenship. While I continue to proffer this argument in the current study, the study also illustrates how traditional authority has, over the years become an appendage of the state through strategic measures which include salaries for chiefs, vehicles, rural electrification, and power that comes with being entrusted with the role of distributing subsidies. Additionally, the exclusion of customary tenure areas from formal financial services means that households are at the mercy of government led subsidies which are steeped within the political interests of the ruling party ZANU-PF. In many cases, government subsidies end up being used as incentive to support the incumbent party. In such instances, elected officeholders take the lead in the distribution of these subsidies. The relationship between land tenure and democracy is perhaps the most compelling for reforms, but rarely discussed. In this study I expand on my previous interventions by arguing that the ways in which land is held in customary tenure areas and the existing subsidy regimes have played a critical role in restricting rural residents' autonomy to make autonomous political choices. I further argue that the autonomy to choose is mostly compromised in contexts where access to productive resources such as land, markets, mechanical, financial, and physical capital are negotiated through subservience to traditional authorities who are politically affiliated.

Key words: Zimbabwe, tenure, customary land rights, democracy

INTRODUCTION

According to the recent results from the recent census conducted by the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT, 2022), most Zimbabweans (61.4%) have customary land tenure or live in the rural areas (ZIMSTAT, 2022). The ruling ZANU-PF has since the turn of the century managed to win both parliamentary and presidential elections based on overwhelming rural support. The urban population on the other hand, has mostly voted for the opposition parties. In the 2018 elections, ZANU (PF) won 144 parliamentary seats and 132 (91.6%) of these were rural whilst the MDC Alliance won 64 parliamentary seats and 58 (90.6%) of these were in the urban areas. In addition, most votes for the ZANU-PF presidential candidate came from the rural areas (ZESN, 2018). Many questions have been posed to try and explain the popularity of ZANU-PF in the rural areas as well as its unpopularity in urban areas. Many have advanced widespread allegations of election rigging to dismiss the claims of ZANU-PF popularity in the rural areas. These claims, although widespread and popular, remain unsubstantiated. There has been no systematic evidence-based approaches to expose widespread election rigging. In this paper, while this study does not dismiss rigging claims, it explores other ways in which the ruling party has either by coincidence or a cunning strategy ensured its dominance in the rural areas. The study argues that the ways in which land is held in customary tenure areas and the existing subsidy regimes have played a critical role in ensuring widespread support for ZANU-PF. The various legal and non-legal reforms pertaining to rural social organisation, inclusive of land and agrarian reforms, measures to do with traditional leaders and various forms of production of support, have contributed to the entrenchment of ZANU-PF rule within these areas.

The study also argues that the level of autonomy in making decisions on who to vote for is one of the most important measures (if not sacrosanct) of 'free and fair' elections. The autonomy to choose is compromised in contexts where access to productive resources such as land, markets, mechanical, financial, and physical capital are negotiated through political party affiliation or where the support is seen because of the benevolence of a leader rather than national policy funded by public resources. Although this is changing, legally customary tenure land cannot be a commodity that can be traded or used as collateral. The generation of agriculturally based livelihoods depends on belonging within a certain clan to attain usufruct rights over land and productive inputs from the government on an annual basis. Smallholder agriculture is yet to achieve total independence from the circuits of subsidies. The argument presented in this study is focused on a long-term project of ensuring that elections are free and fair thus, the study does not make any claims of providing silver bullet solutions.

UNPACKING CUSTOMARY TENURE

Traditional authority usually thrives in customary tenure areas. Customary tenure is based on what was once perceived as the dominant form of rural sociability in rural Africa, that is, a pristine structural relationship within a lineage grouping and an ethnic clan (Murisa, 2022). At the helm of the customary model is the office of the chief and its subordinate structures. The organisation for access to

natural resources, production and consumption is based on principles of inclusion in or exclusion from the clan or lineage group. The hierarchy of institutions within the traditional framework establishes the criteria for access to land and the norms for defending land rights. The clan asserts political and ritual rights over land, followed by the lineage, which establishes concrete claims over land supported by actual ties of consanguinity and corporate interests. Land use rights which are conferred on the household are in most instances conferred through the male household head.

Only the products of social labour such as crops and livestock, are objects of appropriation (Mafeje, 2003, p.3). Recognition of certain clan domains makes it easy for lineages to maintain a steady pool of land to control any influx of strangers (non-kinspersons). In this kind of framework, production, consumption and accumulation are organised at household level and sharing of labour or produce in instances of distress is done among those who already have certain commonalities in movable and immovable property and are bound together by exclusive ties of mutual obligation. Thus, the lineage framework provides a mechanism of cooperation and fosters mutual sharing. The distribution system encapsulated within the lineage framework functioned as a method for reconciling the individual's total interests with those of the community (Adholla, 1962, p.22). This form of social organisation also provided norms of cooperation centred on the idea of sharing between the richer and poorer members of the lineage group (Von Freyhold, 1979, p.81).

These forms of social organisation provide a platform for mobilisation around production, social and political events. The existing hierarchies combined with group-based forms of access to land and other productive assets create opportunities for political messaging through the chiefs and other clan heads. Perhaps, this explains why chiefs are now on the payroll of the state and receive other benefits such as vehicles.

TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY, INDIRECT RULE AND DEMOCRACY

Transitions from colonialism have, in many cases, failed to comprehensively de-racialise civil society and democratise the local state by reforming customary authority. In the urban areas, the onset of independence from colonial rule de-racialised the state but left civil society racially intact to the extent that historically accumulated privilege (usually racial), was embedded and defended in civil society (Freund, 1997, p.102). On the subject of countryside reforms, Mamdani (1996) argued that:

> a consistent democratisation would require dismantling and re-organising the local state, the array of the Native Authorities organised around the fusion of power, fortified by an administratively driven customary justice and nourished through extra-economic coercion (p.24-25).

Mahmood Mamdani's (1996) seminal work remains relevant in challenging the idea of citizenship in the countryside. At the centre of Mamdani's project is an analysis of the extent to which the structure of power, especially in rural areas in contemporary Africa, was shaped in the colonial period rather than born of the anti-colonial revolt. Mamdani rightfully explains the features of contemporary politics through an analysis of the modes of state power, domination and resistance. According to Mamdani, state power in colonial Africa was derived from the imperatives of dealing with the native question, that is, "how to maintain foreign control over large indigenous populations" (Mamdani, 1996, p.22). Mamdani further argues that the common response across Africa entailed the devolution of power to indigenous rulers in the name of custom and tradition, creating a 'decentralised despotism'. In the case of Zimbabwe, the independent state initially sought to minimise the influence of the chiefs by establishing modern bureaucracies that operated within the confines of civil law (Alexander, 1993 & 2006). However, those reforms were quickly halted at some point and instead, Zimbabwe joined the rest of Africa in promoting the re-assertion of traditional leadership. The Traditional Leaders Act (1999) formally restored customary chiefs' land allocation role in communal areas (although still notionally subject to approval by the Rural District Council), and created a governance structure that resembled a hybrid between the 1982 District Development Committees and the 1969 model for 'tribal' governance by customary chiefs. The Traditional Leaders Act (1999) extended to "Model A" resettlement areas. The Traditional Leaders Act (1999) provided a system of local governance in which 'headmen' and 'chiefs' in communal areas, were imposed in places where elected officials had represented villages for the previous 20 years (Kinsey, 1999). These measures helped to reaffirm the role of the chief and their subordinate structures. Moyo (2001b, as cited in Yeros, 2002a) says that there was a legitimacy problem in customary tenure areas due to the absence of a clear role of the chief, and consequently, rural mobilisation for 'developmental' projects was constrained. The reversal of policy served to ensure further co-option of the office of the chief towards the logic of the state in terms of both the political and development agendas. These reforms are similar to the 1967 Tribal Land Authority Act which elevated the authority of the chief in land matters and local administration. The foregoing discussion provides information on the challenges associated with the nexus of elected and hereditary structures in local government. The reforms were part of the state's broader political agenda to win over the support of the chiefs. Indeed, ever since these reforms chiefs have become beneficiaries of state largesse. Besides a monthly wage, chiefs were provided with brand new vehicles and their rural homes were given priority in the rural electrification programme (Murisa, 2007).

These reforms led to the restoration of a bifurcated state of 'citizens' and 'subjects. The 'subjects', primarily peasant households in the countryside, had to contend with the wrath and arbitrariness of post-colonial structures of power in the form of chiefs and their subordinate structures which mimic native authorities. Thus, the bifurcation of the state has been bequeathed to the post-colonial state and 'indirect rule' continues to be the dominant form and creates a situation in which the state has been 'de-racialised' but not 'democratised'.

THE AGENDA TO REFORM CUSTOMARY TENURE

In Zimbabwe, the term 'customary' is also used to refer to communal areas as a legal sphere in which traditional and/or customary laws are observed under the administration of traditional authorities who include chiefs, sub-

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chiefs, village heads, traditional authorities and spirit mediums. The chieftainship is divided into smaller units headed by sub-chiefs or headmen. These are divided into smaller villages headed by a sabhuku/kraalhead/village head (Holleman, 1969; O'Flaherty, 1998; Andersson 1999).

Customary tenure does not only stifle prospects for democratisation, but it is also near impossible to implement operationally. Murisa (2022) has argued that implementing customary tenure is akin to wading in murky waters. Over the years, traditional authorities, market and the state policies and globalisation have modified the provisions of this otherwise egalitarian system of land administration. Colonial and post-colonial governments maintained customary land tenure to retain political control over productive resources especially land and to prevent the residents from becoming economically independent (Cousins, 1990; Cheater and Gaidzanwa, 1996; O'Flaherty, 1998). In this way, the State retained control over rural population and has capacity to confine it to a specific space.

Whereas in its pristine form land is not sold to those outside the clan, in practice, illegal land sales presided over by chiefs and other lineage elite have been a common feature across the length and breadth of Zimbabwe. Different studies record the practice of illegal land sales. For example, Dzingirai (1994) in Binga (Matabeleland North), Yeros (2002a) in Shamva (Mashonaland Central), and Chimhowu and Woodhouse (2008) in Svosve (Mashonaland East). What is interesting is the fact that it is not only chiefs who are engaged in the practice but other rural elites and Rural District Council (RDC) officials, even though there is no provision in the Communal Land Act for outright land sales. These actors take advantage of the weaknesses,

incoherencies and inconsistencies of the Act and the institutional challenges to enforce them. The Rural District Councils do not have the capacity to follow up on these processes nor the moral influence to oppose such land transactions.

Moreover, there is lack of clarity on institutional mandates and roles in the administration of land under customary tenure in Zimbabwe. For example, the contestations between Traditional Authority, Rural District Councils (RDCs) and other state institutions responsible for land governance. The Communal Land Act (1982 amended in 2002) fails to appreciate the real contestations and competition between RDCs and traditional authority. The Act stipulates that the RDCs should:

> **grant consent only to persons who, according to the customary law of the community that has traditionally occupied and used land in the area concerned, are regarded as forming part of such community (Communal Land Act, 1982 amended in 2002).**

Conversely, the act does not specify how the RDCs will verify the complex issue of identity especially because lineage and clan affiliations are determined by the elders of those groups. In fact, smallholders in customary tenure areas are subordinated to a fusion of authority revolving around an awkward 'institutional mélange' in a similar situation to practice under late colonialism. This fusion of authority included elected Rural District Councils (RDCs), traditional chieftainships and the local ruling party cell structures from 1980 until 1996 (Tshuma, 1997, p.90). The Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) was at some point similarly disgruntled with traditional authority. In 1985, the Ministry of Lands passed

the Communal Lands Development Plan which promoted the establishment of surveyed and planned 'economic units', consolidated villages, and state control of tenure through a leasehold system. The plan condemned communal tenure and dismissed customary leaders as the "conservative guard of an unproductive system" (GoZ, 1985).

The forms of social organisation developed through customary tenure have also come under attack. Archie Mafeje was one of the early and forefront critics of the forms of social organisation that emerge out of customary tenure, arguing that it was highly undemocratic, patriarchal and, in many instances, oppressed women (Mafeje, 1993 & 2003). Although the lineage-based form of organisation has made provisions in the event of the death of the male head of the family, in practice, the surviving widow and minor children have often had to renegotiate their land rights after the death of the primary land rights holder. This notion of a form of social organisation that is in equilibrium, was mostly dominant prior to the introduction of petty commodity-based forms of rural production that compete to serve capitalist markets. The introduction of a market value of rural goods and the practice of trade in rural goods has contributed to exploitative social relations within the lineage group, where the more competent prefer to use their surplus to establish relations which bring more tangible benefits while those left behind find themselves exploited. Rather than viewing the lineage-based forms of social organisation as sustainable mechanisms of balanced social reproduction, it has become an instrument of accumulation

by establishing a criteria of 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' when issues of access to natural resources such as land are under consideration. These are considered crucial criteria for gaining access to vital resources and organising forms of social reproduction.

Customary tenure has also widely been abused by traditional authorities. Initially, the post-colonial government's underlying objective of the local government reforms was to officially usurp the land-allocating powers of chiefs in a manner very similar to the Native Land Husbandry Act[1] (NLHA), and to introduce new social relations of production that were not defined by belonging to a lineage grouping. In terms of land allocation, the Communal Land Act as read in the Regional, Town and Country Planning Act[2], requires a rural district council to "have regard to customary law relating to the use and allocation of land allocation".[3] These measures were, however, resisted by chiefs who had enjoyed land allocation powers in the final decade of colonial rule. Such allocation of land has been restricted in terms of the Traditional Leaders Act.[4] The traditional leaders have regularly involved themselves in land administration and they are often at 'loggerheads' with elected authorities (Alexander, 2003, p.587).

The above conditions challenge the assumptions on the possibilities of a smooth transition from feudal relations of power to an electoral based system. The underlying forms of social organisation, power structures and means of access to land challenge the idea that an individual can make a decision on their

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1. Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951.

2. [Chapter 29:12].

3. Section 8(2)(b) of the Act.

4. Section 26(1) of the Traditional Leaders Act [Chapter 29:17].

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own regarding who should have power when everything else is done in group settings. Access to land and related production implements is clearly organized around the concept of belonging. In this instance the ruling party has inserted itself in rural life. It looks and behaves as if it's at the centre of everything to do with the social, cultural, economic aspects of rural life. The voting patterns in the rural areas suggest that there has not been adequate and clear separation between party and government especially when it comes to the provision of agricultural inputs.

ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY

Democracy is a social rather than a political term used to refer to a society marked by equality of social conditions with no ascriptive aristocracy, and all careers open to all citizens including the opportunities to be in government (Tocqueville, 1835). Democracy is based on balancing power, making trade-offs, and ensuring civil liberties and more importantly it is about making sure that citizens are engaged in solving problems in society. Elections, which are central to democratic practices, are supposed to ensure that the will of the majority takes precedence in the choice of office holders and ongoing accountability of those elected to office. Citizens always retain the right to vote out underperforming leaders and elect new actors.

Furthermore, it is a widely held belief that electoral democracy thrives in contexts where there is full citizenship. In this instance citizenship, refers to the existence of civil laws governing property rights and equality of opportunity. Citizens are those people with legally defined autonomy over their property or

able to sell their labour in return for sustainable wages. Citizenship in this case is directly linked to the existence of a legal framework that creates a basis to approach civil courts for relief in the event of a grievance related to relations of production.

The liberation mantra was mostly about 'one man one vote' as opposed to the colonial period when racial identity determined who had the right to vote. The 'one man one vote' has since been accomplished but there are still concerns about some citizen groups' autonomy to exercise their right to decide on who to vote for. Existing frameworks of access to land and inputs for agricultural production in customary tenure areas should be further analysed to determine the extent to which they allow for autonomous political decision making especially during elections.

There are other threats to democracy in the rural customary tenure areas. These threats, which also apply to other areas but are acutely felt in customary tenure areas where peasants' dependence on traditional land and government subsidies makes them more vulnerable, range from manipulation of laws, abuse of incumbency, use of violence and capture of electoral processes by an elite few (Olukoshi, 2022). Vote buying is another serious threat to democracy in Zimbabwe, and rural residents are more susceptible to vote buying because of their economic vulnerability. Most customary tenure land in the former Tribal Trust Lands or Native Reserves (now formally called Communal Lands) is located in barren and unproductive parts of the country. As a result, many rural households have remained vulnerable and are either in a condition of chronic food insecurity or have just enough to survive. Although officially banned at

law, many political parties engage in this practice. According to a 2017 report produced by the Anti-Corruption Trust of Southern Africa several political parties were engaged in (i) dishing out free food and other goodies to the electorate, (ii) promising housing stands and (iii) giving money to would be voters.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR REFORMS

The Chilonga case provides a compelling opportunity to rethink land relations and their potential impact on democracy. The fact that by one decree people can be alienated from land that they have occupied for more than one century is disturbing. Yet, as already established, electoral democracy thrives in a context where property rights exist and can be protected through the courts. In this instance the Chilonga community, like many others in the customary tenure areas could not enforce their rights in courts. What are the other means of survival in such instances-probably to align with the dominant political party interests.

It is perhaps the Fast Track Land Reform Programme and other ongoing tenure reforms that provide an opportunity to consider a long-lasting land tenure solution for the rural areas in Zimbabwe. The GoZ has committed to a permissory land tenure through the issuance of permits to land beneficiaries. The permit that is being issued for A1 farmers creates a more direct relationship between the land beneficiary and the issuing authority which is government, through the Ministry of Lands. In the process the land beneficiary has recourse to civil courts in the event of a dispute. This is in direct contrast to trends within the customary areas where the

chiefs' historical claim to certain land allocation and adjudication powers holds sway, especially after the promulgation of the Traditional Leaders Act (1999) which restored their land allocation powers.

The land tenure reforms that accompanied 'fast track' land reform contribute towards some of the initial steps in the creation of what Mamdani calls 'citizens' although there are still contradictions, for example, the expansion of traditional authority functionaries suggests the need for a more cautious examination of the significance of these reforms. Traditional authority, deriving its legitimacy from the state, has been weakly inserted into areas where there is no countervailing force on the ground to oppose such state led efforts. This could undo the intended purposes of the permit and obliterate the potential for creation of the rural based citizen.

Currently, there is no organized platform agitating for improved tenure arrangements in customary tenure or fast track areas. The Chilonga community court challenge potentially provides an entry point into the type of advocacy and reforms required. In February 2021, the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) passed several legal instruments (refer to Table 1) aimed at setting aside 12 940 hectares (ha) in the district of Chiredzi initially for the purpose of 'Lucerne production' but this was later changed to 'setting up an irrigation scheme'. However, there has emerged several global formations engaged in struggles for indigenous land rights which the UN is recognizing. The Chilonga agitations for tenure reform are part of a bigger challenge around the rights of indigenous communities and the broader struggles for expansion of rights into customary tenure areas.

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Table 1- Legal Instruments Used to Appropriate Land in the Chilonga Area

Date	Legal Instrument	Description
26/02/2021	SI 50 of 2021[5]	Amendment to section 10 of the Communal Land Act, the instrument designated 12 940 hectares of land in Chiredzi for exclusive lucerne production. The Act also prohibited the utilization of this land for any purposes except for mining activities due to the superiority of mining rights. Once the SI was instituted, occupiers of land were required to promptly vacate with all their property. An exception was made for persons who would have duly acquired permits in terms of section 9(1) of the Communal Land Act.
26/02/2021	SI 51 of 2021[6]	Highlighted that an area of land approximately 12 940 hectares, in the administrative district of Chiredzi ceased to be part of the Chiredzi Communal Land. This legal instrument follows up on SI 50 of 2021 by enforcing s its provisions
09/03/2021	SI 63A of 2021[7]	Corrected the purported irregularities in SI 51 of 2021. The purpose of the land was changed from 'Lucerne production' to 'establishment of an irrigation scheme'. The previous SI did not include the eviction order of land occupants and this new instrument enforced their immediate eviction from the land.
16/03/2021	SI 72A of 2021[8]	Repealed SI 50 of 2021 by reassigning the purpose of the land in question. Under this SI, the land was now exclusively meant for irrigation activities.

The applicants, Chituku and others, argued that the GoZ's intentions breached fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in the Bill of Rights and the applicants' case was motivated by several queries. Firstly, the applicants argued that Chilonga was their ancestral land which they occupied for over 500 years without any disruption. Their occupancy had weathered the upheavals associated with the land displacements of the colonial period. The applicants further insisted that their land should not be categorised under Tribal Trust Lands which were eventually converted into customary land through the Communal Land Act of 1982. Despite not expressly identifying specific provisions of the constitution against which the Act was ultra vires, applicants submitted before the court that the Communal Land Act violated the right to life,[9] right to human dignity, right to property,[10] right to equal protection and benefit of the law[11] and the right to culture and language.[12] Secondly, the applicants challenged the colonially and racially exclusionary frameworks of customary tenure and especially how it mis-conceptualised the systems of land ownership amongst Africans.

5.   SI 50 of 2021 (Communal Land [Setting Aside of Land] [Chiredzi] Notice 2021).

6.   SI 51 of 2021 (Communal Land [Excision of Land] Notice 2021)

7.   SI 63A of 2021 (Communal Land [Setting Aside of Land] [Chiredzi] Notice 2021: Correction of Errors).

8.   SI 2021-072A Communal Land (Setting Aside of Land) (Chiredzi) Notice, 2021.

9.   Section 48 of the Constitution.

10.   Section 71 of the Constitution.

11.   Section 56 of the Constitution.

12.   Section 63 of the Constitution.

In the process, the applicants raised glaring weaknesses in state policy making such as the title change from Tribal Trust Lands Act to Communal Land Act without attending to the major flaws and grievances that informed the land question during the war of liberation. Remarkably, the respondent (GoZ) agreed with the applicants' critique of the Tribal Trust Land Act as well as the flawed nature of the racist colonial ideology that informed it.

Thirdly, the applicants' case rested on a constitutional provision for the right to self-worth and human dignity. They argued that the GoZ's intended move would deprive them of the right to live. The respondent (GoZ) articulated that no one would be displaced because the targeted land was largely uninhabited and that in the event of eviction, adequate compensation would be provided.[13] The GoZ proceeded to argue that the courts were not the proper platform for the resolution of this kind of dispute. The presiding judge agreed with this position and in his judgment, he referred to several cases that reinforced the argument that there is a long-held tradition in which land disputes are resolved politically. The judge concluded the case by recommending a commission of inquiry as the first step to finding a possible political solution.

CONCLUSION: CUSTOMARY TENURE AND DEMOCRACY

The discussion has made a case for considering the prevailing conditions of social organisation and power as potentially contributing towards giving the ruling ZANU-PF or any other incumbent political party an unfair advantage in electoral politics because of its indirect control over access to customary tenure land through traditional authorities who are appointed by the Government. Admittedly, there are other factors at play. However, the norms of social organisation have the potential to make significant contributions on this issue. The discussions on tenure reform have yet to embrace the democracy dimensions discussed in this study. The democratisation agenda has been preoccupied with the rules of elections and possibly missed out on the systemic constraints that seem to have a more enduring influence on voting patterns.

As already stated, the majority of Zimbabweans eke out an existence in customary tenure areas and have mostly voted for ZANU-PF. The question that is raised is whether ZANU-PF has contributed to significant rural transformation in the past and is thus, being duly rewarded through votes. Existing evidence demonstrates that there has been very limited progress in terms of rural transformation since 1980. Most rural households remain vulnerable and are either in a condition of chronic food insecurity or have just enough to survive. This perpetuates their reliance on the government and increases their vulnerability to manipulation. Most rural households are not independent producers as they depend on government's subsidy regimes. This raises further questions on whether their vote is merely an endorsement of the ongoing subsidy programs.

The process of re-imagining democracy will also have to tackle ways of ensuring that those in customary tenure areas have; (i) property rights at the same level as their urban counterparts which are recognised and can be defended in the formal courts (ii) can independently

13.   This is an important part of the affidavit by government which can be used for later litigation in the event of evictions and lack of compensation.

secure financial, markets, collateral and other institutions necessary to ensure efficient agricultural production without dependence on the government (iii) can secure membership and negotiate access to resources which are not linked to traditional authority. These three conditions will contribute towards a realisation of democracy for those holding customary land rights. Besides, this is nothing new in Zimbabwe. The Fast Track Land Reform Program led to the introduction of permissory tenure that is statutorily defined within A1 areas. The permissory tenure, when fully implemented will have a direct relationship with government (and especially civil courts). The land beneficiaries are strangers to one another, and they have created new forms of social organisation undergirded by local farmer groups (see Murisa, 2009; Murisa, 2013 & Moyo et al., 2009). These developments give the immediate impression of an expansion of citizenship to the countryside, suggesting that the hallmarks of civil society have been attained. The concluding question then would be: what stops the government from implementing similar reforms in the customary tenure areas?

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Financial Inclusion in Zimbabwe: Re-imagining Prospects for Inclusive Stakeholder Involvement and National Development

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to investigate the successes, gaps, limitations and failures of initiatives to improve financial inclusion in Zimbabwe and their potential impact on achieving citizen-centred inclusive socio-economic development. Our study contributes to the limited knowledge on financial inclusion in Zimbabwe by presenting findings from a 2021 study on the financial inclusion of micro, small and medium enterprises in Zimbabwe. The study's findings are complimented by a review of other citizen-focused studies on financial inclusion in Zimbabwe. Key findings from this study include notable effort by the supporting system to improve the policy environment, improved access to financial services for women and integration of digital technologies to enhance financial inclusion. However, the empirical evidence from the enterprises indicates continued challenges in both the demand and supply sides and also shows how these are caused by the complex nuances of operating in Zimbabwe, which require urgent attention. The study identifies the current limited commitment by political stakeholders to articulate deliberate policies and programmes that support citizen-centred financial inclusion as a major challenge. We proposes a framework for relevant conceptualisation of financial inclusion which involves a deliberate process of citizen engagement in co-designing and co-creating intervention and impact measurement strategies that are responsive to the lived circumstances of the citizens and enterprise.

Key words: Financial Inclusion, Zimbabwe, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, citizens.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, policymakers, researchers, citizens, and non-state actors have been increasingly focused on understanding the nuances and complexities of financial inclusion (FI) and its understated impact on fostering inclusive economic and social development, especially in developing countries such as Zimbabwe (World Bank, 2022). While there is no single or homogenous definition of FI, there is a consensus on the core premise of the concept which involves the degree of access of households and firms, especially poorer households, and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), to financial services (Yoshino & Morgan, 2016; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2022). Studies on development challenges facing developing countries indicate a common trend of inequitable and disproportionate access to inclusive financial resources as a core obstacle to social-economic development prospects in these countries (Ngonyani, 2022; World Bank, 2022; Isukul, Agbugha, & Chizea, 2019). The World Bank estimates that at least one third of adults in the world are excluded from mainstream formal financial and non-banking intermediaries (Wolrd Bank, 2022). A vibrant, financially inclusive environment is a pre-requisite for poverty reduction and the growth of productive sectors of the economy (Isukul et al, 2019). The absence of a coherent, empowering and inclusive financial service supportive framework has significant repercussions for citizens' livelihoods and economic agents such as MSMEs. Hence the need for ongoing reflections on the state of financial inclusion in countries such as Zimbabwe which have significant economic and social development challenges.

SYNOPSIS OF FINANCIAL INCLUSION IN ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe has been a part of the Alliance for Financial Inclusion since 2012, a network of policy-making bodies and central banks from over 80 emerging and developing market economies. This network gives Zimbabwe access to the latest policies and programs related to financial inclusion. Various studies by civic organisations and economic think tanks have been commissioned to study the FI landscape in Zimbabwe over the last decade. Key studies include the Zimbabwe Economic Policy Analysis and Research Unit (ZEPARU) study in 2011, a study by Baragahara in 2021, FinScope MSME studies in 2012, a study by FinMark Trust in 2014 and the Acacia Economics study in 2020. These studies have covered diverse issues such as the barriers to FI and the policy framework supporting FI in Zimbabwe. Thus, our study is well positioned to reflect on the progress made to date in attempts to enhance FI in Zimbabwe.

The Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ), through the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, has been the principal custodian of the National Financial Inclusion Strategy, which commenced with the introduction of a four-year National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) in 2016 (Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, 2016). In this strategy, a definition for FI is outlined as "the effective use of a wide range of quality, affordable and accessible financial services provided fairly and transparently through formal, regulated entities by all Zimbabweans" (RBZ, 2016, p. 15). The key overarching goal of the 2016 NFIS was to improve FI through targeted interventions focusing on enhancing access (from 69% to 90% by 2020) for women, youth and people living with disabilities, increasing the proportion of banked adults from 30% in 2014 to at least 60%. A summary evaluation of the successes of the NFIS is outlined in later sections of this paper.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the successes, gaps, limitations and failures of initiatives to improve FI in Zimbabwe and its potential impact in achieving inclusive socio–economic development that is citizen-centred. Our study contributes to the limited understanding about the successes, limitations and failures of FI initiatives in Zimbabwe. We contextualise the narrative on FI in Zimbabwe from the context of the country's nuanced complexities and lack of political goodwill. We then advocate for a new thinking of what should frame the narrative on FI, outlining expanded value-adding policy interventions.

The study is structured as follows, first, a summary of literature on various aspects of FI to explain the research gaps, followed by an outline of the methodology used for the study, findings and discussion. The second part of the paper addresses the paradox of the Zimbabwean nuances and complexities; political stakeholder dilemma and an outline of a framework for new thinking for Financial Inclusion in Zimbabwe and policy recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

CONCEPTUALISING FINANCIAL INCLUSION

There are a variety of definitions of the FI concept and its measurable indices (Isukul & Dagogo, 2018; Kumar, 2017; Mahmood, Shuhui, Aslam, & Ahmed, 2022). One critical school of thought on FI focuses on promoting affordable, timely and adequate resources to a diverse ecosystem of regulated financial products and services that can be used by different groups in society (Atkinson and Messy, 2013). Besides access and affordability, this lens on FI advocates for the integration of supporting mechanisms such as financial literacy education and impact on socio-economic development. The other emerging school of thought focuses on the extent or degree of access to financial services by poorer households and MSMEs (Yoshin & Morgan, 2016). The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) defines FI based on the percentage of adults, 15 years old and above, who reported having at least one account in their name with an institution that provides financial services which are subject to some form of government regulation (UNCTAD, 2021).

FINANCIAL INCLUSION AND SOCIAL-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

There is consensus on the established correlation between FI and socio-economic development. Some scholars (Brown, Mackie, Smith, & Msoka, 2015; Oshora, Desalegn, Gorgenyi-Hegyes, Fekete-Farkas, & Zeman, 2021) posit that FI positively influences economic growth levels and reduces income inequality in society. This influence is intermediated through financial development, accelerated business investment, and increased productivity by crucial economic growth drivers such as MSMEs (Villarreal, 2017). Other studies provide evidence of the impact of FI on socio-economic development in developing countries through equitable and expansive re-distribution of economic opportunities which empower

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marginalised groups such as rural citizens and women (Ahmed & Wei, 2014; Isukul & Tantua, 2021). Lack of implementable and inclusive financial policies is likely to result in MSMEs and entrepreneurs resorting to informal practices which could negatively impact economic output crucial to social–economic development (Krumer-Nevo, Gorodzeisky, & Saar-Heiman, 2017; Were, Odongo & Israel, 2021).

CHARACTERISTICS OF FINANCIAL INCLUSION & BARRIERS

There is an established body of cross-disciplinary literature on the diverse nature of barriers to FI for MSMEs and households. However, these continue to evolve, hence the need for continued research in different emerging contexts such as Zimbabwe (Isukul & Tantua, 2021). Common factors driving FI include reliable, established supportive institutions supported by efficient judicial systems, the rule of law, and general political stability (Guitierrez-Neto, Serrano-Cinca, Cuellar-Fernández, & Fuertes-Callén, 2017). There is an established portfolio of barriers comprising demand-side, supply-side, regulatory, and infrastructure factors. Women and other disadvantaged groups such as the disabled are more likely to be affected by these barriers than other groups.

In Africa, it is estimated that 4 out of 5 women lack access to financial services (Ngonyani, 2022). Examples of demand-side barriers include financial illiteracy, lack of collateral and knowledge of financial products. Infrastructure and regulatory obstacles such as weak policies, stringent anti-poor regulations, and weak government support are common barriers in developing countries (Isakul et al., 2019;

Ngonyani, 2022). The manifestation and impact of these barriers are different across countries due to each country's nuances and complexities, hence the importance of current research. Our study on Zimbabwe becomes even more crucial as Zimbabwe is one country that is undergoing various economic cycles that have changed its social and economic development narrative.

FINANCIAL INCLUSION INTERVENTIONS

Various interventions have been introduced to foster FI in many African countries using National Financial Inclusion Strategies (Isakul et al., 2019; Ngonyani, 2022; Triki & Faye, 2013). However, as with other national programmes, there is no shortage of well-documented national strategies to enhance FI. Key success measures of interventions in Tanzania include the impact of new digital technology on expanding mobile money transfers, savings and diverse payment transactions that have translated to growth of businesses. The Alliance for Financial Inclusion and National Financial Inclusion Framework report indicates noticeable evidence of improved access to financial services in Tanzania (Ngonyani, 2022).

Nevertheless, there is always the question of whether these strategies have been effectively implemented with the intended impact and outcome, especially for groups such as women and MSMEs. Shared best practice interventions include increasing innovative financial products and services powered by digital capabilities such as mobile telephony (Demirgüç-Kunt & Klapper, 2012). The rapid penetration of mobile telephony has improved access to some form of financial services to the vast majority at the bottom of the

pyramid of unbanked consumer groups in Africa. Has this been the panacea to the lack of financial inclusion, and to what extent has this changed the levels of financial inclusion for these groups? Further questions relate to how continued political and economic uncertainty in countries such as Zimbabwe has diminished the potential impact of these new financial services delivery technologies.

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on a mixed methods approach comprising two phases. The first phase involved primary data collection using a national survey administered through face-to-face interviews with MSMEs. The second phase involved a secondary data-based review of institutional studies on financial inclusion in Zimbabwe by critical stakeholders such as the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) and FinMark Trust.

Data was collected from 1,402 small enterprises from the ten administrative provinces of Zimbabwe, broken down into 60 micro, 40 small and 20 medium enterprises. Convenience sampling was used to recruit participants. Our sampling also targeted distribution of 63% in rural areas and 37% in urban areas. This target was based on data from ZIMSTAT findings on the percentage distribution of MSMEs in rural and urban areas in Zimbabwe. We used the classification of MSMEs according to the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development in Zimbabwe (MWSMED) to identify the target enterprises for the survey. Data was collected in September and October 2021 using trained enumerators stationed in the ten provinces. Table 1 is a summary of the profile of MSME participants.

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Table 1: Profile of Participants

Category	Element	#	%
Total	Respondents	1402	100%
Enterprise Size	Micro	995	71%
	Small	361	26%
	Medium	46	3%
Age	18 to 25	90	6%
	26 to 35	428	31%
	26 to 45	548	39%
	46 to 65	309	22%
	66+	27	2%
Gender	Female	615	44%
	Male	787	56%
Province	Bulawayo	128	9%
	Harare	155	11%
	Manicaland	151	11%
	Mashonaland Central	111	8%
	Mashonaland East	132	9%
	Mashonaland West	162	12%
	Masvingo	154	11%
	Matabeleland North	144	10%
	Matabeleland South	139	10%
	Midlands	126	9%
Location	Urban	725	52%
	Rural	677	48%
Sector	Retail and wholesale	306	22%
	Vending (tuck-shop/flea market)	299	21%
	Agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing.	150	11%
	Catering, baking and culinary arts	73	5%
	Trichology and cosmetology	63	4%
	Tourism accommodation and restaurants	52	4%
	Logistics and transport	50	4%
	Mining and quarrying	48	3%
	Textile, apparel, leather	46	3%
	Construction, energy, water and architecture	43	3%
	Manufacturing	39	3%
	Information and communication technology	35	2%
	Graphics, technical design, software and printing	30	2%
	Professional, consulting, scientific and technical activity	23	2%
	Handicrafts	20	1%
	Education	20	1%
	Health and social services	17	1%
	Arts, culture, sport, events, media, and entertainment	17	1%
	Financial services and insurance	11	1%

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis from the survey comprised analysis of descriptive statistics supported by qualitative thematic content analysis of the responses. Data from the secondary data-based studies was analysed primarily using qualitative content techniques. Analysis of the meaning of the text was carried out through condensation, categorisation, narration and interpretation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

To address our research gaps, we separate our findings into two parts. The first part looks at the prima-facie analysis or evaluation of the NFIS's impact on addressing the barriers identified in the literature based on the available secondary data. The second part of our findings focuses on establishing the perceptions of the intended target beneficiaries of the NFIS, such as women and MSMEs. This sets a foundation for a balanced evaluation of the extent to which the government and other stakeholders in Zimbabwe have made progress in promoting FI against the backdrop of the NFIS strategy. This empirical data provides insights on whether the stated accomplishments of the NFIS are reflective and representative of the experience of citizens and MSMEs on the ground.

THE NFIS INTERVENTIONS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Policy Environment

The GoZ has put policies and legislative instruments that cover various aspects of FI. These are outlined in Annex 1. The RBZ, through the NFIS, is the principal custodian of strategy and policy formulation for financial inclusion-related interventions. The Central Bank continues to work with mainstream financial services providers to improve areas such as consumer protection and women empowerment.

Access Evaluation

The Making Access Possible Study by Acacia highlights that Zimbabwe has achieved the targets set out in the 2016 Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS 2016–2020) due to the increased proportion of banked adults to at least 60% and access to affordable and appropriate financial services to 90% based on mobile money penetration (Acacia, 2020). The advent of mobile money has improved access to financial services for consumers in both rural and urban areas. Nonetheless, there remains some barriers to this channel due to limited capabilities. Key barriers include limited access to mobile networks in some areas, high cost of mobile data, poor digital literacy and prohibitive taxes associated with mobile money transactions. However, this is a narrow lens on what constitutes FI beyond just mobile money, particularly if one evaluates the realities of whether targeted beneficiaries such as MSMEs and women utilise mobile money as their crucial mechanism to participate in the financial services ecosystem. Moreover, there is a need to reflect on the restrictions and constraints of mobile money. For example, the 2% intermediary money transfer tax has become a barrier to access for most low-income consumers with only transactions under US$5 being exempt (Orbitax, 2022). We found that 18 to 20% of MSMEs in Zimbabwe that do not have access to bank accounts attribute not having an account to high charges. (Chaora, 2022, SIVIO Institute, 2022). Our study addresses the information gap

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regarding the holistic determination of inclusion through a more inclusive and deep investigation of FI efforts in Zimbabwe.

MSME Promotion and Loan Cover

Regarding enterprise promotion, the value of loans made available to MSMEs has grown from ZWL $131.6 million in 2016 to ZWL$2, 03 billion in September 2020 (US$4.25 million to US$6.2 million). The financial inclusion efforts have seen an increase in MSME accounts in the same period, from 71,730 to 142,237 accounts opened. An SME's Forex Exchange was introduced in August 2020. Its purpose is to make foreign currency more readily accessible to MSMEs in order to reduce the reliance on the parallel market (Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, 2020). However, the SME Forex Auction has had a minimal impact as only 7% of MSMEs are registered on it. Forty percent (40%) of unregistered enterprises state that they have no knowledge of the auction system and 15% say it is irrelevant (Chaora, 2022) since the enterprises need cash to transact and it takes time to gain access to funds in the SME auction and the funds will be electronic when they are finally accessed.

Women Empowerment

The NFIS took the inclusion of women seriously, and 12 out of 19 banking institutions established women's desks in December 2019 to improve women's experience throughout the banking process. According to Acacia Economies (2020) the number of women owning bank accounts increased from 769,883 in December 2016 to 2,536,558 in June 2020. The value of loans to this group also increased from ZWL$277.3

million to ZWL$1.18 billion (Chaora, 2022). As a result, 31.1% of all loans had been given to women. From our study, only 22% of women led MSMEs with bank accounts indicated that they had applied for a commercial loan where only 8% of rural women-led MSMEs applied compared to 24% of urban-based women led MSMEs.

Beyond the Policy Transformation, What Are the Realities on the Ground for the Targeted Beneficiaries?

While the NFIS has introduced various policies and regulations that, in principle, create an environment that addresses some of the barriers, it is imperative to evaluate whether these changes have translated into an impactful difference in the demand and supply side barriers to FI. Is the positive outlook from the policy and regulatory interventions reflective of the extent to which the targeted beneficiaries, especially women and MSMEs, have become integrated into Zimbabwe's financial services ecosystems? Do these stakeholders share the same positive perception of the impact of these interventions on their livelihoods? Further introspection on the extent to which these interventions have collectively translated into socio-economic development provides a more holistic assessment of FI in Zimbabwe based on the actual lived experiences of the intended beneficiaries. By addressing whether there are still any barriers to FI for the targeted beneficiaries, we can develop a balanced assessment of the impact of the regulatory interventions introduced by the GoZ and RBZ. In so doing, a more balanced and nuanced evaluation of the state of FI can be framed.

Limited Financial Capabilities- Asset Ownership

Our findings confirmed the low levels of asset ownership among MSMEs with variations across the different formats. The average gross value of the micro-enterprises is US$3,368.00 for small enterprises, the average gross value of assets is US$41,975.00 and that for medium enterprises is US$306,096.00. Up to 41% (n=574) of enterprises have assets valued at less than US$1,500.00. Lack of 'bankable' assets is recorded in recent literature (Ngonyani, 2022) as a key barrier for MSMEs and individuals to accessing formal financial services that require collateral for access to loans.

Lack of Trust

Lack of trust in the financial services ecosystem and regulatory environment is also a major barrier. This was primarily influenced by Zimbabwe's historical context of hyper-inflationary periods which resulted in citizens losing value in their savings and investments, such as a pensions, deposits and savings. This was partly fuelled by uncertainty in implementing government interventions on savings and currency conversions to manage inflation. The US dollar has been the preferred currency due to its stability. This context has created a level of mistrust of formal financial services since they
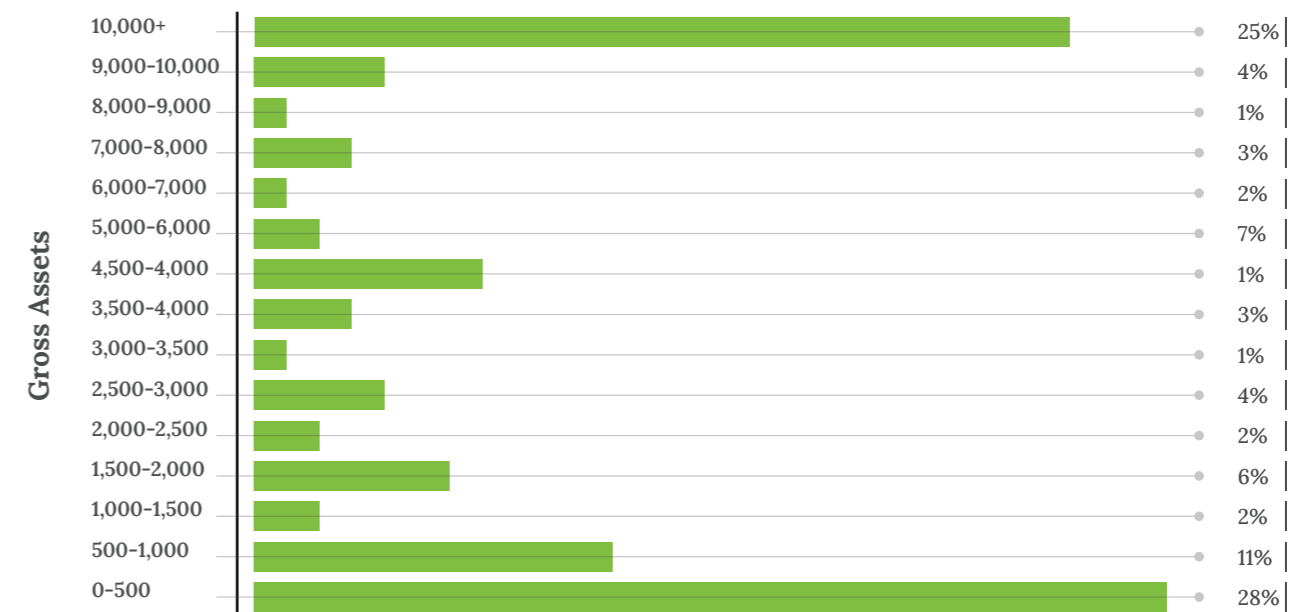
Figure 1: Gross Assets of Respondent Enterprises

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are the custodians and vehicles for implementing these currency interventions. Most citizens and enterprises do not trust the formal financial system to secure the value of their money. As a result, they opt to operate on a cash basis and not keep money circulating in the formal financial system.

Financial Illiteracy

A common theme from respondents and secondary data is the lack of awareness and education on the engagement of financial products and services and the associated complications of processes such as completing loan applications. Access to information and knowledge of financial products determines, to a considerable extent, the quality and success of financial decisions made on behalf of an enterprise or individual. This is likely to be easily facilitated by formal financial advisors, but these were not within reach of both MSMEs and individuals. For example, most enterprises (64%) relied on informal sources of information on financial products since they relied on familial networks to access finance.
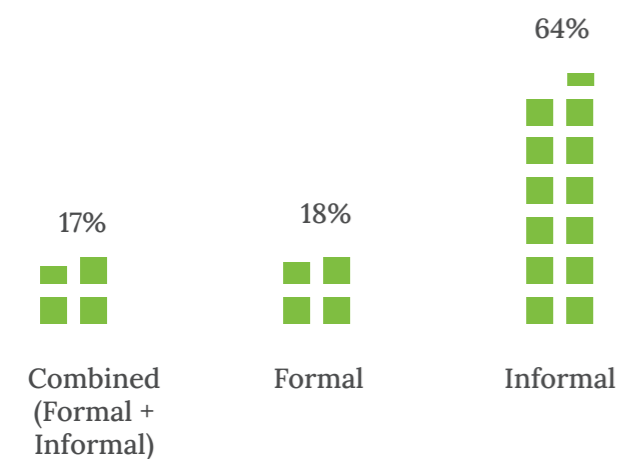
Figure 2: Key Sources of Financial Information for MSMEs

There was a general lack of knowledge of the diversity of formal financial products, although levels improved on mobile money services. This confirms an established finding from Ngonyani (2022) and from studies undertaken a decade ago. There were variations in the levels of financial illiteracy based on gender and the rural–urban divide. While an average of 5% of men identified that they do not know anything about the specified financial products and services, 10% of women indicated that they do not know anything. While 35% of urban-based enterprises indicated either a good or very good understanding of financial products, 29% of rural-based enterprises indicated the same. This further exposes women and rural communities to higher levels of exclusion from formal financial ecosystems.

SUPPLY–SIDE BARRIERS

Financial Services Operational Barriers

i. *Access to Financial Services*

Access to financial services emerges as a critical barrier for MSMEs, particularly for women and those in rural areas. Only 36% of all enterprises interviewed have access to a bank account. The remaining 64% had different reasons for not having bank accounts. The most significant reason for micro-enterprises not having an account is non-registration, indicating that although an enterprise may want an account, they have not followed all the processes that allow access to one. Other reasons mentioned as significant by micro-enterprises include high bank charges (18%) and the perception by many founders that there are not enough security protocols to safeguard their money in the Bank (14%). Micro enterprises also gave the reasons

that the bank account opening process takes too long, the banks are too far, and they do not have the documentation required by banks.

These factors become magnified when considering the context of the rural areas. In the rural areas, only 23% of enterprises have access to bank accounts, whilst that number rises to 48% in the urban areas. Regarding gender perspectives, women-led enterprises were more likely not to have access to bank accounts. Seventy-five per cent (75%) of women-led enterprises do not have access to bank accounts, while 55% of men-led enterprises did not. It is essential to highlight the reported progress in terms of increases in loan values to women led MSMEs between 2016 and 2019 and the achievements in the banking sector on the empowerment of women highlighted earlier (Acacia Economies, 2020); RBZ, 2020). Nonetheless, significant gender gaps continue to be present. Women with no access cited the following reasons for lack of access: 27% indicated they do not have bank accounts because their businesses are not legally registered, whilst 22% cannot afford a bank account, and 17% reinforced the lack of trust in the system to retain their money safely. Mobile phones and financial technology have improved access rates to financial products and services. More than half (58%) of enterprises in rural and urban areas have a mobile money account.

ii. *Funding Sources*

There is evidence of low levels of access to funding from formal institutions. Personal savings were the primary source of financing; eighty per cent (80%) of founders used their savings to start their businesses, 7% used banks and 6% used microfinance institutions to secure funding. Respondents relied on personal and

familial networks instead of formal financial services to raise funds. For example, 11% of the respondents secured funds from family and friends to finance their start-ups, while 11% secured funding from income savings and lending groups. Only 14% of small enterprises in Zimbabwe make loan applications to formal entities like banks or microfinance institutions with the hope of receiving funding. Respondents reported difficulties in accessing loans citing various reasons. At least 36% said that loan services were unavailable from the Bank. The services may have been available to other customers but not to them as individuals.

Other founders noted that they did not have sufficient information on how to make the application, whilst 11% had insufficient documentation, 6% had no collateral or were wary of high-interest rates associated with loans in Zimbabwe. Primary reasons included high inflation and lack of trust in the system. Notably, 30% had their applications rejected because they had not demonstrated a strong cash flow, 25% did not meet the criteria for assets or collateral, 16% had incomplete paperwork, and 6% had not been in business long enough to demonstrate a viable enterprise. Our findings expand the scope of understanding of the challenges MSMEs face in accessing funding beyond the collateral narrative covered by previous studies on FI in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is ranked 67th out of 190 countries in terms of low access to credit for MSMEs (Acacia Economies, 2020).

iii. *Regulation and Infrastructure*

Access to formal financial institutions was closely linked to the registration status of the enterprises. There were more (52%) unregistered enterprises than registered ones. Regarding the

perception of registration, up to 89% of the respondents indicated that they felt some form of restriction to compliance. There were diverse reasons for not registering. The overarching reasons were centred on the inconvenience of bureaucracy and lack of awareness. When asked why they had not registered, 39% indicated that they felt the process was bureaucratic, and up to 17% did not know how to get their business registered. Other key reasons were the high registration costs and lack of simplicity and accuracy in the company registration law. Our findings are supported by other significant studies on FI in Zimbabwe, such as Acacia Economies (2020)'s study, which reinforces the negative impact of compliance challenges.

Concerning the gender-registration nexus, it was seen that most unregistered entities are run by women, constituting 54%, while men lead 46%. This compounds the other established barriers to formal financial institutions that account for the lack of FI. Although the introduction of mobile money has improved access to some forms of formal financial products, this has not necessarily been inclusive. There are still some infrastructure gaps and differences in gender distribution. Enterprise founders/owners in rural areas experienced more restrictions (57%) on mobile money use, whilst 53% of enterprise founders in urban areas experienced such restrictions. MSMEs' restrictions include high bank charges, lost or incorrectly billed transactions and mobile devices being incompatible with the mobile money applications. Further reasons for not using mobile money include lack of trust in the system itself and the irrelevance that their business only handles cash transactions, thereby rendering mobile payments irrelevant.

THE PARADOX OF ZIMBABWE'S NUANCES AND COMPLEXITIES

The above findings of the state of FI from the perspective of targeted beneficiaries are closely associated with the nuances and complexities of Zimbabwe's context in the last decade or so. The country's economy has experienced significant structural changes and consequent economic instability and challenging livelihoods for citizens. The economic decline manifested by de-industrialisation, unstable monetary and fiscal environment and hyper-inflation has impacted on citizens' livelihoods. Most of Zimbabwe's population lives at the periphery of the formal economy; they are either engaged in smallholder agriculture or informal sector activities (sometimes sanitised as MSMEs). The de-industrialisation has resulted in the decline of large formal corporates and the growth of MSMEs in agriculture, vending, retail and the service sectors making the MSME sector a considerable contributor to GDP (60%). (African Development Bank, 2011; Chaora, 2022; International Labour Organisation, 2021).

However, due to the high level of informality, these MSMEs are primarily excluded from the mainstream financial ecosystems, as evident from findings from this study. According to the SIVIO Institute Financial Inclusion Index (SI-Findex), 56% of MSMEs are financially excluded in Zimbabwe. Although there has been some growth in the total loans to MSMEs, these represent approximately 5% of all banking sector loans and advances in 2020 (Acacia Economies, 2020). As of 22 July 2022, a total of US$1.2 million had been disbursed to SMEs through banks and microfinance institutions as part of the COVID-19 support mechanism (RBZ, 2022). This presents an interesting paradox in the narrative on improving FI for MSMEs and citizens in Zimbabwe because there have been insignificant changes in barriers faced by MSMEs and citizens.

HIGH POVERTY LEVELS

A significant hindrance to FI is the state of the Zimbabwean economy itself. Seventy-one (71%) of the population in Zimbabwe live below the total consumption poverty line of US$70 per person per month (upper line), according to the 2017 Poverty, Income, Consumption, and Expenditure Survey. Incomes are low at an average of US$230/ month across the employment spectrum, with MSMEs paying as little as US$138/month and state-owned enterprises paying as little as US$183/month (BDEX, 2022). Such low incomes limit the buying power and financial liquidity of households. This is exacerbated by poor prospects for employment in the formal sector.

INFLATION AND CONSUMER CONFIDENCE

Zimbabwe's high levels of inflation undermine FI gains. Zimbabwe has experienced several episodes of very high inflation levels in the past and periodically allowed the use of multiple foreign currencies in addition to the Zimbabwe Dollar (ZWL). At the time of writing of this article in July 2022, consumer price inflation stood at 257% per annum according to Trading Economies (2022) and at 260.63% according to ZIMStat (2022). A strong impact of the hyperinflationary environment has been erosion of depositors' funds and erosion of consumer confidence when new currency measures such as conversion rates have been introduced. This is coupled with other related challenges such as high-interest rates for borrowing and low-interest rates for savings which mainly affect marginalised groups such as women and youths because they cannot access capital thereby further excluding them from the financial ecosystem. Weak consumer confidence is further reflected in the reluctance by MSMEs and general citizens to keep their hard-earned money in banks, opting to keep it in hard currency cash format. This can be attributed to high inflation and a lack of trust in formal financial institutions' capacity to retain the value of their savings. Non-participation in the formal financial institutions further excludes MSMEs and citizens from accessing the broad financial ecosystem.

THE POLITICAL STAKEHOLDER DILEMMA

Through our manifesto analysis tool, we analysed the promises made by two of the most prominent political parties in the Zimbabwe 2018 Presidential election, the Zimbabwe African Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the Movement for Democratic Change Alliance (MDC- Alliance). We noted some references to promoting FI. Both parties referred to promoting entrepreneurship activities through promoting incubation hubs, creating tax breaks and providing access to credit. Neither party mentioned laws and regulations around inclusion and the strategies to improve FI from a policy perspective. Neither party mentioned the importance of training in financial literacy nor enhancing access to information for vulnerable groups. This lack of commitment by political stakeholders is further demonstrated in the analysis of the current GoZ's commitment to promises related to financial inclusion. According

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to SIVIO Institute's Zimcitizenswatch tracker, two key categories of financial inclusion-related promises that have not commenced as of August 2022 are in the following areas:

» Creating incentives for the introduction of innovative financial products which are easily accessible to the general public.

» Intensifying the rollout of financial literacy programs in collaboration with financial and private sectors.

The absence of solid commitments to FI in the main political parties' manifestos (MDC Alliance, 2018; ZANU- PF, 2018) and the subsequent failure by the government of the day to keep or commence related promises from their election manifestos (SIVIO Institute, 2022) indicates political actors' lack of goodwill in supporting financial inclusion. By extension, it also raises serious doubts about these actors' commitments to integrating citizens' voices and needs in addressing the broad poverty and livelihoods challenges currently facing the majority of Zimbabweans, given the role of these citizens in driving entrepreneurship and growth and success of MSMEs.

TOWARDS A NEW THINKING FOR FINANCIAL INCLUSION IN ZIMBABWE

Our study shows the same barriers to FI reported ten years ago, raising a fundamental question on the need for a re-think and re-imagination of the mindset and approach used to address FI in Zimbabwe. Other studies supporting these findings include those by non-state actors such as Acacia Economies and FinScope. This demonstrates a misalignment between the design and implementation of policies and intervention mechanisms with the realities of impact for the targeted beneficiaries. This reinforces the need for an approach that is designed to set out a more inclusive and impact-driven framework or thinking for FI. Such a framework or thinking places the citizen and, by extension, entrepreneurs at the centre of policy and intervention design and implementation.

The barriers are well-established and perceptions of what could be done differently can be drawn from the insights from the targeted beneficiaries, thereby creating an opportunity for a more consultative and co-creative approach to designing interventions whose impact can be tracked. In some ways, this should mitigate the re-occurrence of the same barriers in 2030, as is evident from the current discourse. Revisiting the framework for measuring the impact of interventions placing citizen stakeholders such as women and youths at the centre of the framework of new thinking for intervention is a crucial pre-requisite for any initiative that builds on the work done to date to enhance financial inclusion in Zimbabwe.

This is imperative considering the nuances and complexities that frame the Zimbabwean context outlined above. There is need for a deliberate process of engagement of citizens in co-designing and co-creating intervention and impact measurement strategies that are responsive to the lived circumstances of the citizens and, by extension, MSMEs. Citizens and, by extension, MSMEs' decision-making on financial issues is made within a much-nuanced environment that is relatively unique to Zimbabwe.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENHANCE THE IMPACT OF MSME-SUPPORT INITIATIVES AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION OF CITIZENS IN ZIMBABWE

Many programmes have been implemented to promote MSMEs, specifically women-owned and-run MSMEs. There are various sources and case studies that can be used for benchmarking effective policy interventions commissioned by the World Bank and international development actors such as German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), which have been implemented in countries such as Tanzania, notwithstanding the often faulty and contentious one size fits all policy prescriptions of multi-lateral organisations void of local context sensitivities. Figure 3 below summarises a framework to revisit the framing of interventions with an emphasis on continuous co-creative measurement of the impact on citizens' livelihoods.
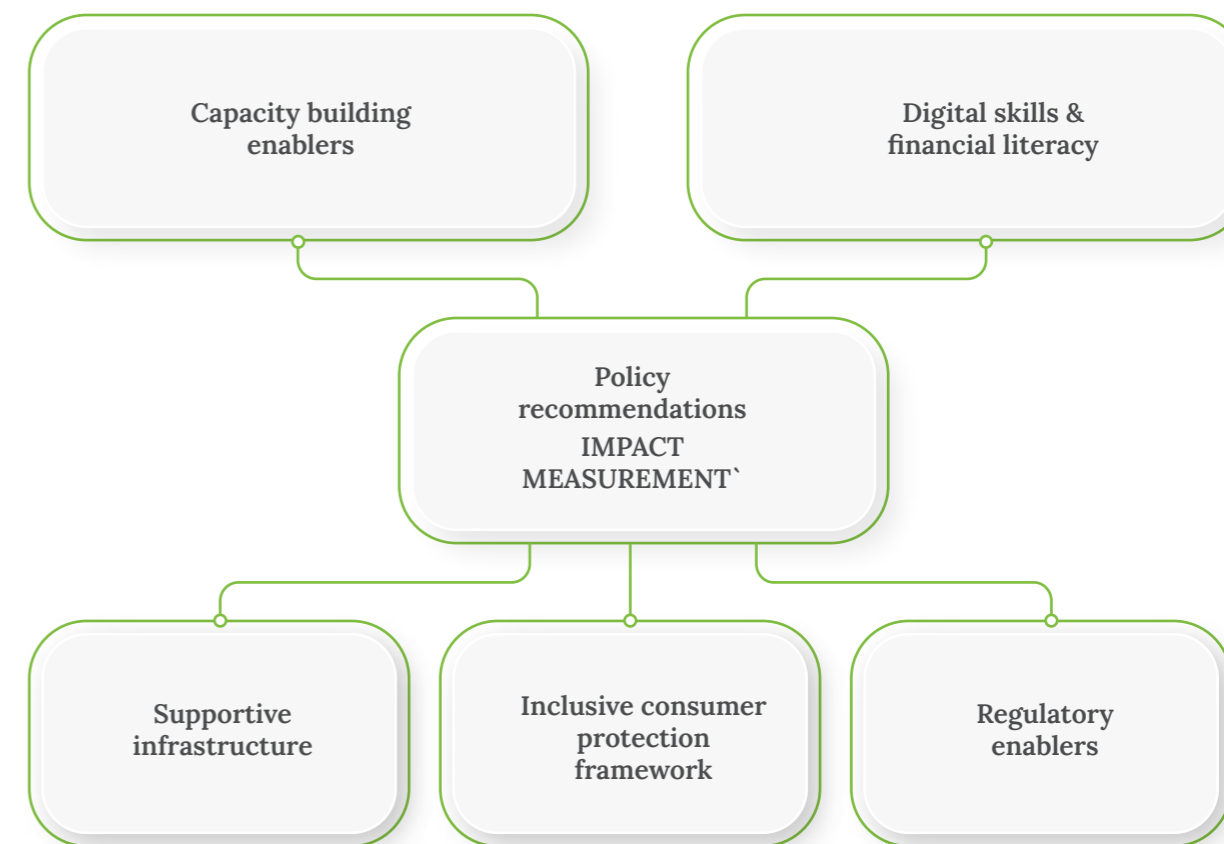
Figure 3: Framework for Financial Inclusion Impact

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CAPACITY BUILDING ENABLERS- RESEARCH AND FUNDING

Given the diversity and continuous barriers to FI in Zimbabwe, there is a need for investment in constant research to measure the impact of interventions that are in place. This process should be co-creative, involving targeted beneficiaries such as MSMEs and women and the generality of citizens currently excluded from the formal financial services ecosystem. Investment in new product development responsive to the nuances and complexities of Zimbabwe's context is essential. This must be reinforced by integrating citizens' voices in co-designing and co-creating relevant financial products. Other key areas of capacity building include the development of a robust Fintech network which will be crucial in improving funding models for MSMEs and, by extension, mentoring marginalised groups such as women. A targeted focus for funding different stages of MSMEs would help entrepreneurs develop and scale up, considering how most enterprises are active in the informal economy. Integration of diverse funding options such as philanthropy foundations and impact investors should be promoted through appropriate policies and incentives for the actors to participate in inclusive financial services ecosystems.

REGULATORY ENABLERS

There is scope to revisit the regulatory environment governing key actors, such as micro-finance institutions (MFIs), in order to reduce the stringent regulations on MFIs. The trickle-down impact of this will be a reduction on the cost of lending money to the poor. This can include reviewing renewal periods for licenses from the costly 12 month period to 24 months. Funding for MFIs in Zimbabwe must utilise mechanisms that target communities at the bottom of the pyramid, in rural and remote areas, by creating a national development fund for MFIs. This will help to ensure that the MFIs get access to affordable and patient capital, which allows them to lend at lower rates with more extended payback periods to vulnerable groups who need the access most.

Restrictive compliance requirements have been cited as key barriers to FI. Therefore, there is a need for a consultative engagement of targeted beneficiaries to understand the constraints they face which inhibit them from complying with registration requirements. Involving all the stakeholders in developing a regulatory framework could enhance the levels of compliance. Other best practices implemented in developing and transition economies include introducing support mechanisms such as tax breaks and loan access which can encourage MSMEs to move into the formal economy.

PRO-POOR REFORMS

Further pro-poor reform ensures that the 2% IMTT does not apply to low-value transactions and that micro and small enterprises are shielded from the tax. This could be an additional method of promoting compliance through policy support in understanding the impact of MSME on the economy, employment and GDP. These reforms should also be extended to financial product development, where there is a gap in providing insurance and reinsurance products for MSMEs and the poor.

SUPPORTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

In terms of competition, Zimbabwe needs to relax current restrictions in the communications sector to allow for the entrance of new telecom companies that can compete with the few big players. This will help to reduce voice and data costs to consumers, thereby aiding access to technology and, therefore, inclusion. The ability to send money to or receive it from another person even if they use a different financial service provider are critical pre-requisites for broadening access to digital financial products. The current digital telecommunications environment is dominated by one major network, Econet. Pro-market advocates would argue that the government has no business in managing market dynamics in a free market model. However, interventionist policies are a necessity where there is a need to safeguard the provision of public social products such as accessible and affordable telecommunications.

Energy inclusion and financial inclusion are mutually entwined. It is important to note that access to electricity more broadly unlocks access to other essential services, including information and communications technology (ICT), education and healthcare services. Without electricity, it is difficult to expand these services to rural areas. FI can facilitate energy inclusion by allowing access to finance to invest in basic energy needs (such as a solar power system) and by making it possible to pay for electricity using digital payment systems.

DIGITAL SKILLS AND FINANCIAL LITERACY TRAINING

There is need to promote digital skills that will lead to the promotion of financial technology skills in Zimbabwe, with an emphasis on developing such skills at secondary and tertiary levels. Stakeholders should continue to invest in promoting digital capabilities skills, especially among marginalised groups such as women and youths. This could be best maximised by integrating the various training initiatives implemented by multiple players in the financial ecosystem. An extension of education should include financial literacy training in tertiary education systems so that citizens are introduced to school-level financial literacy training.

INCLUSIVE CONSUMER PROTECTIVE FRAMEWORK

The GoZ and other stakeholders such as the RBZ, have made significant inroads in introducing various policy and legal instruments to safeguard consumer protection in line with the NFIS (See Annex1). However, there is scope for revisiting these instruments to integrate the voice of targeted beneficiaries, the citizens. The current challenge is not so much about what has been put in place to date, but it is more to do with an evaluation of the implementation and effectiveness of the various instruments that are in place. A citizen-centred approach helps draw insights into some of the nuanced complexities that citizens and, by extension, MSMEs face in utilising the current instruments.

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CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Although progress has been made with regards to financial inclusion, it is evident that there has been little change in the challenges that Zimbabwe faces since the FinScope survey of 2012. Thus, although progress is evident it has not been sufficient to remove the hurdles to inclusion. Additional research needs to be conducted to determine the actual impact of current efforts to enhance women's financial inclusion, explicitly considering the recorded successes based on NFIS indicators. Continuous real-time evaluation of the uptake and effects of legislated consumer protection instruments is also critical to future research. The information gathered should address the gaps of information currently existing around the informal sector together with the needs and preferences of vulnerable groups.

We currently note that access has improved since the NFIS but high-quality products and services are not accessed equitably. Therefore, future efforts on inclusion should be aimed at measuring the quality of financial products and services with benchmarks for financial service providers with an emphasis on improving the quality provided to low-income groups. Our quest for information and quality should aim to meet the needs of consumers, understanding that rural and urban communities, men and women, the old and the young have different financial needs.

The policies we promote should consider the information and quality gaps with an emphasis on consumer protection and innovation in the digital age. Some industry sectors such as vending, retail, mining and agriculture require diligent efforts to ensure that citizens in those spaces have an opportunity to engage with policy makers on products, services and inclusion measures that would be best suited for them.

Our attention and focus should rightly continue towards women, youth and MSMEs with efforts to reduce their vulnerabilities and promote their inclusion through improved access, improved training and opportunities for co-creation with policy makers.

We observe that the barriers to inclusion for small enterprises can be summed up as lack of flexible and affordable financing, harsh compliance laws and lack of information on the best fit for using and sourcing financial products and services. Addressing these three concerns for targeted groups such as youth, women and founders in marginalised areas will create more inclusive systems that promote access amongst MSME's.

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ANNEX 1: REGULATIONS GOVERNING FINANCIAL INCLUSION IN ZIMBABWE

1. Money Lending and Rates of Interest Act

2. Banking Act

3. National Microfinance Policy (2008)

4. Microfinance Amendment Act

5. Bank Use Protection and Suppression of Money Laundering Act

6. Immovable Property (Prevention of Discrimination) Act

7. Cooperatives societies act

8. Insurance Act

9. Exchange Control Act

10. National Gender Policy

11. Mobile Money Interoperability Regulations of 2020

12. Consumer Protection Framework

13. Retail Payment Systems and Instruments

14. Operational Guidelines for Deposit Taking Micro-Finance Institutions

15. Prudential Standards on Agency Banking

16. National Financial Inclusion Strategy

17. National Development Strategy 1 (NDS 1)

18. Zimbabwe National Industrial Development Policy 2019 to 2023

19. Infrastructure Investment Plan

20. Vision 2030

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

New Citizen Forms of Solidarity in Zimbabwe's Crisis-Stricken Context

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ABSTRACT

The real effectiveness of foreign aid or overseas development assistance is evident in the improvement of the livelihoods of the recipients for the better. There have been numerous debates and discussions around the extent to which foreign aid brings about true development for countries in the global south. In the case of Zimbabwe, foreign aid and its reduction have been linked to the political standoff between the country and the west, particularly after the implementation of the controversial land reform program. Coupled with a protracted economic crisis that has stretched for over 20 years, the expectation was for the country to completely collapse. However, this has not been the case. Citizens found ways or alternatives to continue with their lives and develop mechanisms of resilience and solidarity that allowed them to keep on going even amid the political and economic crises of the last 22 years. How did they do this and what role can this play in advancing a more inclusive society and approach to development? This paper explores this question.

Key words: development; foreign aid; citizens; solidarity; giving; associations

INTRODUCTION

For decades, African countries have mainly depended on overseas development assistance for developmental purposes. This was partly due to the colonial project that made the colonies subjects of the empire. Secondly, several countries in Africa became indebted to financial institutions as a result of structural adjustment programmes that were driven mainly by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Zimbabwe, like other African countries and those of the global south, was for many decades a major recipient of foreign aid in order to improve the livelihoods of people and to drive the nation's development. Since independence, literature abounds on the extent to which the country depended on various forms of aid (see Moyo, 1995; Chikowore, 2010; Bird & Busse, 2007; Gurukume, 2012). During the liberation struggle, various countries also supported Zimbabwe to free itself from Britain. The help came in cash and in kind. After independence, the country received both bilateral and multilateral support especially from the industrialised nations until it was put under sanctions after 2000. Still, help was given to the country through selected bilateral, multilateral and philanthropic channels. This pattern is not different in other countries and regions of the world where aid is seen as important in advancing the development of poorer nations.

Given the above context, this article seeks to highlight three issues:

i. Firstly, it outlines the aid patterns in Zimbabwe - showing the gradual decline of aid and how this has been a global phenomenon that was recently exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the context of Zimbabwe, the ongoing economic crisis and political stalemate as well as sanctions have further exacerbated the decline of aid to the country.

ii. Secondly, the article argues that even if aid was available, it does not necessarily equate to development given that it comes with conditionalities.

iii. Thirdly, the article argues for alternative ways of approaching development. The case of Zimbabwe is illustrative. The country has little aid and limited state resources, yet the country has not collapsed. It has been more than twenty years since the country faced an economic and political meltdown. What then are some of the new frontiers of support and survival that citizens have drawn support from? How influential are these new forms of solidarity in advancing a more inclusive society and in the advancement of true development?

AID AND DEVELOPMENT

Despite the levels of aid – which amounts to over USD1 trillion in assistance since the 1970s, sub-Saharan Africa is still floundering in a cycle of disease and poverty when compared to other regions of the global south (Moyo, 2009). Citizens of Africa are worse off – they have remained poorer, and development has slowed down over time. When aid flows to Africa were at their peak, poverty rate rose from 11% to 66% (Moyo, 2009). Africa's per capita income continues to fall, life expectancy is stagnated, and, in some instances, it has regressed. The proportion of poor inhabitants in Africa has grown, making Africa the only continent where poverty has

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grown so drastically (Moyo & Mafuso, 2017). In Asia, the poverty rate dropped from 73.6% in 1965 to less than 10% in 2014 (WIDER, 2020) based on a US$3.20 per day poverty line, while in Latin America using a poverty line of US$4 a day, the region's population living in poverty fell from 45 to 25 per cent between 2000 and 2014 (Levy, 2016).

For scholars such as Dambisa Moyo (2009), aid has not been transformative to Africa. According to Moyo (2009), the continent's 'cycle of disfunction' is linked to or has its roots in aid. Moyo and Mafuso (2017) highlight that aid effectiveness can only be seen if people's livelihoods are changed for the better. Dambisa Moyo (2009) has further challenged many assumptions about aid and argued that "recipients of this aid are worse off" (p. 17).

The debate around the usefulness or effectiveness of foreign aid has often pitted proponents of aid against those who are critical of aid. For instance, economics professor, William Easterly (2009) has also been an opponent arguing that poverty results from an absence of economic and political rights, and that only the restoration of these will address the issue (Melesse, 2021). Melesse (2021) notes that criticism of aid can be traced close to 50 years ago. Peter Bauer was a strong critic of government-to-government aid. His argument was that this aid was neither necessary nor efficient and that in fact what it did do was to promote government power, destroy economic incentives while diminishing civic initiatives and dynamism (Melesse, 2021). Broadly, the aid critics highlight how official aid creates "dependency, fosters corruption, encourages currency overvaluation, and doesn't allow countries to

take advantage of the opportunities provided by the global economy" (Melesse, 2021, "An old debate", para. 4).

The increasing critique of external aid as a catalyst for development raises the need to examine other ways through which countries in the South can respond to the needs of their citizens. There is no doubt that some forms of aid will remain useful as it has been previously. Examples include quick humanitarian responses to pandemics and catalytic finances such as that provided by philanthropic sources. However, as more and more criticism pile up on aid and new developments take place in the global North such as the reduction of their contributions, there is need to look for resources in the domestic markets for countries in the south. Ghana, for example, already introduced a 'beyond aid' policy – the Ghana Beyond Aid Charter and Strategy Document (Government of Ghana, 2019) that seeks to have Ghana benefit from trade relations than from aid relations. The principal factor behind such shifts has to do with the fact that aid has failed to provide any significant development in the continent so far. Africa cannot depend on aid only to try and advance its development and ultimately improve the livelihoods of its citizens, the solutions and resourcing to address the development challenges of the continent must come from within or from other sources other than aid. Philanthropy in its different forms is one such source. Several governments in Africa have now established frameworks to engage philanthropy. These range from philanthropy strategies such as the case of the government of Rwanda to Philanthropy Departments or departments in government that are responsible for philanthropy, for example in Liberia, South Africa and Kenya among others.

FOREIGN AID

Ajayi (2000) has defined foreign aid as a form of assistance by a government or by financial institutions to other needy countries. This assistance can either be in cash or kind. Another definition of foreign aid put forward by Lancaster (2007) is that it is a voluntary transfer of public resources, from one government to another independent government, or a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), or to an international organization (such as the World Bank or The United Nations Development Program (UNDP)) with at least a 25% grant element, with the goal to improve the human conditions in the country receiving the aid. The transfer of resources is often from richer countries in the global north to the poorer countries of the global south.

There are three distinct types of aid:

i.   Humanitarian or emergency aid

ii. Charity based aid

iii. Systematic aid (aid payments made directly to governments through bi-lateral or multi-lateral agencies, loans, and grants)

Prior to World War II (WWII), the early objective of foreign aid was mostly for political and military support. At the end of WWII, with the devastation caused by the war, aid was used to provide immediate disaster relief to help Western European economies rebuild. An example of this was the Marshal Plan. In the post-colonial period in the 1960s and 1970s, aid was used to help to advance the economies of newly independent countries and as a means to advance development. By the 1990s most countries changed their primary objectives of giving aid to the improvement of the lives of the

poor (Sogge, 2002). Sogge (2002) has identified three basic objectives of the World Bank and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries in giving aid. These are:

i.   Reducing material poverty, chiefly through economic growth, but also through the provision of public infrastructure and basic social services.

ii. Promoting good governance, chiefly in effective, honest and democratically ac- countable institutions to manage the economy and the legal order, but also in the promotion of civil and political rights.

iii. Reversing the negative environmental trends.

Foreign aid has been seen as a bridge to counter the disparities that exist between developed and developing countries and are largely reflected in the different living standards across countries. According to Tarp (2009), the major disparities that exist are around the following four areas:

»   Productive capacity – poor countries do not produce very much.

»   Lack of physical capital.

»   Lack of human capital.

»   Lack of technology and functioning institutions.

Foreign aid's main role now is focused on improving living standards significantly so that poor countries can produce more. It is seen as the vehicle that will promote economic growth and foster development. Foreign aid

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has therefore been projected and seen as a tool for modernization. This, however, is still debatable for the African continent. Foreign aid has yet to deliver an improved "modern" Africa. The continent has made some mild attempts at development and modernisation but when compared to Asia and Latin America, it remains woefully behind in terms of infrastructure and technological advancements.

MODERNIZATION THEORY AND FOREIGN AID

If foreign aid is seen as a tool of modernization, there is a significant link between the modernization theory of development and foreign aid. The modernization theory of development came about in the 1940s. The aim of this theory was to firstly, explain why poor countries were failing to develop by highlighting the economic and cultural conditions that were preventing their growth; secondly to advance the notion that the solution to poverty lay in capitalism and the adoption of western values and culture; and thirdly to stress that countries that wanted to develop, therefore, had to do away with traditional values and culture and take on those of the global north if they wanted to advance.

How do countries then modernize? The answer lies in a key concept within this theory put forward by economist Walt Rostow in 1960 – which outlines the five (5) stages a country must go through to become modern (see Figure 1)
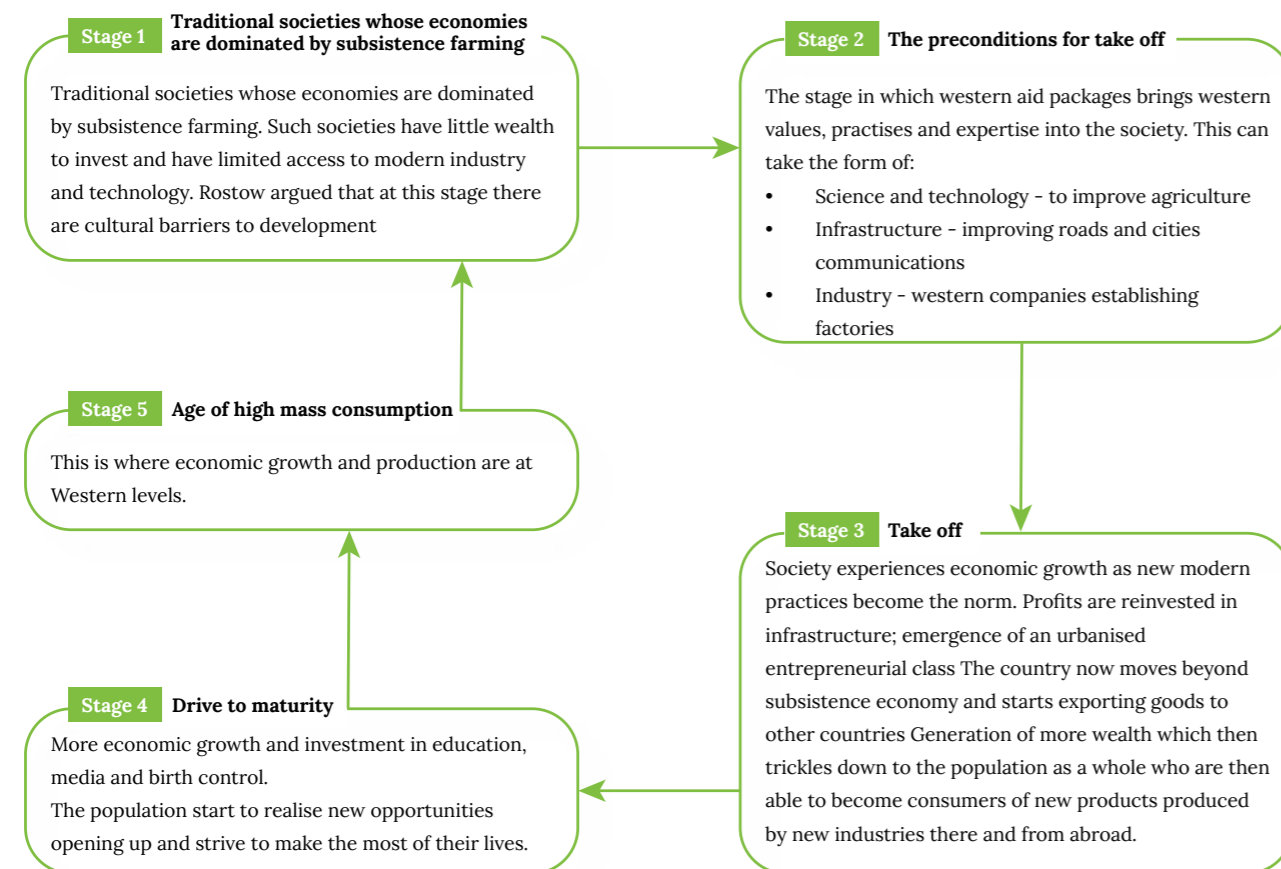

Figure 1: Rostow's Five (5) Stage Model of Development

Countries start off as 'traditional' societies and ultimately go through various stages to reach the 5th stage which he termed 'The age of high mass consumption'. At this stage countries undergoing development, will be expected to have the productive capacity and economic growth levels comparative to western countries. These stages are ones that developed countries have gone through and the expectation is that developing countries must therefore follow in the same footsteps if they are to develop. As discussed earlier, this has not been the case with African countries due to political, economic and geo-political factors that have sought to keep African countries indebted to the North.

CHALLENGES WITH MODERNISATION THEORY AND FOREIGN AID

There have been major criticisms of the modernisation theory. Central to them is the one-size fits all approach that it adopts. The theory fails to take into account contextual differences and nuances present from one country to another and makes all developing countries seem homogenous. The theory does not speak on or reflect upon some of the problems of modernization and the challenges of inequality in developing countries. The model assumes that countries need the help of outside forces. The premise is that experts and money coming in from the outside, are parachuted in, and with their injection bring about development. This notion downgrades and completely fails to recognize the role of local knowledge and initiatives and can be seen as demeaning and dehumanising for local communities and actors. Galeano (1992) argues that minds become colonised with the idea that they are dependent on outside forces. The theory fails to also take into consideration underlying internal challenges such as corruption which also prevents aid of any kind from doing good. Aid is often siphoned off by corrupt elites and government officials rather than getting to the projects it was earmarked for. This means that aid creates more inequality and enables elites to maintain power. There are also ecological limits to the growth of some of the projects proposed to modernise a country. The extraction of primary resources for initiatives such as mining and forestry has led to the destruction of the environment as well as, at times, the forcible removal of people from their land with little to no compensation. A closer look at the case of Zimbabwe helps to illuminate the arguments advanced above.

HISTORY OF FOREIGN AID IN ZIMBABWE

Independence for Zimbabwe in 1980 coincided with the 1980 United Nations Decade for Development in the Third World and with it an increase in development assistance. In addition, individual states also sought to support the new government. Both the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank have been foreign aid donors to Zimbabwe, with the World Bank being the largest donor to Zimbabwe since 1980. Between 1980 and 1981 Zimbabwe received 14 bank loans and four (4) International Development Association (IDA) credits amounting to US$657 million (Dashwood, 2000). During that period, US$51 million went towards promoting agricultural development in the communal areas, US$136 million to the rehabilitation and expansion of exports of the manufacturing sector, US$150 million to the energy sector, US$141 million to the transport

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sector, as well to the other smaller projects, such as urban development and support to small scale enterprise (Dashwood, 2000, p. 68). World Bank Group (WBG) assistance to Zimbabwe totalled $1.6 billion between 1980 and 2000 (World Bank, 2022).

Since the year 2000, the World Bank suspended its direct lending to Zimbabwe because of non-payment of arrears. Support that has come through from the World Bank since 2000 has been sector-specific and limited in terms of amount. A key fund has been the Zimbabwe Reconstruction Fund in place since 2014, which has since inception received US$52 million from development partners (World Bank, 2021). The IMF holds a similar position. In September 2001, the country was declared ineligible to use the general resources of the IMF and to borrow resources[1]. As of September 2022, the IMF's position was that it was "precluded from providing financial support to Zimbabwe due to unsustainable debt and official external arrears" (Press Release No.22/310: IMF Staff Concludes Staff Visit to Zimbabwe, para. 5). The fund currently provides Zimbabwe with technical assistance on economic governance, financial sector reforms and microeconomic statistics.

Zimbabwe has received comparatively high levels of foreign aid for a long period peaking in the 1990s – during the period of the Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP). Aid levels from the World Bank and IMF started to decline in 1996 and direct aid or lending from these entities ceased in 2000 at the height of Zimbabwe's fast-track land reform program; a worsening economic crisis and political impasse brought about because of the land reform program. The land reform program caused declared and undeclared sanctions against the country by multi-lateral financial institutions and foreign governments. The country was no longer eligible to access financial and technical assistance. It also led to the suspension of voting rights and the suspension of balance of payments. This meant that after 2000 Zimbabwe was isolated from international capital and this precipitated the economic crisis in that country.

However, even at its peak levels of receiving aid, especially in the early 1990s with the introduction of ESAP, there was no significant shift or improvement in the livelihoods of the majority of citizens. In 1998, the Central Statistics Office[2] noted that the incidence of poverty in Zimbabwe increased from 40.4% in 1990 - 91 to 63.3% by 1995 - 96. In addition, the government slowly started to lose policy autonomy as the structural adjustments programs were conditional and if the government was to continue to get foreign aid, there was a requirement to cut back on what the IMF and World Bank considered to be unnecessary spending; open up the economy through the removal of measures to protect local manufacturers and adoption of more liberal economic policies and less focus on social policies and measures. ESAP worsened the economic crisis in Zimbabwe (characterised by a shrinking formal economy, mass retrenchments, shrinking tax base, and increased levels of formalisation and lack of service delivery) and deepened external dependency on foreign aid. In addition, the conditions attached to such multilateral aid are the principal cause of abject poverty. This situation was not only unique to Zimbabwe but to many African countries that adopted structural adjustment programs at the behest of the IMF and World Bank.

The situation in Zimbabwe post-2000 has progressively worsened and the economic crises became more prolonged. The political isolation of the country by the west continues and access to substantive financial aid from the west remains restricted. For all intents and purposes in such a scenario, the expectation would have been for the country to degenerate into chaos. However, Murisa (2022) highlights that "many have sought to understand why despite years of economic crises Zimbabwe has not degenerated into a much deeper political crisis or chaos" (p. 7). So what then has held things together? One of the reasons has been the growth in funding inflows from China and Russia in attempts to increase their global influence and break the monopoly of western aid. According to Sun (2014) most of the financing by China in Africa "falls under the category of development finance and not aid" (What constitutes China's aid?, para. 2). With the drop and conditional nature of western forms of aid, Zimbabwe has seen an increase in the aid it receives from China. In a report produced by AFRODAD (2019), based on statistics from the China World Investment Tracker, Zimbabwe received in excess of US$9 billion in aid, investment and grants between 2005 and 2019. The bulk of this has been targeted towards infrastructure projects such as the upgrading of the Kariba and Hwange Power Stations; the upgrading of Victoria Falls and Robert Mugabe International Airports; the construction of the new Parliament of Zimbabwe building in Mount Hampden and significant investments targeted at resuscitation of steel production in Zimbabwe. When it comes to Russia, the support provided to Zimbabwe has mostly been on the economic front in the areas of mining, agriculture, energy as well as the educational and scientific fields – though it has not been as significant as China.

Since 2000, Zimbabwe has adopted a deliberate "Look East Policy" to get aid from China and countries like Russia. Governments in Africa generally prefer aid from the Eastern countries because it is not tied to conditionalities of good governance, democracy and the upholding of the rule of law. It is still early to conclude how effectiveness this new form of aid from the east has been. Zimbabwe for example still faces challenges with the economy and the provision of social services to the majority of the population. There is a possibility however that in the long run, this aid can contribute to infrastructure development which in turn might be a positive booster for reviving the economy. It is therefore not possible for this paper to make any conclusions on the effectiveness of this new aid from the East. What has been clear since 2000, however, has been how both the government and population in Zimbabwe have managed to adjust and survive under conditions of declining foreign aid.

This next section of the paper unpacks what has been happening – how ordinary people and communities have survived and worked with each other and for each other to navigate the socio-economic and political challenges the country has faced over the last 22 years. A key issue which has not been sufficiently discussed in existing debates about progress and development in Zimbabwe is how communities in particular and the country in general survived without substantive aid from outside.

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ASSOCIATIONAL LIFE, GIVING AND SOLIDARITY MECHANISMS IN ZIMBABWE

For a country such as Zimbabwe which has undergone many years of an underperforming economy, contested governance models leading to a political stalemate, decreased levels of service delivery and increased social and political crises, it is very easy to not see that in the midst of all this, citizens have tended to develop mechanisms of resilience and just go on with their lives as if the government did not exist. More often, there is a misdiagnosis of what holds the center together, if the analysis is not devoted to the actions and activities of citizens. Zimbabweans have endured more than two decades of crises that have led to one of the biggest migrations in sub−Saharan Africa. The statistics on the number of Zimbabweans who have emigrated are a bone of contention and vary with Afro Barometer indicating that there were approximately three to four million Zimbabweans living outside the country (Ndoma, 2017); while others estimate the figure to be as high as seven million[3]. The top destinations for Zimbabwean migrants include - South Africa, the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States. Yet amidst all this, the space has been held together by networks of solidarity, reciprocity, mutuality, and trust. In a study carried out in 2020 of citizens in Harare and the social, economic and political networks that they belonged to, 49% of respondents indicated that they belonged to a social support association, while 40% of respondents indicated that they belonged to an economic association/ formation – such as a savings and lending group; a housing cooperative or buying club (Mususa,

2021). Citizens have continued to survive in their different formations and groupings. These formations have kept the hope for democracy and pluralism alive. They have made sure that Zimbabweans continue as a nation to yearn for a free, prosperous and developed society. The formations have continued to provide spaces for cooperation in solving problems faced by the nation.

Given the various moments that Zimbabwe has gone through, it is glaring that there are very few studies that help us appreciate the role that associations and networks play in society. In order to make sense of development, it is critical that there is an understanding and appreciation of the role that social networks play in sustaining the fibre of a society. The mechanisms of resilience that keep people together are best captured under the notion of associational life. Associational life has long been a studied phenomenon especially in the United States of America and in some developed nations like Italy. Associational life is normally defined as "a web of social relationships through which citizens pursue joint endeavours-namely, families, communities, workplaces, and or religious congregations"[4]. Many observers have argued that these networks and their various institutional models are critical in not only forming human beings' characters and capacities, but they also provide meaning and purpose to human beings. These networks are also platforms and tools that citizens use to respond and address societal challenges, most of which are developmental in nature. Yuval Levin (2017) aptly summarized this argument by stating that these mechanisms,

> begin in loving family attachments. They spread outward to interpersonal relationships in neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, religious communities, fraternal bodies, civic associations, economic enterprises, activist groups, and the work of local governments. They reach further outward toward broader social, political, and professional affiliations, state institutions, and religious affinities. And they conclude in a national identity that among its foremost attributes is dedicated to the principle of the equality of the entire human race. (p. 4)

Zimbabwe's political and economic landscape has given rise over the years to the emergence of several associations, mainly in response to societal needs and more recently due to the failure of the state to meet its service delivery functions. Michael Bratton (1989) in the review of **Beyond the State: Civil Society and Associational Life in Africa,** writes that;

> Forms of associational life have evolved in rural Africa that address the direct needs of peasant producers for survival, accumulation, and reproduction under harsh and unpredictable conditions. (p. 413)

These associations were aptly called 'the economy of affection' by Goran Hyden (1980). Hyden argued that voluntary organizations with indigenous roots-for example, rural savings societies and nongovernmental welfare associations-are able to undertake fundamental developmental tasks like accumulation and distribution (119-28). For the urban poor, studies have been conducted across Africa, including in Zimbabwe that show that associational life

is a crucial element in their coping strategies. Ilda Lourenco-Lindell for example, looking at Guinea-Bissau, argued that,

> Informal networks of mutual assistance, notwithstanding their loose nature, are critical in the coping strategies of poor urbanites. Being embedded in webs of social relationships, people gain access to niches of the urban informal economy, find places to live, and are sustained through crises (Tostensen et.al., 2001, p. 27).

Put differently, these networks are platforms to reduce the vulnerability of the poor. AbdouMaliq Simone's study of Soumbedioune in Dakar and Johannesburg undertaken in the late 1990s emphasizes the fluidity of informal networks. However, it is this "fluidity that defies formalization and produces a situation of invisibility" that makes this a powerful platform and flexible tool for "responding to windows of opportunity, as and when they appear" (ibid, 28). Miranda Miles (2001) in her study of informal networks of women in Swaziland shows that in vulnerable positions on the lower rungs of the employment ladder, individuals, households and communities mobilize whatever resources they command to eke out a living. Apart from the tangible assets at their disposal, women create and draw on networks to enhance their resilience and chances of survival. These informal reciprocity networks derive largely from long-standing rural traditions of communal work parties, which are recreated in the city to form a basis for the acquisition of resources within an urban setting (ibid; 28).

According to Miles (2001), female urbanites rely on informal networks for their survival. They

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3.   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zimbabwean_diaspora

4.   See for example, The Social Capital Project, prepared by The Vice Chairman's Staff of the Joint Economic Committee at the Request of Senator Mike Lee (May 2017).

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mobilize resources through rotating savings and credit systems whose members contribute a certain amount on a regular basis. Upon sharing of proceeds, the money can be used for any purpose at the discretion of the member. Some have used this system to buy land, property and/or to start a business. In addition, Miles shows that these networks are also used by the members as a therapeutic function in terms of well-being (Miles, 2001).

As a coping mechanism, most of these survived through extended families, and remittances both from within and from the diaspora. Diaspora remittances to Zimbabwe have risen significantly over the last 3 years. In 2020, the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe recorded diaspora remittances of just over USD1 billion (CGTN Africa, 2021).

In June 2022, remittances of USD1,372 billion had been recorded (Kazunga, 2022). It is also in times of shortages that citizens become innovative and look for alternative survival modes. The survey undertaken by SIVIO Institute in 2020, demonstrated that 42% of respondents depended on diaspora remittances and 26.51% have no options at all, while 44.56% depended on casual or piece jobs. A separate study by Jowah (2020) on giving by Zimbabweans showed that in 2019, 91% (1140) respondents had in the last six months given to immediate family members while 64% (794 respondents) had given to the church and 61% (759 respondents) had given to their extended families. In other words, giving, technically called philanthropy, played a major role in keeping families together.
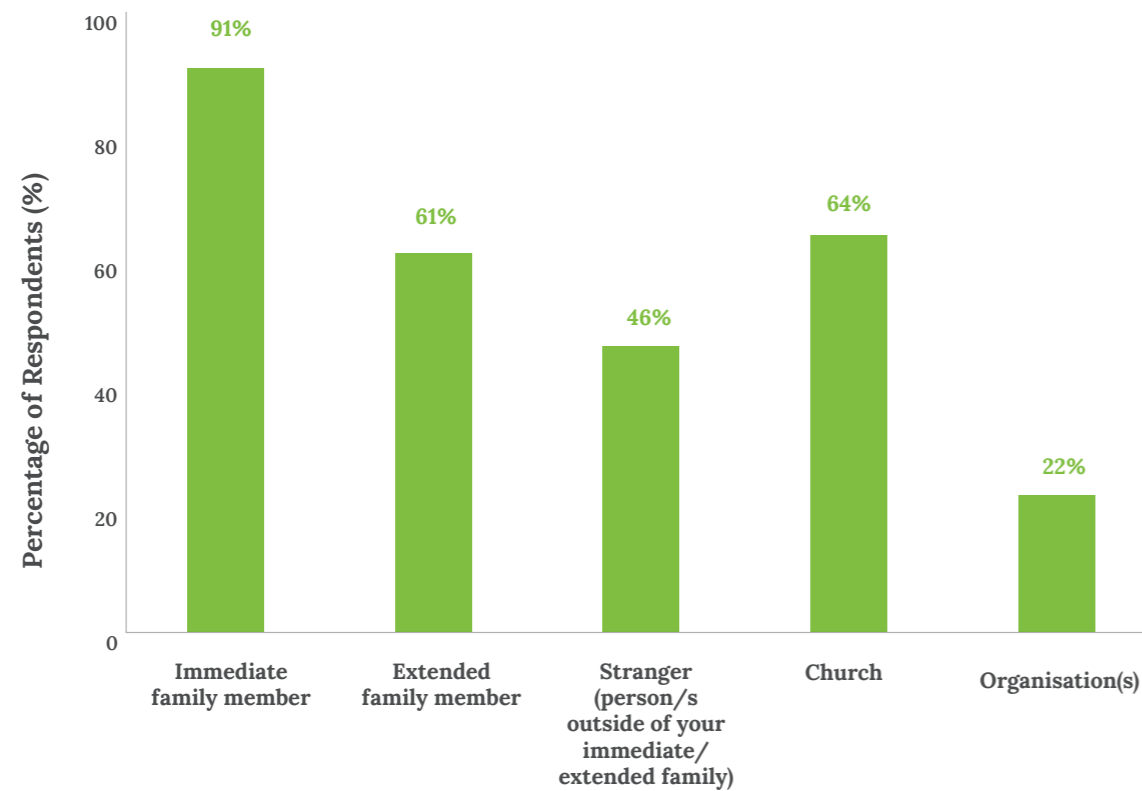

Figure 2: Entities that Received Donations in the Last Six Months

The various associations found in several countries in Africa are not unique to those countries, they are also present in Zimbabwe. A nationwide survey carried out by SIVIO Institute of 2, 449 people in various parts of Zimbabwe, showed that people who are unemployed (26.20%) and those who are in the informal economy (40.84%) comprised the majority. Only 22.44% are in the formal sector with what can be called a formal employment position. About 49.69% of these were female. The majority of these were in the age groups 18-25 years old (24.46%), 26-35 years old (30%) and 36-45 years old (23.7%). In other words, those between the ages of 18 and 35 years of age constituted 54% while those between 36 and 55 years old made up of 37%. Put differently, 67% of those who were surveyed are either unemployed or operating in the informal economy. These are drawn mainly from the ages 18-55 years old who comprised 91% of those surveyed. This spells social unrest and the creation of vulnerable social structures, especially in a society that has high levels of literacy such as Zimbabwe. The survey showed that 97% of the respondents said they could read and write. More than 40% had attained tertiary education and 51% had obtained secondary education. And more than 66% lived in an urban setting.

Looking deeper into those who are in the formal sector, it is clear that the majority of them are in education (15.9%), civil service (13.74%), retail (12.12%) and mechanics and engineering (12.6%). Thus, the productive sectors of the economy are not absorbing much of the workforce. As a result, most citizens' monthly incomes are not adequate

to meet their basic needs. About 87.61% of the respondents from across 31 rural and urban areas had an income that did not meet their basic needs compared to 12.39% who said their incomes are adequate.

The findings by Jowah highlighted above are not surprising given that in the survey conducted by SIVIO Institute in December 2019, when citizens were asked to identify networks that mattered the most to them, the majority (73.12%) ranked extended family highly, followed by religious groups, churches or mosque (64.93%). Other networks that mattered included sports clubs (38.76%), burial societies (39.99%), savings and lending groups (34.79%), residents associations (31.15%) and cooperatives (29.58%). It is worth noting here that networks that are closer to the communities are ranked higher in terms of importance while those that are a bit removed from communities such as affinity groups, professional bodies and alumni networks are scored very low. As Figure 3 below shows, most Zimbabweans were in 2022 not engaging that much with social movements, peace clubs and affinity groups as they did with those networks that have an opportunity to grant them access to economic opportunities, provide coping mechanisms and also spaces for healing such as churches. The existence of savings clubs, burial societies and cooperatives among Zimbabweans is historically grounded in many communities and has always served to cushion families and individuals in times of need.

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High   Medium   Low

Figure 3: Association by Level of Importance

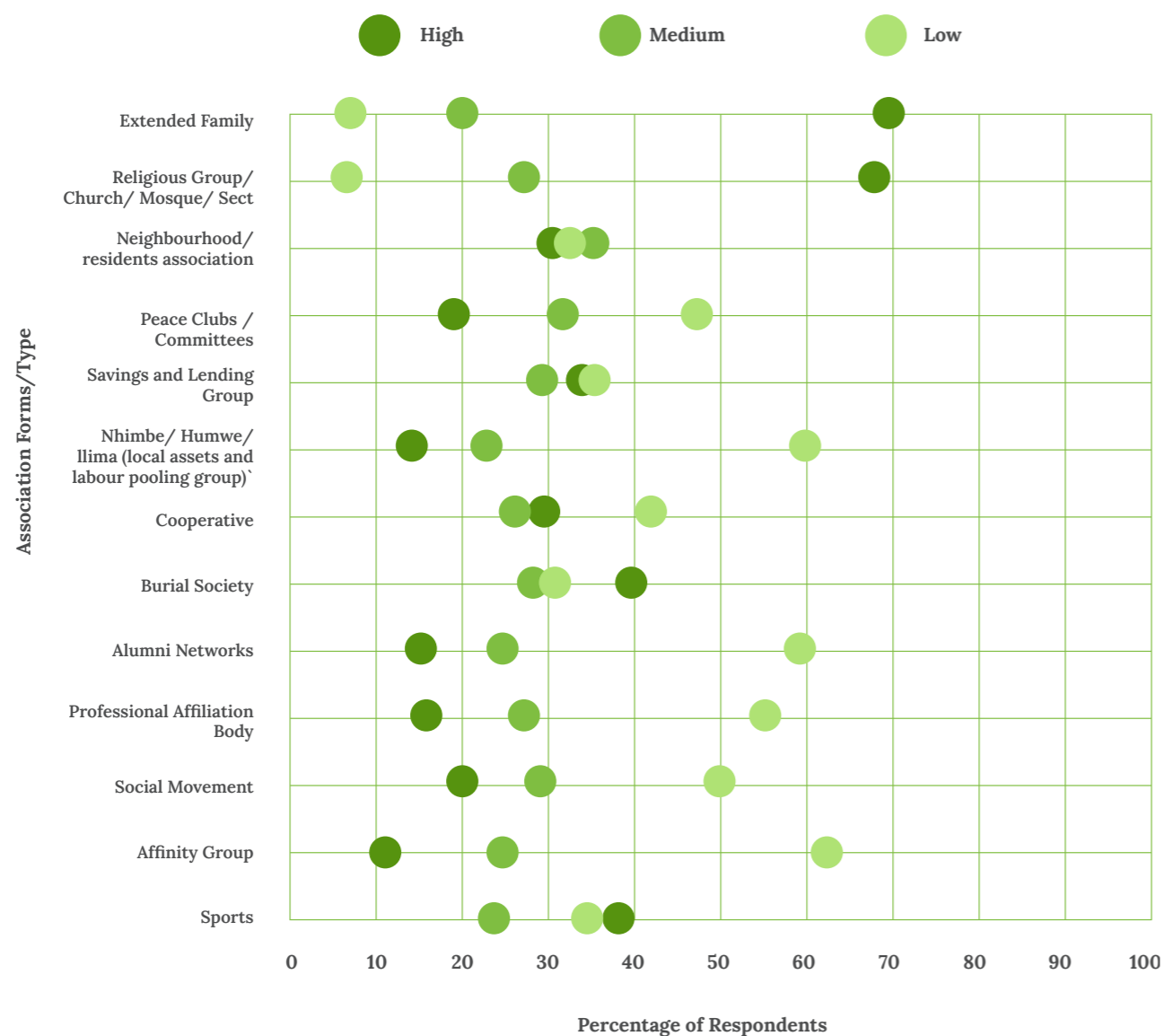**Figure 4: Giving to Extended Family**

It is clear that for development to make sense, attention needs to be given to how people relate with each other in their extended families, in their religious congregations and most importantly for economic reasons, how they establish savings, lending clubs and cooperatives. The importance of extended families is also captured in the study by Jowah (2020) mentioned above. The study shows patterns of giving and quite interestingly the majority of people give to extended families consistently. About 53% gave an average of between USD$5 and USD$100 to their extended families in the last six months.
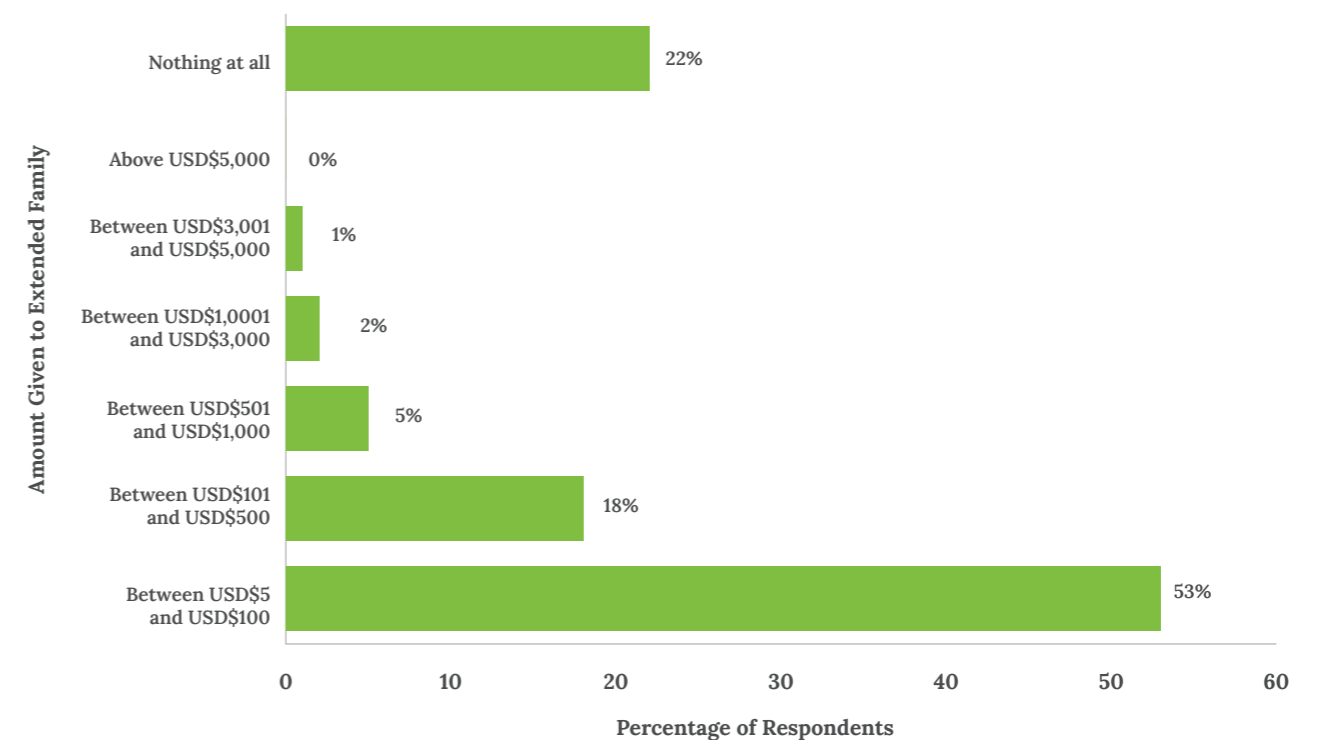
It is a well-known fact that in Zimbabwe, families depend on the community for burying their beloved. This is an old practice that has kept the social fibre intact. Burial societies, residents, associations and saving clubs are highly prioritized. There is a close relationship between the networks that are prioritized and the benefits thereof. Most of the respondents in our survey showed that citizens belong to churches and other networks for spiritual support (64%). Secondly, citizens participated in networks because they wanted a sense of belonging (62%). This is mainly true of extended families, churches and to some extent sports clubs. Thirdly, collective security (38%) and finally pooling together assets (37%), mutual support (37%) and networks (25%) also mattered for citizens. This would be of significance for those who participate in residents' associations,

savings clubs, burial societies and cooperatives. Finally, there is a high number of citizens who participate in networks and associations for solidarity and mutual support (68%) as depicted by Figure 5 below.

It is significant that 64% of respondents participate in religious networks mainly for spiritual support. This is not far from the demographics of Christians and other religions in sub-Saharan Africa. Gina A. Zurlo (2017) shows that Christians in 2016 comprised 58%, while Muslims constituted 29.4%, and Ethno-religionists (10.6%) and others (1.4%). In 2016, there were 52 million Christians in Southern Africa alone with a population of 59.83 million. Given the many challenges that Zimbabweans face, there is the possibility of fragmentation, alienation and atomization. To avert this, it is

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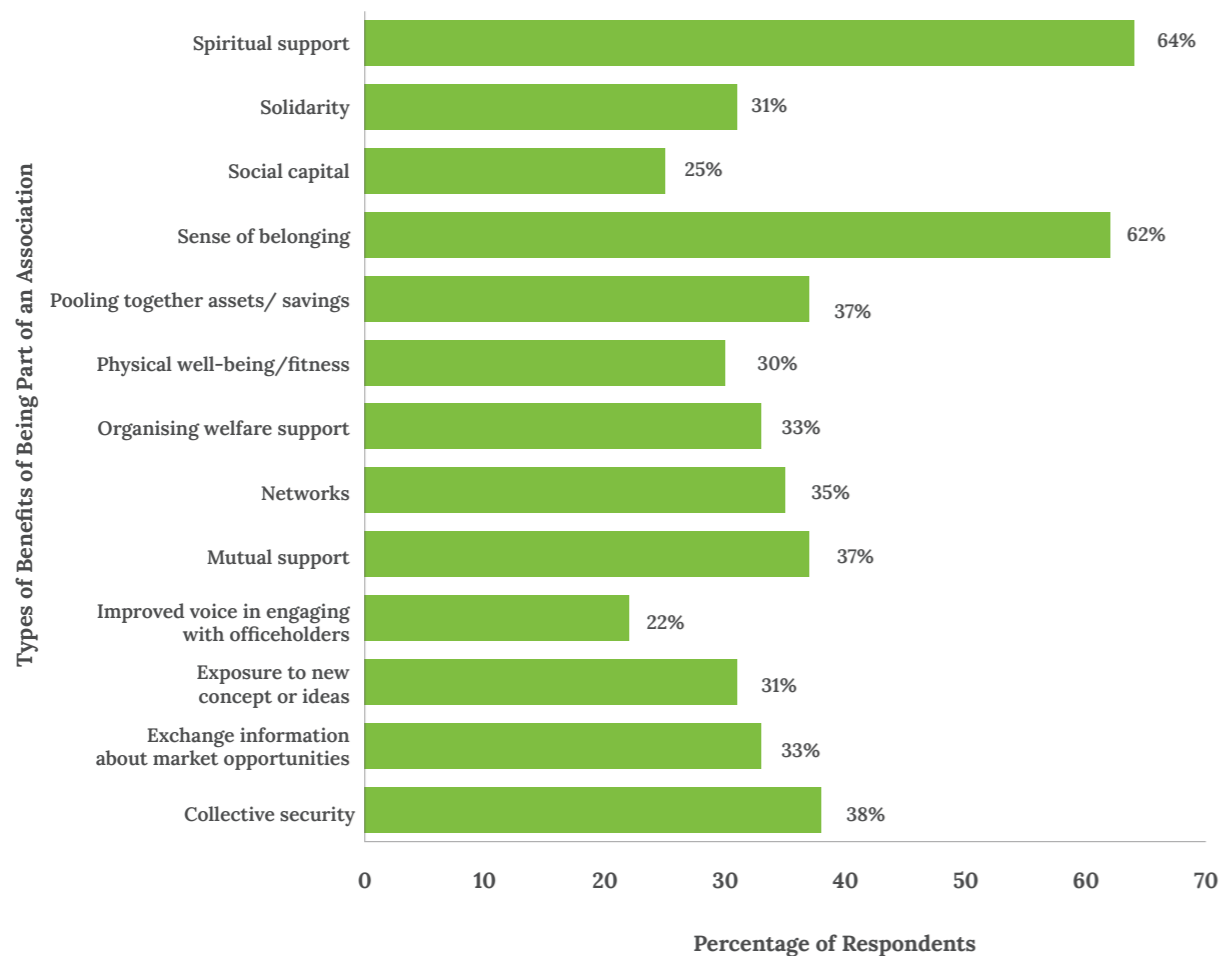New Citizen Forms of Solidarity in Zimbabwe's Crisis-Stricken Context

Figure 5: Benefits of belonging to an Association

clear that citizens seek those platforms that make them feel they belong. It is not surprising that more than 60% would seek a sense of belonging in networks. This is a tested mechanism for resilience building and a coping strategy, especially among the urban poor. In **Bowling Alone,** Putnam (2001), wrote:

❝ **Faith communities in which people worship together are arguably the single most important repository of social capital.... As a rough rule of thumb, our evidence shows nearly half of all associational memberships in America are church-related, half of all personal philanthropy is religious in character, and half of all volunteering**

occurs in a religious context (p. 66).

The Social Capital Project (2017) alluded to earlier argues that "religious institutions that convene people under the banner of shared beliefs have powerful community-promoting advantages over secular institutions". It further argues that these religious institutions "provide a vehicle for like-minded people to associate, through regular attendance at religious services and other events and charitable activities they sponsor". It adds that religious institutions are "highly effective at enforcing commitment to shared principles and norms of behaviour, passed down over generations" (Op. cit., 26). Robert Putnam further argued that religious institutions promote investments in social ties outside the

participants' denominations. He concluded that people who are committed to religion,

❝ **Are much more likely than other people to visit friends, to entertain at home, to attend club meetings, and to belong to sports groups; professional and academic societies; school service groups; youth groups; service clubs; hobby or garden clubs; literary, art, discussion, and study groups; school fraternities and sororities; farm organizations; political clubs; nationality groups; and other miscellaneous groups. (Op. cit., 67).**

Neighbourhoods' associations and residents' associations are also important networks for Zimbabweans. As seen in the survey, about 46% of respondents belonged to a resident or neighbourhood association. This figure is high and suggests that citizens have come together in response to some of the service delivery challenges facing government. The biggest attractions for belonging still remain the extended family (90.13%); followed by religious groups (87.67%), sports clubs (57.92%) and then burial societies (44.76%) and savings clubs (37.36%). This is in line with the order of importance that respondents accorded to each type or form of association as demonstrated in Figure 2 above whereby order of importance,

Figure 6: Membership in Associations

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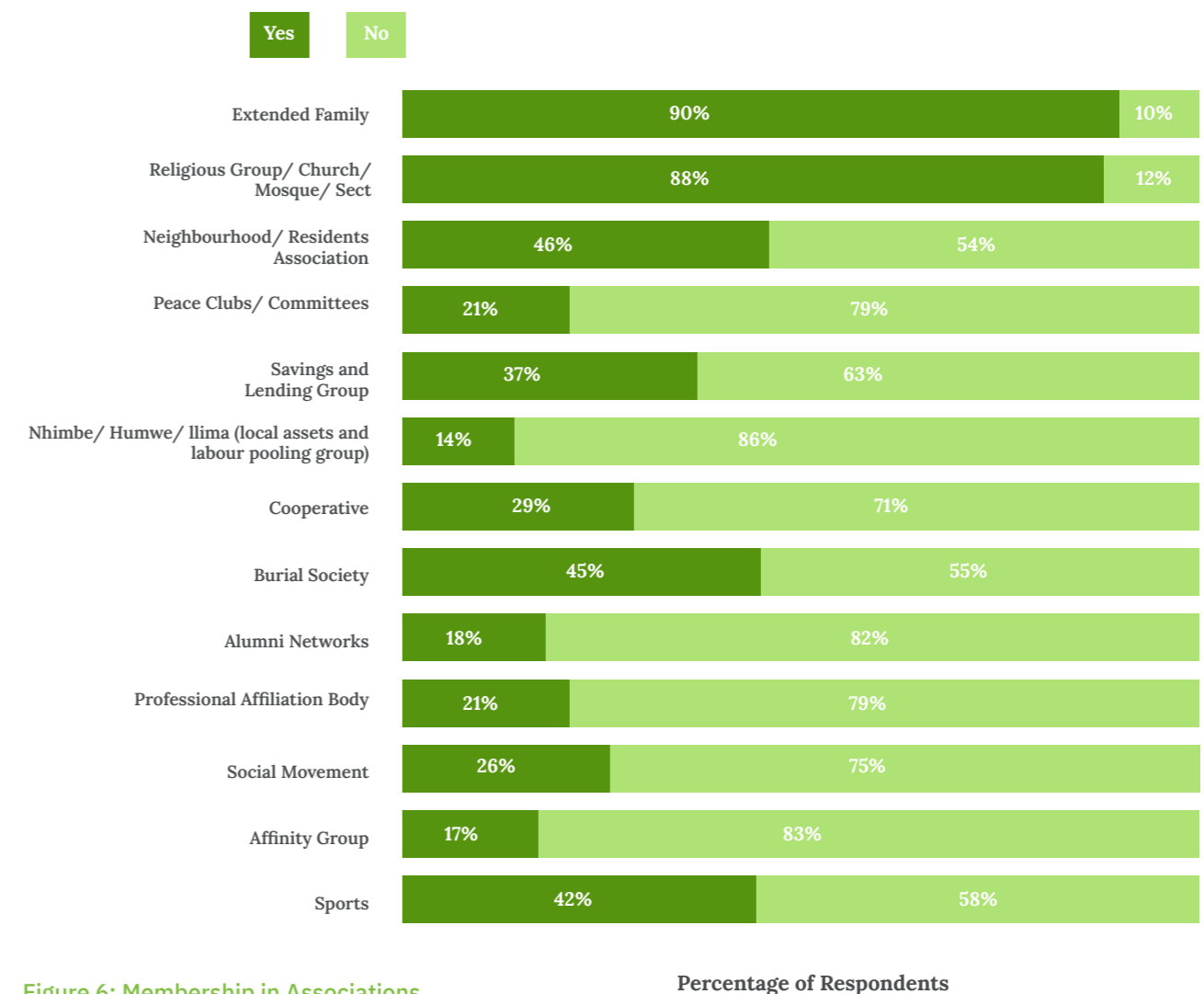New Citizen Forms of Solidarity in Zimbabwe's Crisis-Stricken Context

extended family ranked first (73.12%), followed by religious institutions (69.93%) and burial societies, sports, savings clubs and residents associations.

Theories of social capital argue that neighbourhoods with a healthy associational life provide a number of advantages to their residents. Research has also shown that communities with higher levels of trust and a greater willingness to address community problems have lower levels of crime (Sampson, 2012). Other researchers have also argued that communities, in which individuals help and look out for each other, are more willing to pool common resources, when necessary for example, after a natural disaster (Murphy, 2007). In the case of Zimbabwe, this has been demonstrated in recent examples such as the cholera outbreak in 2018 and the devastating cyclones Idai and Kenneth where groups such as Childline Zimbabwe, Econet Zimbabwe, Kidzcan Cancer, Children's Homes, and Higherlife Foundation, among others responded to address various needs. Additionally, it has been noted that neighbourhoods with healthy associational life seem to offer children greater prospects and opportunities for upward mobility within society (Chetty & Hendren, 2015).

The rise of residents' associations (RAs) in Zimbabwe is linked always to the decline in service delivery by urban councils. Musekiwa and Chatiza (2015) argue that although residents' associations predate independence, their visibility and numbers today has dramatically grown since 1980, with a spike in the post-2000 period. This is due to the post-2000 socioeconomic crisis that gripped Zimbabwe which resulted in weakened capacity of urban authorities to deliver basic essential services, such as housing, water, electricity, basic education, refuse removal and primary health. Residents responded to this failure by creating residents' associations and creating visibility of such associations. As the writers argue, residents' associations are established by citizens as pressure groups to ensure that councils improve service delivery and that in a democratic society, councils are accountable to ratepayers. This is crucial for development.

The history of residents' associations in Zimbabwe also reveals the shifts that have occurred over the years in their functions and mandate. Musekiwa and Chatiza (2015), for example, illustrate that the Gweru Residents' Association was in pre-1980 the voice of 'blacks' in enhancing access to urban services while Mutare Residents and Ratepayers Association focused on the service delivery challenges faced by residents in high-density areas of Mutare-then Umtali (ibid, 124). In the post-2000 period, residents' associations that were formed continued with the focus on citizens' participation and access to services. This was the case with the Harare Combined Residents Association while the Mutare Combined Residents and Ratepayers Association was established to address issues of access to clean water, streetlights, and refuse collections mainly in low-income suburbs. Residents' associations, therefore, emerge in response to the loss of faith in local government to deliver services. RAs are also established to compliment or replace local government system. In this case, RAs also 'play the role of nudging and guiding local authorities. Secondly, RAs emerge to address short to medium-term issues. These are mostly operational matters that are not long-term in nature. These associations have not positioned themselves in the urban areas only. The Masvingo United Residents Association for example is reported to have helped create RAs at rural service centers such as Nyika, and Mupandawana in Bikita and Gutu (ibid, 124).

In addition to advocacy and policy influence, RAs are also involved in service delivery. In Bulawayo, Musekiwa and Chatiza report that the Bulawayo Residents Association assisted with pauper burials-conducting 80 such in 2008. The Association also assisted by mobilizing funds for Mpilo hospital to repair the mortuary and laundry facilities. BURA is reported to have also run an HIV/AIDS programme in Bulawayo. The Harare Combined Residents Association is also said to be running a funeral fund. And in Mutare, the CMRRA mobilized communities for a reforestation and gully reclamation initiative in Dangamvura suburb. RAs also represent citizens on issues of public good. They also hold authorities accountable. All these are critical functions in a democracy.

Urban housing cooperatives are also another network that has provided an avenue for citizens to address problems associated with housing. Just like the residents' associations, the cooperative movement in Zimbabwe predates independence. The Cooperative Societies Act 193 was passed for example, in 1956. The number of cooperatives has grown exponentially. For example, by 1990, there were 1100 cooperatives and by early 2000s, the numbers had quadrupled (Butcher, 1990). Today there are more than 200 urban housing cooperatives. Harare alone has more than 80 of these (Kamete, 2007). The same is true of school associations that have been proven to result in higher school quality and better child outcomes.

From the December 2019 survey, it seems as if respondents are overall satisfied with the performance of the networks that they belong to. More than 70% of the respondents derived significant benefits from belonging to an extended family group while 22% benefited moderately from extended family membership. This is over 90% of people who derive benefits that range from significant to moderate benefits. Secondly, close to 70% of respondents benefited significantly from their membership in a religious group while 25% benefited moderately. The trend is the same as with the importance of the association that citizens belonged to or participated in. Figure 7 below illustrates this. Quite interestingly, there are very few people who see benefits from belonging to a Non-Governmental Organization or Community-Based Organization. Only 28.73% say they derived significant benefits from these compared to 59.89% who say there are no benefits. This signals a shift to locally based structures as opposed to national and or regional groupings like NGOs.

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Legend:
- High – I derive significant benefits from being a member
- Medium – there are some benefits but am not totally satisfied
- Low – there are no benefits whatsoever

Y-axis: Percentage of Respondents

X-axis: Type of Association

Categories: Affinity Group, Alumni Networks, Burial Society, Cooperative, Neighbourhood / Residents Association, Extended Family, Nhime/ Humwe/ Ilima (local asset and labour pooling group), NGO/CBO, Peace clubs/ committees, Private Sector Association, Professional Affiliation Body, Religious Group/ Church/ Mosque/ Sect, Savings and Lending Group, Social Movement, Sports
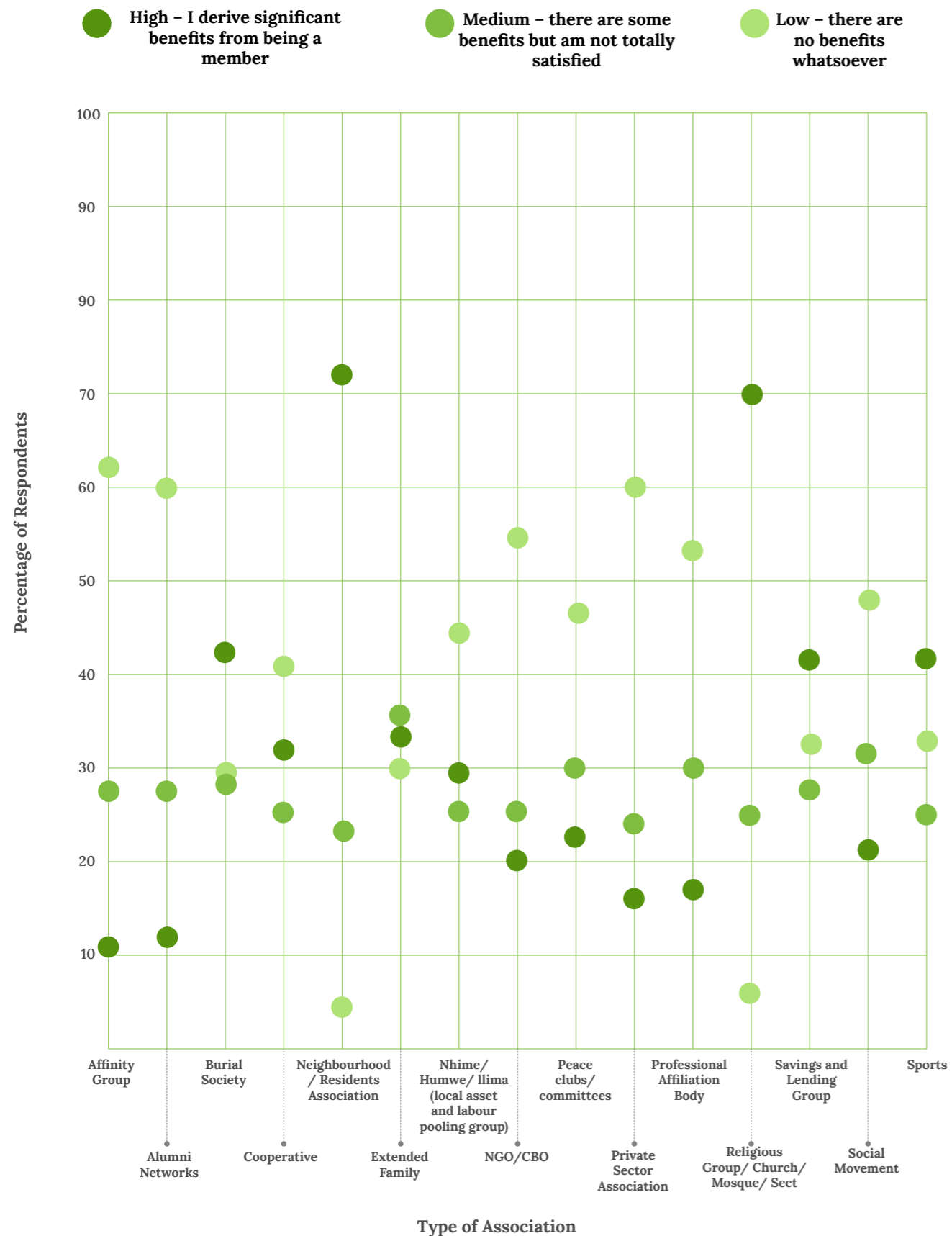
Figure 7: Levels of Satisfaction with Associations

Benefits of association can also be a function of the extent to which a member is active in the association. When asked if they held positions in the association in which they are members, less than 40% said they were in each type of association.

GIVING AND SOLIDARITY DURING COVID-19

When the pandemic broke and during the period under lockdown, there were a number of citizens-led giving initiatives established across Zimbabwe. Desktop research by Jowah, Garwe and Satuku (2021) from March to June 2020, uncovered 60 local citizens-led/driven initiatives established to help counter the impact of COVID-19. The pandemic helped showcase and highlight numerous acts of giving from grassroots to large corporate and government levels. It was a phenomenon across the continent and worldwide. The giving that took place in Zimbabwe was even more remarkable in that this giving has been happening amid a long-term economic crisis (Jowah, Garwe and Satuku, 2021). One of the most significant examples of this giving was resources mobilised under the Solidarity Trust of Zimbabwe which raised about USD450,000 and ZWL15 million from Zimbabwean corporates and individuals (based locally and in the diaspora). Such giving follows on from other crisis moments that the country had faced where there was limited government capacity and donor aid – e.g., during the Cholera epidemic in 2015 and with Cyclone Idai in 2019, citizens came alongside the government to mobilise resources to help deal with these crises and support those most heavily impacted by these events.

It is largely due to actions of citizens' solidarity that the country has not completely collapsed despite economic challenges and the decrease in the provision of social services at the local and central government level and the limited foreign aid inflows. It highlights that in order to advance the country's development – it cannot be just a state driven or a combination of state and foreign aid-driven development. Ordinary citizens have assets that they can mobilise and draw upon to advance development. There is, therefore, a need for a more inclusive approach towards development which is driven by citizens and government and foreign aid comes in to complement citizen resources.

CONCLUSION

This paper has sought to highlight and provide some insights into the lack of a total collapse of the country post-2000 despite the sustained economic and political crises the country has undergone for the last 22 years. It is important to begin to recognise and highlight the importance of how citizens and what they do for and with each other have contributed to this lack of collapse. The forms of citizen solidarity should therefore be promoted and seen as important towards contributing to a more inclusive form of development for Zimbabwe. Citizens have often been left of the traditional forms of development strategies adopted – as has been the case around the use of aid – where the development challenges and solutions for citizens are often defined by others. The forms of citizen solidarity that have been highlighted in this paper have started to show how citizens can contribute towards and be part of the implementation of strategies to address the socio-economic and political challenges they face.

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