

## CAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT FACILITATE REALISATION OF ZIMBABWE'S VISION 2030 ASPIRATIONS?

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*Abstract: It is now looking increasingly unlikely that Zimbabwe is going to meet its stated watershed goal of becoming an upper middle-income nation by 2030. Zimbabwe's Vision 2030 was adopted in 2018, amidst considerable excitement and fanciness. Official declarations backed up the plan's promise to reverse decades-long development stagnation and serve as a panacea for socio-economic improvement in the land-locked southern African country. Since then, whenever an opportunity to rally people behind its declared lofty objectives arises, the national government has not shied away from seizing it. However, it looks like the programme is behind track, and it might take some time to accomplish its objectives against the constraints of a timescale that is now seemingly turning out to be increasingly restrictive, limiting, and obstructive. The article argues that stagnated progress may be the outcome of local government's potential in the realisation of Vision 2030 not being fully exploited. In light of this, it reflects on potential actions that may possibly be taken to expedite the implementation and timeous realisation of Zimbabwe's Vision 2030 aspirations.*

*Keywords: Local government, national government, Zimbabwe, Transitional Stabilisation Program (TSP), National Development strategy 1 (NDS 1), National Development Strategy 2 (NDS 2), Vision 2030*

### **Introduction**

In the case of Zimbabwe, local government is that part of government that is on the ground and interacts with ordinary Zimbabweans on a daily basis and its function and administration affects the lives of ordinary Zimbabweans more than that of central government (Centre for Community Development in Zimbabwe 2009:4). The article engages on local government's propensity to play a transformative role in Zimbabwe's ambition to reach upper middle-class status by 2030. The main focus of the investigation is the issue of whether local government's vast potential has been fully unlocked and exploited to contribute to the achievement of that goal. The investigation is taking place in the context of allegations that national government's policy actions are not aligned to those of local government in many ways, including in the crucial areas of collaboration, cooperation, teamwork and coordination. It is not unusual for the two levels of government to present themselves as rivals and competitors even. Above it all, a persistent and recurring theme is that national government has a penchant for undermining local government. It is now essential, if not pragmatic, to raise this issue given that the clock is ticking and Zimbabwe's aspirational aim to become an upper middle-class society has less than seven years to be accomplished. Thus far, it would appear that progress is stymied, conscripted and hindered, triggering real trepidation among policy analysts that the ostensibly well-intentioned policy may fall well short of its objectives. Against this backdrop, it is hoped that the engagement of this question might inspire greater cooperation, coordination, consensus-building, and better alignment between the national and local governments, which would be ideal for achieving the objectives of Vision 2030, in the time frame left.

Among the values and objectives driving the realisation of Vision 2030 plan are enhanced governance, the rule of law, respect for human and property rights, reengagement with the West, the creation of an investor-friendly environment, increased investment, and a persistent fight against corruption (Bhoroma, 2022).

It is noteworthy that the Vision aims to achieve a per capita income of US\$4500 and sustain annual economic growth rates of +7% from 2018 to 2030 (Bhoroma, 2022), with excellent employment prospects and a high standard of living for its people. The Vision will be realised through the implementation of the Transitional Stabilisation Programme (2018-2020), and successive Five-Year Medium-Term Development Strategies also known as National Development Strategies (2021-2025) and (2026-2030), which are focusing on provision of essential public infrastructure and services delivery. On 5 October 2018, national government unveiled the Transitional Stabilisation Programme (TSP). It ran from October 2018 to December 2020. Stabilising the macroeconomic system and putting necessary institutional reforms into place were its primary goals. According to Mthuli Ncube, Zimbabwe's Minister of Finance and Economic Development, the TSP aimed, among other things, to put the economy back on track after years of perceived stagnation. Additionally, it was claimed to promote local production, exports, economic recovery, and transform the economy (Zimbabwe Treasury, 2018). Building on the TSP and acknowledging its inadequacies, the national government issued the National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1) on 16 November 2020. Targeted at "Towards a Prosperous and Empowered Upper Middle-Income Society by 2030," it runs from 2021 to 2025. In order to achieve "Vision 2030," the 5-Year Medium Term Plan stresses development of human capital, housing delivery, economic growth and stability, and stability of food and nutrition (Zimbabwe Treasury, 2018).

The Vision 2030, "Towards an Upper Middle-Income Country," entrenches values such as constitutionalism, rule of law, freedom of expression and association, responsiveness of public institutions, unity in diversity, social contract and responsible citizenry. The policy also aims to foster inclusive economic growth and address poverty resolutely, thereby transforming Zimbabwe into an industrialising, knowledge based upper middle-income country that provides a high quality of life to all its citizens by 2030 (Zimbabwe Treasury, 2018). Additional goals of Vision 2030 include increasing formal employment by 80%, gradually lowering the poverty rate, increasing the percentage of households with access to electricity from 52.2% in 2017 to over 72% by 2030, and increasing the percentage of rural households with electricity from 27.7% to 60% in the same time frame. Additionally, the initiative aims to guarantee that all households have access to improved sources of water (Zimbabwe Treasury, 2018).

Vision 2030 also aims to improve food security, knowledge adoption, awareness, affordable and accessible social services, infrastructure provision, and economic development. The policy adopts a pillar approach in order to enhance coordination and implementation of programmes and projects, central to the realization of targeted results that address the country's socio-economic challenges. Governance, inclusive growth, infrastructure and utilities, macroeconomic stability and financial reengagement, and social development are among the pillars (Zimbabwe Treasury, 2018). Given the foregoing, the main question that begs an answer is whether Zimbabwe's national government is proactively and fully tapping into the potential of local government to unlock its full potential for the realisation of Zimbabwe's Vision 2030?

**Table 1: Policies facilitating Zimbabwe’s Vision 2030 plan**

Derivation	Designation of policy	Period of implementation	Intended goal
GoZ (2018)	Transitional Stabilisation Programme (TSP)	2018-2020	Upper middle-income society by 2030
GoZ (2020)	National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1)	2021-2025	Upper middle-income society by 2030
GoZ (2025)	National Development Strategy 2 (NDS2)	2026-2030	Upper middle-income society by 2030

Note: GoZ- Government of Zimbabwe Source: Author, 2024

**Organisation, Structure and Methodology**

The article is organised as follows: after the background introduction, it delves briefly into the statement of the problem. Following this, it introduces the organisation of the system of government in Zimbabwe, the objective being to facilitate more insight into the area of study. Thereafter, it engages on the conceptual and theoretical framework for the article. Next, it engages the possibility of the national system of government leveraging local government roles and responsibilities in furthering its accomplishment of Zimbabwe’s Vision 2030 plan. The article uses document analysis to organise, analyse and make sense of the information relating to this under-researched area of study. After this, the article presents its concluding remarks.

*Statement of the Problem*

Seemingly, there is a growing concern that the measures put in place to facilitate realisation of the goal of Zimbabwe becoming an upper middle-class society by 2030 are not performing as well as it had been hoped. The performance across the spectrum is far from encouraging. This may be fueling the perception that the plan runs the risk, real and imagined, of missing its targets by some considerable margin. However, amid a ground swell of dissenting perceptions, national officials exhibit considerable optimism and whenever an opportunity presents itself, they also plead for more time for it to produce better results. It would seem that a large portion of the poor showing may be attributed to the officials’ not doing enough to fill in the missing puzzles relating to governance, especially on the issue of aligning the plan to the governmental system. Arguably, this was not the case at the time when the plan was conceived. In drawing the plan, national government which originated the document placed decentralisation at the center of realisation of Vision 2030 goals. The first 5-Year Medium Term Plan (also known as National Development Strategy 1 or NDS 1, in short) to some extent mention devolution and decentralisation as anchor of the plan. Chapter 11 of the NDS 1 addresses some issues that may be pertinent to the engagement of citizens through the grassroots structure of local-self government. Thus, it marginally engages how this may be accomplished through scantily discussed topics such as “Inclusive Governance and Socio-Economic Development”, “Strategies to Improve Inclusive Governance and Socio-Economic Development”, and “Programmes to Improve Inclusive Governance and Socio-Economic Development”. It seems that the spirit of co-operation, teamwork, collaboration, alliance and partnership exhibited in Chapter 11 of the NDS 1 has not lingered long enough to see through the goals of Vision 2030 accomplished. In the post-drafting period, the relationship between national government and local government has for much of its existence between

characterised by squabbles, acrimony and conflict over issues of power, autonomy and discretion, among others (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Examples of the dynamics of administrative conflicts**

Parties squabbling	Issues over which they are squabbling	Status of resolution
Mayors/Chairpersons Vs MLG	Allocation of authority	Long standing and not resolved
Mayors/Chairpersons Vs MLG	The status of local autonomy	Long standing and not resolved
National Vs Local Government	Control of local politics	Long standing and not resolved
Mayors/Chairpersons Vs Town Clerks/Chief Executive Officers (CEOs)	Delineation of roles and responsibilities	Long standing and not resolved
Local Vs national bureaucrats	The question of who is the boss	Long standing and not resolved
Councillors from divergent political formations	Control of policy-making processes	Long standing and not resolved
Councillors from identical political formations	Access to local resources/factionalism	Long standing and not resolved

Source: Author, 2024

Seemingly, a bone of contention is seemingly local government’s irritation at the unfettered discretion enjoyed by national government that has been exercised at times with a great measure of controversy by the minister of local government to whom local authorities are subordinate by law, policy and arrangement (see Table 3). The squabbles are seemingly more discernible in urban local authorities, nearly all of which are under opposition control (Chigwata, Marumahoko & Madhekeni, 2019).

**Table 3: Examples of the centre’s quest to dominate local policy**

Act	Section	What national government can do through the MLG
UC	80	Can dismiss a council and replace it with a Commission
UC	91	Enjoys unfettered right to access all council records
UC	116	Approve appointment of senior council staff
UC	309	Has absolute right to be furnished with certain reports
UC	313	Can give directions on matters of local policy
UC	314	Can reverse, suspend, and rescind local decisions
UC	315	Can make directives to local government
RDC	53	Approval required for certain resolutions
RDC	87	Can act on behalf of council in estate development
RDC	90	Approves by-laws of local government
RDC	94	Can make or adopt by-laws on behalf of councils
RDC	138	Enjoys the power to conduct financial inquiry
RDC	153	Can demand to be furnished with certain reports
RDC	154	Can initiate investigations into local affairs
RDC	155	Can give directions as he considers it appropriate
RDC	157	Can suspend and dismiss elected councilors
RDC	158	Can appoint a caretaker to act as a council

Note: UC-Urban Councils; RDC-Rural District Councils; MLG-Minister of Local Government Source: Author, 2024

## **The Structure and Geographical Hierarchy of the Governmental System in Zimbabwe**

Zimbabwe, a country of roughly 14 million people has 10 provinces of which eight are rural and two, Harare and Bulawayo, are metropolitan provinces. The country which was a former British colony for over 100 years has 92 local authorities of which 32 are urban councils and 60 are rural district councils. It is the duty and responsibility of urban local authorities to represent and manage the affairs of people in urban areas throughout Zimbabwe (section 274 (1) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe). In the same vein, rural local authorities represent and manage the affairs of people in rural areas throughout Zimbabwe (section 275 (1) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe). Both urban and rural local authorities comprise of officials who are elected every five years and they make the policy-making arm of local government. The administrative arm is made up of local bureaucrats appointed purportedly on merit mainly to implement the decisions made by the policy-making arm of local government (Marumahoko *et al.*, 2020). In the case of urban councils, it is pertinent to note that they are classified mainly based on size, area under their jurisdictions, responsibilities and sources of revenue, among others. In ascending order urban local authorities are organised as follows: (1) local boards, (2) town councils, (3) municipalities, and (4) city councils (Marumahoko, 2010). In between local government and national government are located eight rural provincial councils and two metropolitan councils for Harare, the capital and Bulawayo, the second biggest city in Zimbabwe. The eight provincial councils and two metropolitan councils correspond to Zimbabwe's 10 provinces.

A provincial or metropolitan council is responsible for the social and economic development of its province, including- (a), planning and implementing social and economic development activities in its province; (b), co-ordinating and implementing governmental programmes in its province, (c), planning and implementing measures for the conservation, improvement and management of natural resources in its province, (d), promoting tourism in its province, and developing facilities for that purpose, (e), monitoring and evaluating the use of resources in its province (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013). National government at the apex makes the third governmental system for Zimbabwe.

**Table 4: Structure and geographical hierarchy of the governmental system in Zimbabwe**

Organization	#	Name(s)
National Government	1	The Government of Zimbabwe
Provincial Councils	8	Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West, Midlands, Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South, Manicaland, Masvingo
Metropolitan Councils	2	Harare, Bulawayo
City Councils	8	Harare, Bulawayo, Kadoma, Kwekwe, Gweru, Masvingo, Mutare, Victoria Falls
Municipalities	9	Bindura, Chitungwiza, Chegutu, Chinhoyi, Kariba, Redcliff, Gwanda, Beitbridge, Kariba
Town Councils	10	Rusape, Mvurwi, Karoi, Norton, Gokwe, Shurugwi, Zvishavane, Chiredzi, Chipinge, Plumtree
Local Boards	5	Epworth, Ruwa, Chirundu, Hwange, Lupane
Rural District Councils	60	Guruve, Zvimba, Zivagwe, Zaka, Vungu, Uzumba-Maramba-Pfungwe, Umzingwane, Unguza, Tsholotsho, Tongogara, Sanyati, Rushinga, Runde, Pfura, Nyanga, Nyaminyami, Nkayi, Ngezi, Mwenezi, Muzarabani, Mutoko, Mutasa, Mutare, Murewa, Mudzi, Mberengwa,

		Mhondoro, Mbire, Mazowe, Masvingo, Marondera, Manyame, Mudzi, Makonde, Kusile, Kadoma, Insiza, Hwedza, Hwange, Hurungwe, Gutu, Gwanda, Goromonzi, Gokwe South, Gokwe North, Chivi, Chiredzi, Chirumanzu, Chipinge, Chimanmani, Chikomba, Chegutu, Chaminuka, Bulilima, Buhera, Bubi, Binga, Bindura, Bikita, Beitbridge
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Source: Author, 2024

### **Conceptual and Theoretical Issues**

In this segment, the article begins by exploring briefly the definition of the word local government and the basic characteristics associated with it; the objective being to locate it in the context of the current engagement. This is followed by another brief discussion focusing on the theoretical aspects of local government. It returns to the theoretical framework it sets later on-precisely at the point when it begins to argue a case for national government to rigorously tap into the boundless potential of local government to facilitate prompt realisation of Zimbabwe’s Vision 2030 plan to become an upper middle-income society by 2030. According to Stones (1968) local government is part of a governmental system of a country that deals with problems of population within a certain territory or location. Similarly, Aijaz (2007) defines it as that part of the government of a country which deals mainly with issues related to a given population within a given territory. In the same vein, Ndreu (2016) defines it as a government body elected by the people that has administrative, legislative and executive functions on the territories under its jurisdiction. Ndreu (2016) identifies five basic characteristics of local government drawn from numerous studies done by various researchers. According to Ndreu (2016), the first characteristic is that, local government has constitutional or statutory status. This means that it is defined, recognised and functions on the basis of the laws of a particular country. The second characteristic is that it is a body that has the right to decide about its own local taxes on the territory it has jurisdiction. Thirdly, it is a body that is characterised by the right of local communities to participate in its decision making processes or management of local affairs. Fourth, is its capacity to act autonomously from central government bodies, within the limits set by law, through the decentralization process or the principle of local autonomy (Marumahoko & Fessha, 2011). The fifth characteristic is that it is a body that serves the common interest of the citizens (Ndreu 2016).

The article engages on four theories that are relevant to its discussion. These are (1), structural functional analysis, (2) the principle of subsidiarity, (3), Stigler’s two guiding principles for jurisdictional design and (4), Oates’s decentralization theorem. In addition, it also draws from (4) Zimbabwe’s constitution and (5), subsidiary legislation. The objective is to locate the article within a theoretical framework that, (1) supports the under-tapped potential of local government to contribute to attainment of Zimbabwe’s development and (2) facilitates the utility of local government in Zimbabwe’s quest to become an upper middle-income society by 2030 consistent with the country’s Vision 2030 plan (see Table 5).

**Table 5: Theories/philosophies relevant to the article**

#	Applicable theory	Selected proponent(s)
1	Structural functional analysis theory	Almond&Powell (1966;1988)
2	Subsidiarity principle	Pope Pius XI(1931); Marumahoko (2020c; 2023)

3	Two guiding principles for jurisdictional design	Stigler (1957)
4	Decentralization theorem	Oates (1972)
5	Constitution of Zimbabwe	Government of Zimbabwe (2013)
6	Urban Councils & Rural District Councils Act(s)	Government of Zimbabwe (1988;1995)

Source: Author, 2024

The structural-functional analysis model developed by Almond and Powell (1966, 1988) offers a coherent and integrated theory from which explanatory theories pertinent to every facet of a particular public administration system can be deduced. It is distinguished by three primary characteristics: (i) the focus on the entire system as the analytical unit; (ii) the proposition of certain functions as necessary for the upkeep of the entire system; and (iii) the functional interdependence of various structures within the entire system. Finding a social item's, structure's, or process's contribution to the system's persistence—that is, the part it plays in keeping the system within predetermined bounds—is the major goal of structural-functional analysis (Bill & Hardgrave, 1973; Marumahoko *et al.*, 2020). The subsidiarity principle states that local issues belong in the hands of local government. It also emphasizes that local government ought to concentrate on issues that are specific to the area, such waste management, roads, water and sanitation, and so on (Marumahoko, 2020b; Marumahoko, 2023). Furthermore, it emphasizes that as local government is in charge of matters pertaining to local regulation, taxation, and spending, it is the proper level of government to provide for local services (Shah & Shah, 2006). According to Sikander (2015), local government is portrayed as being uninvolved in matters of national significance, such as monetary and fiscal policies, security, defense, foreign policy, and macroeconomic policy. These matters fall under the purview of sovereign or national government.

Stigler's two guiding principles for jurisdictional design underscore that, (a) the closer a representative government is to the people, the better it functions and (b) that people should have the right to vote for the types and quantities of public services they desire (Stigler, 1957; Marumahoko, 2023). Oates's decentralization theorem (1972) underscores that, "each public service should be provided by the jurisdiction having control over the minimum geographic area that would internalize benefits and costs of such provision". In 2013, Zimbabwe adopted constitutional provisions that align with the principle of subsidiarity. The Preamble to Chapter 14 of Zimbabwe's Constitution underscores that there "must be *devolution* of power and responsibilities to lower tiers of government in Zimbabwe". Section 264 of the Constitution underscores that whenever appropriate, governmental powers and responsibilities *must be devolved* to subnational governmental systems which are "competent to carry out those responsibilities efficiently and effectively". According to Section 264 (2) (a) of Zimbabwe's Constitution, the goals of the transfer of governmental authority and duties to subnational governmental systems include: "to give powers of local governance to the people and enhance their participation in the exercise of the powers of the State and in making decisions affecting them". Another related objective is to "recognise the right of communities to manage their own affairs and to further their development (Section 264 (2) (d))". Section 274 (i) of the Constitution provides for urban local authorities as local governmental institutions that "represent and manage the affairs of people in urban areas throughout Zimbabwe".

Zimbabwe’s Constitution in section 275 (1) also recognizes rural local authorities as local government institutions that “represent and manage the affairs of people in rural areas”. In the same vein, section 276 (1) of the Constitution underscores that a “local authority has the right to govern, on its own initiative, the local affairs of the people within the area for which it has been established, and has all the powers necessary for it to do so”. The Rural District Councils Act (Chapter 29:13), the Urban Councils Act (Chapter 29:15) and the Regional Town and Country Planning Acts (Chapter 29:12), are the three main legislations defining the legislative powers and functions of rural and urban councils as local authorities that manage the local affairs in the areas under their jurisdictions (see Table 6).

**Table 6: Other legislations that define the powers and functions of local government**

Local authority it relates to	Legislation
RDCs&UCs	The Road Traffic Act (Chapter13:11)
RDCs&UCs	The Vehicle Registration and Licensing Act (Chapter 13:14)
RDCs&UCs	The Road Act (Chapter 13:18)
RDCs&UCs	The Shop Licenses Act (Chapter 14:17)
RDCs&UCs	The Public Health Act (Chapter 15:09)
RDCs	The Communal Lands Act (Chapter 20:04)
RDCs&UCs	The Environmental Management Act (Chapter 20:27)
RDCs&UCs	The Water Act (Chapter 20:24)
RDCs&UCs	The Education Act (Chapter 25:04)
RDC	The Traditional Leaders Act (Chapter 29:17)

Note: RDCs-Rural District Councils, UCs-Urban Councils Source: Author, 2024

**How Can Local Government Contribute to the Attainment of Vision 2030 Plan?**

In this section, the article motivates the case for worthy consideration of local government as an important contributor to the realization of Zimbabwe’s Vision 2030 plan, even as we saw earlier on that the relationship between national and subnational governmental units tends to be characterized by energy sapping squabbling over the issues of autonomy, decision-making, and the limits of ministerial encroachment on local government turf, among other issues. In arguing the case for local government contribution to realization of Vision 2030 plan, the article draws from three points that are aligned to earlier engaged theories of local government (see Table 7).

**Table 7: Three points aligned to the theories of LG**

#	Point	Relevance
1	The ability of local government to supply essential infrastructure services that support private economic output	Aligned to theories of LG
2	Their capacity to administer and provide a wide range of services as representatives of the national government	Aligned to theories of LG
3	Their contribution to socio-economic progress through participatory institutions and processes	Aligned to theories of LG

Note: LG-Local Government Source: Author, 2024

All these crucial local government contributory roles to national development tick on the boxes of the theories of local government engaged on earlier. Finally, local governments influence the entry and exit of local economic actors—both public and private, traditional



and modern, domestic and foreign—into their spheres of influence by their deeds and inactions (Olowu, 1988; Bennett, 1994; Olowu, 2009). This way, they are important partners who cannot be ignored in deciding whether or not Zimbabwe's Vision 2030 plan meets its target of facilitating for the land-locked southern African country to become an Upper Middle-Income Society by 2030.

### **Tapping into the Powers of LG to Benefit Zimbabwe's Vision 2030 Plan**

Zimbabwe's aspirations to become an upper-middle class society by 2030 stand to benefit from local government's authority to provide basic economic infrastructure of human connectivity. In this conception, local government may be viewed as a provider of goods and services that individuals cannot provide individually for themselves. It is the solution to collective action problems, the medium through which citizens create public goods that benefit everyone. Local government's authority to provide basic economic infrastructure of human connectivity is defined in the country's constitution and more specifically declared in the Rural District Councils (RDC) Act-for rural councils and the Urban Councils (UC) Act-for urban councils (see Table 6). Roads, bridges, dams, water supply, and sanitation are examples of basic economic infrastructure of human connectivity assigned local government (Marumahoko, 2020a; Marumahoko, 2022). Zimbabwe's RDC Act in section 71(1) provides for wide ranging powers and functions of RDCs. In total the RDC Act bestows RDCs a total of 61 powers and functions; of which a number of them can be harnessed to facilitate Zimbabwe becoming an upper middle-income society by 2030. The powers and functions of rural local government are listed in the First Schedule to the RDC Act.

In the same vein, the Urban Councils (UCs) Act in section 198 (1) allocates UCs a total of 54 powers and functions that national government, working cooperatively with local government may tap to boost the chances of Zimbabwe meeting its ambitious objectives no later than 2030. Schedule 2 to the UC Act lists the powers and functions (Marumahoko, 2010; Marumahoko & Fessha, 2011; Marumahoko *et al.*, 2020). It is pertinent to note that some of powers and functions allocated RDCs and UCs speak to infrastructural services that facilitate robust economic development (see Table 8). The operation of these powers and functions to which national government may benefit is facilitated through by-laws, regulations, policies and policies made by local public administrations.

In providing basic economic infrastructure of human connectivity whose services may benefit citizens beyond its area of jurisdiction, local government can be said to be a solid basis for socio-economic development in general and a catalyst for accomplishment of Vision 2030 plan in particular. Its accessibility, proximity, and identity as an institution moulded in the wishes of the local people who give it its unique character in comparison to national government which is largely perceived of as being far-removed from ordinary people, increases the chances of its programmes being successfully implemented to the advantage of national development goals (Marumahoko, 2023). In addition to providing services themselves, local government can resort to many other options that boost implementation of local programmes that benefit Zimbabwe becoming an upper middle-income society by 2030.

Outsourcing is one option at the disposal of local government to realize improved service infrastructure development and provision, especially that with a bearing on the attainment of Zimbabwe's Vision 2030 plans. Outsourcing is when companies or other organizations

run services on behalf of the local government, and these contracts are usually awarded following a competitive tendering process (Sandford, 2019; Marumahoko & Nhede, 2021). Solid waste management, primary health care, water supply and sanitation provision are a few of the examples of services that local authorities may outsource to other organisations. Even when local authorities outsource responsibility, they are still legally responsible for the generation, development and distribution of these services. This is despite that contractually, the responsibility is now assigned to another organisation to provide it. Among the many benefits of contracting are the ability to hire for specific time periods to fulfill temporary requirements without committing to long-term expenses and the private sector's ability to specialize in some areas that local government would find costly or difficult to duplicate.

Where there is sufficient capacity, local government may insource provision of infrastructure for basic service delivery (Sandford, 2019; Marumahoko & Nhede, 2021). In this case, services previously outsourced return in-house. Insourcing entails local authorities opting to cancel or not renew contracts with private companies, for functions and processes such as solid waste management, water, sanitation, roads, public safety, transportation and health care. Another option of boosting service infrastructure provision is commercialisation. In essence, it refers to the practice of local government providing services at a charge in order to generate additional income. This can take various forms, such as establishing partnerships with commercial organizations or setting up independent, autonomous profit-making companies.

Yet another option that appears not to have been fully tapped to facilitate improved local or national development is Public-Public Partnership (PPPs) or Public-Private Partnership (PPP) or shared provision of local government services (Sandford, 2019; Marumahoko & Nhede, 2021). Essentially, PPPs whether it involves public sector organisations or involvement of a component of the private sector, unlock immense opportunities for contributing to realisation of Zimbabwe’s Vision 2030 plan. It facilitates the crucial sharing of resources, expertise, and knowledge between two or more entities to provide service more efficiently and effectively.

**Table 8: Examples of LG powers and functions**

Function(s)	Local authorities it relates to	Source
Roads	RDCs&UCs	Section 71&1 <sup>st</sup> Schedule to RDC Act (Chapter 29:13) Section 198&2 <sup>nd</sup> Schedule to UC Act (Chapter 29:15)
Bridges	RDCs&UCs	As in above
Dams	RDCs&UCs	As in above
Water	RDCs&UCs	As in above
Drains, sewers and sewerage works	RDCs&UCs	As in above
Controls over property	RDCs&UCs	As in above
Electricity	RDCs&UCs	As in above
Planning, construction and use of buildings	RDCs&UCs	As in above
Amenities and facilities	RDCs&UCs	As in above
Food, food premises, vehicles and markets	RDCs&UCs	As in above

Source: Author, 2024

### **Local Authorities as Agents of National Government**

It is often intimated that national governments are unlikely to be able to achieve sufficient policy differentiation on their own. Partly, this is a simple capacity issue. They would quickly be overwhelmed if they had to devise policies and assume the role of implementing them for each local government jurisdiction in Zimbabwe. Beyond capacity constraints, there are also informational constraints to consider. Policy makers in national ministries find it more challenging than those in local governments to properly understand the local context. They typically do not have any local connections, live in the capital, and are required by their jobs to deal with a wide range of regions rather than concentrating on one particular area. A point is often made that development policies cannot be implemented by national governments alone but that it may require that different levels of government are active in addressing issues that fall within their policy areas (Marumahoko & Nhede, 2021). Yet in Zimbabwe, development processes towards realisation of Vision 2030 plan are seemingly dominated by national government. On this issue, Zimbabwe's national and local governments have not exhibited a rich culture of working together.

This is despite that over the past decades they have worked together on issues to do with national calamities such as drought, crop failure, Covid-19 and HIV/AIDs. These are national disasters whose mitigation is funded from national government while implementation is made largely the responsibility of local government. Even then, collaboration may have been deemed convenient as the issues they coalesced around were considered issues of life and death and therefore beyond contestation. This may not be the case with the perceptions of the current processes leading to the realisation of Zimbabwe's Vision 2030 plan. Since the adoption of the current constitution in 2013, there has also been some form of collaboration between the two systems of government in the area of funding of devolution projects (roads, clinics, schools etc). Suffice to say the collaboration was not voluntary but constitutionally directed and sought to fulfil a constitutional provision which allocates 5% of nationally collected revenue to fund local development projects which in theory are traced back to local decision-making but in reality appear to be the result of national government dominating decisions on what projects the funds can be used on.

In the provision of these infrastructure development projects many of which address endemic poverty and are seemingly aligned to Zimbabwe's Vision 2030 plan, national government has tokenistically relied on local governments to implement them. With this mind-set, the full development potential of local government is far from unlocked and deployed to the benefit of realisation of Zimbabwe becoming an upper middle-income country by 2030. It may be important that there is acceptance that strong place-based and territorially differentiated policies by national governments are only a complement, not a substitute, for the role of local governments.

### **Contribution Through Local Government Participatory Institutions and Processes**

Even as its implementation is officially said to be tapping into widespread public consultation, there are lingering uncertainties that the processes preceding attainment of Zimbabwe's Vision 2030 plan are themselves rooted more in top-down central planning and bureaucracy. They are barely founded on bottom-up decision-making ethos which are consistent with the existence of local government as the system of government enjoying greater proximity to communities. Although it is claimed to trace its origins to participatory

processes, there is not much to support the claim that Zimbabwe's Vision 2030 plan is the outcome of citizens aspiring for an upper middle-income society by 2030. That does not, however, seem to diminish its utility and set purpose, either of which appear to be based on sound policy goals. Even then, national government may have to work tirelessly and closely with local government to build significant public support for the watershed development plan. It may help for national government to submit to local government participatory processes in order to accomplish this. By leveraging local mechanisms for mobilizing public support for the implementation of local policies, the national government might encourage popular support and solidarity for its Vision 2030 development plan. As an institution closely associated with community needs and aspirations, local government boasts of a number of institutions and processes for involving citizens in local decision-making processes, policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, that the national government might find useful. Neighbourhood and village development committees, for example, are the first line of democratic local government institutions that people interact with when they need to express themselves about development issues in their communities. By tapping into these grassroots institutions designed mainly to foster participatory development, national government might enhance its chances of successful policy implementation.

The ward development committee (wadco) is another accessible institution through which ideas of citizens may be sought, consulted and cross fertilised before they are submitted to relevant council committees for further consideration. A councillor submits them to council committees in his/her capacity as elected ward representative and chair of the ward development committee. The decisions made at committee level take the form of recommendations and they are further submitted to council (a body to which all councillors sit for binding decisions). In the same way, local government leverages these bodies, national government may also tap into these institutions and processes to increase acceptability and implementation of national policies such as Zimbabwe's Vision 2030 plan. The foregoing seemingly draws from social contract theory to make an appealing case for national government to submit to local government participatory institutions and processes in the course of seeking to maximise delivery and accomplishment of Zimbabwe's Vision 2030 development plan. The fundamental tenet of the social contract theory is that consent from the governed should serve as the basis for government, a notion that dates back to the Age of Enlightenment (Stone, 2018; Marumahoko *et al.*, 2018; Marumahoko, 2021).

According to Etieyibo (2018), a completely rational person will only accept social interactions, morality, social and political behaviors, and institutional norms provided they align with their interests or sense of usefulness. In this instance, social contract theory not only clarifies the intricate relationship between citizens and governments, but it also piques our curiosity about the variables and interactions that could potentially support Zimbabwe's efforts to achieve upper middle-class status by 2030.

### **What does all of the above tell us?**

It seems that local government is purposefully or inadvertently sidelined in favor of insufficient perspective on national development. It is noted that as national government undertakes the audious and strenuous task of nudging the country toward realisation of Vision 2030, the role of local government is scantily acknowledged, let alone appreciated.

It was not entirely clear why local government suddenly finds itself being marginalised this way, suffice to say that this development may serve to undermine, weaken and undercut the already perceived fragile status of local government as a worthy partner in national development. It is unclear how much local government can accomplish or how much of its potential has been consciously harnessed to support Zimbabwe in becoming an upper middle-income country by 2030. An ideal situation is for national and local governments to engage in complementary roles. Based on the research discussions, neither level can provide effective support for the realisation of Zimbabwe's Vision 2030 plan without the contribution of the other. The seeming lack of collaboration at the moment may need to give way to the realization that place-based policies as well as national policies that have an impact must be implemented through efficient multilevel governance. Place-based policies, whether directly or indirectly supported by the national government, are implemented in large part by local governments. Local authorities have a deep understanding of local conditions due to their narrow emphasis, and they frequently have strong connections with local players, including companies, NGOs, and powerful local and national policymakers. Depending on the specific policy issue at hand, local governments can work together to enact policies at various geographic sizes. As a result, local governments are frequently more qualified than national governments to target policies in the context of identifying pertinent stakeholders, and coordinating actions among them. The more localised a policy decision is, the more applicable these benefits become.

### **Conclusion**

Amidst central domination and a limited role for the local sphere of government, Zimbabwe's quest to become an upper middle income society by 2030 shows obvious signs of under-performance- raising the prospect that it may struggle to meet its goals. In the context of facilitating intergovernmental relations in socio-economic development, the article engaged on the question of how national government might tap into the institutions and processes of local government to substantially facilitate for Zimbabwe to realise its dream and aspiration of becoming an upper middle-income society by 2030. In its quest to underscore the utility of the often neglected local government institutions and processes in the realisation of Zimbabwe's Vision 2030 plan, the article focused on three issues of great significance that national government might benefit from as it implements policies meant to benefit the country's socio-economic progress. These are (i), local government's authority to provide basic infrastructural services that facilitate private economic production, (ii), its ability to serve as an agent of national government for the delivery and management of a wide variety of services, and (iii), its contribution to socio-economic progress through participatory institutions and processes. In presenting its case for robust local government participation in processes facilitating realisation of Zimbabwe as an upper middle-class society by 2030, the article consulted, (i), structural-functional analysis theory, (ii), subsidiarity principle, (iii), two guiding principles for jurisdictional design, and (iv), decentralisation theorem. It also tapped into Zimbabwe's Rural District Councils Act (Chapter 29:13), Urban Councils Act (Chapter 29:15) and the Constitution of 2013. All of the above provide for a strong local government role in socio-economic improvement, making local government a productive and indispensable intergovernmental partner to national government. It is crucial for the realisation of Zimbabwe's Vision 2030 development plan. The Government of Zimbabwe may do well to tap into the vast potential

of local government to speed up attainment of its much coveted goal of Zimbabwe becoming an upper middle-income-society by 2030. In all of this, a good starting point is, perhaps, acknowledging that local government matters for the simple reason that it forms the basic foundation of national government and all its developmental initiatives.

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