

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Delivering quality services in a democratic and participatory manner

Local government under the MDC will enjoy the full protection of the constitution and be structured in a way that empowers the people to make decisions on local issues, supervision from central government being limited only to the protection of the people's interests. Elected representatives will, in the main, represent the interests of the people in their areas of jurisdiction. Local government will deliver quality services at a local level.

Local government faces the following challenges, among many others:

-  Rapid growth in the urban population as a result of rural–urban migration, and a resultant rise in urban poverty.
-  Decayed infrastructure for basic services such as water, effluent disposal, solid waste removal, and recreation.
-  Inadequate road networks and insufficient transport for the commuting public.
-  The scourge of HIV and AIDS and other diseases.
-  The replacement of democratically elected officials with officials appointed against the will of the people.
-  Lack of clarity on the roles of central government, traditional leadership structures and democratically elected councils.
-  The subversion of people's wishes through the use of non-democratic structures, such as chiefs and other traditional leaders in the rural areas.
-  Unlawful ministerial interference in the running of local authorities.
-  Ministerial control of local authorities' budgeting process and delays in approving budgets.
-  An acute shortage of urban residential accommodation.
-  Severely degraded and overcrowded urban neighbourhoods.
-  The incapacity of residents and ratepayers to pay rates and taxes because of the state of the economy.
-  High levels of corruption in the current system.
-  Under-representation of women in local government.

A VISION FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Under an MDC government, local government, in its different forms and tiers, will play a central role in the welfare and day-to-day lives of ordinary Zimbabweans. Local structures will enjoy devolved power to capacitate them to make substantive decisions on service delivery. The MDC is committed to the creation and sustenance of a local-government system that enjoys the confidence of the people of Zimbabwe through its capacity to deliver quality services in a democratic and participatory

manner, always mindful that it is answerable to the local populace. The MDC government will encourage and foster international inter-local-government relations.

Local Autonomy and Devolution

The MDC believes that local challenges and aspirations are best dealt with at the local level. Consequently, mandates will be clearly delineated and delegated to local authorities, which will be empowered financially and institutionally to be able to deliver on them with minimum supervision from the central government.

Budgeting and financing mechanisms for local authority activities, development of local legal frameworks and the recruitment of staff are examples of areas in which local authorities will be allowed to act with a high level of independence from central government.

Under the MDC, local government will operate as the ‘local state’, expeditiously attending to the development and welfare needs of the local populace. Within this framework of decentralized responsibility, the MDC will establish provincial authorities that are democratically elected and have clearly defined tasks for the development of the regions for which they have responsibility. The delivery of such services as water, housing, electricity, road infrastructure and waste disposal will be delegated to locally elected officials and institutions.

PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

MDC local government will be based on democratically elected structures, which will be representative of the social, demographic and gender conditions prevailing in the environment. The MDC desires a local-government system that is enduring and is protected from individual political and other interests.

The Rule of Law

An MDC government will fully respect the rule of law and the national constitution in all its activities. It will respect property rights and ensure a predictable and stable environment for investment and all legal forms of business activity. It will also respect the right to personal security and safety for the people living and working within the boundaries of local authorities.

Human Resources Management

The MDC will encourage the engagement of qualified personnel, who will be compensated on a basis that will motivate them to deliver efficient, honest and courteous services to the communities they work for. All the staff of local authorities will be recruited and remunerated by the local authority. Local-government labour

policies will be fully integrated with national labour policy and practice, and a National Employment Council will be maintained to service the needs of all staff working in local government.

Equity and Equality

Equity and equality and solidarity with the poor and disadvantaged are fundamental values of the MDC and these will be pursued in all spheres of local-government activity.

In respect to gender, an objective will be to achieve the appointment of women to half of all senior positions in local authorities and to seek a similar ratio in all elected posts.

In respect to disadvantaged and disabled individuals within our society, the objective will be to ensure equal opportunity and access to all local-government facilities and opportunities. It will also be the policy of the MDC to pursue activities and practices that favour the poor in our society, and to facilitate the growth, security and activities of the informal sector in all its different forms.

Transparency and Accountability

All revenue and expenditure will be subject to regular and public review as well as oversight by elected structures. Budgets for all local-government activity will be subject to discussion and agreement by the communities they serve prior to presentation to councils and the Ministry for approval. All local authorities will be required to appoint auditors and to present audited accounts within six months of the year-end to the Ministry of Local Government. Failure to do so will result in the suspension of council rights to borrow funds or to change the basis of their tariffs and taxes.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the MDC's policies towards local government will be to:

-  Create and sustain democratic systems of governance in all local government areas in the country.
-  Strengthen local government's capacity to deliver good-quality services to communities with the democratic participation of the communities they serve.
-  Strengthen local government essentially for purposes of strengthening the whole nation through effective and democratic public policies, which seek political democratization and power sharing to help create social and political stability and development.
-  Create an environment which encourages sustainable wealth creation through local and foreign investment.

- ✎ Exploit opportunities that exist in the global economy and emerging technologies to strengthen local democracy and fight poverty, disease and hunger.
- ✎ Guarantee the operational autonomy of local government with respect to the services delegated to them, and allow local initiatives to flourish on matters of interest and importance to the local communities.
- ✎ Entrench equality of opportunity for women, men and disadvantaged groups, which is expected to translate into a stronger role for women in local governance and the development of policies that deal affirmatively with concerns of disadvantaged groups.
- ✎ Encourage the co-operation of local authorities in nourishing and strengthening voluntary and independent associations of local authorities.
- ✎ Encourage linkages with international local government associations for the benefit of local communities.
- ✎ Ensure that the relationship between local government and central government is such that supervision is commensurate with the interests such supervision is intended to entertain and protect.
- ✎ Ensure that the natural and economic resources at the disposal of the local authorities are exploited for the benefit of the communities closest to the resources.
- ✎ Adopt a participatory approach at the lowest level in managing and executing local-government programmes.
- ✎ Encourage and support gender balance in all decision-making structures.

THE STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Provincial Assemblies

The MDC believes strongly in participatory democracy and development. This belief demands that government is brought as close to the people as is possible to facilitate participation in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies.

An MDC government will, as a first step in the process of devolution of powers and decentralization of functions, establish five administrative provinces. In order to do away with the ethnic and tribal connotations associated with the names of existing provinces, these will be titled as follows:

- ✎ Northern Province
- ✎ Eastern Province
- ✎ Central Province
- ✎ Southwestern Province
- ✎ Southeastern Province

The boundaries of these administrative provinces will be subjected to a detailed review. Each province will have a Provincial Assembly that will comprise the Executive Committees of all councils in the province. All Members of Parliament and Senators from the province will have the right to attend meetings of Provincial Assemblies. It will be the responsibility of each Provincial Assembly to oversee development in its area of jurisdiction. Each Provincial Assembly will elect a chairperson, together with an executive committee, from among its membership, none of whom will have executive powers. Each Provincial Assembly will establish a small administration to deal with its affairs and appoint a chief executive to head this office. The role of these assemblies will be advisory to both local and central government.

Urban Councils

An Executive Mayor, who is directly elected, will head the council of each city and designated municipality. Within each municipality or city council there will be an executive committee, appointed by the Executive Mayor to look after specific areas of responsibility. A Town Clerk will be appointed by each municipal or city council on a contract basis and will have the responsibility of acting as chief executive to the council and head of the administration.

A chairperson, elected indirectly by the elected councillors, will head a town council. Within each town council there will be an executive committee appointed by the chairperson to look after specific areas of responsibility. The head of administration will be the Town Secretary, who will be the appointed on a contract basis.

Rural Councils

A chairperson, elected indirectly by the elected councillors, will head each Rural District Council. Within each Rural District Council there will be an executive committee appointed by the chairperson to look after specific areas of responsibility. A Chief Executive Officer or Council Secretary will be appointed by the council on a contract basis.

Financing Local Government

The delivery of good-quality services is a function of sound, adequate, predictable and sustainable funding. MDC local authorities will be resourced from:

-  Local rates and other property taxes.
-  Charges for services provided at the local level.
-  Grants and loans from central government which are predictable and commensurate with the responsibilities delegated in addition to a need to promote equitable development across the country.
-  Local public-private partnerships, which will be encouraged both to engender a spirit of ownership as well as to mobilize resources.

Qualifications of Elected Representatives

-  Executive Mayors will possess the qualifications specified in the Electoral Act.
-  Councillors must demonstrate acceptable literacy in an appropriate language.
-  Council chairpersons will be at least 35 years of age and possess a minimum of 5 O levels.

SERVICES IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS

Water, Effluent and Waste Disposal

Local authorities will have the responsibility to ensure that people within their area of jurisdiction have access to adequate, safe and clean water. Local authorities will also have the responsibility to treat and dispose of waste water in a manner that conserves the environment and protects national and international waters.

Rural local authorities play a leading role in conserving the environment and safeguarding the health of water bodies (dams and lakes). Local authorities which form catchment areas for specific dams and lakes will enjoy a royalty equivalent to a percentage of the proceeds of all revenue generated from the commercial activities at the water body. MDC local authorities will be expected to engage in productive waste-water management.

The role of the National Water Authority (ZINWA) will be restricted to the development, management and supply of bulk raw water to end users.

Solid-waste Disposal

Responsibility for waste management will rest with local authorities. MDC local authorities will maintain clean environments through efficient and solid-waste disposal practices. The methods used to provide such services will be left to each council's discretion, but private-sector services secured on an open-tender basis will be encouraged.

Public Health

In line with the MDC's policy on health, it will be a specific responsibility of the local authority to implement all public health programmes. These will include the provision of safe, clean water for household consumption, efficient waste management and pest control. In all these the MDC local authority will work with stakeholders in the management of public-awareness programmes.

Primary Health Care Clinics

The MDC government will establish a primary health care clinic for every 1,000 families in all local government areas. These will be managed by individual

committees chaired by local elected councillors that will be responsible for their finances, staff and procurement of drugs. Central government will fund these local health clinics through a grant payable each month to the local authority. In addition, all District Hospitals will be the responsibility of the local authorities and will be funded by the revenues gained by the treatment of patients and other services.

Education

While the provision of educational services will be the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, working through individual school and tertiary institutions at local level, the planning and provision of sites for schools and the provision of services to all educational establishments will be the responsibility of local authorities.

Roads

It will be the responsibility of both urban and rural councils to build, operate and maintain all roads not classified as 'national roads'. The latter will be the responsibility of the National Road Fund and the national government. Road development and maintenance in urban and rural council areas will be funded by grants from the National Road Fund, negotiated annually and based on the extent of the network in each region. In addition, local councils will set and charge local licence fees for vehicles registered in their region and these funds will be used for road development and maintenance.

The National Road Fund will manage third-party insurance as a compulsory national service to motorists. The funds raised will be used for repairs to local-government facilities and civil-engineering works arising from vehicle accidents. Councils will receive funding for such repairs upon application and justification to the National Road Fund.

Transport and Mass Transit Systems

The MDC recognizes that the cities of Harare and Bulawayo are on the way to becoming classified as 'mega' cities (cities with more than 10 million inhabitants). As such they will require a mass-transit system in the future and an MDC government will ensure that the necessary planning for this is completed within the period of its first term in office. In the interim, the MDC commits itself to the development and provision of a low-cost mass-transit system linking Chitungwiza, the international airport and the city of Harare.

All local authorities will be responsible for the provision of transport services that are cost-effective, convenient and efficient. The role of ZUPCO will be subjected to a full review by an incoming MDC government and thereafter handed over to local authorities for administration and management.

Housing

Housing is accepted as a top priority for an MDC administration. Housing is also a strong stimulant for growth, with high local content and multiplier effects on the economy. It is also labour intensive. An MDC government will regard the provision of family housing as a key element in its efforts to foster a secure, settled urban population that stands by family values and thereby minimizes the possible spread of HIV infections. It is also regarded as a key aspect affecting rural land settlement, as urban workers who do not earn an adequate income or have access to housing on a secure basis often rely on the rural areas for family security and accommodation.

It will be an objective of the MDC government to establish a national programme for low-cost family accommodation on a properly planned basis that will enable local authorities to make at least 500 housing starts a day for the first five years, the objective being to eliminate the backlog in urban housing over this period if that is at all possible. National government will underpin this programme financially, but its execution and administration will rest with local authorities and the private sector.

Electrical Energy

All urban councils will have full responsibility for the distribution of electrical energy and for the collection of revenue arising out of the consumption of electrical energy within their areas of responsibility.

Fire and Ambulance Services

All local authorities will be required to provide an adequate fire and ambulance service to deal with emergencies in the areas under their jurisdiction.

STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

The delivery of good services by local authorities is a task that the ministry and local authorities cannot accomplish alone. The support of all key stakeholders will be required for the discharge of local-government functions to the satisfaction of the communities they serve. A strong relationship will be established with all relevant stakeholders so as to facilitate their direct participation and assistance to local authorities in Zimbabwe.