

M-Governance as a Remedy to Service Delivery in Zimbabwean Local Governments: The M-DATA Project of the City of Mutare

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Abstract: Governance and public administration in general were not spared by the internet revolution of the 1990s. Resultantly governance the world over is rapidly becoming electronic and virtual. This led to the advent of e-governance and m-governance. In light of this development, the paper assessed how the service delivery of local governments in Zimbabwe has responded to the introduction of m-governance. The assessment is based on the Zimbabwean case study of the M-DATA project of 2015. The project was implemented by the City of Mutare's local government in collaboration with various civil society and non-governmental organisations. The study among many other things, sought to ascertain the impact of the M-DATA project on service delivery by the City of Mutare local government and to examine the factors which explain the current contribution of the M-DATA towards service delivery. The study was conducted through in-depth, face to face and semi-structured interviews with council administrators and the development partners. Questionnaires were also distributed to citizens dwelling in 10 of the 19 wards in the City of Mutare. The study reached the conclusion that the city's attempt at m-governance was strangled by the fact that technology alone cannot improve service delivery, but rather it needs the support of several under-lying factors. Recommendations targeted at the Zimbabwean central and local governments, the NGOs and civil society were also made to improve the M-DATA project and m-governance in Mutare and Zimbabwe at large.

Keywords - Mutare, Zimbabwe, M-Governance, Service-delivery

Research Area: Social Science

Paper Type: Research Paper

1. INTRODUCTION

The dawn of the Information Age through computers and the internet has revolutionized every imaginable facet of humanity. Governance is one of those facets that have been greatly transformed by the Information Computer Technology. Owing to the acceleration of the liberalization of political spaces, citizens across the globe now require direct communication with their respective governments around the clock. Instead of physically visiting government premises to pay bills, report faults or make general enquiries, citizens can now get such services from the comfort of their homes through the use of their computers and mobile devices. This transformation of government services through the use of computers and mobile phones is respectively referred to as e-governance and m-governance.

Mutare in Zimbabwe and Africa at large have not been spared from this transformation. Thus in April 2015 the Mutare City Council commissioned the first ever attempt of m-governance in the country. This initiative was termed the M-DATA project which is an

acronym standing for Mutare City Dialogue and Technology for Accountability. The project was formulated and implemented through a tripartite collaboration of the NGOs, Residents' Associations and the Mutare City Council (MCC, hereafter). The project was formulated for a number of reasons, the major being to improve service delivery in Mutare and to bridge the gap in communication between the MCC and citizens of Mutare. Thus the research aimed to analyze whether the MCC through the M-DATA project has managed to improve service delivery within Mutare. The research was necessitated by the continued failure to provide efficient service delivery by the Mutare urban local authority despite the implementation of the M-DATA project. This continued failure is evident through base-line survey reports, uncollected refuse, poor street lighting and deterioration of road networks among others. Due to these problems, the research sought to answer the following questions; Are the citizens of the City of Mutare familiar with the M-DATA project? Has the M-DATA project helped to improve service delivery in Mutare? What factors explain the current failure of the M-DATA project to improve service delivery in the City of Mutare? It was hoped that the research would be of use to the MCC, NGOs and residents associations as to how they could use technology to improve governance at local authority level.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research for the study was conducted from July to November 2016. It made use of both qualitative and quantitative methods of research. The research was conducted through questionnaires, in-depth interviews and document analysis. The questionnaires were distributed to 50 purposively sampled house-hold members from 10 of Mutare's 19 wards. Purposive sampling was selected so as to give a fair chance of equal representation among the selected 10 wards. 10 out of the 19 wards were selected in order to get a sample of the citizens' views with regards to M-DATA. 54% of the research participants were females whilst 46% of them were males. This is also a similar reflection of the situation on the ground in Mutare. The population census of 2012 revealed that females make up 53% of the population in Mutare whilst 47% are males. The 10 wards that were researched were 1, 3,6,7,11,12,13,14,15 and 16 as illustrated in the table below. These wards consisted of both high and low density residential areas as well as emerging settlements. This was done so as to get the information regarding M-DATA and service delivery of the MCC from all the types of residential areas that characterize the City of Mutare.

| Ward No. | Suburbs | No. of Households |
|----------|---|-------------------|
| 1 | Sakubva (Old Location, Avenues, Municipal Camp, Chimoio Flats) | 5 |
| 2 | Sakubva (MacGregors, NHB, Matida Flats) | |
| 3 | Sakubva (Nyausunzuzi, Old Chisamba and Chtungo) | 5 |
| 4 | Sakubva (New Chisamba, Mundembe, Dangare, Mazhambe) | |
| 5 | Sakubva (Muchena, Maonde, Old Zororo, New Zororo, Devonshire) | |
| 6 | Dangamvura | 5 |
| 7 | Dangamvura | 5 |
| 8 | Dangamvura | |
| 9 | Dangamvura | |
| 10 | Part of CBD, Muneni nad Nyakamete Industrial Area | |
| 11 | Part of CBD, Palmerstone, Greenside, Darlington, Bordervale, Morningside, Avenues, Beira Corridor | 5 |

| | | |
|----|--|---|
| 12 | Yeovil, Westlea, Florida, Fairbridge Park, Murambi Avenues, Tiger Kloof | 5 |
| 13 | Weirmouth, Chikanga extension, Mountain rise, Jelf Estate | 5 |
| 14 | Chikanga Phase 1 | 5 |
| 15 | Dangamvura (Federation, Area 3 and Gimboki South | 5 |
| 16 | Chikanga Phase 2 and 3 | 5 |
| 17 | Devonshire Extension, St Joseph's, Garikayi, Raheen, Hobhouse, Dream house, Natview Park | |
| 18 | Dangamvura (Area 15, Area 16, Pegasus and Aloe) | |
| 19 | Fern Valley and Fernhill | |

Table 01: Respective Wards of research participants

During the study, 10 key informants were also engaged due to their knowledgeability of either the M-DATA project, affairs to do with MCC or Tele-Communications in general. These key informants comprised of the Mayor, Town Clerk and Project Officer all from the Mutare City Council. Furthermore officials from the NGOs and residents' associations which participated in the project were interviewed. These officials were drawn from the following organisations:

- International Rescue Committee (IRC)
- Peace and Capacity Building Development Foundation (PACDEF)
- United Mutare Residents and Ratepayers' Trust (UMRRT)
- Combined Mutare Residents and Ratepayers' Trust (CMRRT)
- TELONE (Mutare Branch)

3. E-GOVERNANCE, M-GOVERNANCE AND CONVENTIONAL GOVERNANCE

Kim (2004) defines e-government as the use of information and communication technologies as a tool to achieve better governance. Kushchu (2003) adds that m-governance is the utilization of all kinds of wireless and mobile technologies for improving benefits to citizens, business and all government units.

However it is vital to note the differences between m-governance and e-governance. E-governance is an umbrella term used to refer to all the technologies which can be utilized for the purpose of governance. m-governance happens to be one of these technologies which use mobile cellular phones. It is also important to note that both these forms of electronic governance are not meant to replace the conventional ways of government service delivery. Rather they are there to complement and modernize the traditional way of delivering government service.

4. E-GOVERNANCE AND M-GOVERNANCE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Of the two forms of electronic governance, m-governance is more widespread than e-governance especially in developing countries. This is primarily due to the fact that the penetration of mobile phones is higher in developing countries as compared to that of internet and computers. Needless to say, mobile phones are relatively pocket friendly as compared to computers. Furthermore, e-governance requires more investment in terms of the infrastructure in comparison to m-governance. Most developing countries do not have the

resources for such heavy investment and in addition some countries have challenges with computer literacy.

Alrazooqi and de Silva (2010:1039) reveal that only 40% of the world has access to the internet whilst 60% have access to mobile phones. Lallama (2004) adds that m-governance is better than e-governance because it is available, anywhere, anytime as long as network coverage is available. She however cautions that m-governance is limited in that it faces difficulties when it comes to transferring large volumes of information. Gashghai (2002) reveals that in developing countries citizens do not have access to internet services with sufficient regularity and in some cases are unable to access it at all. Ghyasi and Kushchu (2004:4) affirm that as compared to computers, mobile phones are easier to use, they have a low cost of ownership and thus developing countries are in a better position to absorb them.

5. M-GOVERNANCE CASE STUDIES IN AFRICA

It is interesting to note that m-governance is a technological system that is being practiced the world over and even in Africa. Countries such as Philippines, Turkey, Czech Republic, South Korea and Japan among others have also adopted it. This points out the fact that it is not an impossible system to adopt and also that it is not only reserved for the predominantly developed countries. As highlighted earlier, m-governance is actually more suitable for developing countries such as Zimbabwe due to the fact that it is simpler to adopt and requires relatively less advanced infrastructure as compared to e-governance. In Africa, the following countries have adopted M-Governance:

- **Uganda:** The National Democratic Institute (NDI) (2013:9) informs that Uganda Watch, a civil society organization adopted m-governance in 2011 and used the SMS platform to observe elections and even report fraudulent activities during elections. The USpeak program was also launched and is an SMS platform used to enable citizens to contact their respective Members of Parliament.
- **Egypt:** The National Democratic Institute (NDI) (2013:9) states that the citizens launched the Ally Sotak program which utilized the SMS platform in 2011 to educate citizens about elections. In particular it informed them about their rights and responsibilities with regards to elections.
- **South Africa:** Muguti (2013:21) informs that the South African government established m-governance through the Electronic Communications and Transformation Act (ECT) in 2002. The policy among other issues covered matters to do with access, authentication, consumer protection and cyber-crime issues. The government went on to ensure that everyone had access to mobile phones and advanced communication access to all. Competition was encouraged in the Information Computer Technology sector. This was done so as to ensure rapid penetration of internet and mobile technological services.
- **Ghana:** The Panos Institute and the UNDP (2009:50) posit that Ghana also took advantage of its high rate of mobile penetration and uses m-governance to promote citizen participation in Ghana. During election campaigns mobile phones are used by aspiring political candidates. Furthermore, mobile phones are used to monitor the electoral processes and through the platform citizens can access the number of votes for each and every candidate at both constituency and national level. Through the platform, citizens can also report any fraudulent activities straight to the radio.

6. SITUATION ANALYSIS: PRACTICE OF M-GOVERNANCE IN ZIMBABWE

M-Governance in Zimbabwe is at the embryonic stage. This state of affairs is brought about by the fact that e-governance itself is greatly under-developed in Zimbabwe as well. As mentioned earlier m-governance is part and parcel of e-governance. Thus if e-governance is facing developmental challenges as it is in Zimbabwe, this will inevitably also affect the effective development and practice of m-governance. Zinyama and Nhema (2016:15) state that technologically Zimbabwe's ranking in the world is very low. This assertion is further confirmed by the E-Government Developmental Index (EGDI) in 2014 which revealed that Zimbabwe is ranked 126/193 countries in the world. Ruhode et al (2008) affirms that as much as there is progress towards the transition to e-government, the progress is hampered by the lack of an all embracing ICT strategy. Muguti (2013:30) adds on and informs that in Zimbabwe there's no integrated government policy framework for the development of e-government.

This status quo raises many unanswered questions considering that the Zimbabwean government has taken various steps to encourage the development of e-government. Furthermore, the Zimbabwean population has also displayed preparedness to successfully adopt e-governance.

In terms of government initiatives to encourage the development of e-government in Zimbabwe the following initiatives were taken:

- **1999:** the Nziramasanga Education Commission Report recommended the introduction of ICT teaching and learning in schools.
- **2002:** the Science and Technology Policy was established and aimed to promote science and technology as a gateway towards national development.
- **2005:** the National e-Readiness Survey was conducted to evaluate the preparedness of the country to adopt information and computer technology.
- **2009:** the Ministry of Information Communication and Technology was formed.
- **2010:** the implementation of the ICT draft bill.

On the other hand, the Zimbabwean population has displayed preparedness to adopt e-governance and m-governance. This is shown by the high rate of mobile penetration amongst the population. The Postal and Tele-Communications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) 3rd Quarter report of 2015 reveals that mobile penetration in Zimbabwe has reached 92.8% of the population (13 131 200) whilst internet penetration had reached 46.6% (6 593 900) of Zimbabweans.

Moreover, the preparedness of Zimbabweans to adopt m-governance is also shown by their use of other mobile financial platforms such as ECOCASH, ONE WALLET and TELECASH that are all in a way related to m-governance. These mobile financial platforms are provided by each of the three main Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) in Zimbabwe namely, Econet Wireless, Net-One and Telecel respectively. ECOCASH for instance was launched in 2011 and within 18 months of its formation it was utilized by 31% of Zimbabwe's adult population (*This is Africa Online May 15 2015*). By 30 June 2015, the Econet Head of Business and Marketing Development confirmed that ECOCASH was being utilized by 60% of Zimbabwe's mobile population and 450 million transactions had been conducted through it. Moreover, in April 2015 the Reserve Bank revealed that the total value of mobile and internet based transactions in 2015 alone was US\$ 453, 061 000 whilst in 2014

the figure had actually been higher and reached US\$ 476 038 000(*The Herald, June 30 2015*).

What this illustrates is a population that has the capacity to successfully adopt both e-governance and m-governance. Thus, one wonders the factors that explain the lack of development of e and m-governance services in Zimbabwe. Part of the problem appears to be attributed to the fact that the Zimbabwean government is not yet ready for the nation to become an information society. This is based on the various legal instruments that were legislated to withhold information from the general populace of Zimbabweans. Some of these legal instruments include: Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) of 2005, the Interception of Communications Act (ICA) of 2007 and the Broadcast Services Act (BSA) of 2000 among others.

7. BACK-GROUND INFORMATION: MUTARE CITY COUNCIL M-DATA PROJECT

In Zimbabwe, the civil society in collaboration with the local and central governments have made some initiatives of establishing both e and m-governance. These collaborations and initiatives have taken place despite the legislative obstacles militating against the successful implementation of both services in Zimbabwe.

The M-DATA project of the MCC is an example of such a collaboration which attempted to establish an m-governance platform. This platform was actually the first of its kind in Zimbabwe at the time. It was developed in 2013 and was launched to the public in April 2015. The project was brought about through the partnership of the Mutare City Council and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) as well as the Peace and Capacity Development Foundation (PACDEF).

The term M-DATA as mentioned earlier is an acronym standing for Mutare City Dialogue and Technology for Accountability. It is an SMS platform which allows the citizens of Mutare to report faults, complaints, compliments and suggestions to the Mutare City Council. All this is done through sending a text to the hotline number 34452 for a fee of 10cents per SMS. The SMS platform will directly link the citizens to the 6 departments of the city council. Once the SMS has been sent to the city council, it will be attached with a prefix which will direct it to its relevant department. It will then generate a reference number which the sender can then use to follow up the SMS. Furthermore, the SMS will escalate to a superior in the event that it has not been attended to by the responsible authority within a specific period of time. The escalation of the SMS can continue right up to the office of the Town Clerk if it is not attended to.

The M-DATA Quarterly of May 2014 posited that the M-DATA project was necessitated by the existing disconnect between the citizens and service providers in Mutare. The existence of this disconnect was unraveled by a baseline survey that was conducted by PACDEF in the City of Mutare. The citizens who participated in the survey indicated that:

- The majority of the citizens of Mutare were not included in the decision making of the city council.
- The decision making of the city council was not in line with their needs and priorities.
- Council services are available less frequently than desired i.e. roads, housing stands, refuse collection and water supply.
- Council administrators were not being accountable to citizens.

- Issues presented by the citizens to the council were not being effectively addressed.

Resultantly the M-DATA project was formulated as a remedy to the above mentioned anomalies. Its objectives were to:

- Open up democratic space for citizens' participation in the local governance space.
- To improve communications between the council and the citizens.
- To foster bottom-up accountable and gender sensitive decision making.
- To improve service delivery by bringing the citizens and the council administrators together.

Since the launch of the M-DATA project it appears that not much has changed in terms of service delivery and citizen engagement in Mutare. This assertion is based yet another Service Delivery Basel-line survey conducted by the United Mutare Residents and Rate-payers Trust (UMMRT) as recent as January 2016. The survey unearthed short-comings in the service delivery of the Mutare City Council. Amongst some of its findings the survey revealed that service delivery challenges were being experienced in the housing, water and waste management as well as urban infrastructure and health services.

8. FINDINGS: ANALYSIS OF THE M-DATA PROJECT

1. Are the Mutare Citizens Familiar with M-DATA Project?

From the data which was collected from the MCC, residents and civil society groups it emerged that the majority of the Mutare citizens are not aware of the M-DATA project. It was also realized that most of the respondents were not sufficiently trained for the utilization of the M-DATA project. This assertion is based on the following statistics obtained from the questionnaires distributed:

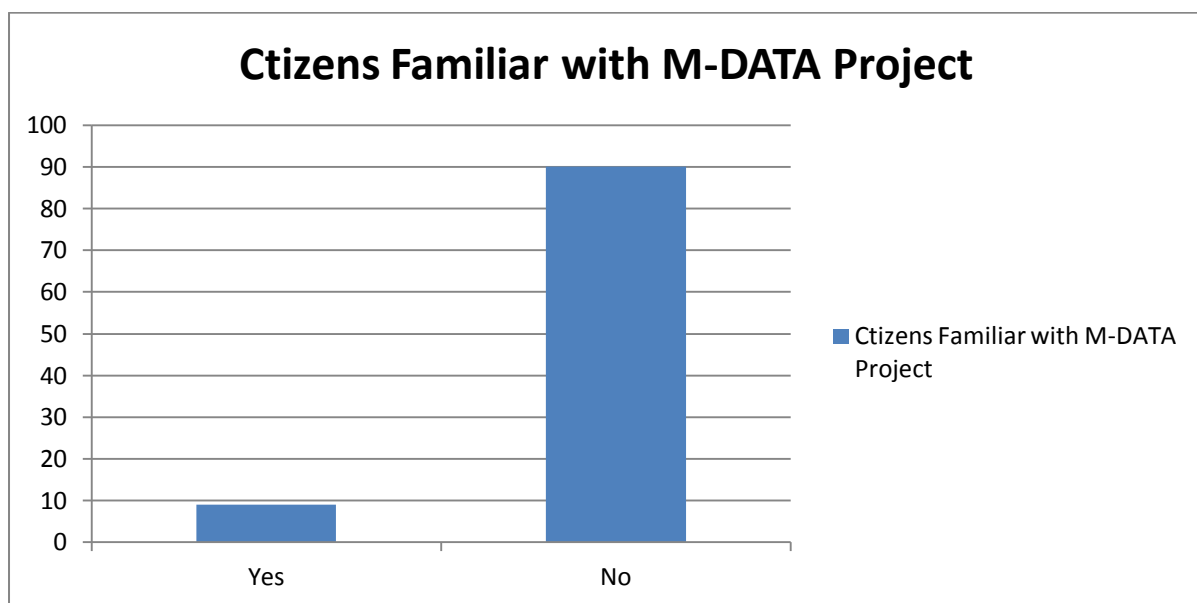


Fig 01: Mutare Citizens familiar with the M-DATA project

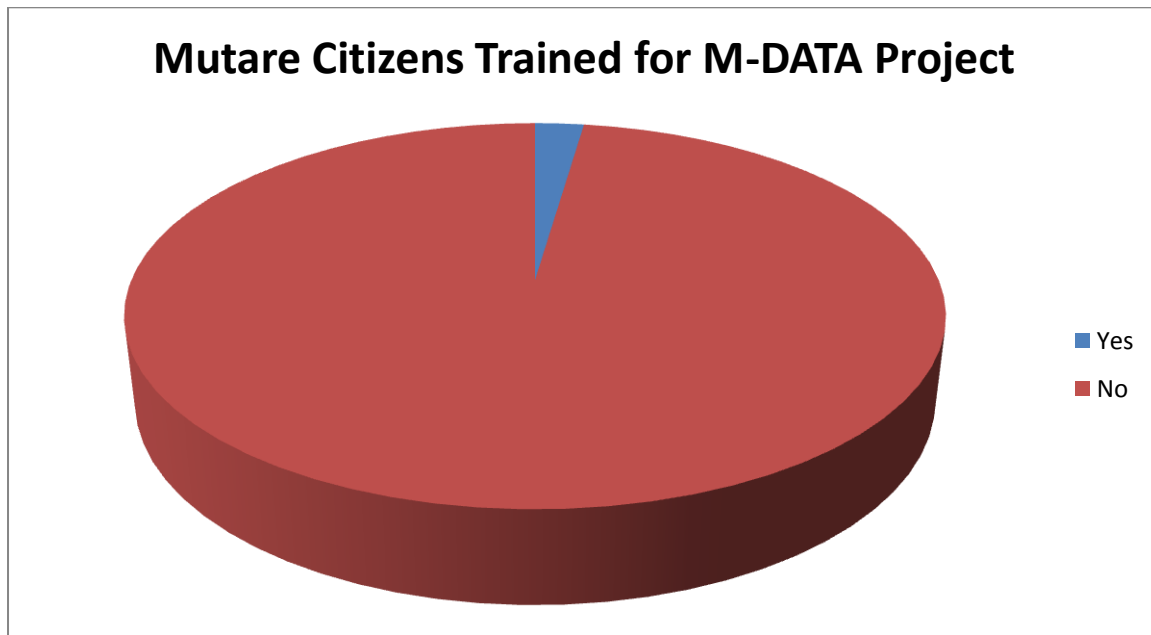


Fig 02: Mutare citizens trained for M-DATA project

Basing on the illustrations above, it is thus clear that the M-DATA Project is yet to make a significant impact upon the citizens in Mutare. It is interesting to note that the findings of this study are similar to the findings of the evaluation report of the IRC which was one of the main organisations involved in the formulation and implementation of the project. The evaluation report of September 2015 also noted that the campaign of the project only reached 47 472 of the citizens of Mutare. This translates to 18.11% of the population of Mutare which according to the census of 2012 stands at 262 127.

2. Has Service Delivery by the Mutare City Council Improved Since the Establishment of M-DATA Project?

The findings with regards to the above mentioned research question illustrated that service delivery has not changed in any way since the launch of the M-DATA project in April 2015. The majority of the residents indicate that the service delivery by the Mutare City Council is poor. This is clearly illustrated in the table below.

| Rating | Percentage |
|---------------|-------------------|
| Poor | 61.4% |
| Fair | 34.1% |
| Good | 4.5% |
| | |

Table 02: Mutare citizens’ ratings of service delivery by the Mutare City Council

These findings have also been echoed by a Service Delivery Baseline Report conducted by the United Mutare Residents and Ratepayers Trust (UMRRT) between December 2015 and January 2016. The report amongst other things revealed that service delivery in Mutare was at an all-time low. The council, according to the report was not providing housing facilities to citizens. Resultantly, in areas such as Sakubva 4 people were sharing a room. Furthermore, the city council was no longer servicing the stands for the citizens. With

regards to water and waste management, the city council was failing to provide water to areas such as Dangamvura and emerging settlements such as Gimboki and Garikai. Refuse collection has also become a thing of the past as solid waste had not been collected in 4 months.

These two scenarios of very low citizenry familiarity with M-DATA as well as the poor ratings of service delivery by the Mutare City Council raises the question why? It then called for a further investigation into the factors that explain why the M-DATA project has failed to make an impact in Mutare.

3. Factors that Explain the Failure of the M-DATA Project

Based on the research findings, the following factors appear to have strangled the potential of the M-DATA project:

- Administrative Incapacitation of the Mutare City Council
- Ineffective Awareness Campaign
- Citizen Apathy
- Technical Inadequacies of the M-DATA Platform
- Dis-engagement of Mutare Internet Service Providers and Mobile Network Operators
- Central Government General Attitude Towards M-Governance and Citizen Participation
- Ownership of the Initiative

a) Administrative Incapacitation of the Mutare City Council

The success of the M-DATA project has also been frustrated by the lack of capacity on the part of the Mutare City Council (MCC) to sustain the project. For the project to succeed, manpower, ICT skills and technology in the form of computers are a requirement. However, of all these requirements, the MCC has none. The project manager at IRC revealed in an interview (19 August 2016) that personnel that are completely dedicated to the running of the M-DATA project are required. However, the MCC has delegated the task to employees who are already employed in the Chamber Secretary's department with other tasks. This was revealed during an interview with the Chamber Secretary (27 May 2016). The council does not also have sufficient computers and internet connectivity to run the project. This was revealed by the Project Officer at the MCC (Interviewed 11 August 2016). These assertions were then corroborated by scholarly evidence from Chen et al (2006) points out that the availability of infrastructure in the form of network as well as organisational structure are important for the success of m-governance. Khamayeh and Lawrence (2006) and Muguti (2013:7) also reiterate the same facts. Thus it is difficult for the project to succeed as there is no staff compliment which is directly assigned and dedicated to it.

It is also important to note that the success of the project is further compounded by the fact that there is very low staff morale at the MCC. This is due to the fact that the staff is going for periods up to 17 months without salaries being paid. This is due to the critical financial strain which the council is operating under. This was established during an earlier study conducted in 2015 (Muchanyuka 2016).

Furthermore there is a shortage of workers themselves at the MCC. This is due to a Ministerial Directive which has frozen all posts till further notice. This has left some critical posts such as the Health Department without any doctors and most of the administrators are working in an acting capacity (UMRRT 2016:18) Thus the MCC as well as other councils are

disabled from recruiting suitably qualified personnel such as a Public Relations Officer to effectively administer the project due to this directive.

b) Ineffective Awareness Campaign

The M-DATA project has also been affected by the lack of an effective awareness campaign amongst the residence of Mutare. The parties involved in the launching of the project i.e. the MCC, IRC and PACDEF all stated that various awareness campaigns were conducted. These awareness campaigns comprised of road-shows, newspaper adverts, flyers and meetings with residents in the months leading to the launch of the project. However, upon further research amongst the residents from Mutare it appeared that the majority of them (92%) were unaware of the existence of the M-DATA project. Furthermore, the Evaluation report by the IRC also confirmed that only 23% of the population of Mutare (262 124) were reached by the various awareness campaigns for the project. Thus it seemed the strategies used for the awareness campaigns were ineffective. Part of the ineffectiveness lies in the fact that these awareness campaigns were done as a once off affair. This was stated by an official from UMRRT (interviewed 17 August 2016) who asserted that there were no follow-up campaigns done to further spread the word among citizens. Follow up awareness campaigns were essential because the assimilation of the project among the citizenry is more of a process than an event. Thus there was no follow up or re-emphasis on the importance of the M-DATA project amongst the citizens of Mutare.

c) Citizen Apathy

Mutare citizens are generally disconnected from and disinterested in the affairs of their local government. Thus it would have been impossible for the M-DATA project to succeed under such circumstances. Khamayseh and Lawrence (2006) list the acceptance of m-governance amongst citizens as crucial for the success of projects such as M-DATA. The existence of this apathy among Mutare citizens is seen in the low attendance by the residents to budget consultative meetings. For example in the Chikanga suburb, out of a population of 40 943 residents only 20 showed up for the October-November 2015 budget consultative meetings. This apathy was also cited by both the Mayor and Acting Town Clerk (interviewed 26 May 2016) of the MCC (interviewed 12 August 2016).

However, it should be noted that this apathy is not born out of a general lack of concern on the part of the Mutare residents. Rather it is born out of the fatigue which the Mutare residents have developed as a result of the appalling record of service delivery of the MCC. When citizens report faults through the M-DATA platform, the MCC is not in a position to act on it due to lack of capacity and resources.

Moreover, the apathy is also a result of the macro-economic challenges which Mutare and Zimbabwe at large are experiencing. Currently Zimbabwe is facing high levels of unemployment and a liquidity crisis in which banks can only give US\$100 per day to both citizens and organisations (Al Jazeera September 2016). Thus instead of being actively involved in the affairs of their local government, Mutare residents are busy trying to irk a living. This is also in accordance with the assertions of scholars such as Roberts (2004:325) who stated that citizens in impoverished environments will be busy scrounging around for alternative ways to survive as opposed to participating in local government affairs. Irvin and Stansburg (2004:59) also concur with this argument and state that the vulnerable find it difficult to participate for they have to provide for their families as opposed to spend time in meetings.

d) Technical inadequacies of the M-DATA Platform

The M-DATA project has failed due to the short-falls of the platform itself. The platform is not very interactive in that most of the communication is one way. Citizens report faults to the MCC which in turn responds with a note of acknowledgement. However, the platform should do more than just receiving fault reports and sending back acknowledgement receipts. There are more concerns which the citizens have other than reporting faults. The MCC should also utilize the platform as an avenue to update citizens with the latest information concerning the city e.g. deliberation outcomes from the full council meetings, local budgets, elections etc. This is what other m-governance platforms are being used for in countries such as Kenya and Ghana. In Kenya, Hellstron (2009) informs that m-governance platforms are being used to offer taxation, judicial, legal, health, education and even agricultural services. In Ghana as highlighted earlier the m-governance platforms are actually being used to monitor election results (UNDP 2009).

Furthermore, the platform is only accessible through SMS texts. This is a self-limiting factor considering that according to POTRAZ (2016) 5.16 million Zimbabweans have access to the internet through their mobile devices. Thus M-DATA can avail itself on several other social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Skype and Facebook which it could avail itself in.

The platform is also charging a 10 cents charge for every SMS and yet other mobile operators are charging just a fraction of that for their SMSs. This makes the platform relatively expensive in comparison with other mobile network operators in Zimbabwe. Econet Wireless for example is charging 0.0530 cents per SMS and even availing an SMS weekly bundle of 0.50 cents for 130 text messages. Telecel is also selling a daily SMS bundle of 25 text messages for 0.25 cents. Thus the cost factor along with other technical factors discussed above serve to discourage the popularity of the SMS platform among the citizens.

e) Dis-engagement of Mutare Internet Service Providers and Mobile Network Operators

The M-DATA project was also strangled by the lack of the involvement of the local mobile network operators in Mutare and Zimbabwe at large such ECONET, NETONE and TELECEL. The program did not also involve communication companies such as TEL ONE. This was revealed during interviews with officials from these tele-communication companies (Interviewed 11 August 2016). On the other hand, the MCC and NGO officials who were involved in the project stated that the mobile operators were approached, but both parties failed to come to a consensus. However, despite these challenges it would have been beneficial for the M-DATA project to have involved these communication companies. This is based on the fact that these companies already have a huge following in terms of subscribers. The 2016 report of the Post and Tele-Communications Regulation Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) posited the following figures in terms of active subscribers.

| Mobile Network Operator | Total Subscribers |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| ECONET | 6 702 691 |
| NETONE | 4 360 298 |
| TELECEL | 1 824 936 |

Table 03: Zimbabwean mobile network operators and their subscribers

Source: POTRAZ Quarterly 2016

Thus based on these figures as well as the numerous years of experience which these companies have, the M-DATA project would have benefited immensely from being partnered with these MNOs.

f) Central Government General Attitude Towards M-Governance and Citizen Participation

The Zimbabwean central government was not actively involved in the implementation of the M-DATA project. This also served to play a hand in the failure of the project. This is due to the fact that the involvement of the central government in such matters is of paramount importance. This importance emanates from the fact that in every country, it is the central government which creates an enabling environment for m-governance initiatives to thrive. This line of argument has also been supported by the study conducted by Muguti (2013:10). In her study she reveals that the government has to be involved in the m-governance initiative through awareness campaigns and skills building programs. She further states that the government needs to avail information to the average citizen.

With regards to these roles which the government needs to play, the Zimbabwean government has done none with regards to m-governance. Rather the Zimbabwean government is more inclined to the promotion of e-government services as opposed to m-governance. This is seen by the several policy initiatives such as the Science and Technology policy of 2002, the Medium Term Plan of 2011-2015 and the National Industrial Development Policy of 2012-2016 among others. However, these initiatives are ill-placed considering that Zimbabwe does not have the infrastructure to support e-governance. This fact was established by the e-readiness survey of 2005 conducted by the Zimbabwean government and the National Economic Consultative Forum (NECF). Additionally, Zinyama and Nhema (2016:15) came to the same conclusion and posited that, "With reference to technology, Zimbabwe stands very low in the world order of nations." Their study also established that e-governance in Zimbabwe is hampered by inadequate infrastructure such as the availability of broadband internet services, lack of ICT skills, investment capital and digital literacy levels. Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that the failure of e-governance services is not only peculiar to Zimbabwe, but rather it is a challenge that is widespread among African and other developing countries. The e-government Index (EGDI) (2014) postulates that e-governance is slow and uneven in Africa.

That is it maybe; the Zimbabwean government is more than ready to implement m-governance. This is based on the fact that 90.8% of Zimbabweans have access to mobile phones as opposed to 45% who have access to computers and internet according to POTRAZ 2015. Furthermore, the Zimbabwean citizenry as pointed out earlier is already utilizing other mobile platforms to conduct their day to day business. The ECOCASH and TELECASH mobile platforms are examples of such facilities which prove that Zimbabweans are in a better position to adopt m-governance instead of e-governance. The ECOCASH facility within 3 ½ years of its existence had handled 450 million transactions equivalent to US\$11 Billion and it is also used by 60 % of the Zimbabwean population.

However, this attitude of the Zimbabwean government towards m-governance comes as no surprise. This is due to the government's reluctance to provide information to the average citizen. Accessibility of information is one of the pre-requisites listed by Muguti (2013:10) as essential for the success of m-governance within a nation. The track record of the Zimbabwean government appears not to favor information accessibility and citizen participation in general. This assertion emanates from the enactment of bills such as the Broadcast Services Act (2000), Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA)

(2005) and the Interception of Communications Act (2007). Thus with this attitude by the central government, m-governance initiatives such as the M-DATA project are less likely to succeed.

g) Ownership of the Initiative:

The M-DATA initiative seems to have failed due to the fact that the project was not community driven. Rather the initiative was introduced by external parties which are the IRC and PACDEF. The lack of the involvement of the community at grass roots level in the project presents a problem of its sustainability. The NGOs appear to not have been in touch with the facts on the ground with regards to the priorities of the citizens of Mutare and Zimbabwe at large. The MCC focal person for the M-DATA initiative (interviewed 11 August 2016) informed that the M-DATA initiative did not consider the Zimbabwean macro-environment.

The introduction of the initiative appears to have been anachronistic in that the Mutare citizens had other grave concerns to deal with such as poverty and unemployment. The Provincial Report of the census conducted in 2012:99 revealed that 12 883 of the 69 988 (18.4%) citizens of Mutare are unemployed. The Zimbabwe Poverty Atlas of 2015:32 further reveals that 49% of the citizens of Mutare are poverty stricken. In some wards such as ward 2, 61% of the population is poverty stricken. This background contributes to the failure of the initiative as it is not in tandem with the pressing concerns of the citizens.

9. CONCLUSION

The M-DATA project of the City of Mutare has failed to be the panacea to its declining service delivery. This is due to several macro and micro conditions that have been identified in the argument and were not considered during the implementation of the project. However, despite the failure of the initiative it is important to note that it is a very useful and important step towards modern day government. Thus it should not be totally abandoned, rather it requires the parties involved to get back to the drawing board as specified in the recommendations. This will allow the establishment of the foundation necessary for the success of the m-governance initiative. When that is done it will allow the benefits associated with m-governance to be realized.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings in this paper, the following recommendations were made to ensure the realization of M-Governance initiatives such as the M-DATA project. The recommendations have been categorized to target each of the parties involved in the M-Governance equation;

- a) Zimbabwe Government:* The Zimbabwe government needs to take a leading role in such initiatives. The central government needs to ensure that an enabling environment has been created for the success of m-government initiatives. This can be done by availing information to every citizen, by allowing the free flow of information amongst citizens. The government should also be involved in spear-heading the program by creating an awareness campaign to educate the masses.

- b) *Mutare City Council*: The MCC might need to consider repeating awareness campaigns amongst the masses. Part of the reason why the masses are not aware of the M-DATA initiative is that the awareness campaigns were done only once. The council should actually do these campaigns at intervals so as to reach a wider audience. Furthermore, the MCC should consider employing people who are totally dedicated to the cause of the M-DATA initiative. This is also in line with the recommendations from the NGOs which formulated and implemented the project. The danger of delegating staff members who already have their own duties to perform is that they will not be totally devoted to the project. M-Governance by nature is very demanding and thus requires undivided attention. The MCC might also want to learn from sister councils such as the Bulawayo City Council which has a similar project running successfully. The MCC might want to also collaborate closely with the Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) as they are already utilizing mobile platforms similar to M-DATA such as ECOCASH, TELECASH and ONE WALLET. Thus these MNOs already have a wealth of experience with mobile platforms. The MCC also needs to improve its service delivery track record before it can implement technological platforms such as M-DATA and benefit from it. This is because technology is not there to improve service delivery where it does not exist.
- c) *NGOs*: These might consider supporting community driven m-governance initiatives rather than the NGOs themselves taking the leading role. This helps to ensure the ownership and the support of the project from the citizens. The NGOs might also want to consider the timing of initiating such projects. They might want to consider the broader macro and even micro conditions of the nation. This is important especially with reference to Mutare and the M-DATA initiative. The initiative was affected by the high levels of poverty and unemployment.
- d) *Mutare Citizens*: The citizens need to be receptive to M-Governance initiatives. This is because if they are given the chance they will be very beneficial and convenient to them. The current appalling levels of citizen apathy have to be done away with. Much as there might be current economic and political challenges that is when there is a greater need for the participation which the m-governance initiative strives to achieve.

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