

# **An Assessment on the Effectiveness of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) Governance and Service Delivery in Zimbabwe: A Case of Harare City**

**Clever Marisa<sup>1</sup>, Custon Ziwoni<sup>2</sup>, Johannes Marisa<sup>3</sup>, Jethro Mudzingwa<sup>4</sup>**

*<sup>1</sup>Part-Time Lecturer, Zimbabwe Open University, Zimbabwe*

*<sup>2</sup>Lecturer, Internation University of Management, Namibia*

*<sup>3</sup>Lecturer, Great Zimbabwe University, Simon Mazorodze School of Medical and Health Science*

*<sup>4</sup>PhD (r), African Leadership Institute*

**Abstract:** This study assessed the effectiveness of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) governance and service delivery in Zimbabwe, with a focus on Harare City Council. The study highlights the critical importance of WASH in preventing diseases and promoting public health, particularly in urban settings. The research objectives were to evaluate the challenges facing the WASH sector in Zimbabwe, assess the effectiveness of WASH governance and service delivery, and identify opportunities for improvement. A mixed-methods research approach was employed, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather data. A sample size of 384 households was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. Data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, and descriptive statistics were used to summarize data. The research findings revealed that despite an enabling environment, WASH services in Zimbabwe have been deteriorating due to weak institutional arrangements, inadequate financing and corruption and mismanagement. The study also found that community-based approaches, such as Community Health Clubs (CHCs), can improve WASH behaviours and health outcomes. The findings underscored the imperative need for strengthening Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) governance and service delivery in Zimbabwe. The study recommends strengthening WASH governance and service delivery by reviewing and revising the National Action Committee's (NAC) structure and operations, increasing investment in WASH infrastructure and services, and promoting community-based approaches. Additionally, the study recommends prioritizing waste management and collection, promoting environmental awareness and education, and supporting cities to manage waste effectively. Implementation of these recommendations will improve WASH outcomes, reduce the burden of waterborne diseases, and promote a cleaner and healthier environment for all citizens.

**Key Words:** WASH, Governance, Service Delivery, Sustainable Development Goals, Public Health, Institutional Arrangements and Environmental Cleanliness

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## **1. Introduction and Background to the Study**

The importance of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) in preventing diseases and promoting public health cannot be overstated. In Zimbabwe, the government has initiated efforts to promote environmental cleanliness,

including designating the first Friday of every month as a national clean-up day. However, challenges persist, particularly in Harare, where poor waste management and sanitation pose significant health risks to residents. Subsequently, the significance of environmental cleanliness and hygiene has been recognized globally, with the United Nations (UN) adopting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 where SDG 6 focuses on ensuring access to clean water and sanitation while, SDG 11 aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable (UN, 2015).

The World Health Organization (WHO) has also emphasized the significance of environmental health, estimating that 24% of the global burden of disease is attributable to environmental factors (WHO, 2019). In Africa, the African Union (AU) has developed frameworks and policies to promote environmental sustainability and public health. The AU's Agenda 2063 aims to create a prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its citizens, representing a dynamic force in the global arena (AU, 2015). The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has also prioritized environmental sustainability and public health, recognizing the importance of cooperation and collective action to address regional challenges (SADC, 2018).

In Zimbabwe, environmental cleanliness and hygiene have been recognized as critical components of public health. According to the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZimStat), the country's urban population has been growing rapidly, putting pressure on existing infrastructure and services (ZimStat, 2020). Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe, faces significant challenges related to environmental cleanliness and hygiene. The city's waste management system is inadequate, leading to the accumulation of waste in streets and open spaces (Manyanhai et al., 2019). This has serious implications for public health, as poor waste management can contribute to the spread of diseases like cholera and typhoid fever (Chirenda et al., 2020). In this case, the Harare City Council has been criticized for its failure to effectively manage waste and maintain a clean environment, highlighting the need for improved governance and service delivery (The Herald, 2022) hence the need to conduct this study and come up with appropriate recommendations to address these challenges.

### **1.1. Theoretical Framework and Its Applicability to the Study**

The Social Ecological Model (SEM) serves as the theoretical framework for this study, providing a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between individual, social, and environmental factors that influence health behaviours and outcomes (McLeroy et al., 1988). The SEM acknowledges the multiple levels of influence that shape behaviours and outcomes in the domain of environmental cleanliness and hygiene such as: intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational, community, and policy. At the intrapersonal level, individual characteristics such as knowledge and attitudes influence behaviour (McLeroy et al., 1988). The interpersonal level examines social networks and relationships that shape behaviour, while the organizational level looks at institutions and organizations that provide services and support (ibid.). The community level explores community norms and values that influence behaviour, and the policy level considers laws and policies that regulate environmental cleanliness and hygiene. This framework enables the identification of individual, social, and environmental factors that contribute to the challenges facing the city (Sallis et al., 2008) and informs the development of effective interventions and policies that address the root causes of these challenges and promote sustainable solutions (McLeroy et al., 1988). The SEM's comprehensive approach allows for a nuanced understanding of the complex factors at play, facilitating the identification of effective solutions to promote environmental cleanliness and hygiene in Harare.

## **2. Related Literature Review**

The literature emphasizes the importance of a multi-faceted approach to addressing the challenges facing urban areas, particularly in the context of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services. Poor waste management and sanitation have been linked to the spread of diseases such as cholera, dysentery, and typhoid fever (Chirenda et al., 2020). In Zimbabwe, WASH reforms have been ongoing for over a century, but challenges

persist, especially in rural areas where access to clean water and sanitation is limited (Ndebele & Mutsindikwa, 2020). Community-based approaches, such as Community Health Clubs (CHCs), have been found to improve WASH behaviours and health outcomes (Chimbari et al., 2018; Makoni et al., 2020). CHCs increase knowledge and adoption of good hygiene practices, such as handwashing and proper waste disposal, by promoting community engagement and participation. However, the effectiveness of CHCs depends on various factors, including leadership and support from local authorities. Community-based approaches, effective leadership and governance, financing and investment, and Service Level Benchmarking are all important strategies for improving service delivery and promoting environmental cleanliness and hygiene in Harare City.

Effective leadership and governance are crucial in promoting environmental cleanliness and hygiene. This requires a commitment to prioritizing waste management and sanitation, allocating resources, and ensuring accountability (WHO, 2019). In Zimbabwe, the government has initiated efforts to promote environmental cleanliness, including designating the first Friday of every month as a national clean-up day (Mnangagwa, 2020). Nevertheless, more needs to be done to address the challenges facing Harare City and ensure that the city remains clean and hygienic. The literature highlights the importance of financing and investment in WASH infrastructure and services. Increasing investment in WASH improves access to clean water and sanitation, reduces the spread of diseases, and promotes economic development (Hutton & Varughese, 2016). However, financing WASH remains a challenge in many countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where funding gaps are significant (WHO, 2017). One approach to improving service delivery in urban areas is Service Level Benchmarking (SLB). SLB involves tracking the performance of local authorities over time to identify areas for improvement and share best practices. A study on SLB in Harare City Council found that the city is improving water and sanitation services, with performance indicators increasing after every peer review process (Kamonjola, 2021). The City of Harare faces significant challenges, including poor waste management, inadequate sanitation, and limited access to clean water. These challenges are complex and require a comprehensive approach to address. The United Zimbabwe Alliance has highlighted the need for efficient service delivery, including access to essential services like clean water, sanitation, and road infrastructure.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This study employed a mixed-methods research approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather data (Creswell, 2014). A descriptive survey design was used to collect data on the current state of environmental cleanliness and hygiene in Harare. The target population consisted of residents of Harare, Zimbabwe, with a focus on households and communities in high-density suburbs, where waste management and sanitation challenges are most pronounced. A sample size of 384 households was determined using the Cochran formula (Cochran, 1977). A multi-stage sampling technique was employed, involving the selection of wards and then households within those wards. This approach ensured that the sample was representative of the population and allowed for the collection of data from a diverse range of households.

The study utilized a combination of research instruments to collect data including structured questionnaires that were administered to households to collect data on their waste management practices, sanitation facilities, and hygiene behaviours. In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants, including city council officials, health workers, and community leaders, to gather data on policy and programmatic responses to environmental cleanliness and hygiene challenges. Observational studies were also conducted to assess the state of waste management and sanitation in the study area. A document review was conducted to provide a contextual understanding, identifying gaps in policies and practices. The documents reviewed included government policies, reports, research studies, and budgets, to help gain a deeper understanding of WASH issues in the City of Harare and develop effective recommendations for improvement.

Data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, where descriptive statistics were used to summarize data, and inferential statistics were used to test hypotheses and make inferences about the population (Field, 2013). This approach enabled the researcher to identify patterns, trends, and correlations in the data, and to draw meaningful conclusions about the research problem.

#### **4. Research Findings**

- The findings underscored the imperative need for strengthening Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) governance and service delivery, which is deteriorating in Harare. This deterioration poses significant health risks to residents, underscoring the urgency for comprehensive reforms.
- The study established key areas requiring improvement such as institutional arrangements, financing, community engagement, monitoring and evaluation, and addressing corruption and mismanagement.
- The findings established that the National Action Committee (NAC) on WASH, established in 2010, provides a whole-of-government framework for fulfilling the obligation to deliver WASH services. However, the NAC's operations are notably weak, with decision-making processes and role clarity among members remaining indistinct.
- The study further established that inadequate financing emerges as a significant challenge to WASH service delivery in Zimbabwe. The study emphasizes that increasing investment in WASH infrastructure and services, particularly in rural areas, is not just beneficial but critical to improving WASH outcomes and bridging the gap between urban and rural areas.
- The findings established that the community-based approaches, such as Community Health Clubs (CHCs), have demonstrated their effectiveness in improving WASH behaviours and health outcomes. These programs foster community engagement, promote hygiene education, and encourage the adoption of healthy practices, contributing to a reduction in waterborne diseases.
- The study highlights the necessity of establishing robust monitoring and evaluation systems. These systems are crucial for tracking progress, identifying areas for improvement, and enabling stakeholders to make informed decisions and adjust their strategies to enhance WASH outcomes.
- The deep-seated corruption and mismanagement within the Harare City Council are found to be undermining the country's economic development and growth. This highlights the need for transparency, accountability, and good governance in the management of WASH services.
- Ultimately, the study reaffirms that a healthy nation is crucial for economic development and growth. A population with access to adequate WASH services is better positioned to contribute meaningfully to the economy, breaking the cycle of poverty and disease that often accompanies poor health outcomes.

##### **4.1. Analysis and Discussion of the Findings**

The findings on Zimbabwe's Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) sector governance arrangement reveal significant challenges despite an enabling environment. The study highlights the incapacitation of the National Action Committee (NAC) in effectively delivering its mandate, which is attributed to unclear roles and responsibilities among members, inadequate financing, and the absence of a legal framework. This situation is exacerbated by corruption and mismanagement within the sector. According to Bevir (2011), governance involves a plurality of public and private stakeholders, hybrid practices, and is considered multi-jurisdictional. In the context of Zimbabwe's WASH sector, effective governance is crucial for ensuring that the various stakeholders work together towards a common goal of providing clean water, sanitation, and hygiene services to the population. However, the lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities among NAC members hinders the committee's ability to coordinate efforts and make informed decisions.

The study's findings on financing are consistent with the literature, which reveals that recurrent expenditure dominates the central government budget, leaving limited funds for capital expenditure. This has resulted in inadequate investment in WASH infrastructure, which is essential for ensuring sustainable service delivery. As

noted by Moriarty et al. (2013), investments in WASH infrastructure have prioritized development over sustainability, resulting in high failure rates of rural water supply systems. The absence of a legal framework for the NAC has significant implications for the committee's effectiveness. According to the study, government recognition and legalization of the NAC would grant it the necessary authority and obligation to lead and direct the sector. This would enable the NAC to coordinate efforts across different stakeholders and ensure that the sector is working towards a common goal.

Pattberg and Widerberg (2014) emphasize the importance of building blocks and governance functions in defining the performance of any system. In the context of Zimbabwe's WASH sector, the NAC's planning capacity is weakened by the absence of regular meetings and inadequate resource mobilization. The planning function has been relegated to the Department of WASH Coordination, which develops annual sector plans and budgets with limited stakeholder involvement. This approach has resulted in a lack of ownership and accountability among stakeholders, which can undermine the effectiveness of WASH interventions.

Jiménez et al. (2016) and SWA (2019) identify sector policy/strategy, institutional arrangements, sector financing, monitoring, review, and capacity development as crucial building blocks and governance functions. In Zimbabwe's WASH sector, these building blocks are essential for ensuring that the sector is well-coordinated and that services are delivered effectively. However, the study's findings suggest that these building blocks are not functioning optimally, which has resulted in significant challenges in the sector. The study's findings also highlight the importance of intersectoral coordination in ensuring effective WASH service delivery. However, the lack of coordination among stakeholders has resulted in duplication of efforts, inefficiencies, and ineffectiveness in service delivery. This is consistent with the literature, which emphasizes the importance of coordination and collaboration among stakeholders in ensuring that WASH services are delivered effectively (WHO, 2019).

#### **4.2. Conclusions and Recommendations**

In conclusion, this study has provided a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) governance and service delivery in Zimbabwe, with a focus on Harare City. The findings of this study reveal significant challenges in the WASH sector, including unclear roles and responsibilities among members of the National Action Committee (NAC), inadequate financing, and the absence of a legal framework. These challenges have resulted in ineffective coordination and service delivery, which has significant implications for the health and well-being of the population. The study's findings highlight the importance of effective governance and leadership in ensuring that the WASH sector is well-coordinated and that services are delivered effectively. The absence of a legal framework for the NAC has resulted in a lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities among members, which has hindered the committee's ability to coordinate efforts and make informed decisions. Therefore, it is essential that the government recognizes and legalizes the NAC to grant it the necessary authority and obligation to lead and direct the sector.

The study also highlights the importance of adequate financing for the WASH sector. The lack of investment in WASH infrastructure has resulted in significant challenges, including poor sanitation and hygiene practices, which have contributed to the spread of diseases such as cholera and typhoid fever. Therefore, it is essential that the government increases investment in WASH infrastructure to ensure sustainable service delivery. The study's findings also emphasize the importance of intersectoral coordination and collaboration among stakeholders in ensuring effective WASH service delivery. The lack of coordination among stakeholders has resulted in duplication of efforts, inefficiencies, and ineffectiveness in service delivery. Therefore, it is essential that stakeholders work together towards a common goal of providing clean water, sanitation, and hygiene services to the population.

Overall, this study has provided valuable insights into the challenges facing the WASH sector in Zimbabwe and has identified potential solutions to address these challenges. It is hoped that the findings of this study will

inform policy and practice in the WASH sector and contribute to improved service delivery and health outcomes for the population. The study's findings have significant implications for policy and practice in the WASH sector where policymakers and practitioners can use these findings to inform the development of policies and programs aimed at improving WASH service delivery. The study's recommendations can also be used to guide investment in WASH infrastructure and to promote intersectoral coordination and collaboration among stakeholders. The study's findings also highlight the need for a comprehensive approach to address the challenges facing the WASH sector in Zimbabwe. This approach should involve effective governance and leadership, adequate financing, and intersectoral coordination and collaboration among stakeholders. To address the challenges facing the WASH sector in Zimbabwe, the following recommendations are made:

- The government should urgently intervene to address the challenges in Harare and ensure that the city is governed in a transparent and accountable manner.
- The government should implement robust accountability measures, including regular audits and citizen-led monitoring initiatives, to ensure that the city council is transparent and accountable to residents.
- The Harare city council should prioritize community engagement and involve residents in decision-making processes through regular town hall meetings and citizen-led planning initiatives.
- Council officials found guilty of corruption and mismanagement should be prosecuted to demonstrate a commitment to accountability and transparency.
- Harare City Council should prioritize waste management and collection to prevent the spread of diseases.
- Residents should be empowered with knowledge and skills to take action in protecting their environment.
- The government should strengthen WASH governance and service delivery by reviewing and strengthening the NAC's structure and operations, increasing investment in WASH infrastructure and services, and promoting community-based approaches.
- The government should also promote environmental awareness and education to reduce the burden of waterborne diseases and promote a cleaner and healthier environment for all citizens.

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## **INFO**

**Corresponding Author:** **Clever Marisa**, Part-Time Lecturer, Zimbabwe Open University, Zimbabwe.

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