Are Communities Coming of Age? Assessing Active citizenships programmes in Gweru & Chiundura.

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Contents

Introduction[1]

Democracy and participation are terms loosely used especially by authorities to mean following what they prescribe. Often it means opportunities for citizens to participate in the voting process during local government or national elections as and when they are held. For the ordinary citizen it means exercising their rights without threats from the state and its agents.

Democracy is a system of government under which the people exercise the governing power, either directly or indirectly through representatives in a periodical election (Appadoria. 2004). The essentials of democracy allow free discussion, free association, periodic elections, and continuous participation of the people in the government of a country (Odigwe. 2015). Election-centred definitions are problematic in that they tend to focus on election-day voting and election results, but negate the aspects of active citizen participation and factors that either promote or discourage that participation of citizens in daily activities, including exercising their agency. The notion behind the "alternation" thesis, challenged by Carothers (2002), was that elections, and changes in elected governments, would lead to the deepening of democracy, but, in Africa (and Zimbabwe specifically), there is little evidence that citizens believe that elections lead to democracy (Logan & Cho. 2009). Earlier, Bratton and Logan (2006) pointed out the weak demand by African citizens for accountability from their governments, suggesting that African citizens were clearly voters but not yet citizens.

One of the key objectives of participation, critical to the demand for accountability, is to create a healthier and more active democracy (Barnes, 1999: 67). Defining "democracy" as rule by the people presents a big problem. A political system is democratic to the extent that, and only to the extent that, it involves realisation of responsive rule (Betheem. 1994). But this also assumes that the citizens governed are actively taking part and engaging with the leaders who then respond to the needs of the majority. This belief is also based on the assumption that local citizens have an influence over the decisions made by the local authorities especially as it relates to service delivery (Devas. 2003). Full and equal participation requires that all people have voice — meaning the capacity to speak up and be heard, from homes to houses of parliament, and to shape and share in discussions, discourse, and decisions that affect them (Klugman et al. 2014). However, the extent to which citizens engage with their leaders at any level is influenced by the politics and the nature of the local government structures.

This report is based on work carried out by the Research & Advocacy Unit (RAU) under its active citizenship and community security programmes. The aim is to understand whether the role of women and young people in local participatory policy-making is contributing to creating a conducive environment for the full enjoyment of its citizens, and also that duty bearers are getting more responsive to the inputs by the community which they serve. We try to answer the question: *Does citizen participation in day to day activities of their local authorities imply increased accountability?* Even though there are massive programmes to educate citizens and discussing the benefits of participation, this research shows that the role of citizens, especially women and youth is limited (RAU. 2017), serving mainly to provide information on the basis of which the government then makes decisions.

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[1] This report was written by Lloyd Pswarayi, Senior Researcher, with statistical support from Tony Reeler, Senior Researcher.

Background/Context

With the history of politically motivated violence in Zimbabwe, especially experienced in 2002 and 2008, there emerged a new form of threat in the communities. Violence and fear of violence, especially sponsored by the state, communities have been paralysed by political intolerance over the last 15 years. This has created insecurity amongst the people, particularly women, youth, and children (RAU. 2010). Research to understand what community security meant for women and youth in light of the violence of 2008 in Zimbabwe was undertaken (RAU.2015). The report identified common perceptions for young people, especially women, of threats to their security in the community, which included the continued existence of the structures of violence. In some cases these run parallel to the formal structures of government.[2] The study also showed that security, for the women and young people in the target communities, goes beyond the mere absence of physical violence. It involves a complex interaction of various factors affecting women and youth such as gender-based violence, continued droughts and the politicisation of food aid, high levels of unemployment, exclusion from key decision making processes and from accessing economic benefits among others. For young people it is exclusion when and where it matters most. Therefore promotion of community security must include a wide range of social interventions that are needed to ensure freedom from fear.

It is from this understanding that the project sought to create platforms that brought together community members and the local leaders (Councillors in the case of the urban areas and the local traditional leaders in the case of rural areas): firstly create understanding and expectations from each other and then explore how best to address the concerns. The assumption here is that creating linkages and understanding will help to create access to the leaders and generate interest in the local affairs for the community members. It is also hoped that participation of citizens will help foster democracy starting at the local level and this can help in promoting accountability and eventually improved service delivery. But are state structures ready to incorporate the views of citizens, especially those of the youth to increase their participation?

Methodology

The study was carried out in Gweru (urban) and Chiundura (rural) in the Midlands province, chosen on the basis of previous RAU work (RAU.2015).

To help explain and interpret the responses from the questionnaire, four focus group discussions (FGDs) were held, two in the urban area and two in rural areas. The FDGs participants were selected community members, councillors and traditional leaders.

Table 1: Participants – Questionnaires & FGDs

Activity Type	Male [n=36]	Female [n=31]
Focus group discussions with youth (urban)	8	12
Focus group discussions with youth (Rural)	10	10
Individual interviews	20	36
Urban Councillors	6	1
Traditional leaders	5	0
Total	**49**	**59**

2 RAU (2015)Perceptions of Community Security: A Study on Gweru & Chiundura Communities, February 2015. Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit.

The questionnaire focused on participation especially at the local level, with special emphasis on understanding the differences in the response between male and female respondents. The questionnaire was administered to 56 individual respondents. In the end a total of 80 participants completed the questionnaire, but only 67 were youths between the ages of 18 and 35, who formed the sample for this analysis.

The questionnaire was divided into the following sections:

- demographics – employment, education, etc.;
- civic capabilities and competencies;
- understanding of perceptions about gender;
- kinds of civic engagements they participate in.

The questionnaire generated an enormous number of fields (207), and, since many of these formed logical subsets, a number of indices were created to summarise key sections of the responses. Eight indices were created as follows:[3]

- **Public Debate** – five questions dealing with aspects of speaking in public (*speaking in public; speaking to leaders; expressing opinions; discussing politics with friends; discussing politics with family*);
- **Competencies** - Eleven questions dealing with kinds of competencies that youth might possess (*happy to lead in peer group; chat with unfamiliar person; confident to express oneself; leadership among friends; initiatives to improve youth; help resolve disagreements; provide advice; build bridges between rich & poor; build bridges about politics; discussing family finances; influence on spending*);
- **Attitudes about gender equality** – Seven of the thirteen questions on views about gender equality (*everyone has right to be listened to in group; happy to speak in mixed sex group; accepting regardless of gender; man & woman equal voice in home; man & woman share household chores; same pay for same work*);
- **Neighbourhood relationships** - Four of the five questions on aspects of social relationships (*people get along; positive attitude by other residents; positive attitude by other residents; accept others regardless of political party*);
- **Confidence in social engagement** - Seven questions dealing with self-confidence (*confident to visit other members; confident to express opinions; confident to lead discussion; confident to take leadership; confident to initiate a project; confident to question things*);
- **Confidence with duty bearers** – Four of the five questions about confidence in being in groups (*important that politicians do not interfere; Ok to approach politicians; adults value this kind of group; council should support a group like this; know how to approach*);
- **Participation in neighbourhood** – Nine of the ten questions about various forms of participation (*power to make a difference; interested in what the leaders do in the neighbourhood; participating in activities to improve my*

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[3] Not all questions were used in the construction of the indices as the question did not fully fit within the general tenor of the category. For example, under *attitudes about gender equality*, two questions were concerned with male opinions about women or female opinions about men, and four questions were about economic power in which it would not be possible to disaggregate males from females. Hence, the index was reduced from 13 questions to seven.

neighbourhood; informed about news and decisions; plan to become actively involved in neighbourhood issues; individual's responsibility to solve problems; local government people welcome my engagement; take a leadership role; confident to criticise leaders);

Influence of politics – Four questions about local politics (*politics has strong influence; politics influences the manner in which goods and services are distributed; influences access to resources; politics influences how I interact in my neighbourhood*).

All questions were asked verbally on a 5-point, *not at all/strongly disagree (1)* to *very/strongly agree (5).* The reliability of the indices was calculated, and, as seen below, the results showed reliability estimates ranging from 0.686 to 0.949, but most were greater than 0.7.[4]

We then tested the indices as dependent variables against the independent variable of gender. The data was analysed in SPPS (20).

Findings

Statistical analysis

Statistical analysis revealed a number of differences as well as there being no differences between the young men and women in the sample.

Table 2: Difference in measures, Male versus Female

	Male [n=36]	**Female** [n=31]	*df*	*t*	**Sig**
Public Debate	3.83	3.42	65	1.997	0.05
Competencies	3.61	3.39	65	1.167	ns
Attitudes about gender equality	3.72	3.71	65	0.067	ns
Social Relationships	3.83	3.39	65	1.956	0.055
Confidence in social engagement	3.89	3.39	65	1.582	ns
Confidence with duty bearers	3.19	2.97	65	0.716	ns
Participation in neighbourhood	3.39	2.77	65	2.352	0.022
Influence of politics	3.61	3	65	2.465	0.016

Young men were significantly different (but not strongly) in *civic capability, social relationships, participation in the neighbourhood*, and influence of politics. There were no differences in *competencies, attitudes about gender equality, confidence in social engagement,* and *confidence with duty bearers.* It seem contradictory that young women would express having a wide range of *competencies* as well as having *confidence in social engagement* and *confidence with duty bearers*, but believe that they have less capacity in *public debate*, *participation in the neighbourhood,* and believe that politics has less effect on the community than males. However, as discussed below in detail, these differences may be explicable on a variety of reasons, but generally it can be surmised that the more public the

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[4] Reliability was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha.

setting the less personal and political efficacy young women have due to the combination of patriarchy and the cultural prohibitions about age.

Employment

We first look at the status of employment of the respondents and the extent to which it is inhibiting or promoting participation.

According to the most recent census in 2012, 77% of the 13 million population is below the age of 35 years. Youth aged 15-34 years old constitute 36% of our population, and constitutes 56% of the economically active population. By looking at participation in events such as national elections, youth constitute 41% of the electorate yet only 14% participate in the voting process[5].

Table 3: Employment status

	Male	**Female**
Business	2.5%	0
Self-employed	45%	40%
Family support	35%	58%
Employed	5%	0

With the dearth of the formal economy as a result of both political and economic crisis emerging in the late 90s, the economy has taken a new shape that has become a norm, characterised by a phrase commonly referred to as *"kukiya-kiya"*[6] , perhaps simply defined as the "informal economy". *Kukiya-kiya* is basically doing anything and everything just to get by and suggests cleverness, dodging the police, and the exploitation of whatever resources are at hand, all with an eye to self-sustenance, i.e. hustling. This phenomenon is not only limited to urban areas but also takes place in rural areas as Zimbabweans, old and young seek to survive. The respondents confirm that 45% (male) and 40% (female) are self-employed and trying to make ends meet and reflecting the now "new economy", the *kiya-kiya* economy. Former Finance Minister Tendai Biti acknowledged the *kiya-kiya* economy in his description of the current Zimbabwean economy[7].

The *kiya-kiya* economy has wider implications on citizen participation and engagement at any level of government as will be discussed in subsequent sections. With most citizens hustling and trying to irk a living, attending public or community meetings becomes secondary as the majority of the targeted people are in survival mode. The public meetings are described as 'useless' and "a waste of time" bringing no tangible results to address the concerns of the people. These sentiments were shared in the FGDs, where, in Gweru (Urban) service delivery is reportedly poor and the councillors are said to be non-responsive and corrupt. From the respondents only 5% male were in formal employment and none from the female respondents. Most are being supported by their families (35% males and 57.5% females). This is indicative of the challenges and the strains posed by the local economy and its failure to create employment opportunities. This also puts a strain on families to provide food on the table. For the younger people, finding opportunities out of the country becomes appealing

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5 RAU Publication - Framing the debate: youth voter registration in Zimbabwe in preparation for 2018 elections, April 2017

6 Jeremy L. Jones - 'Nothing is Straight in Zimbabwe': The Rise of the Kukiya-kiya Economy 2000–2008, Journal of Southern African Studies, Volume 36, Number 2, June 2010

7 Biti's 'kiya-kiya' performance treacherous, http://nehandaradio.com/2009/07/20/biti%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%98kiya-kiya%E2%80%99-performance-treacherous/. Comment made by Jonathan Moyo after Tendai Biti's budget presentation in which he referred to the economy as *kiya kiya.*

rather than staying and trying to fix the country[8]. This also feeds into the *kiya-kiya* economy where the only alternative means of survival is not in the formal economy.

With the rise in unemployment and the political pressure being mounted from the youthful population, Government has embarked on a drive to encourage young people to start up their own businesses to address the employment crisis. It is important to note here that government is responding to a new economy it has no control over, perhaps to divert attention to its failure to resuscitate the formal economy where it can exert some controls and realise revenue through collection of taxes. Through the Youth Fund and programmes, such as *Upfumi Kuvadiki* (Wealth to the Youth), young people were expected to access financial resources in all parts of the country to implement projects and start up business ventures. However, at the local level very few young people accessed the resources as there were reports of abuse of the funds by senior politicians[9].

When talk about the youth funds emerged, it was reason to attend the meetings called in by councillors and traditional leaders as they expected to be told how to access funds for their projects. One of the challenges raised by young people was that it was very difficult to access finances to start up their own companies. From the respondents in the study, only 2.5% of the male respondents confirmed that they were running their own businesses and none of the female respondents had businesses running. Even those running their businesses most stated that they are not registered entities and have challenges accessing finances, taxation and basic training in business management. Special attention is needed to support young women to equip them with skills to run their own business.

Civic Capabilities

Earlier we referred to agency and described it as the ability to express oneself freely. Voice and agency are valuable ends in themselves and have a direct impact on citizen engagement. One has to feel confident with his or her own skills and use them in public forums. In this section we analyse the responses on how the respondents engage as citizens and with their local leaders in public spaces.

Table 4: Speaking in public, Mean scores[10]

	Males	Females
Speaking in public	3.9	3.2
Speaking to leaders	3.8	3.1
Expressing opinion	3.6	3.4
Discuss politics [friends]	3.8	3.1
Discuss politics [family]	4.1	3.8

It is surprising to see the extent of activism and "ability to speak in public" amongst the respondents given the perception that there is a "police" state and that people need to be careful especially when they speak in public spaces and public meetings.

The trust issues are raised in the FGDs where respondents highlighted that what they talk about is dependent on the people around and the place they are at.

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8 M. Oosterom & Pswarayi – Being a Born Free: Violence, Youth & Agency in Zimbabwe, 2014 - http://www.participatorymethods.org/resource/being-born-free-violence-youth-and-agency-zimbabwe
9 http://www.tellzim.com/2015/09/youth-fund-abused-zhuwawo-told.html , https://www.newsday.co.zw/2017/04/28/parly-stalks-zhuwao/
[10] The difference between males and females was statistically significant (see Table 2).

Interestingly also is that the gap between male and female respondents is narrow and perhaps indicating that programmes on gender are taking effect in the communities. The Councillors and the Traditional leaders noted that the programme of creating spaces to meet the communities were positive. They cleared some of the misunderstandings about their roles as community leaders and also get the expectations of the people they lead. As a result the communities are comfortable when it comes to "speaking with leaders". This is despite the fact that the male respondents are more comfortable (3.8) compared to female respondents (3.1). This level of "comfort" has been created by increased interaction with local leadership through the various platforms they have created to engage with the communities.

Perhaps the FGDs provided perfect opportunities to vent frustrations about the Councillors as it was discussed that the reasons for not attending community meetings called by the leaders was because they find "*nothing beneficial in those meetings so they would rather look for jobs to sustain them than to sit in fruitless Councillors' meetings*". An interesting conversation sprang up with participants in the FGD for Gweru (Urban) Ward 5 which has a ZANU PF Councillor. The participants revealed that they had decided to sabotage meetings because promises which were made to them during the campaign period were never fulfilled thus they see it as a waste of time to sit and participate in those meetings. They claim that they campaigned vigorously for the Councillor to be elected but there was not even a thank you celebratory party. For that they felt used and won't attend meetings. During the campaign they were promised jobs and now they have become a laughing stock of opposition members.

The wider capacity in civic capabilities is also shown in the ability to generally "*Discuss politics*" with an average 3.8 for male respondents. Interestingly, though the response for women is lower than that of male respondents (3.1), this is relatively surprising given the commonly held perceptions that women shy away from politics even discussing it with their friends. This could be a symptom of the general state of the underperforming economy where even the very loyal of supporters are feeling the effects. The level of trust increases for the respondents in discussing politics with their family members (4.1 males and 3.8 females). In the FGDs even though women are slowly coming of age and participating in discussions at community level, there are still challenges associated with their gendered role in society.

There are still concerns that women struggle to get space at public forums to speak and express their opinions. In the rural areas, where the public meetings are mandatory for every household, they are attended mostly by women, thereby raising their chances of participation by default. However, we need to continuously look at the realities as gender-based violence is a global epidemic, affecting women across all regions of the world and women are subjected to physical or sexual violence or both at the hands of their husbands, boyfriends, or partners[11]. Unequal power relationships within households and in society as a whole have broad-based effects. Gender-based violence, for example, is associated with social norms and expectations that reinforce inequality and place the choices of women and girls outside their realm of control[12].

Levels of Competency
We also looked at the level of competencies that is available within individuals and how they use these competencies to interact with their peers in the community.

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[11] Jeni Klugman et al - Voice & Agency: Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity; World Bank Group, 2014

[12] ibid

Table 5: Competencies, Mean scores[13]

	Males	Females
Happy to lead in peer group	3.9	3.4
Chat with Unfamiliar person	3.3	2.8
Confident to express	3.9	3.85
Leadership among friends	3.7	3.2
Initiatives to improve youth	3.7	3.57
Help resolve disagreements	3.8	3.67
Provide advice	4	3.4
Build bridges between rich & poor	3.7	2.8
Build bridges about politics	3.2	2.4
Discussing family finances	3.6	3.8
Influence on spending	3.3	3.7

The responses show a slightly higher mean for male responses compared to female respondents though the margins are not much. The exception only comes when it relates to building bridges about politics where the competence drops to 2.4 for women compared to 3.2 for male respondents. For example there is a high level of competence amongst individuals in the communities to provide each other with advice (4 & 3.4 males and females respectively) and a high confidence level to express themselves (3.9 and 3.85 males and females respectively).

From the FGDs, it was noted that even though the perpetrators of violence are known, they just have to co-exist after elections. Issues only emerge when the election period approaches. For the young people, in both rural and urban areas, the local leaders have started sporting competitions such as soccer and netball. These social activities allow young people from different political persuasions to interact and get along. The difficulty in building political bridges is also expected given that the alleged perpetrators are at the forefront talking about mending fences, and this is always viewed with suspicion. This can also be a coping strategy to survive the structures of violence that exists, as being suspected of belonging to the opposition can cost the family from accessing goods and services provided by the State. But important to state here is that there is high level of competency in engagement at an individual level even to resolve disagreements.

In the rural areas of Chiundura, for example, some of the traditional leaders were accused of partisan distribution of food aid as well as farming inputs, and coordinating the violence in the communities. The same applies in the urban area of Gweru where the opposition controls the council, but "shadow' Councillors" from the ruling party appear to have more influence when it comes to some economic activities and use that to reward or punish political opponents. However, both the traditional leaders in Chiundura and the Councillors in Gweru are now using platforms such as social gatherings including funerals to spread the message of peace as well as giving important notices and announcements that would otherwise be given if people would attend the community meetings.

Another social dimension that stood out is building bridges between the rich and poor where women respondents had a low mean of 2.8 compared to men with 3.7. When it comes to

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[13] There were no significant differences between males and females (see Table 2).

family finances, the gender dimension pops out and could possibly refer to the influence women have in domestic matters as opposed to having more control in community matters, where men have more dominance. Most women are engaged in the informal sector such as selling tomatoes and vegetables, growing vegetables for sale, selling second hand clothes, etc to help support their families. The responsibility of making sure that the family is taken care of no longer rests on men and that explains why women have a marginal edge over male respondents about influencing spending patterns and also family finances. With communities living with conflicts and political conflict being the most visible, it is interesting to note that the competencies to resolve these conflicts lie within the communities themselves as both men and women expressed confidence to resolve differences.

Attitudes about gender equality

Attitudes about gender equality are important in as far as they view the role of women in participation. These societal norms are powerful in that they prescribe what is the acceptable behaviour of women in society is and the kinds of jobs that are acceptable[14].

Table 6: Attitudes about Gender equality, Mean scores.[15]

	Male	Female
Everyone has right to be listened to in group	4	3.8
Happy to speak in mixed sex group	4.2	3.3
Prefer to speak in same sex grp	3	3.6
Men's opinion more valid	3.3	2.7
Women's views more valid	2.7	3.1
Accepting others regardless of gender	3.8	3.4
Man & woman equal voice in home	3.7	3.8
Man & woman share household chores	2.6	3.4
I have own source of income	3	2.6
Able to travel safely in pub. Transport	4	3.9
Same pay for same work	4	4.2
In control of earned income	3.4	3.2
Can save income I earn	3	2.9

The responses from the questionnaire indicate that both male and female respondents highly agree that everyone has a right to be listened to (4 & 3.8 respectively) and that men and women have an equal voice in the home (3.7 & 3.8 respectively). Interestingly also is that both male and female respondents do not agree that the views of one gender are more important than that of the other (2.7).

These strong views are however not consistent with what generally obtains on the ground where spaces for participation for women and youth are still limited. They are a mere expression of *what should* and not necessarily *what is,* though there are changes.

Attitudes about gender equality are not very misplaced but the average is low on men concerning splitting of household chores. Most women concur with this notion whilst the

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[14] Ibid - Voice and Agency and Girls for Shared Prosperity
[15] There were no differences between males and females (See Table 2).

men are against the idea which is influenced by the societal structures and the norm of the African culture[16] which restricts the woman to the home.

Social relationships

Table 7: Social Relationships, Mean scores.[17]

	Males	Females
People get along	3.5	3.6
Positive attitude by other residents	3.4	3.4
Befriend people from other wards	4.4	3.7
Cannot befriend people with less money	2.2	2.5
Accept others regardless of political party	4.1	3.1

In spite of political differences and violence that takes place especially during elections, the communities generally get along and willing to make new relationships. Even with regards to accepting people with different political persuasions, the male responses were high (4) though there is some scepticism when it comes to female respondents (3).

One explanation could be that residents both rural and urban tolerate each other for the sake of personal and family safety. Added to this, could be that the frequent reports of the violence that takes place in the community is not perpetrated by people from those specific communities but by people from other distant communities.[18] Also some traditional leaders were accused of aiding the violence.

With the dearth of the middle-class in Zimbabwe as a result of increased levels of unemployment, it is interesting that the class issue emerges as a factor that does not affect relationships within communities. Both men and women respondents said it is not a factor (2.2 & 2.5 respectively). This question was deliberately asked to ascertain what role financial affluence plays in directing relationships. A pilot study carried out in Murewa showed that there is a linkage between participation in politics and employment levels especially amongst young people[19].

The tendency is that affluent people form their own groups, and there is evidence that there is a communion amongst people from different wards because they share common problems like water, and unemployment, amongst so many community problems. These problems are cross cutting and affect even supporters of the ruling party. This may also explain why there is acceptance of people from different parties and from other wards. Common problems bring fighting groups together to find the solution even though the solution is fighting the very same people that the other parties supported before.

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[16] World Bank report ibid

[17] Males had significantly higher levels of social engagement in their neighbourhoods than females (See Table 2).

[18] The case of 2008 elections people talked about youth militia from the Border Gezi training camps being deployed in areas they were not known so that they could carry out their tasks without fear of being identified.

[19] M. Oosterom et al - The Violent Politics of Informal Work and How Young People Navigate Them: A Conceptual Framework

Social Engagement

Contrary to common beliefs that citizens are not engaging, the data shows that generally most people belong to some social grouping or gathering and this is where the discussions citizenship are taking place.

This is happening in both urban and rural areas. Women for instance are involved in mainly economic ventures and exchanging ideas about how they can fend for their families. Other social groupings mentioned include savings clubs, from the little money they collect from their daily informal income generating activities. Again, most women consider going to church as a social activity which gives them motivation because of the economic hardships the nation is facing.

Table 8: Social Engagement, Mean Scores

	Males	Females
Member of any group (yes)	38	36
Member of any group (no)	1	2

The greater chunk of women, including the young people, have pinned their hopes on religion to change the current national situation. These support networks in turn facilitate women participation in socio-economic and political spheres.[20] Most of the young people, especially the males, are into recreational activities like playing soccer as a way of passing time since they have nothing else to do because of unemployment. But again, even though some would spend their time at the local drinking hole, important discussions that have far deeper implications are taking place in those spaces as the local leadership explores avenues to reach out to the people since the formal ways such as meetings have poor attendance. The danger however is that these new spaces are not gender-sensitive as most women would not want to be seen at beer spots because of the stigma attached to these venues.

Confidence in group participation

Table 9: Confidence in groups, Mean scores[21]

	Male	Female
Confident to visit other members	4.4	3.7
Confident to express opinions	4.3	3.6
Confident to lead discussion	4.1	3.5
Conf. to take leadership	4	3.3
Confident to initiate a project	3.8	3.3
Conf. to question things	2.5	2

At the individual level where people make choices to join certain groups, male respondents are generally confident (4) to take up leadership positions within the group and express their opinions and lead the discussions. This is somewhat different when compared to women.

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[20] Felix Kiruthu - Masculinities, Femininities and Citizen Identities in a Global Era: A Case Study of Kiambu District Kenya, 1980-2007

[21] Males were significantly more confident in group settings than females (See Table 2).

It could be that the traditional role of men as the head of the family comes into play but also that women are not sitting at home but going out of their way to contribute to their household upkeep. Of note from the table above is that respondents are not confident questioning things at group level. This is surprising given that these are people who voluntarily come together to form the very group and the assumption would be that these are people with similar interests and familiar with each other. The implications of the low response on questioning things are far reaching as it filters down to issues affecting the entire community and failure to hold duty bearers accountable. It then becomes legitimate to ask the question whether communities are able to engage with their leaders if they can't hold each other to account. Do we have a citizenry that complain privately but afraid to ask questions face to face?

This has far reaching implications on policy and the policy making process, and whether there is meaningful participation and engagement. In the rural communities for example, and in some instances in the urban areas, attending community meetings is mandatory and because of this mandatory nature, the 'engagement' process is one way. Jethro Petit refers to 'empowerment participation' as critical otherwise the meetings can quickly become a token exercise or even a means of maintaining power relations. [22] For this to happen there is need for meaningful changes in power relations to facilitate a two-way engagement process.

Soliciting support from elder people or local leaders

For young people, they have to contend with the effects of exclusion, and they find it very difficult to be recognised by the adult population. A large proportion of youth does not have a well-defined place in society and are vulnerable and dependent[23]. Being young in Africa is viewed as problematic and there are so many derogatory names that are associated with or used to describe young people in Zimbabwe. Such names include *marombe (loafers)*, *zvidhakwa (drunkards), vatengesi (sell-outs)[24]*, resulting in young people not being able to connect with the generation that is in leadership and their contributions at community meetings has been limited. In the context of government failing to create employment through resuscitation of local industries, young people find themselves in the informal sector and in some cases trying out what is now commonly referred as "*maproject"* (projects) in a bid to make income. In the rural areas for instance, young people would like their local leaders to "*give them maprojects*". In that they mean the leaders sourcing resources to start up projects in the community such as poultry raring, pig farming, carpentry, etc to get some form of livelihood. A few have started small business ventures and so many of them are operating illegally. Some with ideas have openly received support from "big" people in their political party but others have failed to get funding to get their initiatives off the ground.

The local structures are designed to create a client – patron relationship in most communities and every activity can be viewed from that relationship. For example there is connection between politics and employment or making things happen in the community (see Table 10).

Even though the average suggests not favouring much to engage politicians, there is a huge number that actually thinks it is

Table 10: Influence of Politics, Mean scores[25]

	Male	Female
Important that pol does not	3	3.3

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[22] Jethro Petit - Empowerment and Participation: bridging the gap between understanding and practice, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, UK, (2012)

[23] Jon Abbink - Being young in Africa: The politics of despair and renewal

[24] Marjoke A. Oosterom and Lloyd Pswarayi - Being a Born-free. Violence, Youth and Agency in Zimbabwe; IDS RESEARCH REPORT 79, 2014

[25] Males were significantly more politically engaged than females (See Table 2).

interfere		
Ok to approach politicians	2.9	2.3
Adults value this kind of group	3.9	3.6
Council should support a group like this	3	2.8
Know how to approach local authority	2.8	2.6

the way to go and nothing moves without having the blessing of the political leadership. This is consistent with what obtains in the informal economy where people generally have to be connected to someone in high places to access benefits. This is commonly referred to as *madhiri* (deals).

Figure 1

Have you ever contributed to a discussion
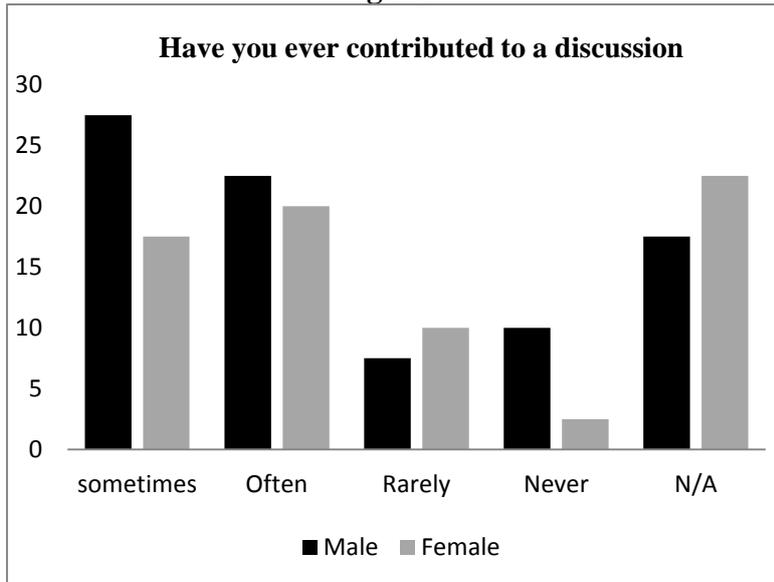
From the FGDs, accessing resources such as project financing was linked to membership of the ruling party and those young people who were active were considered ahead of anyone else. Because of an envisaged gain, attendance to ruling party meetings was viewed as a matter of economic gain. The paradox however, is that the very same respondents are of the view that politics should not interfere.

The initiatives by youth to create employment for themselves are being valued by adults in the community. This is viewed from the perspective that the older generation see young people as 'hopeless" and would prefer this than seeing young people spending time prostituting or drinking illicit beer.

Even though these ventures are being supported by the adult population, they have created headaches for city fathers and a mess of urban town planning. They have become commonly referred to as *mushika-shika,* depicting a

Figure 2.

Sources of livelihood
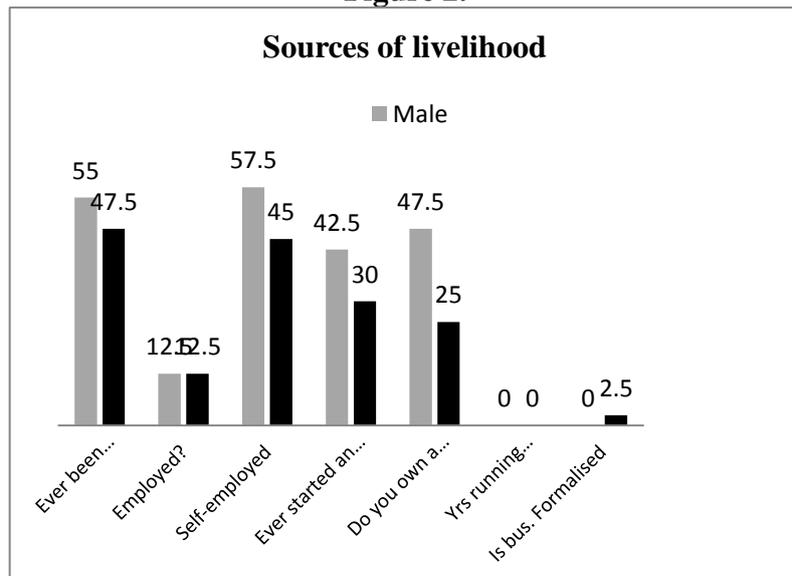
state of disorder where chaos reigns and even dangerous to the general populace. These ventures have to have to work within parameters set by the elders.

For example, in the rural areas young people have to seek permission from their traditional leader to use a specific piece of land for their income-generating activities, and, in the same way, young people in the urban areas need to follow council by-laws for their ventures or risk continuous running battles with the police. However, engaging the local authority is not easy for young people. It is important to understand this engagement process as 47.5% of the male respondents and 25% of the female respondents indicated that they own their businesses. Formalising the business is important to avoid losses as council embark of clean-up campaigns for illegal businesses. 57.5% of the male respondents and 45% of the female respondents are self-employed and as such need to understand how they can engage with their local authorities in their bid to establish economic initiatives that help them.

Participation

The hallmark of any democracy is centred on citizen participation and that they participate freely without fear or threats. Participation, it is envisaged, will ensure that leaders are responsive to needs of the communities they serve and will promote accountability by engaging the duty bearers by raising pertinent questions to the leaders, especially when it comes to the provision of goods and services in the case of the urban areas.

Table 11: Participation in the neighbourhood, Mean scores.[26]

	Male	Female
Power to make a difference	3.5	2.8
Interested in what the leaders do in the neighbourhood	3.4	2.8
Participating in activities to improve my neighbourhood	4	3.1
Informed about news and decisions	3.9	3
Plan to become actively involved in neighbourhood issues	4.3	2.7
Individuals responsibility to solve problems	2.9	2.9
Young people/women can't do anything about problems	3.6	3.2
Local government people welcome my engagement	3.4	2.8

There is more willingness to participate in activities that would improve their neighbourhood for male compared with female respondents (4 & 3.1 respectively) The male respondents also show more interest in what the leaders do in the neighbourhood compared to female respondents (2.8) These responses are not surprising given the gender roles that are normally attached to women and where they feel only safe in their home.

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[26] Males were significantly more likely to participate than female (See Table 2).

Take a leadership role	3.2	2.7
Confident to criticise leaders	2.8	1.8

There is again a low average in motivation to take part actively in issues affecting the neighbourhood. But again this is hardly surprising given the legacy of violence that continuously exist in local communities that expose women to all forms of gender based violence, strong to demotivate them from wanting to participate especially in political meetings.

Participants from the FGDs highlighted that engaging local leaders was difficult, especially in the urban areas. The Councillors were accused of not residing in the Wards they purport to represent. They are accused of buying properties in affluent suburbs soon after winning the elections, abusing council resources in the process. Even though the participants expressed dissatisfaction with the Councillors, they acknowledged that they had come across messages for ward meetings called by the Councillors. These messages included posters and a council vehicle with a wailer announcing the meetings. Sometimes they just chose not to participate in those meetings. The case however is different in the rural areas where meetings are mandatory for every household.

The desire to take up leadership roles is less in women (2.7) compared to men (3.1). This is worrisome as attempts are being made to ensure that there are deliberate efforts to increase participation of women in all structures of society,[27] and also see them take up decision-making positions. The reasoning is that despite being in the majority, community security issues affect mostly women and getting them involved especially at their community level will help address many problems that affect them. But again this is a long term process which might start at building personal capacity of women as there are capacity gaps compared to men who have always enjoyed taking up the positions. It will take a lot of undoing to redress notions of gender that are deep rooted in cultures and that define the role of the woman to be in the home.

Earlier we discussed about competencies at group level to hold each other to account. It would have been surprising if the confidence to criticise leaders was high. The respondents demonstrate low confidence in doing so (2.8 for male). The confidence is even lower for female respondents and the explanation could be that this may be influenced by the ancient ideology that women should not voice out their misgivings and should remain in their shells. Perhaps the explanation is found in the fear that is instilled and the stories about disappearances with no trace of political activists who are critical of the establishment[28].

The issue of politicising agriculture inputs and food aid was one of the major concerns raised by women in both rural and urban areas. However, the community finds it difficult to have it discussed as this is viewed as an attack on ZANU PF. Even development projects have become politicised to the extent that constructive criticism is not possible.

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[27] For example the campaign by the women's movement for gender parity in constitutional bodies such as the national Assembly in Zimbabwe and the Commissions

[28] The latest disappearance recorded in Zimbabwe is that of Itai Dzamara who has not been accounted for four years on. Other people viewed critical of government include Jestina Mukoko and some attempts were made against former Secretary General of the General Agriculture and Plantation Workers' Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ), Gertrude Hambira who is now exiled.

In the FGDs, the traditional leaders said their hands were tied and could not do much regarding the politicisation of resources. They acknowledged that, even though their duty was to ensure that everyone under their jurisdiction had a fair share, the resources are politically sourced, and, the moment they are suspected to be opposition sympathisers, no resources would be allocated to their wards. They are caught between a rock and a hard place and continuously need be "*relevant*", and that meant supporting ZANU PF politics. Young people also suffer in that they are excluded from initiatives that may have a financial benefit and their views are not regarded as important. As a result, youth are concerned about making money and don't attend meetings that are called by their local leaders.

It is tragic that the response to harness youth grievances has been to co-opt them into the very structures that are exploiting them. For example the local urban Councillors have created a structure where a selected section of the youth is part of that committee. This is also the case in Chiundura where the traditional leadership structure has a youth representative. However, the selection of the representative leaves a lot to be desired as all the grievances are supposed to be channelled to the Committee member who does not always represent the youth, but who also joins the gravy train. At the end of the day, the system is re-inventing itself by window dressing its structures at the expense of addressing youth concerns. This social-economic exclusion results in the youth pursuing their personal errands and other small ventures that may result in financial benefits for them personally rather than to sit in unbeneficial and unfruitful meetings (*see Figure 2 over*).

Figure 2.

Frequency of attending public meetings by gender
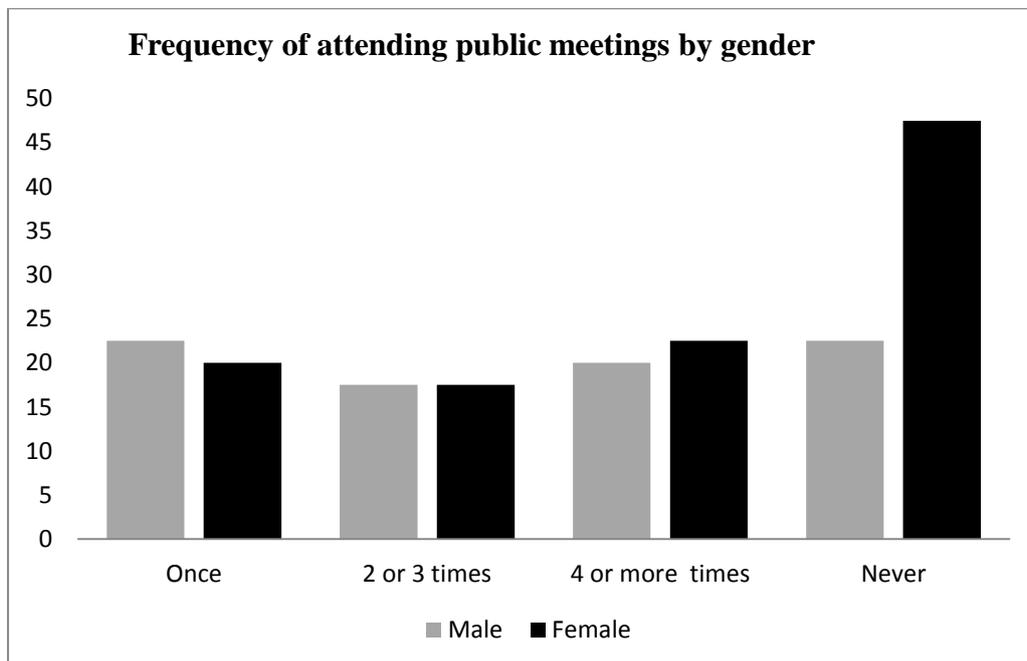
Table 12: Treatment at public meetings, Mean scores

|	Male	Female
Is everyone given the chance to speak	2.9	2
Men and women have equal opportunities at	3	2.2

The effects are more on women who have to contend with such issues as fear of violence apart from the traditional conceptions that

meetings		
Young people given opportunities to speak at meetings	2.8	2

speaking at public meetings is for men. Besides, young people are hardly given the chance to speak at such public meetings.

The averages above are low concerning voice and equality during public meetings. For women they don't believe they have equal chances to speak at meetings (2). For young people the chances are slimmer (2.8 male respondents) and even worse for young women (2). In the Chiundura the village heads were accused of discarding women's contributions at community meetings even though they are always in the majority in attendance.

Figure 3.
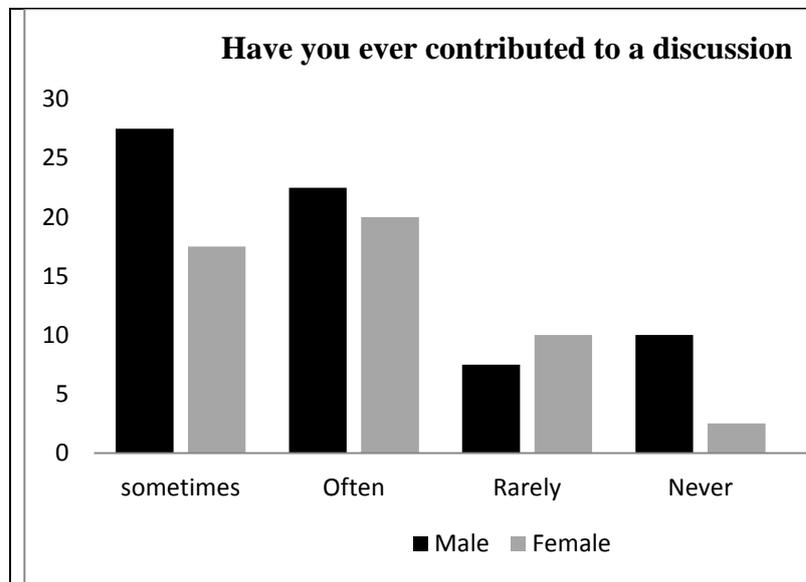
For young people, even though they have limited participation in public dialogue meetings that are community focused, they participate in discussions at the foras they create and at other meeting places such as their homes, beer halls etc. For the men, their discussions are centred on the current state of the country and the hardships they are going through. Women are mostly involved in discussions to do with family matters.

Conclusions

Even though there is a lot of work taking place to empower citizens, the results will be seen in the long run. For this to happen there is need for meaningful changes in power relations to facilitate a two-way engagement process. The current set up in communities does not facilitate policy engagement and the consultative processes that take place are meaningless in as far as they influence the policy making processes. They are designed to create a patron-

client relationship and the local structures are designed to create a one centre of power. The structures often use violence or threat of violence and intimidation to control the conversations. The differences are significant between men and women in so far as engaging in public places, perhaps explained in the patriarchal set-up of our societies. However, there are similarities in responses between male and female respondents when it comes to engaging in social groupings. The conclusion here is that, conversations are taking place in groups where citizens or communities are in control of the spaces and agenda. This is different when public meetings take place where citizens are invited. Hidden and visible power is a characteristic of the nature of relations and does not encourage participation.

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