

SIDA Evaluation Report, Local Government Development, Zimbabwe

1990/2

CENTRAL AUTHORITY BLOCKS LOCAL AUTONOMY

An Evaluation of SIDA Support to Local Government
Development in Zimbabwe 1983–1989



By Lennart Gustafsson, Anthony Redmond,
Christopher Rambanapasi



This report is the result of an evaluation carried out in November 1989 by an independent study team consisting of Dr Lennart Gustafsson, Anthony Redmond, and Dr Christopher Rambanasi.

The views and interpretations expressed in this report are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Swedish International Development Authority, SIDA.

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and Christopher Rambanasi*

SIDA
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Support to Local Government, Zimbabwe

Executive Summary	3
1 Introduction	7
2 Review of the Progress of Local Government Development in Zimbabwe since 1983	10
Introduction	10
Local Government Development and Reform	13
Amalgamation of Rural and District Councils - Problems, Bottlenecks and Constraints	17
Achievements by MLGRUD with Respect to Strengthening of the Rural and District Councils	20
3 Performance of SALA	24
Institutional Co-operation	24
Special Studies	26
Training Methods	27
Systems Development	29
Back-up Arrangements	32
Study Tours	34
Other Issues	34
Conclusion	37

4 Role of MLGRUD and Other Zimbabwean Institutions.....	38
MLGRUD Policy	38
Training and Promotion	40
Local Co-ordination	43
Local Authorities	45
Urban Development Corporation	46
Dombashawa Training Centre	47
Accountancy Training.....	48
Conclusion	49
5 Recommendations.....	50
Ministry	51
SIDA	56
Zimbabwe	57
Sweden	60
List of Abbreviations	58
Appendix.	59
Background	59
Reasons for the Evaluation	62
Scope and Focus of the Evaluation	62
Timing and Methodology	64
Reporting	65

Executive Summary

At independence in 1980, Zimbabwe inherited a local government system heavily influenced by the policies and attitudes of the previous colonial administration. In particular, local government in rural areas was divided between white-dominated Rural Councils and African Councils in the Tribal Trustland areas. Initially, the African Councils were replaced by District Councils, and subsequently, the Government announced its intention to amalgamate the Rural and District Councils into unified Rural District Councils, a policy enacted by the Zimbabwean Parliament in 1988, although at the time of writing, no actual amalgamation has taken place.

Co-operation between Zimbabwe and Sweden in the field of rural local government commenced in 1983, with the second agreement period due to expire in mid-1990. This co-operation has consisted of two main elements; on the one hand, direct funding of training and development activity in Zimbabwe by SIDA; and on the other, institutional co-operation between the Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development (MLGRUD) in Zimbabwe and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities (SALA), this co-operation also being funded by SIDA. SIDA, through each of these elements, has seen its role as being primarily to help develop the capacity and capability of rural local government and to provide assistance to it throughout the period of preparation for, and execution of, the amalgamation process.

In order to ensure that the agreement with the Government of Zimbabwe might be renewed in 1990 on a sound footing, SIDA commissioned an independent evaluation of the achievements of the co-operation programme to date. This evaluation was required to focus on the following main facets:

- a) an assessment of the progress of rural local government in Zimbabwe since independence;

- b) an analysis of the performance of SALA over the agreement periods;
- c) a review of the activities of MLGRUD and other in-country agencies in Zimbabwe in respect of the programmes agreed.

The evaluation was also expected to produce from this analysis recommendations which would assist SIDA in framing the agreement with the Government of Zimbabwe to run from July 1990. The attached report is the product of that evaluation, which took place during the month of November 1989, and which consisted of elements of consultation in both Sweden and Zimbabwe.

The overriding conclusion from the evaluation is that the programmes developed so far have done much to help bolster the situation of rural local government in Zimbabwe over a very difficult period. Whilst the position of local government as an entity has not as such appeared under threat, there have nevertheless been many problems associated with managing the transition from a colonial to a post-colonial system, problems involving central/local relationships, the distribution of service responsibilities, resource and tax-sharing bases and the whole issue of management and administration of locally provided services. SIDA/SALA/MLGRUD co-operation programmes have provided crucial elements of support to the system, have helped to focus attention on the training and development needs of the rural local authorities, and have tackled a number of the specific problems identified as particular bottlenecks to their progress. In general, therefore, the principal objectives of the assistance have been pursued with some considerable success during the period under review.

However, such an overall statement masks a number of problems of which SIDA needs to be aware, and which, in the view of the consultants, have sometimes impaired the success of individual elements of the programme. Looking first at SALA, it is clear that the project is under-managed at the Swedish end, resulting in a lack of strategic awareness of the issues in the field and, occasionally, an over-dependence on Swedish experience (much of which is of fairly limited relevance in Zimbabwean conditions) to generate ideas and solve problems. There was also some evidence in the past of a lack of co-ordination in Zimbabwe in fulfilling the chosen 'Speaking Partner' role, but this has now largely been overcome by the appointment of a local SALA representative in Harare. Some of the methods chosen to further the project objectives have had limited impact — special studies and study tours in

particular — and problems with systems and technical compatibilities have badly delayed the production of a much-needed common accountancy base for the new authorities.

Some of these matters raise issues for SIDA itself. It is the view of the consultants that faster progress might have been possible in tackling some problems had cognisance been taken of the development experience of urban local authorities. SIDA's requirement that its assistance be confined to rural local government has helped reinforce the already entrenched differences between the two systems in the way MLGRUD administers them. On a wider front, the whole SIDA policy of nominating one body, (in this case SALA), to provide both institutional co-operation and consultancy services is questioned as producing a one-club approach to dealing with development projects and as less than best business practice.

In Zimbabwe, there was some disappointment with the performance of MLGRUD in meeting its share of the responsibilities under the agreements. On a general level, the Ministry was perceived as bureaucratic, over-centralised and slow to respond to the needs of the local government system. It was alleged (though never conclusively established) that SIDA direct funding to training and promotion activities was being used in substitution for MLGRUD's own financial commitment to the function, rather than as an expansion of it. The Ministry's training and promotion section has been reduced both in status and size in recent years and technical equipment and hardware donated by SIDA to the project was not readily available to it. Problems were also identified in respect of the operations of UD Corp, and the accessibility of some aspects of formal training to authorities located in rural areas. Overlying the entire question of central/local relations however, was an atmosphere of uncertainty about Central Government's intentions for local government as an institution, and about the whole process of amalgamation in rural areas.

The main recommendations of the study fall into four areas as follow:

- (i) **MLGRUD** — The creation of a Steering Group is recommended to oversee the programme and to act as a channel for funding assistance to agreed activities. This Steering Group should supervise the work of a substantially strengthened training and promotion section, which would be expected to draw up annual strategic training plans for the whole local government system and to implement them both centrally and through task forces of part-time trainers at provincial level.

(ii) **SIDA** should tie its assistance to progress in achieving the recommendations in (i). Furthermore, tighter conditions should be imposed on the use of equipment allocated to the project and on matching the levels of funding for training, promotion and development allocated by MLGRUD and SIDA. A further look should be taken at the nature of SIDA's relationship with SALA to ensure the best possible mix of resources to implement the project objectives.

(iii) **SALA** is recommended to continue the valuable work being done through the 'Speaking Partner' role and to participate in the Steering Group recommended in (i). However, its relationship with SIDA should be, in the first instance, an advisory one, although it should not be precluded thereby from providing consultancy input to individual project elements.

(iv) **Others** — A variety of detailed suggestions is made to help with improvements in delivering the assistance agreed, some of which are relevant in Zimbabwe, others in Sweden. In Zimbabwe these mainly relate to the need for a more thorough pursuit of the full training cycle to ensure that training needs are properly identified and performance evaluated. In Sweden, better briefing for consultants is recommended, together with the discontinuation of study tours and special studies in their present form.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This report relates to the study of the impact of Swedish technical assistance to rural local authorities in Zimbabwe during the period of 1983 to 1989. This assistance, though financed by the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), is largely co-ordinated and delivered through the Swedish Association of Local Authorities (SALA).

The study was commissioned by SIDA as part of its normal programme for reviewing the impact of technical assistance. In this instance, however, the currency of the present agreement between SALA and its Zimbabwe counterpart, the Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development (MLGRUD) is nearing its end, being due for renewal in July 1990, and SIDA asked to be advised of any changes thought desirable for incorporation into the next agreement period.

The terms of reference for the study cover four areas;

- a) a review of the progress of local government in Zimbabwe since independence in 1980;
- b) an assessment of the performance of SALA during the current and past agreement periods;
- c) an analysis of the contribution of MLGRUD to the implementation of the assistance objectives during the agreement periods;
- d) conclusions and recommendations relevant to the next agreement period.

The full terms of reference are attached as Appendix A. It should be noted that they require that part (a) of the study be researched and written in

Zimbabwe by the local consultants.

The study was carried out during November 1989 by an independent study team consisting of the following members:

Dr Lennart Gustafsson, Head of the National Fund for Administrative Development and Training for Government Employees, Sweden (Statens Förolyelsefonder)

Anthony Redmond, Head of Cipfa Education and Training Centre, United Kingdom

Dr Christopher Rambanapasi, Department of Physical Planning, University of Zimbabwe

Assistance was also received from Dr. K. H. Wekwete of the University of Zimbabwe, although he did not form part of the team in Zimbabwe.

The study was conducted in three parts. Approximately one week was spent initially in Stockholm on familiarisation and discussions with SIDA and SALA officials on their views of the programme. Thereafter, two and a half weeks were spent in Zimbabwe, in discussions with officials of local authorities and MLGRUD, the local representatives of SIDA and SALA and other interested parties. The study was concluded by a further week in Stockholm of follow-up discussions with SIDA, following which this report was finalised.

The format of the report follows broadly the terms of reference laid down, and subsequent to this introduction contains four sections. Section II traces the development of local government in Zimbabwe since 1980, identifying its achievements (and those of MLGRUD) and the bottlenecks which have limited those achievements. Section III examines the role, expertise and organisational capacity of SALA in meeting the assistance objectives laid down by SIDA. Section IV evaluates critically the attitudes, activities and progress of MLGRUD as SALA's local partner in meeting these objectives. Section V concludes the report with recommendations intended to improve the effectiveness of all parties to the achievement of these objectives over the forthcoming agreement period.

The consultants would like to place on record their thanks to all those who gave up their time to discuss the issues with them. They were received throughout, both in Zimbabwe and Sweden, with unfailing courtesy and hospitality. That said, the duration of the Zimbabwe-based portion of the

study was inadequate for the breadth and depth of analysis required, and the time pressure this placed upon the team was further exacerbated by the failure of MLGRUD to inform many of those with whom meetings were scheduled that the team was to visit them, and by the simultaneous absence from Harare of many key, senior officials from MLGRUD during the crucial final stages of the mission.

Chapter 2

Review of the Progress of Local Government Development in Zimbabwe since 1983

Introduction

At independence in 1980, Zimbabwe inherited a racially segregated local government system which catered separately for the interests of European settlers and the majority African population. A tripartite system existed, which included:

a) **Municipal Local Government** catering for the main towns and cities. This was established through the 1897 Municipal Act which vested powers on the European settlers who owned land and property. The African population, who were considered largely as labour, had no democratic representation. At Independence (1980) Municipal Local Government was relatively strong and autonomous. Most towns and cities had their elected representatives who constituted the Municipal Council in which local government powers were vested. However, the city structures and functions were highly segregated, which has become a fundamental colonial legacy.

b) **Rural Councils Local Government** catered for the interests of the commercial farming areas (largely owned by Europeans) and some of the very small towns. The 1966 Rural Councils Act established Rural Councils and vested them with a relatively high degree of responsibility and autonomy. The main area of responsibility was infrastructure provision, particularly roads. The Rural Councils catered for the minority interests of European settler farmers, despite the existence of a large majority of Africans working on the farms.

c) **The African Councils** covered the areas then called Tribal Trust Lands. These were lands reserved for "Native Settlements" and where 70% of the total

population of Zimbabwe lived. Local Government in these areas was largely controlled by the colonial government, which ensured that there was no democratic representation. Traditional Chiefs were used to create a blend with colonial authoritarianism. Overall the system was repressive and never allowed for any meaningful participatory democratic system.

Taken as a whole the system of Local Government was highly imbalanced. On one hand, the system as it applied to European settlers in both rural and urban areas was democratic and allowed for a relatively high degree of autonomy; whilst on the other hand the African population was not democratically represented at any level (either rural or urban). The system also manifested a high degree of imbalance in resource allocation which was reflected in social and physical infrastructure provision.

The challenges for a new local government system after Independence were many and these included fundamentally:

- the need to democratise the system at all levels. In urban areas the African areas had to be fully represented and by virtue of their majority of population in urban areas, would become the dominant voice. In rural areas there was a need to restructure the system, virtually setting up new units (District Councils) and new legislation.
- the need to strengthen the development orientation of local government. This objective was closely linked to the setting up of District Councils which would be the new focus for rural development. All the sector Ministries and Agencies had to relate to the new local government structures, strengthening both deconcentration and devolution.
- the promotion of the national goal, of growth with equity, which was reflected particularly in the Transitional National Development Plan 1982/3 — 1984/5.

The goals of the new local government system were stated in the 1982/3 — 1984/5 Plan. These included:

- provision (at least cost) of basic and essential services to the population of the local government areas;
- provision of economic development stimuli and improved facilities to attract potential investors;



The previous system manifested a high degree of imbalance in resource allocation which was reflected in social and physical infrastructure provision. Photo: Lars Åström, SIDA Photo Archives

- provision of popular democratic, efficient, cost-conscious and development orientated administration.

The importance and need for a strong and efficient local government system was echoed in the 1986 — 1990 Five Year Plan.

Local Government Development and Reform

The development of the local government system will be examined in chronological order up to the present situation.

As already highlighted, the immediate post-independence era (late 1980, 1981, 1982) saw a restructuring of the tripartite system largely to reflect a democratic, non-racial order. In the urban areas there was a delimitation of new neighbourhood wards to reflect population distribution in both former European and African areas. This was complemented by the overhaul and Africanisation of the bureaucratic systems. However, the fabric of the local government system was maintained, resulting in the minimisation of disruption to service provision.

In the Rural Councils (commercial farming areas) there was limited change initiated, and the ownership of land has remained largely in European hands. Resettlement, which has occurred on commercial farming land, has been fairly marginal accounting for only up to 5% of total land which continues to be devoted to commercial farming.

It is in what were African Council Areas that major changes have been effected. The former 220 African Councils have been re-organised into 55 District Councils. Whereas the former Councils were based on Chieftain areas within administrative districts, the 55 new Councils were based on democratic representation of whole district areas. The councillors are selected on the basis of political parties and have to seek democratic re-election. With the new reconstitution of District Councils, there has been also a related deconcentration of a variety of Central Government Ministries and Agencies.

A major Central Government policy thrust has been in rural development and several programmes have been implemented. These include:

- Rural Growth Centre Policy, which has had a major impact on rural settlement development.

is the conflict between functional organisation and territorial organisation. In the former, the role of Sectoral Ministries (line Ministries) would be dominant, whilst in the latter emphasis would be on the role of locally elected bodies being the decision makers. This has implications for resource allocation, particularly decisions on public sector investment spending. In Zimbabwe the role of sector Ministries has remained dominant, making local government very dependent on the flow of resources from Central Government.

There are variations between urban and rural local government in terms of dependence. The District Councils are up to 95% dependent on grants from Central Government, whilst Urban Councils are relatively autonomous, and for the larger ones, dependent on Central Government only for major infrastructural development. Therefore, it could be argued that there are significant variations in the levels of decentralisation prevailing.

The 1986 Tax Commission Report highlighted the nature of central/local fiscal relations and some of the policies which could be adopted. The report highlighted the fact that local government in Zimbabwe had a comparable status to that of any developed country with a unitary form of government. However, the different kinds of local authority differed substantially in terms of responsibilities, revenue and expenditure patterns. Some of the key policy recommendations include:

- the need for a clear division of responsibilities between Central Government and local authorities. This should also be linked to matching responsibilities and budgetary powers;
- that local finances should be placed on an assured basis instead of being dependent on year-by-year Central Government grant decisions. There should be an appropriate compensatory grant mechanism to equalise the differences of income and revenue potential between local authorities;
- that local government tax base should be broadened, particularly in the communal areas.

The 1986—90 Five Year Plan echoes the importance of strengthening the economic base of local authorities. Hence Central Government has encouraged all local authorities to engage in income and employment generating projects. Such projects have included productive, commercial and other infrastructural ventures. However, the major problems in most cases are the controls which are

imposed by Central Government on enterprise development — high taxes, high minimum wages and the exercise of ultra-vires powers in the oversight of local government. This reinforces some of the problems identified by the Tax Commission Report (1986).

The present position of local government shows that there is a need for a number of measures to strengthen the system in future. These include:

- increased transfer of revenues (including tax sharing) from central to local levels. This would strengthen the local territorial base;
- increased investment in productive and commercial ventures. This requires public and private sector partnership. Central Government should actively develop social and physical infrastructure (roads, clinics, schools) while local government actively mobilises local, national and international capital to build productive ventures;
- improving manpower levels, particularly of a managerial and technical type. Recruitment of better qualified staff is a priority and this should be complemented by a wide range of training schemes;
- reviewing central/local relations dynamically (not just through amending legislation) to take into account the changing circumstances;
- there is also a need to stipulate in a clear, unambiguous way national development philosophy, locating the role of local government clearly. This calls for the establishment of what could be termed a guidance framework.

Amalgamation of Rural and District Councils — Problems, Bottlenecks and Constraints

The issue of amalgamation of rural local government has been considered a top priority since Independence in 1980. This is because it addresses the issue of eradicating a colonial legacy of a 'European Rural Local Government' and an 'African Local Government'. The issue, however, is not simple because it involves the question of land tenure and ownership. European Rural Local Government catered for the large scale farms, whilst the African Local Government catered for small scale farms utilised by communal farmers.

Local government as an embodiment of community interests (in a plural or collective sense) has been an important expression of the different racial, socio-

economic and political interests. First, local government is an important way of organising and providing services. Secondly, it is an important vehicle for political expression; and finally an important vehicle for resource allocation and transfer. Addressing amalgamation has to take into account all these different facets.

In 1988 the Rural District Councils Act was passed, thus statutorily amalgamating former Rural and District Councils. In practice no amalgamation has occurred since the Act was passed. Therefore it is an urgent task for the Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development to undertake.

Although the Act has been passed there are many unresolved issues. First, the boundaries of the new Rural District Councils have not been established or formally gazetted in law. The assumption is that this will be determined on the basis of contiguity, i.e. those local authorities nearest to each other will link up. Consultations are underway and there are reports of resistance to amalgamation by some of the former Rural Councils. Secondly, despite the passage of the Act, Rural and District Councils (former) have not been dissolved. They continue to function which has somehow weakened the immediate resolve to amalgamate. Thirdly, there are many conflicting views being put forward about amalgamation. One view is that of unification which literally means a fusion of territorial interests. Another view is that of a federation of interests, retaining more or less separate identities between District and Rural Councils.

The Act makes provision for some flexibility particularly in the committees which are formed from the elected representatives. It is, however, the intention to strengthen unity of interests.

Although the Act technically outlines what powers and functions the new Rural District Councils have, the amalgamation exercise does not address the crucial issues of land ownership and resource allocation. Amalgamation will not remove the major imbalances between communal and commercial areas. There is therefore a need to continue public sector support to communal areas to improve the levels of social and physical infrastructure investment.

Although the majority African population will clearly form the political majority, economically the minority large scale farmers (largely Europeans) will have a dominant role. Even if there was an element of sharing of the tax bases (there is more yield from the commercial farming areas than communal areas) major disparities would still remain. The 1986 Tax Commission Report compared the structure of revenue income of sample local authorities. Local taxes from

Rural Councils yielded up to 36% of total revenue, whilst District Councils yielded only 0.4% of their total revenue. When it comes to grants-in-aid from Central Government, Rural Councils received 35.8% (for health, roads, etc) whilst District Councils received up to 96.8% from Central Government.

These disparities make financial planning difficult and make simple administrative amalgamation unrealistic. In addressing amalgamation it is therefore important to take into account a variety of issues;

- economic /financial
- political
- social
- central/local relationships.

An urgent requirement is the establishment of an administrative framework to operationalise the new arrangements. Whereas District Councils are run by Senior Executive Officers on a day to day basis, they are accountable to the District Administrator who is the de facto Chief Executive Officer. He is the most senior Central Government officer at district level and accountable to the Minister of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development. In contrast Rural Councils are run by Chief Executive Officers, who have a direct link to Central Government. Such differences have to be removed as the new system takes root. In fact there will be one Chief Executive Officer for the new local authorities. However, until that is done, there will be very slow progress in terms of implementation.

The urgency of this matter is linked to the whole staff establishment of the new Rural District Councils, which should absorb staff from the abolished former Rural and District Councils. There is a need to identify key technical and managerial skills required for the operation of the new local authorities. There is a need for technical officers in both physical and economic planning. These would complement staff operating at Central Government level. There is a need in the new local authorities for a development section, which has the capacity for project formulation, management and implementation.

Currently there is limited research being carried out by both local authorities and the relevant Central Government departments. This is a great deficiency which needs to be overcome by commissioning local research of a long term nature on a variety of issues. The majority of studies tend to be ad hoc and therefore have a limited nature. It is therefore logical to suggest long term

interdisciplinary research which will link directly to policy making. This will also strengthen local training efforts and capacity.

Achievements by MLGRUD with Respect to Strengthening of the Rural and District Councils

It is rather difficult to make a comprehensive survey of the achievements of a big organisation like MLGRUD. This section will therefore merely present a summary perspective of the main achievements as a direct link up to the evaluation exercise.

The first major achievement of MLGRUD has been the understanding of the administrative weaknesses inherent in the colonial origin of the local government system. The main problem has been that local authorities by nature ought to be territorial organisations serving their local populations but colonial heritage had used them as functional organisations serving the interests of Central Government more than those of their local environments. This situation bred contradictions which led to local authorities being granted more responsibilities for their local population without adequate political power or financial resources to meet these responsibilities.

The problem posed by the colonial legacy of functional central/local relations manifested itself in a number of ways including:

- a) a sectoral model of organising the local government system which mirrored the sectoral organisation of Central Government ministries. This resulted in unco-ordinated line activities at local government level which tended to mock the unified territorial nature of these activities;
- b) the existence of a dual local government system especially at District Council level in which the council became overshadowed by the Central Government representative in the institution of a District Commissioner (or District Administrator after independence) which promoted a paternalistic relationship between Central Government and local government;
- c) strong Central Government control over local authorities through such devices as the use of auditing powers, legislative use of ultravires powers, prescribed grants etc. This had the effect of substantially reducing the autonomy of local government;

d) the predominance of service functions granted to local authorities and the absence of any involvement in income-generating projects. The result of this problem is that local authorities have tended to be mere functionaries of both Central Government (in helping to transmit national sectoral ministerial services to local level, thus making ministries effective) and the private sector (by expanding the market system through facilitating its penetration into the rural areas by a process of service provision). In playing this functional role, local authorities' territorial responsibilities towards their local population became severely curtailed;

e) the reliance of local authorities on Central Government grants as a means of financing local government affairs. This has been upheld by Central Government refusal to share taxes with local government. The upholding of this principle has recently been recommended by the Tax Commission set up by the post-independence Central Government. This attitude, grounded in a functional ideology which makes it normal for Central Government to grant independent budgets to ministries and parastatals (including those in perpetual deficit) whilst at the same time withholding similar budgets from local authorities, begs a major question. The granting of direct and independent budgets to local authorities would resolve the territorial — functional contradiction and stimulate local authorities' territorial responsibilities;

f) unidirectional central/local relations in which local authorities' activities are controlled by Central Government through a system of prescribed functions and grant expenditures. The prescribed functions mainly consist of services (education, health, roads water provision etc) and exclude commerce, industry, agriculture and urban development which remain the implicit responsibility of either the Central Government or the private sector in the process of rural transformation. The result has been that the process of rural transformation has at best proceeded at a disappointingly slow pace.

These functional arrangements inherent in the prevailing essence of central/local relations have resulted in stagnation of development at local level which has generally tended to bring the local government system into disrepute. The realisation of this problem by MLGRUD precipitated reforms which led to the amendment of the acts governing local authorities (Urban Councils Act, District Councils Act, Rural Councils Act) as well as the creation of new acts such

as the Provincial Administration and Planning Act and the Rural District Councils Act.

Thus legislative achievements included:

- a) the democratisation of the local government system by removing racialism and introducing a system of elected representatives at local level;
- b) granting planning and development powers to local authorities;
- c) the creation of an intermediate provincial administration and planning to co-ordinate the activities of District and Rural Councils;
- d) deconcentration of ministerial activities and staff to provincial level so as to strengthen the link between Province and District and to facilitate top-down and bottom-up flow of information for purposes of both planning and decision-making processes;
- e) the amalgamation of the hitherto separate District and Rural Councils into unified Rural District Councils. These legislative reforms, however, effectively removed colonial racialism from the local government system and that way democratised it, but beyond that, the reforms did not adequately address themselves to the problem of territorial — functional contradiction. The legislative reforms concerned themselves more with methodological issues rather than substantive issues of the design of central/local relations. This methodological emphasis meant that the substantive aspects of functional colonial central/local relations continued into the post colonial era, making the legislative reforms inadequate.

The persistence of this contradiction led to a series of moves by MLGRUD to try to strengthen the local government system and these moves culminated in the present arrangements of co-operation between SIDA/SALA and MLGRUD. This continuous problem perception is itself an achievement. In addition to legislative achievements, MLGRUD also instituted and implemented the following programmes;

- training of relevant ministry officials whose roles impinge on the operations of local authorities or on rural development in general;
- training of local authority staff, councillors and members of lower-tier structures of local authorities;
- research and study to determine current weaknesses in the management of

local authorities, making recommendations on improvements;

- study visits to expose Zimbabweans to local government systems in other countries.

These contributions are evaluated in the following sections.

Chapter 3

Performance of SALA

Discussions were held with officials and representatives of SALA throughout the study. Initial meetings were held in Stockholm before travelling to Zimbabwe, in order to establish SALA's own views of its activities. Whilst in Zimbabwe, contact was made with SALA's local co-ordinator in the Ministry, and views were sought from various parties within the Ministry as to the effectiveness of what had been undertaken over the period of co-operation. The following analysis of findings is therefore divided into six main areas:

Institutional Co-operation

Special Studies

Training Methods

Systems Development

Back-up Arrangements

Study Tours.

In addition, other comments covering general issues relating to SALA activity are included.

Institutional Co-operation

The overwhelming impression received by the consultants whilst in Zimbabwe was that SALA's assistance had had immeasurable benefit in keeping alive the idea of local government in that country. Whilst there were

a number of issues on which performance might have been better, it is undoubtedly the case that the support provided by SALA was widely appreciated, highly regarded and seen as an important factor in the survival of the local government system. Some of SALA's initiatives were also seen by some to have prompted debate about the issues surrounding democratic local government (e.g. resources, central/local relations), although in most cases this debate has still to lead to definitive policy decisions. It is against this background of widespread approbation that subsequent criticism should be seen.

One area which on occasions has caused problems is the enormous institutional differences between the local government systems in Sweden and Zimbabwe. Many years of stability and peace have given Sweden an established and well resourced system of local government in which many of the nation's powers to supply public services, under local democratic control, are vested. Zimbabwe as a nation has been independent for only ten years, prior to which there were decades of war, and the local government system is still substantially a product of the colonial system which preceded independence. Central/local relations are far from settled, and many questions remain about the extent of local autonomy vis a vis central control. Whilst the sheer scale of these differences may sometimes have allowed Swedish advisers to focus attention on the main principles of local government, at the same time, where problems requiring practical solutions have been broached, it has not usually been appropriate to reach for a tailor-made solution from the Swedish system. There is evidence to suggest that in some cases this dissimilarity has led to misunderstandings and to false starts in attempting to solve practical problems, although more recently this issue has been less of a problem than it was in the early days of co-operation.

By agreement with MLGRUD, SALA has adopted what it describes as a 'Speaking Partner' role. Broadly described this means that SALA sees its role primarily as providing support and advice, rather than intervening directly in Zimbabwean activity. It is difficult to argue that this is anything other than the correct approach, especially since it is the Ministry's preferred model, but successful execution of such a policy requires considerable acumen and skill, and in particular a recognition that not all the projects in which institutional co-operation takes place can be treated alike. Again, there is evidence that this has not always been recognised, and that it has often taken a long time for the respective roles of SALA and MLGRUD to be clarified in respect of any

particular project. However, against this, it must be said that SALA has now come to recognise this problem, and most recent joint activity has been preceded by detailed discussions and careful clarification of respective roles. This situation can also be helped by ensuring continuity of consultants involved in a project. Despite the difficulties, it is considered that the Speaking Partner role continues to be the optimum way to conduct this aspect of SALA/MLGRUD co-operation.

The consultants have recognised one other issue in respect of overall co-operation, and one which relates to issues to be explored further on chapter 5. SALA is essentially local authority based, with a background and culture shaped by the concept of local democratic self government. MLGRUD is an organisation of Central Government which while it carries responsibility for the oversight of local authorities, nevertheless is shaped by the dynamic of centralist control. It is difficult to envisage, in current circumstances, any other institution than MLGRUD with which SALA might have co-operated over the last six years, but ideally it should be working with a similar body to itself, i.e. an association of local authorities. In Zimbabwe, each group of local authorities — urban, rural and district — has its own non-statutory association, but no all-embracing national association exists and in the absence of such a body, MLGRUD is the only partner available with a national outlook on local government. SALA is known to be keen to see the amalgamation of the local authority associations and has been supporting moves to involve the existing associations in activities such as the procurement function. The consultants endorse this course of action. Once such an amalgamation takes place (and it is far from imminent at present) SIDA should re-consider the appropriateness of the existing institutional relationship with a possible view to establishing direct co-operation between SALA and such a national association.

Special Studies

The initial phase of SALA/MLGRUD co-operation was heavily characterised by the commissioning of a series of special studies on aspects of local government in Zimbabwe. These studies generally concentrated on matters of philosophy and high policy and were mainly carried out by Swedish experts from local government or academic backgrounds.

In their favour, it can be said that they placed issues on the agenda for

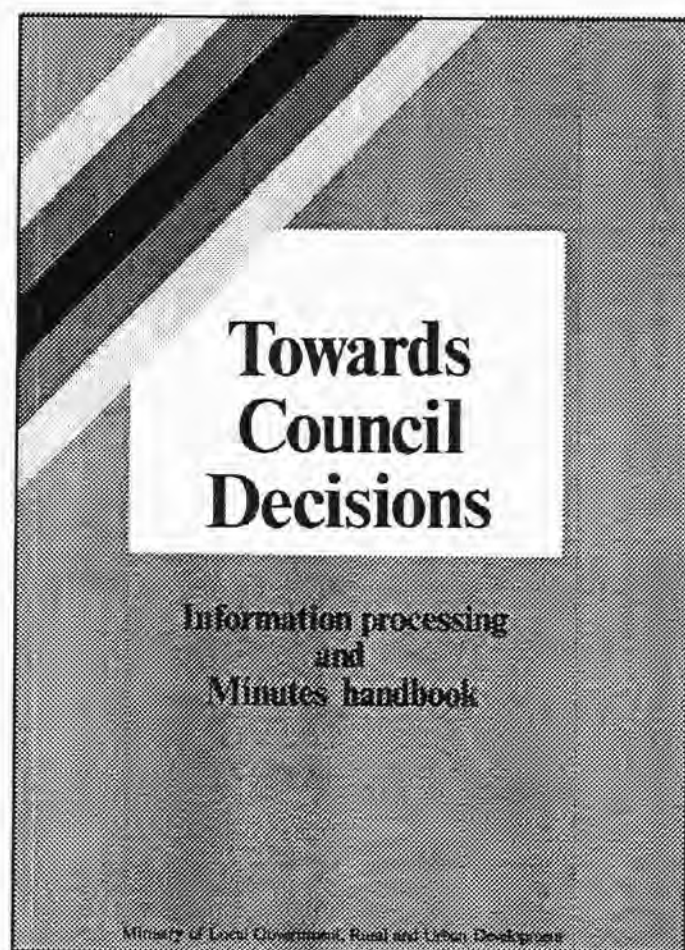
debate in Zimbabwe which might not otherwise have been considered. Beyond that, little can be claimed for them — many of the issues raised still remain unresolved (for example; local government resource bases), solutions posed in them are often very Swedish in nature and a recognition of the desperate needs of rural government for basic systems development and training has now largely rendered this type of study superfluous to current requirements.

Both SIDA and SALA expressed the view that an important explanation for the relatively weak impact of special studies is the low degree of ministerial involvement and active interest in the undertaking and results of these studies. Since many of the topics covered by the studies impinge on political activity, it is the view of the consultants that no further such studies should be commissioned until active, ministerial participation can be assured. When this can be established, there will, undoubtedly, be future occasions when the debate about the wider role, objectives and constitutional position of local authorities can be re-joined, but when this happens, SALA should look to exploit primarily local resources — fully in keeping with its Speaking Partner role — to undertake any studies then considered necessary.

Training Methods

One of the most widespread favourable reactions to the role of SALA came in this field. The major projects completed to date — the Handbook on Council Minutes and Information Systems, and the Training Handbooks for Education and Health administrators, were all very well received, and were seen to have brought significant positive benefits by way of better understanding of roles, better and faster decision making (one District Council claimed to have reduced the average duration of its Council meetings from a day to two hours by adopting the Minutes handbook) and improved motivation amongst staff. Subject only to comments about the approach and the setting of clear objectives made earlier, it is clear that this is a role in which SALA has excelled during the co-operation period and in which solid progress has been made.

Inevitably, there are some criticisms. In each case, three levels of training — Ministry, senior local management, middle local management — were identified. During each of the projects (except the Minutes handbook) a fourth level emerged for training at basic management level — teachers,



One District Council claimed to have reduced the average duration of its Council meetings from a day to two hours by adopting the Minutes handbook

community health workers. So far, the level of training still remains untouched, despite widespread feedback from the higher-level trainees. In the case of the Minutes Handbook, some councils (especially Rural councils) had systems already equal to or beyond those suggested therein, but all training was pitched at the same basic level. A more general criticism was that whilst the initial thrust of training went well, there was no follow-up nor any programme of repeat training for future recruits or promotees in the service concerned. It is accepted that the Speaking Partner role limits the extent to which SALA can insist on continuity of training and, in any case, resource limitations on training staff (of which more in chapter 5), may make any promise of

continuity dubious anyway. Nevertheless, in future projects of this nature, it is suggested that some elements of follow-up and repeat training be built into the projects to ensure that successor target groups are given the same exposure to the ideas as those who happen to be in post at the time the project is executed.

Systems Development

Two main projects can be identified as belonging to this area of SALA/MLGRUD relationships — the Administrative Handbook and the development of a common accounting system and accompanying Handbook. The contrast between the way these two have been approached could not be greater — indeed it could be argued that the lessons learned in implementing the latter project have been very successfully applied in dealing with the former.

The Administrative Handbook is an ongoing project at the time of writing. Its overall objective is to build upon what has been achieved by the Handbook on Minutes and Information Systems and to create basic administrative procedures—financial regulations, standing orders, internal communication systems — for Rural District Councils. Clear terms of reference have been established and work plans drawn up allocating tasks both between the SALA consultants and the Ministry, and between a number of Zimbabwean working groups set up by the Ministry, which groups include some representatives of rural local government. A timetable has been set for drafting various sections of the Handbook and, as far as could be ascertained at the time of the visit, was being adhered to. This approach would seem to be a model one for this type of project and should be seen as such for future projects under SALA/MLGRUD co-operation.

The story of the Accounting Handbook is a very different one. The need for a standardised accounting system for the new Rural District Councils was identified early in the period of co-operation between MLGRUD and SALA. At present, Rural councils operate an accounting system based heavily on British local government accounting practice which is characterised primarily by the use of loans funding and the absence of depreciation in capital accounts. District Councils, however, operate a simple cash accounting system, reflecting their close relationship to, and control by, Central Govern-

ment local officials. Few of either type of authority completes its own year-end accounts — for Rural Councils this is usually done by the external auditors (currently UD Corporation) and in District Councils by the office of its appropriate Provincial Administrator.

It was clear that one of the necessary steps towards harmonisation of the administrative procedures of the two types of authority was to agree a common accounting system. SALA was asked to support this process, and agreed in 1984 to appoint consultants to advise MLGRUD on this matter. However, this project did not go well for the following reasons;

- (i) no clear agreement was reached at the initial stage as to the precise role of the two parties — the SALA consultants and their Ministry counterparts — with the result that little progress was made in the initial phase of the project;
- (ii) there were fundamental technical differences between the solutions favoured by the SALA consultants, and those supported by the Ministry and its then British advisers provided under an ODA-funded programme (which was completed in 1987);
- (iii) there was (and still remains) a lack of expertise in the field of local authority finance and accounting in the Ministry, resulting in agreed technical changes in draft documents being incorrectly incorporated (or not incorporated at all) into subsequent drafts.

An initial attempt at producing a handbook was completed in 1987, but was rejected by the Ministry as too complex and confusing. Subsequently, a Working Party was established consisting of representatives of the Ministry, local government, the University of Zimbabwe and SALA to oversee the production of a substantially revised version. This device did produce more rapid progress, largely by dint of commissioning Zimbabwean experts to draft the technical chapters of the handbook and by August 1989 a 'final' draft had been agreed.

A copy of this draft was made available to the consultants. It was stated at the time that there remained a number of typing errors, and 'one or two' (unspecified) technical issues to be ironed out before publication. The draft was therefore read in the light of these reservations. To its credit, the Ministry has disseminated copies of the draft to interested parties in government and

the accounting profession, and is currently receiving comments on it from these sources. Furthermore, its provisions have been tested reasonably successfully in four pilot local authorities, and the completion of the current draft has been widely welcomed from various quarters throughout Zimbabwe.

The overall impression of the consultants however, is that the draft is still some way from perfection. There remain a number of technical problems — rather more than ‘one or two’ — and parts of the draft are not well written, given that many of those who will read it will have at best a sketchy knowledge of the principles involved. Chapter 1 on the Coding Plan is particularly poor in this respect, and actually contains errors in the answers to self-assessment questions which are supposedly intended to increase readers’ understanding of the coding list incorporated in the text. It also lacks any coverage of the methodology and use of management accounting. Many of the typing errors — which it was claimed had all been corrected in a subsequent draft — still remain, and some change the whole sense of the sentence or table in which they appear. The problems mentioned in this paragraph were identified and discussed in detail, and at some length, with officials of MLGRUD towards the end of the consultancy.

The major external criticism of the document of which the consultants were made aware was that from the Zimbabwe Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (ZIPFA), the local professional body of public sector accountants. ZIPFA’s criticisms are more fundamental than simply the quality of text and argument — this body argues (*inter alia*) that the thrust of the draft is flawed in failing to lay down local government accounting standards and in ignoring the needs and experience of urban local authorities.

These criticisms present the Working Party with a dilemma. Whilst the timetable for amalgamation of Rural and District councils has yet to be determined, nevertheless to incorporate the ZIPFA proposals would require major aspects of the document to be completely re-written from scratch, and may possibly delay its practical implementation date until beyond amalgamation. The Ministry is keen to begin training with the handbook early in 1990, but is prepared to accept subsequent modifications as they are agreed. However, it is the view of the consultants that at the very least the technical and remaining typing errors must be eliminated and Chapter 1 (the Coding Plan) re-written to make it more structured and comprehensible before the docu-

ment is approved for release to authorities, and training gets under way. These tasks should be achievable in a short timescale — the consultants do not support the ZIPFA view that the publication of the Handbook should await a major rewrite. Modifications can be made at a later date to incorporate agreed amendments as MLGRUD has suggested.

A comment is also needed on the training proposed. The Financial Advisers at MLGRUD expressed considerable concern at the availability of technical expertise to train local government staff in the new system. Whilst there is said to be no shortage of training expertise per se, the staff available within the Ministry to carry out the training are not skilled in accounting, and in particular, key areas of the handbook — especially those on capital accounting — are likely to give rise to considerable difficulties of interpretation and require explanation at a level of technical expertise that few trainers are likely to possess. It is understood that there is an intention to request SALA to allocate consultant time to assist with the preparation of training material early in 1990. Views expressed within the Finance section of the Ministry and the consultants' own view of the handbook material suggest that this may not be the best course of action to take and that a more prudent approach would be to engage the local expert in public sector accounting at the University of Zimbabwe to prepare the training material and, if necessary, to supplement that resource with experts in loans fund accounting systems (on a short term assignment), to train the trainers who will deal directly with the local authority staff.

Back-up Arrangements

SALA has an important role in ensuring that the ongoing co-operation with MLGRUD is given proper administrative and planning support. Again, it is possible, from the consultants' observation, to say that on the whole this role has been carried out satisfactorily. This has been particularly true in Zimbabwe itself where the arrival one year ago of a local SALA representative has substantially boosted the quality of local co-ordination. This arrangement should continue.

Two worrying features arose under this heading, however. First, there were some comments from MLGRUD officials about the lack of understanding of some short term consultants about Zimbabwe institutions and conditions.

This suggests that better briefing of consultants is needed in Sweden to remedy such deficiencies before the first visit to Zimbabwe is undertaken. It is recognised that such a briefing facility is provided, but the regularity with which this observation was made in Zimbabwe (and the examples of the Accounting Handbook and some special studies bear out this view) do indicate that the approach to such briefing needs to be re-examined.

The other matter relates to the co-ordination and planning of the project in Stockholm. It is conceded immediately that for the best of reasons, the SALA commitment to administrative support in Stockholm is kept to the absolute minimum — 10% of the time of one senior employee with the support of 25% of one administrator post. The observable consequence of this resource level is that little or no strategic planning for the project is taking place, and activity decisions tend to be reactive rather than proactive. Figures shown in Appendix A indicating a significant underspending on the project over its lifetime bear out this view — the primary cause of the underspending is said to be the postponement of amalgamation, yet many training and development opportunities (most of them quite independent of the amalgamation process) were readily identified in Zimbabwe into which such unused funds could have been diverted given a more coherent vision of the field and a more active partnership being pursued. Problems do exist in persuading MLGRUD to be more flexible also, but the role of a 'Speaking Partner' cannot surely be confined only to speaking when spoken to, yet most of the activities undertaken have been responses to one-off requests from MLGRUD, rather than following from a joint, strategic view of the needs of rural local government. The current round of discussions between SALA and MLGRUD, ahead of the 1990 agreement date, run the risk, from the information made available to the consultants, of perpetuating that ad hoc approach. The consultants fully share the antipathy of SALA officials towards higher administrative costs; nevertheless, it is understood that SIDA is willing to make more funds available to strengthen managerial support for SALA's activities in order to ensure that funds intended for rural local government do reach there effectively, and SIDA and SALA are strongly recommended to meet and discuss such strengthening prior to any new agreement being entered into in 1990.

Study Tours

A fairly regular feature of SALA/MLGRUD co-operation is the staging of study tours, for Zimbabwean officials to evaluate local government systems (mainly in Sweden) outside their own country. Feedback from study fellows varies, but is overwhelmingly appreciative of efforts made to receive, and provide guidance to, the visitors. However, identifying in detail any real benefits in Zimbabwe from such study tours is a process much longer than there was time for, but the absence of any significant mention of such benefits from those consulted in Zimbabwe suggest that they are not great. It can be argued that their impact is not intended to be strictly utilitarian, but is designed to stimulate thought and improve motivation amongst those exposed to the discoveries made during the tour. Furthermore, the lack of positive reaction may itself be an important outcome of the tours in that participants have recognised the inapplicability of systems and approaches in Sweden to the conditions of Zimbabwe. Whilst there is some merit in these arguments, it is not felt overall that the study tours have produced much by way of direct tangible benefit in Zimbabwe, and have been an exceedingly expensive way of pursuing training objectives. It is recommended that general study tours of the type used to date should in future be offered only, and sparingly, to policy makers, and should not be confined to Sweden. Secondly, activity in this area should be steered towards study visits with a narrower range of objectives — for example to examine accounting or audit systems, to evaluate resource bases, to look at electoral procedures. The target population should be serving officers — and training staff — and again studies should not be confined to Sweden, but should provide a comparative base including possibly those of other African and/or developing countries.

Other Issues

In addition to issues related directly to the terms of reference, one or two other matters have emerged on which it is thought relevant to comment. Some of these matters are at least as much for SIDA's attention as for that of SALA.

In the early stages of the co-operation, auditing was targeted as an area to which attention should be given. Since the establishment of the Urban Development Corporation (UD Corp) the focus on this subject has switched to that institution which, *inter alia*, is responsible for the external audit of

Rural Councils. Direct assistance has been provided to UD Corp by SIDA in the form of a long term consultant, but a change in the role of UD Corp, which is perceived to take it away from its objectives in rural areas, has led to a reassessment of this assistance and a decision to withdraw it. The activities of UD Corp are evaluated in chapter 5, but it is disappointing to note that this withdrawal of assistance will leave the question of audit in relation to rural local government no further forward than it was at the beginning of the co-operation. For the period beyond 1990, it is recommended that the issue of audit be reinstated amongst the ongoing elements of co-operation. It should be remembered that audit has two distinct facets — internal and external. UD Corp is charged only with the responsibility for year-end external audit and whatever SIDA's long-term attitude towards UD Corp, it will probably continue to carry out that function following amalgamation. For this reason, UD Corp should not automatically be ruled out for assistance, at an appropriate level, to ensure it carries out that task to the advantage of the rural authorities (further reference to this issue is provided in chapter 5). Of at least equal importance is the matter of internal audit within rural authorities. This area appears not to have been given any serious consideration to date yet internal audit can be regarded as an important element of internal control within any organisation, but especially one in the public sector, but appears to attract very little attention from most rural local authorities. It is strongly recommended that irrespective of future attitudes to external audit and UD Corp, consideration be given to developing an internal audit element in future co-operation between SALA and MLGRUD and that SIDA encourage such a development.

In similar vein to external audit, early statements of intent were made about the development of a Local Authority Service Organisation (LASO) within MLGRUD. This organisation would have provided consultancy and support services to local authorities in rural areas to assist with their development, but its establishment was not proceeded with once the decision was made to set up UD Corp (which has similar functions). The consultants believe that the idea of a LASO is a sound one although they would not wish to see it simply duplicate the work of UD Corp (assuming, of course, that UD Corp can deliver such services — see chapter 5), nor to be simply another instrument of bureaucratic control within the Ministry. This matter will be returned to in the next paragraph.

A very recent development on SIDA's part has been a proposal to establish a Rural District Development Fund. The purpose of such a Fund is to provide the wherewithal for rural authorities to call in expertise in the form of consultancy or development advice to help them pursue their objective of self sufficiency — much of the money would be expected to go to UD Corp to pay for consultancy services. A report was commissioned by SIDA in 1988 on the feasibility of such a Fund, but largely failed to overcome the major issues associated with it. The central dilemma posed (but never resolved) was of how to ensure that the sums of money involved went directly to benefit rural authorities without the administration of the funds being subject to MLGRUD bureaucracy, and yet remain within the overall terms of institutional co-operation with MLGRUD. In principle the consultants strongly support the idea of such a Fund and see it as having an important role in tackling some of the problems identified during their mission. However, it is also clear that machinery for ensuring that such funds are used directly in the way intended does not currently exist, and recommendations are made in Section V about how this machinery could be created. If this issue is resolved and UD Corp does improve its performance, then the need for a LASO is less pressing, though if UD Corp continues to perform poorly in this regard, other instruments for the achievement of the proposed Fund's objectives should be examined.

The final issue is a more general one for both SIDA and SALA. Under the co-operation scheme so far, all short and long term consultancy work has been carried out by employees or nominees of SALA (or, occasionally, SIDA) and they have been Swedish in nationality. Those chosen have undoubtedly been competent, enthusiastic and committed to the projects in which they have been involved, but evidence reported earlier does suggest that on occasions the Swedish dimension has hampered rather than assisted progress in problem-solving in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, the role of SALA as both principal and contractor in respect of consultancy activities would appear to preclude the consideration of alternative modes for approaching projects in Zimbabwe beyond simply identifying the SALA employee(s) (or employee(s) of SALA-related organisations such as K-Konsult or SPRI) best placed to tackle the job, and is in any case not very good business practice. (This is not in any sense a criticism of SALA — this policy is entirely consistent with the terms of its agreement with SIDA.) An alternative basis for the SIDA/SALA relationship

is identified in Section V, but is based on seeing the overall process of assisting local government in Zimbabwe as having three elements:

- direct allocation of funds (from SIDA)
- institutional co-operation (the 'speaking partner' role) — SALA
- provision of consultancy services (governed by normal commercial and professional principles).

The overall effect of identifying separately the third element would be to enable SIDA to recruit the most appropriate skills (including those from SALA) to deliver the consultancy services identified as necessary through the 'speaking partner' role of SALA, and those resources could be drawn from Zimbabwe, from Sweden or from other developed countries. If required, SIDA could ask a single organisation to co-ordinate the consultancy on its behalf, or could opt to do this for itself.

Conclusion

Inevitably, any critical evaluation of organisational performance identifies areas where such performance can be bettered, and when written down may seem more akin to a catalogue of criticisms and failure than a balanced view of progress and achievement. Let it be said therefore, unequivocally, in conclusion to this analysis, that the overall performance of SALA in pursuing the objectives agreed with SIDA has been good, and has brought significant benefits to rural local government in Zimbabwe. Without that assistance, local government in rural areas of the country would be substantially worse off than it is at present. Not all projects have proceeded equally well, but SALA has consistently demonstrated its willingness to learn the lessons from those projects where things have gone wrong, and to apply them to ensure better performance for subsequent ones. There is still much to do both in overhauling the basis of the institutional co-operation with MLGRUD and in supporting the delivery of more and better support to rural authorities, but SALA can genuinely have grounds for being satisfied with most of what has been achieved so far. Recommendations to help raise further the quality of co-operation are made in chapter 5.

Chapter 4

Role of MLGRUD and Other Zimbabwean Institutions

The overall role of MLGRUD in the development of local government in Zimbabwe over the last ten years is outlined in chapter 2. The purpose of this chapter is to examine at micro level its part in the institutional relationship with SALA and to evaluate its contribution to the individual projects undertaken in the course of that relationship. The chapter will also deal with the evidence collected from local government, training institutions and professional bodies consulted in Zimbabwe in an effort to identify training needs and any resources available outside the Ministry to meet those needs.

The chapter is divided into two main areas — comments on the role and contribution of MLGRUD, and an analysis of the main issues encountered outside the Ministry. The evaluation of MLGRUD's role will be broken down into the following subjects;

Policy

Training and Promotion

Local Co-ordination.

The remainder of the chapter will examine the different institutions consulted and attempt to identify themes emerging from the consultations.

MLGRUD Policy

This report is not the appropriate place to debate the constitutional niceties of the role of MLGRUD. However, the SALA/MLGRUD co-operation has to be conducted within a framework of policy issues which should, in turn,

prompt much of the content of the partnership arrangements. Therefore some observation on the policy role of the Ministry is necessary in order to understand that context.

The major issue of policy clearly relates to the decision made in principle shortly after Independence, and since legislated upon, to amalgamate Rural and District Councils. Various target dates for executing this amalgamation have come and gone, and whilst progress is being made in delineating boundaries for the new District Councils in some areas, there is still a long way to go before the full amalgamation takes place. Many vital issues remain unresolved, especially in relation to the resource base for these authorities and, given the chequered history in recent years of central/local relations, the precise range of services to be delivered. The caution of the Ministry in arriving at decisions on these issues is understandable — many of them constitute major points of contention in central/local relations throughout the world — but the lack of any firm date for amalgamation means that much of the thrust behind the SIDA/SALA related programme is blunted, given that it was the anticipation of the training and support needs of the new authorities which led to the initiation of the programme.

Rather more disturbing is the day-to-day context of central/local relations within the existing local authority structure. Chapter 3 referred to cultural differences between central and local government and the consultants were particularly struck by the differences in attitudes to local authority activity between the Ministry and the authorities themselves. This issue is exacerbated by regular statements from government that more responsibility is, as a matter of high policy, to be devolved to local communities, which are in stark contrast to the highly centralist attitudes of MLGRUD, and the somewhat piecemeal way in which local government problems are addressed. The Ministry appears to have no grand design relating to the role of local government in Zimbabwe and lacking such a strategic view, tends to be reactive rather than supportive towards it. Many (though by no means all) of those consulted in local authorities also bore out the criticism of the Public Service Review Commission about the slow, bureaucratic pace of MLGRUD and its excessive centralisation of decision-making and control.

One other issue of general policy is worthy of note — its implications will be picked up later. The Ministry's machinery for dealing with local government is divided into two quite separate streams — that dealing with urban authorities

(cities, town councils) and that dealing with rural authorities (rural and district councils). Observation suggests that there is relatively little interchange between the two, meaning that problems identified and solved in the one stream are rarely exploited to provide solutions to similar problems in the other. To an extent, SIDA must share some of the responsibility for this attitude in that its insistence that institutional support should be concentrated on the rural areas has reinforced the division between the two types of authority.

Training and Promotion

The major vehicle for the execution of the partnership arrangements between SALA and MLGRUD is the Ministry's Training and Promotion Section. This section currently is headed by an Under Secretary with five trainers on secondment from other work in the Ministry, and some clerical support. Detailed discussions were held with the Section Head and with some of the trainers within the section. Based on these discussions, the following conclusions are offered.

(i) The section has suffered an acute decline in both size and status over the last three years. Previously, the section appeared to be viewed as a major vehicle within MLGRUD for promoting the interests of local government and for supporting its training and development needs — it had a clear role in advocating the cause of local government at central government level. At that juncture, it was headed by a Deputy Secretary. Since then, the status of the Head has been downgraded, the number of trainers reduced and their status changed to that of secondees as opposed to the established staff previously employed. The advocacy role has now all but disappeared.

(ii) Financially, the section is now heavily dependent upon SIDA funding. Precise figures were hard to come by, but it was clear that the proportion of the recurrent budget of the section met from SIDA assistance has grown substantially over the last three years until this source of finance is now the predominant one. The corollary of this is the relative reduction in the financial commitment of MLGRUD to the section's activities, despite what are clearly the substantial training and development needs of the local authorities. (It was at one stage alleged, though it was not possible to verify this

because of the non-availability of senior Ministry staff towards the end of the mission, that the Ministry of Finance had increased the recurrent budget allocation to MLGRUD for local government training in recent years but that these funds had not been applied for that purpose.)

(iii) The reduced status and lower staffing levels of the section have now largely placed it outside that circle within the Ministry in which policy discussions take place. Whereas previously the section head could participate in and influence the policy framework of MLGRUD in the light of the perceived needs of local authorities, it now simply has to act within policy parameters determined elsewhere. That said, it was made clear that there was little interference from the Ministry hierarchy with the day-to-day management of the section's programmes, although this apparent 'freedom' of action was still constrained by the requirement to refer upwards almost all other decisions.

(iv) Although the section has, theoretically, a responsibility for training and promotion in urban local government, its activities rarely take it into that field, and its programmes were aimed almost exclusively at rural authorities. Surprisingly, the reaction to the suggestion of common training programmes for urban and rural local government was that it had never even been considered. Again, the stated objectives of SIDA and the extent to which the section is dependent upon SIDA funding has helped to bring about this attitude, but its major cause rests with overall MLGRUD policy.

(v) The section is short of transport and support equipment. This conclusion was initially somewhat surprising, since SIDA has allocated programme funds for the purchase of vehicles and other hardware. On investigation it was ascertained that this equipment was in use elsewhere in the Ministry, and access to it by this section was no different from that of other sections of MLGRUD, and was often very difficult to arrange. The terms of SIDA assistance to the Ministry indicate that equipment purchased under the programme becomes the property of the Government of Zimbabwe, and is not tied to a specific project, and to this extent, the Ministry is acting in accordance with the letter of the agreement. However, the spirit of the agreement must imply that equipment and vehicles purchased to further a particular programme should be available on first call to that programme and

should be allocated elsewhere only when not needed. The lack of access to transport must create inefficiencies for a training team which above all needs to be mobile. SIDA is recommended to review this situation.

(vi) The reduction in the size of the training section has increasingly forced it to take a top-down approach (much in accordance with overall Ministry policy) to local government training. Broadly, the staff of the section appeared to be spending about 90% of their available time on direct training or administrative activity leaving very little to be allocated for needs assessment or follow-up. Whilst the views expressed by the participants about the quality of training delivered by the section were overwhelmingly supportive, both trainers and trained expressed frustration at the lack of opportunity for a more sustained dialogue on the issues for which training had been provided. Decisions about what training should be provided also appear to be made centrally with little evidence of detailed consultation taking place with local government.

(vii) The content of training delivered appears to be substantially job-skill orientated rather than concerned with awareness and/or management training. There is clearly a limit to how far the section can go in the direction of higher level training, and there are other institutions within Zimbabwe which provide formal management training for government (central and local) officials. Nevertheless, the demise of the promotion aspect of the section's responsibilities appears also to have removed this dimension of training from its agenda. The result is again a loss of strategic vision of the hierarchy of training and development needs of local government leading to a series of ad hoc 'shopping lists' of job skills training rather than a coherent, developmental programme.

(viii) SIDA, through its local representatives and the resident SALA representative, has attempted to encourage the section to expand its activities by bringing in outside consultants and trainers on a contract basis to help with the delivery of training or development needs. SIDA has funds available to assist with this process. So far this encouragement has had little success, partly because of the unwillingness of the Ministry bureaucracy to follow this path and partly because of a mistaken belief that funds allocated to finance such a course of action would be deducted from other funds allocated by SIDA to

MLGRUD. This has further enhanced the sense of beleaguerment of members of the section and has significantly reduced its capacity to support the training needs of the authorities.

In concluding this part of the report, two further points need to be made. First, the consultants became aware of the decline in the status and morale of the Training and Promotion Section only after reaching Zimbabwe. Given the day to day involvement of SALA with this section, it is somewhat disconcerting to discover that SIDA Stockholm had not been alerted to the way in which this primary instrument in the partnership with MLGRUD has been run down over the last couple of years, apparently as a matter of policy. The nature of the SIDA/SALA review relationship clearly needs reassessment.

Secondly, the consultants were aware of the work of the Public Service Review Commission in Zimbabwe and of its criticisms and recommendations relating to MLGRUD. Whilst many of those consulted shared the Commission's overall perception of the Ministry, no-one supported the idea of absorbing the Ministry's Training and Promotion Section into the Ministry of Public Service. The consultants endorse this view. The Ministry of Public Service is a central government/civil service orientated training organisation, and to absorb into it the requirement to meet the training needs of local government also would risk disorientating the Ministry of Public Service, and, more fundamentally, down-grading even further the distinct training needs of local authorities. However centralist the attitudes of MLGRUD, its main preoccupation remains that of local government and to transfer its training and development responsibilities to another Ministry with no history of commitment to, or familiarity with, local government objectives and culture would be altogether the wrong path to take.

Local Co-ordination

As in most countries, local authorities in Zimbabwe find themselves having to deal with a variety of central government departments. For local authorities in Zimbabwe there are major dealings not just with MLGRUD but with the Ministries of Health, Education and Transport as well as small scale dealings with several others. For District Councils, the issue is further complicated by their relationships with MLGRUD's Provincial and District Administration structure, of which the most obvious manifestation is the role that District

Administrators play as Chief Executive Officers of District Councils, an arrangement, thankfully, to be discontinued once amalgamation takes place.

One of the prime objectives for the SALA/MLGRUD co-operation has been to ensure that local authority staff have a clear view of how they relate to different Ministries, and where various boundaries of responsibility and service provision fall. This is not a major problem for Rural Councils with their generally very narrow range of services, but is for District Councils which have a much wider range of services, especially in Health and (until recently) Education fields and which are heavily dependent on earmarked funding from Central Government. Some aspects of this issue were dealt with in Chapter 3, but it is important to point out here that MLGRUD has identified the issue of local co-ordination as a problem area and has, with SALA support, gone a long way towards dealing with it through its training programmes. MLGRUD has little control over the policies or attitudes of other central ministries, and shifts in their attitudes have understandably complicated the question of local co-ordination, but the general view expressed by local authorities was that whilst much still remained to be done, recent training initiatives had achieved much in clarifying roles and streamlining basic administrative procedures.

A word is needed on the Provincial structure, in particular in the training context. Each Province has a Provincial Promotion and Training Officer (PPTO) and other staff operating within that field. In principle this structure should provide a basis for local training effort and indeed things are being done, particularly with councillors. However, the overall impression is that PPTO's have a very wide range of duties to perform as support staff within the Provincial structure and that there is a lack of co-ordination between and within Provinces and between Provinces and MLGRUD headquarters. Staff in Provincial offices consulted could often identify training needs in authorities in their areas, but did not have the resources to meet those needs nor sufficient influence to place those needs on the training agenda at national level. Overwhelmingly their view was however, that much still remains to be done in improving the training state of councillors and administrative staff, and in supporting and developing rural local authorities to take on the responsibilities envisaged for them after amalgamation.

Local Authorities

In all, nine local authorities — a mixture of Rural and District Councils in all parts of Zimbabwe — were visited. Inevitably, different issues and needs predominated in different authorities, but a number of important themes recurred regularly enough to provide a reasonable picture of local authority training needs. The following, in the consultants' view, were the principal issues;

- (i) the need for a greater volume of training overall, particularly for District Councils, and for all classes of participant, elected and employed;
- (ii) expressions of appreciation for the role of SALA and MLGRUD in tackling some basic issues but at the same time a recognition that training must move on to give attention to management needs and not simply concentrate on systems and skill training;
- (iii) the need to reinforce policy objectives, particularly those related to amalgamation and the intention to create self-sufficient local authorities — this issue often came down to the need for training in entrepreneurial skills to provide the basis for income-generating projects;
- (iv) a requirement for formal training programmes, such as those at Dombashawa, to be conducted over much shorter timescales to facilitate release from small authorities;
- (v) the potential gaps likely to open up in management skills after amalgamation, when many CEO's, in particular those from Rural Councils, are likely to opt for retirement.

In general, the consultants were impressed by the dedication and competence of local authority staff who in many cases were operating under very difficult conditions and in a constant state of uncertainty about the intentions of central government departments. Many were clearly concerned about the implications of amalgamation and in particular the problem of a resource base for the new Rural District Councils. The state of readiness for the change varied enormously from some authorities which saw no problems to others which clearly did not know where to begin. Whilst few appeared to challenge either the logic or inevitability of amalgamation, many doubts were expressed about the viability of the amalgamated system and its ability to survive without significant central government support. Policy makers still have a long way to go in convincing local authorities that amalgamation can be made to work.

The overall impression is that this Centre does a workmanlike job in training local government employees. However, its institutionalised training systems and capacity limitations hold out little hope for it to increase its impact on practical training in local authorities, unless it is prepared to alter and/or expand its approach. This in turn will need substantial initial funding and whilst it is not an option which should be ruled out, nevertheless it looks unlikely to have any immediate effect on the scale of the training problem in local government.

Accountancy Training

One of the needs which emerged clearly from the visits to local authorities was that for formal training beyond the job skills level currently being tackled. One of the areas most widely identified was that of accountancy training and the opportunity was taken on return to Harare to discuss the matter with the two professional bodies most closely involved. The Zimbabwe Association of Accounting Technicians (ZAAT) provides a second-tier qualification open to candidates in all sectors of the economy and with school leaving level entry qualifications. Since its inception in the early 1980's, ZAAT has provided a route to its qualification for public service employees and does have a significant number of trainees from local government. However, although there are college-based courses in the main urban areas, most rural authority students are studying by correspondence method and few are expected to qualify in the end. ZAAT itself is having financial problems and needs to widen its student base by including Central Government employees, but requires financial assistance to develop the appropriate curriculum. SIDA has provided assistance to ZAAT in the past under other programmes — it may be worth considering further support in order to ensure that ZAAT survives as a vehicle for more advanced training in local government. Furthermore, as part of any future review of training in local government, some attention could be paid to devising methods of making ZAAT courses more accessible and/or to improving success rates for those for whom college attendance is not possible.

The Zimbabwe Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (ZIPFA) is the professional body for public sector accountants. Its secretariat is based on Harare City Council and it has firm roots in local government, although many of its members are in Central Government also. As at November 1989,

however, it had no members in rural local government. Its preferred entry requirement is the possession of the Bachelor of Accountancy (B.Acc) degree of the University of Zimbabwe, although other routes are possible. In the longer term, ZIPFA has an important role to play in improving the quality of financial management in local government both as a setter of accounting standards for authorities and as a provider of an appropriate qualification for senior staff. It is a desirable long-run objective for the new Rural District Councils to have at least one ZIPFA qualified accountant on their staff, although this cannot be an immediate priority. If this is to be achieved, however, the size of the intake to the B.Acc degree will need to be substantially expanded (as recommended by the Public Service Review Commission) and/or other, more accessible methods made available for aspiring professionals to acquire the qualification. Again, this idea should be incorporated into future thinking about local authority training.

Conclusion

That part of the study conducted in Zimbabwe itself revealed a mixture of both hopeful and discouraging aspects. On the positive side, solid progress had been made in tackling basic administrative problems in rural local government through the joint activities of SALA and MLGRUD. Against that, the slow movement towards amalgamation, the heavily centralist attitudes of the Ministry and the contradictory messages being given to local government about its future role create an uncertain framework for progress. Furthermore, and particularly worrying, was the manner in which training and promotion for local government had been downgraded and funds intended by SIDA to expand such activity had actually been used simply to substitute for the Ministry's own financial commitment to these functions. A great deal remains to be done to establish a sound framework within which the importance of these functions can once more be recognised and which will provide a basis for the more effective management of them in the future. Such a framework, however, will have to be based on a much wider constituency of interests than just the Ministry.

Chapter 5

Recommendations

The first major recommendation of the study relates to the way in which the SIDA assistance is managed by MLGRUD in Zimbabwe. Various paragraphs in Section IV of the report draw attention to perceived shortcomings in the manner in which the Ministry is dealing with the training and development of local authorities in rural areas, and the lack of cross-fertilisation between what is happening in rural and urban areas. The consultants have therefore sought to identify an alternative operational model for the support of local authority development and in so doing have taken into account the following considerations.

1. Responsibility for day to day decision making has to be delegated within MLGRUD and clear lines of accountability and financial responsibility established.
2. The training and development function should be organised in such a way as to ensure that it is independent of the source and level of external funding, i.e. it should be in keeping with established government structures and be capable of functioning when the Zimbabwean Government takes full responsibility for its finances.
3. The training and development function should allow for an adequate degree of influence in its planning and execution by those affected, i.e. the local authorities. It should also provide the potential nucleus for a future, more independent body for local, administrative and related training when the time is ripe for local authorities and/or their associations to take a fuller responsibility for their own training and development.

4. The organisation of training and development activities should be responsive to the practical issues and changing priorities in local administration. This consideration, amongst others, has ruled out any proposal for the establishment of a free-standing "Institute for Local Administration".

Overall, the consultants conclude that the training and development function should remain within the sphere of influence of MLGRUD, but that the balance of other influences must change in order to reflect more clearly the different cultural and activity base of local government.

The following recommendations are therefore made, divided between those appropriate for MLGRUD and those for SIDA.

Ministry

- a) The establishment of a Local Government Training Promotion and Development Programme to plan, co-ordinate and deliver a concerted plan aimed at developing the capacity and capability of rural (and urban) local authorities.
- b) The creation of a Steering Group to oversee the work of the Programme, the membership to be drawn from rural and urban local government, MLGRUD and the SALA representative in Zimbabwe. Detailed recommendations on membership of this group are not made, but ideally it should consist of no more than eight members, of whom no more than three should be drawn from MLGRUD. The group should meet no less than six times per year.
- c) The inclusion within this Programme of responsibility for training and promotion in both urban and rural local authorities. However, given the particular development needs of rural authorities the Programme should be responsible for this aspect in rural authorities only, and not in urban authorities.
- d) The appointment of a Director of Training, Promotion and Development with the rank restored to that of Deputy Secretary. This Director should be accountable to the Steering Group for the agreement and management of an annual training and development plan subject only to the overall approval of that plan by the Minister of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development.
- e) Part of the role of the Director of Training Promotion and Development

should be to conduct a regular (at least annual) training needs analysis of local authorities, particularly those in rural areas. This should be discussed, prioritised and agreed annually with the Steering Group, along with a training plan based on that analysis. The size and scope of the plan should be set within financial parameters agreed between the Director and the Ministry at the time of determining the Ministry's budget strategy for the subsequent financial year.

f) The Director should serve under a two-year, renewable contract of employment — the Steering Group should have the right to recommend to the Minister whether or not this contract should be renewed.

g) Beneath the Director of Training, Promotion and Development should be a strengthened training team at Ministry level. It is recommended that the size of the team be restored to nine members (plus supporting clerical staff) each of whom would have collective responsibility for contributing to central policy making and course delivery, and individual responsibility for co-ordinating, developing and monitoring the training effort in one Province. These trainers should be accountable to the Director of Training Promotion and Development and not to Provincial Administrators, although they should have a contractual obligation to co-operate with the latter.

Although the main objective of this recommendation relates to the localisation of training efforts, it will be necessary to retain a strong, but mobile, central training group to provide for activity where the level of expertise required, or economies of scale dictate that central provision is the most appropriate way of meeting a particular training need.

h) At each provincial level, a task force of trainers should be organised, in part by better use of provincial and district promotion and training officers, and in part by the creation of enhanced training skills for serving technical officers in local authorities through training for trainers activity.

Provincial training task forces should be mobile within provinces.

SIDA

- a) In considering the renewal of the agreement with MLGRUD in July 1990, SIDA should take account of the extent to which the Ministry has moved towards the adoption of the model outlined above. In the absence of such movement, SIDA should consider the withdrawal of direct support to the existing Training and Promotion Section, although the overall institutional co-operation between SALA and MLGRUD should continue.
- b) Should the recommendations be accepted, this Programme should be seen by SIDA as the repository for all SIDA direct assistance funds, including those monies which it wishes to earmark under its proposals for a Rural District Development Fund (see Section III for details).
- c) All property funded by SIDA for the pursuit of objectives under this Programme should be vested 100% in the Programme, and this provision made a condition of ongoing SIDA assistance. On the acceptance of this condition, SIDA should consider ways in which it can help with the achievement of recommendation h) listed above.
- d) Funding for the recurrent costs of the training element of the Programme should be on an agreed basis between MLGRUD and SIDA. It is strongly recommended that SIDA funding be set at a fixed multiple of the annual revenue allocation by MLGRUD to the Programme: for example Z\$3 equivalent from SIDA for every Z\$1 committed by MLGRUD. No such stipulation should relate to funds allocated for development purposes.

The thrust of these recommendations is designed to reverse the process identified in Section IV above, that MLGRUD is steadily increasing its control over training and development activity in local government whilst at the same time reducing its financial commitment to it. It is also in keeping with a philosophy that the extent of training and development activity should be related to the identified, ongoing training needs of the local authorities and not to the number of trainers employed by the Ministry, i.e. demand rather than supply led.

The consultants are also aware that early in 1990 there is to be a major study of training needs in local government (urban and rural) conducted by SIDA on behalf of the World Bank. This study is seen as a major step in identifying and shaping future training requirements for local authorities. Without

suitable machinery for managing this training and for ensuring the accountability of those responsible for delivering it, however, much of the effort going into that study may be wasted. Therefore the recommendations made above have been framed in a way which will enable the proposals of the SIDA/World Bank study to be incorporated without the need for further organisational change in the Ministry.

The second substantial recommendation concerns the relationship between SIDA and SALA in Stockholm. Section III of the report identified three different elements in the process of assisting rural local government in Zimbabwe;

- direct funding
- speaking partnership
- consultancy services.

At present the second and third elements are both largely in the hands of SALA, with the consequences set out in Section III. The establishment of a distinct programme, pursuing the objectives recommended above, should enable the SIDA/SALA relationship to be reconstituted in the following way.

a) SALA should continue to operate the "Speaking Partner" role and should in particular continue to have a full-time presence in Harare to provide advice both to MLGRUD, and to SIDA and SALA in Sweden.

b) As recommended above, the local SALA representative should sit on the Steering Committee and participate in particular in the process of formulating the annual training and development plan.

c) Within that plan should be identified those areas in which existing resources in MLGRUD (including those developed by the provincial based machinery recommended) require supplementation by outsiders.

d) An annual review meeting should be held in Sweden between the appropriate SIDA and SALA officials, including the SALA representative in Harare, to identify the source of those external support resources. The role of SALA in this regard should be to provide information and advice to SIDA about the resources available within Zimbabwe and about how best in its opinion to meet any shortfalls.

e) SIDA should then determine in the light of this advice, the contractors it

wishes to employ to deliver consultancy support to the project for the plan period. It may choose to do this itself or to delegate the task to another contractor of its own choice.

f) SALA should continue to meet SIDA at regular intervals to monitor the progress of the programme and in particular to ensure that SIDA is kept fully advised on any problems in the way funds allocated directly to the programme (the first element) are being used.

The fundamental purpose of these recommendations is to make clear the different roles contributed by various bodies employed by SIDA and SALA in the scheme of co-operation. They in no way preclude the possibility of SALA continuing to fulfil both the role of 'speaking partner' and that of general contractor. SIDA may choose, if it wishes, to appoint SALA as the co-ordinating agent in accordance with e) above. However, in these circumstances, the separate roles of co-ordinator of external consultancy organisations and of providing an advisory function must be clearly distinguished, and SALA will need to develop a capacity to locate the most appropriate expertise where this may lie outside its own organisation, or that of its family, or even outside Sweden altogether. Should SALA be given this double role, then there will certainly need to be a strengthening of its Stockholm-based co-ordination function — an examination of the machinery established for the same purpose by SIPU might prove helpful in this regard. Regardless of to whom will be given the task of co-ordinating the consultancy services, it is the view of the consultants that the reporting mechanism within Zimbabwe for the local representation of SALA should be reconsidered. The 'speaking partner' role ought to be more closely linked to the policy making levels of MLGRUD. Consideration should therefore be given to linking this role to the level of Permanent Secretary, rather than, as at present, to executive level.

Other recommendations mainly relate to the findings gathered during the course of the time in Zimbabwe, and are based on the interviews and observations obtained during that period. They have been grouped according to whether they are applicable in Zimbabwe or Sweden.

Zimbabwe

a) There should be greater continuity in training programmes to recognise the ongoing nature of much of the training undertaken. This continuity involves going through the full training cycle from needs identification to follow-up, including remedial action where follow-up shows a shortfall in meeting training objectives. Implementing this recommendation on the ground will, of course, require additional resources and should be read in conjunction with earlier recommendations about a restructured training function.

b) The matter of fourth level training for Health Administrators should be considered immediately.

c) New areas of training should be explored — particular needs identified during the study were for middle management levels, project management, accounting and audit, and entrepreneurial skills. In some cases, consideration should be given to the use of existing technical and professional qualification courses many of which (for example, ZAAT) are already established and available.

d) Continued support should be given to the development of material and training related to the Accounting Handbook. Subject to the modifications suggested in Section III, the current Handbook should be published as soon as possible, and training begun at the earliest opportunity thereafter. However, the intended approach to this training needs to be re-examined and consideration given to the use of a combination of local and overseas training resource persons properly versed in the more technically complex issues of the Handbook as currently drafted.

e) The establishment of a small number of pilot schemes in rural areas to identify the potential for local rural development. Two models are possible — income-generating projects operated by local authorities directly, and development projects operated by private sector enterprises which would expand the local economic and tax base.

f) Ways should be explored, within the bounds of organisational and financial practicality, of devising more 'user friendly' modes of study for courses at Dombashawa and for the ZAAT qualification.

Sweden

- a) Improvements are needed to the briefing arrangements for consultants prior to their first visit to Zimbabwe. Who should be responsible for effecting this improvement will depend upon the outcome of the recommendation made earlier on the future of the SIDA/SALA relationship.
- b) Study tours in their existing form should be discontinued and any resources available switched to provide facilities for tours much more sharply focussed on particular training or development needs.
- c) For the moment, there should be no further special studies, although the further use of this aspect of the institutional relationship could be revived in appropriate circumstances.
- d) Further consideration needs to be given to the principle of assistance to UD Corp once the existing long term consultant is withdrawn.

List of Abbreviations

LASO	Local Authority Service Organisation
MLGRUD	Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PPTO	Provisional Promotion and Training Officer
SALA	Swedish Association of Local Authorities
SIDA	Swedish International Development Authority
UDcorp	Urban Development Corporation
ZAAT	Zimbabwe Association of Accounting Technicians
ZIPFA	Zimbabwe Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy

Appendix

Terms of Reference

Background

It has been agreed that an independent evaluation will be made of the Swedish support to local government development in Zimbabwe. The evaluation will take place in the context that one of the primary priorities for the post-independence Government of Zimbabwe has been to develop and reform the local government system. For this reason, the Government has launched a programme aimed, among other things, at modernising and democratising the system as a whole as well as at amalgamating the Rural and District Councils; the latter for the purpose of creating a unified local government system at rural level.

Co-operation between Zimbabwe and Sweden in the field of local government development started already in 1983 with a study visit to Sweden for officials of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development, MLGRUD, organised by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities, SALA. The study visit was followed by a series of SALA short-term consultancies during the period 1984-June 1985 primarily aimed at undertaking studies and reviews and at providing recommendations in areas such as:

- Local government structures and autonomy;
- Amalgamation of Rural and District Councils;
- Local government finance, accounting and auditing;
- Organisational, administrative and personnel structures.

The support to local government development has since July 1985 constituted

a sub-programme of the Public Administration Sector Support Programme and its various sub-programmes was reached for the period **July 1985 - June 1987**.

During this period the sub-programme comprised the following main activities:

a) Amalgamation of Rural and District Councils;

- Advisory support
- Studies of special interest
- Development of new administrative and financial systems (accounting, auditing, minute secretaries, committee structure etc.)
- Handbook development and training based on the new systems
- Staff development in MLGRUD and training of RDC staff and councilors related to the amalgamation process;

b) Feasibility studies on the establishment of a Local Government Service Organisation;

c) Health and Education Administrators' Training.

A new Sector Agreement for the period **July 1987-June 1990** was signed in June 1987. In addition to the activities already embarked upon during 1985 and 1986 the agreement provides for an increased support for capacity building within MLGRUD in general and its Training and Promotion Section in particular as well as for support to the Rural District Councils. As for the period 1983-1985, the major part of the Swedish assistance is organised in the form of institutional co-operation between MLGRUD and SALA.

The budget allocations and actual disbursements for the Swedish support to local government development are as follow (SEK million):

Period	Allocated	Disbursed
1983 - June 1985	2.4	2.4
July 1985 - June 1987	11.4	8.9
July 1987 - June 1990	20.6	7.9*
TOTAL	34.6	19.2

* Up to June 1989

As regards local government, the Government's policies are:

- abolition of the racial and dual system of local government and the establishment of democratic institutions aimed at providing an opportunity for mass participation in the overall development of their community;
- promotion of viable, efficient and self-reliant local authorities and advising these authorities on their financial, administrative, legal, planning and, when appropriate, their training needs;
- promotion of growth and development in rural areas;
- ensuring central government presence and co-ordination at district and provincial levels.

The overall and long-term objective of the Swedish Support Programme, which should be viewed in the above context, is to develop the local government structures in order to enable the rural population to take an active part in political decision making and to provide them with an increased share of the country's economic and social resources.

The operational objectives of the programme, as stated in SIDA's internal memoranda for decision-making dated 21 May 1985 and 9 March 1987, respectively are;

- to strengthen the capacity and capability of MLGRUD, especially its Training and Promotion Section, to manage and support local government development;
- to contribute to the establishment of well-functioning and viable local authorities;
- to improve the co-operation at district level between MLGRUD, the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health.

These objective are to be attained through competence - and institution-building activities and advisory services. The main activities include advisory short and long term support, training of staff, study visits, development of administrative and other systems and studies of special interest.

Reasons for the Evaluation

During the annual consultations between the Government of Zimbabwe and SIDA in April 1989, it was agreed that an evaluation of the local government support programme be carried out during the latter part of 1989 in order to summarise the impact of the support since 1983 and to provide a background for decision on a future Swedish support.

Scope and Focus of the Evaluation

The objectives of the evaluation are to:

- 1 Review the progress since 1983 of local government development in Zimbabwe;
- 2 Assess the results and impact of the Swedish Support Programme, including the institutional co-operation between MLGRUD and SALA, in relation to the overall and operational objectives stated in paragraph 1.2 above;
- 3 Produce recommendations to MLGRUD and SIDA on the contents and direction of a continued Swedish support beyond 30 June 1990 to local government development.

In order to comply with its objectives, the evaluation shall compose but not necessarily be limited to the following aspects:

Progress of local government development:

- i A description of the development of local government since 1983 in terms of, inter alia, the organisation and role of bodies involved, particularly MLGRUD, Rural and District Councils, the Department of Physical Planning and the Urban Development Corporation.

Particular attention should be paid to:

- steps taken by Government for local government development and reform: present position and future plans;
- the amalgamation of Rural and District Councils: progress, problems, bottlenecks and constraints;
- achievements by MLGRUD with respect to strengthening of the Rural and District Councils (training, systems development etc.).

The above aspect of the evaluation is to be carried out by the Zimbabwean member of the evaluation team, prior to the arrival in Zimbabwe of the international team members.

Results and impact of the Swedish Support Programme:

- ii A description and an assessment of the results achieved within the various activities in relation to the objectives of the support programme and to targets set. This should include an assessment of the contribution to local government development and the benefits that have occurred, if any, to the local authorities, through the co-operation programme;

Particular attention should be paid to assessment of the following:

- growth in the capacity/capability of MLGRUD, especially its Training and Promotion Section, to plan, manage and support the local government development efforts;
- improvement in the performance of MLGRUD and Rural and District Council staff trained under the programme;
- the relevance, applicability and function of the administrative and financial systems developed for rural and district councils, as well as of the handbooks produced in this context;
- the relevance, utilisation and function of training material produced and training equipment procured under the programme;
- the usefulness to MLGRUD of the special studies undertaken;
- improvement in the co-operation at district level between MLGRUD, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, respectively;
- the appropriateness of the institutional co-operation between MLGRUD and SALA;

- iii Assessment of the modes of operation;

- assess the methodology and methods used for institution building, transfer of knowledge and development of skills;
- assess the relevance of the know-how made available to Zimbabwe via SALA;

- assess SALA's professional and administrative backstopping functions in terms of organisation and efficiency;
- assess the efficiency of the institutional co-operation built up by MLGRUD and SALA.

Continued Swedish Support:

(iv) Recommendations should be made in light of the analysis of Zimbabwe policies and the relevance of the Swedish contribution to the reform process. They should also include suggestions about the institutional arrangements of a future co-operation between Sweden and Zimbabwe in the field of local government development.

In making these recommendations, the following aspects should be taken in account:

- the extent to which necessary need for concentration to a limited number of areas and activities;
- SIDA's ambition to direct an increasing share of the Swedish support directly to the rural district councils.

Timing and Methodology

The evaluation will be conducted by a team of 4 independent consultants of whom 1 should be a Zimbabwean resident nominated by the Government of Zimbabwe. The team will comprise a team leader, an expert on local government development, a training expert and an expert on local government finance and administration. All the team members should have adequate professional background and experience from work in developing countries.

The evaluation is tentatively to be carried out during the period 2 November – 4 December 1989, of which time about two and a half weeks (9 – 27 November) will be spent in Zimbabwe.

The international members of the evaluation team will gather in Sweden on 2 November 1989 and use the time up to 8 November 1989 to undertake interviews with concerned SIDA staff, with the SALA project management and with the SALA short-term consultants who have been involved in the project. Before leaving for

Zimbabwe, the team should produce a detailed work plan for the evaluation. This plan should take into consideration the need for the team to undertake field visits in Zimbabwe to a representative sample of Rural and District Councils (pilot as well as non-pilot councils), interviews with concerned MLGRUD, SALA and SIDA staff to review available documentation.

Simultaneously with the work of the international team members in Sweden, the Zimbabwean member of the team will carry out activity 3 (i), i.e. a draft description of the development of local government since 1983.

Report writing and complementary interviews/report reviews will take place in Sweden 28 November – 4 December 1989.

Reporting

The evaluation team shall produce a comprehensive report in English on its findings, conclusions and recommendations, including an executive summary. The report should be typed on a word processor (IBM or IBM compatible) using WORD and should follow the standardised SIDA format.

Before leaving Zimbabwe, a summary report on the results of the evaluation shall be submitted to and discussed with MLGRUD and the Development Co-operation Office (DCO) of the Swedish Embassy in Harare. The draft report should be presented in three copies to SIDA HQ, the DCO and MLGRUD not later than 15 December 1989.

The final report should be submitted in three copies as stipulated above not later than two weeks after the evaluation team has received comments by SIDA and MLGRUD on the draft paper.

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An Evaluation of SIDA Support to Local Government in Zimbabwe 1983-1989 by Lenart Gustafsson, Anthony Redmond, Christopher Rambanapasi</p> |
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CENTRAL AUTHORITY BLOCKS LOCAL AUTONOMY

Zimbabwe gained its independence in 1980. But it inherited the local government system of the colonial administration. To help the rural population gain their rightful share of political influence, Sweden and Zimbabwe in 1983 started a programme to develop local government.

This evaluation finds that the programme has provided crucial support to local government. The programme has concentrated on the development of administrative and financial systems and has identified important training needs.

The evaluation team also points to some problems. Rural Councils and District Councils have still not been amalgamated. The section responsible in the Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development has suffered from cuts in both size and status. It is now heavily dependent on SIDA funding. Furthermore, it is outside those circles in the Ministry where policy discussions on local government take place.

The evaluation was carried out in november 1989 by an independent study team consisting of Dr Lennart Gustafsson, Anthony Redmond, and Dr Christopher Rambanapasi.

Each year about 30 of SIDA's 200 projects are evaluated. A number of these evaluations are published in the Evaluation Series. Copies of the reports can be ordered from SIDA, S-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden.

