



Association of Rural District Councils of Zimbabwe

**Proceedings of the 10th
Rural District Councils
Engineers Forum Annual Conference**

*Consolidating Gains of The Emergency Roads Rehabilitation Programme
Towards Vision 2030*

27 - 28 October 2021, A' Zambezi River Lodge

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Association of Rural District Councils of Zimbabwe hosted the 10th Edition of the Rural District Councils' Engineers Forum Annual General Conference at the A' Zambezi River Lodge Victoria Falls on the 27th and 28th of October 2021.

The Conference was held under the theme: Consolidating Gains of The Emergency Roads Rehabilitation Programme Towards Vision 2030. Engineers from various rural district councils converged to share ideas, network and to learn.

The Conference commenced with the Welcome and Introductory Remarks by the ARDCZ Chief Executive Officer, Dr. I. Matsilele who highlighted that the overarching objective of the Conference was to gear up for the accelerated implementation of the Emergency Road Rehabilitation Programme II. In this regard, the ARDCZ CEO informed delegates that the programme had been designed to ensure that the stated overall objective is met.

The CEOs Introductory Remarks were followed by a Keynote Address that was read on behalf of the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure Development, Eng. T. Chinyanga by Eng. A. Amos, the Chief Director Technical. The Permanent Secretary bemoaned the lack of progress in the implementation of ERRPII. Particularly, the Chief Director raised alarm over the fact that most Road Authorities had failed to utilise funds that had been availed to them by the Programme.

The Conference also had a number of professional presentations focused on project management, GIS In Local Authorities, Performance Guarantees in Local Authorities among others. In addition, an interactive session with PRAZ was also conducted where the Engineers raised pertinent issues in the procurement process that were hindering operation in Local Authorities.

The Conference ended with a domestic Session where a New Engineers Forum Chairperson (Eng. Q. Masocha – Umguza RDC) and Executive were elected.

2. Day 1

2.1. Introductory Remarks

Dr. I. Matsilele commenced his remarks by welcoming the Engineers to the 10th Edition of the Engineers Forum Annual Conference. He briefly outlined the status and objectives of the Association of Rural District Councils of Zimbabwe. He said the Association was part of the one hundred and seventy-five associations across the globe, hence the organisation belongs to the broader family of local government internationally. He noted that it was good that the rains had come, however, he reminded the Engineers that the roads will be left in a bad state, hence there was need to focus on road infrastructure.

Dr. I. Matsilele emphasized the need for continued collaboration among the key partners for roads infrastructure development which are the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure Development (MoT), the Zimbabwe National Roads Administration (ZINARA) and Road Authorities, Rural District Councils, District Development Fund (DDF) and Urban Councils.

Further, he underscored the importance of the Engineering Department in the Local Authority Structure and note that Engineers were an important human resource which needed to be motivated. He advised the Conference that it was under this background the Local Authorities Managers Union of Zimbabwe had been invited to give an update on progress made towards the representation of Grades 10 and 11 Employees in RDCs. The delegates were encouraged to network, establish acquaintances and share ideas during the conference.

Ending his remarks the ARDCZ Chief Executive Officer stated that Several Facilitators had been engaged to deliver well researched presentations that were envisaged to add value to the RDC Engineer.

2.2. Key Note Address by The Permanent Secretary in The Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure Development

The Chief Director commenced his presentation by reminding delegates of the national road conditions which were deplorable in state according to the 2019 road condition survey and the 2021 rains had left them in worse state. He highlighted that, The National Development Strategy I had

roads infrastructure as a key development pillar which is expected to boost foreign direct investment, regional and international trade which will assist in achieving the goal of making Zimbabwe a middle income by 2030.

Further, the Chief Director, enlightened the engineers of that the budget for the Emergency Road Rehabilitation Programme II (ERRP II) was about Four Hundred Million United States Dollars (USD 400,000,000.00) and these were consolidated funds from the Road Fund (ZINARA), Department of Roads Annual Budget, District Development Fund Annual Budget and 20% of Devolution Funds. The local authorities were notified of that their share of these funds were to be disbursed to approved projects. He raised a concern that there was currently a mismatch between disbursed funds and the work done. The Chief Director apprised the Conference that most Road Authorities had not been able to fully utilise their allotted disbursements which was unfortunate given the sorry state of our road infrastructure. Further, he encouraged Road Authorities to confine to approved budgets since there would not be supplementary allocations.

The Chief Director notified the delegates that the aim is to move away from centralised procurement of equipment. In addition he said the ministry will operationalise the database on the national roads condition survey which will be used for ERRP II. He encouraged the delegates to comply with the act and attract competent contractors for the work which needs to be done.

Moreso, he nailed down the main focus of the National Development Strategy I which he said it is to restore infrastructure. " It is now upon us to make sure that our roads are good" he said as this will give aid to economic development. He encouraged the engineers to study the long-term development plan so that they deal with the issue of roads. Engineer Amos went on to foster that there is need to prioritize roads and utilise the funds which are meant for development so that there will not be a situation where we spin back to emergency.

He listed out some of the challenges which the ministry faced during the implementation of the ERRP II such as fuel, stating that it was difficult to acquire fuel in RTGS. Also, other expenditures as some road authorities went above their budgets, capacity understanding of the ERRP, planning equipment was worn out and there was an issue of being short staffed.

The delegates were given an opportunity to ask questions as well as to comment on the presentation. One of the most asked questions by the delegates was that on procurement of equipment at provincial level, specifically how the rural district councils will acquire them, how the system would be managed and why they had not opted for procurement to be done at district level. He attended to these questions together with Mr Pasipamire and said that The Ministry will consult the various councils to submit their requirements as a province and these lists will inform the acquisition of the pieces of earthmoving machinery.

Another question which was asked was on outsourcing whether there should be complete outsourcing or inhouse, on this he said, "you are the people on the ground, we do not have the full capacity for the projects at National Level hence most projects are outsourced, however, if you are fully equipped then you can do inhouse works" he added to say that procurement is just a once off and all you need to do is to manage.

Some gave comments on the capacity of Local Authorities, we have a shortage in contractors, hence we need to outsource but when we do these are short changing us, therefore we need to introspect the type of contractors we are dealing with, he said. Another delegate commented that there was no information on the ERRP, no one knew who to report to or make requisitions either ZINARA or even the local government was not even sure. Lastly the Chief Director urged the delegates to come up with the list of contractors who do not perform well so that all road authorities are made aware and discouraged from hiring them.

2.3. Update on the Unified Councils Pension Fund – Mr. N. Jakaza

Mr. N. Jakaza representing the Unified Councils Pension Fund gave a brief update of the fund to the delegates. He described the UCPF as the pension fund which council workers' pay their funds awaiting retirement. It is a pension fund that stands on its own for proper development, he added. The facilitator gave information on what the pension fund so far possesses inclusive of the 4000 square meters of land in Victoria Falls which they are partnering with Cresta hotel to build a 4- star hotel. Of the various assets which the UCPF owns these will be sold in order to fund the Victoria Falls project, he said.

He also raised an issue of foreign currency investment versus Zim dollar between 2009 and 2018. He quoted SI 142 of 2019 which states that Zim dollar and US dollar were one as to one 1:1 at the date of promulgation, however this came as an ulcer to those who had invested that is those who were paying pension funds and as a pension fund they suffered loss.

UCPF liased with ZB bank so that the beneficiaries of the fund can get mortgages at an individual level. One of the delegates asked if the statutes laws are helping referring back to the issue of Zim dollar and US dollar as he stated that it was an unfair way of dealing. Mr Jakaza wittily answered the question by suggesting that there is need to let Members of Parliament MPs know so that they present the issue in the parliament so that there can be a tweak in the SI 142 of 2019. However, he urged the delegates not to look on the negatives of this statutory instrument as it also comes with positives.

The other question which was asked on why the assets of the UCPF not benefiting the pensioners, he said the idea of mortgages is there so that they can benefit. Another delegate raised a point that pension funds should come to a halt because no one is really benefiting, Mr. N. Jakaza quickly dismissed this narrative as he gave an insight that 80 to 90% of the buildings in the country are funded by the pension funds, hence ending this means no development within the country

2.4. Project Management Under Devolution – Eng. T. Chaza

Organisational Project Management as a requirement for devolution. Firstly he gave definitions of program, projects and project management as:-

- i. Program is a centralised management system in which projects are co-ordinated to achieve a program's overall, strategic objective and benefits.
- ii. Projects fall under programs; they are temporary endeavours meant to have a result.
- iii. Project Management is the application of knowledge in the implementation of a set of related projects.
- iv. A stakeholder is the one who is impacting or being impacted by the project.
- v. He further went on to give the three constraints of project management which are the schedule, cost and scope.

administration. He highlighted the key duties of the engineers that they should focus on managing contracts, payments and bidders. The delegates were urged to do site visits with the contractors prior giving them the work which needs to be done, as they are essential in their line of business. Lastly, he encouraged engineers not carry the burdens of contractors in terms of performance. He added that if there is any contractor in need of any help to deliver quality to the client, STF can chip in to help.

3. Day 2

3.1. Update On LAMUZ :By The CEOs Forum National Chairperson Dr Pise

Before he gave an update on LAMUZ ,Dr Pise encouraged the engineers to properly structure the engineering department depending on how they want it to look like in order for them to work in the new dispensation. He said LAMUZ has been formed to deal with the challenges being faced by the grade ten and eleven workers. He mentioned the issue of salary disparities as one of them ,hence he said there is need to have a minimum payment so that there will not be any of these and also minimum conditions of the managerial posts.

One of the delegates asked if there are subscriptions for LAMUZ and the facilitator said that there will be copies of paper which will educate on how to join and the subscriptions. Dr Pise further noted that people need to get ideas on mordenisation and devolution as councils are being more developmental and technical. In order to move towards vision 2030 of the state of infrastructure, there is need to embrace technology,he added.

3.2. Waste Water Treatment Technology by Mr Mhlanga from Witronia .

Commencing his presentation, Mr Mhlanga enlightened the delegates that there is need to uplift the engineer's profession, thus by transforming the way we dispose waste. He highlighted a number of issues on the environment one of them being pollution of the environment which is then polluting the water being supplied. He noted that Rural District Councils are expanding leading to mismatch with the environment, hence sewer treatment is required. He further went on to propose the digester system which is environmentally friendly, eliminates odour, help to minimize pollution among others. As he went on he listed what is needed in order to use the system . As he was rounding off, the facilitator mentioned that introducing new ways of solving problems will get one recognized. He then urged the delegates to come up with many solutions to the numerous problems being faced as it shows the engineering mind.

Questions were raised if the system is sustainable and he agreed that it is. Others had questions on whether the five billion micro- organisms required are commercial, to this one he answered yes again. After taking a few questions the presentation came to an end.

3.3. Implementation Of GIS in Rural Local Authorities by Eng. E. Chitsungo

Engineer Chitsungo presented on the implementation of geographical information systems as it is the technological way everyone should embrace. The objectives of the presentation was to assess the benefit that comes with implementing GIS in rural local authorities and impacts of GIS in the organisational practices. He listed some of the softwares which can be used to design plans and also to capture data such as the ARC, GIS. He encouraged the engineers to start implementing GIS as it helps in spatial planning, spatial distribution of resources. Speaking to the engineers he said, "Grow, grow interest in GIS and get trained". He also said that policy makers should be involved in the use of GIS as they can be assisted in decision making. It helps in development control, he added.

3.4. Introduction Of Ecobond Soil Stabilizer: FSR Solutions

The facilitator gave benefits of using the ECOBOND stabilizer in his presentation and some of them which were stated are safety, duration of the project being shortened among others. The delegates were educated and taken through as to why they should use ECOBOND in projects such as rural dust roads in rural areas.

He further went on to enlighten the delegates on different applications of the ecobond soil such as the dust control, it mitigates all the potential occupational or environmental hazards. He noted that ecobond is water resistant, therefore it is good for roads especially the dusty ones as well as tarred roads. He added that roads made by ecobond have are durable, saves time as it shortens the time of the project and cost, it reduces cost from about 30-50%.

3.5. Recommendations

1. In 2016, Zinara allowed Local Authorities to purchase projects monitoring vehicle for Engineers and this led to the successful completion of the visual road condition survey in 2017. Now with the urgency of ERRP, the same must be done for performance improvement to reach about 95% from the current 48%.

We recommend that the 2022 budget caters for that.

2. When the ERRP programme started early 2021, there was confusion in the way it was supposed to operate as there were no clear guidelines on the operational structures that had been set up. There were unclear communication lines which were established then because of non-representation of Rural District Councils in the National Steering Committee, only MOT and DDF had representation.

We recommend that there be representation in the National Steering Committee on ERRP2 from the RDC National Executive committee.

3. There is a proposal from MOT to purchase equipment for all Road Authorities using the 20% Devolution allocation.

We recommend that Equipment procurement process should be left to the Rural District Councils as they are bodies corporate and independent Procuring Entities who will then decide who they want to partner with on collective procurements.

4. The issue of non-performing contractors with multiple of projects.

We recommend that ARDCZ to set up a portal where all local authorities will submit complaints and recommendations about the performance of contractors which can be accessed by procuring RDCs share information in areas of interest.

5. A Road Condition Survey was done in 2016, supported by the Road fund then but was not completed, only based on Visual assessments, we need to complete the exercise by doing by enhancing it further to determine structural integrity of the roads so as we are informed of cost estimates to repair our roads and characterise them. 10000 km not gazetted in settlement areas.

We recommend that Road authorities to carry out a road condition survey taken into cognisance the structural issues with the help of the Local Government Associations, ZINARA and MOT to re-visit and activate the database from NRCIS by subscribing to ESRI.

Refrain from updating of the database on an on-going basis and get a licenced version from ESRI.

6. GIS is a critical tool used by Leaders today to influence in various areas within their jurisdiction. By Definition According to ESRI, GIS is a computer system which creates manages, analyses and maps all type of data integrating location data (where you are) with descriptive information (What things are like). It helps us understands patterns relationships in their geographic context

We recommend that ARDCZ facilitates common training of Engineers and acquisition of GIS based applications on any Engineering software.

7. Engineering Departments in other locations are Roads and Planning, Technical Services and Works departments. There is a lot of pressure on these departments in the wake of Devolution and ERRP, as leaders we cannot achieve if we do not capacitate the departments which form the backbone of service delivery and revenue in Councils, for us to see performance improvement

We recommend that we come up with a fit –for- purpose organogram for the Engineering Department, headed by the Engineer with 3 assistants with the following sections:

- i. Roads Engineer/Technician-Roads Section to attend to all road infrastructure maintenance and development issues
- ii. Water Engineer/Technician piped water systems, sewer and water in our smart rural setups growth points
- iii. Structural Engineer/Technician/Planning Technician /GIS Technician to have Building Inspectorate /artisans builders/carpenters/plumber
- iv. Engineering Clerk/QS technician to do costing of projects

8. As part of the sustainability strategy, since Rural District Councils will be equipped with equipment by 2022

We recommend that Rural District Council should establish adequately equipped workshops manned by Qualified Diesel Plant Operators to ensure efficient maintenance and repairs of the purchased equipment

3.6. Domestic Session Election of the Human Resources Forum National Executive Committee

The Engineers Forum Conducted their elections and the following was the outcome of the session:

Name	Council	Position	Province
Eng. Q. Masocha	Umguzo RDC	Chairperson	Mat North
Eng. A. Mtuke	Bikita RDC	Vice Chairperson	Masvingo
Eng. M. Nyikadzino	Bindura RDC	Secretary	Mash Central
Eng. M. Ndebele	Insiza RDC	Vice Secretary	Mat South
Eng. E. Chidembo	Makoni	Member	Manicaland
Eng. C. Kwera	Chirumanzu	Member	Midlands
Eng. A. Mudenda	Hwange	Member	Mat North
Eng. F. Majachani	Mudzi	Member	Mash East
Eng. P. Muputa	Sanyati	Member	Mash West

4. Annexures

4.1. Programme

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/195b-To5rHQRUtV9xsYuihEDjJ-5STD3m/view?usp=sharing>

4.2. Attendance Register

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UCeMEfkhyzCgG6_xMNIjTBK0f01Imtl9/view?usp=sharing

4.3. Conference Recording – Audio

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1kXkURyesQEanEeF5GSR9iZqlwhU16_j7?usp=sharing

4.4. Conference Presentations and Speeches

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1jJwiAnVwLdGpZJA0HQ9Jm4raa45SbbGM?usp=sharing>

