

Local Governance and Service Delivery in Sierra Leone: Challenges Faced by Bo City Council

Issa Alie Gbla¹, Ibrahim Munu², Mohamed Yusuf¹

¹Department of Peace and Development Studies, Njala University Bo Campus, Bo, Sierra Leone

²Department of Sociology and Social Work, Njala University Bo Campus, Bo, Sierra Leone

Email: gblaisaalie79@gmail.com, ibrahim.munu@njala.edu.sl, myusuf@njala.edu.sl

How to cite this paper: Gbla, I. A., Munu, I., & Yusuf, M. (2024). Local Governance and Service Delivery in Sierra Leone: Challenges Faced by Bo City Council. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 12, 236-249. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2024.129014>

Received: July 27, 2024

Accepted: September 16, 2024

Published: September 19, 2024

Copyright © 2024 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

This work was carried out to evaluate the challenges local councils face in service delivery. Local councils play a crucial role in service delivery, ensuring that essential services reach communities, thus impacting the people's overall well-being. Through their various functions and responsibilities, local councils ensure effective governance, efficient service provision, and community participation. This article adopts primary data through questionnaires and interviews and secondary data through consultation with several textbooks, magazines, journals, and other publications. Two hundred and fifty (250) copies of questionnaires were administered through simple random sampling method. It was observed that various challenges faced by local councils were late transfer of funds, conflict of interest between the political and administrative wing, inadequate logistics, lack of donor funded projects, tax collection from businesses, lack of autonomy, poor leadership, corruption and administrative inefficiency, were among the challenges faced by Bo City Council. However, it is recommended that the government concentrate on capacity building, adopting new technology, timely transfer of funds from the central government, and providing adequate financial support to local councils in communities and the entire country. Additionally, it is important to review and enhance collaboration between different agencies and formulate policies that enable local councils to contribute to political discussions and improve service delivery within the local governance structure.

Keywords

Local Governance, Sustainable Development, Service Delivery, Bo City Council

1. Introduction

Promoting grassroots development drives the expediency of local government function everywhere, globally. Although local government administration has historically been crucial in promoting development, various limitations have gradually interfered with its operations. These issues include, among others, the blatant lack of adequately skilled and qualified human resources, poor infrastructures, inadequate funding, and the excessive control of the central governments in determining activity implementation (Akhakpe, Fatile, & Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2012).

Decentralization is a significant institutional reform that many observers believe to be the most significant change since most African nations gained independence (Yatta, 2015). With the rapid growing population of Bo City, and the growing demand for service delivery and development, decentralization is certainly what is needed to bridge the historical gap of governance between the government and the people. Efficiency in local governance is the political methodology to deliver local public services to the most significant number of people amidst the challenges (Yatta, 2015). It is crucial to remember that despite numerous reforms in local government administration in Sierra Leone, little has been accomplished in terms of the provision of fundamental services in local governments that will translate to sustainable development at the grassroots level.

After a decade-long civil war in Sierra Leone came to an end in 2002, the administration of late President Ahmad Tejan Kabba reinstated the local government system in Sierra Leone by passing the Local Government Act (LGA), 2004. Right after the Civil War, there was a strong political desire for decentralization, which is reasonable. The LGA of 2004 was viewed as a critical move for reestablishing fully operational, elected local councils that prioritized services. It created the legislative basis for political, administrative, and fiscal decentralization in Sierra Leone (European Commission Report, 2020).

Decentralization has been the key to enhancing local service delivery. Many central governments in developing and least developed nations, including Sierra Leone, have delegated political, administrative, and fiscal responsibilities to local authorities in the course of national development in order to allow for the definition of public policies and service delivery on local realities. To reduce poverty and advance sustainable development, citizens must participate in decision-making that directly impacts their lives and have access to accountability mechanisms (European Commission Report, 2013).

Despite the reality of the subsidiarity principle, local authorities have only sometimes been fully empowered because the right amount of autonomy, capacity building, and financial resources have only sometimes accompanied the political recognition they have received from central governments (European Commission Report, 2020).

Local councils' role in the delivery of social services is crucial to promoting and sustaining community development. Consequently, this piece explores the challenges local councils face in service delivery in Bo City, and proffer recommendations

in addressing it.

2. Theoretical Perspective on Local Governance

Local councils have a significant duty to improve local government. The services rendered by the personnel and councilors of Bo City Council are essential for the local populace to attain healthcare, education, and cleanliness. Additionally, they serve as an intermediary between the citizens and the central government. Although the Council is actively striving to enhance the appeal of Bo City for tourism and development, there are evident obstacles encountered by the Council administration in delivering services that will elevate the standards and quality of life for the residents, as indicated by this research. This study adopted the structural functionalist theory to understand the role of local councils in service delivery.

The theory of structural functionalism offers a comprehensive framework for comprehending the responsibilities and dynamics within local government structures and their influence on the provision of services. [Parsons \(1951\)](#) asserts that social systems, such as local governments, are intricate entities in which different components collaborate to uphold stability and accomplish societal objectives. Within the realm of local government administration, this idea suggests that many governmental departments and agencies work together in a mutually dependent manner to carry out crucial societal responsibilities, such as the building of infrastructure, provision of public health services, and delivery of education ([Parsons, 1951](#)).

In Sierra Leone, this theory can be utilized to examine the functioning of local government entities, such as district councils, within the larger context of governance. District councils in Sierra Leone have the responsibility of providing local services such as water supply, sanitation, and elementary education ([UNDP, 2018](#)). Every division within the council, including health, public works, and education, has a specific function in upholding social order and fulfilling the fundamental requirements of the citizens. These departments collaborate to guarantee the efficient delivery of services and the maintenance of community welfare.

Furthermore, the structural-functionalist perspective emphasizes the significance of role differentiation and specialization within local government systems. Administrative units are organized to efficiently distribute resources, ensure transparent management of public finances, and carry out development initiatives in line with national objectives and local requirements ([UNDP, 2018](#)). Local governments can improve the efficiency and responsiveness of their services by retaining functional differentiation. The specialized units of the Bo City Council, which are responsible for finance, revenue mobilization, development, audit, human resources, educational information, monitoring and evaluation, and procurement, play a vital role in the development of the municipality.

Moreover, the theory underscores the significance of norms and values in influencing administrative practices and relations between citizens and the government. The establishment of norms regarding accountability, transparency, and

participatory decision-making is crucial for building trust between local authorities and the general public (Parsons, 1951). In Sierra Leone, there are structures such as Ward Development Committees that aim to encourage community involvement in local governance. These committees participate in activities such as participatory budgeting and development planning, which are designed to make local government practices more inclusive and responsive to the ideals and felt needs of society (UNDP, 2018).

In conclusion, the structural functionalist theory provides a useful perspective for examining the internal workings and societal roles of local governments in Sierra Leone. The theory emphasizes the interconnectedness of government departments and how effective coordination and adherence to societal standards lead to better service delivery and governance outcomes. This theoretical framework not only helps in comprehending present difficulties faced by the Council but also guides approaches for improving the productivity and efficacy of local government operations in advancing community welfare.

3. Background to Local Government in Sierra Leone

After independence from Britain in 1961, Sierra Leone maintained its colonial-era local government system. The Native Administration as it was called became the Chiefdom Administration, and the Tribal Authorities became Chiefdom Councils after the 1964 Tribal Authorities (Amendment) Act. The 1963 Local Courts Act also changed the Native Courts to Local Courts. People having a thorough understanding of customary law, other than Paramount Chiefs, could become Local Court Chairman. Despite some changes, the local government system in the former Protectorate of Sierra Leone remained mostly unchanged for the first decade after independence, resembling the structure in place during colonial rule (Ochiai, 2017).

However, corruption and inefficiency in the District Councils, which had served as local administrations since independence, sparked public controversy in the late 1960s, leading to its abolishment in 1972 (Ochiai, 2017). The central government appointed District Officers to manage District Council operations and its resources. The Chiefdom Councils (previously Tribal Authorities) continued after the District Councils were eliminated, although they relinquished all local administrative functions save for a limited set of tax and judicial authorities. Following the termination of the District Councils in 1972, Sierra Leone no longer had the administrative structures that formed local governments. Like the colonial Indirect Rule System, local government institutions in the Protectorate, consisting of Tribal Authorities and District Councils, can be described as a system of “decentralized despotism” according to Lechler and Mcnamee (2017). This system was established by the colonial government not to basically involve them in governance administration, but to use them as a structure for exploitation.

In the 1970s and 1980s, rural villages experienced oppressive and authoritarian governance by Paramount Chiefs and other traditional authorities following the

elimination of local government. There was a lack of accountability, and corruption was widespread. Official positions were utilized to solicit bribes. The local governance in urban areas in Sierra Leone is heavily influenced by the privileged wealthy individuals, politicians, and successful business people who hold significant political and economic power in shaping the governance system. In the provinces, Paramount Chiefs and other traditional rulers wielded absolute authority. This instance of mismanagement played a significant role in initiating and prolonging the 1991 Civil War. Following the war, the government placed high importance on implementing local government reform, an effort that it has sustained.

In May 2002, after ending the conflict, President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah stated in his re-election speech that his government would prioritize local government reform as a crucial development matter in post-conflict Sierra Leone. Subsequently, there has been vigorous debate over the reform of local government, specifically decentralization. The government has garnered backing from the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme in pursuit of this objective. In response to these advancements, the government passed the Local Government Act of 2004 in March of that year. Subsequently, in May, the government conducted local council elections nationwide, forming a total of 19 Local Councils, consisting of 13 District Councils and six City Councils. Sierra Leone reinstated local government after a hiatus of 32 years.

Since their inception in 2004, the Local Councils have functioned as providers of public services in various domains, such as public health, education, and infrastructure. Their presence has been deeply rooted in the everyday lives of citizens. In contrast, in 2010, the Sierra Leone Government declared its intention to reinstate the position of District Officer (formerly known as District Commissioner), which had been eliminated when District Councils were established in 2004. The reinstatement of District Officers was intended to unequivocally demonstrate the government's commitment to assume responsibility for the governance and leadership of chiefdoms, rather than delegating it only to the District Councils, an action that undermines local government.

Sierra Leone's Parliament debated and enacted "The Local Government Act of 2022" with some revisions on December 19, 2022, to boost local government and rural development. The Bill seeks to continue local governments, Bo City Council, decentralize and devolve tasks, authorities, and services to local councils, and repeal and replace the 2004 Local Government Act for Sierra Leone's development. After extensive consultations, debate, and modifications, the Bill became law.

4. Service Delivery at Bo City Council

Bo City, the second-largest city in Sierra Leone, is a significant urban centre and serves as the administrative focal point of Bo District. Similar to other local councils in Sierra Leone, the Bo City Council is accountable for a range of public services such as infrastructure development, waste management, water supply, and sanitation (Bo City Council Report, 2018)

The Council is responsible for the collection and disposal of solid waste in order to meet its purpose of maintaining a clean and healthy environment for citizens. The council is accountable for the upkeep of local roads and infrastructure, assuring its optimal state for both vehicular and pedestrian use. Additionally, they supervise public health endeavours, including cleanliness, illness prevention, and occasionally the administration of local clinics or health outreach programs. The council is responsible for overseeing the organisation, safety, and cleanliness of local markets. They also play a role in supporting primary and secondary education by maintaining schools and providing educational resources. In addition, the council undertakes projects to enhance the living standards of the community, focusing on areas such as housing, water supply, and social services. They also manage land use and promote orderly development within the city. The council's activities are funded through the collection of local taxes and fees, such as property taxes, business licenses, and market dues (Government of Sierra Leone, 2004).

Service delivery encompasses all interactions between citizens and public administration, including seeking information, managing personal affairs, and paying taxes (Motsi et al., 2023). It also refers to the extent to which services provided by various sectors meet or surpass the expectations of the general public. Srivastava and Larizza (2011) assert that local governments are responsible for providing adequate, affordable, and high-quality basic services. However, the challenges in service delivery within the Bo City Council in Sierra Leone are a significant issue that affects the local population's access to essential services like sanitation, healthcare, education, and infrastructure hence the need for this study.

The need for more basic infrastructure, such as limited access to clean water and efficient sanitary facilities, is a significant problem. Many communities in Bo encounter difficulties with the accessibility and quality of water, resulting in possible health risks. Inadequate road infrastructure impedes transportation and accessibility, especially in the city's remote areas, hence impacting the delivery of goods and services, and healthcare. UNDP (2017) in their report asserts that health institutions in remote neighborhoods of the city sometimes suffer from a lack of staff, inadequate equipment, and limited accessibility. Insufficient financing and inadequate infrastructure in public health education lead to the proliferation of diseases that may otherwise be controlled or prevented through increased knowledge and preventive measures.

Once again, waste collection services frequently experience delays and inefficiency, resulting in excessive accumulation of waste in public spaces, as the filth is evident in the major streets of Bo. The prevalence of corruption and inadequate management procedures inside the council might result in the improper allocation of resources, hence worsening the deficiencies in service delivery in the City. The lack of transparency in the council's work and decisions undermines public trust and engagement. The research is driven by frequent power outages and unreliable electricity supply, which restrict household and business activities, impede economic growth, and diminish quality of life. Furthermore, there is a communication gap between the council and the citizens, resulting in a lack of awareness

about available services and how to access them.

[World Bank \(2017\)](#) reports that the major obstacle that the Bo City Council must confront is the insufficient budget and ineffective distribution of resources, which negatively impacts the provision of crucial services. It is crucial to increase local revenue production and obtain more funding from the central government or international donors to enhance service delivery.

5. Literature Review

The presence of local government has consistently been justified because it is a vital component of the democratization process and the enhancement of widespread involvement in decision-making. A political system cannot be deemed comprehensive and democratic unless it incorporates a system of local governance. Local governance is necessary in communities where individuals have frequent and meaningful interactions with one another ([Crawford, 2003](#)). To effectively resolve their problems, individuals must interact as a unified entity to achieve their intended results.

Governments play a vital role in governing and providing services to communities at the local level. They are a key factor in the development of communities. For service delivery to be sustainable, the roles of community leaders and local council administrators are extremely important. However, Local Councils are faced with challenges in the delivery of essential social services to enhance development. In an interview with the Chief Administrator of the Bo City Council, local councils, including Bo City Council, are essential in providing public services; they deliver key government-devolved functions such as health, education, agriculture, solid waste management services, rural water services, and local roads.

According to [Smith \(2017\)](#), one of the most significant issues local councils deal with is the need for more funding. Local governments rely primarily on financing from the central government and donor institutions, and limited availability of funds can severely limit their capacity to implement development initiatives and deliver critical services. The delay in allocating community development funds to local councils has impacted the timing of project activities, eroded the trust of those benefiting from the development, and generated concerns regarding accountability and the delivery of services. [Smith \(2017\)](#) observed that budgetary constraints hinder local government's ability to maintain infrastructure, respond to social welfare requests, and adopt effective policies to improve people's living standards.

Devolving functions from central government to local councils has been a game-changing development in improving local governance according to [Johnson \(2019\)](#). It has, however, also presented difficulties. Local councils frequently need more capabilities and knowledge to manage the transferred tasks well. [Olowu and Wunsch \(2004\)](#) stated four prerequisites that must be fulfilled for the implementation of decentralization to be efficient. These prerequisites include the presence of a competent local authority with autonomy, adequate resources allocated to localities, the establishment of effective institutions for collective action,

and the existence of transparent and accountable local political processes. These requirements primarily pertain to the local government's ability to carry out assigned tasks in the delivery of social services. Decentralizing roles with proper support mechanisms can result in efficiency and better management (Johnson, 2019).

A good knowledge of the roles of councils, and the duty they owe to community people can informed quality decision-making, which is an underlying pillar for efficient performance. When council staff are capacitated in the performance of their functions, service delivery will be remarkable. Where the opposite exist, policies may be prejudiced, the public may participate less, and vulnerable groups may be excluded. In order to solve these issues, a study by Brown and Green (2018) showed the importance of inclusive and transparent governance methods. Where governance at local level involves the local beneficiaries in identifying their felt needs, planning on ways to address the problem, the result will be sustainable. Local councils have a crucial role in efficiently delivering healthcare, education, and sanitation services. In order to address issues with service delivery, a research study by White et al. (2020) underlined the necessity for capacity-building efforts and strategic planning. Local councils must involve the community in decision-making and policy creation to succeed. Effective public participation procedures and communication tactics are essential to addressing these issues, as Jones (2016) has noted.

Local councils need help with their ability to govern effectively and provide essential services to their constituents. Financial constraints, decentralization issues, governance concerns, service delivery limitations, and community engagement barriers are among the key challenges that must be addressed. Policymakers and stakeholders must recognize these challenges and work towards implementing reforms and initiatives to overcome them.

6. Research Methodology

The study's conclusions were based on data generated through both primary and secondary research methodologies. The study was carried out in Bo City, and the data was collected and analyzed utilizing a comprehensive technique that integrated qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The researcher additionally documented activities and conducted interviews with 250 persons, including council personnel, stakeholders, and members of the community. The secondary data were derived from scholarly journals, newspapers, and relevant publications pertaining to the topic being examined.

7. Key Findings on the Challenges Faced by Local Councils in Services Delivery in Bo City

Service delivery is a central aspect of local government operations. The Local Government Act 2004 mandated the transfer of specific sectors and functions to local councils to promote community involvement and efficient governance. This

transfer of responsibilities enables a grassroots approach to decision-making on issues that could affect the community. Despite the positive effects this has on development, numerous challenges hinder the council's ability to effectively provide essential services that contribute to community development. Below are the findings generated from this study.

Financial Constraints: The Bo City Council operates within strict budgetary limitations tied to each sector, which can curtail their ability to deliver adequate services to their communities. During an interview with the Finance Officer of the Council, he emphasized that the council frequently faces constraints in carrying out activities due to insufficient funding, an inadequate budget, and delayed cash transfers from the central government. These factors have resulted in a decrease in the quality of services, delays in infrastructure projects, and a lack of personnel to carry out developmental operations. According to a study by [Taylor and Francis \(2018\)](#), a global survey of local government finances revealed that many local councils struggle to generate sufficient revenue to meet the increasing demands for service provision. This financial strain poses a significant challenge, as local councils must find innovative ways to manage their limited resources effectively ([World Bank, 2012](#)).

Limited financial resources hinder the council's ability to carry out its responsibilities effectively. With sufficient funding, it becomes easier to maintain existing infrastructure, improve essential services, and invest in community development. The local council heavily relies on central government grants, which often need to be increased to meet the city's growing demands. As a result, service delivery, such as waste management, road maintenance, and healthcare accessibility, suffers.

Also, many local councils source funds from donor institutions, making them vulnerable to fluctuations in funding availability. According to a World Bank report, the limited financial resources available to local councils create a substantial obstacle for them in meeting the needs and aspirations of their communities ([World Bank, 2017](#)).

Governance and Political Interference: Political interference and governance issues present another challenge for local councils in service delivery. Disruption caused by frequent changes in political leadership can impede progress and inhibit the implementation of long-term plans. Moreover, decisions made for political rather than practical reasons may prioritize certain areas over others, thus widening the gap in service provision. In Sierra Leone today, there's an unequal distribution of resources in areas covered by the party in power, and those in opposition. In many instances, the strong holds of the ruling party benefits the most, while the opposition areas are politically deprived. The [World Bank \(2012\)](#) highlights the importance of good governance in achieving effective service delivery, emphasizing the need for transparent decision-making processes and solid institutional frameworks that safeguard against political interference.

Technological Advancements: Rapid technological advancements pose oppor-

tunities and challenges for local councils in service delivery. On one hand, technology can enhance efficiency and effectiveness, streamline processes, and improve citizen engagement. On the other hand, not all local councils possess the resources or expertise to adopt and integrate new technologies into their existing systems. The [International City/County Management Association \(ICMA\)](#) emphasizes the need for training programs and technical support to bridge the digital divide and enable local councils to harness the potential of emerging technologies. ([World Bank, 2012](#)).

Most of the activities and reports generated by the Bo City Council are paper based. There is a serious challenge in filing all documents into a computer based system as the council is constrained with computers, the technical capacity undertake online transactions, and more importantly power outages. Efficiency in service delivery can be achieved more when people have access to relate with their councils from the comfort of their homes.

Social and Demographic Changes: Bo City councils faces adapting their services to cater to changing social and demographic dynamics within their communities. Rapid urbanization, population growth, and youth bulge are just a few factors that require local councils to reevaluate their service delivery strategies. The United Nations Development Programme emphasizes the importance of comprehensive urban planning and the provision of appropriate social services to address the needs of emerging sectors and marginalized groups within society ([Stoker, 2006](#)).

Collaboration and Partnerships: The toughness and interconnectedness of global challenges require local councils to collaborate with other stakeholders, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community groups, and private sector entities. Collaboration allows the pooling of resources, expertise, and knowledge, ultimately leading to improved service delivery outcomes. The academic journal article by [Stoker \(2006\)](#) supports this notion, stating that effective collaboration and partnership are essential for local councils to address complex social issues and deliver integrated services ([Taylor & Francis, 2018](#)).

Policy Implementation and Coordination: The effective implementation of policies and coordination among different agencies and stakeholders is crucial for successful service delivery. However, the local council of Bo City faces challenges in translating policies into action due to bureaucratic hurdles, inadequate collaboration, and a lack of accountability. As a result, delays and inefficiencies in service delivery persist, impacting the quality of life for residents ([Journal of Public Administration and Governance, 2019](#)).

Inter-political objectives have also compromised policy implementation and coordination. Nation issues of relevance are sometimes analyzed from a subjective view, thereby hindering community growth and development.

Lack of Skilled Workforce: Another significant challenge the local council faces is the need for a skilled workforce. The effective delivery of services requires knowledgeable and competent personnel to plan, implement, and manage various

initiatives. Unfortunately, the local council struggles to attract and retain qualified professionals due to limited resources and competition with the private sector. The city is grappling with control of waste management, delivering accessible and affordable health care services, lack of enough trained teachers to deliver courses in science, technology, engineering and mathematics in schools, and the expertise to increase revenue generation. This shortage of skilled workforce adversely impacts the quality and efficiency of service delivery in Bo City.

Communication and Information Management: Effective communication and information management are essential for ensuring transparent and accountable service delivery. However, the Bo City Council needs support in maintaining an effective communication system and managing information flow. The work of the council's focal person on public information and education has to be redefined to meet the modern technological demands of technology and service delivery. Access to technology and adequate training help the council's ability to collect, analyze, and disseminate relevant data.

The medium that is mostly used by the council in disseminating public notices are through radio stations, which are paid for by the council. The payments for these information to be announced to the public have often limited the amount of time such notices are broadcasted. Town hall meetings and community engagements are not budgeted for by council, a challenge that has created a gap within the local governance structure.

Infrastructure Deficit: Inadequate infrastructure is a pressing challenge the local council faces in service delivery. Like many growing urban centres, Bo City experiences rapid population growth, putting immense strain on infrastructure such as roads, water supply, and sanitation facilities. The lack of proper infrastructure affects the quality of essential services and hampers economic growth and development. Additionally, the council needs help to allocate sufficient funds and coordinate with relevant stakeholders to address the infrastructure deficit adequately.

More roads, markets, community centres, and transportation systems must be improved to ensure the delivery of essential services to remote areas. According to a report by the World Bank, inadequate infrastructure is a significant barrier to service delivery in Sierra Leone, affecting the lives of millions of people living in rural communities. Furthermore, the lack of infrastructure impedes economic growth and development in these areas, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and underdevelopment (*Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 2019).

Lack of Capacity and Governance: Local councils in Bo City often need help with capacity and governance issues. Inadequate training, poor coordination, and weak administrative systems within local councils undermine effective service delivery. Insufficient capacity in terms of human resources creates difficulties in managing and implementing development projects, leading to delays and inefficiencies. Furthermore, corruption and mismanagement within local councils erode public trust in the government and hinder the effective delivery of services.

A report by Transparency International highlights the urgent need for improved governance and capacity-building mechanisms in Sierra Leone's local councils to combat corruption and enhance service delivery (Transparency International, 2017).

8. Summary of Key Findings

The Bo City Council faces a range of operational constraints, including financial limitations, capacity deficits, political interference, infrastructure challenges, limited community engagement, and corruption. The fact that funds are not allocated to councils on time to finance their operations will affect service delivery and slow down development. The research findings also shows that corruption, inadequate staff personnel, and Addressing these issues requires a concerted effort from both the local council and the central government, alongside support from international development partners. These references and issues provide a basis for understanding the complex environment in which the Bo city Council operates. Bo City Council, like many local governments in Sierra Leone and other parts of Africa, faces several key constraints and challenges. These issues can have significant impacts on the council's ability to deliver services effectively and meet the needs of its population.

9. Recommendations

Local councils play a crucial role in delivering essential services to communities. However, they encounter numerous challenges that hinder their effectiveness in service delivery. For an effective and efficient service delivery, local councils in Bo City need to:

Strengthening Financial Resources and the timely disbursement of funds:

One of the primary challenges faced by the local council in Bo City is inadequate financial resources. Insufficient funding leads to compromised service delivery, leaving communities without essential services. To address this, it is necessary for the central government to ensure the timely allocation of funds to local councils. This can be achieved by revising budgetary allocations, decentralizing financial resources, and exploring innovative financing mechanisms.

Enhancing Capacity Building: Local councils in Bo City face capacity constraints, with staff needing more skills and expertise to carry out their duties effectively. Investing in training and development programs for council staff is crucial, ensuring they have the knowledge and skills required for efficient service delivery. Collaborating with educational institutions, organizing workshops, and providing on-the-job training opportunities can significantly enhance the capacity of local council employees.

Embracing New Technology: In the modern era, technology has become an invaluable tool for service delivery. Local councils in Bo City can leverage new technology to streamline their operations and enhance efficiency. Implementing digital platforms for service requests, payment processing, and information dissemination

can improve accessibility, reduce response times, and enhance transparency. Furthermore, data analytics can enable councils to make data-driven decisions, identify service gaps, and allocate resources more effectively.

Enhancing Citizen Participation: Involving citizens in decision-making processes and service delivery can significantly improve governance and accountability. Local councils in Bo City should establish participatory mechanisms such as citizen advisory committees, public consultations, and regular feedback sessions. This engagement will foster a sense of ownership within the community and ensure that services meet the actual needs and preferences of the residents.

Strengthening Inter-agency Collaboration: Challenges in service delivery are often rooted in complex interdependencies between multiple agencies and levels of government. Establishing effective interagency collaboration mechanisms can help overcome this challenge. Local councils in Bo City can reduce duplications and gaps in service provision by promoting coordination, sharing resources, and aligning objectives. Regular meetings, joint planning, and information-sharing platforms can facilitate closer collaboration among relevant stakeholders.

10. Conclusion

Based on the study, it can be concluded that the local council in Bo City faces significant challenges in delivering efficient and effective services to its residents. Inadequate funding, lack of a skilled workforce, communication gaps, infrastructure deficits, and policy implementation issues are among the key hurdles that must be tackled. Addressing these challenges will require targeted strategies, such as timely disbursement of funds, increasing budget allocations, investing in workforce development, improving information management systems, prioritizing infrastructure development, and enhancing policy implementation and coordination. By effectively addressing these challenges, the local council can enhance service delivery and improve the quality of life for the residents of Bo City.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

- Akhakpe, I., Fatile, J. O., & Igbokwe-Ibeto, C. J. (2012). Local Government and the Challenges of Community and Rural Development in Nigeria: The Way forward. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 2, 648-665.
- Bo City Council Report (2018). *The World Bank Sierra Leone Multi-City Hazard Review and Risk Assessment Final Report (Volume 4 of 5): Bo City Hazard and Risk Assessment*.
- Brown, A., & Green, M. (2018). Governance and Decision-Making Challenges in Local Councils. *Public Policy Journal*, 15, 112-129.
- Crawford, A. (2003). Contractual Governance on Deviant Behaviour. *Journal of Law and Society*, 30, 479-505. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6478.2003.00267.x>
- European Commission Report (2013). *Commission Report on Monitoring the Application of EU Law*.

- European Commission Report (2020). *General Report on the Activities of the European Union*.
- Government of Sierra Leone (2004). *Local Government Act, 2004 (Act No. 1 of 2004)*. Government Printing Service.
- International City/County Management Association (ICMA). *Harnessing Technology for Local Government Transformation*.
- Johnson, L. (2019). Decentralization and Devolution Challenges Faced by Local Councils. *Local Governance Review*, 25, 78-94.
- Jones, R. (2016). Community Engagement and Participation in Local Council Decision-Making. *Community Journal*, 8, 75-88.
- Journal of Public Administration and Governance (2019). *Financial Autonomy and Service Delivery in Local Councils in Sierra Leone*.
- Lechler, M., & Mcnamee, L. (2017). *Decentralized Despotism? Indirect Colonial Rule Undermines Contemporary Democratic Attitudes*. Lud-Wig-Maximilians-Universität München.
- Motsi, A. et al. (2023). Service Delivery in Urban Local Authorities: A Literature Review Paper. *Journal of Industrial Distribution & Business*, 14, 23-33.
- Ochiai, T. (2017). *A Historical Overview of Local Government in the Protectorate of Sierra Leone*. Ryukoku University.
- Olowu, D., & Wunsch, J. S. (2004). *Local Governance in Africa: The Challenge of Democratic Decentralization*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Parsons, T. (1951). *The Social System*. Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Smith, J. (2017). Financial Constraints and Implications for Local Councils. *Journal of Public Administration Research*, 12, 45-60.
- Srivastava, V., & Larizza, M. (2011). Decentralization in Post Conflict Sierra Leone: The Genie Is out of the Bottle. In P. Chuhan-Pole, & M. Angwafo (Eds.), *Yes Africa Can: Success Stories from a Dynamic Continent* (pp. 141-154). World Bank.
- Stoker, G. (2006). *Public Value Management: A New Narrative for Networked Governance?* SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0275074005282583>
- Taylor & Francis (2018). *Local Government Finances across the Globe: A Comparative Analysis*.
- Transparency International (2017). *Corruption Perception Index*. Transparency International.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2017). *UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021: A New Plan for a New Era*.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2018). *UNDP Sierra Leone Annual Report 2018*. UNDP.
- White, S. et al. (2020). Service Delivery Challenges of Local Councils: A Case Study. *Journal of Local Government and Administration*, 18, 205-220.
- World Bank (2012). *Governance in the Service of Delivery*.
- World Bank (2017). *Sierra Leone Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project: Project Information Document*.
- Yatta, F. (2015). *Assessing the Institutional Environment of Local Governments in Africa*. The Cities Alliance.