THE CONSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION OF THE DEVOLUTION AGENDA IN ZIMBABWE: A COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The Constitution of Zimbabwe that was introduced in 2013 provides for the devolution of governmental powers and responsibilities from central government to lower tiers, aimed at bringing local governance closer to the people and promoting democratic, accountable government. To this end, the Constitution establishes provincial and metropolitan councils across Zimbabwe's ten provinces, mandated to plan and implement economic and social development programmes and to monitor and evaluate resource use. It further establishes urban and rural local authorities responsible for promoting economic and social development within their spheres of influence, with the overarching goal of accelerating local development and ensuring no community is left behind. Despite these noble provisions, implementation has faced significant challenges, including underfunding, corruption and insufficient resources, hindering national development despite sound policies such as the National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1). Consequently, poverty levels remain high eleven years after devolution was constitutionalised. This study undertakes qualitative research into the opportunities presented by the constitutional protection of devolution in Zimbabwe, enriched by a comparative analysis of Sri Lanka, whose constitution decentralises power to provincial councils while leaving local authorities to be governed by legislation. It concludes by proposing solutions to Zimbabwe's devolution challenges and drawing lessons from Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka, Constitution, Devolution of Power, National Development, Challenges.

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