

# THE COMPLIANCE OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF VICTORIA FALLS WITH THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES ACT OF ZIMBABWE

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# Introduction

- ▣ The call of proper records management is achievable if it is supported by relevant archival legislation
- ▣ In Zimbabwe the National Archives is mandated by the National Archives Act of 1986 to manage the public records including those of Municipalities
- ▣ However the availability of the archival legislation does not mean total adherence as this presentation will show.

# Local Authorities in Zimbabwe with specific reference to Victoria Falls

- ▣ History of Local Authorities in Zimbabwe can be traced back to the Urban Councils Act of 1891, 1980 which was repealed and replaced by the Urban Council Act (Chapter 29.15) and this have been amended for a number of times
- ▣ Through the Act the Central Government has decentralised some of its constitutional duties such as the provision of basic services to the local authorities
- ▣ This inextricable link between the Central Government and local authorities has also extended to records management

# Continued...

- ▣ It therefore comes as no surprise that section 7 of the National Archives of Zimbabwe Act is dedicated wholly to local authorities and statutory bodies
- ▣ Victoria Falls is one of the 9 municipalities in Zimbabwe. It was granted this status in 1999
- ▣ Its responsibilities range from the provision of housing, land management, health facilities, water production and distribution, sewage removal and treatment to the provision of social amenities

# Statement of the problem

- ▣ The National Archives of Zimbabwe is not all that visible to the far ends of Zimbabwe such as the Victoria Falls. There are many factors that have led to this invisibility for example the financial constraints faced by the institution has caused the Department to be immobile. This means the legislative supervisory role of NAZ is not being felt in such areas. The result being partly adherence to the National Archives Act of Zimbabwe by both parties that is the National Archives of Zimbabwe and the Municipality of Victoria Falls.

# Summary of research findings

- ▣ Lack of retention schedules
- ▣ Accumulation of unprocessed records/archives
- ▣ Acute shortage of filing cabinets and this has resulted in most files being filed in improvised suspension files and others stacked in boxes
- ▣ Most of semi current and archival records are decentralised within different departments and sections
- ▣ Archival and semi current records not transferred to National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) and the Act is vague on that

# Summary of research findings continued...

- ❑ Lack of properly built Registry as it is just an office which was turned to records management services
- ❑ The centralised registry is new and yet to take shape
- ❑ Reasonable positioning of registry supervisor officer in the municipality organogram
- ❑ Properly established electronic records mechanisms are yet to be established
- ❑ Financial constraints

# Discussions: Visibility of NAZ

- ❑ In early 1980s the NAZ embarked on decentralisation of its records management services to provinces
- ❑ This saw NAZ opening Record Centres in Mutare, Chinhoyi, Gweru and Masvingo
- ❑ Observations on the ground revealed that some provinces such as Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East, Matabeleland North and South still do not have Record Centres
- ❑ So the Bulawayo Archives and Records Centre has to cover these 3 provinces and Victoria Falls is 439 km from Bulawayo



# Invisibility of NAZ continued...

- ▣ The Municipality of Victoria Falls (MVF) is therefore the victim of this invisibility
- ▣ In their history of existence only once in 2006 were the records management (RM) surveys carried out
- ▣ Its now 9 years after this RM survey was done and the NAZ has failed to have a follow up
- ▣ This is also in ultra vires with the NAZ mission statement which stipulates that the frequency of RM surveys should be at least done once every four years per institution

# MVF' organogram in relation to RM functions

- ▣ The RM of the MVF falls under the Chamber Secretary. These middle managers immediately below the Chamber Secretary are as follows: Legal Services Officer; Human Resources Manager; Fire and Emergency Services Officer; Security Officer; **Registry Supervisor** and Committee Secretary
- ▣ Whilst the MVF positively recognises Registry Supervisor as a middle manager at the time of writing this article the Registry Department was manned by one person instead of 4
- ▣ This very insignificant low number of staff at the registry means that RM is compromised thereby leading to the partial compliance of NAZ Act

# Physical and intellectual control of records at the MVF

- ▣ One of the importance of retention schedules is to discard promptly those records you no longer need etc.
- ▣ Therefore the unavailability of retention schedules at the MVF has led to the uncontrolled massive accumulation of records in both the Registry and the Offices
- ▣ This was a vindication that the records were not being disposed in a proper manner as envisaged by the NAZ Act and the theories of records cycle or even records continuum

# Infrastructural Challenges

- ▣ The Registry at MVF was established in 2012. It still needs to be equipped with proper RM equipment
- ▣ It was just an office which was turned to registry without making any necessary changes
- ▣ Shelving and storage facilities are in short supply and this has meant that some of the records are just stacked in the boxes and put on the floor
- ▣ This has compromised proper preservation leading to some records being affected by moisture

# Financial constraints

- ▣ It is not a secret that most if not all municipalities in Zimbabwe are facing financial challenges. There are even struggling to honour statutory obligations to NSSA and ZIMRA due to liquidity challenges (Report of the Auditor-General for the financial year ending December 31, 2012)
- ▣ The Profile Document of the MVF (n.d:7) stated that the institution's financial position is very poor which makes procurement of necessary equipment very difficult
- ▣ Also this has led to the exodus of skilled professionals as the document argued
- ▣ RM services have not been spared from this as has been discussed above

# Recommendations and conclusions

- ▣ NAZ can establish a satellite records centre in Matabeleland North in order for it to be visible and play its supervisory role as mandated by the NAZ Act
- ▣ MVF can build an archival suitable building for the management of their records
- ▣ MVF with the assistance of NAZ can come up with retention schedules and institutional records manual which will assist in the proper management of public records as envisaged by the Act
- ▣ The MVF can employ more RM officers than just having one at the present moment

**Thank you for your time**