

CAMPAIGNING IN ZAMBIA

Understanding the challenges faced by children affected by poverty

Background/context:

Zambia has a population of just over 15 million people¹, of which half are under the age of fifteen. The country has a mixed economy consisting of a rural agricultural sector and a modern urban sector that, geographically, follows the rail line connecting most of the major cities in the country. This provides affordable transportation of goods such as timber, minerals, raw materials and manufactured goods between cities and across borders. Currently, the construction sector contributes 14% of the gross domestic product (GDP), while agriculture contributes 9%, with the manufacturing and the mining sectors each contributing 8% of the GDP.²

Zambia's positive economic growth, at around 5% to 6% over the last 10 years, has been driven by increased copper production, high commodity prices and significant foreign direct investment. Yet coupled with high levels of economic inequality, this growth has not resulted in commensurate change in income poverty levels or employment, other than in limited urban settings. In 2015, Zambia's economic environment was under pressure. Limitations in power supply and a steep drop in copper prices has led to Zambia's kwacha being labeled 'the worlds' worst performing currency' in 2015.³

According to the World Bank mapping of sub-national poverty in Zambia report, around 60% (7.9 million) of the entire population lives in poverty and 40% (5.5 million) are extremely poor. In 2010, rural poverty was estimated at 77.9%, compared to urban poverty levels of 27.5%.⁴ Similarly, more than half of the rural population (approximately 58%) was afflicted by extreme levels of poverty whereas, in urban areas, the extreme poor remained at approximately 13%.⁵

The situation is particularly dire for children, with an estimated 65% (4.6 million) children and adolescents living in poverty. Child poverty is also predominantly rural: 85% (3.89 million) of poor children live in rural areas. However, there is growing urban poverty for those living in informal settlements and urban poor areas.

Large and increasing discrepancies also exist in some specific geographic areas. More than 50% of the population is not able to satisfy their basic food requirements in Eastern, Luapula, Northern and Western provinces, which are predominantly rural and fairly remote. By contrast, in Lusaka and Copperbelt provinces, less than 20% of the population is in this situation. The remote provinces are characterized by mono-economies⁶ with, among other hardships, poor infrastructure, poor access to social and economic amenities, poor water and sanitation conditions, and low levels of economic activities such as significant trade and industry to create jobs and income for the local populace.

¹ World Bank 2015

² CSO, 2014

³ The World Bank report 2015

⁴ The World Bank- Mapping Sub-national poverty in Zambia pages 5 -9

⁵ Urban Child Poverty: A case for Copperbelt and Lusaka provinces 2015 by Economist Frank Kakungu funded by UNICEF through Save The Children Zambia Office

⁶ A mono-economy is an economy relying on one major export or natural resource to bring most of the currency into the country or town/city

Despite the largest share of the Zambia's poor population living in rural areas, poverty levels in the urban areas of Lusaka and Copperbelt are strikingly high. 80% of all children in these areas, girls and boys, and of all age groups, are deprived in at least one of the following seven dimensions⁷ (education, health, nutrition, water, sanitation, shelter and information). Poverty levels in Copperbelt province are particularly high, with virtually all children, at 96%, being deprived in at least one of the seven dimensions. Lusaka is not an exception, with substantial high levels of poverty among the children of all age groups, 81% are deprived in at least one of the seven dimensions.

Cultural and social norms have particularly worsened these problems for girls living in extreme poverty; ⁸ 40% of poor girls drop out of school and 44% between the age of 15-19 are already bearing children; 42% of poor girls are married before the age of 18. ⁹ Culturally, girls are considered to be income generators for families through bride price; many are married off early to provide an income for the family. Sometimes, they are married off to provide an income that is used to allow a boy child to attend school.

Furthermore, children do not have a voice on issues affecting them because formal structures at national, provincial, district and community levels that would allow participation do not engage children meaningfully.¹⁰ The problem is worsened by inconsistencies within different policies that define a child, further impacting on participation and engagement of children in policy processes. ¹¹.

Diagnosis

In Zambia, it is the poorest children living in urban poor and informal areas and rural areas who have been most excluded from progress. This stems from chronic under-investment and poor prioritization in key areas, and poor implementation of existing policies.

- I. Zambia's **malnutrition** problem is significant, with 40% of children under five stunted (low height-for-age) and 15 % underweight (low weight-for-age).¹² The absolute number of children who are stunted has increased, from 685,000 in 1992 to 1.14 million in 2013.¹³ Children from the poorest quintile are 1.7 times as likely to be stunted as children from the wealthiest quintile.¹⁴ Children in rural areas (42%) are more likely to be stunted than those in urban areas (36%). At the provincial level, Northern has the highest proportion of stunted children (49%), while Copperbelt, Lusaka, and Western have the lowest proportions (36% each).
- II. The share of the population using surface **water** is much higher in rural areas than urban areas, at 23% against 1.9 %. Similarly, 26.8% of the rural population does not have toilet facilities, compared to 1.5%

⁷ Urban Child Poverty: A case for Copperbelt and Lusaka provinces 2015 by Economist Frank Kakungu funded by UNICEF through Save the Children Zambia Office. The seven dimensions are the core areas for measuring child poverty by the Central Statistics Office of Zambia

⁸ Zambia DHS 2013-14

⁹ Zambia has a dual law system of customary and constitutional law. Under customary law, there is no definition of a child. Puberty defines the ascension from being a child to an adult: [Panos Media brief on ending child marriages in Zambia](#)

¹⁰ Statement uttered by Pericant Nkole, Save the Children Zambia child Ambassador, at the priority campaign planning workshop held at Cresta Golfview 16-17 November 2015

¹¹ [Panos Media brief on ending child marriages in Zambia](#)

¹² Central Statistical Office (CSO) [Zambia], Ministry of Health (MOH) [Zambia], and ICF International. 2014. [Zambia Demographic and Health Survey 2013-14](#). Rockville, Maryland, USA: Central Statistical Office, Ministry of Health, and ICF International:

¹³ Zambia DHS 1992, 1996, 2002, 2007, 2013-14

¹⁴ Malnutrition in Zambia: Harnessing social protection for the most vulnerable (2016) Report by Save the Children

in urban areas.¹⁵ The situation is considerably worse in rural areas than in urban areas, with one fifth of the population using the most unsafe type of water, or the most unsafe type of sanitation, or both. In rural areas, 19% rely on surface water and 22% practice open defecation.

- III. Children with **disabilities** are largely excluded from schools. Out of the 256,690 people registered as disabled in Zambia¹⁶, 43.2% had no formal education, 39.7% had primary school education, 14.5% had secondary school education, 1.3% had A level and another 1.3% had attained tertiary education. Moberg and Kasonde Ng'andu (2001) reported that 40% of school going children with disabilities in Western and North Western provinces of Zambia dropped out of school system because they could not afford transport to school, food or uniforms. Those in rural schools had to walk an average of 11 kilometers to school.
- IV. The provinces with the highest **literacy** rates in 2010 were Copperbelt (83.1%) and Lusaka (83.0%). Eastern Province had the lowest literacy rate at 54.4%. The literacy rate for males was higher (73.2%) than that of females (67.3%). The Gender Parity Index (GPI) shows the disparities in access to education between rural and urban. In rural areas the GPI was 0.75 while that of urban areas was 1.00. Lusaka and Copperbelt provinces had the highest GPI at 1.04 and 0.99, respectively. Northern Province had the lowest at 0.69.
- V. The overall **labour** force participation rate was recorded at 55.2%, while that recorded in urban areas was 48.5% and 60.3% in rural areas. Overall, the unemployment rate was 13.0% of the total labour force. Urban unemployment rate was 22.1% while rural unemployment rate was 7.5%. The youth unemployment rate was 16.7%, with urban youth unemployment rate being higher (22.0%) than the rural unemployment rate of 7.5%.

Assessment of current government plans and policies

The section analyses some of the policies highlighted in the Sixth National Development Plan, spanning 2013 to 2015 and policy pronouncements delivered by the Republican President of Zambia in November 2015.¹⁷

Health and nutrition

Government plans:—

- Continue reorganizing the Health Sector by delegating prevention programmes to the Ministry of Community Development, Mother and Child Health.
- Strengthen the healthcare delivery by improving capacities at all levels and strengthening linkages and, upgrading all second level hospitals to central hospitals.
- Improve selected district hospitals to general hospital status.
- Develop some training institutions to become centers of excellence for specialist training provision.
- Construct new health posts to improve community involvement in the prevention of disease.

Discussion

Despite making strides in some areas of the health sector, for example reduction in the rate of children

¹⁵ Central Statistical Office (CSO) [Zambia], Ministry of Health (MOH) [Zambia], and ICF International. 2014. [Zambia Demographic and Health Survey 2013-14](#). Rockville, Maryland, USA: Central Statistical Office, Ministry of Health, and ICF International

¹⁶ Central Statistics Office (2003)

¹⁷ Republican President of Zambia (2015) Press briefing at the State House in November 2015.

who are stunted from 45% as recorded in 2010 ZDHS to 40% in the current ZDHS, Zambia will still struggle to provide improved access and quality healthcare to children and their caregivers because of lack of commitment and consistency in policy pronouncements and budget allocations to this sector. In the 2015 budget, Government allocated 9.60% to the health sector and in the 2016 budget only 8.3% was allocated to the sector, demonstrating a reduction of 1.3%, thereby failing to meet international commitments. Therefore, we can argue that Government will not be able to accomplish all of its policy pronouncements.

Sanitation and water

Government plans: -

- Review the policy, legal and regulatory framework in order to streamline and harmonize functions and provide for efficient and effective management of the sector.
- A comprehensive legal and institutional framework will be developed to operationalize integrated water resources management strategies for sustainable water development.
- Develop the national water supply and sanitation policy, mainstreaming climate change adaptation and mitigation aimed at protecting water and sanitation infrastructure against damages.
- Safeguarding communities against flooding, disease outbreaks and water scarcity during events of heavy precipitation and droughts.
- Coordination among stakeholders will be strengthened to enhance coherence and effectiveness in the implementation of water development, supply and sanitation programmes.

Discussion

The vision to meet an improved sanitation and water sector may not be successful due to the following impediments: the budget allocation to the sector has been reduced. In 2015, the budget allocation to this sector was 1.7% compared to 0.9% in 2016, demonstrating a reduction of 0.8%. Consequently, Government's ambition to increase rural access to clean and safe drinking water from the current 67% to 69% and access to sanitation from 44% to 47% may not be completely realized.

Children with disabilities

Government Plans: -

- The intention of the Government is to create an enabling policy environment for the establishment of a well-defined, coordinated, systematic, equitable and sustainable national social protection system targeting children with disabilities.
- The policy reforms are aimed at improving coordination and setting minimum standards in the implementation of programmes for children with disabilities.

Discussion

The intention by Government to provide an enabling environment for children with disabilities is sound, as provided by the number of reforms the government intends to undertake but this endeavor will be affected by a number of constraints such as reduction in the budget allocation by 0.3% and the unclear situation of children who are disabled. Even if the legal instruments are put in place, a number of gaps have not been addressed in the Sixth National Development Plan such as facilities where to access services for disabled children, qualified personnel in special needs and a lack of appropriate infrastructure. The budget allocation for 2015 to this sector was 2.7% and 2016 it was 2.4%.

Education – high literacy rates

Government Plans:-

- Establishment and expansion of early childhood education facilities, particularly in rural area, including ensuring that children acquire literacy and numeracy skills from the earliest grades.
- Promoting research and collaboration between industry and research institutions that is of industrial relevance.
- Upgrading teachers' qualifications to meet the minimum required standards through in- service training and acquisition of higher qualifications from other institutions of higher learning.

Discussion

The ambition of government to reducing the high levels of illiteracy in the country as expressed in the Sixth National Development Plan is noble, but not 100% realistic and achievable. The government has lost direction by focusing the little resources that are available on a wider construction scale of roads, and other infrastructure during a single time period without phasing the budgets and projects across a number of years. This will undoubtedly adversely affect infrastructure development of literacy centers, and other key areas mentioned in the Sixth National Development Plan. In addition, the budget allocation to this sector was reduced by 3%. In 2015 the allocation was at 20.2% and in 2016 the allocation was reduced to 17.2%. With a high demand for increased access and quality education at Early Childhood Education and Basic Education, the current allocation is not sufficient.

Overall Discussion on Poverty

The current economic environment does not favor increased developments in the key sectors like health, education and social protection. In 2015, Zambia recorded the worst performing economic status since 2008 because of reduced copper prices on the international market and a declining currency against the United States Dollar. As a result, the country has recorded reduced revenue because of the slowdown in economic activities. The major factors for this negative performance are the low copper demand and prices, coupled with widespread electricity constraints. The total external debt service for the first nine months of 2015 amounted to US\$225.4 million.¹⁸ Preliminary data indicates that Zambia's domestic debt at the end of September 2015 stood at K26.5 billion compared to K23.5 billion at the end of December 2014. With this current situation we can foresee a situation where Government may not dedicate most of its resources to meeting the Sixth National Development Plan targets, but channel most of its resources to debt servicing and paying for current contracts that are running.

The Government of the Republic of Zambia has put in place various policies to address national issues in various development sectors such as education and health, but most of the policies lack National Implementation Plans. As examples, the National Child Policy, Youth Employment Strategy, Social Protection Policy are some of the policies that currently do not have implementation plans to guide appropriate implementation and resourcing of the policies. Another weakness is that policies are not always supported by cost plans for implementation, causing further delays in appropriate budget allocation to cater for implementation. Furthermore, a likely change in government does not ensure continuity, but perpetual review of policies either in part or as a whole, causing further delays.

¹⁸ 2016 Budget Address by Hon. Alexander B. Chikwanda M.P Minister of Finance Delivered at the national assembly on Friday 9th October 2015

As yet another example, the Ministry of Education has adopted a number of policies to guide the provision of education equitably, the system currently does not assure access by all categories of learners. For instance, the National Child Policy stipulates ECCD should exist in all schools to ensure increased access to all children but the statement is not supported by a costed action plan for implementation, and the current architectural plans are not adjusted to support development of ECCD centers in all schools.

Another significant impediment in the national governance system in Zambia is the legal instruments that do not have policies in place like the National Disability Act; therefore it is practically impossible to execute such an Act without policy statements to provide direction and a foundation for the law to exist.

All these gaps in policy implementation are further compounded by lack of synergies and consistency between ministries to drive policy and have unified policy definitions that are complementary: an example is in the definition of a child; this varies from policy to policy and ministry to ministry.¹⁹ Further exacerbating the problem of policy implementation is having a wrong ministry to drive policy implementation when the mandate belongs to another ministry. For example, the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Child Development anchors education, health and social protection but does not have full mandate to drive the implementation of policies in those sectors.

The current government has inadequate resources to drive most of the existing policies because of the limitations of the Zambia Taxation Act²⁰. One of the gaps in the Act is failure by government to provide policy direction on withholding tax for mining companies, which stands at 0%. Consequently this means the government has limited sources of revenue and the current sources of tax are overly stretched. Furthermore the government cannot generate adequate revenue to drive the Sixth National Development agenda.

Ultimately, the issues under review should be seen as a contribution to the realization of Zambia's 2030 vision of becoming a prosperous middle-income country.

Recommendations

Addressing the multi-dimensional aspects of urban and rural poverty to ensure that no child is left behind from progress requires multi-faceted, multi-sectoral and concerted efforts by both state and non-state actors. Below are some recommendations that will help tackle poverty as a primary driver of exclusion:

- Child sensitive social protection policies with costed action plans for implementation to help tackle rural and urban poverty.
- Investments in inclusive quality services i.e. education, health and nutrition, protection, water and sanitation, shelter and access to information.

¹⁹ Various pieces of legislation do not conform to the provision of the UN CRC and the African Charter. For example the Adoption Act defines a child as one who is below the age of 21 years whereas the Defilement Act defines a child as anyone below the age 16: [Panos Media brief on ending child marriages in Zambia](#)

²⁰ Zambia Tax Platform – Joint CSOs Tax and non-Tax proposal submission for the national budget (advocating for inclusive development through equitable distribution of economic opportunities and quality service provision)

- Strengthen existing community structures to hold government accountable to policy pronouncements to enable checks and balances for appropriate service delivery at the community level.
- Meaningfully create and support child structures to demand for essential, child-friendly services and hold government accountable to child-centered policy pronouncements.
- Appropriate and adequate implementation of existing policies to ensure that the excluded and poor are primarily targeted in the appropriate implementation of policy.
- Properly aggregated and widely shared data that will allow appropriate targeting and resource allocation to those that are excluded and living in poverty both in urban and rural areas.
- Develop and implement policies and laws that prevent illicit financial flows so that government can increase its revenue collection.

Conclusion

Zambia's broad socio-economic policy objectives for 2015 include raising the domestic revenue collections to at least 18.5% of GDP. This is intended to have the effect of increasing resources so that government can better focus on improving the quality of life of its citizens generally and particularly for the child, making him/her an integral part of national development, and creating an environment that prioritizes children's issues. However, due to shifts in government policy, such as the reversal of the mineral tax, there may be significant reductions in budgets for the health, social, and education sectors. The continued debt contracting and servicing will further place a huge burden on the country's ability to set aside financial resources for the learning, health and social protection programmes for children.