



**Institute of  
Social Studies  
Advisory Service**

**In Support of Local Governance**

**An Analysis of Process and Issues**

**Zambia Country Report**

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## Acronyms

BIA	: Business Interest Association
CBO	: Community Based Organizations
DC	: District Council
DDCC	: District Development Co-ordinating Committee
DPU	: district Planning Units
GAS	: Group and Associations Support
GRZ	: Government of the Republic of Zambia
IMF	: International Monetary Fund
LGO	: Local Government Officer
LGP	: Local Government Processes
LOGOSP	: Local Government Support Programme
MFEP	: Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
MLGH	: Ministry of Local Government and Housing
MMD	: Movement for Multiparty Democracy
MP	: Member of Parliament
NCDP	: national Commission for Development Planning
NDCC	: National Development Co-ordination Committee
NGO	: Non Governmental Organization
NGOCC	: Non Governmental Organizations Co-ordinating Committee
ODA	: Overseas Development Agency, UK
PAC	: Policy Analysis and Co-ordination Unit of the Cabinet Office
PACU	: Provincial Accounting Unit
PDCC	: Provincial development Co-ordinating Committee
PPS	: Provincial Permanent Secretary
PSRP	: Public Service Reforms Programme
PPU	: Provincial Planning Units
PTA	: Parents and Teachers Associations
TOR	: Terms of Reference
UNIP	: United national Independence Party
VPC	: Village Productivity Committee
UNDPCDF	: U.N. Development Programme-Capital Development Fund
WB	: The World Bank
WDC	: Ward Development Committee
WfH	: Water for Health project
ZDT	: Zambezi Development Trust

# **In Support of Local Governance: An Analysis of Process and Issues**

## **Zambia Country Report**

### **Table of Contents**

- 1 Introduction**
- 2 Main Features of the decentralisation process**
  - 2.1 Introduction**
  - 2.2 Status of the decentralization process**
  - 2.3 Community participation**
  - 2.4 Out contracting, privatization and local private sector development**
  - 2.5 NGOs and local governance**
  - 2.6 Decentralization and democracy**
- 3 Problems arising in the ongoing decentralisation process: issues and actors**
  - 3.1 Issues**
  - 3.2 Local government systems**
  - 3.3 Strengthening the role of communities**
  - 3.4 Roles of NGOs**
  - 3.5 Local economic development and business groups**
- 4 Strengthening local governance: issues in capacity building**
  - 4.1 Issues**
  - 4.2 Local government**
  - 4.3 Communities**
  - 4.4 NGOs**
  - 4.5 Private sector development**
- 5 Challenges for SNV**
  - 5.1 Issues**
  - 5.2 Capacity building for Local Governments**
  - 5.3 Communities**
  - 5.4 NGOs**
  - 5.5 Business development and producer groups**
  - 5.6 Approaches**

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## 1.- Introduction

The thrust for administrative decentralisation is part and parcel of a deep transformation of the structure and role of the Zambian state. This process of change started in 1991 when in the first multi-party election, the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) took over the government, formally bringing to an end the one-party regime of the United National Independence Party (UNIP) which has been in power since independence in 1964.

UNIP established a system somewhere between a centrally-planned and a market economy. The state took the leading role as the main engine of economic development along a domestic blend of socialist ideology. Planning was the main instrument for resource allocation and parastatal enterprises in the services, trade, industrial and mining sectors were in charge of production. The private sector was basically engaged in retail trade, small-scale and artisan production and farming. In 1971 a regime of 'centralized democracy' -the Second Republic- was established which fused the UNIP and government as one political structure.

Decentralization was given legal status with the enactment of the 1980 Local Administration Act. Provincial Planning Units (PPUs) were created in all provinces, while at the district level District Councils were given administrative and planning powers. Although the formal objective of the 1980 Act was decentralization to the district level, it could be said that the main implicit objective was political, as the three structures of government, namely the central government, the party and the local governments became integrated.

The structure so created had many shortcomings in terms of command lines and allocation of resources, as line ministries and councils were not given sufficiently clear rules for co-ordination. In addition, the technical capabilities at the district level were never sufficiently strong as to plan and monitor the development efforts.

In 1991 the MMD government issued a new Local Government Act, that was later on complemented with the Public Service Reforms Programme of 1993. The PSRP was structured on the basis of three basic components:

- the restructuring of the Public Service, which has implied a rapid process of retrenchment and privatization of state assets;
- a programme for the improvement of management, that implies running government services and parastatals on conditions closer to commercial rules, and a rationalization of human resources, which in practice resulted in a reorganization of government functions, streamlining the public services and cutting as much as possible the government's wage bill; and
- decentralization and strengthening of local governments, the implications of which are explained below.

Therefore, since 1993, the government has been systematically reducing the size of the public sector and decentralizing a substantial amount of its productive capacity towards the private sector. This process of state retrenching is expected to be continued for quite some time, especially with regards to the reduction of the wage bill and privatizing state-owned parastatals, while at the same time attempting to create a stable economic and political environment conducive to

private sector investment and job creation. As it is obvious, the PSRP is concomitant with the adoption of a strict economic structural adjustment programme closely following IMF and WB guidelines. As in many other cases, the social and economic consequences of adjustments, especially because of state retrenching, are being felt strongly in the country in the last 4 years. Unemployment has risen, the quality of services and infrastructure have deteriorated, inflation has eroded the purchasing power of salaries, production has dropped.

But however strong the influence of the international financing institutions in this process of adjustment and redefinition of the role of the state, it has to be recognized that the process of administrative decentralisation is not only rooted in the text of the constitution and on the political manifesto of the MMD Party, but has been twice backed by the electorate. Decentralisation is politically and economically considered to be a key policy transformation in the process of Zambian democratisation and for achieving a sustainable economic development.

Several steps have been taken since the adoption of the PSRP in order to give structure to a decentralised system of local governance. But the process is far from being completed and it is still too early to have a clear picture of what its final shape would be.

Recent political developments have marred the democratic credentials of the MMD and of the regime of President Chiluba, namely the boycott of the general election by UNIP, the main opposition party, as a consequence of the banning of Dr. K. Kaunda as presidential candidate. Furthermore, attempts at controlling beyond reason the activities of NGOs, together with public declarations by high government officials against the opposition, free speech and the independent press, could indicate that the authoritarianism of the Second Republic have not completely disappeared from Zambian politics.

Under these circumstances, and accepting that according to international and domestic independent observers no gross irregularities of the electoral process of last November could be found, the fact is that MMD was largely uncontested and won an overwhelming majority in Parliament. The resulting situation is that Zambia has returned to a *de facto* one-party regime.

As a consequence, the international community is understandably reluctant to continue to provide unconditional support to the Zambian government.

The 1997 Budget presented to Parliament on the 31st of January indicates that Zambia will still depend very heavily on external finance, whether through negotiated loans or straight forward grants. The combined pressure of the external and the internal debt will continue to force the government to downsize state functions and privatise government assets. Although the figures provided to Parliament by the Ministry of Finance indicate an important upturn in the economic situation for 1996, with both a surplus in the budget account and a positive rate of economic growth, the Zambian economy is far from being in a strong position. Exports have grown but so have imports, especially of food, as the last two maize harvests have been poor. Adjustment has exposed domestic production to cheaper and more desirable imported goods. Heavy borrowing by the government has crowded out private investors and has brought the rate of interests to an unacceptable high level. Although inflation and the value of the Kwacha have been

relatively stabilised, the environment is still not mature for the private sector to be able to grow at the steady pace needed to start replacing the state as the main formal employer. Therefore, one can reasonable expect that as layoffs from the public sector continue, unemployment will also continue to rise.

The paragraphs above summarises the rather uncertain context in which the process of decentralization was analysed by the mission.

### **Structure and approach**

After giving a summary characterisation of the decentralisation process in Zambia, the report will discuss what are considered to be the main problems affecting the process. It will then address their implications for governance and capacity building and subsequently it will identify potential challenges for SNV operations.

According to the Terms of Reference provided by SNV, this mission is part of an effort by the organization to turn its attention to 'local government processes' (LGP) as one of two core fields of concern in its task of contributing to the socio-economic and political empowerment of the poor in development countries. The other core field is the improvement of the socio-economic situation of communities. LGP is considered to lack a systematic policy framework and this mission, together with those carried out in West Africa in 1996, and those being carried out simultaneously in Zimbabwe and Uganda, are part of an action plan to strengthen SNV's role, its policies and the organization's competence in the matter. SNV has noted that a wide range of its activities can be considered to be on decentralization, following one of two models:

- a) actions geared towards the empowerment of grass-root, community-based organizations, and
- b) actions focussed on strengthening the planning and implementing capacity of local governments at the district level.

SNV would like to considered both models as ends of a continuum, understanding therefore LGP basically as an effort to build up or re-inforce a dialogue between local governments and the civil society. The problem therefore is understood as *how to combine interventions on local authorities with those on community organizations, such that the latter can gain influence on decision making and hence influence their development opportunities*, in a broad sense.

On the basis of the above considerations, the mission was given the following objectives:

- to analyze the situation and systematize the experiences of the SNV-Zambia programme, so that it can be used in the development of a policy framework for the sub-region; and
- assist SNV to define its position and therefore its role vis a vis LGP.

It is requested that in doing so, special attention is given to:

- the way in which the decentralization process is creating an environment conducive to economic development;
- the finance mechanisms for local development; and
- identification of strategic elements of intervention that SNV could tackle so that the relation local government - local community is re-inforced.

These TOR were discussed in the preparatory meetings held in The Hague. A first suggestion made was that LGP, understood basically as increased 'governance', could be understood as resulting from three different processes:

- administrative decentralization, namely the transfer of functions and of financial and administrative responsibilities to lower levels of government, whether regional or local;
- changes in the structure of political power, as the countries in the region move from one party-states, in which government and party structures acted in a parallel, intertwined manner, to multiparty systems and a civil service potentially more independent of party politics; and
- economic decentralization, namely a stronger integration of the private sector as a key actor in promoting economic growth.

During the mission, interviews, discussions and the analysis of policy documents were carried out having these three processes in mind, and the report is organised so as to touch upon each of them and on their interactions.

The mission would like to thank the valuable cooperation of the Director of the SNV Zambia Office, his staff and collaborators, in carrying out our duties. Ms Prisca Milimo, the local consultant retained by SNV, provided a very significant amount of material, contacts and first hand knowledge of the realities of decentralisation in Zambia without which the mission could not have been able to perform its duties.



## **2 Main Features of the decentralisation process**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The process of decentralisation in Zambia at this stage, and as it can be understood by policy intentions, could be characterised by the following features:

- From a policy point of view, there is tension between two competing models of decentralised government. One that expects decentralisation to help rebuild the confidence of people in the institutions of the state and increase democracy and participation, which is more atone with a devolution model assumedly giving all powers -political, administrative and financial- to a local government structure autonomously controlled by an elected council accountable to the people; and another that seems to have an origin on existing macro-economic conditions, with a strong emphasis in making government cheaper and if possible more effective, that opts for deconcentration and the decentralization of funds to district and sub-district-based offices of line ministries.
- The system of decentralisation is still lacking a sub-district structure that could allow for a broad community participation, that can properly address the socio-economic consequences of adjustment specially on the rural and urban poor.
- Decentralisation is hampered by serious structural constraints on the finances for Local Government and field administration.
- The structure does not provide a strong system of intra and inter-district planning and co-ordination.

### **2.2 Status of the decentralization process**

As mentioned above, the process of decentralisation as it is being implemented by the current government, is an important component of a broader reform of the administrative system of the country, that was started less than four years ago, in 1993. The reforms being introduced are substantial and one can expect that it will take several years before a tested and functional system can be set in place. A long process of learning and capacity development will be needed before the stated goals of decentralisation can be achieved. In addition, a number of important policy decisions are still to be taken and therefore the nature of the process itself is still in question.

On the one hand, the Ministry of Local Government and Housing (MLGH), following very closely the recommendations of LOGOSP -an ODA-supported project- and the Policy Analysis and Co-ordinating Unit PAC at the Cabinet Office, sustain a model of decentralisation more akin to devolution, in which elected District Councils (DC), through a District Development Co-ordinating Committee (DDCC) and a District Planning Unit (DPU), set up policies and priorities to be followed by the local delegations of line ministers, which will report to the Council.

Other authorities are more in favour of a deconcentration position, in which a Council Secretary, appointed by and reporting to the MLGH will co-ordinate and control on line-ministries funds. In this alternative, the Council may have a policy recommendation role, but no authority over line-ministries expenditures. Except for

voting for Councillors and MPs, communities will not be in a strong position to influence policies at the local level. The deconcentration model is favoured by line ministries, which on the basis of the PSRP of 1993 have already taken action to transfer responsibilities to the district and sub-district levels, and by the political appointees at provincial level, like the Provincial Permanent Secretary and the Provincial Deputy Ministers.

Although the political discourse that is contained in the MMD manifesto, in executive orders and in other official policy statements conveys a commitment to the devolution model, the tension between both positions has manifested itself in a number of ways.

For example, the Act No 22 of 1991 which created Town Clerks/District Secretary posts depending on the Public Service Commission; the *de facto* interference of the MLGH on District Council decisions, which by executive orders required to be endorsed at the central level; the creation of the Constituency Development Fund (instead of a district development fund), which gave MPs much saying about its allocations; the weak position in which the DDCCs have been kept regarding control on funds of line ministries spent in the region; and the political interference of Members of Parliaments -which tend to consider themselves above DCs and DDCCs-, are all indications that those supporting a central control on the political and administrative powers already devolved to the local level, are sufficiently strong as to divert policy decisions from the devolution path.

The tug-of-war between the political discourse and the actual practices of decentralisation on the ground indicate that the shape which the decentralised system of local government will finally have is still an open question. Awaiting a clear policy pronouncement, a number of problems are affecting the operation of decentralised bodies, especially with regards with planning functions, funds allocation and personnel management, as it will be explained later on.

If the definition of local governance used in policy documents is considered ('the ability and opportunity of ordinary citizens to influence decisions affecting their lives or... to make these decisions by themselves'<sup>1</sup>) then it follows that governance is still only a potentiality. The channels that will allow to involve the population as actors in local government, beyond its participation as voters in periodical parliamentary and Council elections, has not been developed.

### **The present structure**

The institutional framework for co-ordination was set up by the Cabinet Circular No. 1 of 1995, that created a three-tier system of co-ordination composed of the District Development Consultative Cttes, DDCCs, the Provincial Development Consultative Cttes, PDCCs, and the National Development Consultative Ctte, NDCC.

The DDCCs act as a technical advisory body at the district level, chaired by a District Secretary or Town Clerk, with the DPO as Secretary. In the DDCC all

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<sup>1</sup> Cabinet Office and MLGH (1996), *The National Decentralisation Policy*, Draft, page 5

sectoral Officers sit ex-officio, plus representatives of local NGOs or donors operating in the area. A PPU representative is also an ex-officio member. The tasks being proposed for the DDCC are to co-ordinate activities and expenditures, to receive proposals from departments, to act as a first-stop filter for projects using discretionary funds (e.g. the Constituency Development Fund), to provide technical assistance, to monitor and co-ordinate subdistrict participatory planning activities, to evaluate completed projects, to produce reports for the Council, copied to the PDCC and the MLGH, among others. The DDCC reports to the Council and to the PDCC. It is expected that the Council will provide the DDCC with a Secretariat.

The PDCC is a supra district co-ordinating Ctte. Chaired by the Provincial Permanent Secreatry, PPS, it gathers all Town Clerks and District Secretaries. The Chief Regional Planning Officer is the Secretary and the Provincial Local Government Officer, LGO, is the Deputy Chairperson. All Provincial Sectoral Officers are ex-officio members. NGOs and donors are represented. The Secretariat is provided by the PPU and the PDCC reports to the NDCC through its Chair. The main proposed function is that of 'consultation between Councils and the Provincial administration on Government issues'<sup>2</sup>. It is intended to co-ordinate the preparation of annual capital plans to be fed into the provincial budget and to monitor that these plans are in line with sectoral and national policies derived from the NDCC. It will also collect, revise and up-date provincial data, including the reporting to the NDCC on development activities carried out at the province level.

The NDCC is the national consultation forum between the provinces and the development-oriented Ministries. Chaired by the Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet, it sits all PPS. Donors and NGOs are members by invitation. The NDCC reports to the Cabinet through the Chair and performs as allocator of responsibilities to line Ministries and Provinces for planning, budgeting and executing sectoral programmes. It drafts national and sectoral policies through the co-ordination of District, Provincial and National priorities for Cabinet approval, co-ordinates the preparation of annual capital plans for the line Ministries and Provinces as part of the national budget preparation and sees that locally determined priorities are fully incorporated in national development plans and policies. The Policy Analysis and Co-ordination Unit of the Cabinet Office, PAC, is to provide the technical Secretariat.

This structure depicted in the Circular is an important contribution to the decentralisation process as it provides a co-ordination instance between district, provincial and national levels and brings in contact most development actors.

#### **Shortcomings of the present structure**

There are a number of problems with the system described above.

To start with, the structure is not clear with respect to the autonomy of the Local Councils. By having the DDCC chaired by an appointee from the central government, it is unlikely that the LC will be able to balance the weight on the DDCC that the PPS can exercise.

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<sup>2</sup> Op. Cit.

A second shortcoming is that the structure has been overtaken by events. Three line ministries have gone their own way, creating their own structures, like Parents & Teachers Associations for running schools, Health Boards and Rural Health Centres, and Camp and Block structures for agriculture and livestock extension and at least in the case of Health, bypassing the provincial level. It has been said that these structures could be incorporated as sub-committees at the district level, but what transpires is that the DDCCs and the PDCCs will not be in the position to co-ordinate all development activities as planned.

A more serious problem is that the Circular does not address the issue of funding. It is not as yet clear how and to whom moneys will be allocated, nor whether any new source of funds will be made available, e.g. through the mobilisation and retention of local resources. There is neither a role assigned to the Provincial Accounting and Co-ordination Unit, PACU, nor there is mention on what will happen to the Constituency Development Funds, which may still be a discretionary fund earmarked for the use of the local MPs.

As pointed out already, there is no provision to have a planning or co-ordination capacity below the district level. Field officers of line ministries working at sub-district levels will have no instances of co-ordination nor an intersectoral view of the ward or village level needs. On the other hand, there is no provision for the institutionalisation of a fabric of local community organisation, such that a connection between civil society and local administration can be produced. Lacking these structures, there is no clarity on how bottom-up needs and priorities could be brought into the planning system, nor how these will help alleviate the burden on the poor.

The functions of the PDCCs give a strong emphasis to the co-ordination of the district and the central government levels, which is obviously useful, but the PDCCs are lacking a more proactive role in inter-district co-ordination, so that synergy can be created by establishing some shared provincial policy guidelines.

Last but not least, the structure assumes that all districts will need similar structures. It is unlikely that all districts will be in the position to generate the same administrative and planning capabilities and that they will be able to attract and pay for the kind of human resources that the structure requires. Distinction is made between urban and rural districts only, but it could be argued that much differentiation exist among rural districts and perhaps the structure of decentralisation and co-ordination that is being put in place should allow for different arrangements according to circumstances that could better reflect the necessities and capabilities of the local authorities in each case.

### **Weak financial structure of local governments**

A coherent set of policies, a functional decision-making structure and an efficient system of people's participation are necessary but not sufficient conditions for a successful decentralisation effort.

The success of a decentralisation of powers, functions and responsibilities will largely depend on the ability of the GRZ to accompany the process with sufficient resources, channelled through a system of transparent allocations, with clear mechanisms of control both on efficiency and on accountability.

Although the system of revenue collection has been upgraded, there have been no significant improvements on the funding for sectoral services and local authorities. The establishment of Provincial Accounting Units (PACU) has not been able to improve the system of disbursement, basically because of insufficient and erratic transfer of funds to the provinces and the centralised and inflexible nature of the budget system that has been set in place. PACU in particular has been subject to undue influence of the PPS which often re-directs funds to uses different from those to which they were earmarked.

Deconcentrated line-ministries (Education, Health and Agriculture) have been able to bypass the system and allocate resources directly to their field operations through Managing Boards and other bodies. In the case of health, Rural Health Centres are able to retain the medical user's fees that they are now able to charge. But all these initiatives are disjointed and are taken without a proper structural view on how local development can be paid for.

The finance of local governments has so far been the responsibility of the MLGH. The 1991 Local Government Act, which was supposed to compel the Central Government through the MLGH to fulfil its obligations on the financing of District Councils and provide them with broad powers to raise its own resources, has failed to improve on the availability of funds at that level. Bloated with surplus staff, starved of resources from the Central Government, many DC are in a desperate situation regarding their ability to provide the services they are obliged to deliver. Further, DC, largely through externally financed projects like LOGOSP, are still on the process of generating sufficient accounting and managerial capacities as to improve efficiency and accountability in the use of the little resources they have. The lack of capacities has allowed some abuses and misappropriations from the part of local officials and Council members.

### 2.3 Community Participation

Whether the devolution or the deconcentration model are to be considered, what is lacking in the whole process is a basic fabric of community organisations, with an institutional status and a minimum of self-governing structure, knowledgeable of their rights and entitlements, sufficiently empowered as to be able to approach and demand from those LG institutions that are being set in place with the specific task of solving people's problems.

The line-ministries that have completed or are in the process of deconcentrating their operations at the district and sub-district level, have created sub-district structures and governing boards that allow them to approach local communities. The Area Boards and the Neighbourhood and Villages Cttes. of the Ministry of Health, the PTA and their representation at District Educational Boards, the Block and Camp structure to provide services to farmers created by the Ministry of Agriculture, are all structures meant to approach the people's needs. But these structures are independent and unco-ordinated even when they operate in the same area. Communities therefore are confronted with parallel structures operating on sectoral lines without having an internal organization that can unify their claims and their responses.

### **3. Issues, actors and problems arising from the process of decentralisation**

#### **3.1 Community participation**

As it has been pointed out above, the structure of decentralisation has failed to establish a proper link between the local communities and the district level. Decentralised line ministries have been able to establish sub-district operative structures that have approached their operations to the people. But a basic fabric of institutionalised community organisations able to properly deal with these is not there. The ward system has served for electoral purposes, but has not been endowed with community development or local planning functions.

The result of this lack of contact channels is that in many cases the local communities, especially in rural areas and even more in remote localities, are not aware of what the DC is supposed to do for them. They have no access to the decision-making processes and are in no position to make their council representatives accountable to them.

The policy proposal being considered is to revise the 1971 Village Registration and Development Act, that came in disrepute as a partisan instrument during the Second Republic. This Act created Village Productivity Cttes, that were represented in Wards Councils, headed by an elected Councillor; and a Ward Development Ctte. nominated by the Councillor. VPC and WDC provided for the promotion and co-ordination of local development, while the WCs are the representational fora for a two-way communication with the DC.

No similar structure has existed for urban areas, which will equally need proper mechanisms of participation, although some NGOs are using neighbourhood or resident groups for their own projects.

#### **3.2 Privatisation and local private sector development**

As it was mentioned above, the strengthening of Local Governments is part of a broader process of decentralisation of the Zambian state. Together with the downsizing and functional rationalisation of public services and the retrenchment of state sector employment, the government is -at least in policy documents- committed to generate conditions for a strong private led period of economic growth to take hold. Much of the liberalisation measures accompanying state adjustment could be interpreted as been geared towards this goal. The process of privatising public enterprises is well in its way and a number of additional state-owned enterprises are being earmarked for future privatisation.

Most of the effects of adjustment and economic decentralisation are still to come. Private investment is starting to flow into the country and, according to government figures, the economy appeared to have responded to the stabilisation measures put in place in the last few years. The analysis of economic prospects is beyond the scope of this report, but it can be said that the on-going administrative decentralisation process will continue to be carried out in an environment in which the private sector is expected to have an increasing role to play in generating economic growth. Structural adjustment applied elsewhere has resulted in a high mortality rate of enterprises, private and public. In a number of cases some

enterprises have been able to respond to the new economic environment and survive and even expand. Whether this will be the case in Zambia is not at all clear.

From the documentation consulted and the interviews held, not much information could be extracted on how this process has affected or is affecting the local level. It is known that many District Councils have privatised assets, like Council Motels in areas of tourist potentials, some maintenance services, a substantial number of Council houses. The leasing of Council property, contracting out urban garbage collection and other minor services like office cleaning is about all that is taking place, and this is mostly happening in urban areas. In most Districts the level of activity paid by Councils is so limited that not much transference to the private sector can take place.

But there are no clear policy indications on how and on what sectors expansion of private influence will be implemented.

Likewise, there are no sufficient indications of how local authorities are expected to play a role in promoting economic development. Out contracting or leasing operations of some services to the private sector is one way of doing it, but given the magnitude of these in most districts the effect will be very limited. Promoting economic development therefore will have to go beyond these initiatives. There are a number of local projects on local economic development in operation, like the Zambezi Development Trust, the UNDP-CDF programme, the FAO/MOA project, the fisheries support project in Nchelenge District, and others. The role if any that DC are playing in these initiative is unclear, but in all cases these are project inspired and most likely dependent in project continuity. What is apparent is that DCs are not capitalising on these experiences as to be able to replicate them on their own.

In the case of the District Agricultural Committee in Mansa a link with the private sector has been detected in the form of a private company providing inputs (fertilizers) that are given to farmers in credit to be paid in maize. But in general it was observed that the private sector is failing in providing farmers with suitable seeds. Since the phasing-out of marketing boards, all marketing is in private hands, but there is no institutional links between these and DAC and producers organizations.

Local economic promotion is indeed an area of expansion of DC activities that will need to be supported not only because it will contribute in alleviating situations of growing poverty, but because for many Councils promoting economic development could be the way by which they can expand their own resources and hence improve in service provision.

Perhaps big city Councils are in a better position to perform some business promotion activities but not having interviewed DPOs in towns, there is no evidence on whether this is the case.

### **3.3 NGOs and local governance**

The NGO movement is not very well developed in Zambia. Still it is very much under scrutiny by government authorities. Recently an attempt was made to seriously curtail the sphere of influence of NGOs by setting up a restrictive system

that could have led to an indirect control of their operations by government. It is not clear from the information available what the intentions of the government are, as the attempt was not only in contradiction with statements of democratisation and liberty of association, but NGOs are already subject to registration and accountability by a government institution.

Several reasons could explain this move against NGOs. One is the access to international funding that many NGOs are enjoying in a moment in which donors are reluctant to continue to finance government initiatives and are questioning the political behaviour of the party in power. Another is the critical attitude of many NGOs against abuses of power and upright corruption of politicians and against the high social cost of economic adjustment that is being paid mainly by the poorest segment of the population. In addition some NGOs are actively promoting campaigns pro human rights and gender issues, which are sometimes not palatable to die-hard authoritarian politicians. Further, some NGOs are openly linked to opposition movements. The NGO movement therefore is forced to develop in this environment of mutual suspicion.

Umbrella organisations like NGO-CC have been 'infiltrated' by government and the MMD party in an effort to control them. Little dialogue takes place between the former and the later, as they see themselves as political adversaries in an environment of mistrust.

There are no many examples of NGOs directly involve in the process of generating local governance. One of these is FODEP, which has engaged in a national wide campaign of democratisation, by 'empowering citizens with knowledge to build, sustain and develop institutions and operations of democracy in the country'. Among its activities FODEP monitors all electoral processes, including local councils elections.

Another is Women for Change, WfC, a non-member advocacy organization with a mission to work on the empowerment of women and other process of education for community change. According to the mission's sources, many of the relatively well established NGOs in the country are ran by and work with women. The reason provided is that women are more closely related to key issues of survival, like water, food security and primary health care.

According to WfC President, the problem in Zambia is that the country is just starting to build a civil society and therefore civil society organizations are weak in terms of basic capacities, e.g. stating goals, policies and defining properr internal structures.

The decentralisation process has not given an explicit role to the NGOs movements. Although representatives of NGOs sit in DDCCs -basically as donors-and Development Boards, their roles are not properly specified. Policy documents consulted limited their role to possible training activities and to community development actions. NGOs understand decentralisation in a different way that the GRZ and therefore are disappointed with the process. Several NGOs are sitting in DDCCs but they see themselves as powerless and isolated, as no discussion between local stakeholders ever takes place.



Many NGOs are working directly with communities bypassing or having only minimum contacts with the Districts. Some others are more closely linked to DCs especially when the District institutions are being supported by donors which consider linking with local NGOs as part of their mandate.

### **3.4 Decentralisation and democracy**

As it has been said above, the process of decentralisation as a key element of the process of democracy building is ingrained in the political manifesto of the ruling party. Furthermore, decentralisation is contained and guaranteed in the Zambian Constitution. In addition, most promoters of decentralisation will agree in that if decentralisation brings decision-making nearer to the people, democracy is well served.

But the discourse on decentralisation in Zambia is not fully coherent, not only because there are different approaches at play, but because there are serious contradictions between the theory and the practice. But if some sort of devolution is implemented that will transfer decision-making powers to the District which, if properly supported by mechanisms of real participation, and if free from partisan interventions and abuses of power by authorities, and if properly endowed with adequate resources, will indeed establish Zambia well into the way to a liberal democracy.

There are too many 'ifs' in the realisation of the decentralization project and it is rather naive to expect the present government to fulfill all these conditions. To start with, there are strong elements of central control already built in and there is no structure of direct participation in place. From a political point of view, there is no absolute consistency between the position of all member of government. Signs of strong authoritarianism are sometimes perceived in the attitude of elected or appointed officials. The intended crack down on NGOs and the sometimes subtle and others not so subtle threats to the independent press are proper indications.

Perhaps, as it has been pointed out by some sources, decentralization is more the desire of international organizations and donors than of Zambian politicians.

But one has to recognise that the present regime has done its share in terms of political stability, in terms of progress in disentangling the state administration from the former ruling party, and in opening opportunities for private sector activities. But much more should be done before this incipient process of decentralization can lead to what has been promised by politicians.

#### **4. Capacity Building for Local Governance**

The policy making process regarding decentralisation is far from being completed. Implementation has not even started.

The schedule envisaged by the MLGH is that by April the Draft document prepared in December 1996, would have gone through the whole process of consultations and discussions, so that the Cabinet can make a final decision. Implementation, programmed for the period 1997 -2002, could then begin. This means that by the first half of this year a National Decentralisation Policy is expected to be in place and many of the problems identified should have been addressed if not solved: the tension between a devolution and a deconcentration model, the lack of structures of participation at the grass root level, the mechanisms and the resources for funding, the capacity to extend planning and co-ordination below the level of the district.

It is not easy to predict what the policy will look like, but very optimistacally it can be expected that it will be based on compromises between devolution and deconcentration, that the design of institutional systems will precede the design and endowment of funding systems and that some measures will be put in place to minimise the interference of politicians and government appointees into Council affairs.

##### **4.1 Issues**

Governance will probably continue to be a national issue in the years to come. The retrenchment of government to lower the wage bill and the internal debt, the dependency on foreign aid and donor's contributions, the need to improve efficiency and efficacy of the performance of the state apparatus, and the urgency to curtail malpractice and open corruption by politicians should keep governance, accountability, and transparency high in the national agenda.

Governance may be kept prominent also because there is insistence in reaffirming the commitment of government to improve on that score<sup>3</sup>. Whether these commitments will be honoured is another matter.

Lacking in the short term other more favourable alternative, the country will continue its programme of Economic Structural Adjustment, closely following IMF and WB blue-prints. Privatisation and liberalisation of the economy will continue and the tendency to diminish the role of the state sector as the main formal employer will probably be accelerated. This means that economic conditions could get even worse before they can start getting better. How long will this period be is anybody's guess.

What the social cost will be is unfortunately easier to guess, as experience indicate that the allotment of the burden and of the gains of adjustment is normally

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<sup>3</sup> The commitment was renewed in the speech by the Minister of Local Government and Housing at the 45th Annual Conference of the Local Government Association of Zambia, held on the 26th of June 1996, and published in LOGOSP Newsletter of July 1996.

regressively distributed, with the poor receiving much of the social costs and little of the benefits.

Whether the country could soon be in the position to turn the trends and start a period of better economic conditions is too early to tell.

#### 4.2 Local Government

If policy documents are given credibility, capacity building for local governments will have to be pressure cooked. Following the schedule of implementation contained in the Draft policy document of December 1996, by May 1997 all Councils would have been audited, functions of local authorities will have been re-defined according to policy, and redesigning of institutional structures would have to be completed by September 1997.

The central government (Cabinet Office, MFED and MLGH) will outline functions to be devolved or deconcentrated and will calculate their cost.

Separation and recruitment of new personnel for local authorities will be done in September next, simultaneously with deployment of PPUs to run DPUs. A National Training Policy for both civil servants and local authorities will be started by June and training and retraining to start by 1998. Personnel appraisal systems will be in place by January 1998.

The revision of all relevant pieces of legislation including financial, employment regulations and legalisation of the institutional framework is expected to take place in June.

By December 1997, a District Development Fund would be created.

All these measures are considered necessary to put in place the institutional set-up needed for decentralisation to operate. But other equally important areas of capacity-building are to be developed, like community-based mechanisms of institutionalised participation, and sub-district planning and co-ordination devices.

As it is obvious, the process will require increasing amounts of support in all the areas concerned. It cannot be expected that the government will be able to do all what is needed because it will have nor the financial nor the organisational nor the human resource bases to carry along all these tasks.

Whether external support to the process will continue is not a forgone conclusion. The ODA support for LOGOSP, which seems a crucial programme for supporting the MLGH and the training of local staff efforts, ends in June and there is little certainty of a second phase. A meeting of international donors is expected to take place during the month of February with not much clarity on whether a rapprochement between the donors community and the GRZ is possible.

Assuming everything else to function as expected, capacities of LG staff will have to be reinforced to make the system operational. The kind of training and capacity building that was provided by LOGOSP, namely in accounting, resource administration -including taxation- budgeting, should be continued. In addition, capacities should be built on personnel administration and functional assessment,

especially if evaluation of personnel will be done locally, as it is suggested in the policy document. Other capacities, especially in urban areas, like business registration and licencing, cadastral adminisration, could be crucial to expand local resources. Under the assumption that investment resources will be made available to LC, basic capabilities in project formulation and assessment may be valuable.

A very tall order indeed, which opens many questions about feasibility.

#### **4.3 Local development and private business promotion**

Perhaps the weakest but at the same time one of the most urgent aspect of capacity building and enabling activities is in the field of business promotion and fostering of local economic activity. The whole process of decentralisation is geared towards the state sector with little or nothing said about the role of the private sector, and on the enabling role that the local government can play in promoting local economic development.

Some initiatives, if properly assessed and documented as cases and practices (UNDP-CDF, Rural Investment Fund, micro-projects, FAO/MOA, ZDT, GAS and others), could be used to generate a learning process for the promotion of local economic growth and income generating activities, especially in rural areas. But more will have to be done in order to promote a stronger connection between the service-provision obligations of the local governments and a private sector subcontracting or operating facilities on their behalf.

The imperatives of adjustment and the regressive distribution of its effects indicate that the reinforcement of private sector capabilities to allow it to play a more important role in promoting local economic development should be considered a priority. The retrenchment of the state as a provider of services and employment is and will continue to affect primarily the weakest segments of the population, particularly in remote, marginal rural areas. Efforts should be made therefore to improve the economic base of these communities such that they are in a better position to fend for themselves in an environment of scarcity of state resources.

#### **4.4 Community participation**

As said before, the system of decentralisation that is envisaged is not 'community-led' but 'district-led' in the absence of a fabric of institutionalised community structure. Much work has been done by NGOs and donors in reinforcing these community groups, normally organised on the basis of traditional structures, but much of these experiences are project-driven and seldom not sustainable beyond project goals and time horizons. Giving institutional status to these groups so that they can be recognised as legitimate expression of community interests is in our opinion a high priority.

There are many experimental or project-related community organisation efforts that can be considered as potential initiators of such a structure. The Water for Health in NW Province, the groups formed by the Zambezi Development Trust , the Micro-Project Unit under the now defunct NCDP, the FAO/MOA people's participation project in Western Province and several others, are all initiatives that have succeeded in generating participation capabilities and proper organisation on existing local communities to carry out tasks specific to their respective projects.

Whether these community organisations, which are mostly top-down prescribed, could form an initial base that can be expanded to cover other areas, is open to discussion, as the immediate motivation (the project) for getting organised will not be there. But lacking such a structure the process of decentralisation is bound to be Council-led and therefore once more state-led.

#### 4.5 NGOs

As it was said before, there is a climate of mutual distrust and sometimes even hostility between the government and the non-government sector, especially those belonging to what has been called the non-member organisations.

NGOs are in an excellent position to play a significant role in most of the points considered above. They can and probably will play a role in creating local government capacities by putting in place training programmes and awareness campaigns for the benefit of local governments and elected representatives, from which they can mutually benefit. The NGO's capacity to mobilise fresh resources, many times from international donors, is not to be taken lightly.

The role of NGOs and civil society organisations in business promotion can also be significant. To start with many of the business associations are themselves member-organisations, with a great potential as interest groups to voice their claims to government. This, which can be considered as normal behaviour at the national level, should also take place at the local level. Associations of agricultural producers, of petty traders, credit and service co-operatives and other type of business associations are needed to promote a conducive economic environment, and NGOs can help in their development.

Elsewhere in LDCs NGOs have accumulated a large experience in fostering community organisations and to train them and empower them as valuable channels of local interest expression towards the local and national authorities. Although NGOs are weak in Zambia, there is a task ahead to see them realize the potentials that have been able to developed in many other cases.

## 5 Challenges for SNV

### 5.1 Issues

In the previous sections a description of the process of decentralisation has been given, signalling what the mission considers to be its merits and its problems and bottlenecks. By analysing these we have come to determine areas in which capacities will have to be built. What needs to be defined now is what SNV Zambia can do to play a role in supporting the process.

This is done by looking at those areas needing capacity building from the point of view of SNV objectives, potentialities and limitations. Without attempting at defining or quantifying the demand for SNV support, what follows is an indication of what could be the policy choices open to SNV, by identifying clients, actual and potential. As it is being done in the other country reports, first the relative importance of clients are determined and then choices are identified in terms of technical assistance and capacity building for each potential or actual client.

- At present SNV has two distinct orientations: technical support for local governments and community oriented actions. The first is well represented in the support to 6 districts in Northwestern province and in the Nchelenge, Mwense and Samfya in Luapula, while the other takes place through support to several projects located in Luapula, Northwestern provinces and the Sesheke district of the Western province.
- Although the Country Policy Plan of 1996 calls for an Integrated Process Approach (IPA), the way in which SNV has deployed its resources to support the local administration and the local communities has been on the basis of relatively independent actions. IPA applies normally to each project but not to the actions taking place in the different areas of concentration. There are no policy guidelines or clearly stated intentions on how to link both types of support, which appears to be an interesting possible strategic move, given the absence of a formal and official structure to link Local Governments and community organisations .
- Working on procedures and institutional setups for out contracting and transfer of Local Government functions to private, locally based entrepreneurs could be explored as part of the support to local authorities. In some districts in Northwestern province examples of these kind of actions exists, but are not incorporated as a result of an explicit policy.
- What is clearly an area for further expansion, perfectly coherent with what is already in place, is the support to producers organizations and business interest associations. The Grain Bank in Western province<sup>4</sup>, the GAS and the ZDT in Luapula are attempts at covering this field, that properly evaluated in due course could help derive some strategic proposals for replication. As business interest associations are not well developed at local level, especially in rural areas, SNV could have a protagonist role in helping with the setting up this type of organisations in order to improve income generation possibilities.

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<sup>4</sup> Which was known to the mission basically through indirect references, as it was not visited.

- NGOs are not very well developed at the local level and there is a clear area for expanding operations for these organisations in support of CBOs at the local level. Following policies contained in the Country Plan, SNV has been looking for ways to identify needs and provide support for NGOs operating at the local level. Some initiatives are being considered, like the creation of the Groups and Association Support (GAS) programme, which may constitute a valuable initial step in the setting up of local NGOs. It could be explored whether this kind of initiatives would not be possible to realise in all other projects in which SNV is involved with a number of community-based organizations, like the case of the Water for Health project or other village-based undertakings, that share similar problems and demands, and are located within contact distances. These associations could benefit from the organization efforts and the structure that has been put in place by the projects and use it for further developmental purposes.
- As it became apparent during the Seminar held in Lusaka, SNV is not fully using the information on practices and experiences generated by projects. Although a system of reporting is being used, this is basically related to internal monitoring and control. Further, the organization is in the process of redefining its evaluation methods. Therefore it could be very rewarding for purpose of policy making and definition of best (and bad) practices, if the reporting on projects could be processed in such a way that it can be used as 'knowledge capital' and real policy feedbacks.
- Because of SNV mandate, most activities are carried out at the local level and are attempting to solve important local problems. A commitment with the poor and the less favoured groups of society normally indicate that the level of the communities is the most adequate one for the purpose. But perhaps it is important to consider that in many cases the solutions that are required at the local level cannot be produced without actions promoted at more central levels of intervention. Likewise, much of the experiences accumulated by SNV could feedback better into national policies, if the organization would have a stronger footing in central level agencies.
- Last but not least, it is important to address the issue of the relations between SNV activities and the political establishment. Nor the Country Plan, nor the interviews that were arranged, nor the documents collected ever mentioned the issue of the relation between what SNV is doing and the politics of the place. It is obvious that SNV, like any other international organization, needs to keep a perfectly neutral position. But the fact that this imperative of neutrality exist does not preclude the necessity of considering politicians, political parties and those sustaining different ideological positions as crucial agents in the development process. The problem reside in devising a system by means of which SNV can approach politicians in their legitimate role of representation, to co-opt their powers on the benefit of the communities that SNV wants to serve and to negotiate in a spirit of mutual respect and having everybody's best interests as a goal. But what does not appear as a logical position is to assume that politicians do not exist as development agents.

## **5.2 Support for capacity building for Local Governments**

There is no much that can be said with regard to the support provided to capacity building to Local Governments -that is to say to PPU and DPUs- that is not contained in Dr. Gumby's report<sup>5</sup>. What is recommended there is to continue to support both planning instances in the light of the foreseeable changes, to co-ordinate with other donors and to strengthen SNV position by approaching the MLGH or any other organization charged with sub-national planning. There are no grounds to question the soundness of the recommendations made there, under the terms of references with which the report was written.

But in the light of the discussions in the Lusaka seminar one could ask if not too much emphasis is given to formal planning and to plan making at the District level. In the precarious financial situation in which local governments are, it is unlikely that they will have much planning to do in the sense of rational allocation of resources for long term goals. It is very likely that the operations of LG will improve if more attention is given to managerial and administrative capacities, to stream-line their establishment and procedures, so that the little resources they can command can be better used and accounted for. The issues mentioned under 4.2 above provides a broad indication of areas in which capacities could be built that will have a direct repercussion in improving the efficiency and the efficacy of the local administration. Particular attention should be given to the setting up of the district budget so that it is done in more realistic terms, i.e more closely linking real, effective income and expenditures, and hence can play a role as a sound planning and administrative tool.

In the same token, and given that LG will be required more and more to enable the participation of the private sector, one wonders whether LG should not be more sensitive to the identification of business opportunities in their area and to the promotion of the district to attract and facilitate private investments. Obviously this is not an activity that can be started in all districts, but some are more attractive for investment and in those cases, some attention could be provided to the creation of this capacity to support this activity within the local authority concerned.

## **5.3 Support for community participation**

As it been stressed above, Zambia is still to produce a structure of community organizations at the grass-root level. Government plans are to revise and revive in a different fashion the structure of community organization devised by the 1971 Village Registration and Development Act. The problem with this government initiative is that it may fall in the same kind of political manipulation pitfalls that existed in the previous structure under the Second Republic.

SNV has been involved with grass root community organizations in several areas and has created some sub-district structures that could be an organization alternative to what the government is intending. In the Senanga district of Western Province Sub District Development Co-ordinating Cttes. have been formed. In the same fashion, SNV has devised mechanisms of participatory planning in the

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<sup>5</sup> Support for District Planning in Northwestern Province, Phase II, Final Report, dated October 1996.



Northwestern Province. The FAO/MOA project financed by the Dutch Government in the Western Province has created 240 groups with 32 action areas. There are other initiatives by other donors in the same fashion.

SNV is in a very good position to assess the work done in these experiences, produce an unbiased evaluation of what constitute good practices and what not, and come to a recommendation for a structure that can be used more broadly. A strategic alliance with the MLGH and the Ministry of Community Development (even if this is a weak organization) to produce a blue print for such grass-root organizations that could prevent the pitfalls of the 1971 Act could be attempted.

#### **5.4 Business development and producers**

As said above, the weakest link in the whole process of decentralisation and government retrenchment is that no compensatory measures to alleviate the effects on the poorest segments of the population has been put in place. The government expects the private sector to use the opportunities created by the deregulation and opening of the economy. But it is obvious that the indigenous population, especially that in rural areas, are in a very weak position to take advantages of these opportunities.

SNV is well posed (although perhaps some retooling of expertise will be required) to promote the organization of business interest groups and producer associations. Some experience has been accumulated in this area that can be used more broadly, if proper stock-taking of what has worked and what has not is done.

In particular because of its involvement with District Councils in at least two Provinces, SNV is in a good position to help in the process of out-contracting many LG functions which are presently carried out within the local bureaucracy. The experience of Northwestern Province when properly evaluated could again form the basis for a model system that can be adopted more broadly if properly negotiated with the MLGH.

#### **5.5 NGOs**

As said above, NGOs are weakly developed in the country and are almost non-existing at the local level. The paragraphs above could help setting the aims of a programme of NGO creation and re-inforcement.

NGOs will be needed to help in all the tasks above. To start with, NGOs able to take the LG to account will help in setting up a systems of local government based on transparency and accountability that will have a direct effect in improving local governance. NGOs in an advocacy role, speaking against abuse of authority, or in favour of specific local target groups, or creating a forum for the discussion of Council policies or decisions, could be created by SNV supporting some of the national NGOs in the decentralisation of their operations to the local level. This is again an instance in which SNV should get in a stronger contact with national organisations in order to produce local results.

SNV is also in a strong position, as said above, to help generate a sub-district structure of community organisations and to support the creation of BIAs and

producers organisations by examining its accumulated experience, searching for best practices and systematising what has been learned to be used more broadly.

## 5.6 Approaches

It is beyond the scope of this report to assess the modalities of operation of SNV in Zambia. But still, it is important to point out some general impressions that were formed through the discussions with field staff. In general the way in which SNV operates in the country, perhaps inherited from its origin as a voluntary organisation working with communities of poor people, has been to deploy experts in circumscribed projects in local areas<sup>6</sup>. Two possible consequences of these form of operation could be put up for discussion.

The first one is that there seems to be little by way of synergy if projects are kept too much as independent initiatives. This is said with hesitation, because it is not clear for the mission whether some form of networking of projects actually exists. At least this is not apparent from the Country Plan, where after a preamble of general policies and principles, among which the Integrated Process Approach, the document tends to provide a policy rationale to individual projects derived from strategies which are treated in a very ad-hoc way. A corollary of this situation, which tends to confirm the independent nature of initiatives, is that the experience gained in each project is not systematically used as feedback for other initiatives and whatever solution that was tested for a particular problem does not considered as possible solutions somewhere else, except when it involves the same field expert<sup>7</sup>. Initiatives to share experiences like the seminar organized Botswana and the one in Lusaka, are good attempts at sharing, but much more can be done in terms of documenting projects such that they are converted into accumulated knowledge capital for the organization.

The second one is that the impact of projects, even if very successful, could be lost if the initiative is not properly linked to higher levels of decision making. SNV is not very prominent at the national level, whether among the Ministries directly relevant for what is done in the field (like MLGH) or national organisations with which they can co-ordinate, like the NGOCC or other umbrella organisations.

A way by which both problems (if the problem actually exists) could be tackle, is to consider whether SNV experts could not serve better if they are more flexible in the definition of their responsibilities, such that they could interact with a number of projects or clients, maximising their impact and their contribution, instead of being allocated exclusively to one project, where sometimes they are requested to take over responsibilities that should be in the hands of the host organization. Perhaps a proper mix of local professional staff and expatriates could allow for such flexibility to function.

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<sup>6</sup> In essence there is nothing wrong with this approach. Projects can fail or succeed under this modality of operation and the organisation can decide through its evaluation and monitoring devices what was the outcome of each individual initiative.

<sup>7</sup> The mission is aware that some replication has taken place, like for example the case of the Grain Bank, which is imported from experiences somewhere else in Africa.

### List of persons interviewed

Mr. Kalongo, Permanent Under secretary, Ministry of Local Government and Housing.

Mr. Chapunda, Advisor to the LOGOSP project.

Mr. J. C. Charlier, UNDPDF, in charge of the capital development fund in Eastern Province.

Mr. Piet van Ommeren, Director SNV Zambia.

Mr. M. de Wit, SNV staff in charge of the district planning project, North-western Province.

Mr. Kaluba, Permanent Secretary, Cabinet Office, Policy Analysis and Coordination Unit.

Mr. I. van der Honning, Office Director SNV NW Province, Solwesi

Mr. Chingi, Provincial Local Government Officer, NW Province.

Mr. P. Chibala, Head Provincial Planning Unit, NW Province.

Ms. Mary Hazenberg, advisor Water for Health project.

Dr. A. Soneka, Provincial Medical Officer, NW Province.

Mr. J.K. Bwalya, District Planning Officer, Mwilonga District Council.

Mr. K. Kuokkanen and Mr A. Nidiemba, from the Zambezi Development Trust.

Ms. J. Gardner, Planning Coordinator, LOGOSP.

Mr. A. Yesi, Programme Manager, Foundation for Democratic Process, FODEP.

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