



CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

A Civil Society Perspective

for the Consultative Group Meeting
held on 7th July 2002
at Mulungushi Conference Centre

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Executive Summary

As civil society, we are convinced that the crisis currently engulfing Zambia is not only an economic crisis but also a political and social crisis. Thus, a number of barriers will need to be overcome to put Zambia back on a path to recovery. This paper discusses some of these barriers, specifically those of a cross cutting nature. For the purpose of this presentation we shall focus on HIV/AIDS, gender, employment and sustainable livelihoods, youth and child development, disability issues and the environment. We discuss these issues within the poverty reduction agenda and make some references to the International Development Targets (IDTs) promulgated by the Millennium Declaration to which Zambia is a signatory.

In the first instance, Civil Society contends that poverty reduction is not possible in the absence of human capital formation and this is being seriously threatened by the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Zambia. Given the challenges inherent to containing the spread of HIV/AIDS, development partners should endeavour to ensure that the government has sufficient resources to mount an effective, coordinated response. Overall, Civil society affirms that the nature of the HIV/AIDS pandemic calls for grants from development partners as opposed to loans towards this cause.

With regard to the question of gender, Civil Society observes that in Zambia, as in other parts of the developing world, the benefits of development as well as the consequences of poverty are biased against women. Most government policies are still gender blind. Civil society affirms that gender equity cannot be achieved in the absence of pro-active policies. Thus, government is urged to implement the national gender policy and to take action to meet its commitments under the Beijing Declaration and platform of action, the convention for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and the SADC gender and development declaration which all aim at addressing gender discrimination in politics, employment, the economy, social services, culture etc.

The Human development Report 1996 of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) describes employment as the main bridge between economic growth and opportunities for human development. Civil Society, therefore, affirms that one fundamental task of the poverty reduction strategy paper should be to create and sustain high rates of productive employment. Overall, however, civil society affirms the need for government to design and implement a national employment and labour market policy, along with resuscitating the minimum wage on the basis of a poverty datum line.

On youth and child development, Civil Society contends that the rampant child poverty in Zambia is the cruellest and most devastating form of deprivation. Civil society calls government to review the outdated national youth action plan and establish a national coordinating body for orphans and vulnerable children.

With respect to disability issues, Civil Society observes that the poverty situation among the disabled in Zambia is particularly pronounced. Development partners can therefore usefully focus their assistance by proactively participating in the development of disability human right issues, programmes and policies. Besides, we believe that by considering total cancellation of Zambia's debt this will free resources that could be directed towards reducing poverty reduction among persons with disabilities. Overall, civil society urges government to ensure that each Ministry has a disability sector that should receive direct funding meant for poverty reduction programmes to benefit persons with disabilities. Civil society has also urged for capacity building for environmental policy development and analysis, as well as involvement of essential capacities within communities.

In conclusion, Civil society reiterates the need to prioritise: Implementation of the National Gender Policy; design and implementation of a national employment policy; revision of the National Youth Action Plan and establishment of an institutional framework to co-ordinate youth and child development concerns and Capacity Building for community involvement in sustainable development strategies

Table of Contents:

Executive Summary	2
2.0 Cross-Cutting Issues and Poverty Reduction in Zambia.....	6
2.1 The HIV/AIDS Pandemic.....	6
2.2 Gender Equality:	8
2.3 Employment and Sustainable Livelihood:.....	9
2.4 Youth and Child Development:	11
2.5 Disability Issues	12
2.6 Environment.....	13
3.0 Conclusion	14
References:	15

1.0 Introduction

Two years have elapsed since we together last assembled in a forum like this one. What has happened in the last two years? Put bluntly, the situation has worsened. Zambia is in deep crisis. As Civil Society, we are united in our conviction that the crisis currently engulfing Zambia is not only an economic crisis but also a political and social crisis. It is a crisis of unprecedented and unacceptable proportions manifested in the tripod of deprivation, debt and disease.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the state of human development in Zambia is dismal: average life expectancy at birth for a Zambian is now 37 years ; national adult HIV Prevalence rate is almost 20 percent; formal sector employment is only 11 percent of the total labour force; The incidence of poverty has risen from 70 percent in 1996 to 73 percent in 1998 while the percentage of female-headed households forced to engage in coping strategies is at 32 percent. Meanwhile, the infant mortality rate is at a high of 112 per 1000 live births.

With this background, drastic measures are required if Zambia is to get on course towards poverty reduction as well as achieving International Development Goals(IDGs). A number of barriers will need to be overcome.

The purpose of this presentation is to discuss some of these barriers, specifically those of a cross-cutting nature and point to priorities for development assistance within this context. Admittedly, cross-cutting issues are very broad but for the purpose of our presentation we call focus to HIV/AIDS, Gender, employment and sustainable livelihoods, Youth and Child development , Disability issues and the environment. We discuss these issues within the poverty reduction agenda and make some references to the International Development Targets(IDTs) promulgated by the Millennium Declaration to which Zambia is a signatory. We think that key International Development Goals must be embraced in Zambia's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper(PRSP).

The presentation is organised as follows: the next section discusses the cross-cutting issues highlighted above. The last section concludes the presentation.

2.0 Cross-Cutting Issues and Poverty Reduction in Zambia

In broad terms, civil society observes that the motivation of the Zambian people to contribute their best to the development process, and to the betterment of their own well being is severely being constrained and curtailed by HIV/AIDS, gender and income inequality and unemployment . Other barriers include environmental degradation and neglect of vulnerable social groups such as the disabled and children in need. It is to these issues that we now turn.

2.1 The HIV/AIDS Pandemic

Civil Society contends that poverty reduction is not possible in the absence of human capital formation and this is being seriously threatened by the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Zambia. With a 20 percent incidence of this disease among the adult population, there is virtually no sector or production activity that has not been adversely affected in the country. The most apparent socio-economic effect has been the drastic fall in average life expectancy at birth of a Zambian who is born today. In 1998, it was estimated that the life expectancy was as low as 37 years while in the absence of HIV/AIDS, it could have been over 50 years. More recently, the WHO's Disability-adjusted Life expectancy, DALE (life expectancy adjusted for years of illness) has been estimated to be as low as 30.8 years for Zambia - one of the lowest in the world (Seshamani, 1999)

Now, the International development target is to halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015. The key question is, Will Zambia achieve this ? May be, may be not.

However, the government has set up the National AIDS Council to lead and coordinate a multi-sectoral response but civil society affirms that the challenge of coordinating and effectively managing this response will be considerable. As such, While noting that Zambia is soon expected to get about US \$ 19 million as first

tranche of US \$ 92 million aimed at combating HIV/AIDS, we believe development partners could usefully focus their assistance in six areas:

- **Ensuring coherent and flexible support to the government's multi-sectoral effort:** support for the government's effort to establish an effective, operational and multi-sectoral approach should be fully forthcoming. Development partners should strive to ensure their support is offered in a coordinated and coherent manner that fits within the government's framework. In addition, flexibility is required to ensure that well-targeted programmes receive adequate assistance.
- **Building implementation capacities among non-governmental Organisations and Churches** as part of a combined response that would be part of the overall HIV/AIDS multi-sectoral response
- **Directing freed resources from Debt relief for the mitigation of HIV/AIDS and cautiously relax budgetary restriction.** Given the challenges inherent to containing the spread of HIV/AIDS, development partners should endeavour to ensure that the government has sufficient resources to mount an effective, coordinated response.
- **Targeting 15-24 year olds :** Interventions that target this age group are now of absolute and critical priority
- **Gender mainstreaming in HIV/AIDS Interventions:** In Zambia, as in many other HIV/AIDS – affected countries, women are more likely than men to contract HIV. This gender imbalance has important consequences for overall HIV/AIDS infection rates in Zambia. Government and Development partners should therefore strive to ensure that decisions and interventions that follow in future target both men and women in accordance with their needs.
- **Assisting strategies for accessing and safe utilisation of HIV/AIDS Drugs.**

Overall, Civil society affirms that the nature of the challenge of the HIV/AIDS pandemic must inform consideration of grants from development partners as opposed to loans towards this cause.

2.2 Gender Equality:

Civil Society observes that in Zambia, as in other parts of the developing world, the benefits of development as well as the consequences of poverty are biased against women. This is why women have been identified as a highly disadvantaged group of people who could contribute very effectively towards development and peace in the world if equality in resource allocation was observed.

Civil Society is concerned that while the National Gender Policy was adopted by Government in March 2000 and should be used as a major yardstick for measuring government commitment to gender mainstreaming, it is yet to be implemented. Most government policies are still gender blind. A recent instructive case of gender blindness in the government of Zambia is the 2002 national budget that failed to disaggregate resource allocation and incentives by gender. Neither was gender one of the considerations in setting targets for various activities planned by government.

Civil society affirms that gender equity cannot be achieved in the absence of proactive policies. Such policies have to be mainstreamed into every sector and programme. The various impediments that prevent women from participating fully and equitably in development have to be removed. Such impediments as lack of access to land and credit, unequal opportunities for employment, wage disparities and marginalisation in decision making processes have to be redressed. And there can be no complete poverty reduction agenda without mainstreaming gender into it. Unless this is done Zambia's poverty reduction agenda will be undermined and compromised.

Thus, with respect to priorities for development assistance in the area of gender equality, development partners should support efforts to:

- **Improve quality of, and access to, education**, with special sensitivity to the challenges that compromise girls' educational achievements.

- **Strengthen institutions that are empowering women** such as the Zambia Federation of women in Business, Women Entrepreneurs Development Association, Association of Women in Mining, Women for Change, Non-governmental Organisation Co-ordinating Committee, NGOCC, etc.

Overall, civil society calls on government to take action to meet its commitments under the Beijing Declaration and platform of action , the convention for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and the SADC gender and development declaration which all aim at addressing gender discrimination in politics, employment, the economy, social services, culture etc. we further call on government to Implement the National Gender Policy alongside strengthening the Gender in Development Division(GIDD).

2.3 Employment and Sustainable Livelihood:

The Human development Report 1996 of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) describes employment as the main bridge between economic growth and opportunities for human development. As civil society we are united in our conviction that one fundamental task of the poverty Reduction Strategy Paper should be to create and sustain high rates of productive employment. Employment creation has to be assigned a major role in the Poverty Reduction Strategy. .

Civil Society is concerned at lack of a clear-cut policy for employment generation in Zambia . We are concerned that the single most prominent area of policy failure during the period of economic liberalisation has being job losses, causing manifest hardships and impoverishment of the vast majority of the Zambian people. As we speak today, about 11,000 jobs are about to be lost at Konkola Copper Mines(KCM) due to the imminent pull-out of Anglo-American Corporation(AAC.) Another speaker will amplify this concern.

Intriguingly, the reduction in formal sector employment has been accompanied by a decline in the real wage index . For instance, the modal wage for a civil servant in

2002 is US\$ 45 per month. Meanwhile, the cost of a food basket is at US\$200 per month (According to JCTR April 2002 Monthly survey).

Civil Society's contention in this regard is that while it may not be practical to raise civil service wages overnight to four or five times their existing level, there is an unquestionable need to raise them with the objective of making them converge towards the cost of a monthly food basket over a phased period of time.

Broadly, however, Civil society believes that development partners could usefully focus their assistance on four areas;

- **Focussing on micro and small enterprises.** This should be done mainly through coordinating efforts that offer assistance to micro and small enterprises. Particular attention should be paid to entrepreneurial development, timely access to capital investment, access to information on appropriate technology, development of skills for processing activities and promoting collaborative efforts among operators.
- **Raising the ability of informal sector operators to relocate to more profitable ventures.** The fact that the urban informal sector has become i such a sizeable place of work, should make it a special target for actions to reduce poverty. Special attention should be paid to raising the profile of women in the urban informal sector as the income generated are more likely to be spent on household needs.
- **Devising appropriate policies that target both economic expansion and direct intervention, which can facilitate sustainable and broad based employment generation:** In this regard, there is need to maintain a constant monitoring of trade-offs in policy in order to ensure that no objective is achieved at a significant expense of another. Besides, poverty reduction efforts in this regard should make a more careful assessment of the way specific policy instruments work in practice. All policies including liberalisation and privatisation are only means and not ends in themselves.

The ends are employment and sustainable livelihoods for all Zambians and sustainable human development for Zambia as a whole.

- **Support to the agriculture and rural development strategies:** within this broad agenda, the building of rural feeder roads and supervised agriculture production are particularly important to employment and sustainable livelihood, especially if undertaken using labour-intensive methods.

Overall, however, civil society affirms the need for government to design and implement a national employment and labour market policy, along with resuscitating the minimum wage on the basis of a poverty datum line.

2.4 Youth and Child Development:

With regard to the situation of youth and Children in Zambia, we contend that the starting point for a better future of the country must be specifically targeted policies for the youth and child development. Zambia has a young population with 63 percent under 25 years (- roughly 6 million). The tragedy of our country, however, is that 240,000 youths leave school every year without hope of employment or higher education. The persistent and unabated contraction of the formal sector has aggravated the situation.

Civil Society further contends that the rampant child poverty in Zambia is the cruellest and most devastating form of deprivation. Look at street children, working children, out of school children, many of whom are victims of the sweeping HIV/AIDS phenomenon and the impact of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), and you would agree that something drastic needs to be done. Children are the single most important cross-cutting agent of the future growth and development prospects of the country and so damage to child welfare is tantamount to damage to the country's capacity for long - term progress. From this perspective, it must be obvious that an appropriate policy framework is needed to guarantee normal early childhood development as well as to prevent further intergenerational impacts.

Civil society believes that development partners should direct their assistance towards:

- Assisting efforts to establish a national co-ordinating body for Orphans and Vulnerable Children Activities
- Ensuring the Reviewing, developing and enacting of policies and legislation that will facilitate Orphans and Vulnerable Children's Activities.
- Establishment of more informal skills training centres; currently there are only 20 such training centres
- Supporting community Schools and informal skills training centres

Overall, civil society affirms the need for government to review the outdated national youth action plan to make it more responsive to the existing problems faced by the youth and children in our country.

2.5 Disability Issues

The poverty situation among the disabled in Zambia is particularly pronounced. This category requires specifically targeted interventions. Civil society identifies lack of prioritisation of this Sector by government and the external debt as the contributing factors to the high incidence of poverty among this category.

We therefore call for prioritisation of disability issues and the cancellation of Zambia's debt. In the event that the debt is cancelled, government will be able to implement : a) the persons with disability Act No. 33 of 1996 (Zambia Disability Act); b) the National Trust Fund for the Disabled programme (income Social Security Scheme for persons with Disabilities in Zambia); c) The United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of opportunities for persons with Disabilities (UNSR); d) the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled People: 1983 – 1992 International decade of Disabled persons; e) the 2000 - 2009 African decade of persons with Disabled persons. These pieces of legislation and international covenants are very comprehensive in articulating what needs to be done to uplift the welfare of people with disabilities.

Development partners can therefore usefully focus their assistance:

- By considering total cancellation of Zambia’s debt to free resources that could be directed towards reducing poverty reduction among persons with disabilities
- By proactively participating in the development of disability human rights issues, programmes and policies.

Overall, civil society urges government to ensure that each Ministry has a disability sector that should receive direct funding meant for poverty reduction programmes to benefit persons with disabilities. In the same light , Government must ensure a clear provision within the education Act on provision of special/inclusive education and positive discrimination of persons with learning disabilities.

2.6 Environment

Zambia has a rich natural endowment. However, these natural resources have come under increasing pressure from water pollution and inadequate sanitation, soil degradation, air pollution in the copper belt towns, wildlife depletion and deforestation. The situation of the timber industry in western province is becoming a source of concern, especially that such expropriation is being done without due payment of levies to local authorities or traditional rulers. Suffice to say, however, that existing strategies are being compromised by, among other things;

- Insufficient institutional framework for environmental coordination
- Limited government capacity for environment management
- Insufficient involvement of local authorities and communities in environmental management and conservation; and
- Poverty

We believe as Civil Society that these factors could compromise environmental sustainability and a sustainable development strategy is compelling. Development partners could thus usefully support:

- National sustainable development strategies, with particular attention devoted to facilitating an effective coordinating framework. This could build on existing programmes and strategies such the World Bank supported Environmental Support Programme(ESP) and indeed existing efforts by the United Nations Development Programme, among others.
- Capacity building for environmental policy development and analysis, as well as involvement of essential capacities within communities
- Mainstreaming environment issues in poverty reduction strategies.

3.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, Civil society reiterates the need to prioritise:

- Capacity building among various stakeholders and actors for an effective multi-sectoral response to the HIV/AIDS
- Design of an appropriate policy framework for employment generation.
- Implementation of the National Gender Policy
- Revision of the National Youth Action Plan and establishment of an institutional framework to co-ordinate youth and child development concerns
- Prioritisation of Disability issues; and
- Capacity Building for community involvement in sustainable development strategies.
- Other issues of a cross-cutting nature that must equally receive attention in all poverty reduction efforts which, due to time constrain we could not expound on here include: the pattern of income distribution in Zambia, the aspect of water development and sanitation sector.

Civil Society is convinced that when these priorities are put right, there can be reasonable basis for optimism and for believing that rapid progress towards poverty reduction is feasible in Zambia.

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