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Local Economic Development: An Alternative Development Approach for Zambia

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Abstract: ***Since attaining independence in 1964, Zambia produced several national development plans. However, the development plans had little impact on development imperatives in as far as reducing poverty and inequality levels were concerned. This study therefore, reviews Zambia's past national development policy plans i.e., from 1964 to 2021 and seeks to propose a change of approach to adopt the local economic development process which is more effective in combating high levels poverty and inequalities. The study used a qualitative desk-top study that employed the historical-critical discourse analysis approach to investigate the effectiveness of the past national development plans. The study revealed that the development approach that Zambia adopted did not significantly impact on the reduction of inequality and poverty levels. The study recommends that Zambia should consider embarking on an effective LED approach as an alternative development approach that would deliver the country's development imperatives.***

Keywords: Inequality, Local participation, Local economic development, Poverty, Zambia

1. Introduction and Background

Since attaining independence from the British colonial rule in 1964, Zambia produced six national development plans, five interim and transitional development plans, and one revised national development plan. The latter successive development plans aimed at propelling the country to attain its Vision 2030 of becoming a prosperous middle-income country by the year 2030. The term 'prosperous middle-income country' means alleviating the poverty levels in the country and bringing down the inequalities where Zambian citizens have access to the country's wealth without leaving anyone behind [1].

The traditional, colonial influenced, centralised top-down decision-making approach that Zambia adopted in the last decades focused more on developing the towns and cities along the line of rail failed to produce the desired developmental results [2]. [3] assert that development is about exploiting scarce or idle productive resources to efficiently allocate them for improving the living standards, self-esteem, and freedoms of the people. They added that development is how nations transform from stagnation to growth and from low-income to high-income status, and address issues of poverty. [4] posited that development is viewed differently by each individual or group of individuals. He argued that the general expression of development was how each individual or group of individuals wished to live and experience a better life. The concept of economic development has been evolving over time, although what is common in most definitions is that economic development is a process of emancipating people from poverty through the creation of jobs and wealth. Development should be synonymous with reduced poverty, unemployment, and inequality. Despite registering a growth of at least 7.4 percent per annum between 2004 and 2014, Zambia's growth did not cascade down to the local poor to the extent of reducing the poverty levels, especially in rural areas. It can be argued that growth alone is not sufficient despite it being often considered as a necessary condition for poverty reduction. Addressing inequality and promoting social inclusion therefore, becomes important prerequisites. Zambia's inequality levels are among the highest in Africa, with its Gini coefficient of 0.69 compared to the average Gini coefficient of Africa which stands around 0.43 [5]. Zambia remains a highly unequal country.

[6] in their people-centred, human scale development approach, criticised conventional economic development models as being inappropriate. This was because the development models did not alleviate poverty in communities. In their development approach, [6] advocated models that met fundamental human needs and not only economic growth.

This study therefore reviews Zambia's past national development policy plans from 1964 to 2021 - at the end of the seventh national development plan and seeks to propose a change of approach to adopt the local economic development process that has hit her to, been effective in combating high poverty levels and inequalities in different regions and countries [7], [8], [9]. The study used a qualitative desk-top study that employed the historical-critical discourse analysis approach to investigate the effectiveness of the past Zambia's national development plans.

Local economic development (LED) is about allowing the local community members to dictate their own destiny. There exists a dearth of literature on LED practices in Zambia. A few scholars that have written on Zambian LED have focussed on developing a LED framework without necessarily reviewing the challenges of the past economic development plans [10], [11], [12]. This study goes beyond that and reviews the historical plans to inform the developmental challenges of the country.

2. Theoretical Underpinning

The study adopted the following theories.

2.1 Decentralisation Theory

The decentralisation theory was developed in 1972 by Wallace E. Oates, an American economist [13], [14]. The theory asserts that central governments are not capable of effectively implementing public policy on a regional basis, and advocates for devolution of power and authority to the lower levels of governance. The decentralisation theory built on the academic discourse of early scholars [15], [16] on fiscal federalism/ fiscal decentralisation that provided guidance on addressing challenges of sharing responsibilities and fiscal power within the public sector. The theory assumes that decentralisation would ensure that uniform central policies across the country are applied optimally as sub-national governments consider the preferences of the local communities [17]. It advocates for optimal allocation of resources and economic responsibilities between different government hierarchies, i.e., devolution of power and responsibilities from higher levels of government to lower levels to equally develop local regions in the economy. The LED approach advocates for the locals to define their own livelihood or rather pioneer their own development in short given the autonomy to make decisions that are of best interest to themselves.

2.2 A Ladder of Citizen Participation Theory

A ladder of citizen participation theory was developed by Sherry Phyllis Arnstein, an American public policy analyst in 1969 [18]. The theory suggests different levels of citizen participation with their corresponding impact on the final decision making. Arnstein's work was motivated by the belief that power holders had on citizen participation which in many cases wasn't actually citizen non-participation. Arnstein believed that citizen participation was a categorical term for citizen power, meaning the redistribution of power that enables the underprivileged citizens or the have-nots that were excluded from the political and socio-economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future. The aim of this theory was for the power holders of the affluent society to share the socio-economic benefits with the have-nots by having real power and not merely the empty ritual of participation [18]. To analyse the participation and non-participation levels of the citizens, [18] developed typography of eight levels of participation arranged in a ladder pattern. The bottom rungs of the ladder (the nonparticipation) are called (1) *manipulation* and (2) *Therapy*-describing non-participation that have been contrived as genuine participation. Here the have-nots are co-opted in community development committees simply as rubberstamps and create an illusory form of "participation". Furthermore, the powerless are normally considered to have mental illnesses as such, health experts and social workers subject them to a clinical group therapy which the experts consider as a form of involving citizens in the planning process. Rungs 3 and 4 are at the levels of "tokenism" that gives an opportunity to the have-nots to have a voice in the decision-making process normally through (3) *Informing* and (4) *Consultation.* The levels of tokenism portray a picture of "participation" by the have-nots however, the have-not citizens do not have the power to ensure that their views are taken into account by the power holders, as such they do not influence any change in the decisions and the status quo remains unchanged. On the one hand, consultation is basically a window dressing ritual that power holders subject the have-nots to, and taken as "citizen participation". Rung (5) *Placation*, is another form of tokenism only at a higher level in which the underprivileged are allowed to advise but the powerhouse retain the powers to make final decisions. At the placation level, the powerhouse can place a few have-not citizens into the development committees however; the have-nots do not have the majority in these committees to veto on the decision outcomes. The decision-making clout of the have-not citizens increases at the higher level of the ladder, at the degrees of citizen power: (6) *Partnership,* which now gives them negotiating powers and are able to discuss trade-offs with the power holders. They also put in place structures used to jointly plan and share decision-making responsibilities. Rungs, (7) *Delegated Power* and (8) *Citizen Control* are at the top most of the ladder and enables the have-nots to obtain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power. Here, the have-nots have a dominant decision-making authority over the plans and programmes to be implemented in the community. Citizen control is a situation where the community members have control over the assets within the community. LED is cantered on citizen's participation. Therefore, the level at which citizens are involved in decision-making is critical in implementing sustainable and successful LED strategies.

3. Zambia's Past National Development Plans

The following section of the report discusses the past national development plans Zambia implemented since independence.

3.1 The Transitional Development Plan (1964-1965)

The Transitional Development Plan was a gap-bridging plan in the transition period from colonial and federal planning to the post-colonial planning period [19]. Zambia's economic sectors during this period were backward and limited to the needs of an external economy. The economy was left drained of all resources that could have been utilised to lift many Zambians out of poverty. The Transitional Development Plan focused on developing three sectors, namely defence/security, education, and agriculture. The defence and security were the most important at that time as the country had just emerged from an independence struggle although was still surrounded by unfriendly countries that were ruled by colonial white minorities. In addition, Zambia's borders were vulnerable and needed protection from acts of aggression from its neighbours that were still struggling for liberation and experienced raging civil strife. The emphasis on education by the maiden national development plan was premised on the backward and disgraceful education status bequeathed by the departed British colonial and white settler federal governments [19]. At independence, 70 years after the advent of British rule, Zambia had only 1, 200 citizens with a Cambridge certificate, 100 university graduates and three medical doctors [20], [21]. The education system in rural areas went as far as standard II or standard IV (grade 2 or grade 4). The Transition Development Plan was developed against the backdrop of the first United National Independence Party (UNIP) manifesto that aimed at eliminating income inequalities and utilisation of idle resources in the economy to increase gainful employment and initiate and establish industries in rural and urban areas [22]. The UNIP manifesto placed a premium on agricultural development as over 70 percent of the population depended on agriculture. It further sought to support African traders previously marginalised during colonial rule by giving them soft loans. The UNIP manifesto further pledged to build the first ever public university and ensure that every child in Zambia had some form of education. The UNIP manifesto, implemented through the first national development plan, eliminated the obnoxious school fees that were introduced by the colonial rule to alienate African children. The manifesto pledged to build more and better hospitals, better houses for families and to crack down on corruption in government and the private sector [22]. UNIP was a party led by the Zambian founding President, Dr Kenneth David Kaunda.

3.2 The First National Development Plan (1966-1971)

The First National Development Plan was preceded by the Transitional Development Plan. The focus of the First National Development Plan was to build massive infrastructure for future development and manufacturing industries. The major economic reform undertaken during this period was the Mulungushi and Matero reforms as the country began to transform from a free enterprise economy to more socialist command economy. The First National Development Plan's objective was to diversify the economy from dependence on copper mining to create more employment in non-traditional sectors [23]. The plan also leveraged the Transitional Development Plan to continue uplifting the citizens' education, technical, and scientific skills coupled with the provision of other social services such as housing and health facilities [23]. In addition, the plan aimed at developing the transport and the energy sectors.

3.3 The Second National Development Plan (1972-1976)

The Second National Development Plan's preoccupations were food self-sufficiency and ensuring food security, and import substitution coupled with the continued diversification of the economy [24]. The plan also aimed to reduce the level of income disparity between urban and rural areas. It further continued developing the technical skills of the citizens. The plan attempted to implement regional decentralisation policies, pronouncing self-reliance as an important principle of the national philosophy of humanism, as espoused by First Republican President Dr Kenneth Kaunda. The Second National Development Plan was extended to 1978 because many projects had not been completed by the end of its period [25]. Most projects undertaken in this period were not economically viable as they were mostly executed to respond to unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) by the Ian Smith administration of Southern Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe) [26]. The UDI caused Britain and America to impose sanctions against Southern Rhodesia. These sanctions had a direct negative impact on the Zambian economy for example, fuel supply to Zambia through Southern Rhodesia was completely off [27]. In addition, the industrialisation approach implemented during this period was mostly capital intensive and did not create many jobs for the population.

3.4 The Third National Development Plan (1979-1983)

The Third National Development Plan built on the objectives of the Second National Development Plan. The plan outlined eleven principal objectives that included to: attain socialism; adopt labour-intensive technologies to attain full employment; use local raw materials and establish capital goods industries; create a strong rural economy; explore non-copper minerals; explore export markets; speed up the Zambianisation reforms; maintain price stability and grow the economy at six percent. In addition, the plan called for the need to provide social infrastructure countrywide, i.e., to build more schools, hospitals, and clinics [28].

However, in 1983, the Third National Development Plan was replaced with the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP), following an agreement between Zambia and the International Monetary Fund and World Bank [25]. The SAP was however cancelled the same year following Zambia's refusal to remove the subsidy on maize, a staple food in Zambia [25].

3.5 The Fourth National Development Plan (1989-1993)

Following the cancellation of the SAP, the Fourth National Development Plan was developed in 1989 to reinforce the objectives of the previous development plan and introduced a different aspect of promoting women and youth participation in national affairs [29]. It emphasised facilitating private sector participation. However, the Fourth National Development Plan was never executed as the Republic of Zambia re-introduced the SAP in 1989 [25]. Zambia then ceased the approach of producing national development plans. Following the change of government in 1991, the new Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) government led by Dr Frederic Titus Jacob Chiluba developed the New Economic Recovery Programme (1992-1994), which was used to further execute the SAP.

3.6 Transitional National Development Plan (2002-2005)/ PRSP

The Republic of Zambia reverted back to the national development plan approach when the new deal MMD government of President Levy Mwanawasa was elected into office in 2002. The National Development Plan was designed as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and later the same year was incorporated into the Transitional National Development Plan (TNDP). The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provided the central theme for the PRSP, focusing on reducing extreme poverty by half by 2015 through sustained economic growth and employment creation. The emergence of PRSP was seen as recognition of the failures of previous SAP that was imposed by the Bretton Wood Institutions on poor countries [30]. The PRSP was also a pre-condition by Bretton Woods Institutions to access concessional loans. The implementation of the PRSP was urgent, since the Republic of Zambia was placed among the highly indebted poor countries (HIPC) and qualified for substantial debt relief that were due in the following year. The PRSP objectives included: enhanced investment and export promotion; local industrialisation; enhanced public sector management; decentralisation; good governance; prudent resource management; and improved security and justice. PRSP had good intentions of reducing poverty levels in Zambia; however, it failed to meet its principal objective of reducing poverty levels in the country, the poverty incidence remained high at 68 percent [31].

3.7 The Fifth National Development Plan (2006-2010)

The Fifth National Development Plan (FNDP) was launched by Zambia's third President, Mr Levy Patrick Mwanawasa. The FNDP was themed around "broad-based wealth and job creation through citizenry participation and technological advancement" [32]. The plan focused on development of the agricultural sector with matching resources to stimulate income generation in the economy and improve the livelihood of the Zambian citizenry. Other sectors such as infrastructure, tourism, manufacturing, mining, and energy complemented the policy focus of the FNDP. The plan aimed to target both wealth creation and poverty reduction. The FNDP built upon the successes of the PRSP/TNDP. The plan's goals included to: accelerate the pro-poor economic growth; achieve a single digit inflation; stabilise the exchange rate; and reduce domestic debt. Ultimately, the main goal of the plan was to ensure that the growth translated into poverty reduction. During the FNDP period, Zambia registered an economic growth, at an average of 6.1 percent per annum compared to an average of 4.8 percent attained under the PRSP/TNDP. This growth was, however, below the FNDP average growth target of 7.0 percent.

3.8 Sixth National Development Plan (2011-2015)

The Sixth National Development Plan (SNDP) was launched by Zambia's fourth President, Mr Rupiah Bwezani Banda, in2011. The SNDP built on the gains of the FNDP in as far as attaining Zambia's Vision 2030 was concerned. It was themed "sustained economic growth and poverty reduction" [33]. The objectives of the plan included to accelerate development of infrastructure; the growth of the economy and diversification; rural investment and poverty reduction; and human development enhancement. The SNDP outlined sector programmes deemed critical in achieving its overall objective.

It included sectors such as economic and social development, human development, infrastructure, and regional development. Cross-cutting issues were mainstreamed in the SNDP, such as governance issues, the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), gender issues, and disability. The social development programmes in the SNDP were motivated by the need for the country to achieve most of the United Nations MDGs. The SNDP tried to focus on development strategies that address poverty and ensure that provision of health and education facilities, water and sanitation and access to motorable roads were prioritised.

The SNDP targeted growing the economy by six to seven percent and bringing down the inflation rate to a single digit. It also targeted reducing people living in extreme poverty to about 29 percent in 2015 and aimed to reduce rural poverty from 77.9 percent to 50.0 percent. These targets were missed as rural poverty remained over 74 percent in 2015 [31].

3.9 Revised Sixth National Development Plan (2013-2016)

Following the change of government in September 2011 from the MMD to the Patriotic Front Government, led by Mr Michael Chilufya Sata, the fifth President of Zambia, a need arose to revise the Sixth National Development Plan to align it to the PF party manifesto and policies. It was called a revised Sixth National Development Plan (R-SNDP). The R-SNDP therefore took on board the priorities and the development paradigm of the PF Government towards the achievement of the country's Vision 2030. The R-SNDP was themed "People-Centered Economic Growth and Development" [34]. The R-SNDP did not cancel the SNDP but was designed to complement it. The R-SNDP focused on public capital investments with a bias to rural development - by promoting agricultural development, developing rural infrastructure, enhancing human development, and investing in the social sector and job creation to achieve inclusive growth.

The R-SNDP pledged to continue investing in the skills development, decentralisation, infrastructure development, education, and health sectors. The R-SNDP was motivated by the fact that the robust private sector, although important, was not efficient and sufficient in allocating resources to alleviate the high poverty levels in Zambia [34].

The SNDP/R-SNDP registered an economic growth of 6.5 percent on average and reduced the inflation rate to single digits. Massive infrastructural works were launched during the SNDP/R-SNDP and the social sector was given premium attention through the construction of new universities, new schools, new hospitals, and health centres. However, these massive works came at a cost to government, as government reverted to borrowing extensively through the issuance of commercial euro bonds in 2012, 2014 and 2015 to fulfil this imperative. At the end of the R-SNDP, external debt stock stood at US$4.81 billion, representing 24.0 percent of GDP, compared to US$3.18 billion, which was 17.2 percent of GDP in 2012 [35].

Overall poverty declined to 54.4 percent from 60.5 percent in the FNDP. Rural poverty marginally declined to 76.6 percent (26.6 percentage points above the planned target) from 77.9 percent in the previous development plan.

During the SNDP/R-SNDP, implementation of the decentralisation policies was attempted by way of creating more districts from 73 to 106. The plans were criticised for failing to implement the National Decentralisation Policy, especially the fiscal decentralisation aspect, even when both the policy and its implementation plan were approved by the government.

3.10 Seventh National Development Plan (2017-2021)

The Seventh National Development Plan (7NDP) was launched by Zambia's sixth President, Mr Edgar Chagwa Lungu, in July 2017. The 7NDP's theme is "accelerating development efforts towards vision 2030 without leaving anyone behind" [35]. Unlike the previous plans, the 7NDP departed from sectoral-based planning and took an integrated multi-sectorial development approach to planning in order to tackle the development interventions simultaneously. By employing this approach, the 7NDP tried to domesticate and respond to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Africa Union Agenda 2063, and the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP).

The goal of the 7NDP was to create a diversified and resilient economy that would transform the socio-economic status of Zambia. The transformation would be driven by mainly the agricultural, tourism, manufacturing, and mining sectors. The 7NDP aimed to grow the economy at 5.5 percent on average by 2021; contain inflation to around seven percent per annum on average; reduce domestic borrowing by less than two percent; reduce poverty to less than 50 percent and rural poverty to 70 percent.

Implementation of the 7NDP was met with various unforeseen challenges. For example, during the 7NDP, Zambia experienced erratic rainfalls and droughts that impacted negatively on the energy generation, agricultural productivity, mineral production, the small and medium-sized entrepreneurs' productivity, and ultimately the gross national product. These were compounded by the novel coronavirus disease of 2019, an acute, sometimes severe, respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2.

4. Poverty and Inequality in Zambia

Using data from [31], figure 1 shows the poverty and inequality levels in SADC, where Zambia was showing higher levels of poverty and inequality compared to its peers in the SADC region.

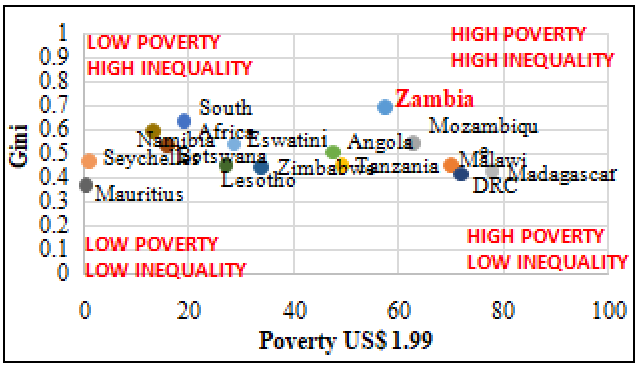

Figure 1: Poverty and inequality in the SADC region

As Figure 1 shows, Zambia shows the highest Gini coefficient among the SADC countries at 0.69, meaning that the gap between the rich and the poor remains extremely high in Zambia. The inequality in Zambia was even higher than the average Gini coefficient for Africa as a whole, which stands around 0.43 [5]. The agricultural sector, which employs approximately half of the population of Zambia, is the lowest paying sector as such, it contributes tohigh levels of inequality [36]. Limited access to affordable credit is another factor causing high inequality.

Regarding poverty levels, only Mozambique, Malawi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Madagascar showed higher levels of poverty incidence than Zambia as depicted in Figure 1 above. Zambia's high poverty levels might be attributed to multi-faceted factors but mainly the mono dependency on the extractive industry - undiversified economy.

A closer look at inequality in terms of telling the story of different income distribution, using data from the [37] pioneered by French economist Thomas Picketty, depicts the levels of income of the citizens and shows the share of the total national income that goes to the bottom 50 percent and to the top one and 10 percent of Zambians. Figure 2 shows disaggregated income inequality for the period 1990 to 2015.

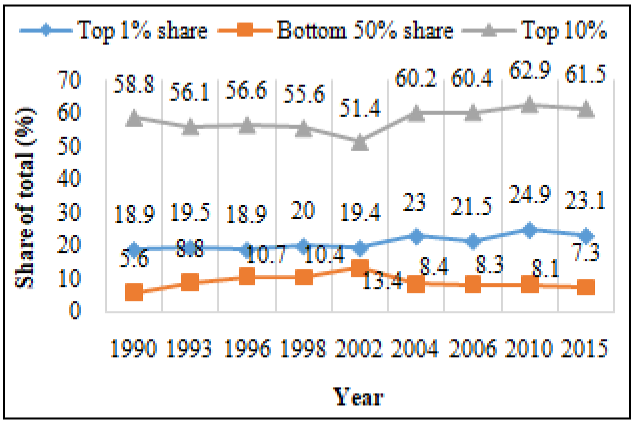

Figure 2: Income inequality in Zambia

Figure 2 shows that the top one percent of Zambians were earning from 19 to 25 percent of the total national income in the last three decades while the bottom 50 percent of Zambian earners were claiming between five and 10 percent of the total income in the same period. The top 10 percent claimed a lion's share of over 60 percent on average over the same period. As seen from the figure above, from 2002, income levels of the top one percent and the top 10 percent of income earners were on a growth trajectory while the bottom 50 percent were on a declining trend. It can be asserted that the gains accruing to the top one percent income earners and the top 10 percent earners were at the expense of the bottom 50 percent. This explains that inequality levels in Zambia was getting worse and hence, as [38] deduced, this phenomenon keeps taking a toll on poverty levels in Zambia. The evidence presented above indicates that the development planning approach that Zambia implemented was not effective in addressing multi-dimensional factors such as poverty and equality as such, this compromised the development imperatives of the country.

5. What is Local Economic Development?

Local Economic Development (LED) is the involvement of locals to shape the future of their own territories [38]. [8] added that that LED was about strategies and projects targeted at a specific territory where the locals own and manage them and use them to bring better livelihood in the locality through job creation and economic growth. LED involves a multi-sectorial, multi-level and multi-actor process ranging from the community-based organisations, the private sector, the churches, the non-governmental organisations, business associations and unions [39]. Successful LED demands the devolution of fiscal and political responsibilities to the local authorities [7]. The local authorities, being at the centre of LED, need to involve and cooperate with key stakeholders in the locality to make impactful LED policies that would lift its people out of poverty, improve their quality of life, and create job opportunities for them. LED is therefore an element of decentralisation that is about creating partnerships among the relevant stakeholders.

Local economic development strategies originated and were practised first in the 1960s; mainly in high-income countries with a sole objective of resolving socio-economic problems those countries were facing at that time, especially in relation to cases of economic regeneration [9]. The LED concept has evolved over time. There are three documented major LED evolutions since the 1960s. The period from the mid-1990s to date is undergoing a third wave of the evolution. The period between the 1960s to the early 1980s registered the first wave of LED evolution and between 1980s to the mid-1990s registered a second wave. The first wave was characterised by mainly public sector involvement. It lacked strategies and implemented projects without coordination; it had no or few monitoring and evaluation programmes and a lack of sources of funding [40]. The second wave continued with the sectoral emphasis focusing on the manufacturing sector and targeted inward investment [40]. In the second wave, the public sector began to involve stakeholders such as the private sector and formulation of development strategies ensued [40]. The third shift, which we are currently in, has moved from being public sector centric to a more public-private partnership with the emphasis on improving the business environment.

The LED strategies emerged in the developing world, specifically in Africa, following the failure of the donor-driven structural adjustment programmes (SAP) to reduce poverty levels in the 1990s [41]. SAPs were donor-driven programmes heavily dominated by central government and decisions from the top hierarchies that had little impact on the local communities. The SAP were structural reforms propagated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The SAP called for full liberalisation of economies and privatisation of state-owned companies. Following the failure of the SAPs to reduce poverty levels, many African countries began to develop decentralisation policies meant to devolve decision making and responsibilities to the local authorities [41]. LED was placed at the centre of many decentralisation policies. Decentralisation like LED is meant to bring development closer to the grassroots. The understanding is that a decentralised country would empower its local government authorities to implement efficient policies that target the ideal beneficiaries-the local community LED primarily causes regions to take full control of their own institutions and initiate economic development that would create the life-style desired in those localities.

6. Selected Local Economic Development attempts in Zambia

Unlike South Africa that has a clear and concise national framework for LED; Zambia did not have a policy framework on LED [42]. However, the planning process of the local authorities is guided by the Urban and Regional Planning Act No. 3 of 2015. The Act under section 35, makes it a requirement for the local authorities to develop an integrated development plan (IDP) [43]. The IDP is one of the key tools used by municipalities to address their developmental challenges. It is a framework that guides activities of government agencies, corporate service providers, civil society organisations, and the private sector within a municipal area. Where a local authority did not have a planning department or had some capacity challenges, the Act allows the planning process to be done centrally at the provincial planning authority. The Act demands that the entire planning process should be a consultative one, involving state institutions, local authorities, vulnerable groups and traditional leaders [43]. The Act makes a good basis for developing and implementing LED strategies in the local municipalities.

The first discourse on the LED by the local authorities in Zambia began in 2018 [11]. The discourse was motivated by the fact that local communities were alienated in the development of some projects and lacked community ownership. High rates of vandalism, underutilisation or shunning the use of facilities constructed in these communities were the order of the day [11]. In 2018, the Local Authorities Association of Zambia (LGAZ), working with the Ministry of Local Authority, funded by the international community, launched the very first local economic development guidelines for local authorities in Zambia. The launch of the LED guidelines was followed by LED trainings in the councils that were piloted to develop LED strategies that responded to the socio-economic development needs within their localities [11].

Below are some of the pertinent ostensibly LED programmes and projects implemented in Zambia.

6.1 Physical development: infrastructural projects

Zambia's central government implemented policies and projects that impact the local communities. For example, the country constructed major infrastructural projects that aimed at linking all internal provinces with roads of a total of 8, 000 kilometres and transform the country into a totally land-linked country. The project assisted to open up rural areas where better roads were constructed to ease their movement, especially transportation of agricultural products, the mainstay of people in rural Zambia. Other projects with socio-economic impact on the local communities across the country worth mentioning were the construction of hospitals/health posts, universities, schools and technical colleges.

6.2 Promotion of inward investments

Attraction of investments is identified as one of the approaches to local economic development [40]. Promotion of mainly foreign direct investment was one of the approaches Zambia embarked on to develop localities through creation of jobs and transfer of skills. Zambia used various tools to promote investments but mainly marketing of the local areas through distribution of brochures and publications, advertisements in print and electronic media, organising investment promotion missions, and organising investment conferences. The total FDI stock in Zambia stood at approximately USD19 billion, mainly dominated by large-scale mining and construction sectors [44]. The FDI approach did little in creating the much-needed job opportunities and reducing poverty.

6.3 Agricultural programmes

Agriculture is one of the pro-poor LED programmes that is widely undertaken by most disadvantaged communities in the developing world. In the quest for economic development, agriculture plays a passive and supportive role. The sector provides food that is low priced and supports the industrial economy by making available and offloading labour to fuel industrial development. Simon Kuznet, a Nobel Laureate in economics sciences, identified four contributions of agriculture, namely provision of production inputs for use in industries like textiles and agro-processing, a source of foreign exchange through export of agro products, stimulating demand for consumer products by increasing rural incomes, contribution of workers not required at the farms as a result of rising agricultural productivity [3]. Agriculture was also acknowledged as lifting millions of people out of poverty, especially during the so-called Green Revolution, following an Asian food crisis in the 1960s [3]. Green Revolution was a boost in the production of grain as a result of the scientific discovery of new hybrid seed varieties.

Zambia promoted agricultural pro-poor policies such as the provision of price support, especially for the staple food, maize, subsidy on seeds, and fertilizers. The country in 2003 introduced what was called the Farmer Input Support Program (FISP) aimed at improving the supply and delivery of fertilizer and seeds for maize production at subsidised prices to small-scale farmers [35]. However, the FISP programme was hampered by the late delivery of farming inputs. In addition, cooperatives were hijacked by large-scale farmers, despite the FISP being designed for vulnerable but viable small-scale farmers [45]. Therefore, FISP benefited non-poor households.

6.4 Entrepreneurial development: industrial yards/industrial clusters

Another centrally planned project with notable impact on the local communities was the initiative called Industrial Yards Development by the Citizens Economic Empowerment Commission (CEEC), a public statutory board. Industrial yards are structures housing small and medium-sized firms involved in steel and wood processing, automotive services, and agro processing. Industrial Yards were piloted in eight (8) districts of Zambia. Industrial Yards were modelled in the way industrial clusters are modelled. Industrial clusters can be used as tools for local economic development. An industrial cluster is a geographic concentration of interconnected companies, specialised suppliers, service providers, and firms in related sectors and related institutions [46]. Firms in the clusters are believed to be more competitive and have more rapid growth than other firms in the same industry but outside the cluster [47].

6.5 Local Government Equalisation Fund

The Local Government Equalisation Fund (LGEF) is constitutional and was established under the Constitution of Zambia as amended by Act No. 2 of 2016. It was operationalised in 2015 through a subsidiary legislation, the Local Government (amendment) Act, No.12 of 2014, now repealed and replaced by the Local Government Act, No. 2 of 2019 [48]. The Act outlines the guidance on how the fund is to be apportioned, managed, and utilised. The purpose of the fund is to support local authorities with salaries for the council workers and to fund functions of the council. The fund was designed to provide a minimum of five percent of the national income taxes in a year [48]. Besides this support from the central government, local authorities also collect revenues at local level using by-laws or council resolutions. The LGEF, therefore, provides supplementary funding for them to perform local government functions. The Local Government Act also stipulates that 20 percent of the LGEF should be used for infrastructural projects in the local areas. However, the local authorities faced challenges in building infrastructural projects as the LGEF was inadequate and in most cases disbursed late [48].

6.7 The Constituency Development Fund

The Constituency Development Fund (CDF) was established in 1995 with an objective of financing micro community-based projects to contribute to poverty reduction in various constituencies [48]. Zambia has 156 constituencies covering both urban and rural areas. The CDF is enshrined in the Constitution of Zambia as amended by Act No. 2 of 2016 for the establishment of the CDF. The fund was designed to empower the local communities in constituencies to take part in decision-making processes of local economic development. The specific objectives of the CFD are to bring on board the local community in decision making in project implementation; to support community-based projects; to support project planning and management; and to provide financial resources in line with the local communities' priorities. At the beginning of each year, the Constituency Development Committees (CDCs) call for project proposals for funding from the local communities represented by the Ward Development Committees (WDCs). The CDF was designed and meant to support the LED process in the constituencies. However, empirical studies [49], [50] that were undertaken to assess the impact of the CDF indicated that the CDF alienated citizen participation in project development and hence it negated the concept of the LED approach. Reasons attributed to these findings were that the CDF was personalised by the area Member of Parliament who utilised it according to his or her preference and that in most cases the CDF was misused and misappropriated. The CDF from its inception to the end of the 7NDP i.e., 1995-2021, failed to bring about LED in different communities it was administered.

7. Results and Discussion

Local economic development is anchored on decentralisation and full participation of local citizens. However, from independence to the end of the 7NDPin 2021, there was no tangible progress in implementation of decentralisation policies [11]. This by and large compromised the implementation of LED projects. As a result, local authorities in Zambia were hampered with erratic and inadequate financial resources. [2] contended that implementation of LED projects was limited due to a number of factors such as capacity constraints and finance. This assertion was corroborated by [12] in his study of local government and service delivery in Zambia that found most local authorities to have no technical and financial capacity to implement developmental projects in their municipalities. The lack of commitment to implement the decentralisation policies posed several challenges regarding active involvement of the lower levels and local authorities in local economic development promotion. It can therefore, be asserted that the failure to fully implement decentralisation programmes adversely affected the development process of Zambia in as far as reducing the poverty and inequality levels at local levels were concerned. The effectiveness of the past national development plans was hampered by the failure of the then government to devolve power and authority to the local authorities.

The existing tools for local development such as the CDF, FISP and the LGEF were ineffective to reduce the levels of inequality and poverty in the local communities. The process of submitting ideas and projects to the CDF committee alienated the local community members as the selected community representatives on the CDF Committee were answerable to the MP as opposed to the community they represented. In fact, the Constituency Development Fund Act of No. 11 of 2018 empowered the MP to directly appoint six (including him or herself) out of ten representatives to sit on the CDF Committee. This phenomenon is what [18] termed as levels of “tokenism”-placation, where a picture was portrayed of “participation” by the have-nots yet in the actual sense the have-not citizens did not have the power to ensure that their views were taken into account by the power holders, in this case the political leadership, as such the have-nots did not influence any change in the decision-making process. This finding confirms [50] assertions that citizen participation in the CDF project identification and selection was highly influenced by partisan political attitudes and was at variance with the CDF guidelines. This finding also corroborates the findings by other studies that CDF was ineffective as it marginalised and disadvantaged the local people [49], [50].

The FISP was meant to be a temporal programme to assist small-scale farmers graduate into medium and large-scale, but the small-scale farmers perpetually depended on this programme without any significant growth. [51] averred that the beneficiaries of the FISP ended up selling their produce on the open market as opposed to through government’s food reserve agency that offered a better and attractive floor price. Therefore, this phenomenon relegated the small-scale farmers to a vicious circle of poverty, continuously dependent on FISP support. [52] proposed a total disbandment of FISP and restructuring FISP into a concessional loan to enable small-scale farmers to take a commercial route and become more efficient. It can therefore be asserted that FISP was sustainable in improving the living standards of the poor in the period under review.
Zambia’s Urban and Regional Planning Act of 2015 demands that all districts should have an IDP [53]. The IDP was the main pillar for budget prioritisation and the main interface with the local community members. Therefore, local authorities saw LED as an integral part of the IDP. However, as [54]clearly enunciated in their study of the link between IDP and LED, they asserted that although the IDP may incorporate some aspects of LED, IDP is not LED and LED is not IDP. Therefore, the absence of comprehensive LED policy frameworks at the local government levels made it unclear for the local authority to implement specific income generation activities that would support the promotion of economic development targeting the impoverished people.

8. Conclusion and Recommendation

The study sought to propose a local economic development approach as an alternative to Zambia development imperatives. To support this proposal, the study reviewed the historical plans that Zambia undertook from the time it got independence from the British colonial rule to the end of the seventh national development plan (7NDP) i.e., 1964 to 2021. The study revealed that the development approach that Zambia adopted did not significantly impact on the reduction of inequality and poverty levels. The tools that Zambia implemented in its quest for local economic development were ineffective in uplifting the livelihoods of the local people. The study acknowledges that the main pillars of LED i.e., decentralisation and citizens participation were weak, as such, the supposedly LED programmes failed to deliver the desired results of taking development to the people at the grassroots. The study recommends that Zambia should consider embarking on an effective LED approach as an alternative development approach that would deliver the country’s development imperatives. An effective LED approach would entail that, factors leading local development are implemented such as full decentralisation process and full participation of local citizens at the levels Arnstein’s call level of *degrees of citizen power* where the have-nots are given power to fully participate in the decision-making process of the developmental issues in their localities.

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