

EVIDENCE AND IMPACT SUMMIT

PRESENTATION

CIVIL SOCIETY AND GOVERNANCE EVALUATION IN ZAMBIA

1.0 BRIEF ON ZAMBIA

1) Zambia is in Southern Africa and is landlocked (Figure 1). On its northern borders are Tanzania and Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire), Malawi and Mozambique in the east, Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Namibia in the south and Angola in the west. It measures 752,618 square kilometres. Zambia has 18.4 million people, a Gross Domestic Product (Current US\$) of US\$19.32 billion (World Bank, 2020). Zambia is well endowed with natural resources, especially copper. It is ranked in development as a lower middle-income country. However, poverty has remained persistently high at 76.6 percent in rural areas, compared to 23.4 percent in urban areas (Ministry of National Development Planning, 2017, p. 35).

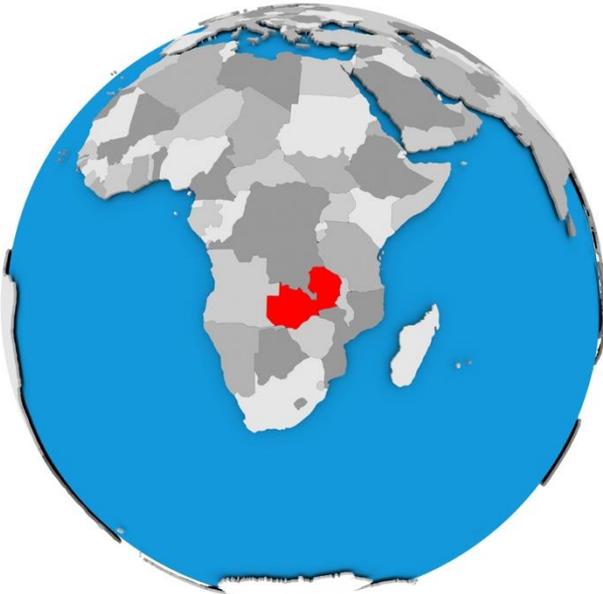


Figure 1. Location of Zambia

2) There is high unemployment among youths, and the country is highly donor dependent and extremely indebted. Debt has reached US\$14.48 billion, over 60 percent of gross domestic product. Most of this is owed to China; US\$6.18 billion including unpaid interest (Africanews, 2021).

3) *During the period 2006-2015, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth averaged 6.9 percent against a target of above 7 percent.*

During the Fifth National

Development Plan's (FNDP) period, GDP growth averaged 6.1 percent. GDP growth slowed down from 7.6 percent in 2012 to 2.9 percent in 2015. During the

FNDP period, inflation averaged 11.4 percent (2006-2009), averaged 9.9 percent between 2011 and 2015 and in November 2016 to 8.8 percent. Zambia's stock of external debt has been rising since 2012. At the end of 2014, external debt stock was at US\$4.81 billion, representing 24.0 percent of GDP. In 2015, external debt was US\$6.41 billion, and as of September 2016 the external debt had reached US\$6.7 billion, representing 35 percent of GDP (Ministry of National Development Planning, 2017, pp. 18 -19).

- 4) It is within this context that this article first explores Civil Society in Zambia to set the scene for the growth of its participation in governance monitoring and evaluation in Zambia. Following this, evaluation challenges are described before suggestions are made for improving civil society's partnership in governance evaluation in Zambia. Finally, some lessons for other nation's civil societies are drawn from Zambia's experiences.

2.0 BACKGROUND ON CIVIL SOCIETY IN ZAMBIA

CIVICUS (2008) defines civil society as “the arena, outside of the family, the state, and the market, which is created by individual and collective actions, organisations and institutions to advance shared interests.” Civil society in this southern part of Africa has its genesis in the evangelisation of European Christian missionaries' pre-colonialism and white settlers during colonialism.

Indigenous intellectuals in northern Rhodesia (as Zambia was called before independence) started questioning the supremacy of the white minorities. These intellectuals were mostly government clerks, mission educated church employees, miners, and storekeepers. They formed voluntary associations that were called welfare associations. They resembled British workers' associations of the nineteenth century. The first welfare association was formed in 1912. It was called the Mwenzo Welfare Society. Mwenzo was a Protestant Missionary Station in Northern Rhodesia. It mainly aimed to be a link between the white colonialists led by the British South African Company (BSC) and the governed. African led Christian churches were also formed as a way of rejecting European missionary control. A charismatic Indigenous evangelist, Lenshina, also formed her Lumpa sect. They copied the Afro-American led churches. The US-based Watchtower sect that questioned the governance of

chiefs and the colonial government also became popular and gained a major following in the northern part of Northern Rhodesia.

The associations mainly advocated for the lowering of tribal barriers, rapid Europeanisation by extending modern education to all, increasing industrial employment opportunities and lifting restrictions from career progressions for blacks, enhancing access of rural indigenous communities to improved agricultural techniques, improving water and sanitation facilities for indigenous communities, removing the movement restrictions and for permanent residency for black in urban settlements, stopping whites from having black concubines, mistreating them and rejecting their multi-racial children, and restricting operating time and access to beer halls. This was to stop the devastating effects of mass-produced alcohol on black communities, especially on productivity, the emerging social challenges of prostitution and spread of unknown before communicable diseases in indigenous communities.

Multi-ethnic welfare associations started being formed almost two decades later. The British government had taken over control in 1924 of Northern Rhodesia from British South African Company. Rapid urbanisation on the line of rail had led to major tension between the majority locals and immigrant minority of whites and Asians. The multi-ethnic associations were formed beginning in the then capital of Northern Rhodesia, Livingstone, and then Ndola and Broken Hill in 1930. Later, they were established in Choma (1931) and in Luanshya (1932), the original mining town on the Copperbelt (Hooker, 1966). Unlike the Mwenzo one, they were very militant, concentrating on social and economic issues, rather than on political ones.

In 1933, the welfare associations united to form the United African Welfare Association. They planned to extend their presence into villages. However, the colonial government exerted a lot of pressure on operations of welfare associations that they closed. Thus, the colonial government prevented the creation of a united country-wide organisation. However, several of them including the Watchtower sect were reported (unconfirmed) as having been involved in the 1935 Copperbelt riot. Long festered resentments by locals against white minority rule exploded when the tax rate for black miners was increased (Rotberg, 1965). The Watchtower sect that was legally operating at that time was afterwards banned.

Former priests and teachers of the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Southern Province helped form the first territory-wide nationalist party in 1937; the Northern Rhodesia African Congress. However, the colonial government refused to register it. Some of the former

leaders of welfare associations were later to become leading members of unions and political parties of natives. Lessons from operations of welfare associations helped locals in the formation of trade unions from the late 1940s. Civil servant, shop assistants and truck drivers formed their own unions. The copper miners came up with the Group of 17. This was a tribally balanced team of miners that was selected to negotiate with the white mines' owners for higher pay for their black employees. Miners came from most of the 73 ethnic groups of Zambia as well as from neighbouring Congo, Malawi, and Tanzania. This emerging multi-ethnicity and unity in fighting for common causes worried the mine owners and colonial government. They, therefore, restricted the stay of miners in urban settlements and forced workers to go back to their villages after their contracts ended. As most of the black miners resented this regulation the emerging political movements in the colony found a lot of support among miners.

In 1946, the Northern Rhodesia Federation of Welfare Societies was formed. It was transformed in 1948 into the Northern Rhodesia Congress. This was to be registered by the colonial government as a political party (Momba & Gadsden, 2013). Young militant blacks copying the militancy of Kamuzu Banda's party in Malawi formed the United National Independence Party (UNIP). It was UNIP that led Zambians to their independence from Britain on 24th October 1964. More NGOs were formed after independence because of the adverse effects of the global oil and financial crises of the 1970s.

Religious organisations still form part of current civil society and are most influential. For example, the Jesuits were cardinal in the establishment of the Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) in 2000 with its mission,

...to ensure that civil society effectively and meaningfully participates in the design, formulation and implementation of the National Development Plans and further monitor the National Development Plans to ensure government provides a means by which Zambia can effectively strategise on reducing the escalating levels of poverty.¹

Zambia's treasury reserves got wiped out in 1971 because of its currency's link to the Pound Sterling that had drastically fallen (Njovu, 2019). Reliant on imports for many of its goods and services, the adverse effect of the drop in the value of the Pound was that prices of goods

¹ <http://www.csprzambia.org/about/who-we-are/> Accessed 01.09.20

rose beyond most of the citizens' reach. The government was unable to continue subsidising some of the social services. Government sought financial assistance from developed nations and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The conditionality for accessing the loans and grants meant more hardships for the majority of citizens. However, the assumed improvements of the economy as the results of the loans did not come. Zambia ended up getting more foreign loans to sustain itself.

Later a Structural Adjustment Programme was embarked upon in 1983 (Simutanyi, 1996, p. 826) with the help of the international monetary financiers. However, the economic and social status of Zambians did not seem to improve. Highly indebted, Zambia then got some relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries programme of the IMF. The programme led to more involvement of the donor community in Zambia's economic and social sectors, including governance. The intervention policies, projects and programmes that were implemented with the help of external donors had accountability components. These required assessment of adherence to financial regulations through financial audits. They also required assessment of adherence to the interventions' goals and plans through monitoring and evaluation.

Until the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005), there was a lot of fragmentation in aid delivery. "The main focus of the Paris Declaration is improving the effectiveness of aid through ownership, harmonisation, alignment, results and mutual accountability" (Chigunta & Matshalaga, 2010, p. v). After the Declaration, the donor community and the UN agencies started to support Zambia's efforts to build local capacity in monitoring and evaluation (M&E). This was mainly translated by Cooperating Partners (CPs) as enhancing the capacity of civil society and government in project management and M&E. In the Zambian context, CPs are foreign governments represented through their embassies and development aid agencies, UN agencies, international development financial institutions and some private organisations. These had or have development agreements with the Zambian government to assist it in the democratising, economic and social development of the country.

Civil society led by churches started to build their own M&E capacity. UNICEF spearheaded the formation of a national evaluation association of M&E professionals that helped civil society. The Civil Society for Poverty Reduction's (CSPR) Barometer Project and Society for Women against AIDs in Zambia started to perform independent M&E of the government's budget disbursements. The Zambia Evaluation Association (ZEA) was formed in 2001. ZEA

was a member of CSPR and led the coalition of civil society and government on national M&E development. ZEA was instrumental in helping other members in establishing M&E systems and formulating strategies. Cooperation between civil society and government on seeking alternatives to Structural Adjustment Programmes led to formulation of the national poverty reduction strategies and the Fifth National Development Plan. M&E was embedded in the Fifth National Development Plan (2006 – 2010) and it was to become a major feature of national planning. It also led to the formation of joint M&E committees on major sectors; for example, the Governance Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (GMEC).

3.0 GOVERNANCE M&E IN ZAMBIA

GOVERNANCE MONITORING AND EVALUATION IN ZAMBIA

Monitoring and Evaluation is a management function in development projects and programmes that are funded by external donors. This is due to accountability requirements on governments and charities to report to taxpayers and donors about the use of funding. Some NGOs have programmes that monitor and evaluate, for example, public policies and national plans. The Gender NGOs Coordinating Council (NGOCC) has programmes that focus on monitoring gender related public policies, national plans, and programmes like the Police Victim Support Unit's implementation of the Anti-Gender Violence programme.

Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) was doing its own independent government budget tracking. The Action for Transparency Project (A4T) had also embarked on its own budget tracking of the education and health sector involving citizens (Mumbuna, 2015). It was a joint project of Transparency International Zambia, Zambia Institute of Mass Communication, and the Fojo (Swiss) Media Institute. In addition, national-led governance evaluations are supposed to be carried out by GMEC. It was created in 2007 to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the governance chapter of FNDP. Its members were made up of Government ministries and organisations (80%), and representatives of civil society

(20%). Civil society involvement in governance is vital for ensuring good democratic governance and the sustaining of peace in a nation.

Bearing this context and the many players in the evaluation space in mind, the evaluation challenges for civil society in Zambia are discussed below.

4.0 EVALUATION CHALLENGES OF CIVIL SOCIETY

4.1 INTERNAL CHALLENGES

4.1.1 Financial and Technical Constraints

The main challenges for Zambian NGOs are financial and technical constraints. They do not have a large membership base to be able to sustain themselves from members' subscriptions. Also, there are very few trained evaluators. Young emerging evaluators usually end up going to work abroad. There are, however, efforts by the Zambian governments and some education institutions to train more Zambians in M&E.

Though cooperation between civil society and the government in Zambia has continued, civil society seems to be no longer playing a major role in national M&E. This could be attributed to being too reliant on external funding and to the, sometimes, volatile relationship with government. CSPR is an umbrella body of about 40 NGOs that mainly carry out poverty reduction programs. Many of its members rely on external CPs. Without grants from external donors, *it would be very difficult for them* to carry out any advocacy program and their survival could not be assured. For example, when *the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA)* closed its offices in Zambia, many Zambian NGOs that were funded by it closed. The closure also affected the consortium of government institutions and civil society that were monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the FNDP and Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. For example, the Governance Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (GMEC) based at the Ministry of Justice had to scale down its operations. GMEC was also adversely affected by the change in priorities of the German government in its disbursement of financial aid. This was almost at the same time as DANIDA was scaling down its operations in Zambia.

In Zambia as most of the notable NGOs are established by external institutions and depend on external funding, most of them are outlets for the interests of their external funders.

The evaluation body in Zambia in this paper is being given as an example to highlight some of the weaknesses of a Zambian NGO. The Zambia Monitoring and Evaluation Association (ZaMEA) is the umbrella body of evaluators in Zambia. It came to be formed out of the decline of the Zambia Evaluation Association (ZEA). The first evaluators' association was formed out of the aspirations of M&E practitioners in the Cooperating partners' agencies, independent local private M & E practitioners, academia and government and quasi-government M & E officers. UNICEF is credited to have transplanted the idea of national and continental M&E associations from USA. It helped form the continental umbrella body, the African Evaluation Association and ZEA, among others. In Zambia, it partnered with academics and M&E officers in then, Zambia Social Investment Fund (ZAMSIF). This was a World Bank supported programme of assistance to the government extending over a 10-year period, aimed at poverty alleviation in rural and urban areas through the funding of community and district level small-scale infrastructure projects.

ZaMEA also faces the common organisational challenges of many members of Zambia's civil society. It is too dependent on a few major contributors to fund their operations. These tend to be mostly foreign donors.

Members that fight to be on the board mostly aspire to enhance their Curriculum vitae and not to enhance the association's capacity to serve the majority of members and nation. They also tend to focus on getting into a position of power that have access to the association's funds and consultancy opportunities. The few critical voices are shunned or pushed out as unscrupulous members entrench themselves to manipulate the NGO. The tendency to ring fence access to funds and opportunities among a few members has led to the lack of growth and collapse of many NGOs.

ZaMEA is not a visible player in national governance and events. It has remained an elite and academic tower of workshops and consultancies much detached from the grass root masses and realities of the life of the majority of Zambians. Though some members attend a lot of M&E conferences, their knowledge does not trickle down to institutions and general public. Its activities tend to be centred at the University of Zambia in Lusaka. This is common among NGOs that had begun their lives with schoolteachers, university lecturers and researchers in Zambia. There is an evidence rigorousness of the academic discipline that pleases external donors but tends to be too detached to real life and the understanding of an average person. The audience tend to be restrictive as activities do not get held in the

grassroot communities that need to be empowered with governance evaluation skills, e.g., score carding. Without the link with the majority of Zambians, it is unable to attract much local support, even from practicing evaluators, to sustain itself.

ZaMEA is also financially too weak to protect its practicing members or fix minimum fees for local evaluators. Many commissioners will pay very high amounts to foreign consultants but apply an in the country evaluation fee structure, which is substantively lower for the same type of work.

4.1.2 Practice of Only Highlighting Positive Outcomes

As individuals we naturally want to show to the public our good side and shy away from those who criticise us. Understandably, some NGOs tend to act the same way. They do not like highlighting their shortcomings. The final copy of an evaluation report may, therefore, not represent fairly the findings of the evaluator. This is usually in assignments commissioned by the NGOs themselves *or where the evaluators 'flatter' the organisation and minimise any short comings, to maintain the NGO as a client and their flow of work and income.*

4.1.3 Lack of Spirit of Service Among Employees of Civil Society

There is also a lack of the spirit of service in employees of some NGOs and development agencies. There are some employees who abuse their offices. *This is particularly so in the health and social sectors. For example, a major management challenge to achieving programmes is due to financial abuse, despite M&E practitioners being part of the organisation.* A major umbrella NGO and main channel for external funding of HIV-AIDS and TB programs and projects in Zambia ended up closing due to financial abuse although there were M&E experts there. An umbrella protestant church association also had employees who were conniving with employees of a donor agency and issuing false evaluation reports. They were channelling the funds received to personal projects, e.g., buying of cars and houses, instead of community ones.

4.1.4 Corruption in Award of Contracts

There is also a lack of transparency in the commissioning of evaluations in some NGOs. The open calls for consultants placed in mass media serve to hide the awards to cronies by some NGO executives and funders. This can be observed in the networks of evaluators that seem to be constantly commissioned by the same client. Other NGOs' executives commission their

friends and relatives to carry out the evaluations. They are availed inside information in order to submit proposals that seem to be favourably matching the calls.

The Zambia Evaluation Association (ZEA) the predecessor of ZaMEA split into two shortly after being formed due to internal conflicts generated by such suspected awards. Much of the unhappiness by some members leading to the split was the perception that only a few members of ZEA were securing work or being recommended by ZEA to commissioners that were approaching it. ZEA was also seen as seemingly benefiting those who were close to top officials in the Ministry of Finance. Most of the commissioning of M&E assignment for government projects and programmes were through the Ministry of Finance.

There have been such splits in many Zambian NGOs over the years, for example in the churches and unions of employees. This has led to a much-weakened civil society. A weakened civil society ends up not being an effective governance watch dog.

4.2 EXTERNAL CHALLENGES

4.2.1 Influence of External Donors

Even within projects with well-established M&E systems and good records as evidence of performance, there have been many cases of intervention failures. Evaluations of civil society and developmental projects in Zambia are mainly externally driven. Though there is talk of respecting beneficiaries, participatory evaluations and being culturally sensitive, the dissenting voices of beneficiaries and evaluators are usually ignored. Commissioners of evaluations who are usually external funders are not part of the project's management. The methodologies of evaluation are mainly dictated by the commissioners. These are likely to be foreign development agencies, governments, and charities. They may choose the evaluators or consultants or play a major hand in the choice of evaluators or consultants. In Zambia, many projects that have been evaluated and termed successful have ended up being failures after the external donors pull out. There are many wells in rural areas that have been abandoned by females who prefer to go and fetch water from streams and rivers. This could be due to a linear approach in project design, inflexible M&E log frames and exclusion of locals in planning and evaluation processes.

4.2.2 Questionable Quality of Evaluations

Unlike the construction service where low standards of work can be visibly seen, it is not easy to ascertain the quality of evaluations. A building could visibly collapse, a road will

develop potholes shortly after construction and there can be low quality of drugs in clinics where cases of corruption are involved. However, it is difficult to ascertain the quality of evaluations especially when the reports are not publicly disseminated. There are no enforceable ethical guidelines *about how commissioners, beneficiaries of a project and M&E consultants should work together*. Though the constitutions of national associations may have clauses on the expected standards of evaluations and disciplining members, *there is no evidence that these have been enforced*. Some evaluators try to please the wishes of donors that all interventions should be shown as successful in reports. Where they note a conflict between the commissioner's wish and reality, they either prepare reports with conclusions that are hanging or leave out negative outcomes.

4.2.3 Challenge of professionalisation of the M&E practice

The question of the quality of evaluations is tied to individual skills and ethical practice as well as the quality of M&E professional associations and academic institutions offering the M&E courses. The profession has been for a long time struggling with the issue of building professional capacity, standardisation of M&E training and professional accreditation. It is in the recent couple of years that higher institutions in Zambia have started offering high academic courses in M&E, i.e., diploma and degrees. However, the curriculum in the national education sector is not uniform. Except may be for Canada, there is no other country which has a national accreditation program for evaluators.

4.2.4 Accountability and Transparency in Civil society

There is also inability by civil society to learn from the past and to avoid weak leadership and management. In voluntary associations, there is also inability to enhance service delivery for the benefit of the majority of members and the nation. Accountability and transparency are principles that civil society advocate for government to adhere to but not for itself. Cases of abuse of offices are common in CSO just like in government.

Out of all the multilaterals [operating in Zambia], the Global Fund is the most vulnerable to abuse. It is dogged by conflicts of interest. We have millions of dollars going into the pockets of a few individuals. The entire CCM (Committee that disburses

funds to NGOs applying for funding) should quit and new people should be appointed. Then we should change all of the PRs (Zulu, 2010, p. 1).

4.2.5 Relationship of NGOs with the Government

Civil society is supposed to be a helper that fills the developmental gap that cannot be closed by government as a result of resource constraints. However, sometimes the relationship between the government and civil society is toxic. The government is usually sceptical of outputs from NGOs that they perceive as being used by external forces even if they are well meant.

Each time the Auditor General's Office issues a report, Transparency International – Zambia will become very visible in mass media. It would express alarm at the level of abuses of public offices and demand from government action on protecting government revenue and assets. This ritual would be repeated the next year. However, during the rest of the year, there would be no monitoring of whether the government has prosecuted those who were cited as abusing their office or introduced new measures to deter abuse of offices. The current President (His Excellency Hakainde Hichilema) has campaigned and warned that abusers of public offices that are mentioned by the Office of the Auditor General will now be prosecuted.

The new national evaluation association, ZaMEA that is supposed to lead civil society in evaluation was not leading the Seventh National Development (2017-2021) Plan's monitoring. The M&E of the plan was spearheaded by the Office of the President under the former President Edgar C. Lungu. The clusters groups of the national development plan were expected to submit quarterly reports to State House.

M&E does not seem to feature under the main functions of the current President. The Ministry of National Development Planning was scrapped and merged once more with the Ministry of Finance when the new ruling party took over the reign of governance in August 2021. Even the national think tank, Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research (ZIPAR) lacks independence as it is under the Ministry of Finance.

4.2.6 Ensuring No One is Left Behind

Foreign development agencies, members of civil society and politicians in Zambia talk a lot on not leaving anyone behind. However, the majority of people who need to have M&E skills in order to enhance their participation in national and local governance are not empowered by

them with the much-needed civic participation and M&E skills, for example, score carding of their elected leaders.

There has also been in Zambian civil society a lack of innovation in M&E and advocacy for indigenous or 'Made in Africa' evaluation methodologies. Many of the commissioners dictate the methodologies that are used in monitoring and evaluating their projects and programmes. For instance, those funded by the US government are likely to insist on using impact evaluation methodologies. Though there are talks of being culturally sensitive and allowing for participatory evaluations by commissioners and evaluators, the power of who pays for the evaluations rules the processes. The beneficiaries are usually too poor, and the evaluators *may not voice concerns due to their reliance on these evaluation contracts for their livelihood.*

5.0 RESOLVING SOME OF THE CHALLENGES

Based on the challenges faced by civil society noted above, this paper concludes with some ideas for improving civil society's performance in governance monitoring and evaluation.

5.1 INTERNAL CHALLENGES

5.1.1 Financial and Technical Constraints

Zambian civil society and the government need to find way of mobilising resources for their operations locally. Government has to allocate a portion of its budget from tax revenue to M&E activities for its plans, programmes and projects. Civil society needs to increase its income base. This can be, for example, through increased membership and subscriptions or investing into income generating ventures. Civil society members can also partner on programmes so that they can share costs.

5.1.2 Lack of Spirit of Service Among Employees of Civil Society

Civil society should be able through its staff recruitment and performance rating system be able to wean out undesirable employees.

5.1.3 Corruption in Award of Contracts

Integrity internal controls can be embedded in the system of procurements and recruitments. These could help stop abuse of offices by employees.

5.2 EXTERNAL CHALLENGES

5.2.1 Overbearing Donors

External funders could help protect the independence of evaluators or consultants. They can have systems of procurements that are fair and uphold the professional integrity of their service providers. Commissioners of evaluations should also be considerate of the opinions of beneficiaries and evaluators. This could include on the methodologies of evidence gathering. Some indigenous ethnic groups have their traditional knowledge that could be useful in data collection.

5.2.2 Questionable Quality of Evaluations

Zambia is not the only country grappling with the question of the quality of evaluation. The field of evaluation is relatively new in the country. It came in the 1970-80s with the opening of the country to the conditionality of the International Monetary Fund. The severe economic and financial crises of that time brought in external charities to work with the government. The economic structural changes of that time brought hardships to a lot of citizens and needed to be mitigated. A lot of external consultants were brought into the country and

worked mainly with researchers from higher education institutions. The emergence of local experts can be tied to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the FNDP.

There are currently discussions on the continent on improving standards of evaluation practice. Zambia is taking part in these discussions. There are also currently a lot of higher institutions of learning offering courses in M&E.

However, a lot depends on the strength of local voluntary associations of evaluators. They need to develop good evaluation standards and strictly enforce them.

5.2.3 Challenge of professionalisation of the M&E practice

The onus is on local voluntary associations of M&E practitioners to standardise the training of M&E professionals in Zambia.

5.2.4 Accountability and Transparency in Civil society

Civil society should lead by example by practicing what it advocates as good principles of governance. It should be open to scrutiny internally and externally.

5.2.5 Relationship of NGOs with the Government

Zambian civil society has been very active in many sectors of national social and economic development. Evaluative evidence provided by civil society continues to play a major role in the advocacy work of civil society. Civil society in Zambia has, in turn, played a major role in developing national evaluation capacity. Now that the Ministry of National Development Planning has been reduced to a department of the Ministry of Finance, civil society needs to enhance its role in building national evaluation capacity.

However, civil society currently faces challenges. These are mainly of sustainability, lack of public support and sometimes suspicions from government. In addition, the nation is currently facing serious social and economic challenges and especially because of the adverse effects of COVID-19. It is a time when civil society must become the alternative to government for solace of most vulnerable people. Civil society has therefore to enhance its ability to be the watchdog of the nation and be the voice of the majority of voiceless citizens.

CSPR used to lead the way by organising its members to come together to be effective watchdogs of the people in national governance. ZEA members were visible in civil society's cooperation with government to develop national M&E systems and capacity. Now it is the Gender NGOs Coordinating Council that seems to be leading in ensuring that its members'

capacity to monitor and evaluate government's gender related policies, plans and programmes are enhanced. It is also helping its members to develop M&E systems to provide much needed objective evidence for use in advocacy programmes. ZaMEA has been currently active in building its members technical skills. It has also been trying to work closely with the government and donor agencies in building national evaluation capacity (Njovu, 2018).

Civil society also needs to start partnering and pooling resources to enhance their generation of evaluative evidence for advocacy. NGOs who are leaders in their sectors can be supported by others to commission evaluation that could be used by other members of civil society for advocacy; for example, NGOCC has been in the forefront for decades on gender related issues. Evaluators can also help increase the participation of citizens in civic duties and make civil society a highly effective advocate for most citizens. In cases where NGOs may not be able to afford M&E experts, they can offer pro-bono services.

As the donor community is facing the same financial and social challenges because of the coronavirus pandemic, it likely that Zambian civil society will further face challenges of financial sustainability. Those NGOs that largely depend on foreign donations must quickly find alternative ways of mobilising resources. When most Zambians begin to perceive that NGOs as not serving the interests of external forces but are instead working for the betterment of Zambia, it likely that more of them will participate in NGO activities and contribute to their sustenance.

5.2.6 Ensuring No One is Left Behind

To reach most people, civil society would have to shift its focus to people that it has not been presently reaching.

ZaMEA needs to broaden its reach and better balance the needs of members and citizen with the requirements of donors and government.

Citizens require timely help to understand issues of national development programmes and plans. ZaMEA does not presently issue public briefs on national development that would be of help to ordinary citizens. CSPR at one time had tried to simplify the technical jargons of national plans so that they would be easier to understand by ordinary citizens. The FNDP was published in local languages by the Ministry of Finance, but the practice was not continued when publishing the next plans. ZaMEA should be spearheading efforts to make government

policies and major evaluative national policy and plans' documents easily accessible and understandable by most Zambians. Most Zambians speak indigenous languages and not English. There are also some citizens that have challenges with their eyesight and may need important national documents to be printed in braille form.

Not all citizens are able to benefit from the pool of M&E experts in civil society. Much of civil society has concentrated their activities mainly in Lusaka or major towns where they are easily visible to foreign embassies and development agencies. It is a time to decentralise civil society in order to cover even remote areas of Zambia. The majority of Zambians live in rural areas.

6.0 Lessons for Other Nations' Civil society

6.1 GROW NATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY USING YOUR OWN RESOURCES

The adverse social and economic factors that led to the formation of civil society in Zambia are prevalent in many countries. We have seen the growth of global movements like Black Lives Matter and Me Too. Many successful NGOs depend on volunteers with the passion to change the status of their communities, nations, and world to a better level. They carry out valuable national programmes, especially those aimed to reduce poverty. They also offer checks and balances to government and ensure good governance in the country. This is very important as there are major weaknesses in our democratic institutions and public media. Much of this is done through M&E that forms the backbone of their advocacy programmes. The COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing economic downturn has, however, had very adverse effects on the Zambian civil society as well as government. Civil society has also been adversely affected by the war between Russia and Ukraine on global supplies of funds, fuel, and food. The weakening US Dollar has been also a challenge as their income keeps on dwindling while prices of goods and services are skyrocketing. Thus, they have been adversely exposed to their vulnerability to external shocks especially reliance on external cash flow. Therefore, the Zambian civil society and government have not been able to adequately serve their constituents.

The change in ruling parties after the August 2021 general elections ushered new changes in governance. The Ministry of National Development Planning has been scrapped and turned into a department of the Ministry of Finance. This is leading to uncertainty on the direction of the new government's evaluation policy and the development of national evaluation capacity.

The disadvantages of indigenous peoples relying on foreigners and their models of development have been shown during this pandemic era. Drivers of developing national evaluation capacity in this volatile situation cannot remain foreign forces. Even developing nations are facing their own social and economic challenges during this pandemic period. It is time local citizens and institutions mobilised themselves and local resources to develop national M&E capacity.

6.2 NEED FOR GOOD LEADERSHIP

There is also need for introspection. Zambian civil society has become a major employer as formal employment sectors are facing challenges. Much of civil society in Zambia is seen as a tool of politicians or donors. There have also been many scandals involving abuse of members and donors' funds in Zambian civil society. These have affected its credibility. There is need to have credible managers in civil society if it is to attract the needed public participation in its activities. Civic bodies across the world need to have this as priority and ensure that they employ credible staff.

6.3 BUILD CAPACITY ON THE GRASS ROOT LEVEL

The world is crying for good governance in many states as can be seen by political conflicts being experienced in some nations. Good governance can only be sustained if the majority of people are empowered to exercise their civic rights. The M&E profession has a duty to ensure that no one is left behind in development and governance by empowering people that are mostly affected by public services. By contrast, the emphasis of CPs in Zambia's national evaluation capacity development has been in building the capacity of NGOs and government agencies. This has been through sponsorship of M&E workshops, conferences, and courses. While this is good, only a few people (civil servants, employees of development agencies, civic activists, and students) end up being empowered.

Civil society in Zambia, meanwhile, has concentrated its operations in urban areas and especially in the capital for visibility. While the presence of donors' and government offices is vital for their operations, much of their services are required by the vulnerable people in remote rural areas or poor townships.

However, what has been recently realised during this COVID-19 pandemic and following the overwhelming victory of the long-time opposition party in the August 2021 general elections, is that both civil society and government have been missing it. That is, that the majority of ordinary people's perceptions matter on national development. The previous ruling party had

ignored public outcries on high level of abuse of offices by politicians revealed by mass media and the Office of the Auditor General, poor public service delivery, unemployment, violence by its cadres and political intolerance. It is mostly the ordinary youths that are ignored by public systems and are adversely affected by unemployment who voted out the previous government. This was despite the favourable election polls forecast for the pre 2021 elections' ruling party by highly qualified researchers.

Based on the above, the lesson for the world is that it should not take every five or twenty years for the public to sack an underperforming politician or public servant. Civil society should be able to assist citizens to effectively participate in governance between general elections. One way to do this is through empowering most citizens to perform M&E, for example, score carding. Once most citizens realise the benefit of being empowered, they will gladly become members of civil society and volunteer to raise the much-needed funds for operations.

7.0 Conclusion

There is need for civil society to be an influential partner with government in national social and economic development. It can only do this if it is financially and technically independent of government.

Civil Society has historically played a major role in pre- and post-independence Zambia and other nations to bring about major changes in the social and economic development of the nation. The corona pandemic, climate change and geo-political conflicts around the world have had adverse effects on the sustainability of these important watch dogs of government and voices of the vulnerable majority. Democracy is now increasingly facing major threats around the world. The world can learn lessons from the experience of Zambian civil society in evidence gathering for national M&E. To be better watchdogs of the people in democratic societies, civil society organisations need to enhance their internal management and leadership performance. They need to produce timely and high-quality evidence that holds governments and businesses to account for their uses of resources for the prosperity and wellbeing of people, and survival of our planet. To get the majority of people in a nation to participate in governance and sustainable development, civil society needs to be seen to be working for the interest of the majority in a nation. Increased participation of people in civil society's activities will help ensure that it is seen as credible, working with them and for them. Citizens that may not be able to financially contribute to the sustainability of civil

society can contribute their time, skills and in other kind. High net-worth individuals can help contribute to the sustainability of civil society by giving financial donations. It is in the interest of every citizen to ensure the survival of civil society to provide checks and balance to government and businesses.

8.0 About John T. Njovu

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