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Structural Injustice and the MDGs: A Critical Analysis of the Zambian Experience

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Following independence in 1964, Zambia ranked amongst the most prosperous countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is now the fourth poorest, and one of the most unequal countries in the world. Since 2000, the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and national government have made efforts to meet the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals), but the indicators still reveal a depressing picture. This article analyses the efforts that are being made in Zambia to achieve the MDGs and critically assesses the economic, political and social blockages towards achieving the Goals at a national and international level.

Introduction

The launch of the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) represents one of many international development goal-setting exercises of the UN over the past fifty years. Other UN goals have included: ending colonialism; acceleration of economic growth in developing countries; expansion of education; eradication of smallpox, malaria and other communicable diseases; expansion of

immunisation; improving the situation of women and children; and increasing overseas development assistance (ODA) to least developed countries (LDCs) (Jolly 2004). The track record in achieving some of the stated goals is very poor. At the end of four UN Development Decades there are more impoverished people in the world than ever before. Is the UN's latest development initiative substantially different from previous initiatives? What are its strengths and what criticisms have been levelled against it? What impact has the MDG process been making in Africa?

With a Human Development Index ranking of 163 Zambia is one of the least developed countries in the world (UNDP 2004). Without question, reducing the number of Zambians living in absolute poverty is a valid goal to be pursued at a national and international level. Based on current trends, however, this and most of the other 7 MDGs are unlikely to be met in Zambia by 2015. From this one might infer that the MDGs are not making a great deal of difference at the local level in improving the lives of the most impoverished. This paper sets out to examine the main reasons why this is so, taking international as well as national economic, social and political factors into consideration.

Zambia and the MDGs

Zambia has had a chequered development history with various economic programmes being implemented over the last five decades. At the time of political independence in October 1964, Zambia was one of the most prosperous countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. From this position as a middle-income country, Zambia today is one of the poorest and most unequal countries in the world. In tandem with the economic decline between the mid-1970s to the mid 1990s, poverty levels increased sharply and human development indicators worsened. While only 33% of Zambians were below the national poverty line in the mid-1970s, the proportion rose to 73% by 1998 (the last available statistics). This masks an 83% incidence of poverty in rural areas (some 5.2 million people) and 56% (and rising) incidence of urban poverty: some 2 million people (Arden 2004, interview).

Primary school enrolment fell from the 1980s until the end of the 1990s. Infant mortality by the mid 1990s was 20% higher than in 1980. Maternal mortality, malaria and HIV/AIDS rates are now among the highest in the world. In 2004 it was estimated that nearly one million Zambians are HIV-positive with an anticipated 100,000 new AIDS cases by the end of that

year (Arden 2004, interview). By 2001 there were 572,000 orphans due to AIDS, and child poverty is on the rise. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has had an enormous effect on life expectancy, which has fallen by 20 years from 54.4 in 1990 to 33.4 in 2001. Zambia now has the lowest life expectancy of any country in the world. One in six children do not reach their fifth birthday (UNDP 2004).

However there have been signs of economic improvement in recent years. Economic decline has been reversed, and modest growth has re-emerged. Such growth averaged 3% per annum between 1996 and 2003.This reversal of past economic decline is significant, though still below the 7-8% annual growth rates required to make a major impact on poverty (Arden 2004, interview). For the majority of the population, however, the effects of this growth have yet to be felt and it has not translated into a reduction in the number of people living below the poverty line or a reduction in inequality levels (Lungu 2004; Najona 2004, interviews). Zambia continues to be one of the most highly indebted countries in the world. As of December 2002, external debt was estimated at $7.1 billion, giving a per capita debt of over $700 compared to a per capita income of $360. The domestic debt, at Kwacha 4988.7 billion (approximately $1.1 billion) in June 2003, also poses a serious challenge (Republic of Zambia/UNCT 2003: 2).

Poor progress towards the Goals

Based on current trends it is unlikely any of the Goals, with the possible exception of the environmental Goal, will be met by

Table 1: Key socio-economic indicators

Indicator	Value	Year
Population size (million)	10.29	2000
Annual population growth rate (%)	2.9	2000
Life expectancy at birth (years)	33.4	2003
Real GDP per capita, $	438	2003
Domestic debt as % of GDP	26	2002
External debt as % of GDP	190	2002
Debt service as % of exports of goods and services	13.7	2002
Human development index (value)	0.38	2003
Human development index (rank)	163	2003

Sources: Republic of Zambia/ UNCT (2003): 24; Economist Intelligence Unit (2004)

Zambia by 2015. To meet Target 1, extreme poverty must reduce from 58.2% in 1991 to 29.1% in 2015. The proportion of underweight under-five children has actually increased since the launch of the MDGs to 28% with no realistic hope of it reaching the targeted level of 13% within ten years. The primary net enrolment ratio (NER) dropped by 4 percentage points between 1990 and 2003 to stand at 76%. Female literacy rates continue to be lower than those of males and the gender gap has not narrowed since 1990. Females also lag behind males in non-agricultural employment and participation in politics (Republic of Zambia/UNCT 2003).

Although still relatively high, infant mortality rates (IMR) have decreased from 107 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1992 to 95 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2002. This remains a long way off the 2015 target of 63 deaths per 1,000 live births. To reach the target in maternal health, the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) of 729 per 100,000 live births in 2002 will have to decrease to 182 by 2015. This is highly unlikely. The incidence of HIV/AIDS has been increasing since 1996 and it remains to be seen if the current prevalence rate of 16% can be halted and reversed by 2015. Malaria is a leading cause of mortality among pregnant women and children under five and the incidence rate of the disease was 377 per 1000 in 2000. Halting and reversing its spread by 2015 poses a major challenge. Environmental sustainability is a serious problem in Zambia with 85% of the population using solid fuels as an energy source. Urgent measures are required to conserve natural resources for both the present and future generations and to reach the environmental targets by 2015. At present only 51% of households have access to safe drinking water and 15% to improved sanitation. Substantial progress needs to be made to make inroads towards reaching the targets of 74% and 51% respectively by 2015.

Zambian initiatives around the MDGs

Localising the Goals

Despite the highly discouraging levels of progress being made, the UNDP country office in Zambia is mustering all its resources and political clout to mobilise civil society and government to work towards the achievement of the MDGs. At the request of the UNDP head office in New York, UNDP Zambia has, in recent months, embarked on a number of MDG-related initiatives. Some of these initiatives, such as the drive to localise the goals, are a

reaction to criticisms from civil society that the goals do not address key development issues for Zambia. Concern has also been expressed by individuals at UN headquarters that the ambitious nature of the targets might in fact discourage governments from their pursuit, imbued as they are with the knowledge the achievement of the Goals lies way beyond the realm of possibility under current macroeconomic conditions. This may therefore lead to the adoption of a "business as usual" approach by the government. As a result the overly ambitious goals and targets are being eschewed by UNDP Zambia in favour of a new set of targets and indicators, which in their view "balance ambition with realism" (Koop 2004, interview)

Already this initiative to water down the targets is proving difficult to push through and has met with substantial opposition from civil society organisations (CSOs). CSOs are irate that discussions are taking place about lowering the targets without even talking about the strategies that are necessary to reach them. They will not agree to lower them without examining the reasons why they are unrealistic to begin with (Henriot 2004; Najona 2004, interviews). Seshamani (2004, interview) further queries the basis on which the UNDP intends localising the MDGs. He argues the UNDP may have adopted this pessimistic approach to water down the targets because of a failure of government in the past to get its priorities right in terms of utilisation of resources. In his view if the priorities are right the targets do not have to be downgraded.

Gijs Koop, UNDP Zambia's economist responsible for the localisation process, conceded that the views of stakeholders on lowering the indicators were very strong. However he refrained from providing further insights on what is transpiring to be a very sensitive area for CSOs. Less sensitive is the issue of formulating additional indicators relevant to the Zambian context such as indicators for job creation, TB and agriculture. Work is progressing on drawing up these additional indicators and they are due to be published toward the end of 2004. These indicators have yet to be ratified.

Sensitising and engaging civil society

In addition to localising the Goals, UNDP Zambia has stepped up efforts in recent months to sensitise civil society and the general public about the MDGs and to engage them in campaigning for their realisation. This recognises that unless civil society actively embraces the MDGs, develops a sense of

ownership over them and uses them as a basis for advocacy and policy work, progress towards their achievement will be extremely slow (Chuma 2004, interview).

The sensitisation task, however, is somewhat complicated by the fact that certain members of civil society view the Goals as having been set at the highest intergovernmental level without the active involvement of citizens. Until the previous Zambian president mentioned the MDGs in 2003, nobody had ever heard of them before (Chikwanka 2004, interview). Thus there is a reluctance to engage with them. Lacklustre reactions to the MDGs from civil society also stem from the fact that Zambia has had the PRSP (Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan), then HIPC (Heavily Indebted Poor Country Initiative), now the MDGs and people wonder "What's going to come next? …it's the alphabet soup on these programmes" (Henriot 2004, interview). In addition "all people are talking about is meeting the HIPC point, it's a point that is floating away and people are drowning in the process….so everyone is saying you have to reach HIPC and more people are talking about this than the MDGs" (ibid.). "Everybody at government level is completely distracted by HIPC" (Murray 2004, interview).

Against this background the UNDP has recently initiated a series of sensitisation workshops around the MDGs. The second sensitisation workshop for civil society groups was held in early September 2004. At it the UNDP resident co-ordinator, Aeneas Chuma, stressed the need for civil society groups to monitor and lobby government to align its activities with the MDGs. Chuma also urged NGOs (non-governmental organisations) "to get involved in the actual implementation through linking the MDGs with their own programmes". In Chuma's view the UNDP has "to engage everybody. It was never intended that government only would do the implementation." Therefore the UNDP's 2004 MDG campaign is aiming to sensitise not just civil society and the NGOs, but also the general public, parliamentarians and the private sector (Kepa Zambia 2004).

The vast majority of Zambians however are still in the dark about the MDGs (Seshamani 2004, interview). They are battling with issues of survival, of getting bread and butter (Lungu 2004). In Seshamani's view, "if a lot of people knew there were these MDGs, that they have the right not to be living in poverty, that they have the right not to die when having a baby, they might not take this lying down." The fact that the UNDP only started to undertake new initiatives to sensitise and engage civil society, NGOs, the public and parliamentarians on the MDGs in late

2004 leaves very little time for the process to gain sufficient momentum to make sizeable inroads into, for example, the halving of poverty levels in Zambia by 2015.

Aligning government plans and expenditure with the MDGs

After localising the goals and engaging civil society, a third key area of action around the MDGs in Zambia is to ensure the government's national plan and accompanying budget is aligned with the goals. The principal national planning document is the PRSP. Zambia's first PRSP was finalised in May 2002 at a time when the UNDP was not actively lobbying governments to align their national plans with the MDGs. Fortuitously for the UNDP, an assessment of the PRSP confirms that it generally contains sound strategies for making progress towards the MDGs (see Table 2). Sector strategic plans in health and education are particularly strong. The PRSP is weaker in terms of achieving the MDG for the environment. Concerns have been raised by some Zambian stakeholders about the lack of priority given to expanding access to safe water, particularly in rural areas. More efforts are needed to address gender inequalities arising from cultural practices and attitudes, and the discrimination faced by women in accessing public services, economic assets and political representation. There are also grounds for debate about the PRSP's strategies for addressing the MDGs for eradicating poverty and hunger. While the growth focus of the PRSP is an essential precondition for improving incomes, it is less clear whether sufficient strategies are included to address hunger and malnutrition, and the issue of vulnerability could have been given more emphasis (Arden 2004, interview).

Overall the Zambian PRSP is regarded as a coherent and comprehensive document (Seshamani 2004, interview). The targets and indicators contained in it were the result of extensive, participatory planning efforts that took into account the concerns and priorities of the stakeholders. Whilst its targets may not be as ambitious as those contained in the MDGs, they are cognisant of the fact the government has limited financial and human resources at its disposal. Additionally the PRSP addresses in detail key areas such as agriculture and infrastructure which are noticeably absent from the MDG targets. With the government in consultation with civil society and international donors already formulating adequate national strategies it is debatable whether or not a role also exists for the UNDP to become heavily involved in the planning and budgeting processes. Even if, as in the

Table 2: PRSP alignment with the MDGs

MDGs	Degree of alignment with existing PRSP strategies
1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	
Halve the proportion of people living on less than one dollar a day between 1990 and 2015	FAIR to GOOD Growth focus (agriculture, mining, and 2015 tourism, manufacturing)
Halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger between 1990 and 2015	POOR Limited initiatives and weak surveillance systems
2. Achieve universal primary education	
By 2015 ensure that children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary school	GOOD National Strategic Plan, strong gender and equity focus, including resource allocation and focus on quality, retention and completion
3. Promote gender equality and empower women	
Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005 and to all levels of education no later than 2015	GOOD National Education Sector Plan (as above), with plans to increase focus on secondary education in future
4. Reduce child mortality	
Reduce by two-thirds the under-five mortality rate between 1990 and 2015	FAIR TO GOOD National Health Sector Strategic Plan – to strengthen systems & services

5. Improve maternal health	
Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio	GOOD National Health Sector Strategic Plan – to strengthen systems & services
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	
Have halted by 2015 and begun the reverse of HIV/AIDS	GOOD National HIV/AIDS strategy stresses multi-sectoral response; building health systems. NAC roles clarified
Have halted and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other diseases by 2015	GOOD National Health Sector Strategic Plan – to strengthen service delivery systems and public health
7. Ensure environmental sustainability	
Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country polices and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources	FAIR Environmental resource loss not excessive. National Environment and Forestry Action Plans exist, but implementation patchy
Halve the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015	POOR Data on sector very poor. Regulatory environment poor; institutional role and responsibilities unclear or weak

Source: Arden 2004, interview: 19-21

Zambian case, the PRSP's targets and indicators are closely aligned with those of the MDGs there is no guarantee the required resources will be disbursed and targeted towards the social sectors which underpin many of the MDGs. Perhaps the UNDP should focus its efforts more on working with civil society to monitor the implementation of the existing PRSP; this has been highlighted by many stakeholders as a cause for particular concern (Chikwanka; Seshamani; Henriot; Murray 2004, interviews).

Costing the MDGs

Another activity UNDP Zambia is embarking upon is a costing study to determine how much money will be needed to achieve the MDGs in Zambia. The first step will be to carry out a basic needs assessment in each of the MDG areas to determine the type, quantity and cost of material and human resources required to achieve the Goals. The Millennium Project is already working with UNDP country offices and governments in a number of African countries to calculate the costs and is directing efforts in these activities.

Chuma was more sceptical about the efficacy of the costing exercise. Various needs assessments performed to date for African countries estimate anything between approximately $30 billion and $100 billion will be required per country to reach the Goals by 2015 (UN Millennium Project 2004). Chuma wryly observed how the much-touted figure of $50 billion falls conveniently between these two extremes and is somewhat arbitrary in nature. Recognising the fact that the required resources are enormous and with no immediate indication of where these additional resources will come from, Chuma expressed reservations about the merits of embarking on a detailed costing exercise and its resultant drawdown on valuable time and resources of UNDP and government staff (Chuma 2004, interview).

A fundamental weakness of the needs assessment which underpins the costing exercise is that it restricts itself to identifying the infrastructure and human resource requirements for achieving the Goals. It is solely concerned with technical interventions and fails to factor in the socio-cultural and political context within which the proposed interventions will take place. Issues of governance, political will, sustainability, international trade, etc. are disregarded. Nor does the needs assessment outline how to involve communities at the grassroots level in the determination of what exactly are their needs.

National level structural injustice and the MDGs

Despite these intensive efforts on the part of the government with the UNDP and civil society, in Zambia and throughout much of Sub-Saharan African, poverty and human development indicators have worsened since the launch of the Millennium Declaration and Goals in 2000. The reasons for this are manifold, encompassing economic, social and political factors at the national and international level. Central to this article is the concept of structural injustice and the way in which inequality of access to economic, social and political resources hinders the development of countries, in this case, Zambia, where 73% of the country's population live below the international poverty line. If real progress is to be made towards the achievement of the MDGs, the layers of structural injustice that envelop Zambia and reinforce inequalities must be identified and dismantled. The following sections highlight the principal forms of structural injustice in Zambia today.

Economic injustices

Structural injustice exists in Zambia on an economic level in a number of forms. One of these is income inequality. With a gini-coefficient of 52.6, Zambia is a highly unequal society. As poverty levels have risen in recent years, so have inequality levels. In 2003 the richest 10% of the population had a 41% share of the income. The income share of the poorest 10% was 1.1% (UNDP 2004). Studies have shown highly unequal societies grow more slowly than societies with less inequality (Deininger and Squire 1998). Thus reducing inequality levels is desirable from an economic as well as a moral standpoint. Inequality in Zambia needs to be addressed directly but at present there are insufficient resources available or measures in place such as social welfare benefits or safety nets to do so. One direct measure proposed by Seshamani (2004, interview) to reduce the depth and severity of poverty in Zambia is to distribute Kwacha 1000 or 2000 per month (appx $0.21 or $0.42) to the extreme poor and give them some level of empowerment rather than distributing that same amount to those who are living just below the poverty line of Kwacha 30,000 per month (appx. $6.4) The marginal utility of the money you give to the extreme poor is much greater. In this way inequality would be reduced along with the severity of poverty. Politically however this is unlikely to prove a popular option as the number of people living below the poverty line would remain unchanged and the government would be unable to present improved poverty indicators to the populace.

Structural injustice also exists in the area of land. Ownership of land in Zambia is still entirely in the hands of the Republican President and is managed through the Commissioner of Lands (Henriot 2003). Land tenure under the current system is either customary land (about 94% of the country) or state land (about 6%). Whilst scarcity of land in Zambia is not an issue, the fact it is all "owned by the president" means local communities in reality have no power over their land since before anybody can be allocated land in a customary area the consent of the Commissioner of the Lands must be obtained. In recent years there has also been political manipulation of land allocation for the purposes of securing votes. As a result civil society believes land should be vested in the state, not in the President, with clear mechanisms for its distribution.

Customary land laws and traditions also discriminate against women as 90% of state land is titled to men. In rural areas, married women have access to land for farming through their husbands, but in the event of divorce or widowhood, they can continue to use the land but will not inherit control of it. Most women go back to their villages where they are dependent on male kin for access to land. It is unheard of for a married woman to be given land in her own right. Rural women do not tend to challenge their unequal position under customary law (Machina 2004, interview).

Accessing capital and credit is almost impossible for the poor in Zambia. Outside of the government there is very little domestic borrowing amongst the private sector. This is unsurprising given that the 2002 commercial lending rates were 36-38% (Arden 2004, interview). From the point of view of trying to set up a small scale enterprise, very few people would go near a bank for capital, no matter how small an amount is required (Murray 2004, interview).

Before the introduction of widespread privatisation programmes in 1992 there were banks servicing the rural communities. Admittedly many of them were inefficient but the manner in which they were privatised or liquidated was not in the interest of the common person (Machina 2004, interview). Today there is not a single bank operating in the rural areas that will give credit to the poor. The mainstream banks are located in the provincial centres and are not interested in serving the rural poor. Microfinance institutions do exist, but again they are located in the provincial centres, their coverage is patchy and they are often focused on lending activities which generate a quick return, e.g. they prefer to lend to a marketer selling produce who can repay the loan quickly than to a small farmer who will have

to wait for one season before being in a position to repay the loan. In addition many of the microfinance schemes are dependant upon donor support from NGOs or bilaterals so the predictability and sustainability of these schemes are not assured (Murray 2004, interview).

Under such circumstances the poor have very few opportunities to improve their livelihoods through accessing capital and credit. The ability of the private sector to invest and generate growth through accessing capital is also extremely curtailed. Such a restrictive and limited lending regime contributes little towards poverty reduction in Zambia. In Seshamani's opinion (2004, interview) the government has a role to play in the provision of microcredit. "Providing microcredit, in particular to female-headed houses, must be treated as a merit good and priced much lower than a private good in an effort to reduce the depth and severity of their poverty." However the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes that ensure equitable access for men and women to economic resources such as land, capital and credit are demonstrably lacking.

Social injustices

It is widely recognised that education plays a fundamental role in the overall development of a nation. As such it has become a human rights issue throughout the world. Zambia is no exception and in 2002 free primary education was introduced. Yet many poor Zambians remain unaware of their rights to education and over 300,000 children of school going age receive no formal education (Arden 2004, interview).

Government expenditure on education has also been extremely low over the past number of years. In 2004 the proportion of the budget allocated to education increased to 21% yet even this has not been reflected in actual disbursements. In 2002 only 33% of the total amount budgeted for education under the Poverty Reduction Programme (PRP) was released. In 2003 the overall amount released increased slightly in real terms but represented a disbursement of only 11% of that year's PRP allocation (Chikwanka 2004, interview).

Inequalities faced by poor people in accessing educational services of an acceptable standard are compounded by unequal allocation of resources in the health sector. Outside of the provincial centres, there is a distinct lack of health facilities in rural areas. Remote areas with high levels of deprivation suffer most from the inequity of the distribution of health resources with most rural people having to travel at least 5 km to access some kind of

health facility (Mwikisa and Seshamani 2003). Where rural health clinics exist, more often than not they are inadequately staffed and lack medical equipment and appropriate drugs. Voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) and anti-retro viral drugs (ARVs) are not available at rural health clinics and only at some district hospitals (Chikwanka 2004, interview). In all parts of Zambia the health status of families in the female-headed households is distinctly lower than in the male-headed households. The impact of gender on affordability of services is also strong. A much larger percentage of male-headed households can easily afford health services as compared to female-headed households (Mwikisa and Seshamani 2003).

Despite the serious lack of adequate health facilities and medical supplies, and the alarmingly high rates of infant and maternal mortality, per capita public expenditure in 2003 on health at $17 is 50% below the amount required for a "minimally functioning" basic health system (Arden 2004, interview). An analysis of the 2002 budgets reveals that only 40% and 50% of the amounts allocated to health and HIV/AIDs respectively in the PRP were actually disbursed. The corresponding figures for 2003 were 50% and 51% respectively (Chikwanka 2004, interview). Increasing expenditure on quality health services targeted to both the urban and rural poor is fundamental to reversing the distressing decline in health and life expectancy indicators experienced in Zambia over the past three decades. Increased health expenditure is also required to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS which has greatly compounded the depth and severity of poverty throughout Zambia.

Political injustices

Structural injustice manifests itself on the political level in Zambia in a number of ways. These include poor governance, state ineffectiveness, corruption and a lack of transparency and accountability. In combination they have contributed to the poverty-stricken condition the country finds itself in today.

Despite efforts to improve the government's track record on governance issues, a number of weaknesses continue to plague the system. The co-option of leading members of the opposition parties into cabinet level positions by President Mawanaswasa has greatly weakened the opposition and the notion of democracy (Henriot 2004, interview). The most recent elections in 2001 were marred by vote buying and vote rigging and President Mawanaswasa is under investigation for said offences. Key government positions such as the Minister of Home Affairs, chiefs of defence and police services and Governor of the Bank of

Zambia have been allocated by the president to family, friends and preferred ethnic groups (Social Watch 2004).

In October 2004 Zambia was ranked 11th on the Transparency International corruption index. President Mwanawasa vehemently disputed this ranking, claiming it was calculated using dated statistics (*Times of Zambia* 2004). Irrespective of the validity of the ranking, corruption remains a widespread problem. Although not carried out on the massive scale that was characteristic of the previous regime of President Chiluba (1991 – 2001) which plundered the national economy, small-time corruption is still pervasive, if not systemic. A legacy of the previous regime, corruption nowadays is partially a result of very low civil service pay and high levels of unemployment. "For many the principal means to survive have become corrupt" (Najona 2004, interview). One consequence of the corrupt tag Zambia is burdened with is that badly needed foreign investors are staying away. With the exception of South African companies, very little foreign direct investment has flowed into the country in recent years. Conscious of the deleterious effects corruption is having on the economy, the government launched a zero-tolerance campaign against large-scale corruption in 2002. It remains to be seen what the fruits of this campaign will be.

In relation to issues of state effectiveness, Zambia does not fare well. Partly because of vested interests, a Public Sector Reform Programme, running since 1993, has made little progress in pay reforms and right-sizing the civil service to improve the delivery of pro-poor services (Arden 2004, interview). Public financial management (PFM) is chronically weak and the legislative framework for PFM needs reform. Bad administration, mismanagement of funds and a lack of planning have beleaguered the economy in recent years (Henriot 2004; Arden 2004, interviews). Donor officials noted that just getting the national coordination mechanisms working was a big problem resulting in a huge bottleneck in moving resources. "Spending on programmes is low because the processes are so slow" (Arden 2004, interview).

An analysis of annual budget expenditure highlights how the PRSP has not dramatically changed the pattern of government expenditure. Budgetary allocations to PRPs have been meagre in relation to requirements contained in the PRSP document. In 2004 the PRP share of the total budget was 6.3%, a decrease from 7.9% in 2002. PRPs are further constrained by actual disbursements, which are far less than the allocated figures (Matabishi 2004: 4). In addition monies that have been disbursed were not always used as intended (Seshamani 2004,

interview). The poor performance of PRPs contrasts starkly with the levels of funding afforded to non-PRP areas which received in excess of 100% of their allocations. In 2002 these sectors included the Cabinet Office, which was over-funded by 512%, the State House, which received 264.2% of its budget and the Office of the President which was granted 238% of budgeted expenditure (CSPR 2004: 22). Thus one can conclude poverty reduction has only been a priority at the policy level and not at the level of budget execution and implementation.

Linked to state ineffectiveness are issues of transparency and accountability. Whilst an increasing number of structural changes have been brought about to increase transparency, such as the publication of the government's "yellow book" which contains a detailed account of revenue and expenditure, a lot of critical information still lies beyond the reach of civil society (Seshamani 2004, interview). The lack of transparency and accountability in government affairs greatly hinders the ability of civil society to monitor the disbursal and management of state resources. The poor, in particular, are affected by this lack of information. Kept in the dark regarding the amount and purpose of the resources allocated to their communities, they are unable to hold government officials to account for poor performance and potential misuse of poverty reduction programme funds as well as non-PRP funds. This lack of accountability and transparency is a critical factor in preventing donors from moving towards direct budget support in Zambia. Outside of the Sector Wide Area Programmes (SWAPs), donors believe the accountability and governance structures are not sufficiently developed and robust to go down the road of direct budget support.

Structural injustice at the international level

National level structural injustice is compounded by structural injustice at the international level. The highly unequal nature of the relationships Zambia is obliged to enter into with the Bretton Woods Institutions and bilateral donors has greatly undermined its ability to determine its own development path. The massive external debt the country has accrued since the 1970s has ensnared it in a litany of IFI-driven (international financial institutions) structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) and interventions which are based upon the neo-liberal economic model. The IFI-driven programmes and interventions did not produce the predicted economic results. Rather, the country has

experienced a dramatic decline in economic and social indicators since the early 1970s. Whilst the blame for Zambia's desperately poor economic performance over the past three decades clearly cannot be laid squarely at the door of the IFIs, for many Zambians the SAPs have been a significant factor contributing to the high levels of unemployment and poverty that plague the country today. The exorbitant debt burden and the strict conditionalities Zambia is still subjected to are two examples of structural injustice at the international level which effectively eliminate any hope of Zambia achieving the MDGs by 2015.

External debt

The relief being afforded to Zambia under the HIPC initiative is proving inadequate in relieving its debt burden. At the start of 2003, the country had received only 5% of the debt service reduction committed to it under HIPC. This year Zambia will hand over $377 million in debt repayments, of which $247 million will go to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Global Campaign for Education 2004). This is more than the government spends on health and education combined. Even if the country finally reaches HIPC completion point in 2005 its debt service will still amount to $100 million.

Critical to achieving the MDGs is addressing the problem of resources (Seshamani 2004; Henriot 2004; Chuma 2004, interviews). Zambia's external debt has greatly reduced resources available for social services and poverty reduction (Henriot 2004, interview). "As long as the debt overhang continues there is no hope of achieving the Goals" (Lungu 2004, interview). "The debt must be cancelled in its entirety and a stop put to debt servicing" (Chuma 2004, interview). Even if Zambia's external debt is cancelled today, the MDGs will not be achieved by 2015 due to the dire lack of resources available to invest in MDG-related sectors and into the economy as a whole (Seshamani 2004, interview). Until the debt issue is addressed and resolved all talk of meeting the MDGs is rendered meaningless.

Table 3: Zambia debt statistics ($ million)

	2000	2001	2002
External debt	5,730	5,671	5,969
Debt service paid each year	186	125	308
GDP spent on debt service (%)	4.3	3.9	3.7

Source: World Bank, 2002

External conditionalities

In order to obtain debt relief from the IMF and other international creditors under the HIPC initiative, Zambia is subject to a number of conditionalities in the area of economic policy. These include the implementation of privatisation programmes and cuts in public spending. The preparation of a PRSP is also required and the country must be on track with an IMF Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) programme. The conditions tied to the HIPC initiative are the latest in a long line of free market policy interventions that have taken place in Zambia since the 1970s, which, in the view of many Zambians, have led to a significant worsening of social and economic conditions for the bulk of the population.

One current condition for meeting the HIPC completion point that is being vociferously opposed by civil society and the media in Zambia is the privatisation of the Zambia National Commercial Bank (ZNCB), a government owned commercial bank serving all parts of Zambia. It has a strong client base among low income workers who can afford the minimum balances required for opening savings accounts. Initially the government agreed to the privatisation but under strong public opposition changed its mind. The IMF responded by announcing Zambia risked forfeiting $1 billion in debt relief if it did not proceed with the privatisation (World Development Movement 2004). Thus privatisation of the Bank is back on the agenda. Civil society believes the bank could be made more efficient and that selling it off to a South African conglomerate will result in branches closing in rural towns with the poor being most disadvantaged (Henriot 2004; Machina 2004; Chuma 2004, interviews). Despite widespread public resistance to the move the government have little choice but to adhere to the IMF's demands in order to get back on track towards meeting the HIPC completion point.

Externally imposed policies to liberalise the agricultural sector are also believed to have greatly worsened the living conditions of the poor. Deprived overnight of state supplied inputs, credit, subsidies and marketing support, the private sector did not step in as envisaged to fill the void resulting in stagnation and regression in the sector. In the past two years the Minister for Agriculture, rejecting the free market ideology of the IFIs, has reintroduced floor prices on produce and taken on a marketing role. These actions combined with good rainfall have resulted in bumper harvests. In the view of Machina (2004 interview), subsidies, if applied correctly, "are not necessarily bad if they enable poor people to lift themselves out of poverty…. If

European countries and the United States have for many years provided (and continue to provide) subsidies to their farmers why should Zambia be curtailed from doing so?"

Restricting expenditure on the public sector wage bill to 8% of GDP is another controversial conditionality towards meeting the HIPC completion point. The Education Minister claimed this has prevented the government from employing 9,000 trained teachers who are badly needed to fill empty teaching posts across the country (Henriot 2004; Chuma 2004, interviews) A potential crisis was averted when the Dutch government stepped in and agreed to pay their salaries.

Liberalisation policies promulgated by the IFIs in the areas of trade and investment have also increased unemployment and poverty (Henriot 2004; Chuma 2004; Najona 2004; Kalima 2004; Lungu 2004, interviews). Under the terms of engagement with the Bretton Woods Institutions, Zambia is not permitted to grant a period of protection to infant industry. Local industries have been unable to compete with cheap foreign imports. "Today it has one of the most liberal trade regimes in the world yet there has not been a commensurate flow of foreign direct investment. The argument of incentives is not valid" (Chuma 2004, interview). "Multinational companies can enter the country, receive a tax holiday for five years and in some instances repatriate 100% of their profits" (Kalima 2004, interview).

For many, Zambia's subjection to one of the most rapid, drastic and rigid SAPs on the continent has contributed significantly to its perilous state today (Henriot 2004, interview). There is no demonstrable evidence that privatisation has resulted in an increase in revenue flows to the government (Chuma 2004, interview). The neo-liberal model of the economy pushed consistently by the IFIs, which sees the state playing a marginal role in economic affairs, is inappropriate to the Zambian context. Rather "there should be a judicious balance between the state and the private sector" (Chuma 2004, interview). The state has a key role to provide public services, to encourage and enable citizens to earn for themselves and to find ways to make it possible for the private sector to thrive.

Unequal power relations

The most salient and disempowering manifestation of structural injustice experienced by Zambia at the international level is the highly unequal nature of the relationships it is locked into with the multilateral and bilateral institutions. Effectively stripped of

its sovereignty in economic matters, the government's hands are tied by the IFIs who dictate the limits to which it can borrow, spend and intervene in the market (Chuma 2004, interview). The inordinate power and control the IMF exerts over Zambian national policy is reinforced by the signalling role it performs for the bilateral donors. In 2003 when Zambia went off track in meeting one of the HIPC conditionalities, not only did IMF funding cease but so did the support from all the major bilateral donors. As a result the PRSP was not funded in many ways (Henriot 2004, interview). With 64% of Zambia's budget funded by external donors, the consequences of not meeting the HIPC conditionalities and the resultant cessation of donor funds spell disaster for the country.

Zambia's dependence "on the kindness of strangers" obliges it to behave in an inordinately deferential manner to donors (Chuma 2004; Murray 2004, interviews). In its quest to secure resources, be they from the UNDP, IMF, World Bank or bilateral donors, the government will simply say yes to anything that is brought to them.

> If the UNDP says "we want you to adopt the MDGs and we are going to give you money", the government says OK to the MDGs. When the IMF and World Bank stipulate the government must bring HIPC to completion point to access more money, the government says "fine". If bilateral donors indicate they will give the government money if it is spent on home-based care for HIV/AIDs patients, the government says "yes". The government is just a yes man. It does not have the capacity or politically the will to sideline anybody who gives them money. In that sense its ability to say yes or no on the basis of its own considered judgement is rather limited (Seshamani 2004, interview).

Another effect of the country's reliance on the "kindness of strangers" to fund the national budget is the air of insecurity and vulnerability it generates. The World Bank instructs the government to draw up the budget on the basis it will get all the money it requires but in reality this is often not the case (Henriot 2004, interview). In 2003 a significant part of the budget went unfunded with poverty reduction programmes being particularly hard hit.

The unequal power relationship between Zambia and countries in the North is also evident in the lack of progress being made by Northern countries in meeting their commitment to increase ODA to 0.7% of their countries' GNP. As a result of their

powerful position, the northern countries "can get their own way with their commitments. Who is going to penalise them? The countries from the South make noise but so what? Once it doesn't affect the northern countries in their daily business then Africa doesn't matter" (Kalima 2004, interview).

Given that the extreme shortage of resources available to the government to kick start the economy and to invest in social services is cited by interviewees as the greatest barrier to achieving the MDGs, and that virtually no progress has been made by northern countries towards meeting Goal 8 in terms of increased aid flows, trade and debt reforms, the prospects of Zambia making real progress towards the MDGs over the next ten years are extremely bleak.

Conclusion

The MDGs are the latest in a series of goal setting initiatives undertaken by the UN since the early 1960s. The MDGs differ from previous UN initiatives in that they were agreed and signed up to by world leaders at the highest political level. They are simple, concrete, measurable and time-bound. They comprehensively embrace all the key dimensions of poverty. Through the publication of MDG country progress reports, civil society can monitor and hold governments accountable for slow progress towards meeting the Goals. In many countries the MDGs have broadened the political space for civil society to engage with government on policymaking and to advocate for increased expenditure on social services targeted towards the poor. Poverty reduction lies at the heart of the MDGs and the increased attention being placed on their achievement by the UN, civil society and international development agencies is theoretically putting poverty reduction high on the agenda of national governments and international bodies.

Although the heads of government signed up to the Goals, only a select few individuals in both the developed and developing world were involved in their formulation and most people remain unaware of their existence. As a result insufficient pressure is being exerted by civil society and non-state actors on governments in both the North and South to work towards their achievement. To date, governments in the North have clearly lacked the political will to carry out reforms in the areas of aid, trade and debt stipulated in Goal 8. Follow-up conferences on financing for development resulted in the mere reaffirmation of

existing commitments and there were no substantial moves towards aid, trade and debt reform. In the absence of sanctions to ensure compliance with the commitments made in Goal 8 and significant pressure from civil society and the general public on this issue, carrying out the necessary reforms is entirely dependant on political will. Donor countries' reluctance to meet their side of the Millennium Compact shows little sign of changing, which effectively eliminates the prospects of making real progress towards achieving the Goals over the coming years.

To a large extent the MDGs are a continuation of the UN's previous technical approaches to development. This is most evident in the costing exercises the Millennium Project is currently performing to determine how much money is needed in individual countries to achieve the MDGs by 2015. While increased resources are absolutely critical to reducing poverty levels in developing countries, understanding the wider social, economic and political issues at play at the national and international level is equally critical. Empowering the poor and giving them a voice and representation in decision-making processes is of fundamental importance. In this regard the MDGs are evidently lacking. In practice, many of the MDG targets and indicators are already part of countries' PRSPs. Additional technical support from the UN is therefore seen as superfluous when what is needed most is the political will to implement the existing PRSPs. The additional layer of MDG discourse brings little new to the debate or process.

In the Zambian context, a myriad of national and international factors are working against the achievement of the MDGs. Unequal access to, and distribution of, national resources disempowers the poor. Lacking education and information, their ability to hold governments to account and challenge unjust economic, social and political structures is severely restricted. Internationally, Zambia's highly unequal relationship with the IFIs and bilateral donors has effectively stripped it of its sovereignty in economic matters and severely curtailed its ability to determine its own development path. Burdened with servicing a massive external debt and faced with a critical shortage of domestically generated resources, the country's dependence on "the kindness of strangers" will continue for the foreseeable future. Ultimately it is the IMF, World Bank and bilateral donors, with their power, vested interests, control over financial resources and disproportionate influence on global governance structures, who will play the greatest role in dictating the course of Zambia's development and accompanying progress towards meeting the MDGs over the coming years.

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