

An Integrated Approach to Rural Planning and Development in Zambia

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SUMMARY

Most of the policies aimed at planning human settlements in Zambia have focused on urban areas. This creates an imbalance of development in the country. While much attention has been given to the development of urban areas, it is a truism that majority of Zambia's population live in rural areas and face the challenges of food insecurity, inadequate housing, lack of infrastructure and environmental degradation.

In Africa, the habitat problem in rural areas is largely a problem of general development. Given this scenario, there is need to evolve rural planning and development approaches that will reinforce rural economies and improve the quality of life.

This paper focuses on rural areas with specific interest to addressing physical and socio-economic issues as catalysts to rural regeneration. Without meeting the needs of the rural community, urban development shall continue to be painted with informal settlements and slums.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Despite the global challenge and clarion calls of tenure conversion in Africa, Zambia continues to have a dualistic tenure with 90% dominance in customary land (GRZ, 1996). Given the above scenario, it can be seen that although Zambia is one of the most urbanized countries in Africa, in fact second from South Africa, the picture on the ground is that 90% of the land in Zambia is rural land.

The debate on land tenure has brought to the fore the question of physical and socio-economic development in rural areas as majority of the rural areas fall under customary land. Closely tied to this debate are the issues of planning and the role it plays in ensuring poverty eradication and sustainable rural development.

Poverty is most prevalent in rural areas where infrastructure is either inadequate or unavailable. The poor make up around 70% of Zambia's total population and 80% of its rural population (Diangamo, 2001). The result of untold poverty levels in rural areas has been the migration of rural dwellers to urban areas with the hope of employment and generally a better life. This has created multiple effects. Muchima (2006) argues that the mushrooming of informal settlements in major towns of Zambia is as a result of not only a failed housing policy but also the migration of people from rural areas into the city. When these people cannot afford decent shelter, they create shelter for themselves with their own initiatives and within their own resources.

Poor quality housing, lack of or inadequate health facilities, few schools, poor road and transport networks, poor functioning markets characterize Zambia's rural areas. Considering that setting up of such necessary infrastructure needs financial, physical as well and human resources in the man's quest for socio-economic development and better quality of life, conditions obtaining in Zambia, especially rural areas, for sustainable development are to a large extent lacking (Mukalula, 2004). Tetteh (1976) states that the current state of settlement problems in developing countries includes:

- Rapid Population growth
- Rapid urbanization
- The essentially rural nature of the African habitat in spite of rapid urbanization
- The subordinate and superordinate political and economic relations established during long periods of colonial rule which will still continue to a very large extent in the economic sphere.

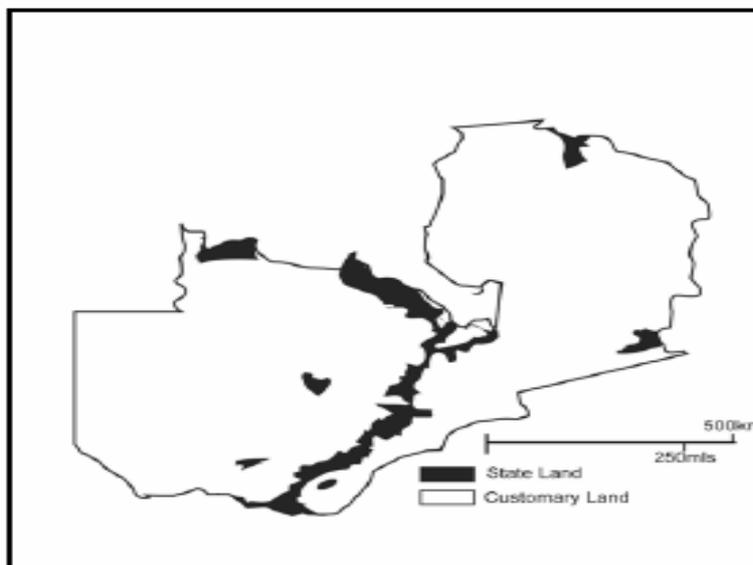
The rural nature of many communities amidst rapid urbanization indeed presents a challenge to the development of rural settlements. Zambia is among the most urbanized countries in

Africa and yet her rural areas are the most backward and underprivileged (Njungu, 1998). What are the underlying reasons for such a paradox?

2. BACKGROUND TO RURAL PLANNING IN ZAMBIA

Planning of human settlements in developing countries frequently reflects ideas and practices inherited from the colonial masters before independence (Tetteh, 1976). The shape of Zambia's urban and rural areas is a mirror of the effects of colonial practices in the country. The segregation of white settlers from the black communities and the selection of the best lands (fertile land and mineral areas) meant that any significant development was to occur in the crown land alone (GRZ, 1995). Crown lands were the areas designated for white settlers only. The rest of the land was left for the black communities as reserve land and customary land. As such the so-called urbanization in Zambia is a narrow stretch cutting across the country.

Figure 1: Land tenure distribution



Source: Adams (2003)

When the country attained its independence in 1964, the crown lands were converted to state land and the rest of the land remained under the authority of the chiefs or traditional rulers.

The state had the role of planning for both physical and economic development in urban and rural areas. Immediately after independence in 1964, a Transitional National Development Plan (TNDP) was prepared in 1965 to ensure successful transition from the colonial government. This plan was succeeded by the First National Development Plan (FNDP) 1966–1970, which basically aimed at:

- Diversification of the economy from predominantly mining to agriculture and other sectors
- Employment creation
- Increasing the level of education
- Provision of social welfare and
- Developing of new energy sources

The Second National Development Plan (SNDP) 1970- 1974 was merely to enforce the First National Development Plan. However, it incorporated such aims as;

- Attaining self sufficiency
- Expanding and diversifying industry and
- Initiating comprehensive measures for regional development.

The weakness of these National plans was that they mainly focused on overall national development without strategies for facilitating actual development on the ground. In the circumstance, areas falling under customary laws were left out, leaving the traditional rulers to plan for their areas. Indeed, after a full 42 years of independence, there is still a general imbalance in development between rural areas and urban areas.

figure 2: disparities in spatial development



Urban area



Rural area

3. THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT CAP 283

This Act was enacted to guide planning in the country. It is the only piece of legislation that guides spatial planning in Zambia. However, the planning process under the Act is restricted to land use planning of areas in State land only. The law stipulates that it is:

An act to make provision [...] for the preparation and approval and revocation of Development plans, for the control of development and subdivision of land or [...] modification of regional plans; and for matters connected with and incidental to the foregoing (Republic of Zambia, 1995)

Part vii(4) of the Act allows for regional planning i.e. including socio-economic planning for regions. While this is so, weak institutional capacities and lack of funds has crippled the fulfillment of the Act.

The problems being faced by some rural settlements in Zambia are eminently the same problems being faced by slum dwellers or squatters in urban areas except the extent of the challenges may vary.

UN-HABITAT has developed a household level definition of a slum household in order to be able to use existing household level surveys and censuses to identify slum dwellers among the urban population. A slum household is a household that lacks any one of the following five elements:

- **Access to improved water** (*access to sufficient amount of water for family use, at an affordable price, available to household members without being subject to extreme effort*); Women and children walk long distances to fetch water from water holes commonly known as *ifishima* in Bemba language. These water holes are believed to be the safest places to get clean water .

Figure 4: Water hole



These holes are made on areas near the river and are left uncovered. Figure 4 shows how the villagers use initiative to provide safe water for themselves. Ifishima are strictly for drinking water and the river is for washing their dishes and clothes.

- **Access to improved sanitation** (*access to an excreta disposal system, either in the form of a private toilet or a public toilet shared with a reasonable number of people*). Rural dwellers make their own toilets in form of pit latrines while others resort to using the bush. For them, this is sufficient because rarely do diseases like cholera break in the settlement.
- **Security of tenure** (*evidence of documentation to prove secure tenure status or de facto or perceived protection from evictions*) Customary lands have a communal tenure which does not offer titles to land. With the introduction of market based approaches to land reform in Zambia, the security of villagers is threatened (Brown, 2002)
- **Durability of housing** (*permanent and adequate structure in non-hazardous location*) Mukalula (1998) states that inadequate methods of construction in some rural areas reduce the permanency of housing. Building materials include poles and mud

Figure 6: Type of buiding materials



- **Sufficient living area** (*not more than two people sharing the same room*).

The above discussion not intend to refer to rural households as slums. Rather it realizes that some areas in rural areas face the same challenges faced in informal settlements. But perhaps the greatest challenge in rural settlements is poverty, which is a lack in basic needs.

Apart from fitting in the habitat's definition of a slum settlement, rural areas faces other challenges.

1. Lack of health facilities
2. Lack of schools
3. Lack of Roads
4. Environmental Degradation

4. FOSTERING DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS

Chileshe (1987) argued that 'for people who have been slaves or have been oppressed, exploited and disregarded by colonialism or capitalism, development means liberalization. Any action that gives them control of their own affairs is an action for development even if it does not offer them better health or bread'. It can be said from this definition that the first challenge in developing rural areas is the perception of development by the rural communities themselves. The OECD (2001) defines rural development as improving quality of life as well as greater social transformation.

Rural development requires investment in areas where the poor live and in the activities they pursue.

Looking at the challenges above, there is need to take an integrated approach in the planning of rural areas. Integrated approach means looking at all aspects of spatial growth and addressing them as one entity. Any neglect of one area has a negative impact on the development of the other areas. Important aspects of the planning process are:

1. Land use planning
2. Socio- economic planning

4.1 Land Use Planning in Rural Settlements

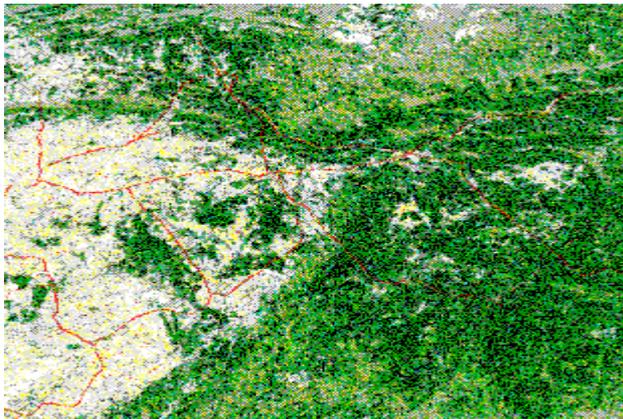
Community developed and driven land use plans are an important way to reduce land use conflicts (OCED, 2001). Common land use in rural land includes farming, communal grazing areas, burial sites and at times land is reserved for village development. Land use planning in the rural areas address the demands and capacities for cropping land, grazing land, forests for wood, charcoal, medicines; village sitting of homes and community services, ancestral and heritage land and water resources where available (Mwanza, 1998). Siting of all these uses is attached to customs and traditions indigenous to that particular area. Conflicting land uses are minimal as the villagers have moral attachments to these respective land uses.

4.2 Importance of Land Information Systems in Rural Areas

The role of spatial planning is to manage environmental, social and economic change and provide a coherent vision for improving human settlement. Healey (1997) defines planning as shaping places, thus shaping the change in rural areas means shaping them in a manner that will not only promote physical aesthetics but will integrate the social and economic aspects. Cardinal to spatial planning is spatial data, which should be readily available to plan effectively.

Since customary areas have information that is transmitted verbally from generation to generation, a way can be found of documenting and preserving verbal registers without resorting to conventional cadastral methods. A simplified manual register can be used to keep all information related to land use. Residents can submit information related to their land to a community committee. Information can be obtained through story telling, villagers' accounts, chiefs records and Government departments

4.3 The Place of Conventional Methods



While they may not be the basis of local land information systems, conventional methods have their own place in rural areas. When combined with information that is readily available, remote sensing products can consolidate local land information systems. For example once the community has identified its boundaries through social mapping, aerial photographs can be used to come up with rural maps. They can also be used to locate areas earmarked for development. However, the

main hindrance towards their use is affordability.

4.4 Socio-economic Planning

Rural development implies both improved quality of life as well as greater social transformation (OCED, 2001). In order to develop rural areas, there is need to realize their potential. Rural areas are not to be seen as problems; they in fact present opportunities and potential to contribute positively to competitiveness, growth of micro business, niche markets and the increasing role of women entrepreneurs.

Although, agriculture continues to play an important role in rural areas, there is need to reinforce rural economies through diversification of economic activities. Moreover, with the introduction of market based reforms, economic pressure on rural areas is expected to increase, adding a major burden on the rural community in doubling agriculture production, alleviation of poverty and realizing food security.

The poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) is Zambia’s development planning and resource programming tool and, as such is the overall framework for national planning and intervention for development and poverty reduction (GRZ, 2002).

It is under the PRSP that Zambia’s Vision 2025 has been outlined with the theme “The Zambia we want to see by 2025”. Shaping the change in customary areas will mean creating micro linkages to fit in perfectly in this vision.

Diagram

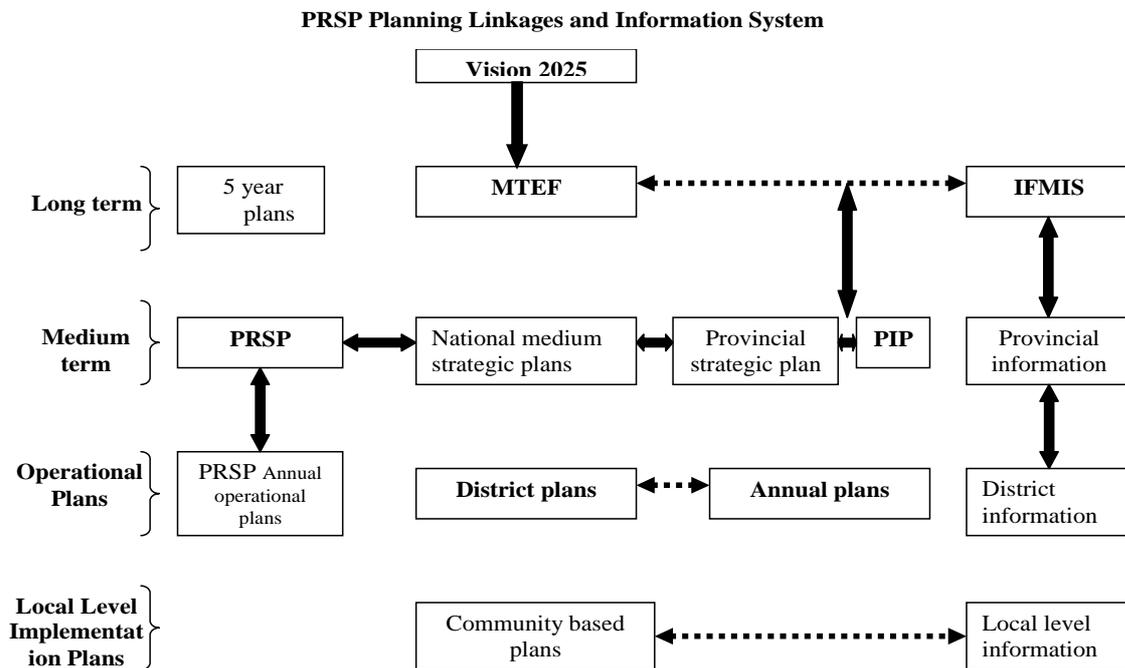
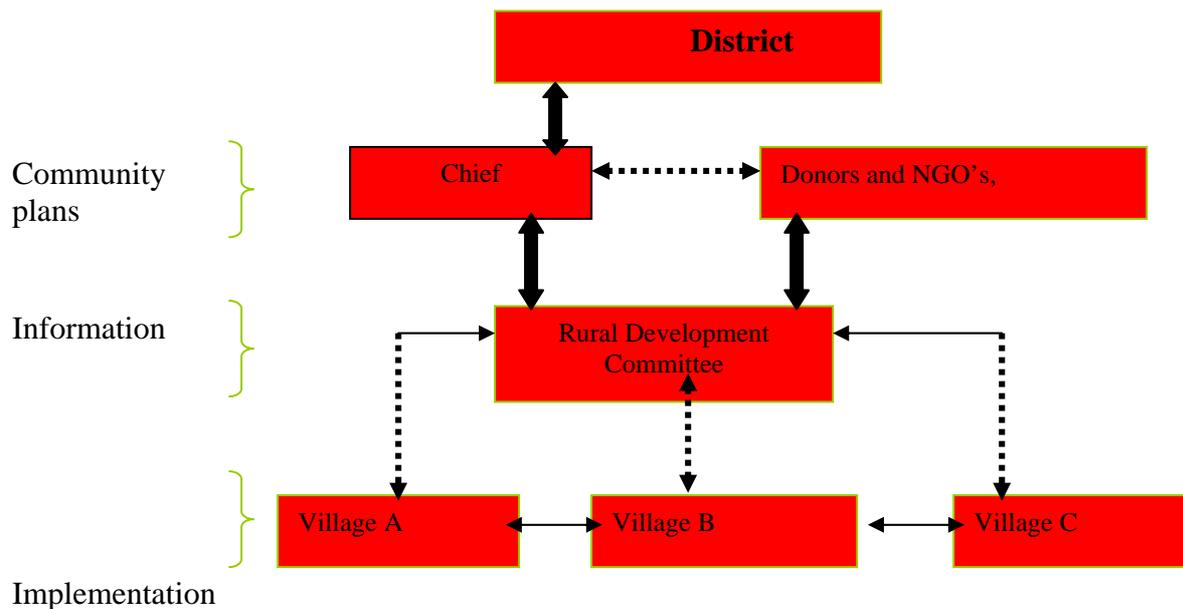


Diagram 2: Linking rural plans into National planning



4.5 Formulated by Author

Diagram 1 addresses the need for committees in the rural areas to be fully integrated in the overall planning process. RDC's decisions should form the basis of implementation of development plans in rural areas. The top- down approach to implementation of plans should be replaced with a bottom up approach. RDC's should comprise village representatives or village headmen. These RDC's developed would guide not only rural development but its members will also learn to determine better use of their resources. The other role of the committee is to act as a nerve center of information.

5. CROSSCUTTING ISSUES: HIV AIDS IN RURAL SETTLEMENTS

Rural settlements face yet another challenge besides poverty. Acute poverty has been worsened by HIV/AIDS posing another challenge in the development of rural areas. The present double tragedy rural areas in Zambia are facing demands an urgent comprehensive approach and multidimensional approach (Njungu, 1998).

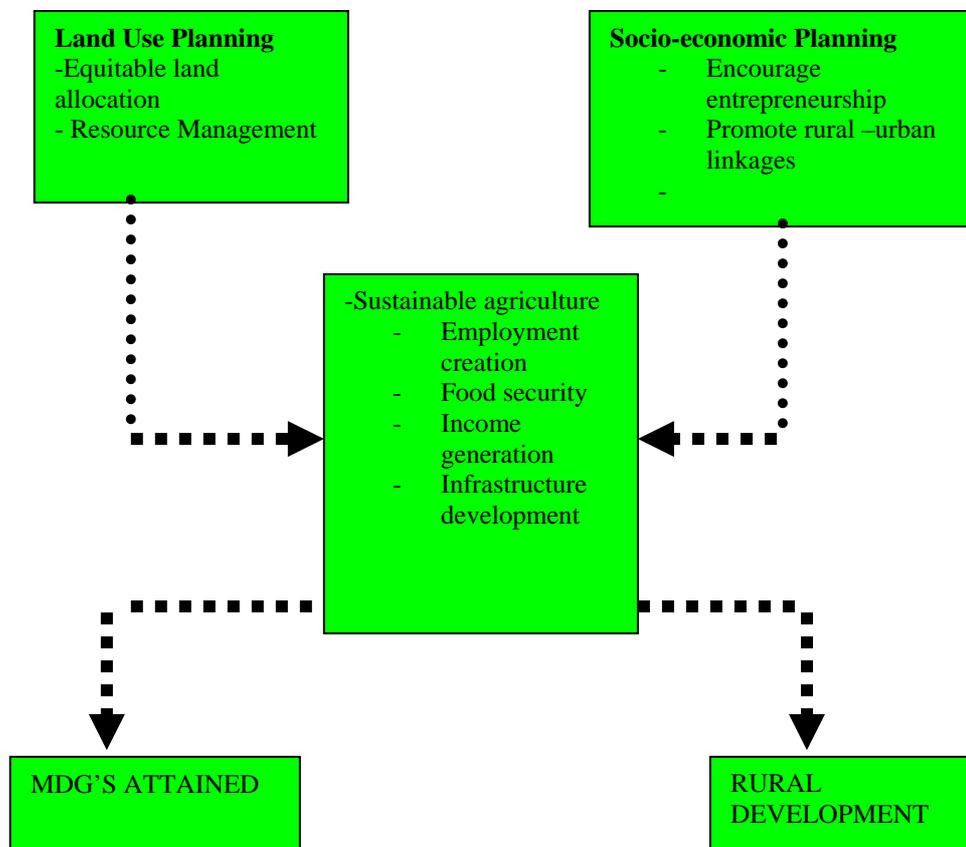
HIV/AIDS and rural development are interlinked. The fight against poverty cannot be isolated from the fight against the AIDS pandemic. The reduction of HIV/AIDS in rural areas certainly accelerates rural development, as it will mean that rural communities will not be deprived of the much-needed human resource to develop their own areas. The worst affected by the disease are women and children. Children are left without parents and the only alternative they are left with is to move to the urban areas where they inevitably become street kids. Women, left with the responsibility of looking after their families go to such extents as prostitution to earn a living. As long as the circle of poverty goes round in rural settlements, the spread of HIV/AIDS will continue to be a part of rural livelihood.

Njungu(1998) further asserts that even the reportedly stabilization of HIV/AIDS in urban areas may only be short lived considering migrations between the rural and urban areas.

6. ACHIEVING MILLENIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN RURAL AREAS

Achieving Millenium Development Goals in rural Zambia is not far-fetched. Basically , aiming to achieve Goals 1 and 8 can have multiple effects that can help to achieve the other MDG's. While agriculture contiuiues to play an important role in rural livelihood, its impact on the environment is critical. In achieving MDG 8, the community should set out measures to protect the environment . Sustainable agriculture practices can help the community to produce more food which in turn increases food security. Surplus produce can be sold to generate income for the community.

The road map



7. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: SHAPING THE CHANGE IN RURAL SETTLEMENTS

Robb (2002) understood poverty reduction in three ways:

1. Increasing income and general assets to a level where the poor are less vulnerable and falling below a certain level
2. Giving people greater control and means to determine their lives
3. The rural poor's perception of their own poverty in a process of sharing strategies, priorities and solutions of various stakeholders, thus incorporating the community in poverty participatory assessment.

From these three aspects of definition, an important aspect arises; even in the midst of poverty, rural settlements must take the challenge of development in their own areas.

With the introduction of market based reforms in Zambia, rural areas need to be equipped for change in their areas. So far, no land audit has been carried out to determine how much of customary land has been converted to leasehold, but the growing number of land wrangles testifies the impact of land conversion. Without tangible information about rural areas, there is a high risk of giving out the best land in the area leaving the community with less viable land. Communities ought to be in control of their own resources.

Besides the effects of reform, communities need to develop their own areas to reduce the ever-increasing poverty levels in rural areas. Rural development requires a shift from top-down planning approaches to bottom-up approaches where the community is involved in identification of its own problems, conceptualizing solutions to those problems, planning and implementing development Programmes.

The question of development in Zambia can only be answered by the reaction of customary communities to current socio-economic needs. The quest for rural regeneration is hindered by lack of integration of rural needs into the overall planning framework as priority is often given to urban land. With the current demand for customary land for urban expansion and market-based activities, the challenge rests on rural areas to plan effectively for their own areas and contribute to national need.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

The author is a 5th year female Land Economy student at the Copperbelt University in Zambia.

Working Experience: Intern at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN-Zambia country office.

Also worked at National Housing Authority (Estates Department) as Estates Officer on attachment basis.

Achievements: Awarded best young researcher for her paper "Land tenure, Access and Boundary Conflicts in Rural Zambia" at the Commonwealth Association for Surveyors and Land Economists (CASLE) conference in Bagamoyo, Tanzania, 2006.

Also received a joint CASLE Lecture prize best presentation by young researcher at the same conference

Career perspective: To ensure that rural livelihood in Zambia is improved and that sustainable development in rural areas will become a reality.

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