

Governance and Poverty Reduction

3.1 Introduction

From the governance perspective, poverty is not only little or lack of access to income through employment, entitlement, or other means that determine consumption but also exclusion from participation in institutions and processes that govern one's life, leading to voicelessness and powerlessness in these processes and institutions. It manifests itself in low educational opportunities, inadequate access to resources, and lack of freedom to exercise choice and participate fully in national development. Governance, on the other hand, refers to processes by which society manages its economic, social, and political resources and institutions, not only for development, but also for cohesion, integration, and well-being of its people. Essential components for good governance transcend matters such as elections, corruption, independence of the judiciary and upholding of the rule of law, the public service, institutional linkages, capacity building, and involvement of civil society in the decision-making process. Transparency and accountability are also identified key tenets of good governance.

Bad governance imposes a particular burden on the poor and throws them into deeper poverty. Equally, poverty constrains the poor from participating in national development, leading to weak or poor governance of institutions. Good governance, on the other hand, is associated with larger growth rates and incomes for the poor. Government, through greater involvement of civil society and private business sector in development, harnesses this. It follows that any strategy for economic growth and sustainable human development must encompass good governance in both its technical and representational forms of which the latter involves participation, transparency, and accountability.

An equally important aspect of governance vis-à-vis poverty reduction is the sharing of the limited resources among the citizenry. It is here where resource planning/allocation structures that respond to the poverty profile ought to be emphasised. There is emerging evidence that confirms that income poverty is reduced faster where equality is greater. One important issue that has to be addressed in this regard concerns the degree to which the country possesses the political will to address the social service delivery systems and the importance of targeting the most needy and vulnerable people by geographical location, by gender, and by socio-economic category. The test of good governance for poverty reduction will be how equipped and politically prepared the government and civil society are to bias resources, once economic growth has generated these, towards those social services that are fundamental to poverty reduction and alleviation (e.g. education, health, and social infrastructure like roads, water supply and sanitation); those categories of people that are more vulnerable (women, children, disabled, retrenched workers, and small-scale peasant farmers) and those rural regions/districts that, according to current statistics, accommodate the country's core poor, bearing in mind, nevertheless, that urban poverty is fast catching up with rural poverty.

3.2 Situation Analysis

Although the Republican Constitution and its provisions aim at promoting and protecting citizens' welfare, widespread poverty has continued to compromise this. In Zambia, good governance entails genuine participation of citizens in the choice of their leadership, programmes, and the pattern of resource utilisation. It also means judicious application of scarce resources towards the reduction of poverty. Similarly, poverty reduction in the area of governance must be guided by a vision of a Zambian society in which all citizens have equal

opportunities to fulfil their potential and co-exist in dignity and harmony. The goal is to transform all private and public institutions into instruments for good governance. Without good norms and practices at all levels and in all institutions, poverty reduction will remain elusive even with the ideal endowment of resources. Public finances will remain porous and citizens' participation in poverty reduction efforts, particularly the poor, will be unattainable.

Although fundamental rights are guaranteed in the Constitution, the PRSP consultative process has revealed several concerns of the citizens regarding the manner the country has so far been managed in the area of governance. Firstly, the non-domestication of several international instruments and conventions Zambia has ratified has continued to check the speed at which the needed internal reforms are effected regarding the rights enjoyed by the citizens. Secondly, the accessibility to courts of law is limited by the inadequacy of courtrooms and judges as well as prosecutors, a phenomenon that delays the execution of justice. The inadequate legal, human resource, and financial support to institutions such as the Zambia Law Development Commission has implied that laws are not revised in time to keep up with the aspirations of the citizens.

Zambia's National Capacity Building Programme for Good Governance (NCBPGG) outlines in great detail the required steps for improving governance in these and related areas. The NCBPGG policy document has posed several challenges that the country has to address, and the government is re-dedicating itself to these ideals. They include the following:

- The consolidation of the requisite political will to implement the National Capacity Building Programme for Good Governance.
- The promotion of regular consultation between the government and its citizens to promote and protect the rule of law. Political commitment to inter-party talks and rational, non-discriminatory and judicious application of the Public Order Act, for example, will be part of the new vision towards the enhancement of the rule of law.
- Development and adoption by Cabinet of a decentralisation policy. Complementary to this is the resolve to develop pieces of legislation to bring into effect the policy and procedures to guide the expected inter-governmental relations. The development and strengthening of planning and financial management systems at the different levels of government will also be pursued.
- Prudent application of state resources in a manner that assures self-reliance, sustainable livelihoods, and adequate means of employment. In this regard, the budgeting process will be reformed to allow for broader participation of citizens.

3.3 Governance Programmes for Poverty Reduction

Given the limited resources, it will not be possible for the country in the short and medium term to implement most of the programmes contained in the NCBPGG policy document. Therefore, Zambia has decided to focus on three key objectives, apart from those concerning corporate governance, which will be implemented as part of the overall strategy for poverty reduction. These are:

- The need to have regular and wider consultations between government and citizenry.
- The need to ensure efficient, equitable, and transparent management of scarce public resources.
- Guaranteed justice.

Given the identified problems relating to poverty, as indicated above the new vision for governance will focus primarily on creating in Zambia a society in which all citizens have opportunities to realise their full potential and co-exist in dignity and harmony. The goal for governance will be to promote good governance in the management of private and public affairs as a mechanism for poverty reduction. To this end, three objectives, apart from corporate governance, with their attendant poverty reduction programmes, will be pursued:

Objective 1: Democratise decision-making through wider use of the consultative process

To enhance the legitimacy of government leadership, decisions, programmes, and resource utilisation for effectiveness of poverty reduction programmes, the PRSP will facilitate the enhancement of the principles of separation of power and the strengthening of legislative and law enforcement institutions, highlighting weaknesses in oversight and addressing the weaknesses introduced by vices such as corruption. A policy of ‘zero tolerance’ against corruption will become one of the major pillars of good governance in the country. At the operational level, regular and wide consultation between government and citizenry will be undertaken. To this end, a decentralisation policy will be developed and implemented *as a matter of top priority* to ensure that citizens, particularly women, disabled persons, and other disadvantaged groups, actively participate in their own affairs. The Decentralisation Policy will specifically define, in operational terms, the extent and limits of actions by central government; provincial administrations; local government authorities/councils; and other stakeholders at the provincial, district, and sub-district levels. This will also empower local government systems and traditional authorities to assume their rightful place in the country’s poverty reduction agenda. In this vein and to minimise undue conflict of interest, the office of the District Administrator will be abolished and its functions taken to local authorities. Mayors and their equivalents, the various education and health boards as well as committees controlling various funds at district and sub-district-level will be directly elected by the people to increase citizens’ control of leadership, programmes, and resources. Institutional linkages between the local authority, on one hand, and the community and all district- and sub-district level structures, on the other hand, will be established and their capacities will be enhanced to operate on non-partisan, professional, accountable, and transparent lines. The needed legislation to legitimise these changes will be enacted.

Objective 2: Ensure efficient, equitable, and transparent management of public resources

Under this objective, the country’s focus will be on accountability and efficient public expenditure management; participatory budgeting, greater transparency in public procurement and contracting procedures, including the strengthening of government finance, accounting and internal audit systems and procedures; and improved financial management and expenditure tracking efforts. To achieve these objectives, the budgeting process under the PRSP will be decentralised to allow for greater involvement of all the stakeholders in resource planning. For the severely poor and vulnerable people, safety nets will be provided to alleviate their transitory level of suffering while bearing in mind, though, that a more sustainable approach to the improvement of their livelihood lies not in free handouts but in their being enabled to materially sustain themselves through, *inter alia*, their direct engagement in sustainable income-generating activities.

To sensitise citizens on the disadvantages of corruption, the political leadership will denounce publicly and at regular intervals corruption, in general, and all identified corrupt practices and abuses of public resources. To complement this ‘zero tolerance’ policy against corruption, the capacity of the Anti-Corruption Commission will be enhanced. Moreover, to improve the efficiency of the public service, all civil servants, including Permanent Secretaries, will be appointed by the Public Service Commission, which will provide them with good conditions of service in accordance with the Public Service Reform Programme (PSRP). The government is committed to ensuring that civil servants and professionals serving in public offices are appointed on merit and under a competitive, transparent, and accountable recruitment structure.

Objective 3: Guaranteed justice for all

Guaranteed justice for all aims at empowering citizens through firmly protecting and enhancing their rights as stipulated in the Constitution. This will involve the domestication of international conventions Zambia has ratified, particularly the social and economic ones; the improvement of the efficiency of the legal system through increased number of court rooms, judges, magistrates and prosecutors; retraining of these personnel under improved conditions

of service; and simplified legal procedures for speedy justice. The government will also put in place alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, including a small claims court, to decongest the courts. All constitutional and legal reforms will need the fair and consistent application of the law, and the government will facilitate this. Similarly, the Police Complaints Authority and the SADC protocol on corruption will be operationalised as a matter of urgency. The requisite elements for attaining the three objectives are summarised in the log frame of this document (Appendix 2-1).