

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

This thesis is based on fieldwork I conducted in Kaabo village, Zambia from June to August 2005. The purpose of the study is to contribute to the understanding of rural poverty and policies aimed at reducing it from the '*emic*' view - that is, the perceptions of rural people and compare them to macro poverty reduction policies<sup>1</sup>. Rural poverty in Zambia is pervasive and remains a matter of concern both to the government and other partners in development.

Poverty and policies aimed at reducing it both at micro and macro level cannot be studied in isolation, but in the broader context of shifts that have been taking place in international development discourse. According to Court et al. (2005), there have been changes in thinking on the meaning of poverty and the shift in the aim of development assistance to poverty reduction. Commitment to alleviate poverty are not new and have informed the agendas of the United Nations (UN), international agencies as well as governments for at least a quarter of a century, if not longer (Sobhan 2001). Until recently, in mainstream development thinking, poverty alleviation was part of a broader agenda for development and viewed as a by-product of rapid growth. However, what is new today is the realisation that it has been at a high level of rhetorical posturing and hence renewed commitments and the prioritisation of poverty as the primary mission of global development agencies and as an overarching programme for many governments.

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<sup>1</sup> Poverty reduction policies are set out in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and its equivalent documents.

A policy is defined as a definite course of action selected by government, an institution, group or an individual among alternatives, in light of given conditions to guide and usually to determine present and future action (Webster's dictionary in Singh 1999).

My interest in this topic stems from my professional involvement (as a planner) in backstopping to eight local planning units of Eastern Province (Zambia) in preparing their district development poverty reduction papers and monitoring of poverty reduction programmes (PRP) under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Furthermore, the schematic history of development cooperation, that is, the overtaking of the conventional agent of development the state by international institutions and market forces of the neo-liberal policies and again the resurgence of putting poverty reduction at the centre stage of the international development community's agenda with the state taking the front seat by preparing its own national strategy for reducing it has really caught my attention during my development theory and self selected reading courses.

Some of the notable changes in the poverty discourse can be broadly summarised as follows:

- Growing interest in vulnerable and social protection.
- Changing perspectives on the role of, and relationship between, different actors, specifically the market, the state (particularly following the Asia crisis in 1997) and civil society.
- Broader definitions and alternative measures of poverty were taken into use where 'poverty' expanded from measures of private consumption to include assets, social consumption, security and empowerment (Court et al. 2005:52).

It is also interesting to note that in the 1980s, participation came to occupy a very important position in the discourse about development policy. Participation of community members is assumed to contribute to enhanced efficiency and effectiveness of investment and to promote processes of democratization and empowerment (Kothari and Cooke 2001). Additionally, participation of the intended beneficiaries in problem analysis and policy making improves the quality of programme and plans that result (Chambers 1983). Thus the 1999 World Bank announced Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) was premised on principles of participation, empowerment and ownership. Through this approach, it was

assumed that the PRSP would create policy space for the poor to be directly involved in the policy-making process.

When I reviewed literature on poverty, I realised that there is much information on quantitative data. In Zambia particularly, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) has been undertaking poverty analysis using household expenditure and income data from household indicators monitoring surveys since 1991, but these do not reflect individual's perceptions of dimensions and characteristics of poverty (CSO 2004). Albeit there are quite a number of studies carried out in Zambia using participatory methods, yet there has been little attention by social scientists (researchers) to critically compare results from these participatory researches to the policies adopted at macro level (PRSP), which may have pragmatic implication to the whole development process as now realised in the development discourse.

### **Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the study are:

- To determine the rural people's definition and understanding of poverty.
- To establish rural people's life experiences and determine how this influences their perception of poverty.
- To establish the government's perspective on causes of poverty and the effectiveness of the implementation of the formulated policies aimed at reducing rural poverty.
- To compare (match /mismatch) people's views about how poverty should be reduced to the macro policies with the current implementation strategies developed by the Zambian government.

Differentiated categories of rural people, that is, children, literate (teachers) and elderly were targeted in order to have views of various groups within the community represented. The criteria they use to distinguish the poor from the non-poor were probed in the first objective.

The problem with conventional planning methods has been that planners worked from normative social models so that the recipients of development were treated as passive or, more often, conservative and obstructive (Mohan in Desai 2002). However, there has been an epistemological awareness among development practitioners that the poor are not improvident, lazy, fatalistic, ignorant and responsible for their poverty, but that they are tough, hard working, ingenious and resilient. This has meant embracing methods which enable rural people to share, enhance, and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions to plan and act (Chambers 1994a). According to Lister (2004), a case has been made by institutions like the World Bank for listening to what people in poverty themselves think are the best measuring indicators.

However, to what extent local people are involved and influence policy on matters affecting them remains cynical. Concerns have been expressed within donor circles, regarding the degree to which the poor influence the PRSPs and the extent to which consultation mechanisms are being institutionalized. Groves and Hinton (2004), observe that albeit the poor and the marginalised are considered primary stakeholders, they usually participate least and have least voice. Participatory methods have over the years pointed to and improved understanding of several areas of Zambian life, but that has often been ignored or neglected in processes of policy formulation and implementation. The Social Recovery Project (SRP) revealed that there is inadequate utilisation of the poverty information by policy makers and others (Chileshe et al. 2003).

On the other hand, implementation of PRPs has been viewed as problematic. Cases have been revealed where a programme is running in an area and people seem not to be aware. For example, the Executive Director for Zambia AIDS Network (ZANAN) said that there was information gap to the public about support groups that exist within communities (Post Newspaper 4/02-2006).

Many researchers have also highlighted regional imbalances in terms of social services distribution between urban and rural areas and within rural areas themselves. A closer examination of the distribution between households by proximity to facility, by residence indicates that urban households have relatively

easier access to all the facilities than rural households. In general, a high proportion of rural households are at a distance of over 16km from major amenities such as a post office, high school, inputs market, banks and health facilities (CSO 2004).

## **Thesis overview**

The thesis commences with an introduction, which highlights the purpose of the study, its objectives and the changes in mainstream development thinking regarding poverty reduction. The second chapter treats definitions of poverty, and also chains of explanations about poverty - individualistic perspectives, structuralist (political economy) and the main explanatory framework drawn from the political economy perspective that is, poverty *versus* power hypothesis. Other explanations explored include the ecological perspective. The third chapter discusses in detail the study site and the methods employed in the study. The fifth chapter presents rural people's perspective on causes of poverty and their life experiences which might influence their perceptions of poverty. Civil society's perspective along with government's is also presented in the same chapter. Poverty reduction strategies as mainly outlined in the PRSP and its equivalent documents are discussed in chapter six. The structural framework for implementing PRPs along with the implementation of the formulated policies is also explored. The chapter ends with the comparison (match/mismatch) of micro findings to the macro poverty reduction strategies. The concluding chapter establishes the relationship between the research findings and the main explanatory framework and others discussed in the theory chapter. A counter-argument is also presented. Lessons learnt from the study are also highlighted particularly methodological insights and policy implications for poverty reduction.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THEORY

It is imperative to explore chains of explanations about the causes of poverty since policies/ strategies aimed at reducing it are influenced by these chains.

Theory provides both: a framework for critically understanding phenomena, and a basis for considering how what is unknown might be organized (Silverman 2005). It also gives prediction of a phenomenon. Without theory, such a phenomenon like ‘poverty’ cannot be understood. This chapter treats different views about the definition of poverty as it is used and understood in the development discourse. The chain of explanations about the causes of poverty and ensuing policies are also explored, which form the basis for the development of the explanatory framework for this study.

#### **Definitions of poverty**

Gordon and Spicker (1999) observe that the term ‘poverty’ can be considered to have a cluster of different overlapping meaning depending on what subject area or discourse is being examined. In any case, Lister (2004) contends that definitions of poverty (should) provide a more precise statement of what distinguishes the state of poverty and of being poor from that of not being in poverty/poor. I do not intended, however, to deal substantially with the debate of concepts, definitions and measures of poverty, but rather to provide an overview and set a footing for the definition employed in this study.

Wratten (1995) identifies two main approaches under which poverty can be defined: Conventional economic definitions which use income, consumption, or a range of other social indicators to classify poor groups against a common index of

material welfare; and alternative interpretations developed largely by rural anthropologists and social planners working with poor rural communities in the Third World, which allow for varying degrees where the poverty line could be, and expand the definition to encompass perceptions of non material deprivation and social differentiation.

### **Conventional Definitions**

Absolute poverty refers to some absolute standard of minimum requirement, while relative poverty refers to falling behind most others in the community (World Bank 2000/2001). According to the World Bank Operational Directive on Poverty, “people are considered as poor if their standard of living falls below the poverty line, that is, the amount of income (or consumption) associated with a minimum accepted level of nutrition and other necessities of everyday,” (World Bank 1992b:5). This include a condition characterised by deprivation of basic human needs, like food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to social services (UN in Gordon and Spicker 1999). As its most basic, absolute is defined in terms of survival. A family is poor if it can not afford to eat (Joseph and Sumption in Lister 2004).

However, it is noted by Gordon and Spicker (1999) that proponents of the concept (absolute) have had great difficulty in producing acceptable criteria for the choice and definition of items included. The needs of populations can not be defined adequately just by reference to the physical needs of individuals and the more obvious physical provisions and services required by local communities. They further argue that absolute definitions of poverty tend to be prescriptive definitions based on the ‘assertions’ of expert about people’s minimum needs.

On the other hand, relative poverty places poverty in context of inequality within societies. By making comparisons between those of lower or higher incomes, any inequalities of material resources that may exist between the groups being examined are highlighted (Lister 2004).

Such standard definitions are useful to policy makers because they provide a uniform scale against which comparisons can be made of the incidence of poverty in different sub populations (urban and rural; urban populations living in different parts of the city; male and female headed households; old and young) or of the same population overtime (Wratten 1995).

However, I concur with Satterthwaite (1997) who observes that albeit the standard of \$1<sup>2</sup> or when replaced by a national poverty line as advocated by the World Bank is an important benchmark by which the extent of poverty is assessed within nations and globally, yet it pays little attention to differences in the expenditure patterns of different groups of the poor or of differences in the costs that they face. In this light it is deemed too low. In a parallel argument, Hanmer et al. (1997) observe that applications of a money-metric approach requires not only the choice of how and where to set the line, but how to deal with the problems of price variations and of family size and composition. Moreover, poverty lines do not measure accurately the poor's capacity to achieve access to resources (which may be influenced by other factors such as education, information, legal rights, illness threatened domestic violence or insecurity). Since incomes are commonly analyzed at the household level, there is a likelihood that individual members of a household may not have equal command over resources and those with low entitlement to consume resources (due, for example to their age, gender or social status) may be hidden within a relatively prosperous households (Wratten 1995).

Townsend (1979) views most economic poverty indices as measures of income inequality rather than poverty. Gordon and Spicker (1999) compliments adding that economic definitions of poverty provide information about income inequality, but are often of more limited use for understanding the distribution and dynamics of poverty.

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<sup>2</sup> The \$ referred to in the whole thesis is the United States Dollar (USD).



## **Participatory definitions**

It is now widely accepted that the multi-dimension of poverty comes out when participatory methods are used (World Bank 2000/2001). Complexity of views only come out when people are engaged than in simple, dichotomous terms of either 'absolute' or 'relative' (Lister 2004). Proponents of participatory definitions argue that the quantification of poverty invariably restricts the number of criteria used to describe it, so that data provide only a partial picture of the reality of being poor (Wratten 1995).

The World Bank (2000/2001) defines poverty as deprivation in well-being.

Chambers dissects deprivation into five dimensions: poverty proper (lack of income and assets), physical weakness (under nutrition, sickness, disability, lack of strength); isolation (ignorance, illiteracy, lack of access, periphery location); vulnerability (to contingencies, to becoming poor); and powerlessness (Chambers in Moore et al. 1998). Baulch (1998) suggest a different but equally credible approach: a six-dimensional-lack of access to private income-and becoming more complex with the addition of lack of access to: common property; resources; state-provided commodities (the 'social wage'); assets; dignity; and autonomy.

On the other hand, Hesselberg (1993) identifies three categories of poverty: food poverty, subsistence poverty and relative deprivation. Food poverty refers to absolute poverty, subsistence<sup>3</sup> poverty to a basic need concept, and relative deprivation to social coping or participation. This definition like others attempts to distinguish different categories of poverty and let alone the poor who are not homogenous. This is essential because it makes us understand the dynamics of poverty.

From the foregoing discussion, two definitions of poverty can be distinguished: measures (operational definitions) and theoretical (conceptual). Measures of poverty represents ways of operationalizing definitions so that we can identify and

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<sup>3</sup> Subsistence is defined by Gordon and Spicker (1999) as the maintenance of a basic level of living, below which needs are not met.

count those defined as poor and gauge the depth of their poverty (Lister 2004). In line with the methodological foundation of this study (qualitative), a theoretical definition of poverty, which comes out through participatory approaches is employed. At issue is the non-material as well as the manifestations of poverty as perceived by poor people themselves (see chapter 4). As argued by Jones and Norak in Lister (2004), poverty has to be understood not just as a disadvantaged and insecure economic condition but also as shameful and corrosive social relations. Participatory approaches developed in the south highlights listless non-material aspects as already mentioned which include among others: lack of voice; disrespect; humiliation and assault.

### **Individualistic perspective on causes of poverty**

Theories adopted by classical economists in the early years of the industrial revolution viewed poverty to be caused by idleness, improvidence and insobriety, which were defects which could be overcome by discipline and new attitudes. It was up to the individual to avoid or escape poverty (Townsend 1993). The 19th century sociologist, Herbert Spencer, blamed poverty on the poor. He claimed that the poor were lazy, and those who did not work were not to be allowed to eat. He attributed poverty to bad moral character (Blacks Academy 2002).

### **Traditionalism and the “culture of poverty”**

Cultural of poverty, is a concept that linked many of the cultural and psychological traits associated with rural traditionalism and to the persistence poverty among certain subgroups in modernizing society (Lewis 1959). In explaining this connection, Lewis made an important distinction between what he believed to be simple cultural “backwardness” of peasant living in “well-integrated” society where everyone was poor and culture developed by rural and urban poor people living in capitalist, class stratified society. The former were poor people by modern standards but not by the standards of their own subsistence economies.

Conor in Duncan (1992) argues that in response to their deprivation, the poor developed habits and psychological adaptations that put them at odds with modern

capitalist culture: never aspired for advancement and felt powerless over their own destinies, and frequently indulged in “defiant” social and sexual behaviour. The culture of poverty is said to have isolated the poor from the rest of modern society. Miller in Øyen et al. (1996) remarks that the poor do things that makes them poor or keeps them in a condition of poverty. The poor are viewed not to be passive victims but that they engage in activities and behaviours that harm them in the economy and everyday life.

The theory implied that the policies which required strengthening were those related to probation, family therapy, social work and education (Townsend 1993). As popularized during the 1960s, the culture-of-poverty theory was used to justify a wide range of policy strategies. For example, Lewis urged poverty warriors to employ individualities counselling and social-work services in the United States (Lewis 1969).

### **Modernization and rural poverty**

The central concept for all theories of modernization is modernity (Habermas, Baudrillard, Boyne and Rattansi in Cheal 1996).

According to Cheal, “Modernity is the term used to describe the dominant culture during the period of time leading up to, and perhaps including, the present. It is thought to have begun with a break through or a series of break through, from all traditional arrangements that had prevailed throughout earlier human history” (1996:2).

Modernization theory spelt out the implications for the geography of a global system divided into centres of modern progress and peripheries of traditional backwardness, with the centre showing the periphery its future (Peet and Hartwick 1999). In modernity the dominant cultural values ceased to be practiced inherited from the past. Traditional values were replaced by criteria for improvement which came to be referred to collectively as “progress” (Cheal 1996).

From the 1930s through the 1960s, liberal reformers and social scientists approached rural poverty within the context of sweeping social and economic changes that were making the United States a truly modern society. These interconnected social and economic changes, including industrialization, urbanization, and the creation of the welfare state, were regarded as both the cause of and the potential solution to rural poverty (Conor in Duncan 1992). Modernization was regarded as a desirable goal for traditional communities and a strategy for combating rural poverty. In the post-war decades a new generation of social anthropologists participated in applied research projects designed to stimulate economic growth, education, and improved health conditions and otherwise bring the amenities of modern life to “underdeveloped” countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America (Duncan 1992).

The war on rural poverty consisted of much safer rehabilitative and relief measures: loans to poor farmers and interventions contained in rural community action programmes. In the agricultural development tradition, the achievement of rising productivity in small-farm agriculture was central in the 1970s and remained orthodoxy well into the 1990s (Tomich et al. in Ellis 2000).

It is noted that these policies stimulated economic growth and out-migration that lifted many rural people out of poverty, social scientists began to explain the persistent poverty of those who remained in rural communities as a cultural rather than an economic problem. They argued that the rural poor lacked the values and aspirations essential for success in modern, urbanized “middle-class” and thus were unable to benefit from modernization (Conor in Duncan 1992).

### *Critique*

It is argued by Townsend (1993) that the individualistic view is wholly misplaced or, at the most, a very small factor in the multiple causation of poverty. Cultures gave their people little if any choice; they bred fatalists who did not know that alternative forms of behaviour and aspirations were possible, because usually they were not. But such an approach is perceived not to be valid to the contemporary study of the poor. Others for example, Charles and Betty Lon Valentine concluded

in their study that there is no evidence of a poverty of culture; or rather they concluded, “a pathetic resignation does exist, but it is by no means the dominant theme of community” (Blacks Academy 2002:3).

Further, the concept of the culture of poverty concentrates attention upon the familial and local setting of behaviour and largely ignores the external and unseen social forces which condition the distribution of different types of resources to the community, family and individuals (Townsend 1970).

As an ensuing strategy for eliminating rural poverty, modernization is perceived not to represent a coherent ideology so much as a loose set of policies to strike at the root causes rather than just the symptoms of rural poverty: reorganizing the agricultural economy to promote greater efficiency and farming as “ a business, not a way of life”; maintaining steady economic growth and full employment in the non-agricultural sector; directing migration of surplus labour to follow new job opportunities; and provide education and services to help people adjust to change (Conor in Duncan 1992).

On the other hand, modernization narrowed government policies which were primarily aimed at fixing the deficiencies of the poor, treating poverty as a problem apart from its large social and economic context. “Development for the periphery was reduced to a process of spatial diffusion of innovation from the global centre of civilization” (Peet and Hartwick 1999:90). Modernization failed to acknowledge the historical roots of contemporary poverty problems and how history has shaped our perceptions about the solutions. Much more, it displaced much of the agricultural labour force and spelled an end to traditional and valued ways of life in rural communities. It is viewed to have further marginalized the rural people (Conor in Duncan 1992).

## **Structuralist perspective**

Marxism (conflict structuralism) attributes poverty to the existence of class divisions in society. Poverty helps to maintain the domination of the bourgeoisie; it serves the interest of this owning class (Blacks Academy 2002).

## **The Political Economy view**

The political economic view stresses that poverty is a product of certain economic and social processes that are intrinsic to given social system. The poor remain poor not because of any individual or personal qualities, but because society denies them the legitimate share of benefits that should accrue to them (Silva and Athukorala in Øyen et al. 1996).

Chambers (1983) notice that poverty is to be understood primarily in terms of economic forces, social relations, property rights, and power. Peet and Hartwick (1999) recognise a hegemonic mystified power which justifies its established order and dominating classes by depriving many so that a few could live well.

“The socio-economic phenomenon whereby the resources available to a given society are used to satisfy the wants of the few while the many do not have even their basic needs met. This conceptualization features the point of view that poverty is essentially a social phenomenon and only secondarily a material or physical phenomenon” (Kurien in Chambers 1983:36).

According to the World System Theory, there is a flow of surplus from periphery to core (Peet and Hartwick 1999). The richer countries control trade and the destinies of poor countries and make them poor by exploiting them. They use calculated mechanisms such as unequal exchange, monopoly over a range of resources (institutional and material) and also benefit from returns to capital investment through repatriation of profits. Within the country or internally the ruling classes and often categories of the bourgeoisie exploit the low classed through shifts in rural-urban terms of trade, and investment in urban industries and services (Chambers 1983).

Within rural areas themselves, land is occupied by a social group called traditional land elites (Janvry 1977). They grab land from the masses for commercial and plantation agriculture thus limiting subsistence agriculture to the least fertile and most easily destroyable lands. A scenario is created whereby local elites drain resources from rural environments, which in turn is shared by urban bourgeoisies.

Additionally, forces of competition, uneven technical change, and privatization of land result in increasing differentiation between families in rural areas. This eventually leads to the disintegration of peasant communities and the emergence of the two distinct social classes of landless wage labour and labour-hiring capitalist farmers.

Hesselberg makes the following observation:

“The destruction of the social system of subsistence from the purpose of integrating the country into the global market economy has led to a worsening of living standards for a part of the population. The reciprocity system in rural Botswana is not as effective as it used to be” (Hesselberg 1993:6).

Similarly, Chambers (1983) observes that reciprocal relations and traditional supports for the poor are rarer and weaker than in the past.

### *Critique*

Those who advocate for a free market argue that if the market is left to operate without interference, prosperous conditions can be assumed the majority of the population. There will be a ‘trickle’ down effect. People must be free to invest and apply their skills. Inequality of structure is believed to be a necessary counterpart of a system of incentives for individuals (Townsend 1993).

This body of thought concedes various factors that might permit peasants to persist in a competitive capitalist economy. These include their capability to retreat into subsistence, their adaptability under pressure, and social norms of reciprocity

in peasant society (Ellis 2000). Therefore, it offers only a limited range of options for alleviating poverty (Øyen et al. 1996).

### **Points of departure**

There have been a lot of changes taking place in the field of development. As rightly observed by Piortese (2001), development thinking and policy is a terrain of hegemony and counter-hegemony. In this light, modernity no longer seems so attractive in view of ecological problems, the consequences of technological change and many others. Albeit, modernization and neo-liberal policies coincide, and it can be argued that neo-liberalism was its continuation in an era of market triumphalism (Peet and Harwick 1999). The resultant Poverty policies from these theories are futile in that they attempt to analyze or shape development by focusing at the level of individual countries let a lone society, but at the same time emphasize on inequality, power relations, social classes and differentiation (Ellis 2000). Conversely, I view the political economy perspective as a convincing and persuasive alternative which addresses the structural concerns in which the poor are embedded. The underlying assumption in this perspective is the recognition that neither targeting of development resources to the poor, nor the promotion of growth is likely to solve the problems of rural poverty without addressing the inherited structural arrangements into which the poor are embedded. As the subsequent section will assert, my main hypothesis for this study is drawn from this grand thought, which I perceive to address gaps other theories do not like the already mentioned structural concerns in which the rural poor are embedded.

### **Explanatory framework for the study – hypotheses**

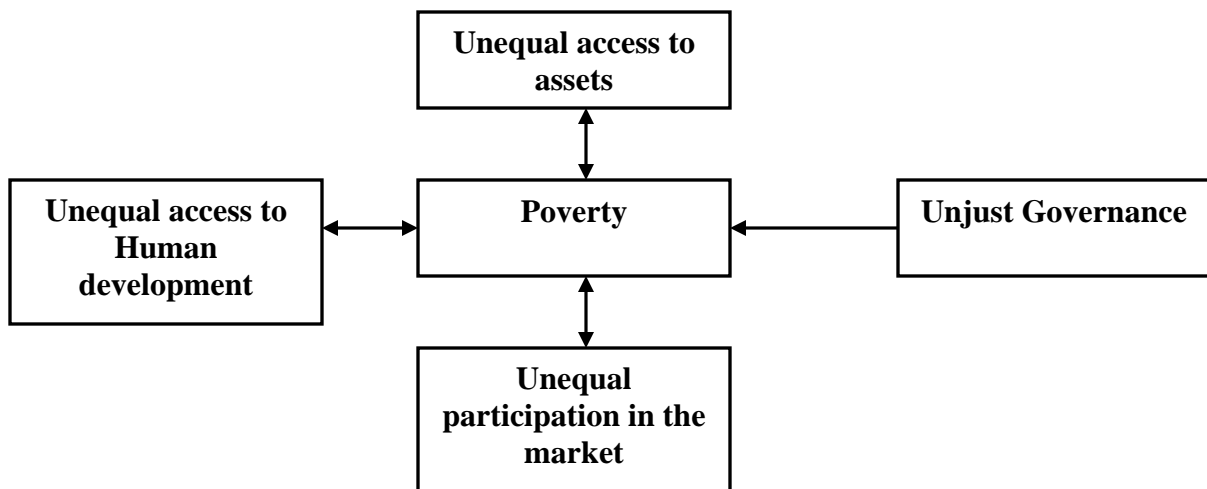
As already mentioned, this study will be conducted within the broad spectrum of political economy perspective on causes of rural poverty. The main hypothesis drawn from this body of thought is the poverty *versus* (*v*) power hypothesis. The other hypothesis is drawn from the physical ecological perspective - Locality and demographic hypothesis.



## Poverty v Power hypothesis

“A broad thesis is that it is not economic markets of themselves that determine the distributions of income and wealth and the rates of poverty. Rather it is the concentration of economic and political power in the hands of narrow privileged groups that produces inequalities and poverties” (Miller in Øyen et al. 1996:582).

According to the editor of the Post Newspaper (26/02-2006), poverty is not only an economic and social issue, but it is also a serious political matter whose solution may lie in the political realm. One may not be able to meaningfully fight poverty without attempting to alter the structures of power because it is these structures that determine the priorities of our country (Zambia). From the point of view of structural dimension of poverty, rural poverty originates in the unequal command over both economic and political resources within a society and the unjust nature of a social order which perpetuates these inequalities. The poor are said to be embedded in certain structural arrangements such as insufficient access to productive assets as well as human resources, unequal capacity to participate in both domestic and global markets and undemocratic access to political power. The structural features of poverty reinforce each other to effectively exclude the poor, from participating in the benefits from development or the opportunities provided by more open market (Sobhan 2001). Thus five injustices, termed as structural injustices can be illustrated as below:



**Figure 1: Structural injustices - poverty linkage.**

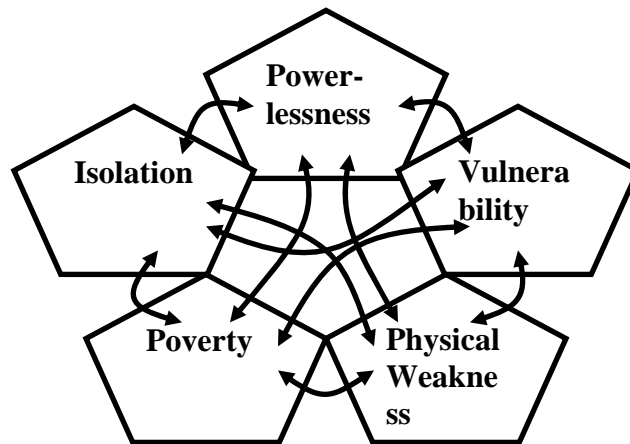
“When the poor compete for resources, the rich will always get priority”- a discussion group of poor men and women, Kenya (Narayan 2000:1). Inequitable access to wealth and knowledge disempower the poor from participating in the market place. Sobhan (2001) contends that as the market operates in the real world than in text books, is designed to compromise the opportunities on offer to the poor. The IFAD report (2001), accentuates that in most societies, with substantial proportion of the population living in poverty, the poor have insufficient access to land, water and water bodies. Within the prevailing property structures of society, the rural poor, in particular, remain disconnected from the more dynamic sectors of the market, particularly where there is scope for benefiting from the opportunities provided by globalization. The rural poor, therefore, interface with the dynamic sectors of the economy only as producers and wage earners, at the lowest end of the production and marketing chain, where they sell their produce and labour under severely adverse conditions.

Powerful groups press markets in preferred directions. Low wages or agricultural produce prices are not “natural” market results. Power dictates their level. In this view the poor are poor because they lack political power to challenge prevailing practices of economic and social exploitation (Miller in Øyen et al.1996).

This inequitable and unjust social and economic universe is compounded by a system of unjust governance which discriminates against the poor and effectively disenfranchises them from the political benefits of a democratic process (Sobhan 2001). Mosse in Alsop (2004) observes that the interests of national elites and the electoral concerns of those in power affect the state’s policy choices, sector priorities, and programmes, with important consequences for the poor.

On the other hand, low productivity remains an important source of income poverty. Low productivity originates in insufficient access to human development (education and technology) (IFAD 2001). Poor people in most rural areas do not have access to quality education let alone the internet technology (IT) revolution relevant to the dynamic market.

Poor people have very limited choices and an inability to make themselves heard or to influence what happens to them (Narayan 2000). Powerlessness results from multiple, interlocking disadvantages, which in combination make it extremely difficult for poor people to escape. Chambers (1983), for example, identifies a vicious cycle which he calls a deprivation trap as illustrated below:



**Figure 2: The deprivation trap.**

Source: Chambers 1983:112

Poverty is said to be the strong determinant of the others. Singling out powerlessness, the rural elites act as a net to intercept benefits intended for the poor, in the way the poor are robbed and cheated, and in the inability of poorer people to bargain, especially women, and those who are physically weak, disabled or destitute. Chambers (1983) cites credit and marketing cooperatives in Third World countries which are dominated by large farmers who use them for their benefit at the expense of smaller producers. In many places, the landless face the harsh arithmetic of supply and demand. Employers of casual agricultural labour, moreover, switch from payments in cash and back again, adopting whichever makes labour cheap. By and large, the poor are isolated in that they lack contact with political leaders or with legal advice, and not knowing what the powerful are doing.

In this explanation, the route to poverty remedy is through power transfer or better, power transformation where the (majority) poor gain their rightful influence (Miller in Øyen et al.1996). In contrast to power is a view of empowerment as struggle for power over resources (or other people), often within a zero-sum game in which the rich and the poor, managers and workers, are opponents (Moore and Putzel 1999). Empowerment is defined by Narayan (2002) as the expansion of assets and capabilities of the poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives.

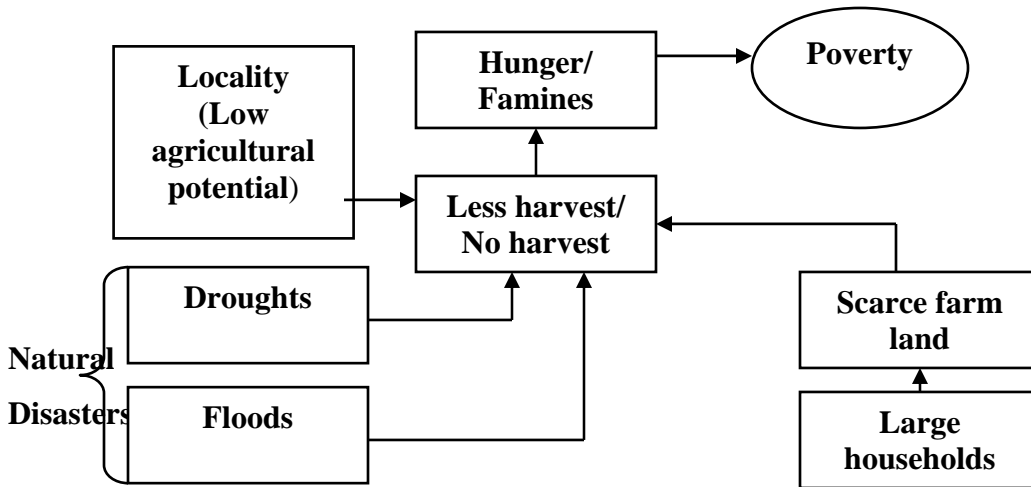
What is needed are concrete policies and programmes to deal with these issues (injustices). There is need for bold reforms that will radically transform the existing efforts together, working together toward the construction of a nation in which all our people will find a place. In all our activities-political or otherwise - our goal should be the liberalisation of persons from every sort of servitude that oppress them that dehumanises them: lack of life's necessities, illiteracy, and the weight of sociological structures, which deprive them of personal responsibility over life itself. (Post Newspaper 26/02-2006).

### **Physical Ecological perspective**

In the physical ecological cluster, rural poverty is interpreted more in terms of what is physical and visible. The two most commonly cited causes of poverty are population growth and pressure on resources and the environment (Chambers 1983). Poverty is also explained by climate (natural disasters). Other factors also postulated in the climatic explanation are: heat discouraging physical work, intensity of rainfall, prevalence of pests and diseases, and the seasonal interaction in the tropics of concurrent adverse factors - with food shortage, and diseases all coming at the same time during the rain (Longhurst et al. in Chambers 1983).

Where one lives may determine one's poverty history (Øyen et al. 1996). According to Thorbecke (2004), National household surveys show that the poor tend to be concentrated in a few geographical areas, for example, remote irrigated zones, dry-lands, mountainous terrain, forests and areas of low agricultural potential. The proportion of rural people in poverty rises markedly in locations that

are marginal in terms of agricultural productivity remote from services and prone to natural disasters - floods, drought, cyclones-and the famines which follow them (Ellis 2000).



**Figure 3: Locality, natural disasters and population – poverty linkage.**

Large household size, which may be associated with rural ness, is often cited as a high poverty risk (Øyen et al. 1996). Under the pressure of population, land is becoming scarcer. Small farms are subdivided on inheritance and children are then poorer than their parents were (Chambers 1983, Ellis 2000).

Physical ecologists also see the physical characteristics of poor people as explanations of their condition. Parasites, diseases, malnutrition, insanity conditions, poor housing, lack of amenities - these are viewed as proximate causes. Poor people are said to be locked in a syndrome of physical deprivation (Chambers 1983).

The explanations outlined above appear to warrant further investigation, preferably using methods, as will be seen in the next chapter, which allow rural people to speak for themselves - their ideas and experiences about poverty.

## CHAPTER 3

### STUDY SETTING AND METHODOLOGY

#### Study setting

##### An overview

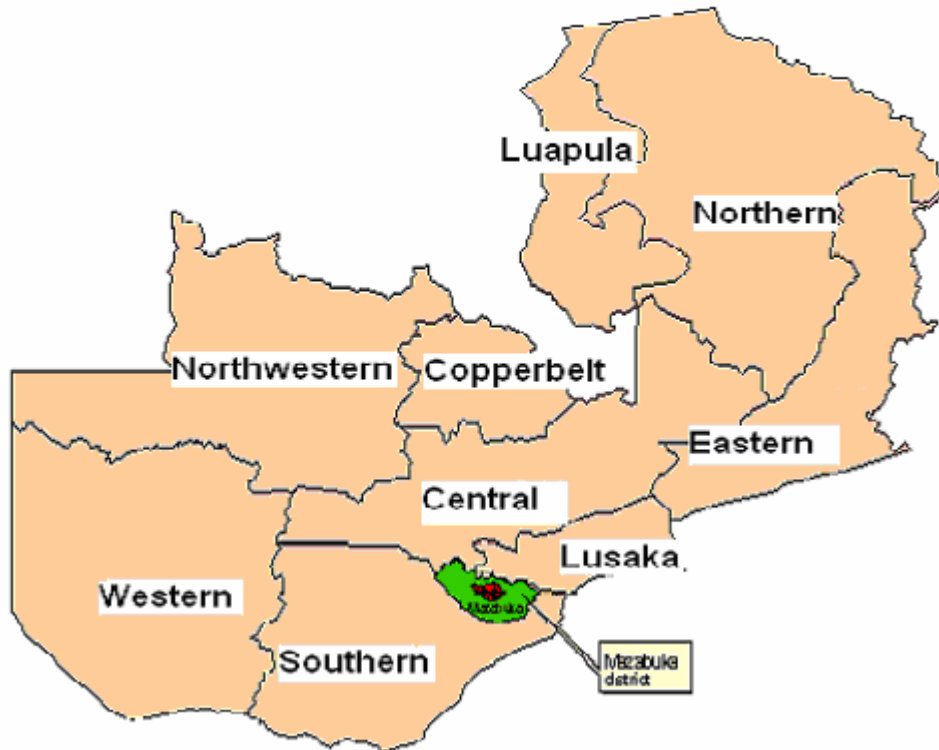
Zambia is abundantly endowed with minerals and other resources that are required to stimulate agricultural and rural development, in general, and poverty reduction in particular. It is estimated that about 35% of water resources of Southern Africa are in Zambia. The country has a good climate, abundant arable land with approximately 48 million hectares suitable for agriculture purposes (Saasa 2003). Most parts of the country receive adequate rainfall and have the capacity to produce a variety of arable crops. The other parts albeit not suitable for crop production is quite suitable for tree crops and for grazing.

Notwithstanding this, about 87% of the population live below the income poverty line of \$ 2 a day and about 64% live below the national poverty line of \$1.08<sup>4</sup> a day (World Bank 2005, UNDP 2005). It is also estimated that 49% out of the 11 million people is undernourished (UNDP 2005, FAO 2005). In the 2005 Human Development Index Ranking, the country with a GDP per capita (PPP \$) of 877 was ranked 166 out of 177 countries (UNDP 2005).

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<sup>4</sup> \$1.08 income poverty line is the national poverty live for Zambia in 1996 and there is no later figure (World Bank 2005).

**Map 1: Provinces in Zambia and Mazabuka district**

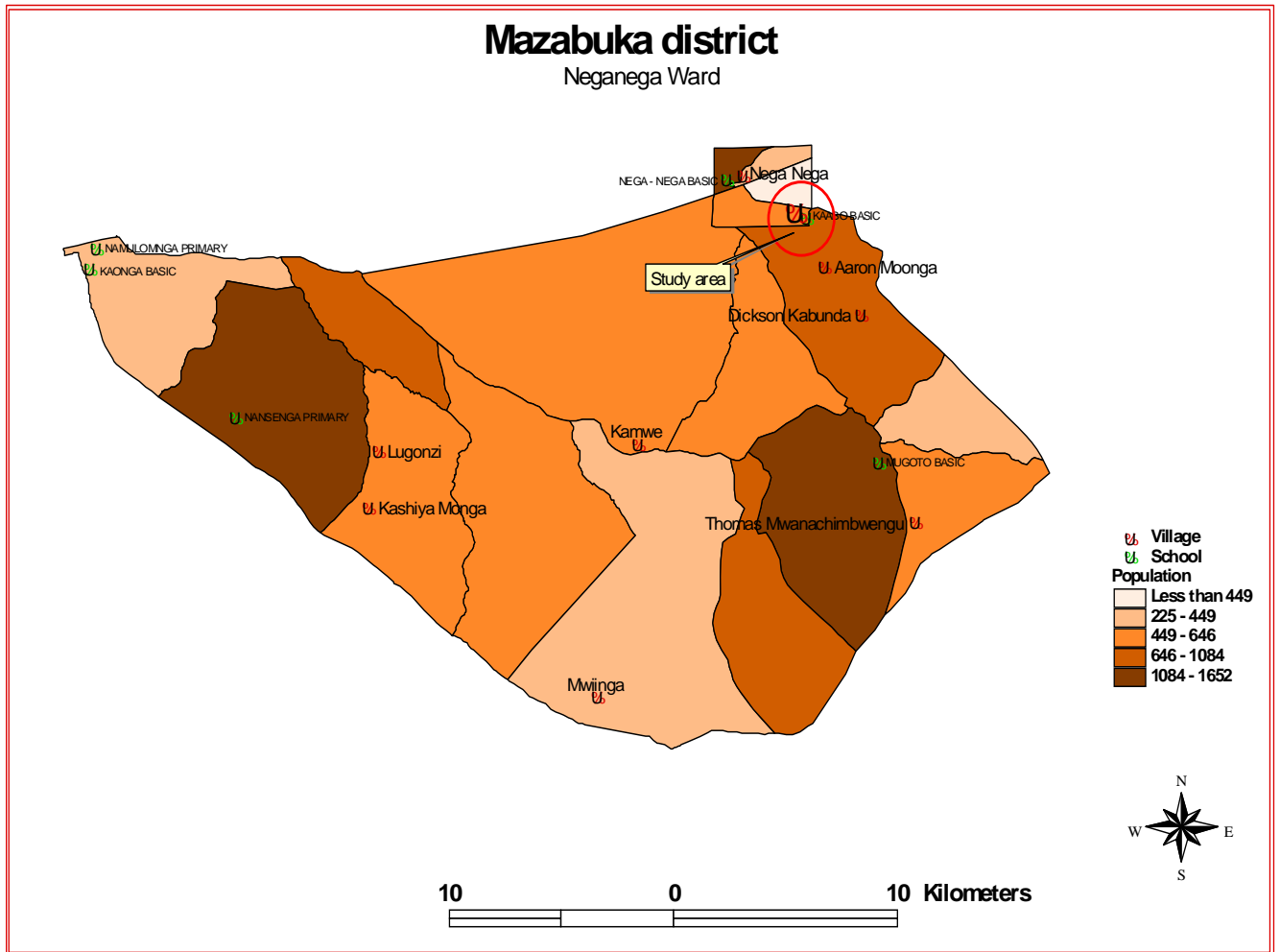


**Source: Based on Central Statistics Office (2005)**

**Profile of the study area**

This study was carried out in Kaabo village, North East of Mazabuka town in the Southern part of Zambia as depicted on the map below. The study area is bordered by other settlements, villages and commercial farms (like Dickson Kabunda). It is near the Kafue flats of the Kafue River. For the sake of this study, the area under consideration is circled and indicated study area (see map 2). The area can easily be accessed both by road and rail. There is only one primary school, and the nearest clinic is in Nega-nega - a township North West of the village about 9 kilometres away.

**Map 2: The study area**



**Source: Based on Central Statistics Office (2005)**

*Historical background*

Albeit there are other people from the 72 tribes of Zambia especially retirees, the indigenous people in the area are *Tonga* by tribe (*from the Bantu botatwe*). People I met told me that the village was established along time ago with settlers supposedly originating from different places both within and outside the country. The early settlers under *Mwambula* are believed to have originated from Malawi and initially settled behind the *Munali* hills on the eastern side of the village before coming to settle in the area. The second group of settlers which came between 1920 and 1930



originated from the *Soli* land. They initially settled at *Sabejwa* and the land was later taken by White settlers as it remains to date. These were under *Shamatuli* village. The third group of settlers came from *kawama* area in *Lubombo* and were given land west of *Shamatuli* village. The main group of settlers were under *Mwanza* village. Due to internal disputes, these people broke and started forming other villages on the eastern side of the study area as it stands to date.

In the late 1930s, the land was taken by a white farmer and people were evicted and went to stay in *Kasengo* area (east of the study area). Due to poor soils and overcrowding, people could not grow enough for their families and there was a shortage of grazing land for their livestock. This compelled them in the late 1940s, to see the District Commissioner at the Boma (Mazabuka municipal council) to complain. They were given back their land following the removal of the settler by the District Commissioner.

#### *Physical characteristics*

The vegetation in the area is mainly savannah. Due to human activities like clearing land for cultivation and charcoal burning, most of the indigenous trees have been cleared leaving only secondary vegetation with shrubs. The most common species of trees in the area are *mopani* (*hard wood*), which is mainly used for making houses and coconut trees were they get coconut fruits. Because of its richness in nutritional value, most families depend on the fruits for some meals specially that its availability coincides with the peak season of food deficit in the area (November to March).

Zambia is divided into 36 agro ecological zones which are further grouped into three main zones, mainly on the basis of rainfall (Saasa 2003). The study area lies within zone two with an average rainfall of 800-1200 mm per year and has a growing season of between 100-140 days. The elevation is in the range of 900-1200 meters. The risk of drought is medium to low with an occurrence of frost in dry season. The minimum temperatures (December to February) is between 17-18 degrees Celsius.

The soils are moderately leached clayey to loamy. They have a low nutrient reserves and water holding capacity with a slight to moderate acidity. Generally, the soils need heavy chemical application like fertilizer in order for crops to grow.

### *Economic activities*

Like other rural areas in the province, the area is moderately populated and lies within the zone of about 449-649 people (see map 2). The area is predominantly rural with a high degree of subsistence agriculture. The main occupation of the people is keeping cattle, goats, chickens and growing crops such as sorghum, maize, groundnuts, cowpeas and cotton. A part of the population works in nearby commercial farms as seasonal labourers and others still on permanent basis. It has to be noted that most of the people diversify their sources of income. They combine traditional or cash crop cultivation with raising small livestock (IFAD 2001).

### *Vulnerability<sup>5</sup>*

Despite being in the maize belt and the region which used to be regarded as the food basket for the nation, the area under consideration has been confronted with calamitous events like drought resulting into acute food insecurity to most households and seasonal diseases for both animals and human beings like malaria. It is on this premise that this area was selected for study since it is now among the most hunger stricken areas in the province. Coming from the area, manifestations of poverty are too obvious not to be noticed among community members. In most cases a part of the population depends on hand-out food from the government and non governmental organisations (NGOs).

Although there are permanent settlers, most people stay in the area temporarily and later migrate to other areas especially in the North (zone three), which is characterised by high rainfall, long growing seasons, and low probability of drought. As already noted, some household members migrate to take advantage

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<sup>5</sup> The term vulnerability refers to proneness to shocks or hazards such as drought. Ellis (2003) gives a graphic impression of vulnerability as “living on the knife edge” where a slight push (shock) may send households over the edge into food insecurity. Shocks refer to sudden and unexpected occurrences like diseases.

of differing seasonal patterns of farm production elsewhere (rural-rural migration) and of non-farm jobs in the off-season (rural-urban migration) as a response to what Ellis and Freedman (2005) describe as seasonality problem. For food insecure households, out-migration of family members in the peak food deficit season is essential for the survival of the resident group that stays behind.

## **Methodology**

Data collection was conducted from June to August, 2005 using qualitative intra-triangulation, which included focus group discussions and interviews with informants. According to Sarantakos (1998) intra-triangulation employ two or more techniques of the same method. This approach enabled me to obtain a variety of information on rural people's ideas about poverty; to use the strengths of each method to overcome the deficiencies of the other and to achieve a relatively higher degree of validity and reliability on the data collected. Qualitative research, more generally, can uncover meanings and provide insights into the experiences of poverty that have implications on policy. As a method, it also enabled me to engage-in depth with lives and experiences of those in poverty.

In essence, people's perceptions of poverty were captured through participatory poverty assessments (focus groups) and interviews as already mentioned and as I will discuss in details later in the chapter. I adopted this approach because, as Lister (2004) points out, it is premised on the belief that people in poverty are themselves experts and their views should be taken on board in the research process not just as objects from whom information is to be extracted. Prior to the undertaking of this mammoth task (fieldwork), rudimentary descriptive conceptual frameworks for the causes of poverty and the definitions thereof were developed and this continued even after fieldwork.

### **Recruitment of participants and data collection**

Returning 'home' in a capacity of a researcher, the initial task involved the identification of the gatekeeper in the community who would lead along the network of contacts. Silverman (2005) defines a gatekeeper as someone who is able

to grant or refuse access to the field. The headman was approached who later directed me to the head teacher of the local school in the community. The head teacher plays an important role in the community because almost all projects in the community enter through him. During the discussion, I perceived that the head teacher would be of great help to the research if he became part of the research team because he was knowledgeable, articulate insider possessing a unique perspective on the social action in the site and provided information on what could not be experienced in the field. I viewed his involvement as valuable in light of the topic to be discussed rather than as one who would influence and compromise what people said. As suggested by Sarantakos (1998), I met the head teacher on three different accounts to ground him in the theoretical and methodological knowledge of the research topic. The way in which the discussions were to be introduced, organised and controlled were summarised in a discussion guide which was given to him a week before. The guide basically consisted of themes in line with research objectives as outlined in chapter 1. It was also agreed that he was to facilitate only during the discussion with the community while remaining as an observer in other discussions.

In order to have a representation of various groups of people within the community and their ideas about poverty, three groups were recruited differentiated by age, and literacy levels with the help of the head teacher using purposive selection (theoretical sampling). The emphasis is upon theoretical reflection on data as a guide to whether more data is needed (Bryman 2004). It therefore places a premium on theorizing rather than the statistical adequacy of a sample. More so, the selection took into consideration the relevance of subjects to the research question. In this case, the judgement of the investigator is more important than obtaining a probability sampling, which would have proved difficult given the unknown population figures of the area for the required categories from the population within the community. The thrust of differentiating the groups by age, i.e., the elderly, children and teachers was to ensure homogeneity within groups which would foster free discussion without intimidation and inferiority and also to enable me gain a better understanding of the different perspectives of poverty.

From the school, two groups were recruited, that is, a group of teachers, and children. The third group comprised of members from the community.

**Table 1: Recruited members for both group discussions and interviews.**

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>FOCUS GROUPS</b>	<b>INTERVIEWS</b>
<b>Adult</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Children</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Teachers</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Key informants</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>

In order to ensure that views of less visible target groups were not under-represented as observed by Mikkelsen (2005), the recruitment of participants was stratified so as to include specific proportions of various groups<sup>6</sup>.

### **Focus group discussions**

The focus group comprising members from the community had 8 members as shown in plate 1. The agreed place for the meeting was at the local school (Kaabo mid Basic), which offered a conducive environment for the discussion because of its neutrality. Contacts were made a week prior to the day of the meeting, and participants were reminded an eve before the meeting. In order to hand over the stick and allow the participants to share their knowledge and analyse with each other their views about poverty as suggested by Chambers (2003), the semi-structured guides which were flexible covered the following themes: how they define poverty; how they understand/explain it i.e., the criteria used to distinguish the poor from the non poor; their past life experiences that might influence their

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<sup>6</sup> The adult group was composed of: medium and small-scale farmers ; old women and men (both landed and landless).

Children group was composed: boys and girls selected from different households e.g. orphans, female headed households, landed and landless households.

Teachers group was composed of three female teachers and two male teachers.

perception of poverty; their ideas about the causes of poverty, and ensuing strategies to reduce it; and the government programmes on poverty reduction in the area. The discussion was in the local language-*Tonga*.

The discussion started with each member introducing himself/herself so as to allow a taped record link voices to names and also to begin the process of developing a group identity (Flick 2002). The linking of names is important and useful when transcribing data. Subsequently, ground rules were spelt out in order to foster freedom of discussion where everyone was free to express his/her opinions. This was made in a very chatty and relaxed manner so as not to kill the anticipated group dynamism (Limb and Dawyer 2001).



Plate 1: participants (members from the community) in action

Using well-being and, causal and linkage diagramming from the ‘tool kit’ of PRA, participants ranked the identified groups of people in the community and did a

cause and effect analysis of the prioritised causes of poverty (see chapter 4 and 5). This was followed by discussions. A summary evaluation for the themes under discussion was presented at the end. After everybody left, the research team remained to make general observations and comments about the whole discussion.

Albeit group dynamics varied, the group with the literate (teachers) basically followed the same pattern as the first one. However, it comprised of five members since the school has only five members of staff. The discussion was in English.



Plate 2: Participants (teachers) in action

Focus group discussion with children followed the same pattern like the other two. The group comprised of 9 members as depicted in plate 4.



Plate 3: Participants (children) in action

### **Interviews with informants**

As already mentioned, interviews were also employed to generate data and 22 informants and 2 key informants were interviewed (table1). This included some identified during the three focus group discussions and others from without. Appointments for the main interviews/conversations were made with each participant before hand. On the day of the appointment a verbal explanation of the study was given. After the discourse with each participant, fresh arrangements were made for a follow up meeting. Semi-structured interviews were employed in data collection. Pretty et al. (1995) defines semi-structured interviews as a guided conversation in which only the topics are predetermined and new questions or insights arise as a result of the discussion and visualized analysis. As rightly noted by Michell in Flick (2002), one- to-one interviews allowed for extended narratives, and for more open talk and brought out issues especially those which could not come out during focus group discussion like individual life experiences.

In order to establish government's policies on poverty reduction and their implementation, the deputy director for planning at the Ministry of Finance and National Planning (MoFNP) was interviewed. The interview schedule was availed



in advance. The schedule basically covered themes relating to government strategies in poverty reduction. As the advocacy for poverty reduction issues, which include close monitoring of government policies and implementation of poverty reduction programmes (PRP), the director for Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) was recruited in order to confirm or refute the information provided by government. The interview schedule was also availed to her in advance.

Empirical verification of the findings was done with the two key informants before withdrawing from the setting.

### **Secondary sources of data**

There is little information in literature about the study area except the general information about the district and the entire province. The map depicting the study area was obtained from CSO. It was digitized (using geographical information system) from the census maps used during the 2001 tripartite elections. Generally, there are no maps showing the delineation of the area, except topo sheets derived from aerial photos captured in the 1960s.

Part of the information on government policies on poverty reduction was obtained from government documents particularly the PRSP and its equivalent like the Transitional National Development Plan (TNDP).

### **Data capturing, management and analysis**

For both discussions and interviews, data was captured electronically (using the tape recorder). Since focus groups were run by the facilitator and an observer, the observer also manually recorded the discussions. In order to overcome the problem of identifying individual speakers and the differentiation between statements of several speakers as observed by Flick (2002), a sitting plan was drawn showing where each member was sitting. This was aided by capturing photos. A running order of the discussion was produced as suggested by Limb and Dawyer (2001) which involved listening to the taped discussions immediately after everybody left in order to keep alive voices of participants into the researcher's mind. The running order, which involved jotting the names of each speaker with just a couple of words

to mark the start of their intervention, was intended to guide the full transcription of the discussion later. On the same day of the discussion/interviews a back-up copy was produced from the original tape.

Although some discussions/interviews were in my local language, care was taken to minimize losses of data that would arise from transcribing and translation. I did the initial transcribing in the original language (*Tonga*) and then translated into English for discussions/interviews conducted in *Tonga* using theme codes. Then a line-to-line analysis was applied to the transcripts.

In order to carefully compare data collected from the two methods employed in the study; semi-structured interviews with informants followed the same format used during group discussions with the same themes. Since more data was generated during conversations with informants than solicited for, qualitative content analysis was applied. Initially, interview transcripts were sorted out by grouping them into three, that is, children, teachers and community members. After a careful reading, categories were identified, refined and description codes given to them by analysing topics/themes and further segmenting them into sub-categories. The sub-categories were coded by labelling the major theme within each paragraph or line and the descriptive codes written in the margins. After the analysis was done for each method, the results were cross-checked to produce the final scheme.

### **Ethical considerations**

According to Barnes in Scheyvens and Storey (2003), ethical issues arise when we try to decide one course of action and another not in terms of expedience or efficiency but by reference to standards of what is morally right or wrong.

Permission to carry out research in the area was obtained from the local authority (Mazabuka district council), and at village level with the headman as already indicated since the area has had no chief for quite some time now. Informed consent was solicited for from all participants. "Informed consent is when a potential participant freely and with full understanding of the research agrees to be part of the project" (Scheyvens and Storey 2003:142). Children were also asked to

give their consent even after obtaining permission from their parents and respective teachers. Participants were informed that they had the freedom not to participate in the study, and that they could stop the discussions/interviews at any time or refuse to answer any question. The participants were assured of anonymity and although the information they provided would be published, their names and identity would not be associated with the publication.

### **Problems or reliability of data**

Recruitment of participants was not without problems. People were initially reluctant to accept because they were suspicious and feared to commit themselves to something they did not know. I must state here that occasionally, there is a problem of party politicking in my country. This initially posed a challenge in that I had to be referred from one person to the other. However, the research assistance helped a great deal more by explaining the purpose of the study, which eventually was gladly accepted by people. Furthermore, upon hearing that I was from the area, they developed the confidence and trust and were able to open up freely.

Similarly, the recruitment of key informants was not easy and required a lot of patience. The director from MoFNP for instance was not willing to participate and instead assigned the deputy director. Initially, she too was not very much willing but later gave in. This might have compromised the data on the government policies on poverty reduction. What is more, at a certain level government workers are not allowed to release government information. In order to ensure comprehensiveness of information on the government policies, the director for CSPR was recruited and more information was obtained from other sources like the PRSP and other policy related documents on poverty reduction.

The discussants and the interviewees were very active and interested in the topic since it bordered on the essence of their existence. However, this was not without problems, some people became emotional during the discussion. This created difficulties with keeping discussions on track. Some pointed out to how they were marginalised in poverty reduction programmes like cattle restocking and borehole rehabilitation by Plan International. My experience with group work as a

regional planner helped to control the discussions effectively by explaining gently the purpose of the research and at the same time taking note of their concern.

Albeit the language used was in my mother tongue, some words used by participants were difficult to translate and I would wonder about their meaning. Words like '*nzala*', '*bucete*' are all correlates of poverty. Clarification was sort there and then. Meaning would also be sort in the context of the speaker.

Scheyven and Storey (2003) observe that one of the pitfalls of PRA (focus groups) is that knowledge and information tend not to be revealed on these occasions by willing informants and there is a likelihood of participants to give false information (lying). For example, there was an issue of segregation at village level where others were neglected in programmes like relief food. I noticed that others in the group tried to suppress it. I also erroneously concluded that such a problem did not exist. However, during interviews the issue featured prominently and people pointed out that it was really serious and that it deserved attention. In this case, the use of interviews overcame the former deficiency since most participants were revisited in different less public circumstances as individuals and a lot of things came out which could not be freely mentioned during group discussions. The nature of the topic under consideration also left little room for lying because of its practicability.

Ordinarily, June to August is the ideal months for conducting research in most rural areas in Zambia because most people would have finished harvesting except for few cotton growers. However, reality reveals that rural people are sometimes busy even during off-farming seasons in search for food especially during years of drought and subsequent hunger. The timing of data collection for this research was somewhat problematic because this was the time when hunger was declared a national disaster and this area like other rural areas in Zambia was severely affected. For example, the group involving the community experienced a drop-out of 3 members who simply did not turn up on the day of the meeting. When follow ups were made, we were told that they had gone to work (picking coffee) at a commercial farm owned by the Commonwealth Development Cooperation (CDC). In order to have a group dynamic, 9 members were recruited.

The 9 were reminded again the day before the meeting while the other two were only approached a week earlier when initial contacts for all were made. Since other members came on time, it was easier to remind the other two in order to bring the number to at least 8. In order not to affect people's programmes especially under such hard conditions, care was taken with the help of the research assistant to make sure that even interviews were conducted at an appropriate time with respondents indicating the most ideal time.

Despite explaining the purpose of the study, some members'<sup>7</sup> expectations were high. They still felt that some help would follow. For example, two members followed to my abode in the evenings to make sure that their names were not excluded from the list of participants. They thought others would benefit who did not participate as it has been with other programmes as they told me. As explained before, I reiterated that the research was purely for academic purposes. However, I explained that the research would also make their perceptions of poverty known internationally once published. The other benefit that would accrue also includes the feedback to other stakeholders (government and NGOs), and would peradventure signal to policy makers what interventions people expected in reducing poverty. More explanation was given when they were met as individuals.

There was no formal pilot phase done in order to test the guides for the focus groups and interviews. However, an informal pilot was done where I could bring the themes to be discussed in an informal conversation with people in another area and not the study area. In this way, modifications were made to guides. They were also discussed by the research team prior to field entry.

A major factor that caused a number of limitations in this study was time. The time frame for data collection was rather short (2 months) and the broad spectrum of issues that the study was addressing, the data collected may not have reached the point of "saturation". Polit and Hungler (1995) define saturation as the sense of closure that the researcher experiences when data collection ceases to yield any new information. Notwithstanding this, the combining of methods ensured that more meaningful data was generated within this period.

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<sup>7</sup> Some participants from the community group.

## **Validity of data**

Some researchers argue that a concern for reliability and validity of observations arises only within the quantitative research tradition. On the contrary, deciding to do qualitative research is not a soft option but also demands theoretical sophistication and methodological rigour (Silverman 2005).

The essence of PRA is change and reversal - of role, behaviour, relationship and learning. In order to ensure that local people expressed their own perceptions of poverty, I sat down to listen and learn from them. My role was only to facilitate, that is, to establish rapport, to enquire and help in the use of the methods while local people themselves expressed their reality by using the well-being and causal and linkage diagramming techniques of the identified risks of poverty - followed by discussions.

As documented, a degree of consistency was ensured from the onset - that is, the selection of participants, data capturing and analysis. In order to ensure that views of people were not distorted, care was taken in transcribing and translation.

My knowledge of the area and the trust that informants had in me as their 'son' and the research assistant further enhanced the validity of the data collected. As noted by Kothari and Cooke (2001) credible information is built upon trust and rapport with informants, and knowledge of the local context among others.

As already noted the combining of methods, that is, focus groups and interviews allowed the cross-checking of the data collected. The trained research assistant also did the recording and transcribing according to the agreed criteria and coding which allowed cross-checking and validate data and information in order to limit biases. It is hoped that the strengths of this design over-ride the weaknesses such that the information generated has a meaningful contribution to understanding rural poverty from the point of view of the local people themselves.

Notwithstanding the encountered problems, fieldwork went on well due to the privilege I had of being familiar with the place and the recruitment of an insider (research assistant), which made the recruitment of participants relatively easier. My involvement in the implementation of government programmes/policies helped

because I knew where to get information especially where gaps were noticed in data provided by key informants. The easy accessibility of the place in terms of transport and relative closeness of households made my mobility within and without easier. Above all, *Tongas* are naturally receptive and very generous people. This enabled me to have a good rapport with respondents, which further enhanced the validity of the data collected. Let us see in the next chapter the details of the data generated from this encounter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RURAL PEOPLE'S UNDERSTANDING OF POVERTY

Poverty as understood by local people reveals complex, diverse, dynamic and unpredictable realities. Through well-being ranking, the local people are able to express their own, knowledgeable and more complex reality. Chambers (2003) defines well-being as the experience of good quality of life. In order to seek to understand poverty from the point of view of rural people, informants were asked to define poverty and the criteria they use to determine who is poor. They appeared generally to recognize the concept and were able to distinguish the poor from the non-poor as they observe the consequences of poverty on individual and household level (manifestations of poverty).

#### **Definitions of poverty**

Children define poverty as lack of school requisites like books, pencils, school uniforms and walking very long distances to school on foot.

Conversely, elders define poverty in three ways:-

- A state of *destitution* (someone who is always in problems without anything).
- Lacking essential basic tools, like animals to use for farming in order to have quality life.
- Lack of *knowledge*



One participant from the community defined poverty this way:-

“...Some of us have been to school. We know what it means to live hygienically; how our children should dress, what they should eat and above all the need to have them educated, but we are *incapacitated*. Our plans and knowledge die within us. Lack of knowledge is not the cause of poverty, but poverty breeds lack of knowledge. We know what to do, but our hands are tied...” - a group discussion of elders (men and women).

The literate group (teachers) defines poverty as lacking basic needs which support life. They also define poverty as lack of education (illiteracy).

On the other hand, CSPR, view poverty in its multi-dimensional facet - deprivation and voicelessness were the majority are excluded in important matters such as decision-making in matters that affect their lives.

### **Well-being ranking**

Respondents identified three groups of people within their locality: the non-poor, the better-off-poor and the poorest. The ranking of these categories was done using indicators or criteria as they directly observe and make comparisons among themselves.

#### *The poorest*

The Poorest can be distinguished with some of the following characteristics:-

- Some have no cattle or goats
- Mostly eat once a day
- Have no access to clean drinking water
- Live in deplorable mud houses
- A part fail to send children to school
- Some can not afford medical fees.
- Dress in rags
- Socially excluded

### *Interpretation*

The poorest group in the community is the most vulnerable to both hunger and diseases. This is because most of them do not have permanent fields and do not harvest enough. The little they plant surrounding their homes is depleted before even the rain season is over. This comprises mostly of female headed households, orphans, the aged and the chronically ill. There are however, some male headed households especially where the head has given himself to drunkenness and left the family unattended to (see chapter 5).

Following the introduction of medical fees by government in hospitals, except for the aged above 65, children under 5, and the chronically ill, nearly all in this category do not manage to take their sick to hospital.

Some girls from the homes of the poorest are coerced to get married at a very tender age (as early as 13 years) due to lack of support at school. "...You would find that you pass your grade seven examination to go to grade eight (first year of high school), but your parents are unable to pay school fees. Not only are you forced to stop school, but also to get married because that is the only thing remaining for you..."- Focus group of children, boys and girls. During the cold season, their children go to school bare footed, without sweaters and always shivering. However, it can be noted that some manage to send their children to school even under adverse conditions.

Generally, most of them in this stratum shy away from social gatherings and rarely attend meetings called upon in the community. They are said to be socially excluded and hard to reach unless followed.

### *The better-off-poor*

- May have cattle, ox-cart, goats and able to farm
- Some are employed but get low salaries
- Occasionally eat three meals per day but have problems from November to March when the number of meals decrease to two per day
- They have no access to clean drinking water
- Most of them still live in mud houses

- Others burn charcoal as a livelihood strategy

### *Interpretation*

The better-off-poor own land and have permanent fields. When the rain pattern is normal, some are able to harvest enough to last them to the next farming season. However, others have problems from November to March when the number of meals taken reduces. Food stocks during this period are low while labour demands on the farm are high. During this stress period, incomes are at their lowest and for many non-existence. This, seasonal stress affects farming for people are required to work in their fields when they are hungry and malnourished. This measures up to other research findings which show that poor people typically save in good seasons but run down their reserves in lean times (IFAD 2001). Analyses in *Simanansa* village (zone two), Zambia in 1995, illustrated by the seasonal calendar of food availability pointed out that household supplies of maize, the staple of the local farming system, were very low between November and February and completely run out in March and April when people rely on other non-staple foods (Milimo et al. undated). Nevertheless, they have a slender chance of acquiring farming inputs than the poorer because some of them work in commercial farms where they are given farming inputs in form of loans. A part of them is able to survive the odds of hunger when there is a dry spell. Though most of them also live hand to mouth like the poorest. In most cases, they also depend on hand-out-foods from the government and NGOs. This group comprises of villagers and government workers (teachers).

They live in houses made of blocks and iron sheets, but the majority still live in mud houses. "...Look at this house! It is not our desire to live in mud and grass roofed houses. We also desire to live in electrified houses..." - interview with a small-scale farmer.



Plate 4: A house of a respondent (small-scale farmer)

Considerably, this group has no mobility problems because they own bicycles which they use when they have a sick in the home and also for transporting their farm produce to the nearby town for sell.

They manage to send their children to school, albeit a significant number only manage to finish upper primary, or junior secondary school.

However, they share the same lot with the poorest of not having adequate and safe drinking water. They depend on communal boreholes (see chapter 5). As a supplement, others dig wells within the perimeters of their homes, but they dry up during the dry season.

This group constitute the most active people in the community who attend meetings, social gatherings and other activities.

### *Non-poor*

- Own a large head of cattle
- Can afford three meals a day
- Manages to send children to school
- Own a vehicle or had one or has the potential of acquiring one
- Have access to clean drinking water
- Can afford to hire and pay field and domestic workers
- Live in houses made out of iron sheets, concrete blocks and well painted

### *Interpretation*

The rich are commercial farmers predominantly whites. Only few blacks are found in this category. Their farms surround the village. Most better-off-poor work in these farms especially during off-peak season. Others work as permanent workers, but stay in the village. They are better placed in terms of accessing inputs and markets for farm produces. This group is very much isolated from the rest and rarely seen.

However, for the blacks within the community who are in this category, they are the most influential and often politicians (ward counsellors). They have their own boreholes and have decent houses. They have appreciating assets and other investments like in the bank which make their lives easier.

### **Summary**

The understanding of poverty in the community reveals that it is not uniform, but is constructed by each group according to its priorities and experience. Children view poverty as anything that detracts them from getting the much needed education. Thus, they associate poverty to lacking of school requisites. To the elderly, poverty is a trap which inhibits them to provide basic necessities to their families. The literate (teachers), on the other hand add to the list lacking transport and illiteracy levels in the community as a visible token of poverty.

The civil society, on the other hand views poverty as deprivation and exclusion of the majority from participating in decision-making processes.

A distilled range of criteria used by respondents reveals that a poor person is not just one who has limited access to property such as not having animals, but one whose well-being is adversely affected by a combination of factors such as living in deplorable mud houses, can not send his/her children to school, can not afford medical fees, dress in rags, have no access to clean drinking water and can not afford three meals a day. The well-being ranking also reveal, like other studies that income (money), the reductionist criterion of normal economists has never been given explicit primacy (Chambers in Øyen and Atal 1997).

As rightly noted by Moore et al. (1998), the immediate correlates of poverty identified by the poor are mainly household or individual variables (e.g., having no cattle, ability to farm, and number of meals taken) rather than environment variables (e.g. remoteness from town, market, and public services ).

I view rural people's understanding of poverty as exhaustive in that it covers the multidimensional facets of poverty - economic and non economic dimensions. Let us see in the subsequent chapter what they perceive as the causes of poverty.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PERCEPTIONS ON CAUSES OF POVERTY

There are many assertions about what causes poverty. As we saw in chapter two, there are opposing and highly politicized frameworks about the causes of poverty, that is, one accentuating “the culture of the poor”, characterized by inadequacies in personal behaviour. The other stresses the “structures”, that the poor remain poor not because of any individual or personal qualities, but because society denies them the legitimate share of benefits that should accrue to them. This chapter broadens the agenda of explanations about the causes of poverty by looking at the rural people, civil society and the government’s perspectives. Rural people’s life experiences are also explored in a quest to ascertain whether they influence their perception of poverty.

#### **People’s ideas about causes of poverty**

The following causes of poverty were identified by respondents:

##### **Lack of education (illiteracy)**

The contemporary generation in the area blames their fore parents for not investing in their children’s education when they had wealth (animals). Although the people interviewed noted an augmentation in the number of parents taking their children to school, most still see it as a share waste of time. This unpalatable situation can be noticed in certain families where it continues from one generation to the other.

Allied to the above is the lack of a big school in the area. Respondents expressed concern that the primary school in the area is too small to accommodate all school

going children. Worse still, lack of a secondary school hinders the majority to continue after their last primary grade.

“...This school you are seeing is a ruin. Not only have teachers emphasized the need to have these few classrooms rehabilitated, but also to have it expanded so that it can accommodate all our children. Where can we get the money? We are of course trying to contribute by offering our labour, but this is not enough...” - a focus group of the elderly (men and women).



Plate 5: Community initiative project to expand the school





Plate 6: Community members working on expanding the school

**Lack of adequate and safe clean drinking water**

The area has only 1 hand pump with 2 others scattered on the eastern side in the other villages. The time spent by women and children (girls) in collecting water, often involve long distances on foot or waiting in long queues at supply points, means that they have significant less time to spend on other activities such as working or going to school. Worse still, they are also forced to share water with their livestock due to the absence of dams.



Plate 7: A woman drawing water at the hand pump in the area



Plate8: A man watering his animals at the same hand pump

### **Corridor diseases**

The exodus of corridor diseases, which has claimed a lot of animals, was cited as another cause of poverty. People have been rendered helpless because animals play multiple functions. They use them for farming (drafting), get milk and sell during lean times like when there is crop failure due to drought, and when sending their children to school.

### **Ignorance**

Changes in weather patterns and farming methods require one to be knowledgeable. Most old people are said to be heedless, but stick to old farming methods and have continued growing late maturing seeds which they used to grow long time ago when there were a lot of rains.

The demise of many animals can, to some extent, be attributed to ignorance. Some people especially among the old folks were said to be heedless when advised to sell some animals in order to buy chemicals and protect others, or sell all of them and keep the money in the banks and start a fresh after the disease was over. They could cite a proverb: *'bulwazi tabumaninzyi kujaya, zimwi zilacaala'* (no matter how severe a disease is, it does not kill all; there will always be remnants).

### **Laziness and attitude**

Some poor families shy away from hard working during the rain season or at least during off-peak season in the nearby commercial farms. It was said that most poor have given up and think nothing can be done to redeem their situation.

Conversely, other families worked hard during the rain season and were able to produce enough for their families to last them to the next farming season. However, their mismanagement habits plunge them again into poverty because they sell all within the few months of harvest, and squander all the money realized from the same.

### **HIV/AIDS related illnesses**

There is profound concern by the community about the escalating levels of HIV/AIDS and opportunist infections, which not only rob them of time as they nurse the sick, but also their meagre resources in purchasing drugs. I wondered whether the pandemic existed in the area and made an inquiry concerning the same:

“...People are dying of HIV/AIDS related diseases. We have been neglected even by policy makers because they think the pandemic is prevalent only in urban areas. HIV/AIDS related illnesses are real in the area and this is evidenced by the augmentation in households run by Orphans. More so, most of them have stopped school due to the demise of their sponsors...”- group discussion with teachers.

### **Lack of a rural health centre**

The nearest health centre to the community is about nine kilometres away. According to the community, this has exacerbated their health problems because

there were reported cases of people dying from treatable diseases like malaria. Moreover, they travel long distances to seek medical help at the expense of doing other activities like farming which in the long run affect their harvest and plunge them into hunger.

### **Changing social relations**

There is a disintegration of society and family fabrics. The aged/poor are no longer taken care of in society or family members. What is more, some children do not take care of their parents any more. "...Some of our children do not look back<sup>8</sup> even when they know that you are suffering..." - Interview with an old woman.

### **Poor government policies**

Government policies have been a matter of concern to the community. People complain that most need areas and individuals have been marginalized. Even those programmes which were implemented in the area benefit only a few. There is inequitable access to resources between areas and individuals. When asked what they meant by saying government policies were bad, they pointed to the much spoken fertilizer support programme. "...Last year (2004), they asked us to form primary cooperatives through which the fertilizer was to be disbursed. Only a few managed to join because of the exorbitant terms required for one to join. Most of us could not afford to pay the upfront amount of money required..."she said. It was noted by the community that every time there was help earmarked for the area, helpers (government and NGOs) targeted viable small-scale farmers. "...Who would help us who are perceived as not viable small-scale farmers...?" - Interview with a small-scale farmer (woman). The cattle restocking program by Plan International was also cited as an example where only those who already had few cattle were favourably considered.

Other identified causes of poverty include the following:-

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<sup>8</sup> Their educated children who are working in town.

- Corruption among agencies of PRPs implementers (both at macro and micro level).
- Lack of voice in development matters. They feel government and other stakeholders should consult them as partners in development.
- Lack/late delivery of agriculture inputs
- Lack of farming inputs
- Poor soils
- Drought
- Bad roads
- Lack of markets for farm produce
- Low wages for those working in commercial farms. They are paid about k100, 000(\$25) per month.
- Lack of agricultural extension officers

### **Prioritisation of the risks (pair-wise ranking)**

Ranking the causes of poverty is done in order to identify the issues that present the highest risk to the poor and the non-poor. A distilled list of causes gives an indication of the priority anti-poverty strategies to be adopted from the point of view of the rural people themselves. From the causes of poverty already identified, the following were ranked by the participants from the community: - inadequate safe and clean water, HIV/AIDS, inadequate health centres, lack of markets for farm produce, lack or late coming of farm inputs, inadequate school (illiteracy) and were compared to each of the other so as to determine which of the two was most significant.

**Table 2: Pair-wise ranking of causes of poverty as prioritised by a group of participants from the community.**

	Inadequate safe and clean drinking water	HIV/AIDS	Inadequate health centres	Lack of markets for farm produce	Lack or late delivery of farm inputs	Inadequate schools (illiteracy)	Score	Rank
Inadequate safe and clean drinking water	x	Inadequate safe and clean drinking water	Inadequate safe and clean drinking water	Inadequate safe and clean drinking water	Inadequate safe and clean drinking water	Inadequate safe and clean drinking water	5	1
HIV/AIDS		x	Inadequate health centres	HIV/AIDS	HIV/AIDS	Inadequate schools (illiteracy)	2	4
Inadequate health centres			x	Inadequate health centres	Inadequate health centres	Inadequate health centres	4	2
Lack of markets for farm produce				x	Lack or late delivery of inputs	Inadequate schools (illiteracy)	0	6
Lack or late delivery of farm inputs					x	Inadequate schools (illiteracy)	1	5
Inadequate schools (Illiteracy)						x	3	3

From the ranking above, the risks are prioritised as below:

- Inadequate water
- Inadequate health centres
- Inadequate schools
- HIV/AIDS
- Lack or late coming of farming inputs
- Lack of markets for farm produce

Inadequate water is usually ranked as the foremost priority in most studies. Others highlighted in other studies include absence of agricultural finance/credit; weak extension services; expensive agricultural inputs; poor education and health facilities (World Bank 1994b, MoFNP 2002).

A pair-wise ranking table constructed in the same manner by a group of teachers revealed similar results except for lack of education (illiteracy) which was ranked second and health services third. Ignorance and lack of voice were also added to their list of priorities.

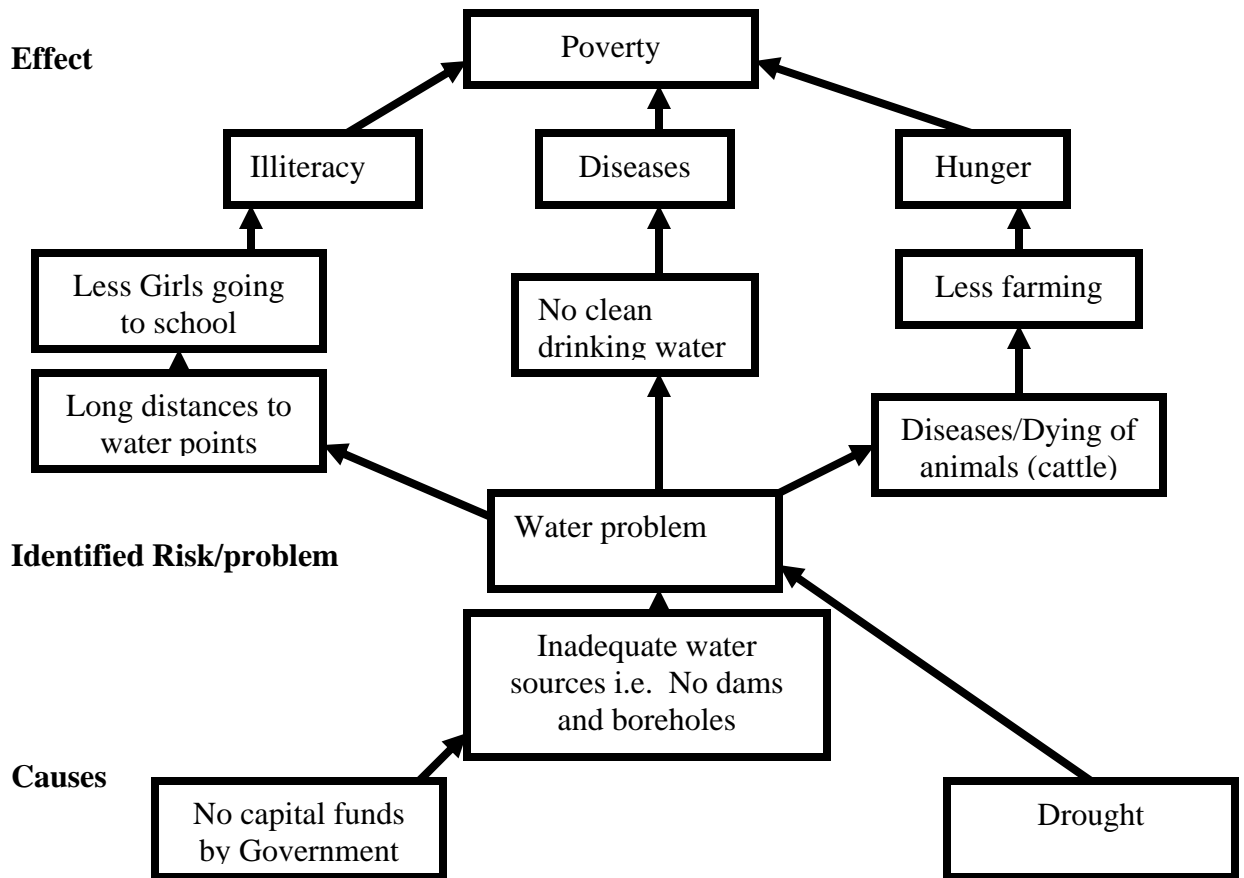
Children too constructed a similar pair-wise ranking table and ranked education as their foremost priority. Inadequate water and farming inputs emerged as second and third respectively. HIV/AIDS was ranked fourth. Others included to their list are lack of cooperation and laziness.

### **Cause and effect analysis of the prioritised risks**

The cause and effect analysis (diagramming), helps to understand the multidimensionality of poverty. Further prioritized risks of poverty are refined in order to determine the courses of action (strategies) needed to address them as will be discussed later in chapter 6. The prioritised risks were analysed as shown below.



1. Inadequate water

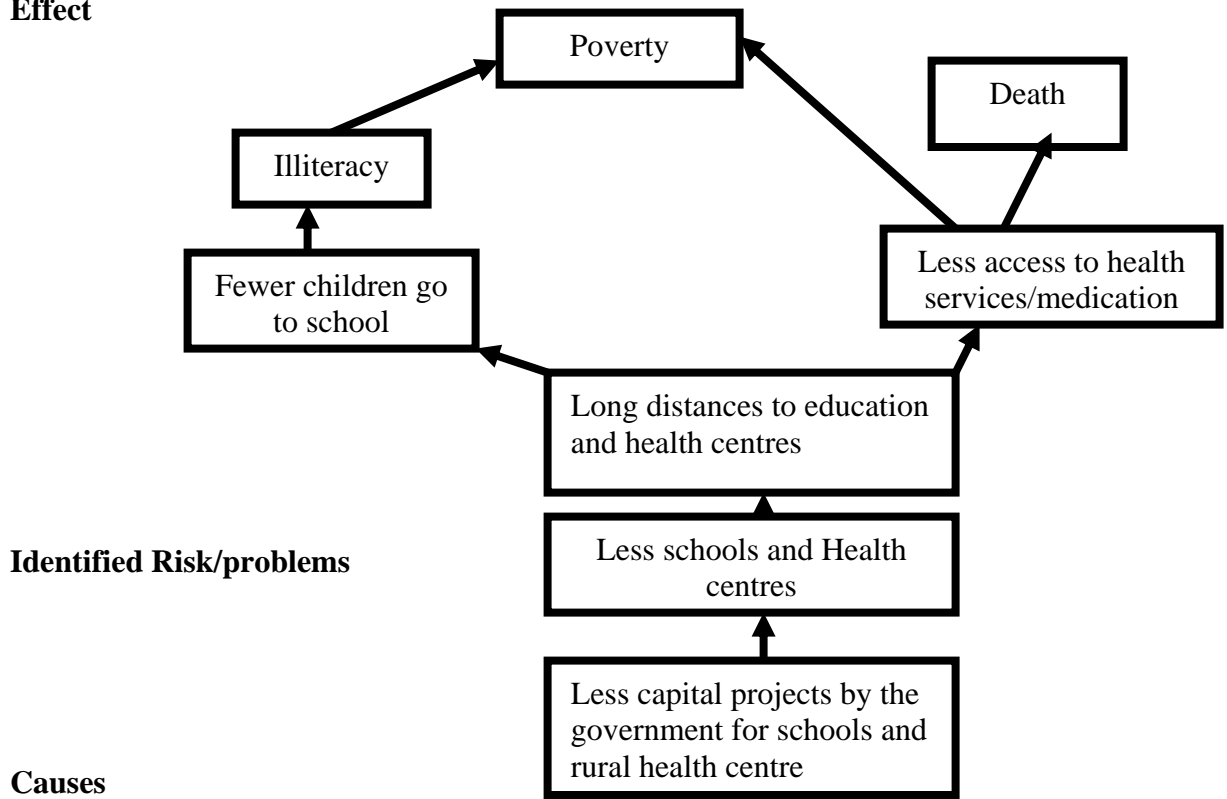


**Figure 4: Cause and effect analysis of inadequate water.**

Water problem has a multiple effect which affects school attendance of some girls, animals and the general well being of people. The problem is perceived to be caused by lack of capital projects by government in borehole construction and dams (for rain water harvest) and drought.

2. Lack of schools and health centre

**Effect**



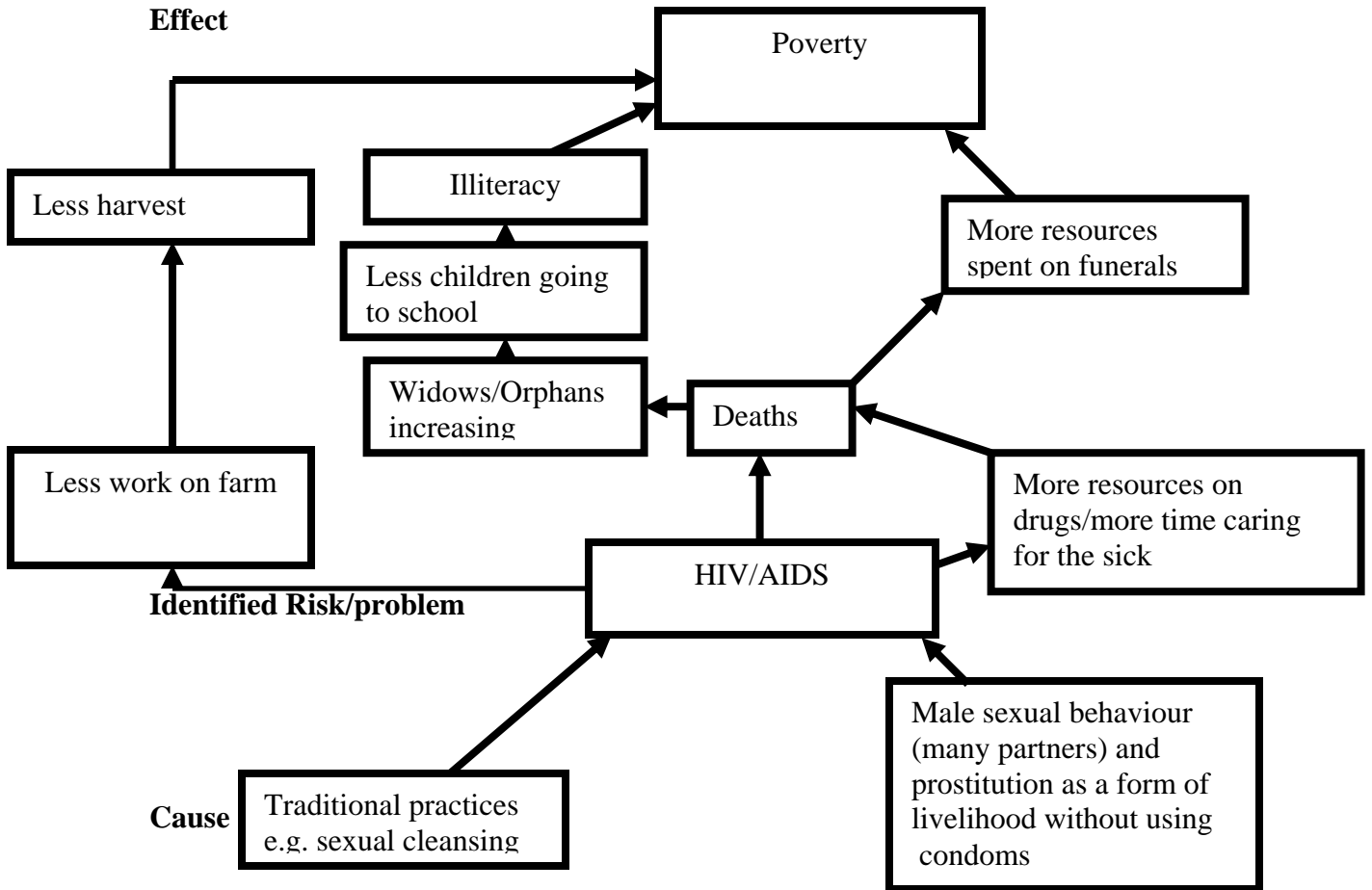
**Identified Risk/problems**

**Causes**

**Figure 5: Cause and effect analysis of inadequate social services.**

Lack of schools and health centres in the area is attributed to less investment by Government in social services like education and health.

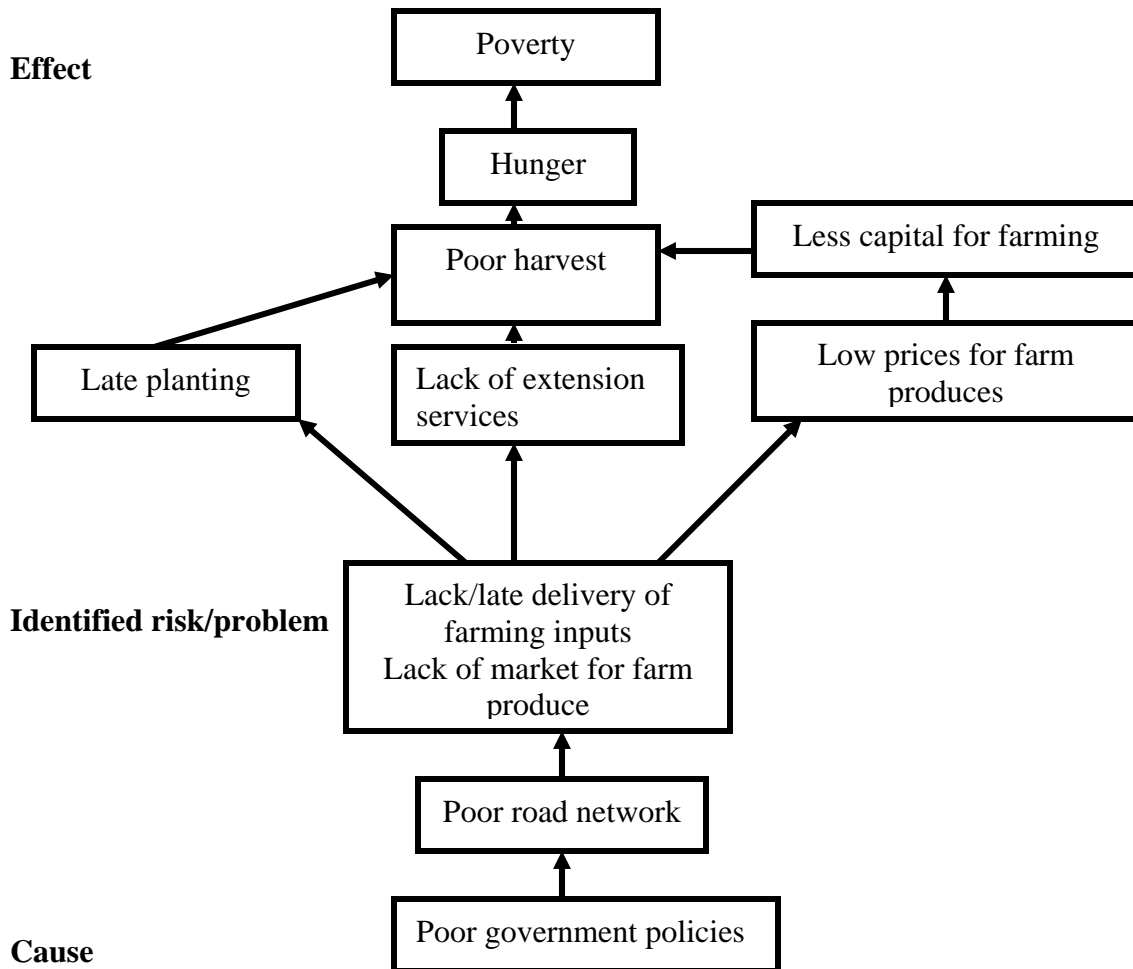
### 3. HIV/AIDS



**Figure 6: Cause and effect analysis of HIV/AIDS.**

The perception prevalent in the area as reflected above is that HIV/AIDS pandemic is caused by traditional practices and prostitution as a form of livelihood, and unfaithfulness especially by some males who travel a lot and have many sexual partners. Worse still they do not use protectives like condoms.

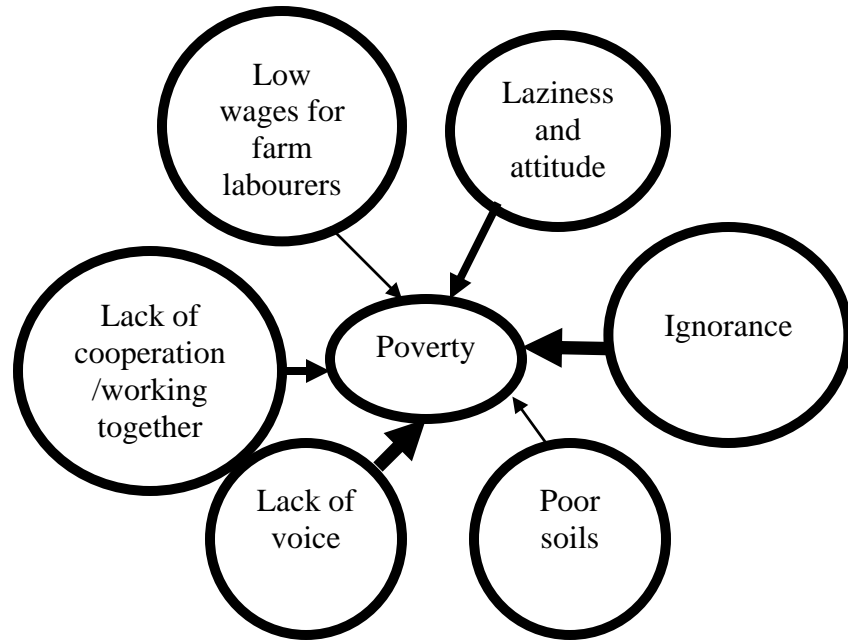
4. Lack/late delivery of inputs and lack of markets



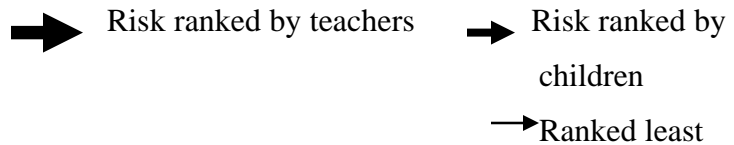
**Figure 7: Cause and effect analysis of late delivery of inputs/Lack of market for farm produce.**

The above analysis reveals that poor government policies in infrastructure building like roads, and marketing of agriculture produce has caused late/non delivery of inputs and forcing of farmers to sell their produce at lower prices than the production cost. For example, a 50 kgs bag of fertilizer last year (2004) costed K100 000 (\$25) while a bag of maize of the same was sold at K40 000 (\$10). The problem has been compounded by lack of extension services in agriculture.

5. Other prioritised risks



**KEY**



**Figure 8: Other causes of poverty as said by teachers and children.**

Albeit not among the foremost ranked risks, poverty is perceived by teachers to be as a result of lack of participation in the development processes and ignorance.

As mentioned earlier on, children on the other hand see poverty as a consequence of not working together, laziness and attitude.

### **Points of departure**

According to Jazairy et al. (1992) and Gaiha (1993), there are other numerous characteristics of a country's economy and society, as well some external influences, which create and perpetuate rural poverty which other studies reveal but not clearly mentioned in this study such as:

- Systematic discrimination on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, religion or caste.
- Ill-defined property rights or unfair enforcement of rights to agricultural land and other natural resources
- Economic policies that discriminate against or exclude the rural poor from the development process and accentuate the effects of other poverty-creating processes.
- Changes in international economy

Poor people themselves in other studies have also strongly emphasized violence, and crime and structural problems like discrimination, insecurity and repression, biased or brutal policing, and victimization by rude, neglectful or corrupt public agencies (Narayan et al. 2000). Additionally, in Nepal labour shortage when girls and boys are in school, and costly cultural and ceremonial practices are cited as causes of poverty (Mikkelsen 2005).

I expected participants to mention inadequate access to agriculturally productive land as a constraint and a cause of poverty. As observed also by Milimo et al. (undated), there is land shortage in most rural areas in Zambia, which is divided in plots and is not sufficient to support households. Large families are seen crowding around a small piece of land. They are losing their traditional land to commercial farmers and very few enlightened villagers who obtain title deeds illegally by capitalizing on the ignorance of others. Corruption is rife in matters of land where laws of Land Acquisition as enshrined in Cap 283 of the Laws of Zambia are ignored by some responsible officers. The problem is compounded by the lack of a Chief in the area who could speak and defend his people in important matters especially of Land, which under the customary land tenure system is controlled and allocated by traditional authorities (MoFNP 2002). The area has had

no chief for about ten years now. This has reduced their land for cultivation and grazing areas for cattle resulting into poor harvests and animal diseases.

Most households have been robbed of the able-bodied men who have migrated to towns or nearby farms. Some of them do it on rotational basis and others on long term basis (Kham 2000). Albeit this is a livelihood strategy for some households, this in my view has affected their input in farming thereby plunging their families into hunger because some are even unable to help the families left behind due to meagre wages.

Theft is another cause of poverty which is not mentioned. There are cases where some people's animals or chickens have been stolen, which act as safety nets in adverse times. Some even experience theft cases in their grain bins, and fields before harvesting. The problem has been exacerbated by lack of a police post in the area. The nearest is about 9 kilometres away. On the other hand, I view theft to be as a result of poverty as illustrated below.



**Figure 9: Theft - poverty linkage.**

Rural poverty is not homogeneous. It varies in type<sup>9</sup> and location. As such, poor people's perceptions about poverty are heterogeneous even within the same geographical area. Moore et al. (1998) study of the poor's perceptions in Asia reveals that the rural poor in Asia are very different from one area to the other. In Philippines for example, poverty is essentially a structural phenomenon where approximately 30 million rural people depend largely on the agricultural output of

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<sup>9</sup> Jazairy et al. (1992) identifies five types of poverty: interstitial (pocket of poverty) of landless agricultural workers; peripheral poverty-seen among occupants of agriculturally marginal physical uplands and highlands located particularly in drought prone areas; overcrowding poverty(concentrated in areas of high rural population density, as exemplified by Bangladesh and eastern India; sporadic poverty-caused by drought, locust calamities and labour displacement; and endemic poverty caused by low productivity and a poor resource base is reflected in low income and poor nutritional value.

about 10 million hectares of cultivated land. Much of that land is said to be of indifferent quality, and access to its distribution is far from equitable (Jazairy et al.1992). In light of this, it is reasonable to infer that the local people in the area do not mention some of these factors because of the variation in their experience with poverty and above all their priorities.

Respondents would time and again refer to a time when things were better for them. Let us see in the subsequent section whether their life experiences have influence on their views about poverty.

### **People's life experiences**

Traditionally, *Tongas* are cattle keepers, which they use for traction, bride-wealth payment, and meat for social gatherings, milk, manure and hides. Additionally, they keep goats, pigs and chicken. Prior to the advent of animal diseases which claimed large numbers - like corridor diseases, people's lives are said to have been easier because by using animals (cattle) for traction, they were able to grow enough food for their families and send their children to school by selling some in lean times.

Previous government policies in agriculture are viewed to have been favourable in that nearly all people had access to fertilizer and all farm produce found readily available markets by the presence of cooperatives and parastatals like the National Agricultural Marketing Board (NAMBOARD) in the area and nearby township. The model of farming which was favoured was the cultivation of maize as a mono crop relying on the use of fertilizer to maintain soil fertility. This was supported by the system of parastatals which supplied fertilizers and purchased maize for transportation to urban centres (Milimo et al. undated). Albeit maize was consumed by rural people, it was largely perceived as a cash crop. In the second republic (1964-1990), the agriculture sector was heavily subsidized by government. Moreover, the government provided dipping facilities for animals in all rural areas and veterinary services were easily accessed by small-scale farmers due to the presence of extension officers in the area.



Tradition encouraged morality and young girls were protected by customs and could only get married at an appropriate age which society accepted, that is, after the initiation ceremony. This meant that prostitution was unheard of with no prevalence of HIV/AIDS.

Society encouraged people to work together. Everyone was, for example, obliged to attend a funeral in the community and social functions. This spilled over to other areas of life. Those who had felt obliged to help their fellows. This meant that poverty would not manifest itself so much in some families as is the situation currently.

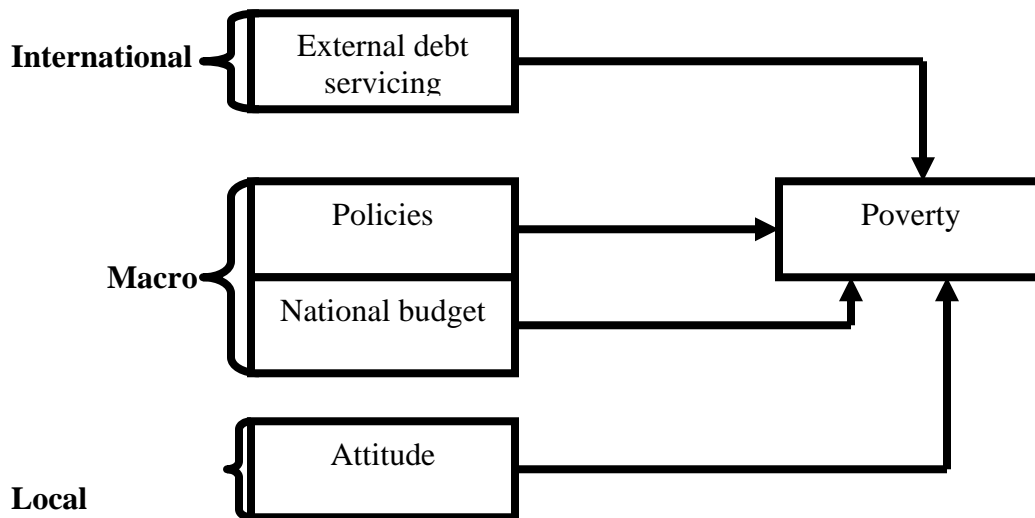
On the other hand, extended families were highly valued. The aged could be cared for by close relatives even if they had no children. A revolution is noted where society is becoming more individualistic. There is a disintegration of not only society, but also family fabric. People no longer care about the needy in society. According to the Editor of the Post Newspaper (26/02-2006) most people in rural areas find themselves in a state of poverty, the injustices of which cries to heaven for vengeance; the alienated masses in rural areas are increasing at an accelerated rate. The traditional society on which they were dependent is disappearing very quickly along with its specific culture. Reciprocal relations and traditional supports for the poor are rarer and weaker than in the past (Chambers 1983, Hesselberg 1993). And a new society is being born-merciless society, a society gripped by poverty and despair, a society devoid of solidarity and one which engenders selfishness, greedy and vanity. Worse still, "... Some children no longer look even after their parents or old relatives..."- Interview with an old woman. The community does not view this as a culture which encourages people to be lazy by not investing for the future hoping that they would be looked after but rather as an obligation for the children and other family members.

".... In *Ndola* (a City in Zambia), there is *Mutanda* (home for the aged) and only whites are there. Where are the aged blacks? Of course in the villages. Who is supposed to take care of them? The answer is obvious: the children or family members. Our system is different from the North where states take care of their

aged. Ours depend on family members and society demands that...”- A group discussion with teachers.

### **CSPR’s perspective on causes of poverty**

Civil Society’s perceptions on the causes of poverty can be viewed at international, macro and local level as shown below.



**Figure 10: Analysis of causes of poverty as perceived by CSPR.**

#### **Policies**

Poverty reduction policies, albeit have a rural component, are still concentrated at national level. The organization perceives government as shying away from rural areas.

The Implementation and prioritisation of PRPs has been highly questioned. Citing the fertilizer support program as an example, the organization has observed that it is the better off who benefit. The right people (the poor) have been left out.

### **The National budget**

The budget itself as a policy document is seen to be problematic. There is misappropriation of resources where government is spending a lot on constitutional expenditures with little left for PRPs.

### **External debt servicing**

Statistics show that government has been paying double to debt servicing than it is spending on education and health.

“....Seeing that we have been offered an estimated \$3.8 billion debt relief following the attainment of the HIPC completion point, the government is now on trial - whether it will channel resources to most need areas like education and health.....” - Interview with CSPR Chairperson.

### **Attitude**

The information that the organization get in the field (rural areas) seem to suggest that people have a mind-set that they shall never develop come what may. Similarly, there is a mind-set which seems to suggest that rural people are on the receiving end. Meaning that someone has to do the thinking and literary everything for them, which the organization view as top down thinking.

### **The government’s perspective on causes of poverty**

The government’s view on causes of poverty can, predominantly be said to be unstable macroeconomic performance, coupled with international obligations like debt servicing.

The following are the perceived causes of poverty as mainly outlined in the PRSP:

### **Lack of economic growth**

The foremost cause of poverty as perceived by government is the lack of sustained levels of positive economic growth. This has been exacerbated by increased income inequality, the persistence of discrimination against women and the girl child, insufficient investment in economic and social infrastructure to keep pace with requirements for rapid growth.

### **High inequality**

Income inequality has been observed to be high in Zambia as shown by the value of the Gini co-efficient of 0.5 or more. A main reason why inequality tends to beget more inequality is the unequal access to credit. The rich on the other hand, have easy access to credit and hence are able to build up further on their already substantial wealth. This is one of the reasons why small scale farmers constitute the poorest social stratum in Zambia.

### **Debt burden**

Debt burden is viewed as a major factor that has reduced resources for poverty reduction, and has exerted a significant crowding out effect on social expenditures. It is estimated that debt servicing has on average accounted for 10% of the GDP, while all social sectors together have accounted for only 5%. The inadequate expenditures on economic and social services have contributed to the debilitation of the country's stock of human and economic capital and this in turn has constrained growth.

### **Excessive External dependence**

The absence of growth and the huge debt burden have made external funding a necessity. External funding, however, has tended to create a paradoxical situation in Zambia. Funds from international cooperation partners would be forthcoming only if the country is current on debt

servicing. As a result, nearly half the inflow of external assistance has tended to flow out again in form of debt service payment. The lack of congruence between the Zambian government and donors in their views on economic and political governance has led to a drastic reduction in donor assistance since the latter half of the 1990s.

### **Inadequate social safety nets**

Social safety net expenditures over the years have been declining in real terms. Between 1998 and 1999 for instance, the community, social and personal services sector that includes activities in the area of community development and social services registered a decline in real value added from K178.8 billion to K175.8 billion.

### **HIV/AIDS**

Human capital formation that is necessary to generate sustained growth is impeded not by lack of adequate social sector expenditures but also by another major factor, namely the high incidence of HIV/AIDS. About 20% of the adult population is stricken by the diseases and related opportunist infections.

### **Unsatisfactory prioritisation**

Even within the limited resources, poverty reduction may not get its due share with wrong prioritisation, misdirection of resources and lack of transparency in their utilization. For instance, to date Zambia has severely fallen short of fulfilling the benchmarks for allocation to the areas of priority human concerns prescribed by the Human Development Ratio and the 20.20 initiative (MoFNP 2002:28).

### **Points of departure**

The Neo-liberal policies of the World Bank and IMF are not seen as part of the cause of poverty by the government despite many studies which have highlighted the adverse effect of these policies especially on the rural poor. In the 1980s, the World Bank pendulum swung over to an attack on the state with demands for liberalization (Martinussen 1999). The liberalization of agricultural markets adversely affects rural people where traders do not pay fair prices for the produce they buy. Often they trade in kind, in second hand clothes, *salaula*. This has left people without enough money to access education and health facilities, good clothing and bedding. In turn, this has adversely affected their well-being (Chileshe et al. 2003).

The poor performance of the economy because of SAP Policies has also adversely affected key social sectors namely the health and education sectors. Government has been finding it difficult to provide adequate social services due to limited resources available. As a result, the provision of both the health and education services has not been sufficient to reach all the population sub-groups particularly the poor (CSO 2004).

I view government's understanding of the causes of poverty as limited in terms of analyzing the local context and geographical differences in how poverty is viewed. As we saw in chapter 4, local people generally share a common view about the causes of poverty. However, there is a slight deviation in priorities depending on age and experiences. Weak understanding of the causes of poverty undermines the basis for country-specific poverty reduction strategies (Hanmer et al. 1997).

### **Summary**

Perceptions of differentiated categories of rural people on causes of poverty in the community do not differ widely. The ranking, however, reveal some variations in terms of priorities. Notwithstanding this, people in the area view poverty to be as a result of macro, micro changes and external shocks like natural disasters.

Substantially, these perceptions are profoundly rooted into their past life experiences.

The area has only two boreholes resulting in inadequate safe and clean drinking water, no rural health centre, and a small primary school which cannot accommodate all school going children.

The change in macro policies like the liberalisation of the provision of farming inputs and marketing of agricultural products have adversely affected small-scale farmers. The former has excluded the majority from accessing inputs like fertilizer required for growing the staple crop – maize. While the latter has forced them to sell their produce at lower prices than the production cost. The poor interface with the dynamic sectors of the economy only as producers and wage earners at the lowest end of the production marketing chain, where they sell their produce and labour under severely adverse conditions (Sobhan 2001). The problem has further been compounded by bad cushioning anti-poverty programmes like the fertilizer support programme which are highly characterised by imbalances and marginalisation of need areas and individuals. The CSPR compliments poor people's views by adding that government poverty reduction programmes fall short in both targeting and implementation and have little or no trickling effect to the intended beneficiaries. Benefits intended for the poor are intercepted along the way either by rural elites or other implementers (Chambers 1983).

Similarly, the government's perspective matches with local people's views. The government acknowledges that there is inadequate or inappropriate targeting of the poor and vulnerable people as evidenced by inappropriate budgetary locative pattern that have generally biased resources against pro-poor interventions. However, lack of economic growth and huge debt burden are viewed as the foremost causes of poverty. The CSPR also notes that debt servicing has left little resources for poverty reduction programmes.

While the government does not succinctly point to the adverse effects of liberalisation as does the rural people, yet it categorically points out that there is weak integration of the poor, particularly small-scale farmers into the market. It also notes that the poor have limited/no access to real assets due to unfavourable

land tenure systems that have worsened labour and land productivity, and also weakness in governance in both its economic and political dimensions.

At the micro level, there is a disintegration of society/family fabrics and tradition along with its culture. Society has undergone a transformation where the poor are no longer cared for. As noted by children during the discussion, there is lack of cooperation and working together in order to overcome poverty. Laziness and some pocket of deviant behaviours are also cited as causes of poverty. They also perceive none involvement in the development processes as a cause of poverty. On account of this, the civil society notes that rural people are passive in the whole development process because they have a top-down thinking.

The area is now more vulnerable to external shocks like disasters (drought) and diseases for both humans and livestock than before. This has multiple effect: it has affected their farming resulting into acute food insecurity since they depend on rain-fed agriculture; demise of livestock – their ‘buffer’ in lean times; diseases like HIV/AIDS (as also noted by the government) and outbreaks of malaria especially during the rain season when they are cultivating rob them of both resources and time to do work on farms.



## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES IN RURAL POVERTY REDUCTION**

Early government policy was to try and address the problem of increasing rural poverty levels by promoting rural development through various programmes. The programmes included easy credit and re-settlement schemes, integrated rural development and many others. Since 1991 the Zambian government approach to poverty reduction has been based on an open market economy, with the expectation that an improved economy would result in reduced poverty levels. However, nearly two decades of implementing macroeconomic stabilization and adjustment signals the realization of several realities. Principally among these is that in spite of the reforms, there has been no reasonable level of growth for several years and poverty remains pervasive (MoFNP 2002).

The resurgence of putting poverty reduction at the centre stage of the international development community's agenda necessitated the preparation of the PRSP by the Zambian government as a framework to address poverty challenges. Combining powerful econometric and ethnographic methods with a battery of participatory techniques, and a sharp neo-liberal economism, the World Bank's PRSP process attempted to provide a link between grassroots assessment and development of strategies at policy level (Craig and Porter 2003).

This chapter reviews the policies and implementation strategies in rural poverty reduction as outlined mainly in the PRSP, other public planning instruments for poverty reduction and as supplemented by the key informant from government (MoFNP). In order to cross check information from government, the

key informant from the CSPR provides the critical analysis of government policies in poverty reduction and its implementation strategy. The micro level findings are compared (match/mismatch) to the macro level strategies with a view to identifying gaps in these strategies that need to be addressed, as observed also by Ellis and Freeman (2004) if real progress in rural poverty reduction is to be achieved.

### **The government's strategies in rural development**

The PRSP is said to have been constructed following a consultative process with all stakeholders such as government agencies and institutions, donors, the private sector, civil society, traditional leaders, provinces and districts through workshops.

A very high premium in the PRSP was placed on economic growth-stimulating intervention. It was hoped that as more resources were generated from the expanding economy, better social services would be provided to people. So government's strategy is to approach poverty reduction through the 'broad-based growth' approach (MoFNP 2004).

Some of the interventions in rural development identified in the broad spectrum of the economy include the following:-

#### **Agriculture**

The overall objective of the PRSP in agriculture is to promote a self-sustaining export-led agricultural sector, which ensures increased household income and food security. The specific interventions are:

- To improve access to credit and insurance climate service.
- To increase volume of credit at affordable rates.
- To improve market, trade, and agricultural business climate.
- To improve land and infrastructure development.
- Construct and rehabilitation of rural dams and irrigation facilities.
- To establish support system for food security. For this output to be achieved, there is need to promote the use of low-input and conservation farming technologies, select target farmers who meet criteria, distribute

required enterprise inputs on time and provide extension messages to support the enterprises.

- Encourage synergy between large- and small-scale producers through out grower schemes (essentially for export crops) since this directly promotes private sector provision of inputs and output marketing arrangement as well as agricultural credit. In this connection, large farm blocks will be opened in all parts of the country, more especially the most poverty stricken as a way of targeting encouraging of investment and job creation in those areas. Small scale farmers will thereby have the additional option of working on large farms as seasonal labourers during off-peak season.

### **Education**

The overall goal in education is to provide relevant, equitable, efficient, and quality education for all. The specific interventions are:

- Increase funding for the education sector.
- Passing of legislation to compel parents/guardians to send children to school.
- Provision of free and compulsory basic education for all.
- Development of a national policy on the education of orphans
- Increasing access of the poor and vulnerable to all educational institutions.

### **Health**

The overall aim in the health sector is to improve health status of all people in Zambia, especially the poor. Specific interventions are:

- To incorporate nutrition objectives into development policies and programmes.
- To establish more health posts in order to enhance health care services.

## **Water Sector interventions**

The overall objective of the PRSP in the water sector is to ensure that Zambia's water resources are effectively developed to contribute to poverty reduction through increased access to safe water and sanitation. The major programme will be dam construction and rehabilitation (MoFNP 2002).

Through the support of the World Bank, the Zambian government also set up the Zambia Social Investment Fund (ZAMSIF)<sup>10</sup> in the MoFNP. One of the main objectives is to achieve sustainable improved availability and use of quality basic social services by beneficiary committees and specific vulnerable groups (MoFNP 2002).

The general PRSP interventions in rural development are in agriculture, roads (and canals), education, health, water, sanitation and HIV/AIDS as well as economic empowerment.

The next section explores the structural framework through which these interventions were to be implemented.

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<sup>10</sup> ZAMSIF project has been running for about 6 years now. Its main areas of concern is building schools, rural health centres and in water and sanitation. Project identification beginnings with the community and desk appraisal are done by the DDCC. Once a project is approved, then it is forwarded to ZAMSIF headquarters through the regional facilitator to effect funding.

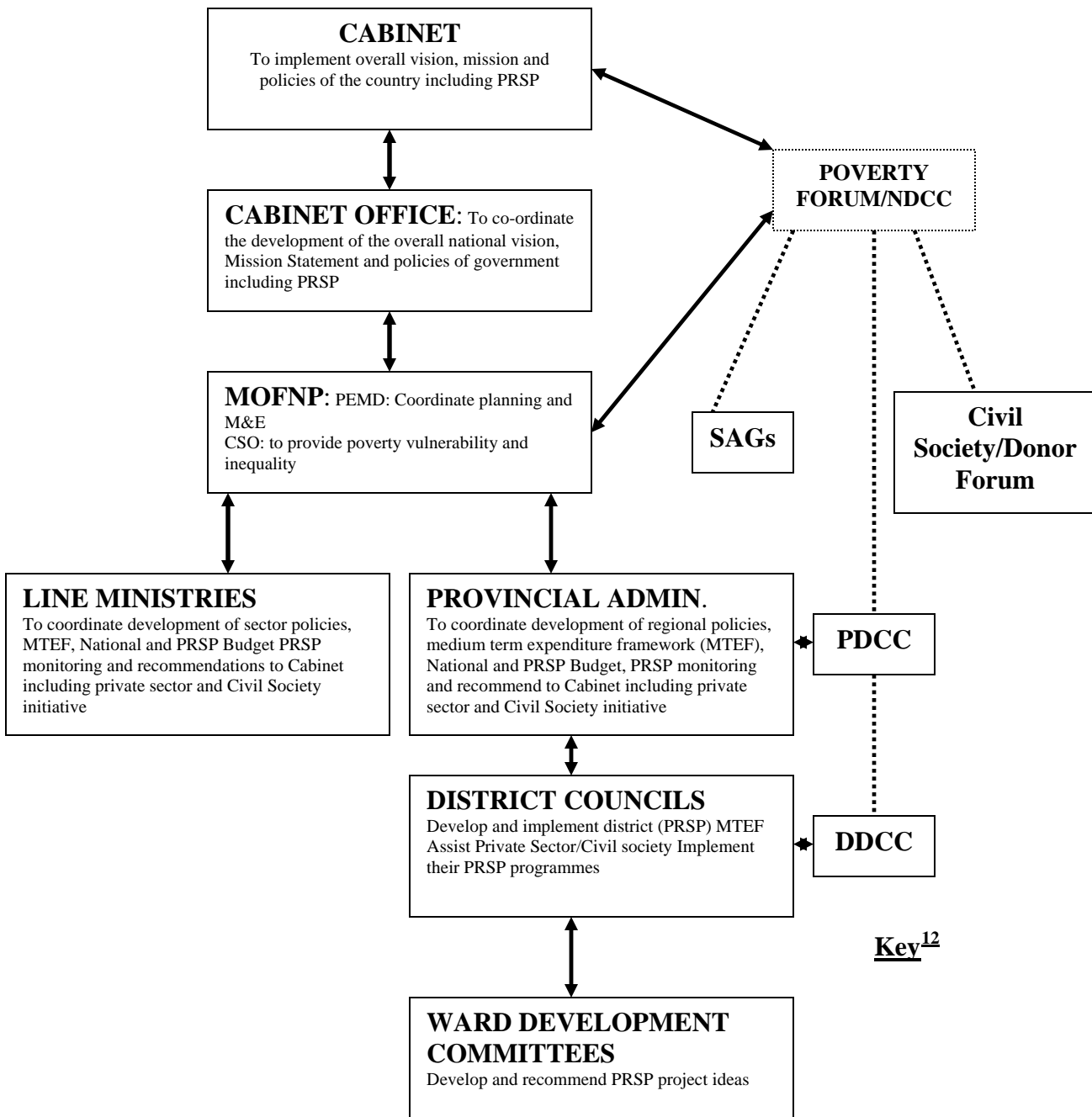
## **Structural framework for PRPs implementation**

As already noted, interventions of interest in this study are those concerned with poverty reduction in rural areas. As such, it is beyond the scope of this study to deal comprehensively with all government programmes in poverty reduction.

The implementation of the PRSP was envisaged to commence at the ward<sup>11</sup> level and then to the district level as illustrated in figure 11. The report consolidated from the consultative structure – the District Development Coordinating committee (DDCC), which discusses development issues, assess and scrutinize the data on tracking programme/policy implementation at district level is then forwarded to the Provincial Development Coordinating Committee (PDCC) and subsequently to MoFNP. Equally, the line Ministries gather their planning and monitoring data from provinces, consolidate them and submit them to MoFNP for onward transition to Cabinet and later to the Sector Advisory Group (SAGs) for discussion and adoption. The framework has a provision for other consultative forums like the civil society, private sector and cooperating partners who discuss PRSP implementation issues and make their submission at the Annual Poverty Forum. The issues from the poverty forum are then submitted to cabinet for information and decision making (MoFNP 2004).

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<sup>11</sup> A ward is the lowest geographical administrative area and planning organ in the district.



**FIGURE 11: PRSP/TNDP PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING**

**Source: MOFNP 2004:55**

<sup>12</sup> The *dotted lines* represent the advisory consultative structures. The *block lines* show the implementing structure.

The annual budget has been the primary instrument for effecting expenditures for PRSP priorities during its programme cycle.

The overall coordination of the PRSP rests with MoFNP with the participation of line Ministries and other government institutions. Notwithstanding the proposed structure, the implementation is still top-down - following the already existing integrated institutional framework for policy formulation as shown by figure 11. The reversal, that is, starting with the ward is hoped to be in operation once the decentralisation policy is finally approved. “It is important that resources are transferred to the local authorities to enable them to effectively provide goods and services in their respective localities” (MoFNP 2002:134).

## **Sector implementation progress**

### **Agriculture**

Agriculture in Zambia has potential of reducing *food poverty*. It is however, reported that the overall PRP allocation in the budget has been below 20% of total budget. Consequently, a number of programmes have not been implemented. Some of the programmes that have been implemented so far include the following:

#### *1. Out-grower scheme support programme*

The crops supported under the out-grower scheme programmes are cotton, paprika, coffee, fresh vegetables and tobacco. The government provided support to small-scale farmers willing to participate in the production of the afore mentioned crops through four organisations namely; the Tobacco Board of Zambia (TBZ), Support to Farmer Association Project (SFAP); the Coffee Board of Zambia (CBZ) and the Cotton Development Trust (CDT). It is estimated that for cotton, 4,222 farmers were supported while under paprika, 3,030 were supported (MoFNP 2004).

## *2. Targeted support system for food security*

The government undertook two programmes in a bid to increase food security; the fertilizer support programme (50% subsidized fertilizer) and the food security pack programme which has been administered by programme against malnutrition (PAM). The fertilizer support programme was a three year temporal programme (2002-2004), which was meant to help farmers that had lost income as a result of 2000/2001 drought. The targeted food security programme targets the vulnerable but viable small-scale farmers. It is reported that 120,000 small-scale farmers under the programme benefited and led to an incremental production of over 360,000 metric tonnes of maize (MoFNP 2004).

## *3. Technology development and provision of agriculture extension services*

Farmer groups like in *Monze, Chikuni* and *Sefula* benefited from the animal draft power programme. The money released for this programme included the procurement of 60 donkeys and 4 rotavators (power tillers). For the period 2002 – 2004 other activities included support activities pertaining to animal diseases control and livestock production. Some farmers were trained in dairy, sheep and goat production. About 120 farmers benefited. However, the training is still going on. In addition Heifer Project International (HPI) carried out goat production promotion to small-scale farmers and 20 female farmers benefited with each receiving seven goats for rear (MoFNP 2004).

## **Education**

Among others, the education sector implemented - the access to education programme. It is reported that the sector have performed fairly well in increasing access to all levels of education over and above the pre-PRSP period. It is said that basic schools increased by 2.27% from 4,556 in 2002 to 4,662 in 2003 (MoFNP 2004). Enrolment also increased. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in 2003 rose



by 4% and has been rising since 2001, indicating the growing capacity of the basic education system to enrol more pupils as the programme intervention intensify. The increase in the enrolment ratio can also be attributed to the abolishing of school fees for primary grades.

The sector responded very favourably in providing education to orphans and physically impaired children. The introduction of pregnancy re-admission policy has also seen an augmentation in the number of girls re-admitted in schools.

Other programmes within the sector include HIV/AIDS awareness as a strategy for mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS on Ministry of Education staff, pupils and teachers.

### **Health**

The focus in the health sector has remained that of attaining the objectives of equity and efficiency in the health cared delivery system. Programmes implemented in the health sector include: provision of drugs in hospitals; integrated malaria control in selected areas; campaign against measles and rehabilitation of health centres and facilities especially the general hospitals in provincial capitals. In nutrition, some of the partial programmes implemented include the immunization of all children under five in all the 72 districts in Zambia, monitoring of vitamin A levels in sugar and fortification of maize meal with vitamin A (MoFNP 2004).

### **Water and sanitation**

To develop water resources especially in drought prone areas, the government embarked on a water resource infrastructure development programme which involved dam construction and rehabilitation, borehole drilling, construction of weirs and wells. The programmes were meant to improve the water supply in rural areas in all the nine provinces. To this effect, 8 dams were completely rehabilitated in 3 provinces, 153 boreholes were drilled in 6 provinces while work on 379 boreholes in 3 provinces is on going (MoFNP 2004). Notwithstanding the impact this development has had on the supply of water in rural areas, not much progress

was made in the development of water supply infrastructure<sup>13</sup> due to insufficient funds.

### **The civil society's view on government poverty reduction programmes**

The overall objective of CSPR is to effectively monitor the implementation of policies, strategies, programmes and plans aimed at reducing and eradicating poverty by government and stakeholders.

The Zambian government did assign a significant role to the civil society in the PRSP formulation. The avowed intentions and expectations were that in order to sustain the participatory nature of the PRSP process, which began with its formulation, civil society would continue to be an integral part of the government's monitoring and evaluation process. As an earnest and exemplary participant in the process of formulating the PRSP and its implementation, the civil society's perspective on the PRSP implementation process becomes imperative.

The indication by CSPR is that from the initial stages of the PRSP preparation, it was not satisfied with what it considered to be an overemphasis by the government on economic growth as the principal route towards poverty reduction.

Albeit premised on principles of democracy and participation, the consultative process is said to have neglected the poor. Instead, they were represented by their chiefs and headmen. Even then, the government had a draft in hand when going to the provinces to consult. The process just ended at provincial level and did not trickle down to districts.

As part of the consultative process, civil society complemented government by doing its own comprehensive study called *The PRSP for Zambia: A Civil Society Perspective*. From this point, the organization argues that some of the views of the people were brought on board, but it is erroneous to assume that all the views

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<sup>13</sup> Note that the provision of water in rural areas remains the responsibility of the government as opposed to urban centres where the provision of water has been commercialized.

of the people were taken on board. "...There is, however an indication that government listened because fairly an amount of input from civil society appeared in the final PRSP report like in education and agriculture..." – Interview with CSPR chairperson.

The organization notes the harmonization of poverty reduction programmes in the PRSP as a positive development. Not only does it entail combining efforts between government and other partners in development, but also mobilization of resources. Unlike previously when donors and government would carry out programmes separately, this meant that programmes were not coordinated and spreading of meagre resources which would not impact on the poor.

Notwithstanding this, it has been observed that programmes would not be effectively implemented because of the decentralization process which is still pending.

"...The powers are still at national level rather than empowering departments at the local level. For example, you can have a sector program under the Ministry of Agriculture like the fertilizer support programme. There are a lot of players involved and the effects may not really go to the ground because it is not operating in a decentralized manner. There are a lot of reported cases where intended beneficiaries are not even aware these programmes as being in existence..." - Interview with CSPR Chairperson.

The approach of having a comprehensive sector programme is viewed to be good because it involved stakeholders who met regularly through the PRSP sector working groups. Donors, the civil society and government would bring their interests. However, the problem noted with this approach, according to CSPR, is that of effectively linking these sector groups to PDCC and DDCC. Ideally, the process is supposed to start from the bottom going up.

### **Observations on PRP implementation**

It was expected that 67% of the funds for implementing the PRSP would come from external sources and 33% from domestic financing. However, the failure in 2003 to conclude a new poverty reduction growth facility (PRGF) with the IMF due to the budget overrun led to the withholding of programme aid by cooperating partners. The withholding of programme aid affected budget execution including spending on PRPs because most of the domestic resources went to external debt servicing and other constitutional expenditures (MoFNP 2004).

On the other hand, less than a third of the intended disbursements of the PRPs were effected in 2002 and the flow of these disbursements was sporadic. The result was that project implementation was delayed, causing costs to escalate and, for projects which had started, to remain incomplete. One of the reasons for inadequate disbursements was due to the lack of specific targeting of the budget towards PRPs that could have made stronger demands in order to effect disbursements because the preparation of the PRSP preceded the development of the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF)<sup>14</sup>.

Implementing agencies<sup>15</sup> did not seem to fully appreciate the PRSP/TNDP as the guiding documents in national development. On account of this, there existed inadequate capacity to utilize the money earmarked for PRPs thereby depriving programmes and projects that may have the capacity to efficiently utilize it. The reason being that there was lack of information from MoFNP regarding timing of disbursements, and also inadequate provisions of capital equipment to facilitate implementation of infrastructure works and a long and complicated tender procedures (MoFNP 2004). This led in some cases to the mismanagement of funds due to lack of information on which projects were funded.

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<sup>14</sup> MTEF is a three year roll on budget which uses the Activity Based (ABB) system and aims at enhancing transparency and accountability. It also entails proper identification of programmes and activities as outlined in the PRSP and budgetary commitments which ensure that disbursements are done in accordance to the annualised profile rather than towards any other consideration that budget office have had.

<sup>15</sup> Implementing agencies refers to executing agencies of PRPs, which could be line ministries, district councils through provincial administration.

## **Comparison of micro findings to macro poverty reduction strategies**

As already mentioned, the formulation of the macro poverty reduction strategies is purported to have followed a consultative process. However, the extent to which these documents formulate policies and strategies, which rural people themselves view as a panacea to the barriers they face remains sceptical.

Arising from the diagramming (cause and effect analysis), the people in the community perceives the following as the foremost interventions to address their plight:

- Investment in water resource development, i.e., borehole and dam construction.
- Infrastructure development in schools, rural health centres and feeder roads.
- Good marketing policies for both inputs and farm produce.
- Peer education in HIV/AIDS preventions

The above outlined interventions are congruent to the government's policies in rural development. Like PRSPs of Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and Malawi, Zambia's is also typically competent at identifying large scale factors that are viewed by rural citizens everywhere as constraints on their ability to improve their circumstance. These factors include poor schools, health services, clinics and rural roads (feeder roads), as well as unevenly working markets, lack of credit and low costs of farm produce (Ellis and Freedman 2004).

Notwithstanding this, most micro factors are other factors which are less susceptible or not addressed in the PRSP as viewed by rural people in the area. These mismatches include, lack of policies/ strategies which allow the majority to participate in development processes particularly the poor as primary stakeholders. According to the political economy perspective, the route to poverty remedy is through power transfer or better, power transformation where the majority poor gain their rightful influence (Miller in Øyen et al. 1996). Others are: strategies to curb corruption practices by implementers of PRPs both at district and community

level so that the majority poor are not deprived of resources; strategies aimed at revitalising social relations at community level on which the poor depended upon. What is more, some policies aimed at reducing poverty are perceived by the community as a problem in themselves. They target a sect of the population within rural communities – viable small-scale farmers leaving out the poorest like the landless, chronically ill and aged. On the other hand, interventions like encouraging synergy between large- and small-scale producers through out-grower schemes only benefit commercial farmers. Innovations such as contracting and out-grower schemes can only work for commercial or high value crops but not for low value food crops grown by the majority of resource poor farmers (Delgado 1999). However, as discussed in chapter 4, some labourers in commercial farms have benefited by acquiring loans on agricultural inputs like fertilizer and maize seed. Although commercial farmers are, on the other hand, viewed as potential contributors to poverty because of meagre wages with which they remunerates their labourers. Employers of casual labour switch from payments in cash and back again, adopting which ever makes labour cheap (Chambers 1983).

People's past experiences reveal that farm sales prices are unstable, whereas under cooperatives and parastatals like NAMBORD they were set and predictable. Fertilizer prices seem to have risen in real terms everywhere resulting in less use of purchased farm inputs than in the past (Kherallah et al. 2000). The effectiveness of private trading is variable; remote locations are often poorly served, and perceptions of weight-and measures 'cheating' by traders are widespread (Ellis and Freedman 2004). On the other hand, other studies show that liberalisation has substantially improved the scope of individuals to construct diverse livelihood strategies involving non-farm activities like in Tanzania (Booth et al. 1993, Bagachwa 1997).

### **Implemented PRP programmes in the area**

Government Progress Reports on PRSP reveal that strides have been made in implementing some programmes in agriculture, education, health and, water and sanitation. However, findings in the community under study show a contrast.

Despite frantic efforts made by the community to have their school expanded, no one so far has come to their rescue. Respondents indicated that an application for assistance was made to ZAMSIF, but to no avail, in spite of meeting the 25%<sup>16</sup> contribution upfront as required by the project. Health standards have continued deteriorating due to the absence of a rural health centre in the area. Water problem is still with the community. The only government programme, albeit unpopular, is the fertilizer support programme (see table 3). The government, however, attribute the failure to build and strengthen the human capital of the people by providing the afore mentioned services to lack of resources. On the contrary, local people view it as a deliberate move of marginalizing certain areas and individuals.

**Table 3: Poverty reduction interventions in the area.**

No	Programme	Actor
1	Early childhood care and development (ECCD)	Plan Zambia
2	Training traditional birth attendants	Plan Zambia
3	Training HIV/AIDS peer educators	Plan Zambia
4	Construction of toilets in the community	Plan Zambia
5	Fertilizer Support Program (FSP)	Government
6	Cattle restocking	Plan Zambia
7	Training in sustainable agriculture methods	Plan Zambia
8	Relief food distribution (2004/5)	World Vision
9	Provision of building materials (Iron sheets, Cement) and ventilation pipes.	People's Action Forum (PAT).
10	Water and sanitation (borehole rehabilitation)	Plan Zambia

As it can be inferred from table two, the community has benefited from the direct assistance it receives from NGOs. For example, Plan Zambia has provided, among others, agricultural advice to farmers following the collapse of government

<sup>16</sup> ZAMSIF projects require a 25% contribution from a targeted community. The community in question has mobilized more than 25%. Building materials like burnt bricks, building sand are already on site. Labour is readily available as community members are already working on the project.

delivery. In the area of health, they have assisted in training traditional birth attendants since most mothers just deliver at home due to lack of a health centre in the area. During periods of food deficit, World Vision has distributed relief food (and food for work). Food for work is where the community members work on identified projects within their locality like roads and in their fields on rotational basis as a condition for receiving relief food. As it has always been observed with the operations of NGOs, issues of haphazard coverage, failure to scale up, and sustainability of what is accomplished after project completion are weaknesses (ODI 1996). Albeit there are complaints by some community members of being marginalised in certain projects like in cattle restocking by Plan Zambia, much work has been done by NGOs in the area than the government. NGOs usually have consciously endeavoured to be representative by allowing communities to form community-based organisation (CBOs) as a way of implementing projects. These groups are usually gender sensitive and allow various categories of people in the community to be included.

The challenge in my view is how feasible interventions like increasing volume of credit at affordable rates and improving market, trade can really work for the rural poor in a liberalised market environment. In view of what is happening in the area, the government can do little more than make hopeful statements of intent with respect to them. The major constraint is the lack of resources and political will. On the former, PRPs in 2002 were allocated K450 billion (K210 billion from donors and K240 billion from the government) representing a 2.2% of GDP. However, by December of the same year, only K110 billion was disbursed (MoFNP 2004). On the latter, the PRSP first cycle ended last year in 2005 and has since been superseded by its equivalent the National Development Plan (NDP), but the decentralisation of institutions responsible for spearheading the PRSP is not yet in place.



## **Summary**

The general government PRSP interventions in rural development are in agriculture, education, health, water and sanitation, and HIV/AIDS. These match with rural people's foremost priorities. However, findings also reveal a mismatch in the following: lack of policies/strategies which allow the majority to participate in development processes particularly the poor as primary stakeholders; strategies to curb corruption practices by implementers of PRPs both at district and community level so that the majority poor are not deprived of resources; Strategies aimed at revitalizing social relations at community level on which the poor dependent upon. More so, change in macro-economic policies is viewed as part of the problem. For example, according to their experience, previous policies of marketing agricultural produces and inputs by cooperatives and parastatals like NAMBOARD worked well for them than liberalisation.

The government progress report on PRSP show that much has been achieved in the area of agriculture, education, health, and water sector. Notwithstanding this, the community under study has known only one programme - the fertilizer support programme since the inception of the PRSP in 2001. Even then, only a few has benefited. CSPR attributes the ineffectiveness in the implementation of PRPs to the delay in decentralising institutions responsible for spearheading its implementation resulting in resource deprivation of intended beneficiaries (the poor). On the contrary, the government attributes the failure to successfully implement PRPs to lack of funds and specific targeting of programmes in the budget coupled with problems of institutional capacity of responsible implementing agencies.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### POVERTY V POWER HYPOTHESIS AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

From the point of view of rural people themselves, the dominant theme as regard to poverty can be traced within the broad spectrum of the political economy view. However, while bearing quite significant traits of poverty v power explanation, the findings of the research brings to light the fact that this does not suffice in explaining the causes of poverty in the area and let alone the ensuing policies aimed at reducing it.

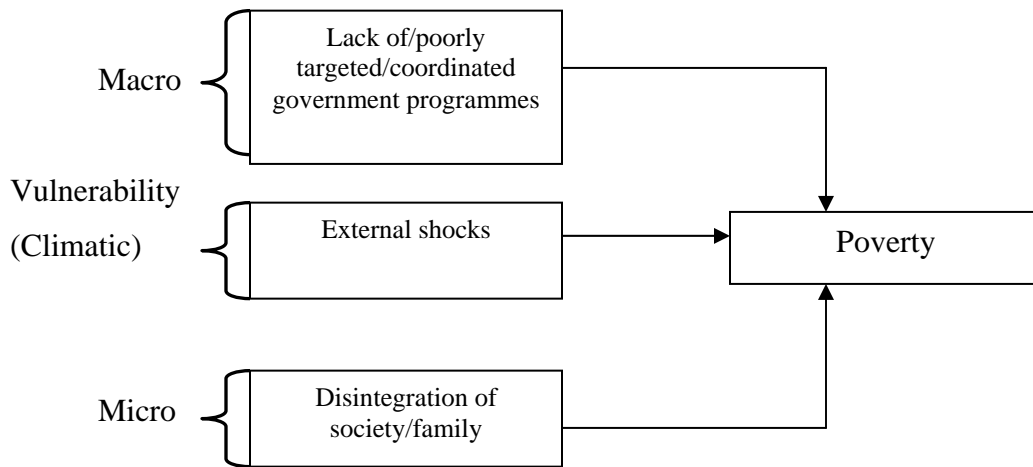
Much commonality can be traced in local people's perspective about the causes of poverty, the civil society and not the government's. Unlike the Poverty v Power explanation which accentuates the concentration of economic and political power in the hands of narrow privileged groups as the source of inequality and poverty, this study comes out with a broadened horizon to include views from other chains of explanations. They are as follows<sup>17</sup>:

- Poverty is primarily viewed as a product of lack of government programmes in infrastructure development like borehole and dam construction and rural health centres and facilities, and schools.
- The liberalisation of the provision of farming inputs and marketing of agriculture produce. The open market system oppresses small-scale farmers.
- Poverty is viewed to be caused by external shocks like disasters (drought) and diseases like HIV/AIDS.

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<sup>17</sup> Local people's perspective

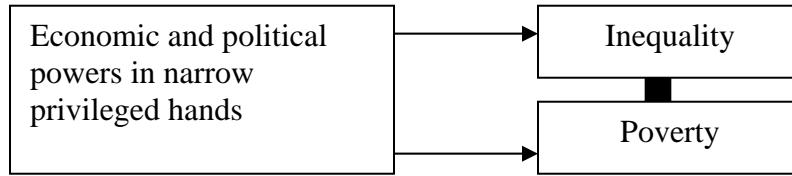
- Poor coordination/targeting of PRPs which result in marginalizing communities and need individuals.
- The disintegration of society/families fabrics along with the tradition on which the poor depended upon.
- Corruption among implementers of PRP programmes.
- Pockets of laziness deviant behaviour, and not working together.



**Figure 12: Summary of findings as perceived by local people.**

On the other hand, government’s perspective shows that poverty is primarily due to lack of economic growth and the huge debt burden, inadequate or inappropriate targeting of the poor and vulnerable as evidenced by inappropriate budgetary locative pattern that have generally biased resources against pro-poor interventions and also weakness in governance both in its economic and political dimensions.

On the contrary, the poverty v power explanation accentuates that political and economical power in narrow privileged hands breeds poverty and inequalities.



**Figure 13: Summary of Poverty v Power hypothesis.**

The poor are said to be embedded in certain structural arrangements such as insufficient access to productive assets as well as human resources, unequal capacity to participate in both domestic and global markets and undemocratic access to political power. Powerful groups press markets in preferred directions. Chambers (1983) observes that rural elite acts as a net to intercept benefits intended for the poor and the poor are robbed and cheated in the process because they are unable to bargain. Credits and marketing cooperatives are said to be dominated by large farmers who use them for their benefit at the expense of smaller producers. What is more, labourers in commercial farms are remunerated with ‘slave’ wages. In many places the landless face the arithmetic of supply and demand. In all the poor have very limited choices to make themselves heard or to influence what happens around them.

The findings of this research also lend partial credence to other chains of explanations like the ecological perspective and the culture of poverty. For the latter, pockets of laziness and character deficiencies are reported in some households in the community. On the former, the frequent occurrences of drought has brought a lot of diseases to livestock due to inadequate water and grazing areas and also crop failure since people in the community depend on rain-fed crops.

In contrast to the Poverty v Power hypothesis which advocate for power transfer or better, power transformation where the (majority) poor gain their rightful influence, the findings reveal that the government policies, while acknowledging this, still remains centralised (top-down).

### **Explaining the findings**

As revealed by the study, poor people's ideas about poverty are not relatively consistent and uniform even at community level. Their perceptions and understanding of poverty are highly dependent on context and reinforced by life experiences and priorities. A wide range of economic and substantially non economic criteria are used to distinguish the poor from the non-poor.

The people in the community suffer from material deprivation in most basic necessities of life like safe water and sanitation, health, and education. Simultaneously, they lack access to farming inputs and markets to sell their farm produces. Moreover, they are confronted with multiple challenges which include the disappearing of the tradition along with its culture on which the poor depended on for support. Extended family either matrilineal or patrilineal line has in the past acted as the traditional safety net for orphans, the widow, the old and the sick. On the other hand, they are deprived of voice in matters that affect their lives and biases in distribution coupled with corruption, which reinforce their material deprivation.

The area is more vulnerable to external shocks like droughts which has affected not only their animals, but also their farming. The above cited clusters of disadvantages interlock and have rendered them powerless.

Albeit the PRSP fall short of capturing all people's perceptions, for example, issues of corruption, and problems of exclusion for the majority in development processes, it is competent at identifying large scale factors which are the foremost priorities of the community - improving the provision of water, agriculture services, schools and rural health centres. The prospect of these poverty reduction strategies as outlined in the PRSP is quite enticing. Reality unfortunately reveals that none of these interventions has been implemented in the area. The only rhetorically known programme is the fertilizer support programme. Notwithstanding this, there are reports of progress in the afore cited areas in other places. The civil society observes that these interventions fall short in both targeting and implementation

and have little or no trickling effect to the intended beneficiaries even in places where they have been implemented because of operating in a centralised manner.

### ***Counter – argument***

Poverty in the area ranges from food poverty, material deprivation to social deprivation. I view food poverty to be substantially transient in most households, while material and social deprivation seem to be chronic.

Local people in the area interface with micro, macro and international changes. For example, the transformation of the traditional society where the poor are no longer cared for can not be viewed in isolation. I view this as having been brought about by the penetration of global market forces.

From the foregoing, policies aimed at reducing poverty which do not take into account the micro, macro and international changes may not accomplish much in uplifting the lives of many poor people. I perceive this weakness in policies aimed at reducing poverty as outline in the PRSP. They basically lack in terms of analysing the local context and let alone the macro changes brought about by the neo-liberal policies like liberalizing the markets for agriculture products and inputs. Instead, policy recommendations are the blue print of the World Bank's three-pronged strategy of growth, investment in human capital and social nets (Hanmer et al. 1997).

The study has also shown that there is no single chain of explanation which can adequately explain the causes of poverty in the area. Equally, no single path can successfully address poverty issues as attempted by the government policies, which takes a reductionist approach - emphasising economic growth as the principle route towards poverty reduction.

Notwithstanding this, there are well articulated strategies as already noted, which have not been successfully implemented due to constraints in many areas. As revealed by the study, there are problems of institutional capacity, lack of funds and above all, lack of political will and strict adherence to principles of democracy (governance). Albeit I view decentralisation as not the end in itself, a positive

commitment towards it is a step forward in the right direction in the fight against poverty.

Above all, the overwhelming challenge is how some of these poverty reduction policies can be effectively implemented in this era when globalization and regionalization are overtaking the standard unit of development, the nation or society. On account of this, it becomes reasonable to infer that it is difficult to implement PRPs like the provisions of inputs and marketing of agriculture products in a liberalised economy. This, however, does not negate the preparation of macro poverty reduction strategies premised on local people's priorities and experiences with poverty. The fact that the PRSP is Zambia's development planning and resources programming tool for both the government and non-government, it is imperative to prepare strategies which comprehensively reflect the views of the people so as to guide all stakeholders concerned with poverty reduction. As the findings reveal, there are some programmes which are amenable to other stakeholders like NGOs.

Contrary to the spirit that necessitated the preparation of these poverty reduction programmes as agitated in mainstream development - participation and empowerment, the results reveal that rural poor have not yet gained a rightful place which can enable them to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives.

### **Lessons from the study**

The lessons learnt from this research cover mainly two areas that are important for both future related research in the area (methodological insight), and for policy implications in poverty reduction.

### **Methodology**

There is a diversity of views and understandings about the causes of poverty among the poor themselves primarily reinforced by experiences and priorities. The very poorest people tend to be under-represented as respondents and generally difficult

to elicit their input in the whole research process unless very conscious efforts are made to include them to avoid under-representation of views. This is because some of the poorest are difficult to reach, socially excluded, elderly, and some chronically ill. In order to ensure their inclusion, my selection of participants for both interviews took into consideration the various groups found in the community. Those who could not be recruited for focus group discussion due to either age, or exclusion were visited in their respective places of abode.

As opposed to the *etic*<sup>18</sup>, my experience in this study is that rural people themselves are competent and experts who understand their '*world*' and let alone what has to be done in order to address their situation. This call for epistemological awareness for researchers/practitioners to adopt methods which place us in a better position to appreciate better the richness and validity of rural people's knowledge. PRA represents such a method which is an extension and application of social-anthropological insights, approaches and methods, cross-fertilised with others (Chambers 2003).

Triangulation of methods is important if a relatively high degree of validity and reliability on data collected is to be achieved. Equally it is needed to use a multiple techniques within the PRA tool kit in order to understand diversity within a community. For example, the use of pair-wise ranking helps to understand people's priorities; Diagramming summarizes empirical information and also show how various aspects of life are linked. Since poverty is what links them all, it helps to understand the multidimensionality of poverty and the need for an integrated approach in fighting it.

Further studies may include the following: participatory mapping which provides information relating to limited physical space, infrastructure, social service distribution; seasonal diagrams-indicate annual variations or variations during other relevant periods of production and reproduction, e.g. rain, labour availability, or price variation (Mikkelsen 2005). Issues of seasonality also indicate an ideal time to start an activity (intervention) that requires the participation of the community. My experience in this study is that rural people may not be available at

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<sup>18</sup>expressing the views, concepts, categories and values of outsiders (Chambers 2003)



all times of the year especially that most households diversify their livelihoods. Depending on the data needed, the combination of these techniques helps to collect rich data within a short period of time.

Further studies may need to address the following issues in different ecological zones of Zambia: People's perceptions of poverty and poverty reduction strategies. As shown in this study, this helps to establish context specification particularly for pragmatic recommendations for interventions tailored in a local context since people's perceptions are reinforced by their life experiences and priorities.

### **Implications for poverty reduction policy**

The foremost priority towards poverty reduction in the area is a practical commitment towards implementing the already formulated interventions, which aim to build and strengthen the human capital of the rural poor, that is, the provision of adequate safe and clean drinking water, the right to basic health care services and education.

The interlinked nature of poverty requires an integrated approach towards its reduction. The study reveals that poverty can not be explained by using a single indicator and that an isolated intervention by sector-based external organisations (for example, department of agriculture) is unlikely to achieve the comprehensive impact on poverty reduction. What is needed is an approach which includes the poor themselves to analyse the impact of potential and actual interventions across a range of sectors, and where the multidimensionality of poverty is taken into account at all levels of policy process (Milimo et al. undated).

Local people's life experiences reveal some coping strategies, which would mark the beginning of any planned intervention. For example, extended families and reciprocity have acted as their traditional safety nets. Formulated poverty reduction strategies should, therefore, aim at strengthening, or rebuilding social relationships within communities. Since such issues are difficult to capture for policy purposes, they can be cross-cutting in other interventions and implemented through CBOs.

Albeit the decentralisation of institutions responsible for implementing poverty reduction policies remains paramount, what is needed is the entire process of building a collective identity for the poor through specially constructed institutions, derives from the need for the poor to claim a place in society and be able to sit in local elective bodies to ensure that their concerns are taken on board in the policy making process.

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## APPENDICES.

### Appendix 1

#### SEMI-STRUCTURED GUIDE FOR BOTH INTERVIEWS AND GROUP DISCUSSIONS.

1. Definition of poverty
2. How poverty is understood, i.e., the criteria used to distinguish the poor from the non-poor (Well-being ranking).
  - How many groups of people do you have in this village in relation to poverty?
  - Sort the cards according to the identified groups.
  - What are the characteristics for each group?
3. Rural people's ideas about the causes of poverty.
4. Which of these causes poses the highest risk? Compare each cause to the other.  
(Prioritising risks)

	Cause 1	Cause 2	Cause 3	Cause 4
Cause 1				
Cause 2				
Cause 3				
Cause 4				

5. Cause and Effect Analysis.
  - Take one priority or main issue and put it in the middle of a paper.
  - What causes this situation? What other causes are there? Start discussing and agreeing the causes of the problem.

- Write these on cards and participants draw arrows between those causes which are related and which directly cause the main problem.
  - What impact does this have on the risks faced by the poor? Or what happens as a result of this problem?
  - Discuss in order to determine courses of action (strategies).
6. Life experiences of people.
  7. Poverty Reduction Programmes in the area particularly government ones.

## **Appendix 2**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE WITH THE DIRECTOR PLANNING - MoFND.**

1. From government perspective, how do you view the situation of rural poverty in Zambia?
2. What are the causes of rural poverty in Zambia?
3. What interventions/policies have you put in place in order to reduce rural poverty?
4. How was the PRSP constructed?
5. What are some of the lessons learnt from the implementation of the PRSP?
  - Areas of strength in poverty reduction
  - Areas of weakness of poverty reduction
6. What measures have been put in place to address some of these weaknesses as you prepare the National Development Plan (NDP) in the area of poverty reduction?

## **Appendix 3**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE WITH THE CHAIRPERSON-CSPR**

- 1. From your organisation's perspective, how do you view the situation of rural poverty situation in Zambia?**
- 2. What are the causes of poverty?**
- 3. When you look at government policies/interventions as mainly outlined in the PRSP, how comprehensive are they in terms of reducing rural poverty in Zambia?**
- 4. When you look at the policies, were the views of the poor people taken on board in formulating the PRSP?**
- 5. What would you recommend to government in order for poverty reduction programmes to make an impact?**

