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Title: Empowering the Zambian youth with land information for sustainable development

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Abstract

Land being one of the key factors of production, has attracted a lot of attention from various sections of African society for various reasons. Various players have specific interest in land for development in sectors that include agriculture, mining, tourism and infrastructure development. In Zambia, the bulk of the land for such investments is under customary tenure and its use implies that it has to be converted into state land (leasehold) for purposes of tenure security. Consequently, poor and vulnerable people, that include women and youth, are left on the margins and in some cases, end up losing their land through displacements with little or no compensation. This is partially the case because customary land is not fully secured compared to state land. This kind of development that leads to loss of land and disturbance of livelihood for the indigenous local community members is not sustainable and will not adequately address the high poverty levels in the country. Additionally, the long, costly and cumbersome land acquisition procedures in Zambia, inhibits the youth from taking part in the acquisition of land for development. This leaves the young generation frustrated and engagement in negative vices becomes a better option thereby exacerbating their poverty situation and that of the country at large.

In an attempt to address the above stated challenges, the Zambian Government has embarked on the formulation of a land policy through a consultative process with various stakeholders that include civil society, private sector, the church, local communities, and traditional leadership. These consultations have been deliberately targeted at the above stakeholders but little has been done to target the youth as a specific group despite them being the future of the country. No specific study has been done to establish with certainty this lack of active participation by the youth but indications show that the youth remain in the periphery in land policy formulation and management in general. Additionally, youth have not seen and appreciated the value of land for their present and future needs as they have been treated as secondary beneficiaries as they are expected to get land through their parents/families and this has led to many of them being content with the status quo.

The current pilot study to establish the progress in the implementation of land policy in Zambia under the “Monitoring and Evaluation of Land Governance in Africa (MELA)” project, will help assess the extent to which the youth have been engaged in the formulation of the land policy and management of land in the country. These findings will help inform future interventions that will ensure active and comprehensive participation of this key group of stakeholders in the development of Zambia in particular and Africa in general.

Having worked and interacted with youths on various platforms and projects, the social media has proven to be a strategic tool of reaching out to and interacting with the youths on various issues that affect them, beyond the political discussions that take much of their valuable time. The Author of this paper is currently the Country Coordinator of the MELA project and also chairs a social group that is mainly composed of youth with a view to address various issues

that affect their former primary school of which land has been identified as an issue. Strategic youth will be identified and trained on various land issues and these will in turn be assigned to recruit and share with their peers, various pieces of information on land. This will be done through a pilot project that will deliberately target the youth vis-à-vis land management in Zambia.

Introduction

Zambia is a landlocked country in Southern Africa, neighbouring the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the north, Tanzania to the north-east, Malawi to the east, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia to the south, and Angola to the west. The country whose size is 752,618 km² has a population of more than 17 million people. The major economic activities of this urbanised nation include mining, agriculture, tourism and manufacturing. A high proportion of income, employment and export earning is derived from these economic activities that take place on, and make use of land.

Land is a fundamental asset and the primary basis for sustainable livelihoods for the majority of Zambians today. Rural people in particular depend on land for growing food, and to some extent, rely on other land based natural resources for fuel, shelter, medicine, tools, fibre and fruits. Land is a resource which has a variety of benefits at the social, economic, community and political levels.

Zambia has two land administration systems namely customary and leasehold (state land). The two parallel systems have their own positives and negatives as highlighted below;

Customary tenure: This type of tenure comprises the bulk (94%) of the land in Zambia and is managed according to traditional norms and practices unique to a particular location (chiefdom). The administration of customary land is characterised by poor documentation with regards to its allocation, ownership and boundary demarcations thereby creating a recipe for disputes at household, community and chiefdom levels. Gender inequalities in land allocation due to some negative cultural practices is common in most chiefdoms as the woman is expected to access land through their male counterparts (brother or husband).

Additionally, there is largely limited transparency in the way land is allocated under this tenure system. The Chief has structures that assist him/her in the management of land but the composition of such structures remains a matter of concern as these are mainly close/related to the Chief and do not provide the required checks and balances in the management of land. Consequently, some Chiefs take advantage of this weakness and allocate and/or sale land to the elite that include foreign investors at the expense of the community members. According to the traditional norms, Chiefs cannot be questioned/challenged by their subject as this is seen as lack of respect and can result in the loss of land by anyone that dares the leadership. Most rural community members are not enlightened on the provisions of the laws and do not know what rights they have and how they can claim them and/or defend them when infringed upon.

Further, land under customary tenure is primarily allocated to families as opposed to individuals. This implies that when the head of the house gets land, the spouse and children benefit from the same land. This leaves the women and children vulnerable as they depend on the head of the house for such land and if he so wishes, he can illegally sale part of this land without any consultations with his family.

Despite the above, customary land is easier and cheaper to acquire as it involves just a mere visit to the Headperson who acts on behalf of the Chief and can allocate land with or without the permission from the Chief. Headpersons do have committees that they consult when allocating land especially to people that come from outside their villages. However, such committees are not well composed and lack the authority to challenge any erring headperson. In a number of instances, Headpersons have sold land without the knowledge of the Chiefs or their committees. Some have even managed to have such land converted by forging signatures of their chiefs.

State land: Unlike customary land, this tenure system is well documented with clear guidelines on how it is acquired and who is responsible for its allocation and has clear boundary demarcations. The Ministry of Lands is responsible for the overall administration of this land and the Commissioner of Lands, who acts on behalf of the President is housed at this ministry. In addition to the Ministry, local authorities (councils) can also allocate land in their areas on behalf of the ministry but the latter still retains the authority to approve or disapprove such allocation and is responsible for the issuance of Title Deeds. The councils can however issue Occupancy Licences to land allocated under their jurisdictions (in improvement areas).

In addition to the Ministry of Lands, there are other ministries that have planning authority on land in their sector. These include Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Ministry of Mines and Minerals Development, Ministry of Energy and Water Development, Ministry of Tourism and Arts and Ministry of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs.

Despite the aforementioned management of state land, there are challenges that are associated with this tenure system which include; long and cumbersome land acquisition procedures, corruption in the allocation of land, encroachment by political cadres on private land and lack of coordination among the key line ministries in the management of land and other natural resources.

The acquisition of state land requires production of documentation (pay slip and/or employment contract, bank account) that confirms the applicant's capacity to develop the land. With high levels of unemployment especially among the youth, acquisition of such land becomes a challenge and other more affordable means (illegal) become attractive to the youth. These include land allocation by political cadres on already owned land which is done with a lot of risks as the developments on such land can be demolished any time by the local authority.

State land is limited (6%) and this results in Government and other investors (including foreigners) to seek land from the traditional authorities for development. This implies that such land has to be converted into state land (leasehold) after the Chief gives consent. This is done for purposes of tenure security on the part of the investors as they may need to use it as collateral as they acquire loans for their investments. Unfortunately, some Chiefs allocate such land and give consent without consulting their subjects. Consequently, poor and vulnerable people, that include women and youths, are left on the margins and in some cases, end up losing their land through displacements with little or no compensation. This kind of development that leads to loss of land and disturbance of livelihood for the indigenous local community members is not sustainable and will not adequately address the high poverty levels in the country.

The Government has acknowledged the challenges mentioned above as contained in the Seventh National Development Plan and it states, "there are several constraints in accessing

land on title, such as inadequate information on land issues, inefficiencies and delays in processing title deeds and insecure land tenure systems.”

Problems Statement

More than 500 million youth worldwide live in poverty, and often cannot afford their basic needs. They lack access to vital resources, and are disproportionately represented amongst the world’s poor (UNFPA, 2016). Zambia’s population is predominantly young, with youth constituting 36.7% of the total national population (2010 census report). The majority of this youth population is unemployed and struggle to make ends meet whilst others engage in productive activities to generate income which include entrepreneurship, casual and domestic work to mention some. However, these do not adequately satisfy the social and economic needs of the young population.

As stated in the introduction above, the land allocation systems and laws under the two tenure systems do not favour the youth. Under customary tenure, the structures that assist the traditional leadership in land management do not involve the youths as they are mostly constituted by elders. This entails that the interests of the younger generation are not adequately represented. Secondly, the youth are not prepared (groomed) for future responsibilities and this does not generate interest on land matters among them.

Under leasehold tenure, land acquisition by the youth remain a challenge due to the long, costly and cumbersome acquisition procedures, required documentation such as pay slips and employment contracts to mention some. Additionally, there is no deliberate policy in the allocation of land, to reserve a certain percentage for the youth, as the case is for the women. Consequently, youths struggle to get land for whatever use. Further, there is no deliberate policy to target the youths in the land policy consultative process like the case is for women traditional leaders and the disabled. This is worsened by the limited information on land (governance and rights) among the young population.

The above scenario coupled with lack of employment leaves the youth frustrated and drives them into various illegal activities with a view to get relief and comfort (which is temporary in nature). This was confirmed by YouthMap in their research titled “A Cross-Sector Analysis of Youth in Zambia, May 2014.” The following is an extract from their report: *“A number of illegal activities were commonly reported in all districts and mentioned in almost all focus group discussions with YouthMap participants, as a response to the lack of employment opportunities. Commercial sex work and drug dealing were mentioned more frequently in urban areas, particularly in Lusaka as well as Livingstone, the tourist capital of Zambia and a border town. A female participant in Lusaka described: “looking at the community that we are in, a lot of young girls go out with older men, some involve themselves in prostitution, and for the guys, others involve themselves in drug dealing.” Drug dealing was generally done on an informal basis, with marijuana being commonly sold in markets. Other drugs were not mentioned by participants.”*

The President equally shared his concerns on the issue of land in relation to the youth during his national address to parliament (March 17, 2017) which focussed on the progress made in the application of national values and principles. The Head of State expressed concern over the illegal manner in which land was being sold to foreigners, noting that the country risked rendering its children landless going by the rate at which people were selling land to foreign nationals. The President observed that the indiscriminate sale of land had an ultimate effect on the children who may end up as squatters in their own country. The President directed the

Minister of Land and Natural Resources to come up with a revised lands Act and policy which would ensure that land was protected for the future generations.

In response to the above scenario, Government and civil society have been working hand-in-hand to ensure the challenges experienced by the youth in the acquisition of land for development are alleviated. Below is a discussion on some of the measures.

Current Interventions

Development of a National Youth Policy

This policy which has a theme “*Towards a Skilled, Enlightened, Economically Empowered and Patriotic Youth Impacting Positively on National Development,*” has a lot of positives that if implemented, would highly contribute to reduction in the suffering of the youth. The Zambian Government has given due priority to youth development and empowerment and underscores the importance of youth participation and involvement in National Development. According to the policy, Zambia’s renaissance cannot be realized if adequate investment is not made in the Youth that constitute the majority of the Country’s population. To give substance to this commitment, the Zambian Government revised the 2006 National Youth Policy in order to make it more responsive to the needs of the Youth, bringing it in tandem with new and emerging issues in youth development and make the policy environment conducive for youth participation and involvement (National Youth Policy, 2015).

The policy is built on the premise that Zambia, like most African Countries, has a significant proportion of its county’s population comprising people under the age of 35 years. This youthful demographic variable presents an opportunity for national development by harnessing the potential that youth have. The policy states, “*it is critical that Government, in partnership with key stakeholders provides the youth with equal access to opportunities that enable them to grow, develop and prosper as fully engaged, responsible, patriotic and productive citizens. This policy is therefore prepared for the Zambian Youth Sector with the objective of mitigating the gaps and challenges, strengthening the existing interventions, maintaining and adopting best practices, discarding interventions that have not worked, enhancing access to and quality of services, extending coverage and increasing impact.*”

The key policy priority areas under which interventions have been crafted include employment and entrepreneurship development; education and skills development; health and cultural, creative industries and sport. Cementing these policy areas are crosscutting issues such as gender, disability, environment, HIV and AIDS and participation. It is envisaged that the latter can be harnessed by inclusion and active participation of youth in decision-making processes, policy development, programming and project implementation.

However, not much has been implemented to realise the progressive provisions in the youth policy. This is specifically so in the land policy consultative process where the youth have not been seen and/or treated as a special target despite the Youth Policy having been developed two years ago (2015).

National Land Policy development

In an attempt to address the above stated challenges, the Zambian Government has embarked on the formulation of a land policy through a consultative process with various stakeholders that include civil society, private sector, the church, local communities, and traditional leadership. These consultations have been deliberately targeted at the above stakeholders but little has been done to target the youths as a specific group despite their recognition as key and

special players in national development. No specific study has been done to establish with certainty this lack of active participation by the youth but indications show that the youth remain in the periphery in land policy formulation and management in general. This will be a challenge on the part of the youth to monitor the implementation of the policy once it is finalised. Additionally, the youth have not seen and appreciated the value of land for their present and future needs as they have been treated as secondary beneficiaries. This is so because they are expected to get land through their parents/families and this has led to many of them being content with the status quo.

Seventh National Development Plan

The Seventh National Development Plan departs from sectoral-based planning to an integrated (multi-sectoral) development approach under the theme “Accelerating development efforts towards the Vision 2030 without leaving anyone behind.” The key outcomes in the development plan include economic diversification and job creation; poverty and vulnerability reduction; reduced developmental inequalities; enhanced human development; and an enhanced governance environment for a diversified and inclusive economy. The plan states “*It is the aim of the Government to promote citizens’ participation in issues that are pertinent to their wellbeing. Inadequate citizens’ participation is a hindrance to the progress of the nation at all fronts, namely political, economic, social and environmental. To successfully achieve the long-term Vision of being a prosperous middle-income country, Zambia has to be inclusive in its development trajectory by harnessing people’s voices in augmenting the nation’s development agenda.*”

To achieve the above, the Government engaged stakeholders through workshops, meetings, roundtable discussions and solicited written submissions. In addition, joint government-civil society organisations symposia were held at national and regional levels with the aim of putting Zambia’s development agenda, vis-à-vis sustainable development and poverty reduction, into perspective. These consultations brought together different stakeholders from the Government, civil society organisations, the private sector, quasi-government institutions, the youth, women and children, the disabled and ordinary citizens.

It is yet to be seen how the provisions of this development plan will be realised given the past experience on the previous plan.

Monitoring and Evaluation of Land Governance in Africa (MELA)

Zambia, under the aegis of the African Union, has joined efforts of member countries who have developed land policies in a manner that is inclusive and responsive to the needs of all land users, contribute to political stability, promote gender equity, foster the reduction of conflict, enhance the sustainable management of natural resources, ensure orderly urban development, which put all stakeholders on the path to higher economic growth and a better quality of life. A pilot study has been designed to establish progress in the implementation of land policy in Zambia. This study will help assess the extent to which the youth have been engaged in the formulation of the land policy and management of land in the country. The 2017 Conference on Land Policy in Africa will present a good opportunity to share the findings from this study once it is launched in Zambia.

Conclusion

Given the foregoing, it is clear that the youth constitute the bulk of the population in Zambia and that they are key in the development of the nation. Despite this fact, youth still remain in the margins in as far as national development is concerned. This is evident in a number of ways

and should not continue. Some measures have been taken to address some of the challenges that the youth experience but a lot still remains to be done in alleviating their suffering.

There is a lot to gain if the youth are nurtured and supported accordingly, and the most to lose if this is not done. The good news is that young people can be very strategic partners in the sustainable development of Zambia if supported. With targeted investments, Zambia's youth have the potential to be the innovators, creators, builders and leaders of sustainable development. To empower young people means giving them the tools to become even more influential, productive actors in their societies. This is more so with regards to land governance.

This special group of society has taken-off and is flying, how they land and where, largely depends on the type of support they receive from the Government and other stakeholders. Given the above scenario:

1. There is need to ensure that the progressive and positive provisions in the policies that affect the youth are implemented and closely monitored by all stakeholders including the youth.
2. There is need to ensure the owners of the future are sensitized on the provisions of the various policies that are targeted at bettering their lives. This sensitization should include the use of social media as most youth make use of this platform
3. There is need for the Government to deliberately target the youth in the formulation and implementation of the land policy to enable them effectively monitor its implementation

The Author of this paper is currently the Country Coordinator of the MELA project and also chairs a social group that is mainly composed of the youth with a view to address various issues that affect their former primary school of which land has been identified as an issue. Under this platform, strategic youth will be identified and trained on various land issues and these will in turn be assigned to recruit and share with their peers various pieces of information on land. This will be done through a pilot project that will deliberately target the youth vis-à-vis land management in Zambia.

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