THE NATIONAL DECENTRALISATION POLICY
Realising Local Development through Citizen Participation

I ALSO EXPECT TO SEE MORE MONEY BEING SET ASIDE TO FIX OUR BRIDGE AND STREET LIGHTS.

I WISH WE CAN HAVE IMPROVED TOWNSHIP ROADS, REHABILITATED DIP TANKS AND A BOREHOLE FOR OUR CLEAN AND SAFE WATER.

I AM VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE UNPLANNED BUILDING GOING ON IN OUR TOWNSHIP WHICH IS CAUSING FLOODING. I THINK THE COUNCIL SHOULD BUY A VEHICLE FOR THE BUILDING INSPECTORATE.

I AGREE WITH YOUR CONCERNS. I ALSO WISH TO SEE RECREATIONAL FACILITIES CREATED FOR OUR YOUTH.
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FOREWORD

The National Decentralisation Policy in Zambia is premised on our aspiration to attain the status of a prosperous middle-income nation by 2030. Through this revised Policy, the Government envisions “Citizen-driven local governance within a unitary State for sustainable development”. Citizen and community participation in local governance is a key pillar for our country’s socio-economic transformation agenda.

The National Decentralisation Policy was last reviewed in 2013. Since then, a number of developments have taken place that have also necessitated the revision of the 2013 Policy. Among the developments, are the amendment of the Constitution of Zambia in 2016 and the enhancement of community participation in local development in 2022.

This Policy, therefore, provides a clear strategic direction for the implementation of decentralisation in Zambia. It prioritises community engagement, citizen-driven local development and inclusiveness in the implementation of programmes. Further, the Policy empowers the citizens to hold their representatives accountable for service delivery and local development. Additionally, the Policy prioritises the strengthening of subnational institutions, and the improvement of relationships at all levels of governance.

This National Decentralisation Policy endeavours to build on the successes of past implementation and seeks to address previous implementation challenges.

Our collective effort towards realising a devolved system of governance is critical. We should, therefore, take-up the challenge to elevate this country to a level where citizens can freely participate in matters of national development.

Hakainde Hichilema
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The development of the revised National Decentralisation Policy ensured the aspirations of stakeholders at the national, provincial, and district levels were incorporated through various consultative forums.

I wish, therefore, to acknowledge the line Ministries, Councils, Members of Parliament, and representatives of Traditional Leaders, Constituency Development Fund Committees as well as Ward Development Committees, who contributed to the successful formulation of this Policy. I also recognize the contribution from the Local Government Association of Zambia, private sector, academia, research institutions, and civil society organisations. The Multi-Sectoral Technical Team, which facilitated the formulation of this Policy, also deserves acknowledgment.

Furthermore, I would like to express my gratitude to our Cooperating Partners for their financial support and invaluable technical assistance to this process.

Government welcomes the participation of all stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation of this Policy.

Patrick K. Kangwa
SECRETARY TO THE CABINET
INTRODUCTION

VISION OF THE NATIONAL DECENTRALISATION POLICY

CITIZEN-DRIVEN LOCAL GOVERNANCE WITHIN A UNITARY STATE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

IMPORTANCE OF THE POLICY

- TO PROMOTE CITIZENS' RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT.
- TO ACHIEVE COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT FOR IMPROVED LIVELIHOODS.
- TO TAKE SERVICES TO COUNCILS CURRENTLY PERFORMED BY THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT SUCH AS HEALTH, PONTOON AND VETERINARY SERVICES.
GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE DECENTRALISATION POLICY

Good Governance
- Promote democratic, effective and coherent governance systems and institutions.
- Promote citizen participation in decision-making.
- Promote transparency and accountability in the use of public resources.

Equity
- Promote fair distribution and application of public resources for the benefit of the community.

Subsidiarity
- Ensure that government decisions and functions are performed at the lowest possible level to improve the delivery of public services.

Constitutional Jurisdiction
- Promote respect for exclusive and concurrent functions of each level of government.

Co-operative Governance
- Ensure that different levels of government coordinate and interact in a cooperative manner.

Sustainable Local Development
- Promote social and economic development at national and local levels, while taking care of current and future impact(s) of climate change.
WHAT IS DECENTRALISATION?

WHAT IS THIS DECENTRALISATION THAT I’M HEARING ON THE RADIO?

DECENTRALISATION IS THE TRANSFER OF DECISION-MAKING AND RESOURCES CLOSER TO THE PEOPLE TO ENHANCE SERVICE DELIVERY AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE.

ABOUT DECENTRALISATION IN ZAMBIA

NOW, DO YOU KNOW THAT ZAMBIA IS IMPLEMENTING THE DECENTRALISATION POLICY THAT SEeks TO IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY AND INCREASE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE?

BUT MWAPU, WE HAVE BEEN TRYING TO DECENTRALISE SINCE THE 1960’S. WHAT HAS CHANGED?

THERE IS NOW GREATER POLITICAL WILL AND MONEY HAS BEEN TAKEN CLOSER TO THE PEOPLE THROUGH THE CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT FUND (CDF) WHICH HAS INCREASED FROM ABOUT K16 MILLION TO K28.3 MILLION.
**HISTORY OF DECENTRALISATION IN ZAMBIA**

- **1964**: Zambia inherits a dual system of administration from Britain.
- **1965**: Enactment of Local Government Act.
- **1980**: Merging of party and Government structures at district level.
- **2000**: Appointment of district administrators.
- **2002**: Adoption of first National Decentralisation Policy.
- **2004**: Policy is launched. Revision of Policy to recognize traditional leaders in national development with the district becoming the focus of development and service delivery. Provision is made for Mayors and Council Chairpersons to be elected by the people.
- **2013**: Decentralisation is entrenched in the Constitution of Zambia.
- **2016**: Revision of Policy to emphasise both sub-national (Province and District) and sub-structures at District and Ward levels, as well as actualise the transfer of responsibilities, functions and resources to Councils.
- **2023**: Decentralisation is entrenched in the Constitution of Zambia.
Zambia has chosen devolution, a form of decentralisation which means the transfer of rights, powers and functions from the central government to sub-national level (Councils, Wards and Zones).

**Ministry of Finance and National Planning:** Transfers funds to Councils for improved services delivery.

**Sector Ministries:** Transfers services, human resources and assets to Councils.

**Councils:** Offer services to the community such as vehicle licensing, community sport facilities, veterinary services, district archives, health services.

**Community:** Community enjoying improved service delivery.
Decentralised Governance

**Objective 1:** To promote inclusive citizen and community participation in democratic governance at the local level with the aim of enhancing local development.
Simplified National Decentralisation Policy

Participation in decision-making through the enactment of the Local Government Act of 2019, which established the Ward Development Committees (WDCs).

A Ward Development Committee member is a link between community members, the Council and development agencies operating in the Ward. For example, CDF project proposals for community projects and empowerment loans are submitted to the WDC.

Their role is to effectively coordinate all developmental processes taking place in the Ward.

Elections for Zonal representatives are held within two months of a General Election.

Following the election of Zonal representatives, a Ward Development Committee is constituted and executive members are voted for by the elected members. Positions voted for are the Chairperson, Vice-chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary and four committee members.

If a WDC is not performing to people’s expectations, members of a community can pass a vote of no confidence (via a two thirds majority).

The Constitution also provides for the election of Mayors and Council chairpersons, as well as Councillors by the people. The people must hold these officials accountable.
1,858 WDCs started working fully in 2022 countrywide. The WDCs are key because they facilitate community-led development.
Administrative Decentralisation

Objective 2: To take services closer to the people from the national level in order to enhance efficiency in the delivery and access to public services.

Administrative Decentralisation involves:

- Transfer of functions to the Councils such as; health services, veterinary services, vehicle licensing, cultural matters, harbours, pontoons, jetties, ferries and piers etc., with the necessary resources (Human, Financial, and assets).
- Promotion of local economic development planning.
- Strengthening of human resources management and institutional capacity at the local level.
Objective 3: To develop and manage human resources in order to enhance performance.

Objective 4: To promote participatory integrated development planning in order to achieve inclusive, sustainable and climate-resilient local development.

An Integrated Development Plan (IDP) is a document that identifies the development needs of a district.
The development of IDPs for the district requires input from ordinary citizens, traditional leaders, the private sector, interest groups and other stakeholders.

Fiscal Decentralisation

**Objective 5:** To enhance financial capacities at the local level in order to support the implementation of devolved functions.

**Pillars of Fiscal Decentralisation**
WHAT IS FISCAL DECENTRALIZATION?

FISCAL DECENTRALIZATION IS THE TRANSFER OF AUTHORITY TO UTILIZE AND MOBILIZE FINANCIAL RESOURCES FROM THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT TO THE COUNCIL.

COUNCIL MEETING IN PROGRESS

WE CAN ENHANCE OUR REVENUE MOBILIZATION THROUGH USER FEES, JOINT VENTURES WITH PRIVATE SECTOR AND SUSTAINABLE BORROWING.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF SERVICES THAT WE NEED TO DELIVER. HOW ARE WE GOING TO FUND THEM?
Objective 6: To promote prudent financial management and accountability in Councils and subnational structures in order to enhance service delivery.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Councils have annual budgets which outline proposed projects for the year. You can request a copy of this budget as well as attend budget hearings.
- For Councils to work at their best, there is a need to manage finances properly, as well as organise their accounting, planning and budgeting systems in line with central government standards.

Policy Coordination and Legal Arrangements for Decentralisation

Objective 7: To develop a comprehensive Policy and legal framework that supports the effective implementation of a devolved system of governance and local development.

DID YOU KNOW?

Zambia cemented its resolve towards a devolved system of governance through:

Provisions of the National Decentralisation Policy:

- Local government is a self-directed level of government with powers to formulate and implement by-laws and policies.
- Councils to administer and oversee programmes and projects in the district.
- The District Administration shall manage concurrent functions for the national and provincial level public sector functions in the district.
- The Provincial Administration shall coordinate Government policies and programmes in the province.
IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

The successful implementation of the National Decentralisation Policy depends on establishing an appropriate institutional arrangement, legal and regulatory framework, resource mobilisation, financing and effective monitoring and evaluation.

Institutional arrangements

Resource mobilisation for effective Policy implementation

The effective implementation of the Decentralisation Policy requires sustainable financing to successfully achieve its objectives and this will be mobilised from the following sources:
THE ROLE OF CITIZENS IN THE DECENTRALISATION PROCESS

- Elect Council, Zonal, and WDC representatives
- Attend Zonal meetings
- Participate in planning and decision-making
- Monitor implementation of projects
- Holding Councils accountable for public service delivery

Participation in Planning and Decision-making

Monitoring of Projects
Enhanced accountability for public service delivery

**HOW CAN YOU PARTICIPATE IN HOLDING YOUR COUNCIL ACCOUNTABLE?**

YOU CAN ENSURE THAT PROJECTS ARE DELIVERED:

• **IN A TIMELY MANNER**
• **FOR THE RIGHT QUALITY**
• **AT A REASONABLE COST**
• **ACCORDING TO THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE**

For the full Policy visit:  
www.decentralisation.gov.zm