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Human settlements of Zambia. NGO promotes community development.

NGO promotes community development

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Human Settlements of Zambia

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Population Lusaka (1980): 536,000
Population Lusaka squatter areas where HUZA is involved (1986): over 250,000

GNP/Capita: US$ 470
Population: 6.5 million

Lusaka

Built-up Area
City Centre
Main Traffic Routes
Squatter areas of Lusaka where HUZA is involved.

Lusaka 1975
Since 1975, due to inflation (800% since 1976) and the devaluation of the national currency (250% in 1985), income patterns have changed drastically.

Percentage Distributions of Population by Income Level
S: when 85% of household income must be spent on food

Climate Graph Lusaka (1,280m)
Human Settlements of Zambia (HUZA) is a national non-governmental organization (NGO) acting in the three main areas of Zambian development: economic, social and political. Working independently between the grass roots and the authorities, HUZA influences the direction and quality of development. In 1964, the government invited the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) to participate in the self-help housing economic and social development of Zambia, and again, in 1974 to promote community participation in the Lusaka settlement upgrading and sites-and-services programme. In 1982, AFSC Zambia became Human Settlements of Zambia (HUZA) by handing over to Zambian staff. With the redirection of Zambia’s declining copper-based economy toward agricultural development and small-scale industry, HUZA’s programme has changed. The focus is now on promoting income-earning activities, improving nutrition and health and reducing living and house-building costs - all with the participation of women and youth.

A one-party, participatory democracy

Zambia’s United National Independence Party operates under a well-defined set of guidelines and the republican constitution. At the same time, it also encourages self-criticism and innovative ideas.

The Party framework is designed to maximize ‘bottom-up’ participation:

1. Everyone belongs to a Section of 25 households, represented by 4 men, 4 youths and 4 women.
2. 10 Sections form a Branch represented by 4 youths, 4 women and 4 men.
3. Branches are grouped in Wards whose Chairmen are elected by all registered voters. Ward Chairmen, who also serve as local District Councillors, preside over the Ward Committee of 8 men, 8 women and 8 youths.
4. District Councillors send delegates to Provincial Councils.

Abbreviations:
AFSC: American Friends Service Committee
EDF: European Development Fund
NHA: National Housing Authority
HPU: Housing Project Unit
HUZA: Human Settlements of Zambia
LCC: Lusaka City Council
LUDC: Lusaka Urban District Council
RPG: Road Planning Group

5. The Provincial and District Councillors, along with Members of Parliament, form delegations to the Central Committee.
6. The Central Committee is elected every 5 years by the National Council and headed by the President of Zambia.

The institutional framework

Projects undertaken in a particular Section must be supported by that Section’s Chairman and his committee. Projects involving 10 Sections or more are appraised by the Branch Chairman and committee. Projects requiring legislative approval are channelled through the Ward Committee whose Chairman, as a member of the District Council, can present this to the District and Provincial Committees for legal backing. This is the institutional framework in which HUZA operates. Experience suggests that it does generate a consensus and does enable popular participation.

Housing needs in Lusaka

The AFSC programme which launched HUZA was a supportive government response to the housing needs of the rapidly growing population of Lusaka. By 1974, ten years after independence, Lusaka's population had grown to well over quarter of a million, nearly half of whom lived in the peripheral, unserviced settlements.

Before HUZA started.
Rural-urban migration
In 1974 nearly 90 per cent of adult residents of Lusaka’s peri-
urban settlements were migrants from the following areas of
Zambia:

- Eastern Zambia: 50 per cent
- Northern Province: 21 per cent
- Central Province: 7 per cent
- Western Province: 5 per cent
- Luapala Province: 4 per cent
- Southern Province: 4 per cent
- North-western Province: 2 per cent
- Copperbelt: 0.4 per cent

Primary Sample Survey, HPU 1974
Only 10 per cent had lived in Lusaka before 1960.
The population was and still is a socio-economic mix:
about two-thirds of the households had (and continue to
have) very low incomes, at or near subsistence level, needing
to spend at least three-quarters of their income on food and
fuel alone. The other third have varying savings margins with
a significant number in the lower-middle income bracket,
needing to spend no more than one-third of their income on
food and fuel.

Sites without services
Most peri-urban settlement dwellings in 1974 had 2-3 rooms
with sun-dried mud brick walls and corrugated sheet roofs of
asbestos cement or galvanized steel. There were no utilities,
few community facilities and roads were ungraded with no
surface-water drainage. Residents provided themselves with
wells, pit latrines and some garbage pits. The settlements
were dispersed, imposing long journeys to work for many.

Moving toward a support policy
Facing up to realities
By the early 1970s, the authorities had accepted that
‘squatter compounds’ could not be eradicated. It was equally
impossible to relocate their people in rural areas or in publicly
subsidized housing. Influenced by Peruvian legislation of
1961 which allowed for the regularization of improvable
squat settlements and the provision of sites with minimal
services, the Zambian government passed a similar Act in
1974, the first of its kind in Africa.

Upgrading planned without participation
In the same year work began on upgrading unserviced
‘squatter compounds’. The norms and procedures were
negotiated with the programme’s co-funder, the World Bank.
People’s participation took place indirectly, through the
involvement of two organizations: American Friends Service
Committee and UNICEF. The programme was to provide
households with 30-year occupancy licenses; water piped to
outdoor stand-pipes, shared by 25 houses; improved roads;
street-lighting and refuse removal. Community facilities such
as schools, health and community centres and markets were
also included, along with building material loans to improve
or build homes.

NGO assists achievements
By 1978 about 160,000 people in 27,000 households had
been served by the upgrading projects in three large
settlements (Chawama, George and
Garden/Chaisa/Chipata) about three-quarters of their total
population. Another 7,550 households had been provided
with minimally serviced plots, including the 5,400
households who had been displaced by the improvements.
Credits for building materials were given to a total value of
US$3 million.

Achieving community participation
Due to community involvement in the implementation phase,
no serious opposition occurred during the four years of field
activity. The relocation of 4,000 houses to make way for
roads and services was accepted along with the relocation of
8,000 households and the disruptive effects of major
infrastructure construction. Community participation in
carrying out official plans was achieved by the Housing
Project Unit (HPU) within the Lusaka City Council. Four of the
six staff members were AFSC personnel bringing with them
their previous experience of working with local community
groups on AFSC’s successful 1969 Kafue self-help housing
project.

Using existing decision-making structures
The Section was chosen as the unit of communication and
organization. Later it was found to lack the overview
necessary to plan large areas and it also carried insufficient
political weight. So Branches were used rather than Wards,
since at that time, their effectiveness was not yet fully
developed.
Involving the community
Public meetings using oral communication along with films, radio spots, posters, music groups and visits to completed areas gained support for the project. Evening and weekend meetings were held at Section level to accommodate working people, over a period of 5 months. Everyone was informed directly instead of getting second-hand messages through Party leaders, which, like most word-of-mouth messages, are subject to distortion. At Section level, layouts of resettlement blocks and the location of standpipes was decided. Face to face, direct local communication at meetings allowed the different interests to reach consensus and encouraged leaders to develop a more responsive attitude toward the community. Section leaders then took their proposals to Branch level meetings.

RPGs: a forum for community decisions
The Road Planning Group (RPG) was the main body for making community decisions. RPGs included community leaders and party officials. With the help of HPU and by ‘road walks’, physically marking the area with pegs, they planned the layout of road routes, school sites and decided which houses were in the path of works. If families could not afford to move, alternatives were worked out.

Limitations and unfulfilled expectations
The HPU had made tremendous efforts to involve the residents of up-grading areas in the planning and project implementation. As a result, residents’ expectations were and continue to be that other local authorities in the country would follow that example. Accordingly, in 1976 the National Housing Authority drew up another proposal for a second World Bank-assisted urban improvement project for six other areas.

Despite substantial time and effort put into the programme, external, uncontrollable factors caused the economy to be weakened. Reduced employment and inflation had their effect on the programme, causing it to slow down and eventually to be suspended indefinitely. The programme was based on the principle of full cost recovery and on unrealistic assumptions about low-income people’s priorities. Private renting and resale of houses was restricted along with other ways in which low-income people earn their livings. The collapse of world copper markets and the decline of national and personal incomes accelerated the inevitable paralysis. By 1986, Zambian currency was devalued by 250 per cent. In 1973, 80 per cent of residents were owner
occupiers, but by 1976, this had dropped to 54 per cent and by 1986 to 40 per cent. As participation benefitted owners more than renters, it declined, slowing improvements and ruining maintenance. The government's rising foreign debt and its people's declining real incomes compounded Lusaka City Council's problems in recovering payments for improvements. The ineffective servicing and maintenance by the LUDC caused even more reluctance to pay. Debts rose and authority was eroded. By 1978 less than half the payments due were being collected.

Decentralization and co-operation

In 1980, in keeping with long-standing, stated policies of self-help and self-reliance, the government introduced a decentralization policy, to meet local priorities and to mobilize under-used resources. The copper industry was operating at a loss, the economy was worsening and there was a need to increase small-scale industry and agriculture. These changes shaped HUZA's role as promoter of community organization and enterprise and as a mediator between people and government.

Complementing limited government powers

HUZA now concentrates on community-based activities, maximizing local resources, since NGOs are better placed to promote these vital grass-root activities than government. HUZA also recognizes that it must act in ways that match, enhance and complement local government services and programmes. Early success of the up-grading programme was largely due to AFSC. But by raising people's awareness, expectations and demands, the problem of government's limited capacity to respond was aggravated. HUZA, as AFSC's successor, now responds to this problem. HUZA's initiatives show how more can be achieved with less, building community without imposing personal or national debts.

The case of the incinerator

Some common institutional barriers to local projects and the comparative advantages of NGOs' roles are illustrated by the case of the incinerator. The Chawama Urban Health Clinic was built by Lusaka Urban District Council with government funds in 1984. But the incinerator for the maternity wing was not in the plans and the clinic could not be used until one was provided. As it was not in the Ministry's budget, local councillors were told that an incinerator could not be built until the next financial year. So the clinic, a large investment on which lives depended, was held up for want of a very small expenditure. Fortunately, HUZA was able to mediate, negotiating permission for the community to build the incinerator themselves, mobilizing resources that government cannot reach.

Reducing expenses and increasing incomes

Three overlapping areas of action

HUZA promotes self-help and self-reliance for development in human settlements. In a low-income country with few international market prospects, reducing costs-of-living and increasing incomes are complementary. HUZA promotes local income-earning training and local enterprise, helping people to get more from their own resources and to improve their health. HUZA works in three complementary programmes that often overlap: Shelter Provision and Improvement through technical assistance and training; lending tools; community leadership training and education in finance, law and land. For example, the Chawama skills training centre provides courses in construction and is developing the production of fibre-cement roofing sheets.

Health, Nutrition, and Gardening through health education; nutrition and cookery training; tools and technical assistance for food growing. For example, in addition to many individual garden plots 20 hectares of land adjacent to the Jack community have been allocated for crops.

Promotion of Productive Enterprise through skills training for local entrepreneurs; loans from a revolving fund; promoting appropriate technologies; research and evaluation of informal sector activities and potentials. For example, the Chawama centre runs courses for clothing design and making, and technical and marketing assistance is provided for women's co-operative clothing and soap manufacturing enterprises.

Economies depend on women

Women are acknowledged as a major force in HUZA programmes. Women combine child-bearing and rearing with managing the household economies. It is they who introduce changes of health practices and nutrition. Women are the principal gardeners, urban farmers and market traders. Most of the income-generating co-operative enterprises, for soap-making and clothing, for instance, are by and for women. The management of home-building and much of the labour is provided by the women.