



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

# EVALUATION OF THE IRISH AID LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IN NORTHERN PROVINCE, ZAMBIA, 2007- 2016



Evaluation and Audit Unit

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The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluation team and do not necessarily reflect the opinion or views of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

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## ACRONYMS

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|       |  |
|-------|--|
| CSO   | Civil Society Organisation                                 |
| CSP   | Country Strategy Paper                                     |
| CRS   | Civil Registration System                                  |
| DAC   | Development Assistance Committee                           |
| DAIPs | District Annual Investment Plans                           |
| DFAT  | Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade                    |
| GDP   | Gross Domestic Product                                     |
| GRZ   | Government of Zambia                                       |
| HDI   | Human Development Index                                    |
| HIV   | Human Immunodeficiency Virus                               |
| HID   | Households in Distress                                     |
| HQ    | Headquarters   |
| IMF   | International Monetary Fund                                |
| MEL   | Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning                        |
| MTR   | Mid Term Review  |
| NDP   | National Development Plan                                  |
| OECD  | The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| ODA   | Official Development Assistance                      |
| PPU   | Provincial Planning Unit                             |
| QUIP  | Qualitative Impact Protocol                          |
| SIDA  | Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency |
| SUN   | Scaling up Nutrition                                 |
| SWAAZ | Society of Women and AIDS in Zambia                  |
| ToR   | Terms of Reference                                   |
| UNDP  | United Nations Development Programme                 |
| WDC   | Ward Development Committee                           |
| WHO   | World Health Organisation                            |
| YWCA  | Young Women's Christian Association                  |

## Background

Ireland established its official aid programme in Zambia in 1980 and in 1982 inaugurated a Local Development Programme (LDP) in Northern Province, the oldest of Irish Aid's local programmes. LDPs have been an important feature of Ireland's development cooperation since the earliest days of the programme and Ireland is almost unique among bilateral donors in retaining this modality in certain of our Key Partner Countries.

In the early days of the programme, projects to construct and rehabilitate water supply infrastructure were implemented directly and managed from a local office in Kasama. At that time, Irish Aid was one of the biggest employers in Northern Province. The LDP has evolved considerably since then, informed *inter alia* by learning from review processes as well as changes in both Irish and Zambian contexts.

This evaluation considers the LDP over the period 2007-2016, during which time approximately €25m was disbursed. From 2007 to 2012 €15.5m was provided for activities delivered in partnership with local government (at both provincial and district level) and local CSOs. The subsequent cycle of the LDP saw a shift to implementation through a management agent with an indicative budget of €9,350,000 for the period 2013-2017.

Typically Country Strategy Paper (CSP) evaluations consider only one CSP cycle. This exercise offers an opportunity to review progress over a longer period, to consider the sustainability of interventions and to ask what has changed as a result of Ireland's presence in Northern Province during this time. It is hoped that this will help inform an understanding of how (and when) change happens at local and national levels and also of why, in some cases, it does not.

Zambia has undergone significant change in the past four decades, evolving from a stable developing country to a less settled emerging middle income state. The population has trebled since Ireland began its programme: from 5.89 million in 1980 to an estimated 16.59 million in 2016. The population of Northern Province quadrupled during the same period. Real GDP increased from \$4.2bn to \$21.3bn and in 2011 the World Bank classified Zambia as a Lower Middle Income country.

However, there are few indications that this growth is either sustainable or equitable. Economic inequality has increased considerably and Northern Province remains one of the least developed in the country, with a Human Development Index value of 0.347 in 2014 – even less than the 1980 national figure.

Significant development challenges remain in Zambia, which is recognised in the government's Seventh National Development Plan for 2017-2021. At the same time, the opportunities for meaningful policy dialogue and for donors to influence change are shrinking. This, together with a perception of increasing corruption, is inducing a slow exit of donors from Zambia.

Given limited government resources, many ministries and service providers elect to work with so-called 'viable' vulnerable beneficiaries, rarely reaching the poorest members of communities.

Since 2007 the LDP has been predicated on the expectation of the roll out of Zambia's National Decentralisation Policy. This has meant a particular focus on the implementation of activities in partnership with local government to strengthen governance and capacity for service delivery.

Evidence suggested that capacity building initiatives had not translated into better service delivery for vulnerable community members and so a change was recommended for the 2013-2017 CSP. A decision was taken to work through a management agent and Self Help Africa was engaged to manage the programme, with a mandate to work with the poorest and most vulnerable community members.

At the time of this evaluation, the programme was coming to its completion of the five year timeframe. Given that there was a new Mission Strategy under preparation in Zambia, preparations were underway to wind down the management agent programme and transfer certain of its elements to local authorities and district government departments. Following a timely communication of findings of this evaluation, a decision was taken to extend the programme for an additional 12 months to allow for a responsible transition out of the project and put elements with the best prospects for sustainability on a more secure footing.

### **Summary of Findings**

In general it was found that Irish Aid's support to district and provincial authorities was well aligned with and relevant to both the decentralisation agenda of the Government of Zambia as well as Irish Aid's Development priorities

A strong finding of the evaluation is the extent to which **Ireland is regarded by government and donors alike as having a genuine legitimacy to address issues of hunger and vulnerability by virtue of its Local Development Programmes.** While there was limited evidence of using these experiences to influence policy in Zambia, the evaluation team heard examples of how learnings from Local Development Programmes informed key policy initiatives, such as the Hunger Taskforce, as well as Ireland's engagement in multilateral fora.

Nonetheless **there is an uneven appreciation of the benefits and continued relevance of Local Development Programmes as a component of country strategies across the Irish Aid organisation.** There appears to be no shared understanding of the rationale for Local Development Programmes, which means expectations of outcomes differ. Influencing policy dialogue and helping the poorest and most vulnerable communities were the two most commonly cited reasons for maintaining a Local Development Programme but there is little evidence of a strategic, complementary approach to achieving these goals.

**Investments in influencing policy dialogue are undermined by frequent shifts in sectoral priorities.** The evaluation found many instances of such changes, decided both locally and at HQ. There is a risk that the insights and experience of the competent, committed and well-regarded local staff team are squandered by such changes, which also inhibits the building of an institutional memory.

There is clear evidence from the 2007-2012 CSP that the **vulnerability of beneficiaries can be increased if a programme is ended too quickly**. Decisions to end or change programmes must be made on the basis of a comprehensive and realistic analysis of the capacities of both partners and beneficiaries to respond to programme interventions and sustain change. Any decision to adopt a change of approach will need to allow sufficient time for transition so as not to undermine aid investments. Where a new approach is adopted, the time required to establish the new way of working should be factored into planning and expectations of results managed accordingly.

**There is some evidence to suggest that elements of the 2013-2017 programme may have contributed to an increased time and labour burden for vulnerable women.** Given that gender is a cross cutting issues of the programme, this is would be of some concern.

While there is some evidence that capacities of local authorities are being enhanced, this does not appear to have led to improved service delivery. **A more strategic approach to capacity building**, or shared understanding of expected outcomes could have led to greater impact.

The transition to working through a Management Agent was well-managed from the perspective of the needs of Irish Aid, including its financial management and human resources. **Though the process involved reputational risk, there is no evidence that any reputational damage was incurred.** Nonetheless, there was little evidence of a formal transition or exit plan against which progress or effectiveness could be measured. Legacy projects from the 2007-2012 CSP placed a significant burden on the management agent.

Under the current CSP, the management agent is effective in addressing the food and nutrition security needs of vulnerable households. While legitimate questions have been raised as to the sustainability of certain interventions, these were apparent from the start of the programme. Indeed, **implicit in a mandate to target interventions at the poorest and most vulnerable community members should be an understanding that such interventions – often quite disruptive in nature - require time and investment to approach sustainability.**

Evidence suggests that expectations of results of both CSPs may have been overly optimistic, and that **decision-making did not always demonstrate sufficient appreciation for how change happens** or the particular constraints of working through government systems and with vulnerable communities.

The question arises of how - or indeed whether - smaller donors such as Ireland, typically flexible and dynamic in its approach to foreign policy, can be dynamic in approaches to development interventions without threatening slow progress or eroding aid investments.

Findings are set out in greater detail in the chapters that follow. Chapter six sets out 13 issues for consideration in the development of the new Mission Strategy.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Ireland established its official aid programme in Zambia in 1980, building on a long tradition of Irish missionary and development work, and in 1982 set up a Local Development Programme in Northern Province. This is now the oldest of Irish Aid's Local Development Programmes.

This independent evaluation of the performance of the programme in Northern Province over the period 2007-2016 was undertaken in 2017. Learning from this evaluation is intended to inform planning and decision making for Irish Aid Zambia's Mission Strategy (2018–2022) which will be supported by two products, a Learning Brief (in 2017) and a final report (in 2018). The final report was to be in 2017 to feed into the planning process. It is also hoped that these will inform broader considerations of the benefits, added value and sustainability of Local Development Programmes in Irish Aid key partner countries more generally.

The evaluation examined the Local Development Programme over two CSP cycles: the 2007–2010 CSP (extended to 2012), known as *Making Development Work at Local Level* and the 2013-2017 CSP, known as the Irish Aid Local Development Programme. Each adopted a different approach to delivery.

The purpose of this evaluation is:

- To provide Irish Aid with an independent, evidence-based assessment of the performance of the Local Development Programme in Northern Province for the period 2007 to 2016;
- To provide accountability to the Governments and peoples of Ireland and Zambia for the support provided to the Northern Province during the period 2007 to 2016, and to identify lessons learned to inform future Irish Aid decision-making both locally in Zambia and within Irish Aid more generally; and
- To contribute to wider learning relating to the support of Local Development Programmes.

### 1.1 CORE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

In order to best inform planning for the 2018-2022 Mission Strategy, the Irish Aid team in Lusaka was invited to identify those parts of the programme for which independent evidence was most required or where information gaps were greatest. The Local Development Programme was identified as an area where questions had been raised as to the longer term effectiveness and sustainability of the programme but with insufficient evidence to draw informed conclusions.

In drafting evaluation questions, consideration was given to other evaluative work commissioned or undertaken by the embassy and information readily available through existing Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) systems. Specific consideration was given to evaluation work undertaken by the Management Agent in Northern Province and in particular its Individual Household Method survey and Qualitative Impact Protocol (QUIP) exercise to be undertaken



towards the end of the programme cycle. Having examined the background and methodology to each of these exercises, the evaluation team is satisfied as to the rigour and reliability of each. For this reason questions about outcomes in livelihoods, health and nutrition were not included in the Terms of Reference for this evaluation. For an assessment of these aspects of the programme, the SHA synthesis report may be consulted.

The following areas of enquiry were identified:

#### **Examining intended outcomes:**

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- To what extent did Irish Aid contribute to enhancing the capacities of the Local authorities and district Government departments to plan and implement development programmes?
- What were the enabling and limiting factors that affected achievement?

#### **Capturing unintended outcomes:**

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- What unintended outcomes (positive or negative) were observed?

#### **Managing transition:**

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- How effectively did Irish Aid manage the transition between modalities<sup>1</sup> of support in its Local Development Programme in Northern Province?

#### **Learning from the local level to influence national policy:**

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- To what extent have the lessons from the Local Development Programme supported Irish Aid's capacity to influence policy dialogue at provincial and national level?

#### **Sustainability:**

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- To what extent did the modalities of support used in the Local Development Programme affect the sustainability of programme results?
- What other factors affected the sustainability of programme results?
- To what extent did the approach used help to achieve programme results?

#### **Linkages:**

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<sup>1</sup> The term modality is used in the original Terms of Reference to describe the means of delivery of the Local Development Programme. Strictly speaking in an Irish Aid context a Local Development Programme is a modality and the means of delivering that programme are more properly understood as 'approaches'. The term 'approach' is used throughout this report.

- To what extent did the Local Development Programme reinforce other aspects of the Country Strategy for Zambia?

A quasi goal-free approach was adopted for the evaluation. While not entirely detached from the stated goals and objectives of the two cycles of the Local Development Programme under review, unintended outcomes were also captured in order to contribute to an informed planning process for the next strategy cycle. In addition to helping capture as broad as possible a range of outcomes, the goal free evaluation approach is considered particularly relevant for projects with capacity building for complex challenges as an element. The evaluation process was informed by DAC evaluation criteria and an assessment based on the DAC criteria is contained in Annex 3 of the report.

Given this quasi goal-free approach, a theory of change has not been reconstructed, nor is contribution analysis, typically a feature of Irish Aid evaluations, part of our methodology. Contribution analysis is used to reduce uncertainty as to the extent to which an intervention has contributed to a particular outcome. This is not considered a significant limitation, however, given the relatively small number of development actors in Northern Province. The degree of confidence with regard to contribution is never absolute in any case.

A participatory approach to the evaluation was adopted and the perspectives of beneficiaries of both approaches were considered at all stages. The ToR for the evaluation committed expressly to new and innovative methodological approaches.

The use of geospatial data was trialled. An area of 25km<sup>2</sup> in Luwingu district was analysed to determine increase in arable land using a bi-temporal change detection approach. 158 locations (comprising a total land area of 127.5ha) were identified as having changed from native shrubland to arable land. Through the use of geospatial data, evaluators can consider the potential impact of programmes on land use and land cover change.

The evaluation team consisted of an international evaluation specialist, a Zambian national consultant, a member of staff from the embassy of Ireland in Mozambique and two members of the Evaluation and Audit Unit of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. During the fieldwork, these worked as two smaller teams, which enabled the group to cover a wide geographical area and meet with a broad range of stakeholders and other interlocutors. Team members were rotated and alternated to ensure consistency of approach and balance to divergent and convergent tendencies.

The following should be noted:

**Data availability and integrity:** Government data collection and analysis is weak. The Zambian Civil Registration System (CRS) is underdeveloped and incomplete. While plans are in place to collect census data electronically in 2020 and to strengthen the CRS in order to monitor progress of the implementation of the Seventh National Development Plan, current data is unreliable and inconsistent.

**Use of secondary information:** Some of the evidence used to inform findings and conclusions is drawn from analysis of secondary information. As noted, this included information from evaluative work undertaken by the Management Agent.

**Use of qualitative information:** Primary information was generated mostly from interviews. This is consistent with both Goal Free and participatory approaches. Transcriptions were coded and analysed and used as part of triangulation.

The evaluation was undertaken in 4 stages:

**Inception:** A desktop review of relevant documents was carried out (a list of documents consulted is included at Annex 2) and interviews conducted with stakeholders in Ireland, including both Irish Aid staff and representatives of the management agent. Key evaluation questions were refined at this point and an inception report drafted.

**Fieldwork:** Fieldwork was undertaken in May 2017 and included 10 days in Northern Province, during which evaluators, in two teams, visited Mbala and Isoka; and Luwingu and Mpika respectively. Each team met with representatives of district and provincial governments, including line ministries. Current and former civil society partners, as well as programme beneficiaries, were also interviewed. At least two evaluators participated in each interview and leading questions were avoided. A list of meetings and interviews is attached at Annex 3.

**Analysis and Learning Brief:** As preparation for the 2018-2022 mission strategy for Zambia was already underway at the time of fieldwork, it was important that findings be ready in time to inform the planning process. While evaluation is of necessity a deliberative process, reporting of results can at times be slowed by clearance procedures. A Learning Brief, summarising the main findings and associated recommendations from the field work was made available to the Irish Aid team in Lusaka as part of an ongoing commitment by the Evaluation and Audit Unit to communicate findings in as timely a manner as possible. This document was finalised in advance of planning events for the new mission strategy. A copy of the Learning Brief is attached at Annex 5.

**Final Reporting:** Following a final process of triangulation and analysis, this evaluation report was drafted. In addition to findings set out in the Learning Brief, the report includes some additional context and background information as well as some consideration of broader programme management. Proofing of this report was overseen by a Reference Group, the Terms of Reference for which are set out at Annex 2. The report was finalised in 2018.

### 3.1 ZAMBIA

Zambia has undergone considerable change since Ireland began its aid programme almost forty years ago. The population has grown from 5.89 million in 1980 to an estimated 16.59 million in 2016<sup>2</sup>. In US dollars, real GDP has increased from US\$4.2bn in 1980 to US\$21.3bn in 2016<sup>3</sup>. Per capita GDP stands at around \$1,700<sup>4</sup> and in 2011 the World Bank classified Zambia as a Lower Middle Income country.

Child mortality rates and the incidence of malarial, diarrhoeal and tubercular infections have declined steadily, while rates of school enrolment, literacy and employment have increased. The prevalence of HIV among adults is falling – albeit very slowly - from 15.6% in 2002 to 13.3% in 2014<sup>5</sup>. All of this is reflected in Zambia's value in the UNDP Human Development Index, which has increased by more than 40% between 1980 (0.42) and 2014 (0.59), moving the country from the 'low' human development group to the 'medium' category.

Despite this apparent progress, there are few indications that growth is sustainable or equitable. The absence of economic diversification makes the Zambian economy vulnerable to shocks. For example, in 2012 copper mining constituted more than 70% of export earnings (despite employing only about 2% of the population).<sup>6</sup> A drop in copper prices by more than 20% in 2015 put pressure on an already fragile economy.

Disaggregated HDI values indicate that development gains have been uneven, with significant disparities between regions and between different sections of society.<sup>7</sup> Economic inequality has increased considerably and the Zambian GINI coefficient grown from 0.6 in 2010 to 0.69 in 2016.<sup>8</sup> In the 2015 UNDP Gender Inequality Index, which measures the human development costs of gender inequality, Zambia is placed 124 (out of 159).<sup>9</sup> Stunting among children under the age of 5 stands at 40%, one of the highest rates in the world.<sup>10</sup>

Northern Province remains the least developed province in the country, with a HDI value of 0.347 in 2014 – less than the 1980 national aggregate figure.<sup>11</sup> Zambia made uneven progress toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals. While the commitment to halve, between 1990 and

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<sup>2</sup> World Bank

<sup>3</sup> IMF

<sup>4</sup> World Economic database 2014

<sup>5</sup> UNAIDS

<sup>6</sup> UN country analysis report

<sup>7</sup> UNDP Zambia Human Development Report 2016

<sup>8</sup> : UNDP

<sup>9</sup> UNDP

<sup>10</sup> UNICEF

<sup>11</sup> UNDP Human Development Report 2016

2015, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty was met in respect of urban dwellers, for those living in rural areas, the proportion living in extreme poverty actually increased.<sup>12</sup>

Politically, there are concerns that the peace and stability that have been a hallmark of Zambia since independence are under threat. The 2016 general election campaign was marked by unprecedented levels of political violence that saw campaigning in Lusaka suspended for over a week. Tensions have remained high ever since, not helped by trumped up allegations of treason – since dropped – against the leader of the opposition. The invocation of article 31 of the constitution in July 2017 brought about a *de facto* State of Emergency which ended in October.

The 7<sup>th</sup> National Development Plan (NDP) (2017 – 2021) was launched in June 2017 and commits to economic diversification, poverty reduction and less inequality. At the time of launch, negotiations were ongoing with the IMF on the terms of a loan, expected to be in the region of US\$1bn. Uncertain political commitment, weakened economic conditions and a suite of austerity-related conditions likely to be attached to any IMF loan present a number of challenges for the implementation of the 7<sup>th</sup> NDP.

While emigration rates are low compared to other sub-Saharan states, emigrants tend to be skilled and well educated, which has a significant impact on a country with such limited human capital. Given the deteriorating political and economic conditions, this situation may worsen.

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### 3.2 DEVELOPMENT

That significant development challenges remain in Zambia is clear. At the same time, the enabling environment for development and the space in which donors can exert influence for positive change is shrinking. In May 2017, President Lungu criticised western donors who had raised concerns about the detention of the leader of the opposition party on charges of treason and challenged them to withdraw ODA.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed donors have been slowly exiting from Zambia for a number of years. Corruption and a shrinking space for meaningful policy dialogue coupled with the glacial pace of poverty reduction in the face of increasing demands for results are cited as the most common reasons for withdrawal.<sup>14</sup> Zambia's elevation to Lower Middle Income status also offers a convenient justification to end cooperation. A review of evaluations undertaken by DAC members of programmes in Zambia<sup>15</sup> throws up common challenges, not least a perceived absence of genuine commitment to equitable and sustainable development on the part of GRZ.

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<sup>12</sup> GRZ MDG Progress Report 2013

<sup>13</sup> *"Now they want to come and regulate our governance. They want to tell us who to arrest, who to prosecute, what matters our courts should preside over; that we cannot allow. Because of our economic dependency, people now think they can tell the Army Commander what he can and cannot do, what I can and cannot do. [...] No, 'we will withdraw aid', they can withdraw aid if they want but they would never withdraw our dignity [...]"* May 26 at the Kala 48 Marine Barracks in Kawambwa

<sup>14</sup> For example, [Netherlands](#) and [Denmark](#)

<sup>15</sup> Accessed at [DEReC](#) – the OECD/Development Assistance Committee Evaluation Resource Centre

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### 3.3 IRISH AID IN ZAMBIA

The Local Development Programme in Northern Province was established in 1982 and is the oldest of Irish Aid's local development programmes. Irish Aid's policy on local development<sup>16</sup> sets out 3 primary objectives:

- Reduced poverty at local levels;
- Strong responsive local institutions at community, local government, civil society and private sector level; and
- Informed national policy development through lesson learning [...] informed by the realities on the ground.

The Local Development Programme under the 2007–2010 CSP (extended to 2012), MDWLL, involved direct implementation of activities in partnership with local government (at both provincial and district level) and local CSOs. At this time Irish Aid worked in 4 of the province's (then) 12 districts (Mbala, Luwingu, Isoka and Mpika) and maintained an Irish Aid office in Kasama. The strategic objective of the Local Development Programme was 'to ensure national level policy is informed by local priorities' but this was expanded following a MTR in 2009 to include:

- Strengthened governance structures at Provincial, District and Sub-district levels (to plan and improve services that include poor men and women);
- Evidence from tracking and monitoring national level programmes at district and sub-district levels used by Irish Aid in dialogue with partners.

This later, more comprehensive, iteration of the objectives brought Irish Aid engagement with governance structures at sub national level into greater relief. During the CSP extension, there was a period of readjustment and consolidation, during which a decision was taken to withdraw from the districts of Isoka and Mpika. Table 1 shows total expenditure in Northern Province from 2007 to 2016.

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<sup>16</sup> Communities – Irish Aid Local Development Policy (2008)





**Actual Expenditure for the Period 2007 to 2016**

| Grant Partner  | 2007      | 2008    | 2009    | 2010    | 2011    | 2012    | 2013    | 2014    | 2015    | 2016    | Totals    |
|--|-----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|
|  | €         | €       | €       | €       | €       | €       | €       | €       | €       | €       | €         |
| Luwingu District Council                               | 143,492   | 564,269 | 1,043   | 152,000 | 478,861 | 100,037 | 222,589 | 207,500 | 100,000 | 90,000  | 2,059,791 |
| Mbala District Council                                 |           | 414,746 | 111,667 | 466,172 | 343,442 | 100,000 | 212,143 | 207,500 | 100,000 | 90,000  | 2,045,670 |
| Isoka District Council                                 |           | 484,789 | 245,410 | 258,918 | 431,241 | 100,000 |         |         |         |         | 1,520,358 |
| Mpika District Council                                 | 259,377   | 407,330 | 113,278 | 339,701 | 138,825 | 60,672  |         |         |         |         | 1,319,183 |
| Kasama Municipal Council                               | 79,128    |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         | 79,128    |
| Provincial Planning Unit                               |           |         | 25,888  | 110,969 | 70,000  | 60,000  | 70,832  | 70,000  | 60,000  | 50,000  | 517,689   |
| Provincial Health Office                               | 281,411   |         | 88,254  |         |         |         |         |         |         |         | 369,665   |
| Provincial AIDS Task Force                             | 26,946    |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         | 26,946    |
| Provincial Local Government Office                     | 630,655   |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         | 630,655   |
| Chilonga School of Midwifery                           |           |         |         |         |         |         | 50,220  |         |         |         | 50,220    |
| Chiba Water Scheme                                     |           |         |         |         |         |         | 9,505   |         |         |         | 9,505     |
| Care (Chambeshi Water project)                         | 3,207,010 | 170,000 |         |         | 306,706 |         |         |         |         |         | 3,683,716 |
| World Fish Centre / CGIAR centres                      |           |         |         |         | 20,762  |         | 500,000 | 500,000 | 160,000 | 350,000 | 1,530,762 |
| Chinsali Association of Lay Missionaries               | 69,865    |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         | 69,865    |
| Radio Mano   | 11,879    |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         | 11,879    |
| St Fidelis Hospital Chilubula                          | 77,991    |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         | 77,991    |
| Catholic Commission for Justice, Development and Peace | 74,743    |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         | 74,743    |
| Development Organisation for People's Empowerment      |           | 100,896 | 88,760  | 62,031  |         |         |         |         |         |         | 251,687   |
| Households in Distress                                 | 127,375   | 110,482 | 93,043  | 70,000  | 70,000  |         | 65,197  | 70,000  | 70,000  | 100,000 | 776,097   |
| Society of Women Against AIDS in Zambia                | 108,474   | 170,555 | 123,405 | 94,000  |         |         |         |         |         |         | 496,434   |

| <b>Actual Expenditure for the Period 2007 to 2016</b>    |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |               |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| <b>Grant Partner</b>                                     | <b>2007</b> | <b>2008</b> | <b>2009</b> | <b>2010</b> | <b>2011</b> | <b>2012</b> | <b>2013</b> | <b>2014</b> | <b>2015</b> | <b>2016</b> | <b>Totals</b> |
|  | €           | €           | €           | €           | €           | €           | €           | €           | €           | €           | €             |
| YWCA   | 29,246      | 17,829      |             | 63,000      |             |             |             |             |             |             | 110,075       |
| Coordination   | 587,729     | 536,826     | 644,672     | 508,100     | 469,827     | 329,113     | 73,327      |             |             |             | 3,149,594     |
| Programme Development                                    |             |             |             |             | -           | 27,853      |             |             |             |             | 27,853        |
| Research, Monitoring & Eval                              |             |             |             |             |             | 39,480      |             |             |             |             | 39,480        |
| Self Help Africa   |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |               |
| <i>Coordination, Management and Oversight, M&amp;E *</i> |             |             |             |             |             |             | 668,534     | 291,741     | 251,857     | 261,603     | 1,473,736     |
| <i>Direct Implementation Costs *</i>                     |             |             |             |             |             |             | 681,466     | 1,008,259   | 1,048,143   | 1,078,397   | 3,816,264     |
| Self Help Africa total grant                             |             |             |             |             |             |             | 1,350,000   | 1,300,000   | 1,300,000   | 1,340,000   | 5,290,000     |
| Total  | 5,715,321   | 2,977,722   | 1,535,420   | 2,124,891   | 2,329,664   | 817,155     | 2,553,813   | 2,355,000   | 1,790,000   | 2,020,000   | 24,218,986    |

\* estimated breakdown between the two broad categories, based on annual reporting with adjustments to improve cross-year consistency (yr1 includes purchase of vehicle, motorcycles and equipment)

Source: Irish Embassy Lusaka

The subsequent cycle of the Local Development Programme, (IALDP, 2013–2017) saw further consolidation with the closure of the Irish Aid office in Kasama and a shift to implementation through a management agent (with oversight from Irish Aid in Lusaka). 70% of activities were implemented directly with communities while the remainder were delivered in cooperation with local authorities. The stated objective of the IALDP was to improve the livelihoods, health status, food and nutrition security of poor households in Northern Province. Other areas of cooperation included strengthening the planning and implementation capacity of Luwingu and Mbala councils, including strengthening their financial management capacity. A consortium of CGIAR (comprising of the World Fish Center, CIFOR and Harvest Plus) was also engaged to carry out research activities alongside the LDP.

The indicative budget was €9,350,000 for the 5 years of the CSP. At the time of this evaluation, preparations were underway to wind down the management agent programme and transfer certain of its elements to local authorities and District Government departments.

The 2007 to 2012 Making Development Work at Local Level and, to a lesser extent, the Irish Aid Local Development Programme were predicated on the expectation of the roll out of the GRZ National Decentralisation Policy and the capacity building element of both programmes was designed in anticipation of decentralisation. The National Decentralisation Policy was launched in 2004 and re-launched again in 2013 with a commitment to devolve 13 ministries and 15 central government functions to districts by January 2017. The aim was to improve service delivery through the empowerment of local communities and the enhanced capacity of local authorities to plan, finance, and manage the services in their areas. A supporting legal framework to promote autonomy in decision making and enhance local political and administrative authority was also envisaged.

In Cabinet Office Circular Number 10 of 2014, GRZ announced the start of the decentralisation process. This was to include Disaster and Risk Reduction Management; Extension Services under the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock; Primary and Early Education; Adult Literacy; Science, Vocational Training; Early Childhood Education; Primary Health Care; Social Welfare and Community Development; and Urban and Regional Planning.

At the time of the evaluation none of the above had occurred and only the transfer of teachers was in process. Decentralisation of budgets, central to the empowerment of local government, had not happened and was unlikely to take place in any meaningful sense in the short to mid-term. While GRZ continues to make statements in support of the decentralisation agenda, recent political events suggest there is likely to be little political will to devolve power and resources to local government.

### 4.1 CONTRIBUTION TO ENHANCING THE CAPACITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND DISTRICT GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS TO PLAN AND IMPLEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

#### **Summary of main findings:**

- Irish Aid's support to district and provincial authorities was well aligned with and relevant to both the decentralisation agenda of the Government of Zambia as well as Irish Aid's Development priorities;
- There is some evidence that the planning capacities of local authorities were enhanced, although this does not appear to have led to improved service delivery;
- Both enabling and limiting factors were identified which affected the achievement of capacity building outcomes. These are set out below;
- There is little evidence of a strategic approach to capacity building. A more strategic approach to capacity building, or shared understanding of expected capacity building outcomes could have led to greater impact.

**Finding 1:** Irish Aid's support to district and provincial authorities was well aligned with and relevant to both the decentralisation agenda of the government of Zambia as well as Irish Aid's development priorities

Irish Aid's support to the district and provincial authorities under the 2007-2010 (including the 2011-2012 bridging extension) Making Development Work at Local Level, and the 2013-2017 Irish Aid Local Development Programme was relevant and well aligned to the Government of Zambia's (GRZ) decentralisation agenda.

The rationale for decentralisation is to bring government closer to the people by providing citizens with an enhanced role in decision-making processes while also improving service delivery to

communities<sup>17</sup>. The GRZ's Decentralisation Implementation Plan<sup>18</sup> commits to building the capacity of local authorities in budgeting and planning to support the decentralisation process.

In line with this, the 2007-2010 (extended to 2012) Making Development Work at Local Level programme was designed to support decentralised service delivery through strengthening the administrative and governance structures of Mbala, Luwingu, Isoka and Mpika districts in Northern Province.

The 2013-2017 Irish Aid Local Development Programme remained relevant through its commitment to strengthen district authorities (Mbala and Luwingu) with increased planning and implementation capacity, a consequent improved service delivery for local communities, and to build the capacity of community sub-district structures.

The objectives of both Making Development Work at Local Level and the Irish Aid Local Development Programme are strongly aligned with Ireland's Development priorities as set out in the 2006 White Paper<sup>19</sup> and 2013 One World One Future<sup>20</sup>. They are informed by the Irish Aid Local Development Policy, which acknowledges the importance of building capacity of local authorities in the areas of accounting, planning, management, service delivery and infrastructure<sup>21</sup>.

Despite challenges with the decentralisation process, Irish Aid's support has been relevant in preparing councils and local government departments for decentralisation and in general management skills. However, in light of the poor progress in decentralisation the impact of this training has been weakened.

**Finding 2:** There is some evidence that the planning capacities of local authorities were enhanced, although this does not appear to have led to improved service delivery

The first approach (2007–2010, and the 2011-2012 bridging extension) supported capacity building in local authorities for integrated planning as well as service delivery to four (Mpika, Isoka, Mbala and Liwingu) district councils in Northern Province. In 2010, Irish Aid increased support to the Provincial Planning Unit (PPU) for monitoring and oversight of district plans. This appears to have been support through closer cooperation and collaboration, rather than financial support. It involved meetings at technical level and joint monitoring undertakings.

Irish Aid funded activities in District Annual Investment Plans (DAIPs) that were aligned to Irish Aid priorities of HIV and AIDS; governance; and water and sanitation. In 2010, following a review of the programme, Irish Aid untied support to the three sectors of governance, HIV and AIDS, and Water

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<sup>17</sup> Zambia Decentralisation Policy 2002, 2013.

<sup>18</sup> Despite the National Decentralisation Policy being adopted in 2002 and later revised in 2011 under the new Patriotic Government, the first Decentralisation Implementation Plan (DIP) was only formulated in 2004 but only endorsed for implementation in 2009 (DIP 2009-2013). With the revised National Decentralisation Policy came the current DIP 2014-2017

<sup>19</sup> The 2006 White Paper for Irish Aid states that we will "engage with regional authorities on pre-agreed priorities to build official capacity to deliver improved and efficient services across a number of sectors."

<sup>20</sup> Irish Aid, 2013, One World One Future, to 'promote local development and the reduction of poverty at local levels'. P25

<sup>21</sup> Irish Aid, Local Development Policy, 2004.

and Sanitation in an effort to respond to district and community priorities and encourage a multi-sectoral approach.<sup>22</sup>

The 2013-2017 CSP noted continued weak capacity in local authorities and committed to building the financial management capacity of partner councils, through a management agent. As the DAIPs were replaced by a multi-annual planning process, this support aimed to enable the districts to develop strong, well-targeted multi annual plans. Training was provided to councils and line ministries in accounting, monitoring and evaluation, programme management, governance, gender equality and sustainable agriculture and aquaculture.

The evaluation team found mixed evidence that the capacities of local authorities to plan were enhanced. Under the Making Development Work at Local Level Programme, Irish Aid implemented capacity building activities directly through its office in Kasama where advisors could provide face to face support. This evaluation has found that Irish Aid contributed to improved financial and planning capacity in the four districts of Mpika, Isoka, Mbala and Luwingu, consistent with findings of the evaluation of the 2007-2010 CSP. In particular, the support given under the Making Development Work at Local Level from the Irish Aid Internal Auditor was noted as beneficial. This type of technical, expert support was aligned well with the needs of districts at the time.

Both approaches (Irish Aid Local Development Programme and Making Development Work at Local Level) contributed to building the capacity of sub-district structures to enable communities to identify their own priorities and needs. The first approach focused –in line with GRZ Decentralization Policy- on the formation and strengthening of the sub-district Area Development Committees in Mpika, Isoka, Mbala and Luwingu.

In 2010, the Area Development Committees were abolished due to changes in Government and in 2012-2013 were reconstituted as Ward Development Committees (WDCs). The evaluation team heard how the districts of Isoka and Mpika were unable to reconstitute the ADC's as WDCs following the departure of Irish Aid and that some progress made had been reversed.

Under the Irish Aid Local Development Programme, WDCs in Mbala and Luwingu were established and strengthened with the support of the Management Agent. The Provincial Local Government Office cited Mbala as a good example of having strong WDCs. Learning from this was shared with other Districts during a Northern Province Provincial Planning Coordination Meeting.

Capacity building interventions under the second approach appear to have been more effective in Mbala<sup>23</sup> than in Luwingu. There was evidence of improved coordination between the council and line ministries in Mbala. A clear delineation of roles coupled with strong leadership were cited as key factors in this regard. Gender transformative training facilitated by the management agent has resulted in improved collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data by the Department of Social Welfare and District Planners in Mbala.

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<sup>22</sup> Northern Province Review, 2011.

<sup>23</sup> As noted in Finding 3, Mbala is a municipality which, in general, tend to attract staff with higher levels of education.

The management agent reports<sup>24</sup> that Luwingu has ‘repetitive audit queries’<sup>25</sup>. This has led to delays in disbursement of grants to the council which affects the delivery of activities under District Plans. While Mbala was successful in its transition from a District Annual Plan to a Multi-annual Plan, Luwingu has been less so, due in part to recurrent audit issues and limited implementation capacity.

The Irish Aid Local Development Programme has been successful in building the capacity of extension workers in Mbala in the area of conservation agriculture. This was attributed directly to a livelihoods component implemented by the management agent. The evaluation team heard how the management agent successfully links its livelihoods interventions with the local Department of Agriculture.

There is an assumption implicit in both approaches that greater capacity in planning and financial management at district level leads to improved service delivery. There is little evidence that this is yet happening and no clear linkages between Irish Aid support and better service delivery to the poor. Limited resources, both human and financial, remain a constraint.

There are few mechanisms in place to track outcomes from capacity building activities, very few baselines<sup>26</sup> established and therefore it is challenging to measure success in this area.

**Finding 3:** Enabling and limiting factors which affected the achievement of capacity building outcomes were identified. Some of these are within the control of the programme, others are external threats.

Mbala is a municipality, which means officials typically have a higher level of education than their counterparts working at district level (for example in Luwingu). While it is not possible to state the extent to which it is an enabling factor in this instance<sup>27</sup>, there is a strong body of evidence from evaluation of capacity building elsewhere to suggest that educational attainment is a critical factor.

The slow pace of decentralisation, which is recognised in both CSPs, has affected the extent to which progress on capacity building can be sustained. While there was an assumption that Irish Aid funding would be additional to funds provided by GRZ, fiscal decentralisation has not occurred and funds disbursed from central government to district level are limited and unreliable. This impacts on the effectiveness of councils and line ministries.

A consequence of continued centralisation is a high rate of staff turnover at district level. This means that staff trained are frequently subject to rotation and knowledge and capacity is lost to the district. For example, the entire senior level of council officials in Isoka – many of whom were beneficiaries of capacity building investment - had been rotated. The evaluation team found similar

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<sup>24</sup> The 2015 Partners’ Compliance Assessment noted how Luwingu Council getting a ‘Good’ rating, and Mbala Council getting a ‘Very Good’ rating. Luwingu scored 23.8 out of a possible 32, and Mbala scored 26.5 out of 32.

<sup>26</sup> Self-Help Africa is the managing agent under the current Irish Aid Local Development Programme and uses Organisational Capacity Assessments to measure changes in capacity of the Districts.

<sup>27</sup> This was not controlled for in methodology, not due to an absence of evidence

evidence in Mbala with one or more council planners having been moved during the current Irish Aid Local Development Programme.<sup>28</sup>

In the absence of clear progress on decentralisation<sup>29</sup>, it is envisaged that staff turnover will continue at a high rate and capacity building is unlikely to be sustained. The 2007-2010 CSP, its 2011-2012 bridging extension and the 2013-2017 CSP all note staff turnover as a threat to achievement of programme objectives. However, there was little evidence of mitigating measures to address these known knowledge management challenges being factored into the programme. Per diem were paid to council and district staff to attend training. The evaluation noted anecdotal evidence that this was being used as supplementary income and was in some cases undermining capacity building efforts. However, this issue is not unique to Northern Zambia in particular or Zambia in general.

**Finding 4:** There is little evidence of a strategic approach to capacity building. There is no clear, shared understanding of what is understood 'capacity building'

The majority of capacity building interventions appear to have been delivered as technical training and there is little evidence of an accompanying strategy for sustaining or supporting the intervention. The lack of a clear understanding of what 'capacity building' means in this context makes it difficult to measure success as expected outcomes are unclear and that impact could have been greater.

Capacity building interventions were largely supply driven. In some cases training was defined by Irish Aid and/or its management agent. District officials noted that this did not always meet their needs. Capacity building was often ad hoc and did not take into consideration factors such as staff turnover. This is consistent with findings of evaluations of other Irish Aid Local Development Programmes.

In considering the two CSP approaches, some stakeholders noted that building local government capacity through a management agent might be expected to be less effective than government to government. This evaluation found no clear evidence that working through a management agent affected capacity building adversely and respondents gave both positive and negative accounts of both approaches. The evaluation team heard positive accounts of the management agent working well with local authorities in Mbala.

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#### 4.1.1 ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- A more strategic approach to capacity building is required, in which targeted technical training is supported by measures that take explicit account of staff turnover challenges (for example, handover processes, development of manuals) to better support sustainability;

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<sup>28</sup> It is worth noting that while staff turnover can be an impediment to building capacity, the opposite is true in the case of poorly performing or ineffective staff. In the case of Luwingu, staff suspended as a result of procurement irregularities remained in the district upon their return to work and in the same role.

<sup>29</sup> The full devolution of function to councils will result in staffing being controlled by the districts.



- In advance of any capacity building initiative, a baseline survey to establish existing capacity and absorption capacity should be conducted;
- Based on the foregoing, an assessment should be made of the level of engagement required for effective knowledge transfer to determine the viability of an initiative – with particular regard to resource allocation - before it is commissioned.

## 4.2 UNINTENDED OUTCOMES OF THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Evidence was sought on the extent to which positive or negative unintended outcomes were observed over the period under review (2007-2016) and which might be attributed to the Local Development Programme. This evidence was qualitative in nature and gathered largely through interviews.

### Summary of main findings:

- There were some positive unintended outcomes; for example, Irish Aid Local Development Programme research partner, WorldFish, developed a public-private partnership to support elements of its work;
- There was some evidence to suggest that elements of the Irish Aid Local Development Programme may have contributed to an increased time and labour burden for vulnerable

**Finding 5:** There were some positive unintended outcomes observed: for example, Irish Aid Local Development Programme research partner WorldFish developed a public-private partnership to support elements of its work

The evaluation team heard evidence that the Irish Aid Local Development Programme research partner, WorldFish<sup>30</sup>, developed a public-private partnership with a Local Zambian Company. Some fish farmers in remote locations were unable to access fingerlings produced by Misamfu Research Station in Mbala, which impacted negatively on their productivity. In response to this challenge, WorldFish established a public-private partnership with the Great Lakes Products company to develop fingerlings and feed<sup>31</sup>. The partnership, formed under this programme, aims to increase aquaculture production in Northern Province while also creating employment and enabling fish farmers to access locally sourced inputs at lower cost.

While this particular outcome was not envisaged in the research and programme design, the Irish Aid Local Development Programme was sufficiently flexible to allow such outcomes to be achieved.

**Finding 6:** There was some evidence to suggest that elements of the Irish Aid Local Development Programme contributed an increased time and labour burden for vulnerable women.

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<sup>30</sup> WorldFish are part of the CIGAR Consortium implementing the 'Integrated Research in Development for Improved Livelihoods' in conjunction with the Irish Aid Local Development Programme. World Fish is focused on increasing knowledge on integrated fish farming, and increasing the production of improved fish feed.

<sup>31</sup> CIGAR Zambia, Integrated Research in Development for Improved Livelihoods in Northern Province Zambia, 2016.

The Irish Aid Local Development Programme aims 'to improve the nutrition and health status of vulnerable Households in Northern Province<sup>32</sup>' and as part of this objective, women in rural areas are trained in Infant and Young Child Feeding initiatives.

This has been a hugely successful initiative, with has made a clear contribution to improved nutritional outcomes. However, a consequence of this success has been a significant time and labour burden for some women volunteers. Many women in rural Zambia face the double burden of productive and reproductive care and evidence would suggest that the current programme may not have sufficiently taken into account of this and in some cases increased the burden on women. The evaluation team heard how some women had little time to look after the needs of their own households as a result of their involvement in the programme.

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#### 4.2.1 ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Existing MEL frameworks tend to focus attention solely on those outcomes envisaged in the programme design. This can mean important learning opportunities are missed when other events taking place in and around the programme are not recognised as being useful opportunities for learning. While it is important to measure against plans, it is also important to know what is actually happening, and be flexible enough to respond to changes.

Programmes should factor in the time and labour burden faced by participants and stakeholders and consider approaches which seek to minimize - rather than increase- this burden.

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<sup>32</sup> Irish Aid Local Development Programme project document

#### 4.3 MANAGEMENT OF THE TRANSITION BETWEEN MODALITIES OF SUPPORT IN ITS LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IN NORTHERN PROVINCE

Irish Aid changed its approach from working directly with 4 districts under the 2007-2010 CSP to working with only 2 districts and through a management agent under the 2013-2017 CSP. This shift involved a number of transitions on the part of all stakeholders, including:

- exiting from the districts of Mpika and Isoka;
- the transition out of direct implementation in Mbala and Luwingu;
- the transition to a management agent approach in Mbala and Luwingu.

The decision to work through a management agent was informed by findings from a 2009 review of the Northern Province Programme and the 2010 CSP evaluation<sup>33</sup>. Particular concerns were raised regarding time spent by Irish Aid staff on the Local Development Programme; fragmented and unclear development objectives; lack of adequate focus and capacity for effective implementation; and inadequate systems for integrated performance measurement and management<sup>34</sup>.

##### **Summary of main findings:**

- The transition was well-managed from the perspective of the needs of Irish Aid, including its financial management and human resources;
- There was little evidence of a formal transition or exit plan and therefore no clearly stated objectives against which progress or effectiveness of the exit could be measured;
- Legacy projects from the Making Development Work at Local Level placed a significant burden on the management agent;
- Though the process involved reputational risk, there is no evidence that any reputational damage was incurred;
- This transition did not consider possible additional targeted investments that might have helped sustain programme outcomes, protect vulnerable beneficiaries and explore continuation of service delivery;
- Some evidence suggests that the most vulnerable stakeholders were unevenly and negatively impacted by the transition.

**The mission will be rigorous that this doesn't happen in the transition this time in 2018**

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<sup>33</sup> Irish Aid Review of Northern Province Programme, 2009.

<sup>34</sup> Irish Aid Zambia (April 2011) Proposed new approach to Local Development Programme (Northern Province) and Irish Aid Zambia (September 2011) Country Analytical Paper Zambia, Local Development

**Finding 7:** The transition was well-managed from the perspective of the needs of Irish Aid, including its financial management and human resources

As part of the transition and exit, Irish Aid closed its office in Kasama and discharged its staff. The evaluation team met with a number of former staff. Evidence suggests that the exit process was communicated in a timely manner, which led to a relatively smooth closure of the office in Kasama. From an internal Irish Aid perspective, the financial aspects of the transition appear to have been equally well managed. However, from a budgetary perspective, funding mechanisms for partners who were heavily dependent on Irish Aid funding were scaled down too quickly.

**Finding 8:** There was little evidence of a formal transition or exit plan and therefore no clearly stated objectives against which progress or effectiveness of the exit could be measured

At the time of transition (2011-2012) there was little written or formal guidance from Irish Aid HQ on how to manage such processes and the evaluation team recognise this as a limitation.<sup>35</sup> The evaluation found little evidence of a comprehensive transition or exit plan to guide the exit out of Isoka and Mpika and the transition in Mbala and Luwingu. The CSP bridging extension of 2011-2012 makes little reference to an exit plan.

Multiple stakeholders underlined the importance of communicating both the rationale and envisaged timeline for transition and exit. While some observed that there was good communication of the fact of the transition, evidence suggests that there was little communication with partners on the process of exit and transition, or indeed the reason. In some cases communication around the rationale for changing modality and for exiting in Mpika and Isoka was cited as weak and the reasons given were not perceived as credible<sup>36</sup>.

**Finding 9:** The legacy projects from the Making Development Work at Local Level placed a significant burden on the management agent.

Limited consideration was given to the potential burden of managing legacy issues. There were several legacy projects remaining after the transition between the two approaches. The management agent took on responsibility for implementation of activities left over from Making Development Work at Local Level.

In some cases, such as infrastructure projects, these required specialist knowledge which was not available to the management agent, as in the case of the construction of council offices in Luwingu. This project had already been considerably delayed, in part due to procurement challenges, and it placed a considerable burden on the management agent. The finished building is poorly constructed and ran well over budget.

Most importantly, little thought appears to have been given to the time burden of managing legacy issues and the likely impact of this on the next cycle of the Local Development Programme. When the management agent took over in 2013, it inherited a backlog of activities dating back to 2008.

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<sup>35</sup> While current grant management guidelines refer to closing programmes, this was developed in 2015-2016.

<sup>36</sup> The reason given for exit was; Isoka was no longer part of Northern Province and was now part of the newly created Muchingu province.

The length of time required to transition into a new approach was also somewhat underestimated. The necessary administrative supports to deliver the Irish Aid Local Development Programme were not in place until six months into 2013.

**Finding 10:** Though the process involved reputational risk, there is no evidence that this materialised or that reputational damage was incurred

The evaluation team heard from respondents in Isoka how the council building which Irish Aid had supported was left unfinished. Strong relationships built on trust were perceived as having been undermined. Some respondents noted how local authorities had not been well informed of Irish Aid's exit. The evaluation team saw at first-hand physical structures in Luwingu which were poorly built and unsafe. There is potential for reputational damage, both as a result of the poor standard of the structures and from any potential injury as a result.

**Finding 11:** This transition did not consider possible additional targeted investments that might have helped sustain programme outcomes, protect vulnerable beneficiaries and explore continuation of service delivery

Decisions to exit or transition can have negative implications for partners and especially for vulnerable communities, unless their needs are explicitly taken into account at the planning stage. There was little evidence that timelines for exit and transition were differentiated based on the differing capacities of partners or that partners were given time to source alternative funding to sustain progress made.

Informed by the 2009 Making Development Work at Local Level planning review, a decision was taken to end funding to all CSOs in Northern Province by 2010. The evaluation team found little evidence that the funding to CSO's were phased out or scaled down.

The evaluation team visited two of the CSOs to which Irish Aid ended support in 2010, the Society of Women and Aids in Zambia (SWAAZ) and Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) Northern Province.

The withdrawal of support had a significant impact on both. Given the high rates of dependency (SWAAZ was 60% dependent while YWCA was almost 100% dependent<sup>37</sup>) on Irish Aid funding, many

**Irish Aid support to CSOs under Making Development Work at Local Level**

**SWAAZ:** Education and nutritional support to orphans and babies under 5. Agricultural and livelihood inputs for vulnerable households, home based care for people living with or affected by HIV and Aids.

**Households in Distress:** Material support to orphans and vulnerable children such as education and food supplements; home based care to people with HIV and malnourished children under 5; livelihoods support to communities with orphans and vulnerable children.

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<sup>37</sup> Kate Butcher, *Review of Irish Aid Support to HIV and AIDS in the Northern Province of Zambia* (Dec 2008).

interventions could not be sustained. Support to vulnerable communities was reduced, and in some cases withdrawn.

Households in Distress (HID) was the only CSO that Irish Aid continued to fund into the Irish Aid Local Development Programme. The continued funding of HID<sup>38</sup> does not appear to be in line with the objectives of the Irish Aid Local Development Programme and the evaluation team heard conflicting evidence for the rationale for continuing support to HID.

Irish Aid had supported the YWCA in Kasama to provide critical temporary services to children and women who have suffered abuse. This included essential care such as food and counselling. When Irish Aid withdrew its support there was minimal access to alternative funding. The Department of Children provided some small support, although this did not come until 2012, a full year after Irish Aid support ended.

Evidence suggests that the manner in which support for shared projects with local councils and CSOs in Isoka and Mpika was ended left partners little time to put contingency plans in place and risked reversing progress that had been made. There was limited evidence of sustainability analysis, assessment of progress achieved to date or analysis of the impact of transfer of full responsibility for programme activities on partners.

**Finding 12:** Some evidence suggests that the most vulnerable stakeholders were unevenly and negatively impacted by the transition.

Irish Aid's withdrawal from Mpika and Isoka had significant impact on the most vulnerable stakeholders. In the case of the programme supported by SWAAZ, which provided home based care for people living with HIV and AIDS, communities tried themselves to bridge the gaps left. The evaluation team heard that community members came together to provide voluntary care, however this was frequently unreliable and unevenly distributed.

Also with SWAAZ, Irish Aid had been supporting orphaned children to attend secondary school. When the support ceased, children were left in school unsure if they would be able to finish their studies. Some schools supported students by waiving fees, however, many of the children were had difficulty in accessing their exam results. Please see the box below for case study.

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<sup>38</sup> Irish Aid Zambia ceased funding to Households in Distress in 2010 and began funding them again in 2012.

**Matika Mwele** is 17 and lives in the Isoka District of Northern Province. Matika was orphaned at young age. His mother died of AIDS and he was raised by his grandmother. Matika is living with HIV and is receiving anti-retroviral treatment. He and his grandmother were receiving support from Irish Aid through SWAAZ, which supported him to attend secondary school. **He remembers the day when he was told Irish Aid were no longer in a position to fund his education.** “I had to do piece works to get money to stay in school. I tried - all I wanted was education”. Matika had 2 years left of school when Irish Aid ended its support. Through his own determination Matika secured an agreement with his school to let him finish his last two years. He took his final secondary school exams and got top marks. Unfortunately, Matika is unable to graduate or receive his results due to problems paying fees in the last year.



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#### 4.3.1 CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Transitioning between ways of working can lead to confusion and interruptions in service delivery, unless there are clear plans supported by effective risk management and business continuity planning. While it appears that Irish Aid has been good at managing those elements of transition that affect its own institution(s), it is important that partners and beneficiaries are also explicitly factored into transition planning.

- Transition and exit should be planned with differentiated timelines that take into consideration partner capacity to sustain progress; capacity of partners to take over activities and interventions; and time required to look for alternative sources of funding;
- There is a need for a more formalised IA guidance on ending projects, transitioning and exit;
- Any new programme should factor in sufficient lead in time to allow for establishment and setting up; expectations regarding results should be managed accordingly.



#### 4.4 REINFORCING OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COUNTRY STRATEGY FOR ZAMBIA

##### Summary of findings on linkages:

- There was some evidence that the Local Development Programme was used to enhance engagement with the SUN initiative under the 2013-2017 CSP. The evaluation found little evidence of the Local Development Programme reinforcing other aspects of the 2007-2010/12 CSP.
- The local development programme was siloed and, in effect, treated as a stand-alone programme.

**Finding 13** There was some evidence that the local development programme was used to strengthen engagement with the SUN Initiative under the 2013-2017 CSP. The evaluation found little evidence of the local development programme being used to strengthen engagement with other aspects of the 2007-2013 CSP.

The evaluation found some evidence to suggest the local development programme was being used to strengthen Irish Aid's engagement in the SUN<sup>39</sup> initiative under the 2013-2017 CSP. The management agent worked with the SUN co-ordinator to develop the Mbala nutrition strategy, and the management's agent's nutrition surveys have been used by the SUN initiative to develop baseline data on nutrition<sup>40</sup>. The evaluation team heard how other donors in the SUN pool fund have been able to use Irish Aid's strong presence in Northern Province to address bottlenecks in the SUN programme in Mbala.

There was strong evidence to suggest that there was increased engagement of Irish Aid Lusaka-based staff in the Local Development Programme in the earlier 2007-2010/12 CSP. Despite the Local Development Policy not explicitly working in the Education sector, the evaluation found some evidence of it being used to strengthen Irish Aid's engagement in the education sector at the central level. For example; in 2010 a tracking study<sup>41</sup> was undertaken in Northern Province, the findings of which significantly enhanced Irish Aid engagement in education at the central level.

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<sup>39</sup> Scaling Up Nutrition 1,000 days' programme which has been developed by the National Food and Nutrition Commission of Zambia. The programme aims to scale up selected priority interventions in different sectors for which there is a global and national evidence base of cost effectiveness in reducing child stunting. Irish Aid Zambia provide support to the programme through the pooled SUN partnership fund under the 2013-2017 CSP.

<sup>40</sup> Irish Aid Local Development Programme annual report, 2016.

<sup>41</sup> Chileshe, J 'Limited Verification of 2010 Funds flow to Schools and Management of Bursaries' (2010)

The evaluation team found little additional evidence that the Local Development Programme strengthened other elements of the 2007-2010/12 CSP. This finding is in line with the 2007-2010 Zambia CSP evaluation.

**Finding 14:** The local development programme was siloed and, in effect, treated as a stand-alone programme.

While recognising that the 2010 Zambia CSP evaluation found the Making Development Work at Local Level to be isolated from the rest of the 2007-2010/12 CSP, evidence from this evaluation would suggest that the Local Development Programme became even more siloed due to the change in approach from direct implementation to the use of a management agent. The delegation of delivery of the Local Development Programme and consequent reduced Irish Aid presence in Northern Province have impacted on the extent to which potential linkages and reinforcement can be exploited. Also the spread across 5 different thematic areas in the CSP meant that staff's time was spread across (1) SUNFund/Nutrition, (2) Education, (3) Social protection (4) Governance, (5) Local development.

The evaluation team note that this is not the only factor in its isolation. Distances and difficulties with travel are also noted as contributing factors e.g. the programme is more than 1000 km from the embassy, and the infrastructure is in poor state.

The evaluation team recognise that in 2017 new, multi-disciplinary approaches are being applied at the time of this study. As a result of this Irish Aid Zambia programme officers have been increasing their engagement with the Local Development Programme.

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#### 4.4.1 CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- Local Development Programme priority sectors should correspond with programme and policy priorities at central level for learning to be transferrable;
- Closer engagement of IA staff, including more visits to Northern Province, is required if opportunities for reinforcement between the Local Development Programme and other aspects of the CSP are to be exploited

### Summary of findings for policy dialogue

- There is mixed evidence of learning at the local level used to influence policy dialogue;
- Irish Aid Zambia is not consistent in targeting sectors in which to influence policy;
- Irish Aid Zambia local advisors are well respected within their sectors, with an ability to exert influence. However, frequent changing of CSP priorities risks undermining this. (we now plan a 10 year horizon and stable policy priorities)
- The evaluation found little evidence of a lesson learning strategy which would enable lesson from the local development programme be fed into national level dialogue.
- There was a perceived lack of 'Irish Aid' visibility under the current local development approach. However, the evaluation team found no evidence to support this.

### **Finding 15** There is mixed evidence of learning at the local level to influence policy dialogue.

Taking learning from the local level to inform national level dialogue<sup>42</sup> is one of the stated objectives of Irish Aid Zambia's Local Development Programme. This is in line with the objectives of the Irish Aid Local Development Policy; 'Informed national policy development through lesson learning systems that allows government and partners to develop policy informed by the realities on the ground'.<sup>43</sup> The 2007-2010/12 CSP pledged to undertake monitoring at local level to develop an understanding of how national programmes and government programmes were working at a local level.

This evaluation identified some lessons from the 2007-2010/12 local development programme which were used to inform dialogue at the central level. Until 2010, Irish Aid Zambia had a long history of supporting water and sanitation infrastructure in Northern Province. Lessons from this were used to negotiate with the Ministry of Local Government and Housing to set up the Rural Water and Sanitation Programme to fund water interventions from the central level.

The evaluation team found little to no evidence that Irish Aid Zambia-under the 2013-2017 CSP- took lessons from the Local Development Programme to inform national policy dialogue. Where emerging lessons were identified, these were being learned by the management agent and in some cases the Provincial Government. There was no evidence that lessons were taken by Irish Aid Zambia and fed into its national level policy dialogue. Some examples include the management agent sharing lessons

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<sup>42</sup> Zambia Country Strategy Papers, 2007-2010, bridging extension 2011-2012, 2013-2017

<sup>43</sup> Communities – Irish Aid Local Development Policy (2008), p.12

with the Northern Province Provincial Government on its experience of forming and strengthening WDCs and lessons on nutrition used to enhance engagement with SUN in Mbala.

The evaluation identified some missed learning opportunities within the current Local Development Programme. In particular taking evidence-based lessons from the research element of the programme to help strengthen Irish Aid Zambia's engagement in its support to nutrition at central level. Irish Aid, through the Irish Aid Local Development Programme, supports the partner Harvest Plus to promote nutritious varieties of maize known as 'Orange Maize'. There is significant evidence to suggest that the production and consumption of pro-vitamin A orange maize can help with child malnutrition<sup>44</sup>. There was an opportunity to link more closely the lessons coming from this research element of the programme with Irish Aid's work in support of SUN.

While the extent to which learning from the Local Development Programme was used to influence policy in Irish Aid at HQ and more broadly was not within the Terms of reference for this evaluation, there was evidence that learning from Local Development Programme was used to inform the Terms of reference of the Hunger Task Force in 2008.

While some small examples were cited, the evaluation found that the Local Development Programme had limited success in realising this objective.

**Finding 16** Irish Aid Zambia is not consistent in targeting sectors in which to influence policy

The evaluation found that there is a lack of consistency in Irish Aid's approach to the sectors it prioritises for policy influencing. This can lead to inconsistent messaging, which undermines perceived legitimacy as an influencer. The findings of this evaluation are in line with those of the previous evaluation, that there was little consideration given to which lessons Irish Aid wished to prioritise and how these might be used in dialogue

There was strong qualitative evidence that Irish Aid Zambia was perceived as having particular strengths in the areas of education, HIV and AIDS and WASH under the 2007-2010/12 CSP. This led to a building of trust and support with other development partners and Government Departments. The subsequent bridging CSP and 2013-2017 CSP changed policy priorities and ended support to HIV and AIDS and WASH. As a result, many valuable networks were abandoned and access to Government was limited.

The 2013-2017 Local Development Programme has a dual focus of sustainable livelihoods and capacity building of local government. The evaluation found little evidence that Irish Aid Zambia engaged with national forums which focused on local governance, decentralisation and/or agriculture and livelihoods. The evaluation found weak engagement between Irish Aid Zambia and the Ministry of Local Government and Housing, the Decentralisation Secretariat or with policy forums which focus on Local Development Programme priorities. This resulted in fewer opportunities to share the lessons from Northern Province.

A number of donor and government respondents commented on the issue of legitimacy in policy influencing, noting that credibility can be undermined if a donor appears as less expert than those it wishes to influence. Factors affecting legitimacy included insufficient understanding of GRZ priorities and perceived lack of expertise in the policy area. Ireland was recognised as having particular legitimacy to speak on issues related to hunger and resilience. The mere fact of having a Local Development Programme in Northern Province was seen as enhancing this legitimacy, despite the fact that most external interlocutors knew little of the detail of the programme.

**Finding 17:** Irish Aid Zambia local advisors are well respected within their sectors with an ability to influence. However, frequent changing of CSP priorities risks undermining this resource.

Irish Aid Zambia local advisors are very experienced and have strong institutional as well as local knowledge. The evaluation team met with a number of actors with whom Irish Aid engages to influence policy. These included government representatives at national and provincial level, multilateral organisations and other donors. These were unanimous in their praise of the competence and professionalism of the Irish Aid team of policy advisors and programme managers. However, changes in priorities in each of the CSP cycles under evaluation has led to valuable networks being lost as programme staff move out of one policy area and into another<sup>45</sup>. Such regular changes in sectoral priorities suggests that there may not be sufficient appreciation for the investments required, time and commitment, to influence policy.

This is not helped by an apparent absence of shared understanding across IA as to what the benefits and continued relevance of Local Development Programmes as a component of country strategies might be. When asked what they understood the rationale of Local Development Programmes to be, Irish Aid staff at HQ, in Zambia and in other Key Partner Countries gave a number of different replies, the least consistent responses coming from HQ-based officers. There does not appear to be a shared understanding of why we continue to support Local Development Programmes.

The evaluation also found a lack of strategic approach to delivering certain objectives of the Local Development Programme, in particular the capacity-building and lesson-learning aspects. With regard to the latter, this was the most commonly-cited rationale for a Local Development Programme, yet we found little evidence of a pro-active approach to capturing learning and supporting its communication through appropriate structures and resourcing.

**Finding 18:** The evaluation team found little evidence of a lesson learning strategy which would enable lesson from the local development programme be fed into national level dialogue.

The evaluation team found no evidence, under either CSP of a framework to support collection of lessons from the Local Development Programme in order to influence policy at the central level. The evaluation of the 2007-2010 CSP stated that lesson learning 'had not worked well'<sup>46</sup> despite this being a pillar of the CSP. While the (2013 – 2017) CSP commits to addressing this absence, in practice the findings of the previous evaluation in this regard remain valid for the current and lesson

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<sup>45</sup> Irish Aid moved out of the HIV and AIDS sector in 2010 and significantly reduced their support to the education sector in the current 2013-2017 CSP.

<sup>46</sup> Mokoro (2012) Evaluation of the Irish Aid Zambia Country Strategy Paper 2001 – 2010 p.86

learning opportunities continue to be missed in the absence of an holistic, strategic approach to lesson learning.

**Finding 19:** There was a perceived lack of visibility under the current approach by Irish Aid Zambia staff. However, the evaluation team found no evidence to support this.

Loss of visibility was cited by many HQ and Lusaka-based Irish Aid staff as a consequence of working through a management agent. However, absence of visibility was not evidenced during the fieldwork, and the Irish Aid brand was clearly visible in the province and remains recognised. The attribution of the work in Northern Province to the management agent was a concern for Irish Aid Lusaka. However, over the course of several weeks of fieldwork by the evaluation team, it was clear that there was broad awareness that the Irish Aid Local Development was an ‘Irish Aid’ programme.

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#### 4.5.1 CONCLUSION AND ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- The evaluation found mixed evidence of learning from the local level being used to inform national level policy dialogue. A number of key factors were identified which enhance policy influencing: a clear set of policy priorities, consistency of messaging, learning strategy.
- A more strategic approach to policy influencing should be adopted. This should consider the change sought and set out clearly the resources required – particularly time – to effect change.
- Given the modest human and financial resources of Irish Aid in Zambia there are inevitable challenges to find a balance between the constancy required for effective policy influencing and the need to respond to evolving context in Zambia. The next CSP should take explicit account of this;
- A process to preserve institutional memory should be developed to facilitate communication, lesson learning and knowledge transfer, in order to support policy influencing;
- Irish Aid may wish to explore opportunities to cooperate with other agencies working at a local level in Zambia to consolidate learning and build critical mass to inform policy dialogue nationally.

## 4.6 SUSTAINABILITY

In evaluating this question, the team referred to the definition of sustainability in the DFAT Evaluation Operations Manual<sup>47</sup> and the SIDA Evaluation Manual as: ‘the continuation or longevity of benefits from a development intervention after the cessation of development assistance’<sup>48</sup>. The issue of sustainability was highly relevant to all areas explored, in particular given the length of time that Irish Aid has been present in Northern Province. While this evaluation can make some assessment as to the extent to which interventions of the Making Development Work at Local Level Programme have been sustained, it can only make observations on the potential of current interventions to be sustained

### Summary of findings

- The evaluation found no evidence that the type of modality/approach was a significant factor in the sustainability of results.
- The team identified factors which affected sustainability of the activities in the first approach and these factors can contribute to learning on sustainability.

**Finding 20:** The evaluation found no evidence that the type of modality/approach was a significant factor in the sustainability of results.

Factors affecting sustainability were identified under both modalities, although the approach to implementation does not appear in itself to have been a contributing factor to sustainability.

There seems to have been a presumption in both approaches that working closely with government would help to ensure sustainability. This accords with the Aid Effectiveness agenda, in particular building capacity of local government structures to take on development activities. Nonetheless, evidence suggests that the extent to which this assumption could be realised was affected by a number of factors.

There is no evidence that the Making Development Work at Local Level approach of working directly with local government made programme results more sustainable. As the Irish Aid Local Development is still ongoing at the time of writing, this evaluation cannot comment on whether the current approach will have an effect on sustainability.

Examples of projects sustained after Irish Aid withdrawal in 2011/12 include water kiosks (peri urban water programme implemented by CARE and handed over to Chambeshi) in Mbala, Mpika and

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<sup>47</sup> Evaluation Operation Manual, DFAT, 2010.

<sup>48</sup> Looking Back, Moving Forward-SIDA Evaluation Manual, 2004, pg. 25

Luwingu; some school buildings, although others were not in good repair, in some cases with structural issues identified.

In Mpika health centres built by Irish Aid had solar panels installed to support delivery suites, and most of these were still operational and well maintained. Other infrastructural projects had been sustained such as the Area Development Committee premises, which is now being used as a local, informal police station.

There is evidence to suggest that capacity building interventions in Isoka and Mpika had not been sustained. Many of the council officers who received extensive training are no longer in place. Many of the limiting factors (addressed above and below) such as high staff turnover impacted on the sustainability of capacity building interventions.

**Finding 21:** The team identified factors which affected sustainability of the activities in the first approach and these factors can contribute to learning on sustainability.

The evaluation identified several factors which affect sustainability. Some are within the control of programme management, while others are external threats and difficult to mitigate.

- **Programme Cycle Timelines:** development programmes are typically delivered in 3- 5 year cycles while poverty alleviation, in particular when working with the most vulnerable, is an ongoing process. The programme cycle timelines in the Local Development Programme have encouraged regular change in programme modality and have also worked against sustainability.
- **Lack of strategic approach to capacity building:** while the Local Development Programme has worked with local government, there have been challenges (described above in Chapter 5) which have limited the extent to which interventions can be sustained.
- **Changes in government:** this brings changes in priorities and in some cases progress made by Irish Aid can become irrelevant and obsolete. In 2007-2011 Irish Aid supported the construction and formulation of Area Development Committees (ADC) groups and built centres for their activities - as per a government circular. With a change in government in 2011- ADCs were abolished and much of the progress and investment made was lost.
- **Staff turnover in councils and local government departments:** this has had a significant impact on sustaining capacity built in local government. The approach to capacity building was limited and seems to have been less about strengthening the institution and more on building individual capacities. The full devolution of functions under the Decentralisation plan will include Human Resources functions – hopefully leading to less staff turnover though this cannot be guaranteed.
- **Financial and technical capacity of partners:** evidence suggests that there was limited analysis undertaken to identify the capacity of partners to sustain activities. Under the current CSP, for example, more than 300 Livelihood Enhancement Groups (LEGs) have been established, which is far in excess of what the Ministry of Agriculture can support and resource. These will be supported to phase out in the transition programme.



- **Community involvement and participation:** well-sustained interventions such as the radio stations supported by Irish Aid have strong community involvement. In some cases communities have provided additional funds. In projects where community ownership is evident, this has been a contributing factor to sustainability.
- **The political will of the government** is a key issue in sustaining progress. In the absence of further resources and a re-renewed drive to support pro poor interventions these interventions will have a lesser chance of success.
- There is strong evidence to suggest that councils and line ministries in Mbala and Luwingu do not have sufficient absorptive capacity to sustain the current Irish Aid Local Development Programme activities if the management agent withdraws or if the programme is scaled down.

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#### 4.6.1 CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- Factors that might affect sustainability should be considered at the design and implementation phase of the programme and potential mitigation strategies designed
- A longer-term vision for poverty alleviation, particularly when working with very vulnerable beneficiaries, should be adopted in order to allow for realistic timeframes to ensure the sustainability of interventions;
- Where an intervention is not considered to be sustainable, an appropriate timeline for its withdrawal should be decided in order to minimise impact on vulnerable beneficiaries and protect the original aid investment. This would also help mitigate reputational risk for Irish Aid.

## 4.7 IRISH AID ZAMBIA'S CROSSCUTTING ISSUES

Irish Aid Zambia's 2007 – 2010 CSP, and the 2011-2012 bridging extension adopted 'mainstreaming' as one of its core strategies underpinning its pillars. It was intended to; 'highlight the linkages between the cross-cutting issues and Irish Aid interventions, with particular focus on addressing HIV and AIDS, gender inequality and governance challenges'<sup>49</sup>.

The 2013 – 2017 CSP committed to mainstream HIV and AIDS, gender inequality, environmental sustainability and good governance. The CSP noted that there were greater opportunities for addressing environmental sustainability in the Local Development Programme than in other parts of the programme.

OWOF sets out Ireland's commitment to 'ensuring that issues of gender, the environment, HIV and AIDS, and government are at the centre of our planning, implementation and evaluation'<sup>50</sup>.

The evaluation identified achievements in mainstreaming some cross-cutting issues. However, there was no evidence of a strategic approach to mainstreaming, or how cross-cutting issues would be mainstreamed in the Local Development Programme.

The Irish Aid Local Development Programme has a gender focus by empowering vulnerable women, in particular female headed households to participate in community local development, and supporting their livelihoods. There is strong evidence<sup>51</sup> to suggest that the current programme under the management agent has led to more women participating in sub district structures, livelihood enhancement groups, and mother to mother groups. More women have been able to join credit and savings groups and significantly increase their accumulation of savings<sup>52</sup>.

The evaluation team heard how council planners and local government staff have been able to utilize skills in the collection and analysis of gender disaggregated data- learned from training in gender transformative approaches delivered by the management agent. However, the evaluation found little evidence that district strategic plans included more gender focussed interventions.

On analysis of reports, performance data and qualitative interviews- the evaluation team identified some challenges in relation to how gender equality is understood within the local development programme. Much of the reporting is based on counting the number of women participating in activities, with less measurement of the meaningful changes in power dynamics at the community level or behavioural change within local government. Another challenge (already noted) was the unintended outcome of increasing of women's time and labour burden.

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<sup>49</sup> Irish Aid Zambia 2007-2010 CSP.

<sup>50</sup> Ireland's International Development Policy, One World One Future p13.

<sup>51</sup> Baseline established by management agent and monitored annually

<sup>52</sup> Irish Aid Local Development Programme 2016 annual report

The mainstreaming of HIV and AIDS was noted as being more successful under Making Development Work at Local Level than in the current approach. This is partly due to the fact that HIV and AIDS was one of Irish Aid Zambia's key priority areas in the 2007-2010 CSP.

The Irish Aid Local Development Programme focusses on environmental sustainability, resilience and climate change. Trainings have been held to sensitise farmers, agricultural extension workers and traditional leaders on climate sensitive approaches to agriculture, such as conservation agriculture. The programme has also encouraged local authorities to include disaster risk reduction interventions in district plans, and to review and monitor on a regular basis.

While recognising some of the aforementioned achievements, the evaluation found no evidence of an accompanying strategy on 'how' to mainstream its cross cutting issues into the local development programme. This impacted on the extent to which both Irish Aid Zambia and its partners could effectively mainstream.

Moving forward, Irish Aid Zambia should develop a mainstreaming strategy to include:

- clear entry points into the local development programme;
- how data will be collected on mainstreaming;
- allocated resources, responsibilities and timelines.

### **Continued Relevance**

The evaluation found that Irish Aid's support to district and provincial authorities was well aligned and relevant to both the decentralisation agenda of the Government of Zambia as well as Irish Aid's Development priorities.

It is clear that Irish Aid is regarded as having legitimacy in addressing issues of hunger and vulnerability by virtue of its Local Development Programmes. Some learnings from the Local Development Programme are feeding into policy initiatives, such as the Hunger Taskforce, as well as Ireland's engagement in multilateral fora, however there is a lack of clarity regarding the benefits and continued relevance of Local Development Programmes as a component of country strategies. The two rationale most frequently cited for having a Local Development Programme in Northern Province are to influence policy dialogue and reach the poorest and most vulnerable; however the approach to achieving either goal does not appear to be strategic. Frequent shifts in sectoral priorities often undermine the capacity of Irish Aid to influence policy.

### **Transition**

The transition was well-managed from the perspective of the needs of Irish Aid, including its financial management and human resources. Despite this, there was little evidence of a formal transition or exit plan and therefore no clearly stated objectives against which progress or effectiveness can be measured. Legacy projects from the Making Development Work at Local Level placed a significant burden on the management agent. When the management agent took over, it inherited a backlog of activities dating back to 2008. The length of time required to transition into a new approach was also underestimated. The necessary administrative supports to deliver the Irish Aid Local Development Programme were not in place until six months into 2013.

This transition did not consider possible additional targeted investments that might have helped sustain programme outcomes, protect vulnerable beneficiaries and explore continuation of service delivery. The manner in which support for shared projects with local councils and CSOs in Isoka and Mpika was ended left partners little time to put contingency plans in place. Evidence suggests that the most vulnerable beneficiaries were unevenly and negatively impacted during this period and risked reversing progress that had been made. There was limited evidence of sustainability analysis, assessment of progress achieved to date or analysis of the impact of transfer of full responsibility for programme activities on partners.

## **Capacity Building**

While there is some evidence that Irish Aid has contributed to enhancement of the planning capacities of local authorities, this does not appear to have led to improved service delivery. There is also little evidence of a strategic approach to capacity building. There does not appear to be a clear, shared understanding of what is understood 'capacity building'.

## **Results Expectations**

Expectations of results for the Local Development Programme within five year cycles have been overly optimistic. Constraints of both working through government systems and with vulnerable communities were not always taken into account. There appears to have been insufficient appreciation of how change occurs. Some of this may be attributed to poor knowledge management and institutional memory. Despite several decades of engagement in NP, there is no evidence that planning was informed by an understanding of change or results based on learnings from experience.

## **Targeting the poorest and most vulnerable communities**

The management agent is effective in addressing the food and nutrition security needs of vulnerable households. Interventions targeted at the poorest and most vulnerable community members require time and investment to approach sustainability.

A review of the transition from Making Development Work at Local Level provided clear lessons about how the vulnerability of beneficiaries can be increased if a programme is ended too quickly. Decisions to end or change programmes must be made on the basis of a comprehensive and realistic analysis of the capacities of both partners and beneficiaries to respond to programme interventions and sustain change. Any decision to adopt a change of approach will need to allow sufficient time for transition so as not to undermine aid investments.

1. Transition and exit should be planned with differentiated timelines that take into consideration: partner capacity to sustain progress; capacity of partners to take over activities and interventions; and time required to look for alternative sources of funding;
2. There is a need for more formalised Irish Aid guidance on ending projects, transitioning and exit. Any new programme should factor in sufficient lead in time to allow for establishment and setting up; expectations regarding results should be managed accordingly.
3. A more strategic approach to capacity building is required, in which targeted technical training is supported by measures that take explicit account of staff turnover challenges. Further to this, in advance of any capacity building initiative, a baseline survey to establish existing capacity and absorption capacity should be conducted. Based on this survey, an assessment should be made of the level of engagement required for effective knowledge transfer to determine the viability of an initiative – with particular regard to resource allocation - before it is commissioned.
4. Local Development Programme priority sectors should be coherent with programme and policy priorities at central level for learning to be transferrable;
5. There should be closer engagement of Irish Aid staff with the Local Development Programme, including strategic, visits to Northern Province,
6. A more strategic approach to policy influencing should be adopted. This should consider the change sought and set out clearly the resources required – particularly time – to effect change.
7. Given the modest human and financial resources of Irish Aid in Zambia there are inevitable challenges to find a balance between the constancy required for effective policy influencing and the need to respond to evolving context in Zambia. The 2018 – 2022 Mission Strategy should take explicit account of this;
8. A process to preserve institutional memory should be developed to facilitate communication, lesson learning and knowledge transfer in order to support policy influencing;
9. Irish Aid may wish to explore opportunities to cooperate with other agencies working at a local level in Zambia to consolidate learning and build critical mass to inform policy dialogue nationally.
10. Factors that might affect sustainability should be considered at the design and implementation phase of the programme and potential mitigation strategies designed
11. A longer-term vision for poverty alleviation, particularly when working with very vulnerable beneficiaries, should be adopted in order to allow for realistic timeframes to ensure the sustainability of interventions;
12. Where an intervention is not considered to be sustainable, an appropriate timeline for its withdrawal should be decided in order to minimise impact on vulnerable beneficiaries and protect the original aid investment. This would also help mitigate reputational risk for Irish Aid.
13. Unintended outcomes should be factored into Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning frameworks.

**Evaluation of Irish Aid's Local Development Programme in  
Northern Province, Zambia, 2007-2016**

**INDIVIDUAL CONSULTANT PROCUREMENT NOTICE**

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is seeking to contract the services (External Contract for Services) of an Evaluation Specialist (individual consultant) to support an independent evaluation of Irish Aid's Local Development Programme in Northern Province, Zambia, for the period 2007-2016.

**1. Introduction**

Irish Aid, the Irish Government programme for overseas development, was established in 1974, with a focus on the fight against poverty and hunger in some of the world's least developed countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Ireland's Policy for International Development 'One World One Future' sets out Ireland's commitment to a sustainable and just world, where people are empowered to overcome poverty and hunger and fully realise their rights and potential.

Ireland established its official aid programme in Zambia in 1980, building on the long tradition of Irish missionary and development work in the country, and in 1982 set up a focussed Local Development Programme in Northern Province. Our programme in Zambia is helping to deliver improvements in the lives of poor people, especially in rural areas. In doing so, we work with a variety of partner organisations at national and local level, including government and non-governmental organisations.

The Northern Province consistently appears as one of the poorest provinces in Zambia. The incidence of poverty is estimated at 75%<sup>53</sup> with over 50% of people living in extreme poverty. Food poverty levels are 72.4% and 49% of children under-five are stunted. The Sixth National Development Plan (SNDP) reports that deforestation, land degradation, poor infrastructure and weak access to social services have all impeded development in the Province.

The Irish Aid programme initially included a wide variety of activities and partners in all districts in the province. In its 2007-2012 Country Strategy (CS), a decision was taken to reduce the number of districts to four. The Local Development Programme supported the Local Authorities and Government district departments to improve their integrated planning and implementation capacities in readiness for the anticipated rolling out of the decentralisation policy agreed by the Government.

Originally support was limited to three thematic areas: Governance; Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Education; and HIV and AIDS. After 2010, the thematic areas were opened out to address priorities

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<sup>53</sup> (2010, Living Conditions Monitoring Survey)

identified locally. The programme was implemented directly by Irish Aid staff stationed in an office premises in the Northern Province. That programme was called ‘Making Development Work at Local Level’.

The anticipated roll-out of decentralisation by the Government during the 2007-2012 CS period did not take place and, as a result, a change of modality – the use of a non-governmental organisation that would work closely with government departments - was recommended for the 2013 - 2017 CS. It had also become apparent that interventions at the community/household level were too thinly spread across four districts, making it difficult to see any meaningful impact. For this reason, the number of districts was reduced further from four to two: Mbala and Luwingu Districts. The new modality planned to use an integrated approach to improve rural livelihoods by targeting interventions at those most vulnerable and addressing household food and nutrition security.

Following a competitive bidding process, Self Help Africa (SHA) was selected to implement the programme, entitled ‘Irish Aid Local Development Programme’. Alongside the Irish Aid Local Development Programme, a consortium of three CGIAR centres (World Fish Centre, Harvest Plus and the Centre for International Forestry Research) were engaged to carry out operational research, the results of which would inform the main programme for implementation. A mid-term review of the Irish Aid Local Development Programme was conducted in 2015 by a team of local and international consultants.

Planning has commenced for a new strategy for Ireland’s engagement in Zambia and, to support this process, it is proposed to conduct **an independent evaluation of the performance of the Local Development Programme in Northern Province over the period 2007-2016**. Learning from this evaluation will inform decision making for the Embassy of Ireland in planning Zambia’s Mission Strategy 2018 – 2022 as well as broader considerations of the benefits, added value and sustainability of Local Development Programmes across Irish Aid more generally.

## 2. The Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is:

- ▶ To provide Irish Aid with an independent, evidence-based assessment of the performance of the Local Development Programme in Northern Province for the period 2007 to 2016;
- ▶ To provide accountability to the Governments and peoples of Ireland and Zambia for the support provided to the Northern Province during the period 2007 to 2016, and to identify lessons learned to inform future Irish Aid decision-making both locally in Zambia and within Irish Aid more generally; and
- ▶ To contribute to wider learning relating to the support of Local Development Programmes.

## 3. Scope of the Evaluation

Guided by the OECD-DAC’s Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance and Quality Standards for Development Evaluation, the evaluation will examine the performance of the Local



Development Programme in Northern Province for the period 2007 to 2016, with particular focus on the following:

*Examining intended outcomes:*

- To what extent did Irish Aid contribute to enhancing the capacities of the Local authorities and district Government departments to plan and implement development programmes?
- What were the enabling and limiting factors that affected achievement?

*Capturing unintended outcomes:*

- What unintended outcomes (positive or negative) were observed?

*Managing transition:*

- How effectively did Irish Aid manage the transition between modalities of support in its Local Development Programme in Northern Province?

*Learning from the local level to influence national policy:*

- To what extent have the lessons from the Local Development Programme supported Irish Aid's capacity to influence policy dialogue at provincial and national level?

*Sustainability:*

- To what extent did the modalities of support used in the Local Development Programme affect the sustainability of programme results?
- What other factors affected the sustainability of programme results?
- To what extent did the modality used help to achieve programme results?

*Linkages:*

- To what extent did the Local Development Programme reinforce other aspects of the Country Strategy for Zambia?

## 4. Evaluation Phases and Methodology

The evaluation will be a transparent and participatory process involving relevant stakeholders, partners and beneficiaries. A mixed method approach is anticipated. Innovation and creativity in methodology and approach are welcomed.

Four cross-cutting issues inform all of the work of Irish Aid: these are Gender, Environment, HIV and AIDS, and Governance, all of which are mainstreamed and taken into account in the planning, implementation and evaluation of all of Irish Aid interventions. In line with Irish Aid's mainstreaming approach, the evaluation will ensure women, men, and vulnerable groups such as female headed households and persons affected by HIV and AIDS are considered at all stages of the evaluation<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>54</sup> The evaluation will give adequate attention to gender, HIV and AIDS, Climate Change issues and – to the fullest extent possible - will collect and analyse sex-disaggregated data.

It is expected that the evaluation will consist of three phases:

#### Phase I Inception

The first phase will consist of a preliminary review of documentation - reports, reviews, evaluations and other documents related to the Irish Aid Zambia CSP and the local development programme in Northern Province for the period 2007 - 2016. This phase will also involve initial interviews with some key informants from Irish Aid in Ireland.

Key evaluation questions will be refined during this phase including detailed planning for the field mission.

#### Phase II Documentary Review and Field Mission

The second phase will involve a further review of documentation and a field visit to Zambia, including Northern Province. The Embassy of Ireland in Lusaka will assist the evaluation team with logistics, including the setting up of interviews. **It is envisaged that the in-country field visit will take approximately two and half weeks and will take place before June 4 2017 at the very latest.** The visit will cross-check the evidence arising from the documentation review and the initial analyses, and gather evidence from interviews with key stakeholders. An in-field debriefing will be given to key stakeholders prior to the departure of the evaluation team. (The consultant may wish to be aware that SHA will conduct an Individual Household Method livelihoods assessment in support of the Irish Aid Local Development Programme in Q2 2017.)

#### Phase III Reporting

The final phase will consist of a debriefing in Ireland (or by Video Conference) on findings from the field visit and submission of an Evaluation Learning Brief (4 pages) within one week of the field visit, follow up work with Irish Aid staff as required and writing of the draft final report.

## 5. Outputs

The expected outputs of the assignment are as follows:

- An Evaluation Learning Brief (4 pages maximum, excluding findings tables) summarising key findings and conclusions, **to be submitted by June 16, 2017;**
- A final report (40 pages approx., excluding appendices) that sets out findings, conclusions, and issues for management consideration and focusses on the core evaluation questions. The primary audience for this report is the Irish Aid Zambia team and Irish Aid technical staff and senior management in Ireland. The first draft final report is expected by July 14, 2017.

## 6. Timeframe

Planning for the 2018 – 2022 mission strategy is already underway and it is expected that learning from the evaluation should be available in time to inform the strategic decision-making process. The following milestones are envisaged:

Phase 1 – inception phase to be completed by 28 April, 2017;

Phase 2 – fieldwork completed by June 4, 2017;

Phase 3 – learning brief by 16 June, 2017; draft final report by July 14, 2017.

## 7. The Evaluation Team

The evaluation will be managed by the Evaluation and Audit Unit of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Evaluation Team will comprise the international evaluation specialist, who will serve as the lead evaluator and analyst, and two staff members of the Evaluation and Audit Unit, including the assignment manager.

For the purposes of the field visit, a local evaluation consultant will complement the core evaluation team and will serve to provide local knowledge, in particular knowledge of the developmental context and Zambian political economy, as well as additional analytical capacity.

## 8. The international evaluation specialist

The international evaluation specialist will play a key role on the evaluation team, providing guidance in relation to the technical aspects of the exercise, including assisting the design of the evaluation, monitoring progress in implementing the exercise, assuring independence, and directing any adjustments to the evaluation plan as may be deemed necessary and/or appropriate. He/she may also be invited to advise on the selection of the local evaluation consultant.

The evaluation specialist will draft the inception report, the learning report and the final report, following consultations with the other team members. The draft final report will be submitted to the Evaluation and Audit Unit and released as a report of the Unit with due recognition of the key role played by the international evaluation specialist.

In addition to having strong general development evaluation skills, the international evaluation specialist will be able to demonstrate:

- knowledge and skills relevant to Irish Aid's areas of engagement in Zambia;
- knowledge of the Zambia development context and the current Governance structures at national and sub-national levels;
- a background in social science or similar discipline with an understanding of Government Structures, Institutions and Financing;
- experience of evaluating complex donor country-level programmes and/or their component parts;
- strong political economy analysis skills;
- excellent English language (oral and written) communications skills.

Interested and qualified applicants are invited to submit:

- A brief statement of their understanding of the Zambia country-specific context;
- A brief statement of their understanding of Irish Aid's Zambia country programme;
- A brief statement of their understanding of this Terms of Reference and any particular challenges they foresee for the successful implementation of the evaluation;
- A brief statement of their suitability to undertake the assignment;
- A Curriculum Vitae;
- A financial proposal (consultant fees only).

Up to 45 consultancy days are available for this assignment. **The consultant must be available to participate in fieldwork (up to 20 consecutive days) during May 2017.**

#### Award Criteria

The Consultant will be selected according to the following criteria:

##### Technical

- Understanding of the Zambia development context (15%)
- Understanding of the Term of Reference (20%)
- Experience of evaluating complex donor country level programmes and/or their component parts (15%)
- Evidence of having the desired overall degree of experience and expertise to undertake the assignment (20%)

*\* Candidates must achieve a minimum of 60 % of the marks available for each technical criteria*

##### Financial

- Cost (30%)

## 9. The In-Country Evaluation Consultant

The Zambian consultant in the team will be a source of local knowledge on developmental context and the local political economy. She/he will provide the local additional analytical capacity. The in-country evaluation consultant will be selected separately.

## 10. Management Arrangements

The evaluation will be managed by an officer of the Evaluation and Audit Unit of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. A Reference Group, comprising representatives from the Evaluation and Unit, Irish Aid HQ staff and external members as may be appropriate, may be established to support the overall exercise.

Irish Aid Zambia will assist with logistics for the field visit. Irish Aid HQ and Zambia will provide all necessary briefing material related to Irish Aid programmes and policies.

## 11. Application Procedure

Interested parties should register at [www.e-tenders.gov.ie](http://www.e-tenders.gov.ie) (Irish Government procurement web portal) and submit their application via this secure electronic post-box facility.

Questions/queries will only be accepted via the e-tenders messaging service and a list of questions and answers will be circulated upon request.

**The closing date for receipt of questions is XXXX 2017 at 17.30hrs.**

## ANNEX 2: CONSIDERATION OF DAC CRITERIA

The Evaluation was guided by the DAC criteria for evaluating development assistance, which informed the drafting of Terms of Reference and key evaluation questions. As the evaluation did not consider all aspects of the programme (in order not to duplicate other independent evaluative work commissioned by the management agent) and as a quasi goal-free approach was adopted, there is a limit to the extent to which an assessment of the programme against the DAC criteria can be made. However, the following observations may be noted:

**Relevance** – the activities of both approaches were relevant. The focus on capacity-building under Making Development Work at Local Level was relevant, given the expectation that decentralisation would occur. As the likelihood of this receded, it was appropriate that the capacity building element of the programme be reduced.

**Effectiveness** – there is mixed evidence that the capacity building elements of the programme were effective. The independent evaluation work commissioned by the management agent suggests that the livelihoods element of its programme is achieving its objectives. While progress is slow, this is reflective of the complex and substantial needs of beneficiaries.

**Efficiency** – in the absence of a credible counterfactual it is not possible to credibly assess the extent which activities have been cost efficient. However, it is important to note that the mandate for the Irish Aid Local Development Programme was to work with the poorest and most vulnerable people in Luwingu and Mbala. These tend to be those furthest from roads and most removed from service providers. Accessing such communities is costly. The management agent was encouraged not to cluster beneficiary groups in order to maximise results. Most local government service providers have elected to work with the so-called ‘viable’ vulnerable in order to make the most efficient use of their own scarce resources. The communities with which Irish Aid works are not considered ‘viable’ in this sense. It is for this very reason that they have been included as beneficiaries in the Irish Aid Local Development Programme.

**Impact** – this is set out in detail under each of the evaluation questions.

**Sustainability** - there is very little evidence that capacity built has been sustained, in large part due to staff turnover. Much of the infrastructure put in place by Irish Aid under the Making Development Work at Local Level remains in place, although other aspects of the programme have not been sustained. Certain of the interventions were ended before they could deliver what may have been more likely to be sustainable results. Evidence suggests that an otherwise effective programme may fail to achieve results if it is ended prematurely.