



## The role of grassroots organisations in fostering local communities' access to land: lessons from the Copperbelt and North Western Provinces of Zambia

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### ABSTRACT

At independence in 1964, Zambia's economy was mainly dependent on copper mining. The industry accounted for approximately 90 percent of its export earnings. Copperbelt Province was thus the country's economic powerhouse, as many of the mines were located in the province. The mines were wholly owned by the giant state-owned Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines which eventually became the biggest land owner after government. Besides looking after its employees, ZCCM provided quasi-municipal services to the whole community in the province, including environmental management in the mine townships, maintenance of roads, refuse collection, street lighting, and many more. However, following the economic liberalisation policies of the entrant government in the 1990s, the mines were sold out to international investors. This was in line with the privatisation program of the day. These economic reforms came with a mix of ramifications to the local communities. Other than the usual mass redundancies, thousands of former ZCCM employees and their families were evicted from 'their' land by the new owners of the mines. This development prompted creation of many activist grassroots organisations that help ex-miners access urban land on which to settle. The paper discusses the roles these grassroots organisations play in land tenure advocacy in the Copperbelt. The Copperbelt case is in turn used as a lesson for North Western province where empirical evidence shows a possible repeat of the Copperbelt events. The paper concludes by arguing that rather than adopting curative measures as was/is done in the Copperbelt, North Western grassroots organisations should adopt more proactive approaches in order to circumvent repeat of the Copperbelt situation.

**Key words:** Grassroots organisations, land tenure, poor people

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Shortly after independence in 1964, Zambia undertook rapid nationalisation of the economy, paving the way for state-led development. Government acquired 51% shares from private enterprises (Republic of Zambia 1968). Consequently, government in 1969 purchased 51 per

cent shares from the mining companies, Anglo-American Corporation and Roan Selection Trust, thereby partially nationalising the copper mining industry. The state controlled 80% of the economy through parastatals. However, the nationalisation agenda proved costly following the global decline in copper prices and the oil shocks of 1970s. Thinking the decline in copper prices was temporal, the government borrowed heavily. However, the copper prices never improved and the debt soared, culminating into a cocktail of economic hardships that eventually led to a range of economic reforms.

The new government in 1991 adopted fully-fledged Structural Adjustment programmes. The government implemented economic reforms more rapidly than its predecessor, or any other African government for that matter, earning the reputation of an exemplar in the liberalization process. At the heart of the reform programme was the privatisation of state-owned enterprises. By June 1996, 137 out of the initially-intended 280 state-owned companies had been transferred to the private sector (Fraser and Lungu, 2007). This paper charts impacts of privatizing ZCCM, focusing on the role of grassroots organizations in fostering local communities' access to secure land tenure and mitigate (potential) evictions in the Copperbelt (CB). The Copperbelt case is used to analyse the neighbouring North Western Province in order to learn from the CB experience. The starting point is a discussion of the landscape of grassroots organizations in Zambia. This is done in section 2, followed by a narrative of the general information background to mining in the Copperbelt. Section 4 looks at the socio-economic impacts of privatising ZCCM, with specific focus on impacts that are related to access to land tenure. Supplemented with case examples, section 5 discusses the proliferation and role of grassroots organizations in helping local people access secure land rights, as well as mitigating evictions. Section 7 is devoted to the emerging developments in North Western Province, the new economic heartland of Zambia which some commentators have dubbed "the new Copperbelt" (Times of Zambia, 8 August, 2007). The section benefits largely from the ongoing research in the region by the author. The paper concludes in section 8 with some discussions and concluding remarks.

## **2. THE LANDSCAPE OF GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS IN ZAMBIA**

The role of grassroots organisations in (urban) development is increasingly gaining prominence among development enthusiasts. Perhaps this is as a result of growing discontent with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) which, for a long time, have been seen by international development agencies as partners in development. But the NGOs have lost public trust as they are accused of existing for economic gains (Chahoud et. Al, 2007). NGOs prioritise only issues that are a subject of international campaign pressure (UN, 2007). Because of such discontentment with NGOs, many communities have turned to grassroots organisations which may be more community-based and as such may put the interests of the community first. The efforts of these grassroots organisations lead to tremendous developmental achievements. With particular reference to privatisation, McKingley (2007) and Radebe (2007) report two cases in South Africa where grassroots organisations have successfully resisted eviction of communities in Protea South and Gauteng. The organisations do not end at just protesting against illegal evictions; they also demand for basic human needs like water, housing, land, electricity, health and education. However, open opposition to government and internationally-orchestrated undertakings like privatisation is not an easy game. In Columbia union leaders are reported to have been assassinated for opposing privatisation of public services while city workers are killed for equally opposing privatisation of municipal services (MacCuish, 2003).

Elsewhere, Training Support for Partners (TSP) is spearheading advocacy for poor people's right to secure land rights in Malawi. TSP is a grassroots organisation specifically looking at grassroots mobilisation on land rights issues. Palmer (2005) reports that TSP has village-based capacity building programmes to empower rural communities to fully participate in

land rights projects. In Angola, the Development Workshop (DW) was established in 1981 and is the first land-related organisation in the country. DW works on behalf of the urban poor, arguing for their just access to land (Palmer, 2005). The organisation was formerly funded by Oxfam GB but now it is funded by Novib – Oxfam Netherlands.

Mozambique also provides an excellent example of an organisation working with the poor to foster their access to land tenure. The Vienna-based non-profit organisation, *Hilfswerk Austria*, or the Austrian Relief Organization (ARO) has worked with poor people of Mozambique's Sofala province for over six years now. The land tenure and development project is financed by the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID, 2006). In Zambia's Copperbelt, the Kapisha Development Committee (KADECO based in Chingola), the Mufulira Peri-urban Development Framework (MPDF based in Mufulira) (Hansungule et al, 1994), the Development Education and Community Project (DECOP), the Copperbelt Urban Livelihoods Project (CULP) and the Citizens for a Better Environment (CBE) were established to specifically focus on land-related impacts on local communities following the privatisation of ZCCM in the Copperbelt (Marshall et al, 2005; Golders Associates, 2005; Sutherland, 2005). Due to limited information, only the latter three are discussed in detail in section 5.

It is evident from the foregoing that there are numerous grassroots organisations that participate in projects that aim to alleviate poverty through advocacy for just access to secure land rights. Some of these grassroots organisations do partner with reputable NGOs with the view to increase the possibilities to overcome the poor people's powerlessness through organised efforts and mobilisation in campaigning for land rights. This perfectly mirrors what happened in the Copperbelt after the sale of the ZCCM conglomerate and other satellite companies. In order to appreciate the story of the CB and what led to the eventual sale of the state's jewel in the crown, it is important to first delve into the historical perspective of mining in the region. This will not only put the subject matter into perspective but will also highlight the enormous role the mining industry under ZCCM played in the Zambian economy in terms of access to land.

### **3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO MINING IN THE COPPERBELT**

The Copperbelt Province (locally fondly known as the 'CB') is one of Zambia's nine provinces. It is situated in the northern part of the country along the naturally-occurring mineral-rich Katanga region which is the region along the border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Katanga region contains one of the world's largest copper ores (Fraser and Lungu, 2007; MacCuish, 2003). The CB borders with North Western Province (NWP) to the west, Central Province to the south while to the north and east is the DRC. Administratively, the province is divided into 10 districts as shown in figure 1.

**Figure 1: Districts in the Copperbelt Province**



Source: Wikimedia Commons

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Copperbelt\\_Province\\_districts\\_corrected.PNG](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Copperbelt_Province_districts_corrected.PNG)

### **3.1 The history**

The CB has dominated Zambia's economy since mining began in the region in the 1920s. Hansungule et al (1994) and Fraser and Lungu (2007) provide a very rich historical interlude of mining development in the region. According to the authors, the first mine was opened at Roan Antelope (now Luanshya) in 1928. At inception, the mines were run by the Roan Select Trust (RST) and the South African based Anglo-American Corporation (AAC). In 1969 president Kenneth Kaunda nationalised the mining industry. RST and AAC were in 1982 merged to form ZCCM. The wealth from mining was directed to improving the country's health, education, infrastructure and subsidising many other state-run companies and consumers (Sutherland, 2005). Although during colonial times much of the mineral wealth was exported to develop Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) mining still contributed to the Northern Rhodesia's (now Zambia) economy so much so that by 1969 Zambia was classified a middle income nation with GDP higher than that of Brazil, Malaysia, Turkey and South Korea (Ferguson, 1999 cited by Fraser and Lungu, 2007). During the hay days of the mining industry, there was a rampant rural-urban migration as rural communities moved to the CB for employment. It was indeed prestigious to work for the mines at the time. Copper prices were always high. And as stated earlier, the mines did not just look after their workers; they provided services to the whole community, including food rations to employees, hospitals, recreation clubs, sanitary and orderly compounds, education for children, cinema, free electricity, water and transport, including burial arrangements for the dead (MacCuish, 2003). The conglomerate "literally operated a 'cradle to grave' welfare policy" (Fraser and Lungu, 2007: 8).

### **3.2 The collapse and sale of the mines**

Like elsewhere in the world, the oil shocks of 1974 and 1979 had a huge impact on the Zambian economy. Copper prices plummeted (Steckley and Muleba, 2001); interest rates skyrocketed. But in order to keep the economy running, and thinking that the fall of copper prices was temporal, Zambia borrowed heavily. By 1974 – 1994, the country was the 25<sup>th</sup> poorest state in the world. Because of the crises, ZCCM became the sole provider of the economy but without any form of (re)investment to boost production. Copper production fell from 750,000 tonnes/year in 1973 to just 257,000 tonnes/year in 2000. The World Bank and

the International Monetary Fund (IMF) took advantage of Zambia's apparent economic crisis to push her into adopting liberalisation policies as a condition for aid/debt (MacCuish, 2003; Fraser and Lungu, 2007). Conditions included devaluing the Kwacha (the local currency), decontrolling prices and cutting the long standing food subsidies. Out of desperation Zambia nodded. Economic hardships continued as the state found itself in a dilemma: should it appease the Bank and IMF or honour its sovereign obligation to provide for its peoples? In 1989, it decided in favour of the former but it was rather too late as the country experienced urban food riots, industrial unrest and vote of no confidence in the ruling United National Independence Party (UNIP). The Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) thus took over government in 1991 in a landslide victory. But since the MMD ran on a manifesto that promised to liberalise the economy and promote democracy, it had no option but to embark on the promised agenda as espoused by the Bank and IMF. The party already had support for privatisation from the general public and other interested entities. This was because having witnessed the terrible effects of Kaunda's nationalisation programme, everyone wanted to revert to the old ways of running the economy. Kaunda's protectionism policies were thus reversed. State-owned enterprises were to be dismantled and sold. Furthermore, the entrant regime reckoned that the best way to revitalise the dying economy was to be in good relations with the Bank, the other IFIs and foreign investors. This would win them trust. But this could only be achieved by accepting donors' demands among which was a strong crusade for private economy. The initial years of MMD in government saw a tremendous increase in DFI. The national budget became 40% donor-funded. This of course came at a price – a huge range of economic conditions mainly associated with privatisation, which started in 1992. By 1999 238 of 311 state-owned companies were sold (MacCuish, 2003). While to the Bank this was "a model for other countries because of its speed and thoroughness" (Fraser and Lungu, 2007: 10), others called it 'looting' (Craig, 2000; cited in Fraser and Lungu, 2007).

ZCCM was the largest of the companies sold out. Many others were just satellite companies. Contrary to expectations, however, the anticipated economic growth was not forthcoming following privatisation. The conglomerate was split up into 7 smaller components and sold off. However, some of the companies (i.e. including the other satellite companies) closed up immediately after the sale while capital flight was common among the successful ones.

#### **4. SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS OF PRIVATISATION IN THE COPPERBELT**

Impacts of privatisation are similar in many parts of the world. They range from mass redundancies to evictions (MacCuish, 2003). With particular reference to the Copperbelt, Fraser and Lungu (2007) and Lungu and Mulenga (2005) categorise the impacts of selling ZCCM into a) impacts on (former) mine workers; b) impacts on CB communities; and c) impacts on the Zambian economy. Under category a) are mass redundancies, unpaid pensions, casualisation and poverty wages; under category b) are a cohort of social and environmental impacts, including impacts on provision of health care, impacts on the upkeep of the mining townships, as well as *access to land and housing*; and category c) impacts include issues to do with ownership of the mines, tax take in form of mineral royalties, contribution of new investors to national treasury, etc. While these impacts are not entirely mutually exclusive, the paper's focus is on access to land and housing. The other impacts are however mentioned in passing where necessary.

During the hay days of the mines, many rural people migrated to take jobs on the Copperbelt. With time, the migrants lost ties with their rural roots. After the sale of ZCCM, their only major source of income, many people defied the government's policy of 'go back to the land' that encouraged retirees to return to villages and take up farming. This resulted into the CB being the most urbanised region in the country. Fraser and Lungu (2007) report that 15% of Zambia's population live in the Copperbelt. Out of these, about 80% live in urban

areas. The number of the unemployed worsened after the sale of the mines. The social/family structure in Zambia is extended family in nature. This means that most families depend on one bread winner. If the bread winner is laid off, the effects are felt along the family chain. Employment levels in the mines have been declining since the 70s, falling from over 60, 000 in 1976 to about 20,000 in 2004 (Fraser and Lungu, 2007).

From the early days of the mining industry, it was ZCCM's policy to ensure that after employment retrenched miners or retirees went back to where they originally came from (Fraser and Lungu, 2007). But during the course of their employment, miners were expected by their relatives in the villages to once in a while return to the village in order to share with relatives and friends what they earned at the mines. This gesture strengthened the ties between the miners and their rural relatives. For those who maintained these contacts, it was easier for them to reintegrate in the rural areas after retrenchment or retirement. The majority who defied this expectation could not easily be accepted back into rural life. It was the same with those who maintained the contacts but did not save enough to please those who hosted them during the times of holiday/rest visits. In Zambia it is not uncommon for workers, especially miners, to fail to save money during the whole of their working life. This is partly because:

*“The stereotype of the Zambian miner is of a hard-drinking, quick-spending aggressive person, accustomed to buying food rather than growing it and enjoying a much envied range of facilities provided by the mining companies...” (Steckley and Muleba, 2001: 7)*

When they bought the mines the new investors negotiated for a range of exemption clauses. The relevant clause to this paper was one that exempted the new investors from covering most of ZCCM's liabilities. The new investors stopped taking care of the mining townships. Subsidies were discontinued. Instead, and as provided in the “Development Agreements” between the Zambian government and the new investors, these liabilities were now to be provided by either the state or local councils (Fraser and Lungu, 2007). Under desperation to sell the mines, the government agreed to these onerous clauses but never lived to promise as it did not afford to maintain the houses in the same way ZCCM used to. Eventually, and as part of the retrenchment packages, the houses were sold out to the sitting tenants (the ex-miners). But because they could not also afford to maintain the houses, and in the hope to raise capital, most of the ex-miners have either sold the houses or live in single rooms within the houses while letting out the other rooms. Others have rented out the whole house and opted to squat on private land on which they have engaged themselves into charcoal burning and peasant farming. Accessing land legally is a nightmare for many of these ex-miners. Less than 5% have title deeds to land (Oxfam, 1998 cited in Steckley and Muleba, 2001; MacCuish, 2003). Since they have stayed on these private lands for many years, many of these ex-miner peasant farmers mistakenly think the land belongs to them. This feeling is compounded by both the department of Agriculture and the department of forest resources who have taken a lukewarm stance towards the ‘squatters’. For instance, the Department of Agriculture has continued to support the farmers in terms of extension services; while the Forestry Department tacitly allow(ed) them to occupy the land and cut trees for charcoal. This amounts to *de facto* ‘licence to operate’. However, the farmers have been facing eviction threats from landowners but with massive protection from party politics, this has been a thorny exercise (Fraser and Lungu, 2007). Realising the perils the ex-miners are facing, many grassroots organisations have sprung up in the region to help them either access secure land rights or negotiate for better resettlement options.

## **5. THE EMERGENCE OF GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS**

A number of grassroots organisations have been formed on the Copperbelt since the onset of the impacts of privatisation in the 1990s. These organisations' areas of focus vary. In this

section we look at three grassroots organisations whose major area of expertise is land advocacy. Due to non-availability of data on the other organisations, only 3 are discussed here. These are the Copperbelt Urban Livelihoods Project (CULP), the Development Education and Community Project (DECOP), and the Citizens for a Better Environment (CBE).

### **5.1 Copperbelt Urban Livelihoods Project**

After realising the economic hardships poor people of the Copperbelt were undergoing following the sale of ZCCM, CARE developed the grassroots organisation Copperbelt Urban Livelihoods Project (CULP) in order to alleviate the growing poverty and suffering in the area. This is done through 3 lines of action (Steckley and Muleba, 2001): institutional capacity building and enhancing personal empowerment skills; community-managed infrastructure and environmental health and sanitation; and livelihood improvement (Agriculture and Small Economic Activities Development – SEAD). SEAD is the more appropriate sub-project to this paper as it is related to land advocacy. The project was particularly initiated after CARE realised that many ex-miners were facing eviction threats from owners of land which they were occupying. Two case examples below show how CULP succeeded in advocating for anti-eviction and/or sound resettlement programmes (Steckley and Muleba, 2001).

#### **CASE 1: ZAFFICO (Zambia Forestry and Forest Industries Corporation) and the George farmers of Ndola**

ZAFFICO is among the most important landowners in Ndola, holding approximately 36,000 hectares. The presence of squatters in the Copperbelt is quite rampant. Among the most affected areas is the land controlled by ZAFFICO. This has been compounded by the fact that when the forestry company was first initiated, individuals were allocated plots of woodlot to clear and burn charcoal as payment for the job done. After clearing the land, many settled in those areas and started farming. Due to population pressure farmers started encroaching on ZAFFICO's designated forest plantations with tacit acceptance from the firm. Bush fires, destruction of small seedlings & illegal logging of grown up trees were common. In order to arrest these problems, ZAFFICO identified & gave permits to some trusted individuals who were then put in charge of a number of farmers as a way of mitigating the devastating effects of uncontrolled land use. The company also established security towers to watch over the plantations and arrest those trespassing, confiscate their tools and bicycles and sometimes prosecute them. These efforts were unsuccessful, and uncontrolled use of plantation land continued. The alternative was to degazette the land and give some pieces to the squatters. However, this was not feasible because ZAFFICO leases the land from the forestry department under the Ministry of Environment, who in turn holds the land on behalf of the President and the state. Any degazetting has to be endorsed by the President. Like all land in the country, forests are vested in the President on behalf of the Zambian people. This means that it is only him who can degazette the forests. However the process for doing so is a long and complex one, perhaps to ensure that people are discouraged from quick "fix it" solutions to land issues which would lead to the depletion of Zambian forests. Below is the degazetting process obtained from the Forests Act Cap 311:

- 1) Local officials in an area prepare and submit their request for degazetting a particular portion of the forest to the Local Council and Local Department of Agriculture;
- 2) The Local Council studies this request, in consultation and collaboration with the Local Department of Agriculture, and then passes a Council Resolution;
- 3) The Resolution is submitted to the Provincial Permanent Secretary at the Provincial Headquarters who studies it with the Provincial Forestry Officer;
- 4) The Council Resolution is then taken to the Department of Forestry in Lusaka who study it and also make recommendations and pass the documents over to the Ministry Permanent Secretary;
- 5) The Ministry PS in turn gives the documents to the Minister to study and prepare the Ministry Position;

6) The Ministry Position is then finally given to the President of the Republic of Zambia for action. Until the President has issued a Statutory Instrument in connection with a particular request for degazetting, whatever land in question legally remains in a forest area.

Source: Steckley and Muleba (2001)

#### **CASE 2: Mindolo Farm College and the Peri-urban farmers of Kalulushi**

Many farmers in the 4000ha Chibote settlement were occupying and farming land belonging to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (MAFF) (now Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MACO), at the Mindolo Farm College, Kalulushi. This land had been expropriated in 1981 from the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation (MEF), which had owned the land from 1968 and started to operate in 1971. After expropriation/nationalisation, more and more of this land was unutilised or under utilized by the Farm College. Throughout the period of nationalisation, and due to its underutilisation by the farm college, Chibote farmers 'invaded' the land with no opposition. The farmers were practicing both rainfed and irrigated (dambo) agriculture, allowing them to produce both staple crops and vegetables. Throughout the expropriation period (1981 – 1997) the residents were farming the mindolo farmland without problems. In 1997, after sixteen years of legal disputes, MEF once more took over ownership of the Farm College. Soon after getting the land back the MEF farm manager held a meeting with the Chibote community and advised them to stop farming. They did not resist but tried to persuade MEF to give them time. After protracted debate with the community, the institution proposed to get armed security guards to stop anyone from trespassing on the farm. Continued meetings with the farm management revealed that they had intentions of intensifying the production and land use on the farm ("to become the bread basket of the Copperbelt"). That intensification plan left no room for further encroachments by the farmers. At this point the community vowed never to leave the farmland but to continue co-existing with MEF. CULP started to facilitate discussions between the two parties, proposing some kind of partnership for coexistence. The proposal was to allow farmers a small portion of land in exchange for labour, given that the management had no intentions of mechanising the operations. Unfortunately, the proposal was turned down and instead security was tightened. Seeing that no land solution was in sight for Chibote residents, the community initiated negotiations with the Kalulushi Municipal Council. Council suggested an alternative plot of land but it was not clear whether the land had been allocated to someone or whether it belonged to council, ZCCM or state.

Source: Steckley and Muleba (2001)

In both cases above CULP's intervention was to help farmers establish Farmers Associations with leadership that was accountable, with legal status and organisational credibility. This would lead to controlled use of the land. CULP also trained farmers as community facilitators and also in improved land use practices that would ensure use of land for mutual gain to both parties. Thus the community gained negotiation skills that they never had before, as well as being able to look at the crisis from a more informed perspective.

#### **5.2 Development Education and Community Project**

Funded by Oxfam, DECOP is a Mufulira-based land grassroots organisation that finds land for poor communities and assists them settle and develop the land. It is also a land rights advocacy organisation. DECOP offers advice and support on land rights issues to local communities. It also promotes fair policies and laws that protect the rights of the poor people living in the Copperbelt region. It has mobilised the local community to form a Land Task Force Committee which meets regularly to look at how land issues can be resolved (Golders Associates, 2005; Sutherland, 2005). The grassroots organisation is working with farmers at the Mufulira New Farm site to ensure that farmers are aware of key issues surrounding access to secure land tenure. According to Palmer (2005) DECOP is the most influential player in terms of accessing land for poor communities in the Copperbelt. DECOP also participated actively in the resettling of the residents of Zambia Railways Compound and

those of the Masondashi informal settlement in Mufulira after the two settlements were declared a disaster area as a result of mining-related surface subsidence in 2003.

### **5.3 Citizens for a Better Environment**

Citizens for a Better Environment (CBE) is a grassroots organisation that advocates for socio-economic and environmental justice for communities adversely affected by mining and other industrial activities. The organisation was formed in 1998. The role of the organisation goes beyond environmentalism. It is also actively involved in helping the poor in the Copperbelt access secure land rights, capacity building and mitigating evictions. Like DECOP, CBE participated in the ZRC resettlement programme with the aim to help the communities restore their livelihoods and design a sound improvement plan. The organisation was given power of attorney by the ZRC community in matters relating to the resettlement. Furthermore, CBE was engaged in monitoring the Kawama and Ming'omba resettlement in Chililabombwe. In all these resettlement agendas, CBE lobbies for resettlement programmes that are informed by the World Bank guidelines (Golders Associates, 2005). The following brief examples show the areas in which CBE has been involved in the Copperbelt.

**Case 1.** Chibuluma Mining in Kalulushi Township attempted to throw a chief and his subjects off their land without compensation. Citizens for Better Environment intervened on behalf of the community.

**Case 2.** The expansion of Lubengele tailings leach dam by Konkola Copper Mines plc (KCM) in Chililabombwe led to resettlement of 139 households. CBE supported a complaint on behalf of the residents to the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) 'Contact Point' in the UK about the quality of the resettlement programme. As a result of the intervention from CBE, KCM have also relocated a number of employees whose housing was disrupted by the 2001 pit collapse. KCM is owned by Vedanta, a UK/Indian company.

Source: Lungu and Mulenga (2005)

It is interesting to learn how grassroots organisations and the communities in the Copperbelt are struggling to cope with impacts of privatisation with regards to access to land rights. Can this be a lesson for North Western Province?

## **6. NORTH WESTERN PROVINCE – THE NEW COPPERBELT**

With its population of 538,350 (CSO, 2003) North Western Province consists of 7 districts as indicated in figure 2 below. The population is heavily clustered around the provincial capital Solwezi (38%). Recent speculations about oil and gas deposits in Kabompo and Zambezi (Zambia Daily Mail, 27 July 2007), and the opening up of a new mine at Lumwana, coupled with the resuscitation of the privatised Kansanshi mine (both mines are located in Solwezi) have put the province in the limelight. Government has also approved the construction of a railway line that will connect Chingola in the Copperbelt province and Solwezi (Zambia Daily Mail, 28 June 2007) and later with Angola. These developments have attracted not only people but also other fringe investments. Traditional authorities are under pressure from the growing population as well as the foreign investors who seek to acquire and convert customary land into leaseholds:

*“And with this economic boom in Solwezi, we are having so many people wanting to convert land for various activities: mining activities, agricultural activities, lodges. So there is so much and we have that on a daily basis and not only from the citizens of this country. For instance we have Lumwana Mine which has attracted so much interest and people and you know it is going to be dubbed the largest copper mine in Africa. So, on a daily basis I have to talk to people about land. On a daily basis and I*

*mean on a daily basis” (Interview with Chief Mumena of the Kaonde people in Solwezi, also Chairman of the House of Chiefs - 12/02/07)*

**Figure 2: Location of North Western Province in Zambia**



Source: Wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:North-Western\\_Zambia\\_districts.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:North-Western_Zambia_districts.png)

The resuscitated Kansanshi mine in Solwezi was once part of ZCCM. The mine is located 10km north of Solwezi town and about 150km north west of the Copperbelt. It has operated intermittently since 1905 (as underground mine and since 1969 as open pit mine) (Fraser and Lungu, 2007). The mine was first privatised in 1997 to an American firm Cyprus Amax. 80% was privatised while 20% remained under ZCCM Nchanga Division. Mine workers were offered to buy mine houses by ZCCM as sitting tenants. However, Cyprus Amax objected to the idea on grounds that they wanted to reserve the houses for company use. Offers were then withdrawn but, sadly, the houses were demolished by the company in 1998. Majority of the workers were declared redundant and told to vacate the mine area. Many of these workers settled on customary land very close to the mine but continued to farm in the mining area (Steckley and Muleba, 2001). In 2001, Cyprus Amax sold the mine to a Canadian firm First Quantum Minerals (FQM). Soon after acquisition, FQM, after acquiring more land from the area chief, expanded the mine and fenced off the whole mine area. As a result the people occupying land very close to the mine are now facing eviction threats because it is not safe to live near mining area. This is also the case with Lumwana Mine, located about 65km west of Solwezi town. Majority of people living in areas surrounding the mines have become victims of discrimination, eviction threats and are denied basic rights like access to shelter and secure land tenure. The next section is testimony to this.

## **7. EMERGING IMPACTS OF PRIVATISATION IN NWP**

This section benefits from the on-going research in NWP by the author. The slice of the research presented here is based on in-depth interviews with communities including the traditional rulers and councillors on what they have gone through as a result of the privatisation of Kansanshi Mine and the opening up of Lumwana mine. Interviews were conducted January/February 2007 in Mushitala and villages near Lumwana mine.

Mushitala is a settlement about 6Km north east of Solwezi town. Until recently, the area fell under chief Kapijimpanga as customary land. However, with the coming in of Kansanshi mine and the eventual expansion of Solwezi town as a result of rising demand for land, the area has been converted into state land. The residents are now facing potential eviction as they cannot afford the regularities that go with the acquiring of state land. In the absence of

advisory or campaign grassroots organisations, their fate now lies with their area Member of Parliament (MP) who has categorically advised them never to move unless they are compensated. Already, all the land in the settlement has been demarcated awaiting allocation on the basis of leasehold tenure. And many of the local residents had farming fields very close to the mining area but the fields have now been enclosed and compensation was promised by the mine at K800,000/ha (approx. US\$200 per ha) but very few have been paid so far. As a result, many residents have sought refuge (for farming land only) in a nearby chiefdom, earning themselves a locally-derogative name tag 'Israelites', signifying the biblical idea that the peasant farmers have been moved from their own problem-prone to problem-free farming land.

Similarly, residents around Lumwana mine are experiencing the same fate. After Equinox Minerals (owner of Lumwana mine) acquired land from the three chiefs on which the mine sits, many people have been displaced under similar arrangements. One impact clearly emerging from these privatisation-related developments is eviction/displacement. One respondent told us that:

*"One disadvantage [of the new investors/mines] is people now are suffering because of no building, no cultivating. Then the second one the area has been wire fenced people are suffering as you can see there are people who can have that money to buy iron sheets and there are some people who can manage to thatch their houses. Therefore, the area where you can get some poles, fibre, rafters so those things are being closed. The other one is they have brought some confusions because in one way the time we had ZCCM there was no confusions like this; put on these beacons and other things. If we go down there there are a lot of them" (Clive Sankisa, verbatim interview extract, 10/02/07).*

The land in Mushitala village has recently been converted from customary to state land. Although the Lands Act 1995 stipulates that the communities should be consulted by and before the chief consents to the conversion, we were told that land in Mushitala was converted without the knowledge of the residents. We also found new beacons in the settlement. Because they were not consulted, the residents have vowed never to move away from their ancestors' land because they have been living there since time immemorial. The residents may only accept to move if they are paid their (meagre) compensation. Apparently, allegiance to ancestral beliefs has a huge impact on the way land is managed in this area.

Almost everyone in this particular case study settlement considered ZCCM to be a better local investor than the foreign FQM. One of the interviewed chiefs observed that the current foreign mining giant is only a capitalist interested in capital flight at the expense of the locals:

*"The mines operate under cover. There is a lot of secrecy. We know that diamond and other precious minerals are being whiskered away to Australia via Lusaka, Livingstone, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Some mines steal our minerals in the name of exploring. If [I] was not here, the mining areas could not have been here! The clever whites do this because they know I cannot do anything. I am not educated, I am weak, have no army, no police. But things are now changing. Today there is uneducated me but tomorrow a Dr will be sitting here."*

In spite of the above ills that have come with the new investments in Solwezi, there are also a number of advantages. These include an improved physical outlook of the Solwezi town and improved sales from a wide range of merchandise/home-based enterprises (e.g. selling vegetables at markets or by the streets) as a result of the growing population.

## **8. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The paper has discussed the role of grassroots organisations in the Copperbelt Province of Zambia in terms of assisting victims of retrenchment access secure land tenure or negotiate

better resettlement packages following the privatisation of ZCCM and satellite industry. The Copperbelt case has in turn been applied to North Western Province to assess whether the latter can repeat the horrible experiences the poor CB communities are going through. It is very evident that the role CB grassroots organisations play in these endeavours is very crucial to the livelihoods of poor communities. However, whereas the organisations are very active in the Copperbelt, their existence and role in North Western Province is yet to be seen. Much as their existence and role in the Copperbelt can be appreciated, however, the organisations came on the scene rather late, thereby adopting the curative rather than the better preventative approach in helping the poor avoid evictions/displacements, tenure insecurity and negotiate appropriate resettlement packages. Rather than springing up in the 1990s after realising the apparent impacts of privatisation on the local poor, grassroots organisations should have been actively involved much earlier in order to sensitise miners and their families on how to cope with potential retrenchments and realise the need to acquire secure land tenure during early stages of one's working life. Perhaps it can be argued that this was unnecessary in the Copperbelt because during Kaunda's regime privatisation was something that was not expected by the mine workers. However, what is obtaining in NWP in general and Solwezi in particular is worrying as there is sufficient evidence to suggest that what is happening in the CB may also repeat in NWP. During our visit in the area, we saw that the habit of a stereotype Zambian miner as noted in section 4 is already evident in Solwezi town. Miners here are known to be huge spenders, hard drinkers, driving posh cars and usually opt to rent multi-bed roomed houses as a group instead of building their own. Being a mine worker here is indeed very enviable and prestigious. 25<sup>th</sup> of every month is a very well known day in Solwezi – the day when miners get paid. Business booms and the whole town becomes very busy as miners spend lavishly. This culture of non-saving is similar to the one in the Copperbelt years back. If not properly sensitised, these future ex-miners and their families will find themselves in the similar predicament as their CB counterparts. "Going back to the land" may equally be a non-starter for them because they dread village life. Thus a stitch in time serves nine! It is high time grassroots organisations got established in NWP in order to start sensitising the people at early stages of their working life at the mines and other fringe companies. The organisations should go beyond the working individuals. They should also target poor communities like those living around the mining areas who are affected by the mining activities and decisions.

Tension between investors, party politics, the council, chiefs, government departments and those who face eviction threats are already evident in Solwezi. While politicians will do whatever it takes to save the poor from eviction for political capital reasons, the capitalist investors would want to ensure that the 'squatters' are evicted in order to pave way for increased production. We have seen how political fiat is taking root in Solwezi's Mushitala by area Member of Parliament. The challenge is on finding land on which to resettle these poor communities. Land may not be readily available as resettlement agencies may be constrained financially or may be tied by the law in terms of making such land available for resettlement. We saw in section 5 how reluctant ZAFFICO was to release forest land for resettling the peri-urban George farmers in Ndola. Even if ZAFFICO was willing, the procedure to degazette the forests is too lengthy, complex and cumbersome (Steckley and Muleba, 2001) and as such beyond the abilities of the poor communities. It is in this light that services of genuine grassroots organisations are required to help the poor avoid the many ills associated with privatisation.

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