Global policies versus national MDG-needs focusing on education: On whose terms? A case study of Zambia.

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1. Introduction.

Zambia is now one of the world's most indebted countries. In the late 1960s, Zambia was an industrialised and increasingly prosperous country. But in the mid-1970s, the price of copper, Zambia's main export, went into freefall. Zambia turned to foreign and international lenders for relief; but as copper prices remained depressed, servicing the growing debt became increasingly difficult. By 2000, Zambia's external debt was twice its GDP, and incomes per capita had fallen to one-half their level at independence. Today, despite the entrenchment of multi-party democracy, a modest revival of the now-privatised copper industry and some success in developing agriculture and tourism, Zambia's 10 million people remain among the poorest in world. More than 70% of people live on less than $1 a day and per capita income average less than US$395 a year. Although worldwide copper prices are hard to control, Zambia's future prospects largely depend on two factors that can be managed: AIDS and debt. One in five adults is HIV positive. Under pressure from the HIV/AIDS epidemic, life expectancy has fallen to 33 years. Almost half of children under 5 are stunted due to malnutrition, and 16% of children die before reaching their 5th birthday. HIV/AIDS related issues (e.g. rising medical costs, decline in worker productivity) place an enormous strain on government resources.

Meanwhile, debt repayments continue to crowd out much needed spending on health, education and poverty reduction. Zambia's debt exceeded US$6bn when it qualified for HIPC four years ago. The largest share of this is owed to the IMF. Since reaching decision point in December 2000 it has been receiving emergency 'interim' relief to cover its debt service. This was designed to last until 2003 when Zambia was expected to reach completion point. All interim debt relief from the IMF has now been exhausted, and this year Zambia's repayments have shot up to US$377m - or 7.3% of GDP, more than Zambia spends on health and education combined (*Campaign for Education).*

The EFA Global monitoring report, 2002, states that in a situation where the shortage of qualified and experienced teachers is a major obstacle to successfully reaching the EFA-goals, HIV/AIDS has seriously effects on the situation in schools. A study in Zambia estimates teacher absenteeism due to AIDS to cost 12450 teachers a year, or 20 million teacher-hours between 1999 and 2010, leaving 498000 children without classroom education for a year. The number of primary school teachers who died in 2000 in Zambia is equivalent to 45% of all teachers that were educated during that year. (Nilsson, 2003, p16)

2. The Zambian context and educational challenges in brief.

Zambia is a country on the brink of social and economic collapse. One in 5 people is infected with HIV, life expectancy has dropped to 33 years and young people aged 20-25 actually have less education than their parents' generation. Therefore, the achievement of Zambia's new government in getting more children into school holds out a critical glimmer of hope. In order to qualify for long-delayed debt relief, Zambia has been forced to stop hiring the teachers and health workers it desperately needs - placing its education success story in jeopardy, and threatening to plunge the country into political crisis. At their meetings in Washington in September 2004, the governors of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank could have resolved this situation by announcing full cancellation of outstanding debt, ensuring macroeconomic targets do not contradict poverty reduction needs, and urging rich countries to replace stop/start engagement by the predictable, long-term commitments needed to hire the teachers and health workers that countries like Zambia so desperately need to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). According to the World Bank's analytical work for the Fast Track Initiative and partly based on further calculations from education sector policy analysts at UNESCO, Zambia is in need of a 62% increase of teachers between 1999/2000 and 2015 in order to achieve universal primary education. (Nilsson, 2003, p13). Historically the figures regarding teaching coverage show that the number of public primary teachers in 1995 was 27302, in 1999: 32866, and the estimated required number in 2015 is 47695, which gives a need for another 14892 newly recruited teachers to get the required number to reach EFA by 2015.

HIV/AIDS deaths alone claim some 1600 Zambian teachers a year, according to Ministry of Education figures. As if the devastating rate of teacher deaths was not enough, AIDS puts other strains on wage and recruitment policies. The bill for sickness and death benefits has increased substantially, potentially crowding out recruitment of new posts if the overall size of the wage bill is too tightly constrained. Sickness absence means that on any given day a school is likely to have fewer teachers in the classroom than the number it officially employs, a situation that makes high pupil-teacher ratios even harder to manage without compromising quality and teacher morale. Finally, HIV-positive teachers, like anyone else with a chronic and fatal disease, want to be based in towns in order to be close to medical facilities, making it very hard to solve rural staffing shortages through redeployment alone

3. School perspectives.

Silas Silewu, the head teacher of Maano Basic School in the countryside west of Lusaka, is not an easily discouraged man. He is not discouraged by the fact that his school, like many in Zambia, has no electricity, little equipment and inadequate supplies of textbooks and learning materials (according to a 2000 estimate, over a quarter of the country's schools need urgent rehabilitation). He is not discouraged by the fact that his paycheck has been shrinking steadily in real terms for several years, or that his staff now earn less than the cost of a minimum monthly basket of food staples. He got into teaching for love of it, and says he enjoys solving his staff's frustrations.

Mr Silewu is not even discouraged by the fact that he has only 3 trained teachers to cope with 526 students. On the contrary, he takes heart from the way student numbers have grown since fees were removed - hoping that this will reverse the disastrous trends of the 1990s, which produced a generation of 20 to 25 year olds who actually have *less* education than their parents. What does worry Mr Silewu is that the teacher shortage is already starting to undermine free primary education. 'If teachers are not deployed children do not get education. We keep enrolling more children. We try to teach them, but if the children are too many you cannot work properly,' he says.

Paul Mutaloange, the head teacher of Chisakila Basic School, concurs. "This year numbers have fallen. Parents have lost interest due to the lack of teachers," he says. He has 2 teachers, plus himself, to teach 250 pupils from grades 1 to 7.

Rather than increasing teacher numbers to cope with the rising enrolments, the Ministry of Education says they are, at best, merely able to replace some of the 1000 teachers who die of AIDS every year. However, despite having the foresight to train many more teachers in order to keep up with AIDS deaths, the hiring freeze stops the Ministry of Education from making use of them. Stanley Chileshe, headmaster of Chimwemwe Basic School in Lusaka, reports that none of the 20 teachers he has lost since 2001 - mainly due to deaths - have been replaced. According to ZNUT, the teachers' union, this is a national trend and the MoE is largely losing the battle with AIDS. The overall drop in teacher numbers between 2002 and 2003 suggests that ZNUT is right. Although each teacher in grades 1 to 4 already teaches two groups of students a day, some schools have had to add a third shift. Students spend as little as 2 hours a day in class, and on average, Zambian children receive only 630 hours of instruction per year. Only a part of the curriculum can be covered. In these circumstances, the "child-centred" approach to teaching (which donors have spent millions promoting) evaporates into little more than a fond memory from training college, says Ruth Brewer, a VSO volunteer working at a Zambian College of Education.

Standardised achievement tests bear out these concerns. Despite small improvements in recent years, nearly two-thirds of Grade 5 pupils fail to attain minimum competence levels in English and mathematics. Unless schools are able to improve quality outcomes, warns Joe Makano of the Zambia National Education Coalition, the investment that Zambia is making in free primary education could be wasted, as graduates will not acquire sustainable skills. Obviously, as long as pupil-teacher ratios remain untenable and teachers' real wages continue to decline, no further improvement in quality can be expected, and a reversal might even be predicted. Yet mindful of current fiscal constraints and donor reluctance to support recurring costs, the Ministry of Education is planning for the next three years on the basis of a pupil-teacher ratio of 64:1 - well over the World Bank's proposed 40:1 benchmark for FTI countries.

Zambia's progress towards UPE is also threatened by the lack of supplementary resources to replace lost income from tuition fees and to support the poorest and most vulnerable, including AIDS orphans, to stay in school. Although schools now qualify for a grant based on student numbers, the cash they receive has not kept pace with the challenges that schools face. "Heads are having to choose between buying learning materials or burying teachers who have died of AIDS," says Alick Lungu of the Catholic Commission for Justice, Development and Peace. The upshot is that although Parent-Teacher Association contributions were supposedly abolished when Free Basic Education was introduced, extra payments in cash or in kind are being reintroduced by the back door in many districts. The PTA at Chimwemwe School, for example, wanted to charge parents K10,000 each (about the same as the old tuition fee) to employ volunteer teachers on a casual basis. The headmaster and other head-teachers find this regrettable, but feel it may be preferable to having no teachers at all. PTA levies are even needed for schools to purchase necessities such as chalk and exercise books. Such charges can easily exceed the amount that tuition used to cost parents. A nationwide survey in 2001, just before tuition fees were removed, showed that combined household spending on books and materials, PTA contributions, sports fees, and school maintenance charges was two to three times as much as the tuition fee in government schools.

Since monetary costs are the most frequently cited reason that Zambian children drop out or never attend school, this trend may push the poorest and most vulnerable children, especially girls and AIDS orphans, right back out of the classrooms that they have only so recently been able to enter. (Global Campaign for Education, p 6-7)

4. PRSP, EFA and Millennium Goals.

The Zambian government has committed itself to the EFA targets and millennium goals regarding education for all, focusing on gender equity and improving quality of education. To improve basic education in Zambia the Ministry of Education developed a three-year sub sector programme, the Basic Education Sub Sector Investment Programme (BESSIP). This was introduced in 1999 covering Grades 1-7 and was intended to increase access and improve quality. Secondary school is not included in BESSIP. According to the PRSP (PRSP: 2002) the priority programmes for education were captured in BESSIP, and it should be continued and extended to cover Grades 8 and 9, with practical subjects and skills training. HIV/AIDS component should be continued and be extended to the whole sector. BESSIP focused on the following components; infrastructure development, educational material development and production, teacher development, deployment and compensation for teachers, equity and gender, upper basic school curriculum development, school health and nutrition, capacity building, decentralisation and HIV/AIDS prevention. Pre-school should be made part of basic education and out-of-school children should to be taken care of through distance learning/ICT and evening classes.

The planning of BESSIP has been criticised for not considering the needed human capacity development in administration, in schools and in the local community. The Educational sector plan was supported by several donors, through a “basket fund” strategy, where the donors agree on the MoE’s sector plan, and the Government receives the funds to be used by the Ministry according to the agreed strategy for development within BESSIP. Donor support is not to be used for running costs. In other words, the educational sector management and salaries, including teacher salaries are to be paid by the government. In the educational sector, these costs capture approximately 95-98% of the educational budget. BESSIP turned into a sector plan in January, 2004, and is now the overall comprehensive educational strategy, capturing all the main components in the sector. Due to EFA and the challenges in meeting the MDGs and EFA targets improvement in basic education still seems to be the main concern among policy-makers and donors.

Zambia also developed its Poverty Reduction Paper in 2002. The focus is on achieving stronger economic growth, pointing to commercial agriculture for export and tourism, and encouraging foreign investments. Poverty has been steadily increasing in Zambia in the last three decades, mainly due to the decline of the mining sector. About 73% of the population is classified as poor. The economic growth rate in 1999 was 1% and is in the PRSP targeted at 4.3% in 2002 and then 4% annually in 2003 and 2004. Resources have been allocated for the priority sectors. The budget for 2002-04 has a shortfall of internal resources of 67 %, which is expected to be provided by donors. Debt servicing in the same period constitutes more than the total budget, and Zambia works hard to achieve debt relief. There is also an emphasis on the social sector to improve social services. Education does not seem to have been given the same importance as in other countries. There seems to be more emphasis on state-funded safety nets for social security for the ”core” poor and the most vulnerable. But education and training is an important part of the Zambian Poverty Reduction Strategy and education is viewed as an important means to combatting poverty and improving individual and national development (Sangnes, draft 2003).

The situation in basic education in Zambia can in short be described as a sector with low enrolment, low progression, low performance and a high drop-out-rate. The attendance is poor, as is the learning environment, There are in general lack of opportunities, unmotivated and ill-qualified teachers, uninterested parents and a wide gender gap. The situation has been made even worse by the decrease in the numbers of teachers in Zambia in the last half of the 90s due to policies of not recruiting new teachers and the high attrition rates mainly due to HIV/AIDS. Striving towards debt relief has worsened the situation in schools, as teacher recruitment has been nil for the last three years to cut down public expenditure, even though the loss of teachers and massive absenteeism due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, really have left the schools, specifically the rural schools with a major crisis. Under these conditions, the quality of education will suffer, the schools lose their legitimacy among the parents and in society as long as they do not deliver proper education, and teachers are unable to cope with the demands.

5. The Highly Indebted Poor Countries initiative (HIPC) and its impact on education and the HIV/AIDS situation.

The Zambian government is forced to consistently and knowingly under-estimate their spending needs in order to be able to reach an agreement with the IMF. When the government over-spends its budget the IMF declares the government off-track, which signals donors to withdraw their programme support. This means the government has even fewer resources with which to implement its budget. Effectively, it appears that the need to reach the HIPC completion point has been put before the need to achieve poverty reduction. This may reflect the fact that resolving the outstanding debt problems of Zambia is of primary importance to the international finance institutions, particularly the IMF. The Zambian government owes considerable sums to the IMF and a large proportion of the repayments to the IMF are now falling due. Staying on track with HIPC means the IMF is ensured of getting repaid.

Many people in Zambia believe that once the HIPC completion point is reached then things will change for the better. However, the reality is likely to be far different. According to the Finance Ministry, nothing fundamental will change once completion point has been reached. "There will be no going back to the old ways. If anything adjustment is likely to get tougher. What we are doing right now is probably the easy part. When we reach completion point, in the post-HIPC phase we may even demand more sacrifices from people because this insistence on good economic management will not stop otherwise the country will back track and lose donor confidence." In its most recent report on Zambia the IMF congratulates the Government for taking a strong stand and "limiting the wage bill to 8% and providing more room for ….priority spending". It states that "the initial results of fiscal policy implementation were positive." (Global Campaign for Education, 2004). This suggests that paying primary school teachers is not 'priority spending' and that 9000 teachers unemployed could be considered a 'positive' result of fiscal policy implementation; yet this would contradict the IMF's resident representative's statement that "If you're putting money into education but not providing teachers it won't work." It appears that the IMF has got itself into a muddle; despite being increasingly committed to Education for All and the other MDGs, it continues to perceive wages and salaries as 'wasteful' expenditure. Unless it reverses this position and shows greater fiscal flexibility, its commitment to poverty reduction is likely to be discredited.

Zambia is locked into a vicious circle. The government has a limited amount of budgetary resources to devote to health, education and other poverty reducing expenditures, but even these resources have been drastically eroded by debt repayments. In order to access further loans and aid, they have to agree with the IMF to a tight budget deficit. However, the IMF's budget targets are extremely unrealistic given the spending that the government needs to undertake to reach poverty reduction goals. (Global Campaign for Education, 2004, p13). Ironically, the best way to fill the resource gap on salaries is debt relief. Across Africa, countries are using HIPC debt relief to pay teachers' salaries, because unlike donor aid it is long-term sustainable finance that is guaranteed. Zambia has been denied access to debt relief because the country cannot meet the targets on expenditure, yet accessing debt relief would enable it to meet the targets *and* pay the teachers. (Global Campaign for Education, 20o4, p16). Zambia was initially on course to reach the HIPC completion point by the end of December 2004. But the IMF and the World Bank now say Zambia needs to fulfill a total of 15 benchmarks, with qualification tentatively expected in the first quarter of 2005. But local and international development agencies have raised their concerns over the impact of the conditionalities linked to HIPC on social services, like education.

Hot on the heels of the growing frustration of thousands of unemployed teachers, Oxfam released a scathing report, in which the development agency claimed that the IMF's harsh conditions had curtailed efforts to improve the quality of school education. Oxfam said that while government initiatives to get more children into school by introducing free basic education were paying off, IMF policies, which severely restricted the recruitment of teachers, threatened to undo many of the gains achieved in recent years.

Zambian schools are experiencing a shortage of about 7,000 teachers, despite having 12,000 trained teachers who cannot be put on the payroll due to a ceiling on expenditure allegedly imposed by the IMF. At its most extreme, the teacher shortage has raised the prospect of a breakdown in the education system, Oxfam warned. According to the Zambian National Union of Teachers, some pupils in rural areas did not see a single teacher during 2004. The IMF hit back, arguing that contrary to the claims, its policies had not prohibited Zambia from hiring new teachers or other priority workers, such as doctors and nurses, and that the wage cap had been agreed between IMF staff and the government in 2003, following a substantial salary rise and the introduction of a new housing allowance for government workers. In this situation, other emergency responses have emerged. As one informant puts it:

> *In an effort to alleviate the situation the Netherlands stepped in with a US $10 million donation to assist in hiring new teachers. Several teachers have now been recruited, to start their teaching now, during term one, January 2005. Most of these teachers are recruited from the cohort of teachers trained in 2002. The effort made by the Netherlands government is highly appreciated at province and district level. (Southern province employee, 2005)*

The fact that the teachers that have been trained for the last three years actually have been left un-employed, are drifting in the streets or trying to make a living somehow, makes the situation even worse. To reach EFA and MDG Zambia needs a lot of teachers. While teachers are now being trained through a 1+1 year training program, set up to replace a 3-year programme and designed mainly to meet the immediate needs in schools and to ensure UPE and EFA, Zambia has experienced a big shortfall of teachers in school, and lots of young recently trained teachers remain un-employed. Education should be the golden path to ending poverty and helping stop the spread of HIV, yet in 2004, the Zambian government will be forced to pay $377 million in debt repayments, and spend just $221 million on education. Repayments to the IMF alone will amount to a massive $247 million, more than the entire annual education budget. The new Oxfam report reveals how Zambian children are paying the price for IMF policies. Ludicrously, while schools are in desperate need of another 9000 teachers, 8-9,000 qualified teachers sit unemployed. Why? A budget ceiling on government spending imposed by the IMF means that the government is not able to employ the teachers and health workers it desperately needs.

The GCE report, *"Undervaluing teachers: IMF policies squeeze Zambian education system"* is co-authored by the international agencies VSO and Oxfam. It calls upon the IMF and rich countries to announce 100% cancellation of multilateral debt owed by the world's poorest countries, funded in part by a revaluation of IMF gold stocks.

6. Possible future strategies.

The conclusion will according to the Global Campaign for Education, require turning 'the vicious circle into a virtuous one' through four strategies:

1) The IMF needs to be more flexible in setting budget deficit targets and to help governments to proactively advocate to donors to provide long-term development assistance;
2) The donors need to commit to providing long-term budget support;
3) The government needs to demonstrate that it can draw up a realistic, poverty-focused budget and execute it efficiently;
4) Rich countries need to finance full debt cancellation.

Civil society is right to blame the IMF for being too short-sighted and technocratic when laying down its budget conditions. Alick Lungu of the CCJDP argues that, "What matters most [to the IMF] is not whether Zambian people have education or not but does the economy have macroeconomic stability or not. But by so doing you tend to lose out on the human face. This is one of the main contradictions of the IFIs' programmes." In fact, civil society groups argue the IMF lending programme in Zambia has never been aligned with their Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, and are based on unrealistic fiscal deficit projections. This, they claim, demonstrates the IMF's failure to meet its responsibility to assist in increasing the level of finance available for countries to reach the Millennium Development Goals. It is alarming that the IMF has now returned to a strict fiscal austerity line, which has yielded little results in the past, has not been consulted upon with a broader group of stakeholders and remains largely unrealistic. Rather than working with the government to help it formulate a realistic poverty-focused budget and to lobby the donor community to finance it, the IMF tends to work narrowly within the given financial envelope to constrain government. The macro-economy is put before poverty reduction. The IMF needs to reverse this tendency and to put the goals of the MDGs first. It needs to find ways to work with the government and donors to loosen the macroeconomic constraints as much as possible. Thus rather than poverty reduction goals being constrained by the macroeconomic situation, the IMF needs to help a government to demonstrate to the donor community where the opportunities lie for making poverty reducing expenditures if more finance is made available.

The first step is for the IMF to work with others including the World Bank to accurately forecast how many frontline public sector workers are needed to reach the MDGs, and how much it would cost to pay them a living wage. This would be the case for teachers, nurses and other crucial public sector employees. This would form a key part of a broader costing exercise to see how much would be required to reach the MDGs in Zambia. Such costing exercises are already beginning and are being carried out by the UN in some countries and the World Bank in others (Global Campaign for Education). With this forecast, the World Bank and IMF should then calculate how much debt Zambia can afford to pay back each year given these financing needs for the MDGs. It is almost certain that for these countries the answer is nothing at all. Every dollar spent on paying back debt in Zambia is a dollar that is desperately needed for poverty reduction. This would mean the WB and IMF should then work with donors to cancel 100% of Zambian debt repayments. This would free up hundreds of millions of dollars to be spent on poverty reduction. The IMF currently has the third largest stock of gold in the world, and it is currently undervalued by $32 billion dollars. It would take only 0.04% of this to pay 100% of Zambia's debt service from now until 2015, releasing $1,603 million dollars over the next ten years to be spent on poverty reduction. However, even with full debt cancellation, the Zambians would still be left with a financing gap if they are to reach the MDGs. This will have to be filled by donor aid, and preferably direct budget support as this is the most efficient form of finance. Having identified the figure required of donors, the World Bank and IMF should work with the Government of Zambia to lobby donors to find as many resources as possible. This should include full utilisation of new funding mechanisms such as the Education for All Fast Track Initiative. Only after this debt calculation and lobbying donors for the maximum commitments should the IMF work together with the government to formulate the macroeconomic framework. This should be done through a process of consultation and should use Poverty and Social Impact Analysis to outline trade offs and policy choices. It should also calculate a number of different scenarios to allow for shocks such as falling commodity prices or drought. A needs-based approach to macroeconomic forecasting and planning, together with flexible long-term budget support from donors, is the only way that countries like Zambia are going to reach the MDGs.

Not only is the IMF forcing governments to “budget with their eyes shut,” without planning realistically for the teachers and nurses they actually need, it also appears to be approaching the MDGs with its own eyes closed to the need for a strong public sector and to predictable long-term support to help finance public services. A major change in domestic and external policies is needed to achieve the education MDGs. Commentators such as the Global Campaign for Education believe that it can be achieved through a combination of debt cancellation and donor action on the basis of the FTI plan. Without a change of course, thousands of out-of-school Zambian children will have to wait until a multiplicity of conditions and policy benchmarks are in place for increases in aid and debt relief. This will take too long. It is critical that the IMF leads the way to signify a departure from business as usual. At the moment the opposite is true. (Global Campaign for Education, 2004, p.17-18).
For their part developing country governments must make poverty reduction and the attainment of the MDGs an explicit objective of macroeconomic policy with transparent, quantifiable and monitorable indicators in the annual budget, and maximise expenditure on poverty reduction, including education and health. This can be done by encouraging an open, national debate on the formulation of key macroeconomic objectives, closely tied up to strategies developed to meet the needs experienced at province, district and community-level.

According to the IMF the only constraint that it is advising the government to adhere to is to limit its expenditure and within this to stick to an agreed overall limit for spending on wages of 8% of GDP. How the government chooses to allocate its salary budget is up to the government. Therefore, according to the IMF, there is no constraint on teacher salaries per se. There are a number of responses to this position. On the reallocation of the salary budget, the first point to be made is that teachers are by far the largest single group of public sector workers. There is therefore a clear link between the overall wage bill and teachers in Zambia; it would be very difficult to keep the wage bill down without limiting or freezing wage increases for teachers. This is not to say that reallocation is not possible. There is no doubt that the Zambian government could do more to prioritise education, to ensure that resources reach schools, and to reduce waste and expenditures on non-poverty reducing activities. The government’s poor prioritisation is reflected in the large gratuities that have recently been awarded to members of parliament at a time when many are being asked to be ‘patriotic’ by accepting further hardships. An MP’s average monthly wage is approximately K1.5 million. A minister earns K3 million per month excluding generous allowances, in addition to drawing an MP’s salary. The housing allowance received by ministers alone is K700,000-800,000 per month. On top of this, Ministers and MPs are legally entitled to a mid-term gratuity of between K200-500 million each. In total there are 150 MPs and 20 Ministers. The unions and civil society groups are incensed that the government is demanding “patriotism” of others but is not prepared to lead by example.

The teachers' unions and other civil society groups do not disagree with the IMF that the government could better prioritise its spending. ZNUT claims that the education sector is being mismanaged by the government and that education is being afforded a relatively low priority: "It should be [priority] number one but it's only number 10… As long as government does not have proper priorities and they lack the skills of prioritising, this crisis is going to continue." Zambia's new government recently demonstrated its commitment to accountability by becoming one of the first to sign itself up for peer review through the NEPAD mechanism. It is pushing hard to liberalise its economy, improve service delivery and root out corruption. It has already completed a project with the World Bank to eliminate ghost and retired workers from the public sector payroll and is introducing an Integrated Financial Information Monitoring System (IFIMIS) to facilitate budget monitoring and public accountability. Yet by denying Zambia access to full debt relief, withholding budget support which would help sustain the overloaded health and education systems, and forcing the government to impose and sustain a wage and hiring freeze, the IFIs and donors are placing in dire jeopardy the very reform efforts that they say are needed to reduce wasteful spending and strengthen prioritisation. (Global Campaign for Education, 2004).

7. Dilemmas and challenges

There seem to be too many unrealistic conditions to enable the Zambian government to reach its overall development goals, and at the same time meet the IMF conditionalities. Educational strategies and development goals are specifically suffering. Talking about quality improvement, increased access and UPE, aiming to meet the MDGs including the educational objectives leaves the country with contradictory challenges. As long as the shortage of teachers is the most critical factor in meeting the need to achieve EFA, especially in the rural areas, the overall goals will not be met. Of course challenges in the distribution of teachers are also a factor to address, as is an assessment of the overall administration of the whole sector. But looking into the major teacher crises in the schools, and the policy of not hiring new teachers, the overall objectives will not be met according to the strategies developed unless more teachers can be employed. The contribution by the Netherlands Government providing donor funding to support teacher's salaries, is a short term solution. An overall needs assessment, looking into all aspects of the macro-economy and coming up with a more comprehensive country strategy, as recommended by Oxfam, may be a sound a strategic starting point. Not being able to employ teachers in the midst of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the impact on education per se seems to be a very costly way for Zambia to continue, with regard to a long term strategy for future development of the country.

In summary the challenge of adequate teacher supply in Zambia at a time of severe financial constraint requires a multi-faceted solution. Each of the main players has an important role to perform in resolving the contradiction of a demand for human capital to drive the development process and a strait-jacket on the funding necessary to educate the human resources the country has available. At the macro-level the IMF and the World Bank must look seriously at debt relief and its opportunities for Zambia. These agencies' powerful analyses of economic realities should be used to advise the Government of Zambia better on how to use its resources most effectively. Enough has been said in the body of this paper about actual strategies available at the macro level for repetition to be unnecessary. However, the fundamental action for the IMF/WB to consider is how to achieve flexibility in their use of lending and repayment instruments which will allow governments more latitude in resolving such glaring contradictions as the teacher supply/teacher freeze anomaly.

For the Government of Zambia, several initiatives present themselves. First is the issue of priorities: is education in fact a top priority or is this political rhetoric? Unless government funding is seen to be following educational development few will be convinced of GRZ statements regarding priorities. It must also be stated that getting government's internal house in order in terms of corrupt and greedy practices will do much to convince communities and donors that priorities are being observed. Strategies adopted elsewhere (as in Tanzania for example) show how the financing of education can be better supported. Capitation grants for schools to encourage enrolment, the multiple use of classrooms rather than double-shifting, careful attention to unit costs, sound financial analysis and information all help to create an economically sound system of schooling. Government has a great deal to do in terms of demonstrating its sincerity and commitment.

The donor community has been shown the way in Zambia by the Dutch initiative in Southern Province. This is short-term but donors should operate jointly on such short-term solutions once they are persuaded that the macro-players are serious about changing their behaviour. This is where donors can play an important advocacy role, saying to the IMF, 'Loosen up over time and we will bridge the interim gap'.

Communities and NGOs also have a role to perform in resolving the teacher supply problem. A greater variety of types of schools and conditions of service could provide opportunities for trained teachers to find some kind of post and receive some kind of salary until the GRZ situation is resolved. CBOs and NGOs have long provided alternative education in Zambia. They should be encouraged to increase their commitment and provision. Organisations like ZNUT have a powerful influence over their members and over government. What creative ideas have come from the unions to assist in resolving the question of the non-appointment of teachers? How could they be brought more fully into the debate and what strategies could they suggest? The need is for a national forum or debate in which creative and economically viable solutions are shared.

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