

# MICRO PROJECTS

## Promoting development through community participation



The several partnership agreements between the European Union and African Caribbean and Pacific countries included always activities aimed at responding to the specific needs of local communities with regard to development. Therefore, alongside the more conventional development assistance, the European Union has been active in providing decentralised support to microprojects in Zambia. The first Micro Projects Programme (MPP) was launched in 1985 in close cooperation and coordination with Zambia Social Investment Fund.

Over the past period of 19 years, the MPP was instrumental in co-financing various community projects, particularly in rural areas which had long suffered neglect because of government's limited financial resources.

As a result, basic schools, dams, roads, health centres, bridges and water wells among other infrastructure were constructed across the country - all at the initiative and through the motivation of local people.

These projects provide living proof that while local communities may be financially poor, they are not short of workable ideas - ideas that could bring hope and human dignity when put into effect. In this regard, I wish to thank everyone - especially the local communities in MPP areas - for their indispensable contribution towards the realisation of MPP objectives.

Indeed, development is not about abstract numbers. It is about whether projects of this nature can have a practical bearing on the daily lives of the ordinary individual.

Sustainable development, like sustainable democracy, should be a process of the people, by the people and for the people.

Therefore, the success of any development projects rests squarely on the active involvement of the people - the men and women who live in the affected area and understand better the difficulties in their community.

I am happy to note that the MPP has contributed to resolving some of these problems. It is the testimonies of ordinary people, such as those published on the pages of this supplement, that provide heart-warming evidence that the MPP was not an exercise in futility.

We are very much looking forward to renewing this experience under a real decentralised cooperation approach.

Henry Sprietsma  
Ambassador - European Union



The Micro Projects Programme that the Government of Zambia started in 1985 through the central Project Management Unit came to an end in 2004. During 19 years of implementation, the programme received €46.2 million (equivalent of K275 billion at current exchange rate) from the European Union. As a result of this level of funding, about 1000 projects were implemented in all the districts of Zambia. These projects were designed to respond to the needs and priorities of the local communities. Government and many other stakeholders including Parliament have acknowledged the success of the programme during design and implementation. We strongly believe that the programme priorities reflected the needs of the local communities among which was the development of community infrastructure.

Nevertheless, 19 years of programme implementation have provided Government with an opportunity to reflect on the achievements, constraints, and challenges for future programme management. It is a result of Government's reflection on the programme implementation that we decided to halt implementation of the programme in 2004. This action by Government has enabled it to consider making changes to the procedures and modalities for implementing community projects. It should be reiterated that the foregoing has been the main reason for suspending programme implementation in 2004. This is contrary to speculation of failure as indicated by some stakeholders. Even Parliament raised issues about the closure of the programme.

The 'new-look' Micro Projects Programme framework will be jointly defined by Government and the European Union in the near future. The new micro project framework will take into account the requirements of key frameworks such as the Decentralisation Policy which provides appropriate mechanisms for funding community projects through the Local Government structures and District Administration. In addition, the successor programme will take into account the requirements of the 9<sup>th</sup> EDF under the Cotonou Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the African-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP) countries which emphasises the realignment of external assistance to the national procedures and funding mechanisms. Through the introduction of such improvements, Government expects to make the successor programme even more successful. The new approach to programme management will continue with the implementation of micro projects through established local procedures that are designed to promote institutional sustainability and national ownership of development.

In this way, we are sure that the wide spread benefits that will accrue in the successor programme will be an expansion of the benefits under the Micro Projects Programme. We are confident that the community infrastructure that has been developed under this programme, including those to be developed under future Micro Projects Programme, will be maintained by the local communities and authorities. The central Government on its part endeavors to provide the necessary equipment and personnel to support the infrastructure in benefiting the people in the local communities.

Ng'andu P. Magande, M.P.  
Minister of Finance and National Planning  
National Authorising Officer of the European Development Fund

## Project overview



A unique feature was that money was directly transferred to local communities who were fully accountable. All this was in line with the MPP motto of 'ensuring sustainable development through community participation'.

Collaboration with government and other cooperating partners helped to maximise limited resources. This contributed to expanding coverage to the whole country, thus giving local communities an opportunity to directly participate in the development of their own areas.

Assistance was demand-driven. A key strategy for success was the direct engagement of the local people. This involved the requirement that local projects be initiated by beneficiary communities and that such proposals should reflect development priorities of the community and demonstrate a high degree of social and economic impact.

In order to encourage the principles of local ownership, capacity building and community participation, the programme was implemented through district development committees. This approach helped to strengthen the government's decentralisation process.

In addition, the MPP also encouraged a shift towards the establishment of economic and income-generating activities as part of a strategy to further promote project sustainability.

The fact that these income-generating activities successfully continue to provide a source of livelihood for vulnerable members of the Zambian society confirms that development can best be sustained when it is anchored on the ideas of those for whom it is intended.

Development projects may some times fail, but local community participation in project initiation and implementation has often guaranteed continuity even long after donor funding has stopped.

This strategy has worked well for the Micro Projects Programme (MPP), a social support programme designed to finance local community development initiatives in Zambia.

The overall objective of the programme was to contribute to poverty alleviation through improvement of urban and rural communities' standards of living.

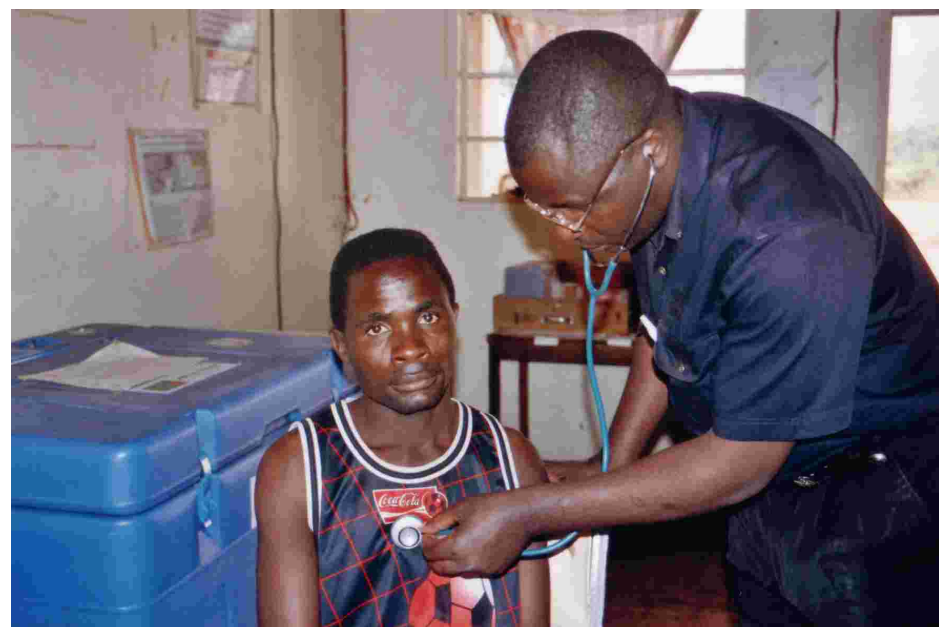
In its 19 years (1985 - 2004) of operation, the MPP provided co-funding to more than 800 community-led projects throughout the country, including community roads, schools, health centres, markets, grain warehouses and vocational skills training centres.

Work involved either new construction or rehabilitation of dilapidated infrastructure.

Beneficiary communities contributed 25 percent of total project costs (often done in kind, such as labour) with the MPP taking up the remaining 75 percent.







**Health facility comes to Kavalamanja**

Kavalamanja rural health centre is located 25km from Luangwa Boma, a rural district that lies about 200km east of Lusaka. The centre was completed in 1998. Before the construction of the health centre, villagers used to walk to the nearest clinic, 25km away. Some died on the way. In desperation, other villagers resorted to traditional medicine, causing death in some cases.

Here, Lickson Zimba, Planning and Development Manager of the Luangwa District Health Management Team, narrates the difference that the rural health centre has brought to Kavalamanja.

"Before this health centre was built, the health delivery system was bad. People used to walk to Luangwa Boma and as an office, we had to make a programme to immunise children here and also conduct growth monitoring programmes. So, we had to organise and find transport to reach this place. But now since there is a health centre, these services are done just here at the health centre."

The difference now is that services are closer to their door step which was different from when it was not there. The cases we refer to Luangwa Boma are, mostly, maternity where women have difficulties in delivering and need a service to Luangwa Boma to deliver. Apart from that and may be the issue of injuries, all cases are handled here.

This is the only health centre in this area. It services a population of 1,055 people. There is no other (clinic) in this area.

When we were building this health centre, there was a lot of community participation because the people looked at health as a major problem and the way they were suffering.

So, the idea actually came from the community themselves in conjunction with the health personnel at the district. After that, they formed a committee which was looking into the construction of the health centre.

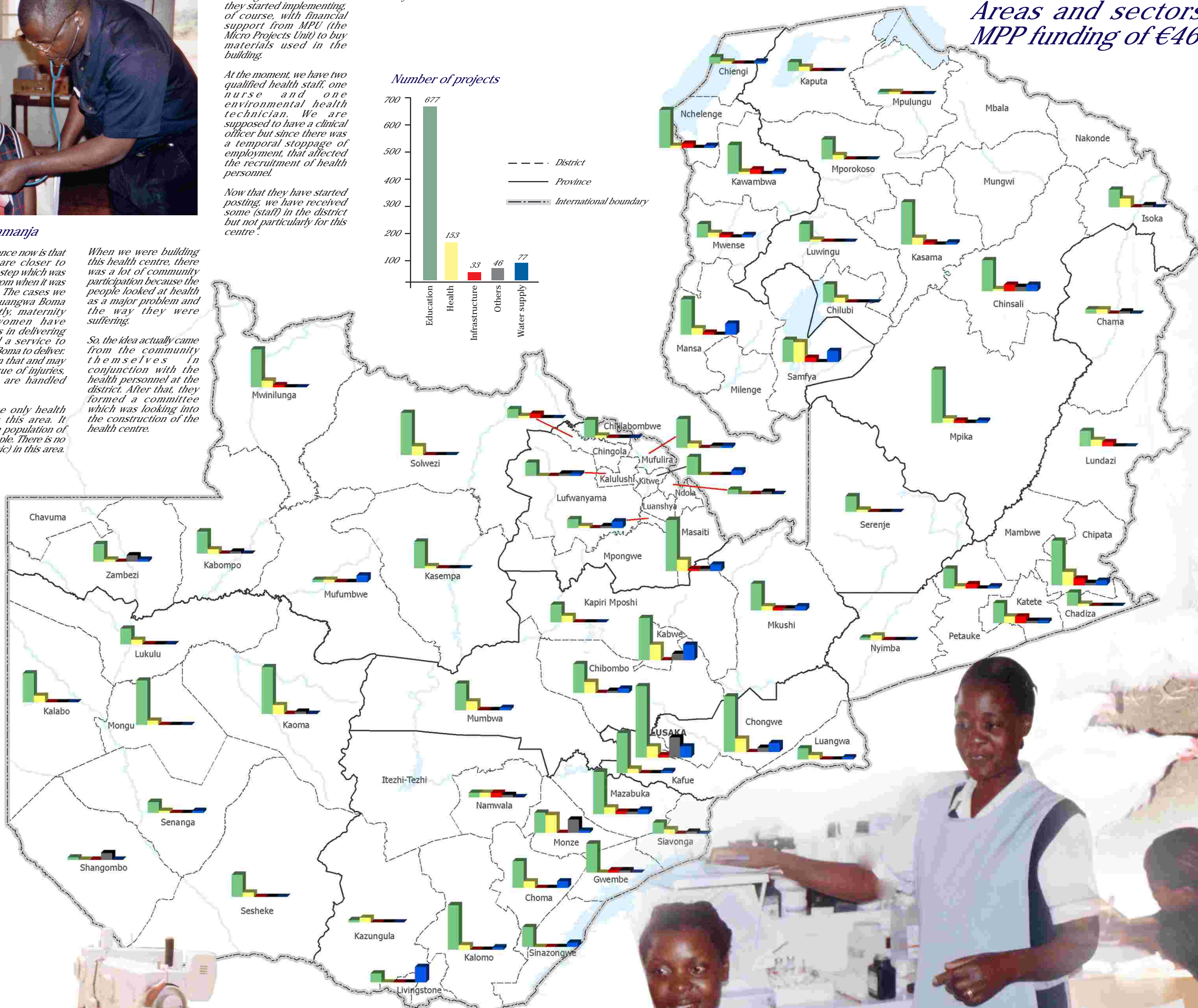
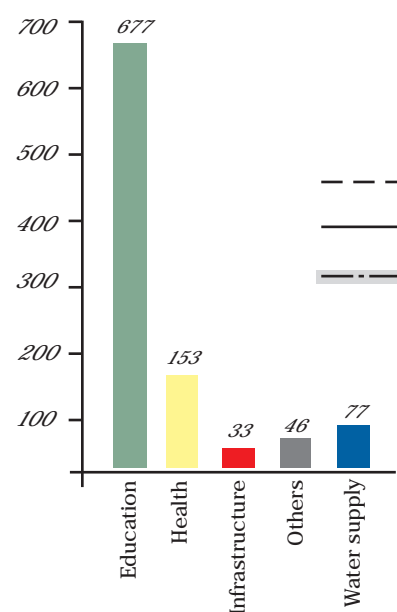
They gave themselves tasks of who was going to mould bricks and who would be drawing water. From there, they started implementing, of course, with financial support from MPU (the Micro Projects Unit) to buy materials used in the building.

Mr Zimba's story shows how an initiative for better health can come from the community itself.

At the moment, we have two qualified health staff, one nurse and one environmental health technician. We are supposed to have a clinical officer but since there was a temporal stoppage of employment, that affected the recruitment of health personnel.

Now that they have started posting, we have received some (staff) in the district but not particularly for this centre.

Number of projects



**MICRO PROJECTS IN ZAMBIA**  
Areas and sectors that received overall MPP funding of €46.2 million or K275 billion



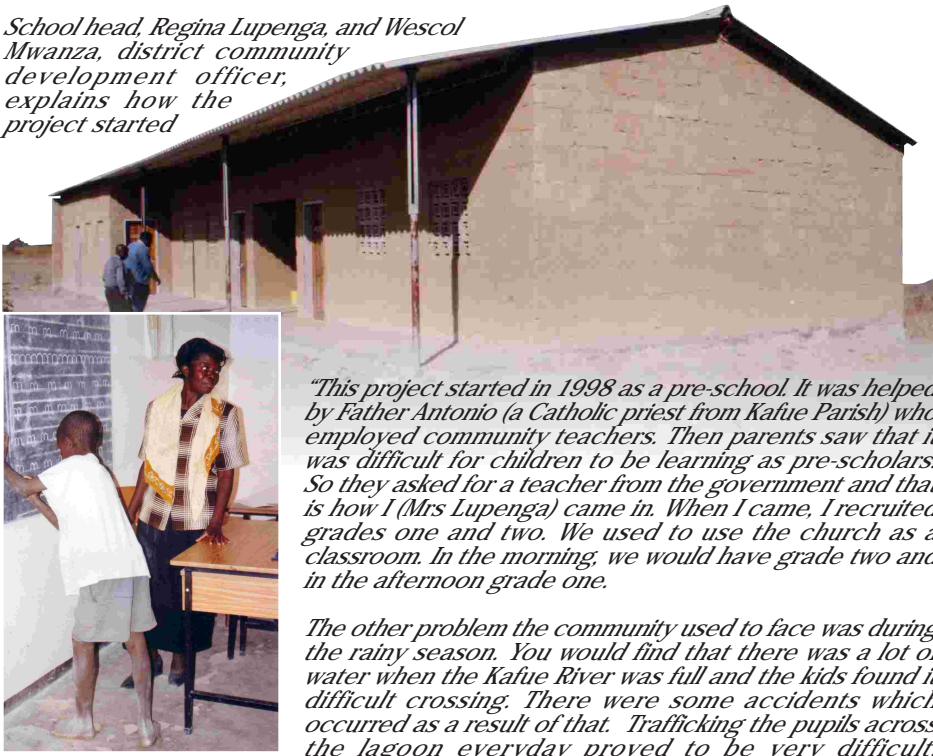


## A new hope: successes from the field

### St. Joseph School - No child is an island

St. Joseph is the only school on the Kafue swamps in Chanyanya area, 60km south of Lusaka. It is the only school on the island. It would take children a total of eight hours to travel to and from Chanyanya Middle Basic School, the nearest school before construction of St. Joseph.

School head, Regina Lupenga, and Wescol Mwanza, district community development officer, explains how the project started



"This project started in 1998 as a pre-school. It was helped by Father Antonio (a Catholic priest from Kafue Parish) who employed community teachers. Then parents saw that it was difficult for children to be learning as pre-scholars. So they asked for a teacher from the government and that is how I (Mrs Lupenga) came in. When I came, I recruited grades one and two. We used to use the church as a classroom. In the morning, we would have grade two and in the afternoon grade one.

The other problem the community used to face was during the rainy season. You would find that there was a lot of water when the Kafue River was full and the kids found it difficult crossing. There were some accidents which occurred as a result of that. Trafficking the pupils across the lagoon everyday proved to be very difficult.

Most of the children did not enrol for school because of the pre-school arrangement which was there. And that contributed to the illiteracy levels of the island. Most of the people (in the area) are fishermen and most fishermen are not good at sending their children to school.

So when we came in and did a community sensitisation, we educated them on the need for them to send children to school.

Then parents saw it that they could build a school. So, there was a development officer from the mainland. He is the one who advised the community that the government could fund the construction of a school. So as a community, we organised ourselves. We were told the community should provide 25 percent of everything.

That is how they started ferrying all the building materials from the mainland. From the mainland, they ferried building sand, river sand and gravel in their small canoes. Then when we were ready, the Micro Projects people came. So when they saw that it was 25 percent that was when they funded us with 75 percent. That is when we started building. This is how it is today.

It was supposed to be a 1x2 (classroom block); then these other classrooms were added, just demarcating these other classes to accommodate children as they go to upper grades.

At first, children used to go to the mainland, about six kilometres from the harbour to that school. This time they have a school here. The school also serves as a meeting point for the community".

### Kafue district hospital - pride of local initiative

Kafue is the only district in Lusaka Province with its own district hospital. And this is a fact that makes the town's residents very proud.

Elizabeth Phiri, a 54 year old resident of Zambia Compound, is particularly happy that she can now quickly receive medical attention whenever she goes to the hospital. It never used to be like this before the facility was opened in 2004, she says.

Before that, patients would have to trek to nearby hospitals such as Mtendere Mission Hospital in Chirundu (95km) and the University Teaching Hospital in Lusaka, a distance of 54km.

Although Kafue had its own health centres, the facilities were too inadequate to cope with demand. As a result, cases had to be referred to the satellite hospitals. Now, the opposite is true.

"With the construction of the hospital, most of the cases (from health centres) are referred here and only a few extreme cases are referred to UTH," says Dr Mwila Lembalemba, the district director of health. "We have seen a reduction in the number of cases being referred to UTH. There has been a drop of about 80 percent."

It was the initiative - and sheer determination - of the community that led to the construction of this modern, 164 bed hospital. The first to be built was a 6 fridge mortuary. A borehole was later sunk. Soon, a ward block was built to wall plate level though the slab was not yet made.

The residents moulded 6,200 blocks; collected 60 tonnes of crushed stones, 65 tonnes of river sand and 20 tonnes of building sand. In addition, they contributed cash amounting to K20,052,000 to procure more local materials and pay for administration costs.



Additional help was needed, though. For this, the community approached the British High Commission in Lusaka, who pledged 58,000 pounds towards the construction of female and maternity wards. The Italian community, Rotary Club and the Japanese government also contributed.

"When we approached the British High Commission, they said we should approach Micro Projects Unit, which we did," recalls Mr. Mervin Hodgkinson, executive chairperson of the hospital management board. "In the beginning it was difficult because the way MPU saw it was not a micro but a macro project. It was big."

However, further meetings and inspection visits to the construction site proved the capacity of the community to carry the project through. The MPU provided a grant of about K764 million.

### Women's resilience triumphs in Kabwe

The economic downturn in Kabwe following the closure of some companies in the 1990s had a telling effect on the lives of the residents of the town. The boom expected after privatisation did not come, some residents say. Instead, a number of men - sole bread winners - lost their jobs.

However, for a group of resilient women in the town's Lukanga Township, what started as a conversation at a local hospital has now turned into a successful business undertaking.

One day in 1998, when some women were gathered at the hospital, word went round that the Micro Projects Programme (MPP) was giving out loans for people to start businesses. Perhaps out of pessimism, some of the women dismissed it as idle talk while others saw a profitable business opportunity in the making. The optimists would later be vindicated by what would become of the project.

"We were 50 when we started but others said it would not work out and they left," narrates Mrs Angela Mbita, Chairperson of what is now Natweshe Income - Generating Association. "Natweshe" is a Bemba word meaning 'let us try' and true to the spirit of trying, the club is now a living symbol of an optimistic effort.

It was during field appraisals done by officials from the district community development committee that some of the club members gave up, saying the project was taking too long to commence. But it was not long after the project was approved that the women received the first loan cycle of K21 million - money that enabled the club to establish a revolving fund.

The women were trained in different business techniques such as savings, record keeping and financial management - skills they say have helped them to successfully manage their businesses. Among such success stories is Anacleta Mukuka, a 42 year old widow with five children, who runs a well stocked consumer shop in Lukanga Township.

Initially, she started her retail business in a rented shop, selling consumer merchandise such as soap and sugar. However, renting the shop was significantly eating into her earnings. The solution was to buy off the shop, she decided. The land lord agreed to sell off the building at K20 million, a price that Mrs Mukuka managed to pay in instalments, with some of the money having been borrowed from the club's revolving fund.

Today, Mrs Mukuka is a proud owner of a successful retail business, plus the property in which she trades. She is among the 31 active members of Natweshe involved in income - generating activities such as cross border trading, chicken rearing and general trading. The club has over K60 million in its revolving fund, including what members still owe and are repaying. Members enjoy the benefit of borrowing from the fund at an average interest rate of 3.5 per cent. Although the majority of members are women, the club has two men who, according to Mrs Mbita, have been very cooperative by repaying all their loans. Natweshe is now registered with the Registrar of Societies.



Mrs Mukuka in her shop

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