

# Towards a reconstructed society: Hope for a better today and tomorrow in a world of unstable economic systems and increasing poverty, with a focus on Zambia

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The social value of this article is a demonstration of the impact of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative on Zambia and how, in response, faith-based organisations had attempted to influence public economic policy for the betterment of 80% of Zambians who lived under the 'poverty datum line' and spent one U.S. dollar a day per capita by 2002, when compared to almost a decade earlier, and who experienced a reduction in life expectancy from 54 years in the late 1980s to 37 years in 2002. The knowledge gap which this article sought to narrow is a lack of adequate reflections on the role of faith-based organisations in addressing economic instability and increasing poverty among majority citizens. The methods used were mainly qualitative in nature, which examined both primary and secondary sources of data. The findings were that the situation of adverse social dislocation of the majority was unlikely to be any better in and beyond 2002. Experience showed that in the year 2005, the socio-economic situation of the majority was still pathetic.

**Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications:** This article sought to highlight the specific role which faith-based organisations played in the orientation of the state towards a 'reconstructed society' in Zambia. The paper challenged the view that socio-economic development matters are a preserve of development experts and politicians only. Instead, the paper argued that the path towards economic stability and prosperity called for the involvement of all stakeholders, including faith-based organisations.

**Keywords:** faith-based organisations; reconstructed society; highly indebted poor countries (HIPC); poverty; public economic policy; ethics; Zambia.

## Introduction

It is not an exaggeration to say that Africa has had difficulties along her journey towards the realisation of a 'reconstructed society' (from the English verb 'reconstruct', that is, 'build or form (something) again after it has been damaged or destroyed') (Oxford Dictionary 2020e), that is, a society which is rebuilt and which affords a comfortable existence and livelihood for all its citizens. The damage and destruction inflicted on the African society, her institutions and her peoples are irrefutable in human history, especially in the last 621 years of African history, 1400–2021. This includes the diabolical slavery and slave trade which saw, *inter alia*, the scattering away of African ancestors in the diaspora and the destruction of the collective African intelligence at sea because a number of brilliant Africans who became sick along the path of Africa's enslavement journeys were thrown into the sea as 'excess cargo'; the degrading colonisation which, *inter alia*, saw the 'rape' of Africa's resources, including the mineral wealth of Africa and the domination of Africa's peoples by foreign forces; and the neocolonisation, which, *inter alia*, continues to see economic repression and suppression in world markets. For example, the best wines from Western Cape in South Africa, such as the 2017 AA Badenhorst 'Ramnasgras' Cinsault Swartland and the 2016 Beeslaar Pinotage Stellenbosch (Freedman 2019) are given restrictive quotas in European markets, and the best lager in Africa, 'Mosi Lager' of Zambia, 'with a gold quality status' (Monde Selection Quality Institute 2021), cannot even be allowed to be exported and to penetrate American and European markets. This is because it may 'wipe out' the sales of any lager in those markets because of its supreme taste (e.g. Edeme et al. 2020; United Nations 2006). In the contemporary world, one of the major hurdles towards Africa's movement towards a fully liberated and reconstructed society has to do with unstable economic systems.

In order to contextualise the article, the terms 'governance', 'ethics' and 'morality' need to be explained from the onset.

'Governance' is a term which is generally seen as 'the act or process of governing or overseeing the control and direction of something' (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2005), especially in the political sphere or 'the action or manner of governing a state or organisation, etc.' (from Old French *governor*) (Oxford Dictionary 2021b), connected to the verb 'govern', meaning to 'conduct the policy, actions, and affairs (of a state, organisation, or people) with authority' (from the Latin *gubernare* – 'to steer, rule', from the Greek *kubernan* – 'to steer') (Oxford Dictionary 2021a). As for the terms 'ethics' and 'morality', the two terms are interlinked and inter-related; whereas 'ethics' has to do with 'moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity', fully connected to the Greek idea of *ethos*, meaning 'nature, disposition, customs' (Oxford Dictionary 2020b), 'the branch of knowledge that deals with moral principles' (firmly grounded on 'ethics as virtues' [Aristotle], 'ethics as rationality' [Immanuel Kant] and 'ethics as utilitarianism' [a broad Western view]) (Oxford Dictionary 2020c), the term 'morality' has to do with 'principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behaviour' (from the Old French *moralite*, from late Latin *moralitas*, from Latin *moralis*) (Oxford Dictionary 2020d), and is very much connected to the Latin *mores* – 'customs' (Oxford Dictionary 2020a). In essence, ethics has more to do with guiding principles in moral behaviour (theoretical) and 'morality' with what ought to be good behaviour in society (pragmatic). Governance, ethics and morality – in structure, substance and practice – ought to be oriented to personal and societal growth, development and transformation.

This is the *essence of a reconstructed society*, that is, a society which seeks to remake and rebuild in the light of past and present reconstructive global and local responses to injustices in political and economic governance style, in unethical orientation and moral loss in economies and societies. Each society must see the relevance of this in the light of their experiences, similar to the post-world war reconstruction of Europe – from the rubble and ashes of war, Europe had reconstructed herself. Reconstructive energies in the Americas and Europe gave rise to such philosophies as reconstructionism, which was appropriated in other contexts, including Latin America (Oregon State University 2021).

That aside, it is not an ill-conceived idea that the movement towards a reconstructed African society should include civil society, encompassing faith-based organisations. Regarding this matter, the World Bank states that: 'Civil society ... refers to a wide array of organizations: community groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), labour unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, and foundations' (Jezard 2018). Thus, civil society has a noble and sacred task to contribute to the very urgent quest for the evolution of stable economic systems.

The article is divided into the following parts, namely background and rationale, how Zambia landed herself in a debt situation, world economic systems and the incidence of

poverty, Zambia's experience with the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative and rising poverty, involvement of the churches and faith-based organisations in public policy matters in Zambia, the birth and growth of a liberation ecclesiology in the light of an unstable economic system in Zambia, major findings and shortcomings, conclusions, recommendations for the churches' involvement in public 'economic' policy, concluding remarks and way forward.

## Background and rationale

The social value of this article is a demonstration of the impact of the HIPC initiative, and how the faith-based organisations had attempted to influence public economic policy for the betterment of the Zambian society, especially during the period 1990–2005. The impact, as shall be seen later, was both economic and social. The research methods used were mainly qualitative, where both primary and secondary texts were interrogated.

Successive governments tried to put in place policies and programmes to stabilise and grow the economy (Jones 1994; Seshamani 1992). Nonetheless, recent research on the performance of Zambia's economy revealed disheartening statistics (Zulu 2002). A number of internal and external forces have been responsible for this (Jones 1994:23–39). Out of this context arose Zambia's debt situation, which this author would like to interrogate, as well as suggesting practical steps for the involvement of civil society in public economic policy matters as a demonstration for passion for social and economic justice for all.

## How Zambia landed herself in a debt situation

Zambia's real economic slide could be traced back to the mid-1970s when its major industry, copper mining – the country's mainstay of the economy – suffered loss of revenue and decline in production. The situation was exacerbated by the energy shortage which brought about high prices – causing heavy financial strains on Third World countries such as Zambia. Put differently, external shocks which consisted of the oil and commodity crises are the major causes of the economic crisis in the Third World countries, including Zambia (Jones 1994; Kalyalya 1988; Morgan 1975; Nafziger 1993; Nunnenkamp 1986; Seshamani 1992; Todaro 1981). *Inter alia*, the economies of these countries did not have the capacity to adjust to the challenges of these crises as compared to developed industrial countries such as the United Kingdom and Germany (Nunnenkamp 1986:51–53).

The oil crisis is traced back to 1974 when the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, through an agreed plan, announced a massive 400% oil price increase (Todaro 1981:491–492). This brought about an increase in their total export revenues – rising from \$14.5 billion in 1973 to over \$110bn in 1974 (Todaro 1981:491). Non-OPEC developing countries which depended on oil from OPEC countries for industrial and

agricultural survival, sharply increased their oil import bill – from \$4bn in 1973 to over \$10bn in 1974 or an increase of 250% (Todaro 1981:491). The genesis of third world debt can be traced from this period. In the case of Zambia, ‘debt servicing, which had represented only 7.3% of export earnings in 1974, rose to 18.7% in 1977 and 47.6% in 1982’ (Seshamani 1992:116–117). The price of oil soared from between \$2 and \$3 per barrel to between \$32 to \$40 per barrel (Nunnenkamp 1986:51–53).

Due to the fall of the commodity price of copper, Zambia’s balance of payment position went into deficit, its terms of trade fell to 54% relative to 1974, its government revenues dropped ‘less than one-fifth of the previous level and its budget went into deficit equivalent to 24% of gross domestic product (GDP) relative to the 1974 budget surplus’ (Seshamani 1992:116–117). Jones observes that ‘the collapse of the copper price expressed fundamental weaknesses in the structure of the Zambian economy’ (Jones 1994:26). By the time of the collapse of the copper price (compounded by the oil crisis), the economy had not yet diversified into other sectors such as agriculture.

Therefore, the fall of the copper price in 1975 made matters worse. Copper which was costing 1460 British Sterling per ton in 1974 dropped to 576 British Sterling per ton in one year (Government of Zambia 1997:11). What Zambia needed, in the face of unfavourable effects of ‘external shocks’, was economic dynamism, resilience and adaptability. Unfortunately, the country at the time did not have these, and so it was hit the hardest.

The road to recovery was going to prove a long, painful and hard one.

## World economic systems and the incidence of poverty in Africa

At the time of sub-Saharan Africa’s independence, beginning with Ghana in 1957, the world had only two superpowers, namely the United States of America (USA) with its preferred economic system of capitalism and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) with its preferred economic system of socialism, which manifested as communism. African countries had no real choice to evolve their own economic systems. Instead, they were ‘forced’ by global economic-political realities of that time to choose between the two systems or integrate aspects of both the systems.

In the meantime, some African countries such as Zambia and Tanzania tried, in the initial stages, to resist the ‘capitalist onslaught’ by introducing neo-socialist philosophies with an African traditional flavour. These were the ‘Zambian philosophy of humanism’, generally defined by Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia as *ubwananyina* (‘fraternity’ or ‘brotherhood’ or ‘sisterhood’ in Bemba) and *ujamaa* (the Swahili word for ‘extended family’ or ‘brotherhood’), expounded and propounded by Julius Nyerere of Tanzania (Bwalya 2010; see ‘Ujamaa’ in Oxford Dictionary 2020f). But, in the long run,

global economic realities made these outstanding, legendary and eminent African leaders succumb to capitalist norms, which were manifested in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank Structural Adjustment Programmes (Bwalya 2006b, 2009b). Later, Julius Nyerere resigned his position as President because he felt he could not implement these programmes, and Kenneth Kaunda abandoned these programmes because they were hurting his people.

The apparent triumph of capitalism at the beginning of the 1990s strengthened the position of the Bretton Woods,<sup>1</sup> IMF and the World Bank to sound a ‘clarion call’ to the world about the need for capitalist conformism. The activities of the Bretton Woods, through structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) and which have now become parts of Africa’s *political and economic creedal statements*, beginning in the 1970s, are well-documented. It is a well-known fact that Bretton Woods were premised on capitalism and have indeed left a well-known, documented trail of human disaster and environmental degradation (UK Essays 2018). These programmes have now been repackaged to suit changing times and are being called the HIPC Initiative.

## Zambia’s experience with the highly indebted poor countries initiative and rising poverty

The HIPC programme as it stood and stands in our world today was launched in Zambia in 1996 and reformulated and enhanced in 2000 (Jubilee-Zambia 2002). As noted already, the HIPC initiative was not essentially different from the infamous SAPs which ruined many African economies and lives of Africans, in structure and substance (Mangani 2005a). By 2005, Africa alone had ‘a debt stock of US\$ 330 billion’ and still spent ‘US\$ 15 billion every year in debt service to rich countries and the international financial institutions’ (Jubilee-Zambia 2002:1).

It is not an exaggeration that the HIPC Initiative had ‘failed to provide low-income countries a permanent and robust exit from indebtedness’ (Jubilee-Zambia 2002). Nine years after its launch in Zambia in 1996, it did not yield tangible benefits for ordinary people in the so-called HIPC countries, especially those African countries that had reached the HIPC ‘completion point’, that is, the stage of completing the HIPC process and of being eligible for debt cancellation (Jubilee-Zambia 2002). So far, there were 18 countries in the world which by 2005 had reached the HIPC completion point, namely Benin, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guyana, Honduras, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia (Jubilee-Zambia 2002).

This leads the author to address specifically the Zambian situation and point out categorically that more was needed to

1. Bretton Woods refers to: ‘a resort in the White Mountains of northern New Hampshire. In 1944, it was the site of the conference that designed the Bretton Woods system, an international exchange rate regime that lasted until 1971, and created the World Bank and International Monetary Fund’ (Your Dictionary, ‘Bretton Woods’; available online: <https://www.yourdictionary.com/bretton-woods>). Because of this, the World Bank and the IMF are referred to as the Bretton Woods.

be done by all stakeholders if Zambia was to tackle poverty under the IMF and World Bank inspired HIPC initiative.

Zambia's experience with the HIPC initiative, as a manifestation of the individualistic capitalist system, was well-presented and articulated by Jack Jones Zulu, a policy analyst with Jubilee-Zambia, in his presentation to the Southern Regional Conference held at ZAMCOM Lodge in Lusaka from 08 to 09 October 2002, when he argued that (Zulu 2002):

Zambia qualified for HIPC debt relief under the IMF, World Bank and Paris Club creditors in December 2000. This was achieved on the basis of a track record of trade and financial liberation of the economy, full privatization of nearly all parastatals, massive civil service retrenchment, removal of subsidies on maize our staple food. This move further saw the introduction of user fees on essential service like education and healthcare provision. (p. 8)

The so-called celebrated track record meant a fatalistic onslaught on livelihoods of the majority of Zambians, exacerbating the already worsening poverty situation in Zambia, with 80% of Zambians living under the poverty datum line, spending one dollar a day per capita by 2002 when compared to almost a decade earlier, and a reduction in life expectancy from 54 years in the late 1980s to 37 years in 2002 (Zulu 2002). Zulu highlighted fundamental flaws in the HIPC initiative, such as an economic framework of reducing the actual debt stock, which stood at \$7.3bn in 2002 to \$3.8bn by 2004 (Zulu 2002), and of providing relief so that the 'saved' money could be channelled into productive growth areas of the economy, thereby creating wealth.

These flaws included unrealistic assumptions which predicted real economic growth rates of 5%–6% of GDP from inception, which would in turn contribute to the reversal of poverty swings in impoverished nations such as Zambia (Zulu 2002). As for Zambia, this feature was proved wrong because between 1999 and 2001, the country was only able to record a growth rate of just between 3% and 5% of GDP without any real accompaniment of 'socio-economic development in which we mean a reduction in poverty, employment creation, increased school enrolment and better healthcare delivery system' (Zulu 2002). This situation of adverse socio-economic dislocation of the majority was unlikely to be any better in 2002, even with the realisation of the prediction beyond 2002. In fact, in 2004, Zambia recorded an economic growth rate of 5%, but this was without any significant large-scale socio-economic improvement in living standards by empirical observations (see Government of Zambia 2005:1-5).

Experience showed that in the year 2005,<sup>2</sup> the socio-economic situation of the majority was still pathetic, and one needed neither econometrics nor any other economic quantification at all in order to prove this point. If the situation persisted, how could Zambia have reduced

<sup>2</sup> Even though the article is set in the near past of the contemporary world, it is very relevant for the African context, where the problem of debt is still 'dogging' African nations today.

poverty by the year 2015 as part of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)? These were initiated and endorsed by the United Nations in 2000 as benchmarks for adequate economic development to be achieved by the year 2015 (United Nations 2000). They were eight in number and included a movement towards the eradication of poverty and environment sustainability (by 2015). Country reports from September 2005 UN Summit in New York reveal that this was yet to happen (United Nations 2005).

The critical concern for then and now was and is this process of turning around the economy through HIPC, which had bruised and incapacitated the majority; for example, due to HIPC austerity measures, 'Zambia was forced to freeze wages in the public – meaning that it could not employ thousands of trained teachers' (Jubilee-Zambia 2002), thus making citizens vulnerable and without access to life-sustaining goods and services simply because they had no salary. It also made civil servants, part of the workforce and the backbone of government, sink deeper into poverty due to the fact that salaries had remained static for a long time, and they could not sustain families due to high inflation (Jubilee-Zambia 2002). The average take-away home pay for civil servants in Zambia was Zambian Kwacha 500 000 (about \$100) compared to a monthly basic-needs basket of about Zambian Kwacha 1 350 000 (about \$270) in 2005 for a family of six in major towns and cities (Jubilee-Zambia 2002). The principle of 'contributive justice' or 'social justice' demanded that citizens are enabled by the economy and the government to bring out their skills, talents and gifts in order to share them and participate fully in the life of the nation (for more details, see and compare Jesuit Centre for Theological Education 2002; Jubilee-Zambia 2002).

While it was appreciated that the government went out of its way to spend billions of Zambian Kwachas saved from the HIPC Initiative on things such as road and bridge rehabilitation and infrastructural development in education (Jubilee-Zambia 2002), the majority of Zambians were still wallowing in extremes of poverty. Even with the attainment of the completion point in the year 2005, for which government was praised, the situation of the majority as seen then was extremely saddening and desolate. In 2005, as noted already, the IMF Deputy Managing Director, Mr Takatoshi Kato, praised Zambia during his visit for reaching the HIPC completion point and sounded the need for further reforms (Times of Zambia 2005). Sadly, he said this without any reference to human degradation and waste among ordinary Zambians due to HIPC austerity measures.

The next section looks at how the churches and faith-based organisations got involved in public policy matters.

## Involvement of the churches and faith-based organisations in public policy matters in Zambia

Speaking of churches and faith-based organisation in Christendom, the mission of the Christian church is not just

about evangelism but is holistic and includes all facets of development, including political, economic and social aspects of life (eds. Bwalya, Marlin & Peter 2004). In Zambia, churches, especially through the three ecclesiastical mother bodies – the Council of Churches in Zambia, the Episcopal Conference in Zambia and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (Henriot [2005]) – have seriously, truly and ecumenically (Henriot 2005) demonstrated that they are indeed the *congregatio fidelium* [the gathering of the faithful] and *conscientia societatis* [conscience of society] to some laudable degree. That is to say, they have vocationally seen themselves as those who faithfully gather around the teachings of the Judeo-Christian witness and common traditions of the worldwide universal apostolic church which is tied together by two well-known creeds, the Apostolic creed and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed, and whose conscience is being transformed in accordance with the revelation of the Supreme Being in human history and by sheer moral societal formation and voice, and whose conscience compels them to faithfully transform society towards true manliness and godliness.

The ecclesial methodologies have been mainly through ecumenical cooperation, policy analysis, critical research and papers,<sup>3</sup> social critiques, advocacy, prayers, and reconciliatory and conciliar mediation meetings, especially when the peace of the nation was threatened by very violent divergent political views. For example, through coalitions with other civil society groups in the Oasis Forum,<sup>4</sup> churches challenged the National Constitution Conference and called for the speedy implementation of a people driven and people-centred constitution (Kyambalesa 2009). Unfortunately, this did not yield tangible results, as the government of the day did not include key contentious clauses in the new constitution draft to be presented to parliament for ratification. Three important clauses which were left out are the 50% plus 1 system of election which required a presidential candidate to get 50% plus 1 vote to become president, rather than by a simple majority; the delay in swearing in of a president for 90 days instead of within 24 hours; and the appointment of cabinet outside Parliament (Pambazuka News 2011). The ruling party then, the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD), went to Parliament in 2010 with a doctored constitutional bill, which, *inter alia*, provided for a simple majority when it came to Presidential elections, swearing in of a President within 24 hours and appointment of cabinet from among members of parliament. But the bill could not be endorsed by Parliament because it lacked a two-thirds majority, to the vindication of the opposition parties, and this was at a huge cost to the nation, quoted at about \$1.7 million (about 85 billion Zambian Kwacha) in

3. For example, The Jesuit Center for Theological Research in Lusaka has been at the center of providing well-researched papers especially on socio-economic conditions in Zambia.

4. The Oasis Forum was a grouping of three ecumenical bodies in Zambia, the Law Association of Zambia and other like-minded people who opposed the introduction of the third term bid by the former President Chiluba in 2001. See U.S. Department of State: Zambia, pp. 1–3, viewed 20 October 2021, from <https://www.state.gov/countries-areas/zambia/>.

conservative terms (see Pambazuka News 2011), in terms of expenses on commissioners and the National Constitution Conference process.

The Zambian churches were relentless to call for and pray for peace prior to the 20 September 2011 tripartite elections, which saw the election of Mr Michael Chilufya Sata (late) as the Fifth Republican President of Zambia, amidst incidences and accusations of corruption (The Post 2011) against the vanquished regime of Fourth President Mr Rupiah Bwezani Banda (late).

In essence, Zambian churches have tried to demonstrate just that: to restore people's dignity and humanity; to preach peace and social justice; and to work for a more equitable and fair society. This has been done under very trying and sometimes very arrogant and irreconcilable socio-political-economic conditions.

The next section presents specifically the birth and growth of a liberation ecclesiology in the light of an unstable economic system in Zambia.

## The birth and growth of a liberation ecclesiology in the light of an unstable economic system in Zambia

This liberation ecclesiology is a practically and intellectually 'critical and prophetic' church movement aimed at liberating humanity, or simply a church movement which sought total human emancipation in all her critical reflection on praxis and in all her participation in the affairs of the nation. Unapologetically and without reservation, it was and is largely attributed to ecclesiological and transformational forces within the leadership of Roman Catholic Church in Zambia, especially through the excellent and life-affirming work of the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR), based in Lusaka.

The Jesuits, in collaboration with other like-minded people, have devoted their literary, intellectual, analytical and scientific skills in order to contribute to the attainment of a fuller human life in Zambia. Their motto, 'promoting faith and justice', was a clarion call to Christian service which other religious groups could emulate (see Bwalya 2006a, 2009a; Jesuit Centre for Theological Education 2002).

Speaking of the JCTR, representative of the feelings of many Zambian Christians and people across the board, its contributions were and are mainly through (see Jesuit Centre for Theological Education 2002):

1. Critical reflections on issues of health education and work, from the standpoint of theology and other social sciences.
2. Publications of relevant papers and magazines, especially on the situation of Zambian workers and food baskets.

3. Facilitation of seminars and workshops in order to conscientise Zambians about what is really obtaining in the economy and to propose 'the way out' of the current economic impasse.
4. Advocacy, especially through Jubilee-Zambia, which had contributed immensely to the reduction in debt owed to the multilateral and bilateral creditors and had continued to lobby through both local and global forums for a total cancellation of Zambia debt; it was hoped that the promise of the G8 leaders which was made in July 2005 at Gleneagles in Scotland to cancel 100% of debt of countries in the HIPC initiative would be honoured (Mangani 2005b).

This kind of approach to the question of economic systems and poverty had a ripple effect and paid dividends, helping the Zambian church and civil society to be more assertive in her quest for the economic justice in the light of the negativities of program implementation (Musamba 2005).

## Major findings

Below is a summary of major findings of the study which were that:

1. The situation of adverse social dislocation of the majority was unlikely to be any better in 2002, even with the realisation of the prediction of fulfilling the HIPC completion point beyond 2002. That Zambia would reach the HIPC completion did not yield in very significant improvements in the social status of the majority. The research showed that the socio-economic conditions for the majority of Zambians in 2002 and beyond 2002 were extremely adverse.
2. Experience showed that in the year, 2005, the socio-economic situation of the majority was still pathetic. That even with the fact that the HIPC completion point was reached by Zambia in 2005, significant social benefits such as access to affordable health and education did not adequately accrue to an ordinary person in the streets of Zambia.

## Major shortcomings of the highly indebted poor countries programme

The following is a summary of the major shortcomings of the HIPC programme as implemented in Zambia between 2002 and 2005:

1. The process of turning around the economy in Zambia through HIPC resulted in a bruising and incapacitation of the majority; for example, due to HIPC austerity measures, Zambia was forced to freeze wages in the public sector, making citizens vulnerable and without access to life-sustaining goods and services.
2. The process made civil servants, part of the workforce and the backbone of government, sink deeper into poverty due to the fact that salaries had remained static for a long time, and they could not sustain families because of high inflation.

3. The HIPC process caused social dislocation for most Zambians because of high inflation, which was triggered by high consumer prices, a high cost of living and a lack of expanded employment opportunities in both the private and public sectors, a fact which disadvantaged skilled and qualified citizens later on, and which became a minus for general workers, resulting in economic doldrums for the majority.
4. The fundamental flaw that the assumed, perceived and anticipated economic growth rates of 5% – 6% prior to and at HIPC completion point would automatically lead to tangible economic development benefits, wealth-creation (*chrematistics*), widespread economic expansion and activity through enhanced activities in key economic sectors, such as in manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, fisheries and mining, and a surge in the standard of living for the majority.

## Conclusions

The conclusions of the study were that:

1. The formulation of the HIPC needed to infuse social factors, for example, the government's program to cushion citizens against very harsh social conditionality, such as the removal of subsidies from the staple food mealie meal, beyond 'mere social hand-outs', over a period of time.
2. The HIPC completion was more oriented to the fulfilment of bilateral-multilateral agreements and the achievement of an austere economic program than to delivering on expanded mass job opportunities in the private and public sectors and delivering on social spending in terms of access to affordable food, health care and education for the majority.

## Recommendations for the churches and faith-based organisations' involvement in public 'economic' policy

It is thus hereby recommended that churches and faith-based organisations in Zambia be involved in public 'economic' policy as follows:

1. The church and faith-based organisations should demonstrate the possibility of a fuller and more abundant life for the broken and suffering society, optimistically working for the realisation of the same through visible social programmes such as the establishment of health and education centres, beyond what missionaries established several years ago.
2. The Zambian church and resident faith-based organisations should be very conversant with the history, intricacies, culture, politics and economies of the African continent and make a deliberate effort to inculcate an appreciation about the holistic knowledge about Africa. The practice of faith should be encouraged among small groups through regular seminars, symposiums and 'schools of socio-politico-economic engagement'.

3. The church and faith-based organisations in Zambia ought to encourage the tapping and utilisation of all the resources available, including medical, professional, spiritual, professional and otherwise, in order to help detect the Zambian economic problem, especially the debt burden, and help provide practical solutions through a multidisciplinary approach, starting with small groups in ecumenical local Christian councils and interfaith dialogue meetings.
4. Churches and faith-based organisations in Zambia should maintain a creative tension between the prophetic stance and a policy-oriented approach through such means as regular joint common cause actions by ecumenical groups and through civil society sensitisation programmes on social and economic justice issues and simplified public policy discussions.
5. The Zambian church and faith-based organisations should help to disprove the myth that Africa is a perpetually poor continent and contribute to 'the dealing with inherent hurdles to development' emanating from key sectors and areas of society, such as from religion, culture and traditional education, and help the country move towards an appreciation of natural resources endowments, through practical, user-friendly practices such as the strengthening and setting up of centres for socio-economic reflection, public policy, nonviolent political activism, agricultural and natural resources development.

## Concluding remarks

In the light of the foregoing, a reconstructed society is a possibility for all. It involves both government and all stakeholders, including faith-based organisations, complementing and supplementing each other to reconstruct and recreate a better, ethical, moral and well-governed society, using all available means to achieve this. The benefit of this movement will certainly accrue to all members of society, who are expected to lead and live fulfilled and happy lives, premised on vibrant community life and sustainable environments. Nobody should be left behind or excluded as society matures into a versatile, healthy, prosperous, spiritual and buoyant reconstructed society, where each person will find space to grow and develop as persons, as they contribute to societal healing, renewal, well-being, harmony, happiness and wholeness – 'one for all; all for one'.

## The way forward

In the light of this study, future researchers must look into:

1. The possibility of a joint formulation and collaborative implementation of public policy programmes and activities between the private sector, public sector and civil society.
2. How the recommendations above can be pragmatically dissected, categorised, implemented, evaluated and monitored by churches and faith-based groups, for the benefit of all Zambians.

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The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

## Author's contributions

M.B. is the sole author of this article.

## Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

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## Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

## Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author.

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