

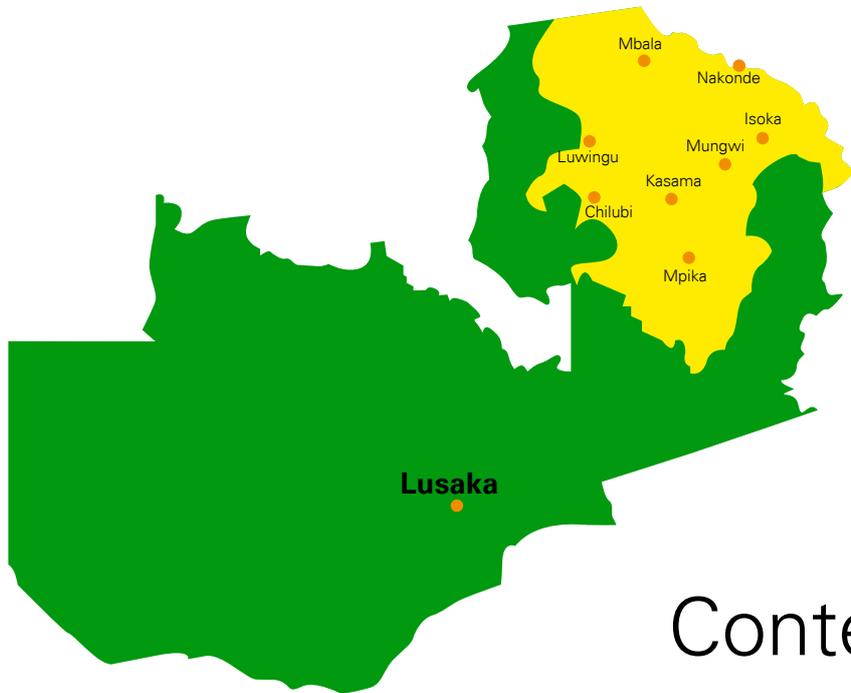


Northern Voices -

Celebrating 30 years of development partnership in
Northern Province, Zambia

 **Irish Aid**
Government of Ireland
Rialtas na hÉireann





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Preface

As Ambassador of Ireland to Zambia, it is with great pleasure that I introduce to you “Northern Voices - Celebrating 30 years of development partnership in Northern Province, Zambia.”

This Booklet marks an important milestone in the great friendship which has always characterised the relationship between the Governments of Ireland and Zambia. 2012 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the launch of Irish Aid’s local development programme in Zambia’s Northern Province, and presented herewith are thirty distinct perspectives on the nature of that partnership and the many benefits it has engendered – for both our great peoples.

The Booklet tells the story of the thirty year programme of development cooperation through the eyes of the very people that have benefitted from it most. It explores the myriad ways in which Irish Aid has contributed to health, education, poverty reduction and development in Northern Province through the perspectives of the people of Northern Province, and also those directly involved in implementing the Programme.

As the Government of Ireland prepares to embark on a new phase of Development Cooperation with our Zambian counterparts, given expression through Irish Aid’s Zambia Country Strategy Paper 2013-2017, this Booklet serves as an important reminder of the depth and breadth of our shared fellowship and bond. *Northern Voices* also serves to remind us that, although Irish Aid has from time to time changed its focus and way of working in the Province, what has not changed is our commitment to work with the Government of Zambia on behalf of Northern Province’s poorest and most vulnerable communities.

I personally had the great pleasure and privilege to work in Northern Province during the years 1996 to 1998, and it is with great pride that I return as Ambassador of Ireland to see the page of this great tradition turning once more, to its next chapter.

This Booklet offers us the opportunity to reflect on the great many successes that we have enjoyed together, while refocusing our energy and determination upon the challenges yet to come. It is my sincere hope that you find it an interesting and valuable resource.

Finbar O’Brien
Ambassador of Ireland, Zambia

Introduction

**“Developing countries must lead their own development.
The most important actors in development are the individuals,
communities and countries we are trying to assist.”**

White Paper on Irish Aid, 2006.

Since 1982, Irish Aid has maintained a focussed local development programme in Zambia’s Northern Province that has always been guided by the principles of partnership, sustainability and effectiveness. The Northern Province programme reflects a similar approach in other Irish Aid programme countries such as the Tigray Region in Ethiopia, or Uganda’s Karamoja Province. However, Zambia’s Northern Province represents the oldest and most long-established local development programme across all of Irish Aid’s nine programme countries, and persists today as a central component of Ireland’s development partnership with Zambia.

Northern Voices: 30 years of development partnership in Northern Province, Zambia marks this significant milestone, reflects on the results that the programme has achieved, as well as some of the challenges that it has faced, and ultimately explores the meaning and value of the partnership to both the people of Northern Province, and the people of Ireland.

Irish Aid recognises that local, national and global issues are ever more closely and inextricably linked, and that the root causes of poverty and hunger cannot be effectively addressed without engaging with the individuals and communities that are most directly affected by these critical challenges. By maintaining a focus at the local level, Irish Aid can work to address poverty within individual communities and households, support strong

local institutions, strengthen local civil and private sectors, and inform national policy by learning the lessons of realities and experiences on the ground.

Throughout 2012, *Northern Voices* engaged 30 Zambian stakeholders to match each of the programme’s 30 years. *Northern Voices* invited each participant to reflect on the ways in which the Irish Aid programme has affected their lives and their communities, and challenged each to articulate the value of local development in their own words, and from their own point of view. *Northern Voices* also asked six individuals who had previously worked with Irish Aid over the years to reflect on their personal and professional experiences, during the time that they spent in Northern Province.

The result is a collection of stories that focus on the human element of what Irish Aid, in partnership with our Zambian colleagues, has set out to achieve in Northern Province over the last thirty years – a human perspective on a history that is, after all, centred on individual people and the ways that Irish Aid has touched their lives.

As Irish Aid moves towards the next phase of its engagement with Northern Province it takes the opportunity presented by this important anniversary to mark the progress made so far, to reaffirm the long held principles of partnership, sustainability and effectiveness, and recommits itself to facing those challenges yet to come.

Since 2002, Irish Aid has placed increasing emphasis on good governance within the Northern Province Programme. The purpose of focussing on governance has been to expand the opportunity for the citizens of the province to participate in decisions that shape their lives. The promotion of inclusive, effective and accountable governance has had a significant impact on the extent to which the citizens of Northern Province can shape their own futures.

Creating awareness of what constitutes good governance ensures that the citizens of Northern Province can demand governance that takes account of their perspectives and is responsive to their needs. By investing in civic education, Irish Aid has equipped communities and individuals with the tools that they need to meaningfully contribute and participate in key decision making processes.

Irish Aid has worked to build the capacity of local authorities, which have been mandated to govern and to provide services to local communities. Across the Province, Irish Aid has worked directly with the District Councils of Mbala, Isoka, Mpika and Luwingu to enhance their transparency and effectiveness.

Civil society organisations also play an important role in holding Government to account, and Irish Aid has also supported a number of such organisations to ensure that

they have the capacity to promote the interests of ordinary citizens.

Irish Aid's work in governance has changed over time, but several key achievements stand out. Communities have been supported to identify their own needs and implement projects that greatly improve their standards of living. This process involves the establishment of community representative structures, such as Resident (and Area) Development Committees, which provide ordinary citizens a mechanism through which they can voice their concerns and actively participate in local development.

Development Committees which have received support from Irish Aid through the years remain active today, empowering disadvantaged communities with the means to express their most urgently felt needs. Communities that historically lacked basic services such as education, health or water and sanitation have been able to demand the provision of these services through these Committees.

As the resources and responsibilities to govern effectively are decentralised to local authorities, Irish Aid has played an important role in ensuring that those responsibilities have been delivered upon. Government has been made more transparent, inclusive and responsive to the needs of the Province's people, who are increasingly empowered to unlock the potential of their own communities and shape their own lives.

Development of People's Empowerment (D.O.P.E.) Women's Council, Mpika District



Robina Mupinde collects eggs from a D.O.P.E. hatchery in Mpika District.

Development of People's Empowerment (D.O.P.E.) supports more than 30 individual women's groups across three chiefdoms in Mpika District. The groups themselves are involved in a wide variety of activities, explains the Women's Council Chairperson Elizabeth Kasonka, "Groups are involved in different activities – agriculture, livestock, sewing, but the point of these activities is to earn money for the members. Women suffer in terms of poverty, there is a need to bring them together and assist them to uplift their lives."

Irish Aid has supported D.O.P.E. since 2003 specifically because it focuses on improving the lives and livelihoods of impoverished, rural women and offers them the opportunity to participate in their communities. "There are issues here that affect women more than men, and even problems that men do not understand the way we do," contributes Anna Mumba, another member of the Women's Council. "We are all looking after orphans, and in poverty this is not easy. If a girl does not complete school she may get into trouble, fall pregnant or marry early. These problems will lie with her mother, or grandmother. Whatever problems children are facing fall back on their parents, but on women particularly."

As Robina Mupinde busily collects eggs from a D.O.P.E. chicken coop to prepare for market, she considers what it means to her to be part of the group. "Before D.O.P.E. started, life was not the same," she reflects. "Men never used to respect us, but now that we have money things have changed. They see the way that we have learned to cope. People look at us as women who have got something in our lives, we have achieved something."

Elizabeth weighs in "We feel so good, we thank God. The skills that we have acquired, nothing can happen that will take those skills away. When we look at where we have come from, we feel very proud. There is confidence that comes with a purse."



"There is confidence that comes with a purse."



Benjamin Mushimata, Chairperson of the Isoka District Planning Sub-Committee.



“The first step is the community level where people identify their own priorities.”

Isoka District Council Planning Sub-Committee, Isoka District

Benjamin Mushimata is Chairperson of the Isoka District Planning Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee is made up of representatives of the various Government Departments that operate within the District, as Mr Mushimata explains, “Each district has a District Planning Officer, who has overall responsibility for bringing together the development plans for the District. However, the Sub-Committee is made up of representatives of each Department: like Health; Education; Agriculture and so on. The District prepares a District Annual Investment Plan which identifies all of the priorities, and allows us to plan out how to address them as a District.”

The annual investment plan also allows donors, such as Irish Aid, to ensure that it provides support to the priorities that have been identified by the District itself. Since 2007, Irish Aid has supported four districts in Northern Province to achieve their annual objectives, through identifying mutually agreed priorities in each DAIP. This ensures that Irish Aid support is aligned to the priorities of the Government of the Republic of Zambia.

As Benjamin explains, the planning process begins from the bottom up. “The first step is the community level where people identify their own priorities. There can be situations where as an outsider, you might believe the priority is water, but to the community it might be something else. If you provide a borehole, it might not be used and people might still drink from the river. This is the disadvantage of the top-down approach.”

Benjamin also reflects on how Irish Aid support has assisted the District planning process in Isoka, “We are ahead compared to some Districts, because of the support we have received from Irish Aid. In terms of planning we can talk about the grassroots level, or planning from the bottom up; we have been doing these things already with your support. It has given us a real advantage.”



The Executive Committee of the New Kamwanya Resident Development Committee in their newly completed offices.



RDC Chairman Gilbert Lukonde (r) stands beside the Principal of the School in New Kamwanya.

“Before anything, we have to hear people’s views - what are the challenges we are facing?”

New Kamwanya Resident Development Committee, Mpika District

In the offices of the New Kamwanya Resident Development Committee (RDC) in Mpika District, it is very difficult to find any sliver of the wall that has not been plastered with the priorities and plans of the Committee. The New Kamwanya RDC documents every decision which it makes and proudly uses the walls of its offices to make sure that any visitor can appreciate those decisions for themselves.

“There is no traditional leadership in this area, leadership is based upon the general consensus of the majority of community members,” explains Francis Bwalya, one of the Committee members. “The RDC was elected democratically with the vision to help the community to prioritise its needs. We gather the community together, we do not see things as ‘us’ the RDC. Before anything, we have to hear people’s views - what are the challenges we are facing,” continues the Committee Chairperson, Gilbert Lukonde.

Once the RDC was registered in 2005, the District Council identified Irish Aid as a suitable donor to address the needs identified by the community. Since 2005, Irish Aid has supported the development of water and sanitation infrastructure and the rehabilitation of the school in New Kamwanya, amongst other works. Irish Aid has also supported the RDC to develop the leadership and management skills that it needs to represent the people of the community and become a strong and accountable voice.

“The spirit of volunteerism comes because we want to see development taking place,” beams Committee member Loveness Chanda. “There are things that we are able to see and touch, once we leave this office we can be able to point at these things: the school; the electricity; the water; and say that we have contributed. That is the sense of pride that we have. Our next step is the clinic, after that we will go back to the community and see what is next,” Loveness concludes.



The production team of Radio Mano (including Acting Station Manager Crispin Ntalasha) prepare to go home at the end of their day.

“Freedom to inform, and the right to be informed.”



Radio Mano, Kasama District

The signpost that marks the entrance to Radio Mano’s premises in Kasama reads “Freedom to inform, and the right to be informed”. This motto neatly captures the reason that, in 2004, Irish Aid supported the founding of the community radio station which today enjoys a listenership of more than 800,000 people. The station broadcasts in both English and Bemba, ensuring that programmes reflect the two main linguistic backgrounds of the audience.

“Programming is mixed,” explains the Acting Station Manager Crispin Ntalasha. “It includes public service broadcasts such as programmes on health, nutrition or HIV & AIDS; news and current affairs; music; lifestyle; and even children’s programmes.” Radio Mano also plays an important role in promoting the local economy as Crispin explains, “Sometimes the station provides discounted advertising rates to local business, to help them to attract more customers.”

Irish Aid recognises the crucial role media can play in enhancing accountability and promoting good governance, particularly at the community level. In Northern Province, community radio is a very important source of news and current affairs information. As Crispin explains, “Radio Mano also plays a role in good governance. ‘Freedom to inform, and the right to be informed’ means that the station has to be able to give information to the listenership free from bias. We want the listeners to come back and tell us what matters to them. We can share their views.”

Community media such as Radio Mano also plays a vital role in promoting the participation of ordinary people in the important issues of the day by providing a platform for discussion. “It gives people the right to reply and discuss issues in a public forum,” continues Crispin. “A recent example of a good governance programme,” he elaborates, “was a broadcast that discussed the new Draft

Constitution. We invited listeners to phone in and discuss the issues raised. There was a great response and the station received more calls than could be aired.”

Irish Aid has supported Radio Mano through the procurement of premises and broadcasting equipment. “Radio Mano uses a 5000 Watt transmitter that broadcasts across all of Kasama, and also touches into 8 other districts,” explains Crispin. “This means that Radio Mano can be heard even in the most rural areas.”

Illustrating the way in which the structure of Radio Mano itself also promotes good governance, participation and accountability; the Station Manager continues, “There are 150 listener groups drawn from across the broadcast area and each group has not less than 20 members. Each group in turn selects two members to attend a General Assembly, which elects the eight-person Board of Radio Mano. The Board sits for a three year term, before going back to General Assembly for a new election.”

Crispin believes that the main role of Radio Mano is to keep people up to date with the issues that affect their lives, “Educating, informing and entertaining,” as he puts it. “The station has a captured audience of 800,000 people and for many of them Radio Mano is the first source of important news. It is essential to the community as a source of information.”

“Civilisation brought to your doorstep,” he concludes.



A Radio Mano DJ at work presenting an evening broadcast.



“It gives people the right to reply and discuss issues in a public forum.”



Senior Chief Mwamba's Council of Headmen. Emmanuel Mukuka, Regina Kayula, Dominic Chikaka, Kayula Lesa and Safeli Kungu.

"Since the 1990s, when the President of Ireland came to open that School in Kamena, we have known of Irish Aid. We are very grateful."



The District of Kasama and domain of the Mambwa Royal Highness.

"We need a factory that employs 200 people, and that buys mangoes from around the chiefdom. That is what will help us to develop."

Mwamba Royal Highness, Council of Headmen, Kasama District

Northern Province, like most of Zambia, has its own traditional leadership which maintains an important role in the day to day affairs of the people. Kasama District is largely the domain of the Mwamba chiefdom under His Royal Highness, Senior Chief Mwamba. "This was not always the land of the Bemba," explains Dominic Chikaka, Chairperson of Chief Mwamba's Council of Headmen. "The Bemba crossed from the Congo moving East across the Chambeshi and occupied this place, calling it Kasama."

Reflecting on the contribution of Irish Aid to the development of the District, and indeed the Province, the Council of Headmen is appreciative. "Since the 1990s, when the President of Ireland came to open that School in Kamena, we have known of Irish Aid. We are very grateful," begins Regina Kayula Headwoman. "What Zambians need, where we lag behind is in industries. We need employment for young people. That is what we need now."

Emmanuel Mukuka, Council Secretary continues, "What is it that we Zambians can produce for Ireland? We don't have somewhere to sell our products. People get a small loan, and they use it to grow crops that they cannot sell. These things go to waste, and people become indebted. We can grow and process these things that God gives us if we have the expertise. We can sell them if we have the markets."

"Let us take a practical example," says Ms Kayula. "We are sitting under a mango tree. During the season many mangoes will simply fall from the tree and waste on the ground. There is no place to make juice, or jam or whatever else is needed. We need industries where we can produce and process and sell finished products. We need a factory that employs 200 people, and that buys mangoes from people around the chiefdom. That is what will help us to develop in the future."



Boniface Kafwimbi Chiluba (l), Innocent Lukaki (c) and Maximilian Mwansa Bwalya (r), members of Katuta ADC, Luwingu District.

Katuta Area Development Committee, Luwingu District

Maximilian Mwansa Bwalya, Secretary of the Katuta Area Development Committee (ADC), leans back against the wall of the nearly completed ADC offices. "It is not possible to hold proper meetings under a tree," Maximilian explains. "So we have used some of the money provided by Irish Aid to construct these offices so that all of our records can be kept safely and we can host meetings. When this office is finished, the community will be able to come here and talk to the Committee."

For an ADC like Katuta talking to the community is very important, because the purpose of the voluntary Committee itself is to represent the interests of the community from which it is elected, and to lobby for support to the area.



"You see in rural areas," joins Chairperson Boniface Kafwimbi Chiluba, "people do not have access, or have enough income. The ADC can bring in support. For instance, if someone has a child that should be in school but they cannot afford the costs, they can come to the ADC and we will find a way to help them. That is an example of how our organisation helps people here in the community."

The ADC was established in 2006 and the initial support to bring the Committee together was accompanied by training in how to participate in local government. "People in the community come to us and present their problems. Then we can forward proposals for inclusion in the District Annual Investment Plan (DAIP) from the grassroots," continues Maximilian.

People from the community come to us and present their problems. Then we can forward proposals for inclusion in the District Annual Investment Plan from the grassroots.



"We have made requests for pigs and this has been accepted. Another proposal to the Ministry of Health provided money to train community health workers," contributes Innocent Lukaki another ADC member. "We have brought the bridge, the ferry, three community schools and now our own offices. Great achievements in just five years," Innocent concludes.

Dermot Carty (Project Manager – Rural Water Supply, 1985-1989)

I arrived in Northern Province with my wife Therese, and two children – Anne Marie and Dermot, in 1985, three days after my thirtieth birthday. Our home was to be found amongst the small cluster of houses in Kasama in which the Irish staff who worked on the Programme lived. Just a few months after our arrival, our third child Clare was born. Clare would grow up to love the fact that she was 'half Zambian', and we used to tease her by asking which 'half' was Irish.

A day in Northern Province never started without the familiar Bemba greeting 'Mwapoleni mukwai?' accompanied by a strong handshake. The most enchanting part of the greeting was the accompanying smile, which was delivered with warmth and sincerity. This greeting was a very important part of each day - the feel good factor that the ritual created was enormous.

My focus was on the Kasama Rural Water Supply Project which delivered wells constructed by communities themselves. We supplied the required tools to the villagers who, with our technical assistance, would dig the wells. Once the well was deep enough the project team would complete the job.

The design was suited to the concept of 'self-help', but the enormity of the challenge should not be underestimated. Villagers had to dig holes as deep as eight metres into the hard sun-baked earth. I remember one village which had still not hit the water table at a depth of 15 metres. I peered into the dark hole and would have thought it empty, but for the faint sounds of pickaxes scraping against soil and rock. As I was lowered into the well (one foot in the bucket attached by rope to the windlass) the shape of two villagers working away in the darkness began to emerge.

Disembarking my 'bucket elevator', I was greeted with the big smile, the warm handshake and the beaming "Mwapoleni mukwai?" The sheer determination, enthusiasm and sense of humour never ceased to amaze me.

The best days for me were always when the completed well was handed over to the village. Speeches completed, and well passed to the care of the community we would all proceed to the requisite music, and I would reach for my guitar to sing 'I'll tell me Ma' or the like. Drums were fetched and great cheering, clapping and foot stomping ensued. It was always so energetic, reminding me of the great Zambian zest for life – I loved every minute.

I believe we made a difference, especially for the women and girls whose responsibility it was to fetch clean water. The time saved not having to walk to the rivers was important. It allowed young girls to attend school. Clean water reduced the burden of waterborne illnesses, and allowed proper washing – of clothes and bodies. Undoubtedly the Project changed lives, but there is a larger context. To develop and reach its full potential, a community needs access to a whole range of services like health, education and good governance. A well can be dug in a matter of weeks, but development at a community level takes much longer. The commitment of Irish Aid over the last 30 years in Northern Province stands as a remarkable achievement, and is allowing the people to reach their full potential.

Writing this account has reminded me of the many happy times I experienced in Northern Province, but also the great sense of pride in the contribution of Irish Aid. I look forward to returning one day soon, and in the meantime wish Zambia, and her great people a sincere "Mwapoleni mukwai!"

Irish Aid support to the education sector in Northern Province has been one of the longest standing pillars of the Programme. Support to the sector has achieved significant results, not just for the tens of thousands of children who have accessed higher quality schooling as a result of it, but also in terms of economic growth, nutrition, gender equality and the response to HIV & AIDS.

Irish Aid support to the education sector in Northern Province began in 1991, with support channelled to Kasama District. The initiative focussed on the provision of appropriate infrastructure, constructing and rehabilitating primary schools across the District, but also involved the provision of educational resources and in-service training. A crucial innovation of the project was a pilot programme which provided teachers the means to teach initial literacy through local languages. The *Breakthrough to Literacy Programme*, became an important stepping stone for children in the Province to engage literature in a context that was more familiar and relevant to their everyday lives, and greatly facilitated their eventual transition to tuition in English.

In 1998, the support to the education sector expanded across the entire Province and incorporated new approaches and priorities including Special Needs Education and the inclusion of girls in basic education. A further change that took place during this period was a move to support the Provincial

Ministry of Education itself as it managed increased resources and responsibilities.

From 2001 Irish Aid also provided support to the District Education Boards, helping them to plan and manage educational services and resources at the local level, and equipping the District Education Boards with the expertise required to deliver quality education services across the Province. Irish Aid promoted the inclusion and participation of communities themselves, sensitising them to the rights and responsibilities that all parties shared in ensuring that the children of the Province received the quality education to which they were entitled.

Irish Aid's direct support to the education sector in Northern Province ended in 2005, but its' contribution since the early 1990s has been significant. 184 school classrooms have been constructed, with more than 120 individual communities informed and sensitised as to the importance of education. Many thousands of vulnerable children, including those with special needs, have been included in formal education. Close to 200 educationalists have received training in various technical and administrative skills across the Province, whilst Irish Aid has also played a vital role in strengthening the Kasama Teachers Training College.

With these results, amongst others, it seems that the contribution of Irish Aid to education in Northern Province will endure for many more years to come.

Kamena Basic School, Mungwi District

Kamena Basic School, located in Mungwi District, was the first school that Irish Aid constructed in Northern Province, and was officially opened by former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, during an official State Visit to the Republic of Zambia in 1994.

The Principal Teacher, Mr Kelvin Kanyai proudly reports, “This school that was built by Irish Aid in the 1990s is still here. This year we have 747 students, a large enrolment of both boys and girls.”

Mr Kanyai explains that the surrounding community is very involved in the school and ensures that it is well maintained, “The community itself looks after our school. They are very interested in their children’s education and very eager. They have contributed towards expanding the buildings.” Mr Kanyai also points out the photograph of the Parent Teacher Association posted on his office wall, “The role of the PTA is to spearhead the school. It is a way for parents and teachers to come together - because the community contributes to the development of the school and the infrastructure, they guard it jealously.”

Mr Kanyai considers the difference that having the school makes for young people in the area. “Previously people here were suffering; the school was just operated by the community itself. If it was not here, I don’t see how the children could do anything constructive. The school offers them an opportunity. We want to build the future so that everyone can benefit from what is being done today. Hard work for a better tomorrow - that is the school motto.”

Pointing to a trophy on his desk, Mr Kanyai explains “We have won this shield just two weeks ago in the zone level football and netball competition.” A broad smile breaks across his face, as he concludes, “A great award to have won, our school scooped first prize.”



Sandra Bwalya, a Grade 8 student at Kamena Basic, during her mathematics lesson.

“Hard work
for a better
tomorrow.”



Chisanga School, Kasama District

Feston Simwaka, the Head Teacher at Chisanga School in Kasama, proudly explains why the flag of the Republic of Zambia which flies in the garden of the school is particularly significant to him. It was not always the case that the school was supported by the Zambian Government. In fact, until 2007, Chisanga School was exclusively supported by the contributions of the local community, housed in a small two room structure built from locally produced mud bricks, and roofed by thatched grass.

“It was in 2007,” recalls Mr Simwaka “that the Government supplied the school with trained teachers who are paid by the Government. Before then it was a community school, and the teachers were chosen and trained by the community. In fact, the teachers were volunteers. Some parents could not afford to give them anything to contribute to their salary.”

Whilst Community Schools provide a vital educational lifeline to many young Zambians, they are rapidly being replaced by Government resourced schools. Mr Simwaka explains the difference this makes for parents in the community, “After the Government teachers came in, the parents who were failing to pay the teachers had relief – they could send their children to school here and save what little they had. When I arrived to Chisanga in 2007, there was a plan in place. Irish Aid was already partnering the community to build a clinic, to upgrade the road and to re-construct the school.”

It seems that the new facilities and better resourced staff are having an effect on the students themselves. “In 2011,” he continues “we graduated our first grade 7’s who had studied in the new school – the first set of students to write their exams from this building. When the results came out, we did very well, and our pass rate was 94.8% ”



Students from Chisanga School, Kasama.



“After the Government teachers came in, the parents who were failing to pay the teachers had relief.”



Mambwe Special Education School, Mbala District

Mambwe Special Education School is located on the grounds of Mambwe Mission in Mbala District, some 35 Kilometres from Mbala town. “Fr Fastenburg from Germany arrived in the 1930s,” explains Stephen Lambaluka, a member of the School PTA. “He asked the Senior Chief for permission to build a Church in Mambwe. After the Church, they next built a school – Mambwe Upper School.”

“The main school has more than 700 students,” explains the Acting Head Teacher Samu Crispin Mwila. “The Special Education Unit has 29 students – 12 girls and 17 boys. That includes those that are hearing impaired, blind and have other physical disabilities. They require special assistance from people who can teach them sign language and assist them to learn.”

Recognising the vital service provided by the Unit to children with special educational needs in the District, in 1998 Irish Aid supported the renovation of school facilities and the construction of boarding facilities which enable children attending the school to remain in residence throughout the school week.

“We take students from a radius of 30 kilometres in every direction,” continues Mr Mwila, “because of the distances it is a real punishment to move back and forth. The boarding facility makes it possible for these children to learn. In the absence of this Unit, these children would never see school. This is the only special school in the area, there is no alternative.”

Lehemiah Namumba, a twenty year old former student explains why the school is so important. “There are people in the community who need help and cannot get it. This school helped me a lot. Education is a right for everybody, children who have these problems should be taught the same as everyone else.”



Members of the Mambwe Special Education School PTA (Including Acting Teacher Samu Crispin Mwila (c), and former pupil Lehemiah Namumba (l)).



“Education is a right for everybody, children who have these problems should be taught the same as everyone else.”



Sunsuntila Orphan Day Care Centre, Mbala District

Sister Nora Emperor arrived in Mbala District in 1994, although her congregation – The Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, have worked in Zambia since the 1960s. “We came to Mbala in 1962,” she explains “it was before independence and the Government at the time asked the Sisters to work at the hospital here.”

The Sisters had always maintained a focus on health, but with the onset of the HIV & AIDS pandemic the context of their work changed dramatically. “We were in the hospital until 1994, but it was in 1991 that I can say AIDS really started to take a grip in the District. So many children in the ward were dying, that’s when we started Sunsuntila,” continues Sister Nora Emperor.

Sunsuntila Orphan Day Care Centre was officially opened in 1993, and was a direct response to the growing number of children who had been orphaned as a result of HIV & AIDS. As the number of orphans began to grow, the ability of the community to care for them in the traditional manner began to diminish. “Most of these children would be hungry and would not be in school if they were not with us in Sunsuntila,” continues Sister Nora, “Life would be very difficult for them. Here we can provide nutritional and educational support to the children that they cannot get anywhere else.”

Sunsuntila caters for more than 50 vulnerable children, infants through to teenagers. The youngest children aged below five years receive nutritious milk and other foods that enable them to develop and grow in the first years of life. Older children attend the Centre daily, accessing a pre-school and also a study centre for older children. “The Study Centre helps the orphans who attend the Government Schools, they can come here for food and for private study,” contributes Sister Yvonne. “All our children receive food, clothes, school uniforms and school fees. This is with the help of Irish Aid and Misesan Cara.”



Sister Nora Emperor of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Mbala District.



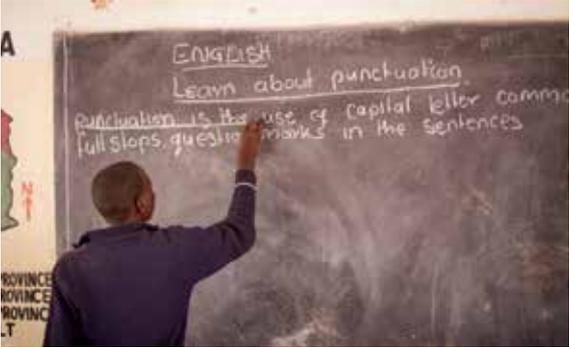
“Most of these children would be hungry and would not be in school if they were not with us in Sunsuntila.”

Both Sister Nora Emperor and Sister Yvonne are anxious to mark the contribution of Irish Aid, and the Irish people. "The Irish people, what they have done?" begins Sister Yvonne "Honestly, they should feel proud for this special gift that they have for the people – the compassionate heart for the people of Africa. It has really done a lot – words cannot express."

Sister Nora Emperor continues, "The Irish have made a special effort, it shouldn't be taken for granted. Very few organisations come up here, but even the Ambassador has been here three times – imagine that! There is a bit of sacrifice in the rural areas, mind you it's not much, but there is a bit," she reports humbly. "There is something between Ireland and Zambia, I don't know perhaps it is our histories. By nature Zambian people are very soft, very compassionate. When Sister Yvonne visited Ireland she thought the same thing about us!"

Sister Nora Emperor is modest to the last, shying away from recognition of her own personal contribution to the orphan children of Mbala District. "Ireland has done so much, it really has contributed so much to a place like Mbala," she concludes modestly.

"Ireland has done so much, it really has contributed so much to a place like Mbala."



The Study Centre at Sunsuntila Orphan Day Care Centre, Mbala.



Kasama Teachers Training College, Kasama District

Each year, approximately 200 qualified teachers graduate from Kasama Teachers Training College, and Irish Aid has played a very important role in making sure that the teachers who qualify in Kasama remain within Northern Province, working in some of the most rural and disadvantaged schools in the Province.

“We noticed that some, in fact the majority, of female students were reluctant to take up postings in the rural areas,” explains Acting Principal Oscar Ntenga. “These rural schools face many difficulties in terms of teaching and learning materials. They are isolated, and at certain times are completely inaccessible due to the rains. Teachers, especially women, did not want to work there, they would not.”

However, in 1998 Irish Aid piloted a work placement programme that encouraged women completing their training to undertake work placements in rural districts. “We saw this change of attitude and the interest of female students to go to rural schools. Most importantly, the girls attending those schools suddenly had role models – young women who were working and successful. This in turn had an effect on their own performance in school,” recalls Mr Ntenga. “The girls from these areas who attend school are an investment, and if they go on to complete their education then we can see the return on that investment.”

Mr Ntenga has a unique understanding of the importance of educating teachers. In 2004 he was a recipient of an Irish Aid Fellowship which enabled him to complete his Masters in Education at University College Dublin. “Studying there, it changed my perspective and the way I look at things. I use what I learned everyday in my work here. Having that qualification means that I can share knowledge with my colleagues here - as the education level amongst the teachers rises, so do the achievements of the students.”



Oscar Ntenga, Irish Aid Fellow and Acting Principal Teacher of Kasama Teachers Training College.



“The girls from these areas who attend school are an investment, and if they go on to complete their education then we can see the return on that investment.”



Jacinta Barrins (Programme Manager, Northern Province Irish Aid, 1996 - 1999)

Arriving in the small Northern Province town of Mbala with three children under seven years old, 100 kilos of baby milk powder and a stock of good intentions on Christmas Eve 1996, I found myself asking “How on earth did I ever end up in this position?” Getting ready to depart Mbala three years later, there was a palpable sense of “How could I ever leave?” I had worked in Africa before; long stints in Kenya and Somalia. There was a significant difference this time – previously I had lived in Mogadishu by myself, which is one thing. Caring for a young family in Mbala, with my husband continuing to work in Ireland, was another.

As it turned out though, it was as positive an environment as could be asked for. My eldest child, Declan, was home-schooled in a makeshift classroom in the compound garage by a local teacher, while my twins Enda and Sinéad took their first steps and spoke their first words in our new home in Zambia. Declan received a broad education filled with lessons he could not have learned anywhere else. Without those years in Mbala, he would not know the best way to soften a mango, how to grow pineapples or rear chickens, or how important it is to burn your hair after you cut it, to avoid it being used in witchcraft and sorcery! For the twins, life was a constant stream of warm smiles. They took full advantage of the free lift provided by a beautifully coloured chitenge, tied to the back of local mothers who had taken such a shine to them. We became well known about town, and I was dubbed napundu, “mother of twins”.

That is not to say there were not difficulties. We became acquainted with the flying doctors as the twins were both struck with bad doses of malaria, and I was almost stranded one night in

the middle of the bush with a sick infant when our jeep ran out of fuel. Incidents like that are simply parts of the fabric of the place though, and its inexorable way of life.

The project was unquestionably exciting: Irish Aid was expanding into the furthest reaches of Northern Province, the potential for the development of rural communities was tremendous and Irish Aid was looking to engineer a new role as it handed management of its many projects across Northern Province over to the local authorities. My work centred on assisting the local Councils to take these next steps independently, and was in line with the broader process of reform then underway across Zambia. We completed the move towards integration in 1998, and after that, the job was to advise and assist at the local level. We piloted a number of simple water and sanitation schemes including brick-lined wells that delivered rich rewards. The approach that we used provided employment, cut costs to the community and was much safer than previous water models. I also took part in policy discussions on water resources, through which I encountered two MSc students who had studied Hydrology in Ireland (Galway University), supported by the Irish Aid Fellowship Training Programme – another significant contribution to the capacities of Northern Province.

One of the legacies of which I am most proud was a survey in which we visited more than 800 households, the first of its kind. We asked the households directly what it was that they needed most, and what it was that they were looking for. The results of the survey became the basis of the local Council’s planning. The Northern Province of the 1990s will live on in my own memory and in my own children’s education, and I would like to think that I also contributed in some small way to increasing the standards of living for the Province’s people.

The delivery of accessible and effective health services remains one of the greatest challenges to global health today, particularly in the developing world. In 2000, The Millennium Declaration identified the areas of child and maternal health as two issues of particular concern, but long before the Millennium Development Goals had been agreed these two areas had been a focus of the Northern Province Programme.

In Zambia, Northern Province historically had one of the highest rates of maternal mortality and so Irish Aid prioritised maternal health services in its Programme, initially supporting management training for medical practitioners and administrators, the rehabilitation of health infrastructure and the provision of medical equipment to the second level hospitals in Kasama and Mbala. Following on from this work, in 1997 Irish Aid undertook a Health Planning Mission that examined the state of maternal health services across the entire Province. The mission made clear that maternal health services lagged behind, particularly in Northern Province's large, dispersed rural population. As a result, the quality of maternal health services was made the primary objective of the programme.

In 2000, Irish Aid supported the Central Board of Health to develop the Northern Province Strategic Plan (2001-2005), again with reproductive and maternal health at its core. The Strategic Plan covered the entire Province and was focussed, amongst other things, on: health management and staff competencies; safe motherhood; midwifery; and

also training traditional birth attendants in good practice. The plan also included significant infrastructural works including the construction and equipment of four designated Maternity Annexes in four of Northern Provinces most remote Districts: Nakonde; Mporokoso; Chilubi; and Kaputa which were all funded by Irish Aid.

Today, Irish Aid continues to support health services in the Province. Operating Theatres and Maternity Annexes have been constructed, ambulance services continue to serve patients across the Province and Irish Aid has also supported the provision of staff facilities at key health points, ensuring that the infrastructure of the Province can cope with the demand in keeping its 1.7 million people in the good health.

Chisanga Health Post, Kasama District

Ms Anastacia Mukuka Zulu is the Acting In Charge at Chisanga Health Post, which serves a large peri-urban community approximately five kilometres from the centre of Kasama town. It is difficult, however, to say exactly how many patients fall within the clinic's catchment area. "Looking at Central Statistics we have a population of 10,244" explains Ms Zulu, "But our own headcount would put it closer to 30,000. The community is not permanent, people move from one compound to the other when they find cheaper rents; we see new faces every day."

Irish Aid supported the construction of Chisanga Health Post in 2009. "I think it came at the right time," continues Ms Zulu. "The biggest problem that we have is malaria; the sanitation in the village is not great. We also see a problem with diarrheal disease for that same reason."

The Health Post offers different services to respond to the most prevalent health problems in the community. "We have separated those who come in for different reasons. We have a Maternal and Child Health Clinic, an Ante-Natal Clinic, a HIV & AIDS Clinic, and also more general clinics; all on different days," clarifies Miss Zulu, "This helps us with planning our work."

"We also have a good relationship with the community, and have trained counsellors who go out into the village to follow up with patients, to educate people about HIV & AIDS and especially about Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission. To reduce the chances of the baby contracting HIV during birth, it is important that mothers come here to deliver. Home births are unsupervised, there is no expertise. It is dangerous for the mother and the child," concludes Ms Zulu. "Now, with HIV, we have to take precautions as mothers deliver."



Ms Anastacia Mukuka Zulu, Acting In Charge, Chisanga Health Post.

"Now, with HIV, we have to take precautions as mothers deliver."



Kampumbu Rural Health Centre, Isoka District

Kampumbu is a small village in Isoka District, located approximately 30 kilometres from Isoka town. Stanley Phiri, the Medic in Charge at Kampumbu Health Centre explains that he arrived in Kampumbu in 2010, to find the centre already in operation.

“The Clinic was built by Irish Aid in 2001, so it is still new. Before Irish Aid built this facility there was nothing, people had to travel to Isoka town. That is too far to walk if you are sick, and it is expensive to pay for transport. Expectant mothers had problems; they couldn’t walk all that way. We have seen many maternal deaths on that road,” reports Mr Phiri solemnly.

“Having such a facility here is a blessing to the community because they can access medicines, they can be diagnosed, treated and can recover from their illnesses.” Pointing to a large thatched structure outside the Clinic, Stanley suggests “You can see the shelter that the community has built for patients as they wait to be seen. It is a sign of their appreciation.”

“The big problems we see here are malaria, and diarrheal diseases, especially with paediatric cases,” continues Stanley. “Irish Aid also built boreholes, but some people still drink from the river. We have distributed mosquito nets, but sometimes they are left unused. It is not that the people are bad it is just that they need to learn. They have never had a facility like this before, and so do not understand some of these issues. We go out into the villages and give them health education, and it works well.”

“We are very grateful to the Government of Ireland for giving us assistance,” concludes Mr Phiri earnestly. “We can see as many as 80 patients a day in this clinic, and we are well-stocked with drugs. Things are improving.”



A patient waits to be seen by the nurse at Kampumbu Rural Health Centre, constructed by Irish Aid in 2001.



“You can see the shelter that the community has built for patients as they wait to be seen. It is a sign of their appreciation.”



Luwingu District Hospital, Luwingu District

Lazarus Daka was the Chief Administrator in Luwingu District Hospital from 2000 to 2009, although he has since moved on to a smaller clinic elsewhere in the District. “The hospital had a bed capacity of about 80 at that time,” he recalls. “That is 80 beds with a catchment area with more than 100,000 people, all living in rural hard to reach places. You can imagine the challenges.”

It was during Mr Daka’s time as Chief Administrator that Irish Aid supported the construction of a maternity annex and operating theatre in the hospital. “Like any other first level district facility, the biggest problem was maternal and child health,” explains Lazarus. “We saw a lot of outbreaks in child health, and malnutrition was rampant. Then we also had challenges in obstetrics and ante-natal health. We had to refer many obstetric cases to Kasama, more than 100 kilometres away.”

The distance to the nearest operating theatre was a challenge to delivering maternal health as Lazarus explains, but not the only one. “Back then people did not know that ante-natal care was important. Some had never been outside their villages. Referring someone to Kasama was like sending them to hell – there were lots of stories,” Lazarus continues. “Now, they see the facilities here, and they are familiar with them. They understand what we can do.” Lazarus points out that the facilities provided by Irish Aid freed up extra capacity within the hospital. “When we shifted into the new maternity ward, we made space to expand the children’s ward. We had space for additional patients – malnutrition and general cases.”

“The population in the District is growing fast,” warns Lazarus. “Now the hospital can offer clinical services, surgical services, general services, ante-natal services; even other things like physiotherapy and the laboratory. We will need all of these specialised services.”



Lazarus Daka, the former Chief Administrator of Luwingu District Hospital, supervising a post-natal Clinic.



“We saw a lot of outbreaks in child health, and malnutrition was rampant.”



Santa Maria Clinic, Chilubi Island, Chilubi District

Chilubi Island sits on Lake Bangweulu, in Zambia's Northern Province. The lake is an important source of livelihood for many of the District's 66,000 residents. Each year during the fishing season, thousands of fishermen move to temporary fishing camps constructed on the thick swampy reeds that line the lake shore. The camps will be home to the fishermen and their families for up to nine months of the year, as they catch the small bream that breed between the reeds and the larger carp that are found in the centre of the lake.

The island itself is home to most of the District's infrastructure, including Santa Maria Clinic which was first constructed by Catholic missionaries in the early 1900s. Although the clinic serves the entire district throughout the year, it is only in December when the fishing season ends that the many thousands of people who have been fishing on the lake present themselves with a wide range of medical problems ranging from untreated injuries, to malaria or HIV & AIDS.

"The time that they have spent untreated makes our work extremely difficult," explains Cosmas Bwalya, Medical In-charge. "They wait until it is bad – always at the last minute. The most important thing is to fish when you can fish, health is only the second concern."

Recognising the huge demands being placed on the facility, Irish Aid in 2007 supported major renovation and refurbishment works at Santa Maria Clinic. These works included the construction of a new operating theatre, maternity annex, laboratory and delivery room.

"Every person in this district who has a surgical problem will pass through these doors," explains Dr Ernest Mutale, Chilubi District Health Officer as he enters the operating theatre. "We will perform an average of six to ten emergency surgeries each week," continues Cosmas. "Sometimes we also receive the



Dr Mutale (l), Theatre Nurse Mwandu (c), and Medical in Charge Bwalya (r) stand over the operating table at Santa Maria Clinic, Chilubi Island.



"They wait until it is bad – always at the last minute. The most important thing is to fish when you can fish, health is only the second concern"







Zambian Flying Doctor Services so we can schedule more procedures when an obstetrician or another consultant surgeon flies in.”

The theatre is well equipped, spacious and clean. “The main problem is the distance that patients have to travel,” explains Dr Mutale. “Patients are referred by other clinics and rural health centres on the mainland, as well as those who come from the fishing camps by themselves. They will have travelled many kilometres to get here. Most cross the lake in canoes, accompanied by their family. That journey can take hours. Mothers give birth while they are on a boat in the middle of the lake.”

Theatre Nurse Mwandu explains that most of the surgical cases are obstetric. “Those that need c-sections must come here. If they deliver at home there will be complications. It can mean the death of the baby and the mother. Here, we can deal with those complications.” Pointing to an adjoining ward Mwandu continues, “A woman who delivers by c-section needs time to recover. They will spend some time here before we release them to the main ward.”

While the challenges seem significant, Dr Mutale is convinced that the facilities at Santa Maria are making a significant difference. “Before this facility was constructed,” he explains, “all surgery cases were referred to Luwingu or Kasama – you are talking of driving for five or six hours and a great many patients simply die along the way. Here, if we get a call for an obstetric emergency we will have the mother in theatre within the hour. The other health centres in the District will receive an emergency case and we will send a boat to collect the patient, it is that simple.”

Irish Aid support to Santa Maria Clinic was specifically initiated with maternal and child health as a priority. “This theatre saves lives, the lives of mothers and their newborn children,” Dr Mutale concludes simply. “We have the skills, we can save them. This facility has really helped.”



Fisherman Edmond Mponda shows off his catch as his family watch from a nearby fishing camp.



“This theatre saves lives, the lives of mothers and their newborn children.”



Nakonde Urban Maternity Wing and Operating Theatre, Nakonde District

Irish Aid supported the construction of the Nakonde Urban Maternity Wing in 1998 to assist the District to respond to the challenges presented by maternal and child health. "Before construction, patients did not believe that they could have privacy and so the vast majority opted for home deliveries," explains Mr Nickson Mazuba, Medical in Charge at the facility. "As a result we had high rates of maternal mortality due to poor health seeking behaviours. Even with the Maternity Wing, we still had challenges as the nearest operating theatre was more than 115 kilometres away. It was in this regard that Irish Aid supported us to modify this annex to make provision for an operating theatre."

"The purpose of the theatre was strictly for interventions in obstetrics and gynaecology," continues Nickson. "Now we can offer ante-natal care; conduct deliveries; offer emergency obstetrics; and post natal care. We currently deliver approximately 150 babies every month," confirms Senior Midwife Ng'ambi. "The most important indicator for us is maternal mortality. Even in the last few years it has come down from as high as 25 deaths in one year, to only three in 2011. It is a huge improvement."

Nakonde District Pharmacist Mwanza points out that the facility's laboratory was also constructed with support from Irish Aid. "In any diagnostic centre, a lab is crucial," he begins. "We diagnose patients and recommend treatment based on the results of tests we undertake here. Without the lab, it would be almost impossible to perform."

Reflecting on the changes that he has witnessed, Nickson is convinced that the most significant is access to care. "We have seen a great change, especially in reproductive health. Many women are coming to access these services. The parameters are different; more people are accessing services; we have reduced maternal mortality and lives are being saved, that is the main goal."



Midwife Ng'ambi (l), District Pharmacist Mwanza (c), and Medical In Charge Mazuba (r) in the Nakonde Operating Theatre.



"The parameters are different; more people are accessing services; we have reduced maternal mortality and lives are being saved, that is the main goal."



Martin McCormack (Co-ordinator Northern Province Development Programme, 1989-1996)

When I first joined Irish Aid's Northern Province Programme in 1989, we operated only in the District of Kasama. By the time I left in 1996, we had moved into nearly every district across the Province. This growth and expansion illustrates the tremendous sense of purpose that Irish Aid has always maintained in the Province - it could not have happened without the commitment from Ireland, the support of the Embassy in Lusaka and the talent and dedication of the Zambian personnel working in the Province itself.

The decision to expand was based largely on the success that the Kasama based Programme had enjoyed. Expanding across the Province allowed innovations, new ideas and technologies, new training, new teaching methods. It also involved renewing the belief that change was possible, and did much to undermine a prevailing cynicism which afflicted many other development programmes operating elsewhere at that time. The move took place at a time of great change in Zambia and brought with it a strengthened bond to the Zambian Government, which was reflected in our working relationships.

It did not come without challenges. Northern Province is a huge, dispersed, rural setting. Simply to understand the needs of this geographically and socially diverse region was almost as difficult as addressing them in a sustainable, effective way. Communication structures were almost non-existent for most of the Programme's history – it is incredible to realise that what began in the era of the telex machine is now operating in the era of satellite communication. Road infrastructure was especially bad, and many vehicles lived shorter lives than they would have in any other Province.

Looking back, I have so many personal memories of my time in Northern Province, both the good and the bad. I remember often meeting Chief Chitimukulu and how he would recount stories of the time his grandfather helped Livingstone on his last trip to discover the source of the Nile. I also remember having all of my fish confiscated by Chief Nkolemfumu after a day spent fishing on his river. I remember Mary Robinson's visit and hoisting the Irish flag over Kasama airport, and the first time that Irish Aid ventured into Nabwalya following an outbreak of cholera. I remember the start of the AIDS pandemic and how we struggled to realise its significance. I remember the genocide in Rwanda and the uncertainty spreading to the southern shores of Lake Tanganyika. I remember when Irish Aid began the primary school rehabilitation and training project, and the renewed sense of optimism it brought to so many rural communities.

A characteristic of the Programme was always the teamwork approach, whereby projects were owned and managed at the local level. One of the questions we always asked ourselves was "How will this benefit 'Mrs Mulenga' 100 miles away from Kasama?" If we could illustrate the benefit to 'Mrs Mulenga' we knew we were helping many more like her. That was how we maintained focus on the Province's poorest and most vulnerable.

I think one of the greatest lessons learned in Northern Province was that development programmes could be successful in rural areas if they were underpinned by commitment, partnership, shared respect and integrity. Northern Province has served as a roadmap for many other programmes elsewhere in Africa. I think it is right to remember and pay tribute to the all the people, Zambian and Irish, who have made the Programme the success that it is today, and will continue to be into the future.

Access to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation facilities has significant impact on people's health. Each year, millions of people worldwide are exposed to the health risks associated with unsafe drinking water and inadequate sanitation facilities. It is truly difficult to find a District in Northern Province that has not benefitted from Irish Aid's work in the provision of safe and clean drinking water, and appropriate sanitation facilities. In fact, many people in Northern Province still refer to "Irish Water" today.

Across the Province, Irish Aid has supported the installation of more than 2,000 individual water points including: hand dug wells; boreholes; protected springs; and peri-urban water supply schemes. Irish Aid has also supported the constructed of Ventilated Improved Pit Latrines across many of the Province's schools and clinics; ensuring sanitary facilities are available to many thousands of the Province's teachers, students and patients. Many people have been trained in basic concepts of WASHE (Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Education) and many village WASHE committees have been formed.

In the 1980s, the Water and Sanitation Programme in Northern Province was directly implemented by large teams of Irish Aid personnel who worked closely with counterparts seconded from the Zambian Department of Water Affairs. Initially, the Programme concentrated on the construction and rehabilitation of water supply infrastructure across the Province. Committees were elected by local communities and given the responsibility

not just to maintain infrastructure, but also to educate the broader community on the importance of clean water.

In the mid 1990s, Irish Aid transferred responsibilities to Local Authorities and Commercial Utilities that continue the effort to provide adequate water resources across the Province today. Irish Aid provided technical assistance in the form of expertise, training and capacity building to these utilities, to ensure that they could continue to deliver appropriate water and sanitation facilities effectively.

Clean water has been provided in an environmentally sustainable manner to many people living in thousands of communities across the entire Province. To these communities the benefits of Irish Aid's contribution in the sector stretch beyond simple access to clean water, reduced instances of diarrheal disease and water-borne illness. Access to a reliable source of clean drinking water also has significant effects on school attendance, retention and performance as well on economic opportunity and productivity.

Irish Aid has worked with the people of Northern Province for thirty years to build their capacities in leadership, accountability, participatory planning, health and hygiene, and operational maintenance ensuring that Irish Aid's contribution to the water and sanitation sector will endure.

Mano Manunga School Borehole, Mano Camp, Mpika District

Mano Camp is home to the families of 92 Zambian Wildlife Authority (ZAWA) Officers whose job it is to patrol and protect Zambia's North Luangwa National Park, and conserve its rich biodiversity. The camp was built in 1988 and originally housed only 21 families but has grown over time to accommodate more than four times that many.

In 2011, Irish Aid supported the District of Mpika to sink two boreholes that provide the community with clean and reliable water sources. Theresa Malisawa, the Deputy Principal of Mano Manunga School, explains the difference the water is making to the 191 students at the local school, "Before the borehole, the students got water from the river which is more than 500 metres away. The river was not clean or safe and students would suffer from diarrhea which is very dangerous. When a child was sick they could not study, and had to stay at home."

The boreholes are providing clean water to the entire community, which seems to understand the importance of the facilities. "Each family contributes 1,000 Kwacha per month to the Water Committee, so that we can fix the pump if it breaks down," explains Chuma Elias, a Wildlife Police Officer in the Camp. "People in the community know that the money is being spent on the pump when they see that it is well maintained."

Chuma also explains that before the boreholes were sunk it was not only dirty water that the community had to worry about – "Apart from the distance to the camp, in the evening the river is not safe. Elephants come to the river to drink and that is dangerous for the people, especially the children." As Chuma points out, "If the community does not understand the animals, and why it is important to protect them, then there will be conflict." With the boreholes in place, it seems that the community at Mano Camp does not have to compete with the park's animals for water anymore.



Children from Mano Manunga School draw water from the borehole pump.



"When a child was sick they could not study, and had to stay at home."



Muleka Borehole, Isoka District

Muleka Chiefdom is located in Isoka District, approximately 60 kilometres from Isoka town itself. “Here in Muleka there are more than 5,000 people living in 15 different villages,” explains the Secretary of the Area Development Committee, Mr Charles Biko Siwale. “We have been here for a long time, since the Mulambia people moved from Nyasaland in the South,” contributes Group Headman Mapson Mulambia proudly.

“For the people in this Chiefdom, the main source of livelihood is farming. We were peasant farmers, consuming most of what we grew. But now the Government has come with agricultural inputs like fertiliser. With these inputs we can produce more. Now we are even selling maize to the Food Reserve Agency,” continues Charles. “As you can see we grow maize, sorghum, kasava – even fruits and groundnuts. Then many of us have livestock, like cattle, pigs and goats.” Of course, environmental concerns still play a role. “The rains are not always good. Last year we enjoyed good rains. It really changes the amount we can grow. When the rain is poor, the harvest decreases,” advises Charles.

With these sources of livelihood secured, it seems that the main challenges for the people of Muleka relate to health – especially access to clean water. “We see a lot of dysentery,” continues Charles. “Not everyone has clean water. There are some villages which do not have boreholes, they don’t even have wells. So what can they depend on?” he asks. “They end up using the river, the Luangwa. The river is dangerous because people wash in it; they bath themselves their children; and even wash their clothes. Even the animals also use that river. It is polluted.”

With the nearest Rural Health Post in Kampumbu nearly 14 kilometres away, it is important to prevent people from becoming ill in the first place, explains Mr Mulambia. “It happened that when someone would get sick – like malaria or



ADC Secretary Charles Biko Siwale (l), Group Headman Mapson Mulambia (c), and School Teacher Teddy Namatama (r) stand beside one of the Muleka Chiefdom boreholes constructed by Irish Aid.



“The river is dangerous because people wash in it; they bath themselves their children; and even wash their clothes. Even the animals also use that river. It is polluted.”

dysentery, we would try to rush them to Kampumbu. We have no clinic here, and it is a long way. Some of our relatives, many in fact, have simply died along the way.”

To address these health problems at the source and try to reduce the prevalence of water born illness, Irish Aid supported the sinking of two boreholes in Muleka. The first was sunk in 2006, this was followed by a second in 2011. “Now a lot less people are suffering from dysentery,” explains Charles as a family from the village approach and begin to pump water into large plastic buckets. “The water the ladies are taking is for drinking. They will fill the bucket and bring it home. They can come back to take more water everyday – clean water.”

In a community such as Muleka, which has never had these sorts of facilities before, it is not enough simply to sink the boreholes and install the pump. “When we sank these water points,” elaborates Charles, “we called our people together and taught them how to use them. We went for workshops. We have to facilitate, we have to monitor. People must never argue over the water.”

The benefits of the boreholes sometimes extend beyond the most obvious, as schoolteacher Neddy Namatama points out. “The boreholes make a big difference for the children’s health. There is less dysentery and, apart from malaria, the children tend not to be sick. When you have clean water you are healthier. When you are healthy it is easy to learn. When the whole class is healthy it is easier to teach,” concludes Teddy.



Villagers from Muleka Chiefdom draw clean water from the borehole daily.



“When you have clean water you are healthier. When you are healthy it is easy to learn. When the class is healthy it is easier to teach.”

Luwingu Per-Urban Water Supply, Luwingu District

Irish Aid commenced support to rehabilitate the Luwingu Peri-Urban Water Supply in 2000, explains the Luwingu District Water Office Francis Kazembe. “Before 2000, Luwingu had a critical shortage of water, the infrastructure for the entire water system was in very bad condition,” reveals Mr Kazembe. “What we have today would not be here without Irish Aid – it would be disastrous in terms of water. Irish Aid has performed wonders in terms of what was needed.” In total, more than 9,000 individuals have benefitted from the rehabilitated water supply system.

The key to understanding the challenge in providing clean water to the people of Luwingu, lies in understanding the complex reticulation grid from source to consumer, insists Francis. “The system comprises three pump stations. The intake pump draws water from a rain-fed river which is of good depth and has a good water yield. This pump sends water to a booster station that is 6 kilometres away. Then the booster pumps the water all the way into the treatment works in town,” he begins. “The water that we draw from the source can be polluted, so we use a filtration system called a ‘slow sand filter’. First the water passes through a 1.2 metre deep sand filter which catches any floating debris. After the sand filter, the water is immediately passed through a chlorinator that disinfects the water to World Health Organisation standards.”

“The last pump then pushes the water into the elevated storage tank. This tank feeds the upper part of the township,” Francis continues. “A second tank that feeds the lower part of the town, downhill, does not need a booster pump, as gravity ensures that the water will flow.”

Finally, the water is ready for the consumer. “In the upper part of the town where the buildings are older and more established, most people will have in-house plumbing. In the lower part of the town, most have standing pipes which we call yard connections,” Francis explains.



District Water Officer Francis Kazembe stands in front of the main intake pump of the Luwingu Per-Urban Water Supply.



“What we have today would not be here without Irish Aid.”



Chilubi Peri-Urban Water Supply Scheme, Chilubi District

Situated upon freshwater Lake Bangweulu Chilubi Island is the home to the Boma, or administrative centre, of the Chilubi District, which stretches to include the North-Eastern shores of the lake where many of the district's 66,000 inhabitants live. Despite being situated on a large body of freshwater, the island and its people experience serious challenges in securing potable water. That is why in 2005, Irish Aid supported the construction of a peri-urban water supply network that could service the people of the island, particularly Muchinshi, the main urban centre of Chilubi town.

“Work was completed in 2007,” explains Constance Mbulo of Chambeshi Water and Sewerage, the private utility company that now manages the water supply. “Before Irish Aid came, people had problems with water and depended mostly on open wells. Others drew water directly from the lake itself. The wells were unprotected and the water that was taken directly from the Lake was untreated. It brought much illness to the people of Chilubi, but there was no alternative.”

“The system now provides water that is pumped from the lake and treated with chlorine,” adds James Musonda, a water technician on the island. “The pipe network stretches across a series of water kiosks from where the people can draw clean water. The main reservoir stores 30,000 litres and we refill it every two days,” continues James. “The water costs only 500 Kwacha for 20 litres, but we have even provided a kiosk for people who cannot afford to pay any bills,” says Constance. “That is very important for people who cannot afford, they too can manage.”

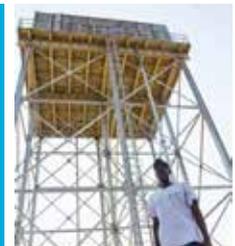
From the top of the main reservoir, elevated 25 metres above Chilubi town James concludes, “I have lived here for eight years. Before the water supply, people got water from the lake. Now the water that comes through the network is safe for consumption, the people are happy.”



Constance Mbulo of Chambeshi Water and Sewerage at the main pump house that the water supply.



“The wells were unprotected and the water that was taken directly from the lake was untreated. It brought much illness to the people of Chilubi, but there was no alternative.”



In Northern Province, efforts to increase nutrition and food security and reduce rural poverty and hunger are closely linked to livelihoods because the vast majority of households in the Province depend on agriculture for their income. Irish Aid has thus identified an opportunity to reduce the immediate effects of poverty and hunger on the Province's most vulnerable, but also to promote sustainable and lasting livelihood options that can break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

Livelihoods, food and nutrition security mark a relatively new focus in the context of Irish Aid's approach in Northern Province, although at various times in the thirty year history the Programme has engaged in the agricultural sector. The most recent strategic focus on livelihoods, food and nutrition security can be traced back to the recommendations of the Irish Aid's Hunger Task Force Report of 2008.

The concept of food and nutrition security that Irish Aid currently employs in Northern Province is one which encompasses not only physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food but also the necessary sanitary environment, adequate health services and proper care and feeding practices that will allow the people of the Province to enjoy healthy lives. It also encompasses sustainable utilisation of available natural resources to meet current and future food and nutritional requirements. In this regard, Irish Aid support promotes environmentally sustainable methods such as conservation farming practices.

Since 2008, Irish Aid has worked to support the food and nutrition security of Northern Province in partnership with the four Districts of Luwingu, Mbala, Mpika and Isoka through a variety of interventions. Irish Aid has prioritised support to activities which strengthen the poorest and most vulnerable households to build their resilience and mitigate the affects of poverty and hunger. Approximately, a quarter of activities supported in the Province are focused on improving the food and nutrition security of the most vulnerable households.

This relatively recent strategic shift has seen Irish Aid support a variety of activities aimed at increasing crop and livestock production, such as training, extension support, and start up seeds including fingerling fish stocks, NERICA rice and livestock. Irish Aid has also invested in productive infrastructure including irrigation canals, fish ponds, storage facilities, diptanks and grain mills.

Future Irish Aid support to Northern Province will deepen the focus at the household level. Irish Aid will target the most vulnerable households with an integrated approach to promote sustainable livelihoods while simultaneously addressing food and nutrition security, linking smallholding farmers to markets and increasing crop yields and nutritional benefits for household consumption.

Lunika Multi-Purpose Co-Operative Society, Luwingu District

As Francis Malama, Chairperson of the Lunika Multi-Purpose Co-Operative Society, explains the history of his group a large herd of cattle grazes between the trees watched over by three herdsmen. "There is a river beyond the forest – Lunika. That is where we got our name," he begins.

"We have 78 cattle," Francis continues. "The cows produce milk, but also meat. The local breed which is smaller can fetch up to 1.7 million Kwacha. But these new Brahmins which we have been given by the Department of Agriculture will fetch up to 5 million," declares Francis. "This herd we are looking at was formed by our fathers in 1979, back then Lunika was a simple farming group and there were just four members," continues Francis. "Today, we have 37 members. Each member provides at least one cow per year. A cow is worth 1000 shares. We also farm crop maize, beans, and groundnuts. We are even trying other businesses."

"In 2010 we were successfully registered as a Co-Operative Society," Francis explains. "In most cases Government cannot support small farming groups, which have to work by themselves. Once you are recognised as a Co-Operative Society, the Government engages itself with you." The District Department of Agriculture, with support from Irish Aid, has provided the larger Brahman cattle to the Lunika Co-Operative. "When we sell a cow, the money goes into our account and then we can then give loans to our members. In January, when the schools open, parents struggle to find money. That is why we started the short-term loans. So far we have assisted 12 members. If we gather just a small bit of interest then we can feed it back into the Society."

Turning to the future, Francis concludes, "I am the son of my father who was here before me, without him Lunika would not exist. Now, I am here for the benefit of my family. Our herd has grown. I will leave something for my children, I see a great future."



Francis Malama, Chairperson of the Lunika Multi-Purpose Co-Operative Society amongst the cattle owned by Society.



"Our herd has grown. I will leave something for my children. I see a great future."

Lwenge Fish Farming Group, Luwingu District

As the members of Lwenge Fish Farming Group gather by the side of their ponds to explain their project, it is impossible not to notice the broad, warm smiles that beam across each face. “We are smiling because we are happy to receive a big project of this magnitude,” explains Sara Musonda. “It has given us a vision, something to look forward to in the future,” Sara adds.

Ruben Mulenga, continues “We all grew up here like our forefathers. It is basically a farming community. We have always grown crops like cassava and maize, but were always at a small-scale. Like for instance in fish farming we all had small ponds that would not even feed our own families.” Frederick Mulenga explains how the project started in early 2012. “There was a Government programme that educated people about fish farming, and we also learned that the District had money given to them by Irish Aid that would support those who were interested in scaling up their ponds.”

The group sees benefits beyond the extra food that they will produce, once they begin to harvest from the ponds. “We enjoy fish, of course,” says Ruben “But what has happened here is a great thing. It will go beyond just eating, to help us to educate our families. We will raise money through this project, and money is difficult to come by in this area. So when we sell the fish it will be easier to support our children”

“If the children are selected to go to High School, it will be easy to sponsor them,” contributes Sara. “We also believe,” concludes Philip “that in an area where people are educated, development will come. Educated people can think around things and overcome challenges.”



Committee Members, including Chairperson Ruben Malenga (l), in front of their newly constructed fish ponds.



“We are smiling because we are happy to receive a big project of this magnitude.”

Mufili Camp, Chikoloba Village, Luwingu District

Lightson Kabwe enthusiastically welcomes visitors to his farm in Mufili Camp. He has much to show them. “This is my grocery shop,” he laughs. “The rain is not stable, so it is not wise to grow just one crop. During the rains I grow maize, groundnuts, beans, fruits and vegetables. Then during the dry season I grow this upland NERICA rice. So, the scale is balanced.”

Through the Department of Agriculture, Irish Aid has supported Lightson along with other farmers from the District of Luwingu, to plant NERICA Rice – a hybrid grain that grows in upland farmland with minimal irrigation. “I was first encouraged by our Agriculture Officer, he brought seeds and made a demonstration,” Lightson explains, “It takes hard work and concentration, a family that does not take things seriously will remain in poverty. We work in groups which makes it easier to clear, weed, drill, and eventually harvest.”

Shifting away from the staple crop of maize is not an easy decision according to Lightson, who explains the advantages of growing rice. “You know we are living in the modern world. Even in rural areas we need to be advanced. Other foods have more potential to nourish our bodies than mealie meal. We need a balanced diet and people are beginning to understand this.”

Apart from the nutritional benefits, Lightson also appreciates the economic opportunity afforded by NERICA rice. “Rice is eight or nine times more expensive than mealie meal, and we are buying most of that rice from our neighbouring country, Tanzania. We are living in a world of competition. As a nation we need to be able to compare and compete. We can grow our own rice and sell it for a cheaper price. New markets can be opened. Luwingu can become a bread basket for Northern Province.”

Lightson explains that he has not always lived in Chikoloba Village. “When I was a schoolboy I lived in Chingola,” he recalls. “Then I came here to set up my home



Lightson Kabwe, with his wife Beatrice, son Amon and Daughter Anne pictured in Mufili Camp, Luwingu.



“You know we are living in the modern world. Even in rural areas we need to be advanced. Rice has more potential to nourish our bodies than mealie meal.”

“We are living in a world of competition. As a nation we need to be able to compare and compete.”

in 1985. I got married then, and now I have two children; a boy and a girl.”

Lightson reflects on the changes he has seen since he established his household in Mufili Camp. “There are so many changes, politically and economically,” he begins. “But I am not a politician, I am a farmer. In Luwingu, agriculture is our first priority. There have been a lot of changes. As we sit here it seems to be summer, but it is really still winter. The weather has changed, adapting to it is very difficult. When I came here in 1985 the weather was normal, it was easy to predict. Now it is changing all the time. You can face flooded rainfall, then drought.”

Lightson is talking about climate change because he sees the way that it is affecting people in Northern Province. “We need research and technologies so that we can adapt,” Lightson suggests. “But it is also up to individuals. If we are told to stop cutting down trees, then we should understand that,” he argues, pointing to the need for individual, as well as collective, responsibility. “As an individual I have started. I am conserving trees in my yard. The trees that I have taken from the earth, I will replace. I can plant orange and lemon trees. They will prevent destruction of the climate, and also bring me the benefits of the fruits.”

Turning to the future, Lightson is optimistic. “Things have progressed a lot. Where there was no hospital, there is a hospital. Where there was no school, you see a school. We are progressing as a nation,” he begins, before reflecting on the support he has received from Irish Aid. “Since the foundation of the world we are brothers. Thank you for your sacrifice.”

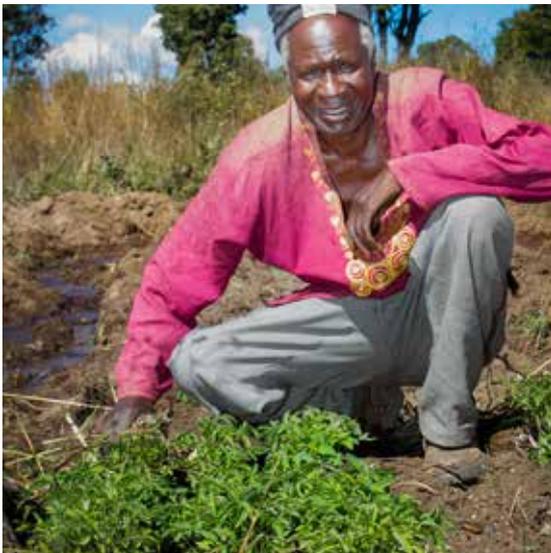


Lightson Kabwe stands in his NERICA rice field.



“The trees that I have taken from the earth, I will replace.”

“When I came here in 1985 the weather was normal, it was easy to predict. Now it is changing all the time. You can face flooded rainfall, then drought.”



Chief Emmanuel Chakonta stands over this seedling tomato plants, which are fed by water from the Kapatu Irrigation Furrow.



“It’s a holistic approach that looks at the whole agricultural system.”



Kapatu Irrigation Scheme, Chakonta Chiefdom, Mbala District

With support from Irish Aid in 2006, the District of Mbala excavated a 1.5 kilometre irrigation furrow which still runs through Kapatu Village today, providing a reliable source of water that irrigates several hectares of crop and also feeds into four commercial fish ponds managed by the community.

Freddy Banda, the District Water Officer at the time of the project explains why it was initiated. “The site was selected because the village was already irrigating using unlined canals. We knew that if we improved the intake, they could expand the irrigation system.”

Mr Banda points out that the site was deemed suitable in terms of environmental impact. “We sensitised the community on the need to participate, and to consider the environment. We did a lot of training on conservation agriculture, organic farming, intercropping and rotation, and also deforestation and its effect on the water table,” says Freddy. “It’s a holistic approach that looks at the whole agricultural system. The stream is perennial, and once the furrow has passed through the last farm, the un-diverted water is returned to the normal flow of the stream.”

Joseph Chakonta is the Treasurer of the Committee that manages the irrigation system. He explains that once the community was successfully using the furrow to irrigate their crops, it was their idea to add the fish ponds. “The idea came because we saw that the canal was complete, and thought let us do other things as well as farming. With help from the Fisheries Department we learned how to build these ponds. The ponds are for the community. We consume some of the fish then sell the rest to other villages.”

Chief Emmanuel Chakonta, Joseph’s father, shows us his tomato seedlings grown on irrigated land. “I am very happy as Chief. What has changed most is the farming. People have moved away from cutting the trees, now they plough the soil.”



Bernard, Gloria and their five youngest children with lemons freshly harvested from the Ndabeda Farm orchard.



“We try to work very hard so that we can prepare the future for our children.”



Ndabeda Farm, Luwingu District

The entrance to Ndabeda Farm is lined with lemon tress and maize. Surrounded by the orchard Bernard and Gloria Mwansa are eager to explain how the support that they have received from Irish Aid has enabled them to turn their small-holding farm into a profitable business. “The community here, including myself, realised that there was always a shortage of fish in the district,” explains Bernard, referring to the cheap, nutritional and protein rich food source, “So we decided to approach the Ministry of Agriculture in the District, who we knew were looking to support new groups as they came together.”

“The officers came and conducted training, and after that we started to meet as farmers to discuss digging the furrows and working together to build the fish ponds,” continues Bernard. “We knew that if we came together we could earn money for everyone who took part.”

Gloria, Bernard’s wife, discusses why the project offered so much to the farmers in the area. “We have six children of our own – five girls and one boy. One of the girls is married and is a teacher. We try to work very hard so that we can prepare the future for our children, so that they don’t pass through the same experiences and problems that we have passed through,” explains Gloria earnestly. “We will send the children to school. Once the children are all educated they can have jobs like their oldest sister who is teaching already.”

“We are expecting a change in life,” continues Bernard. “Now we have hope that we can become richer and support our family. There will be a surplus from these ponds and we can sell those fish and pay for our children’s schooling. We will also buy more seeds for the rest of the farm. So apart from the fish, we can sell maize, cassava, beans, lemons, even bananas,” smiles Bernard. “Education,” repeats Gloria simply, emphasising her hopes for her daughters’ future.

Chiba Market, Kasama District

Although an informal market has existed at Chiba for more than 20 years, it was in 2000 that Irish Aid funded the construction of a permanent market structure that would be managed by an elected committee drawn from within the market community itself. The market has 24 permanent shop stalls, with additional space for up to 40 temporary 'tables'.

Sydney Simusokwe, who has operated a stall at the market for 8 years, was elected to the Market Committee in 2011. "This market really began to function 8 or 9 years ago," explains Sydney. "Before that, there were not many people who were willing to rent a stall; they preferred to just set up a table somewhere, which was cheaper. But this year most of the stalls have been rented already, and the ones that are empty are being held for people who have placed a deposit."

While the cost of a stall is on average just 20,000 Kwacha per month, on a good day a stall selling fresh produce might bring in as much as 50,000 Kwacha. It is not surprising then that the stalls are seen as a wise investment. "The market is growing," continues Sydney. "More people buying means more people selling. This is where we can earn our income. I started with a small shop, now I also have a video show, barber shop and a beauty salon. I have moved to another level."

Bernard Simbaya, who is renting one of the shops stalls, seems happy with the way the market is managed. "The new Committee has put up some measures, the toilets were blocked, now they are repaired and people can use them. There were some workers, like security, who had not been paid in full – the Committee has cleared those arrears. Now we want to repaint the shops. It is step by step," acknowledges Bernard.



Bernard Simbaya (l) and Sydney Simusokwe (r) explain how the Chiba market is managed.



"The market is growing. More people selling means more people buying."

Elinor Jenkins (Technical Adviser, Promotion of Community Managed Urban Services, 1997 – 1998)

I arrived in Kasama in October 1997, just days before a failed Coup d'Etat against the Government of the day. Still in the 'orientation phase' of my contract, I woke to find colleagues glued to the radio and trying desperately to contact Lusaka for more information on what was happening. Being a little naïve, I sat wondering what actually constituted a "real coup", presuming it to be a common place event. It was only when people around me began to discuss how many vehicles and litres of petrol would be needed to get across the border that I began to realise my time in Africa might not be all safari.

PocMUS, a programme that worked with local government to develop urban services in Mbala and Kasama, had already been operational for a number of years, and at that time there was a large Irish Aid team working to strengthen and develop much needed urban infrastructure. While the programme came with a number of vehicles, valuable construction plant and hundreds of pouches of cement; I came with a background in social development, lacking any experience whatsoever in cement rotation. I was responsible for the challenging task of change management, moving from the Irish Aid compound to local government offices and transferring the management of the programme and its resources to community and local government partnerships. The programme championed community participation and so it was critical to build confidence in local structures while gradually relinquishing control over objectives, timelines and resources.

The project base within local government offices played an important symbolic role affirming Irish Aid's commitment to the transfer of project operations to Zambian counterparts. The real engagement was through excellent local government

development officers at district level, who worked directly with community councils in the different locations. At this level there was an impressive understanding of, and commitment to, the principles and practice of community participation in addition to admirable patience with what was often a slow and demanding process. My role increasingly became to support, facilitate, monitor and evaluate. The local development officers themselves negotiated the tricky space between local government and community leadership, ground that became all the more fraught with valuable capital resources at stake. These Zambian colleagues were the real stars of the show; bright, able, committed and competent; supporting their work and developing potential became a key objective of the programme.

Did the programme in Northern Province have an impact? As is often the case the most important contribution lay in those intangible, hard to measure outputs: the body of experience in working it through, negotiating, testing and revising, of coming to agreement. During my time in Northern Province, much time was given over to developing sustainable maintenance plans for the infrastructure that had been developed but it was never easy to safeguard the human capital, which was of so much more value. I have been greatly saddened to hear that so many of the inspiring colleagues have since died, most well before their time.

I left Kasama soon after Shoprite, the first large Supermarket, arrived. I had mixed feelings about the arrival of Shoprite in Kasama, but confess to enjoying its air conditioned aisles on a hot afternoon, while reflecting if such commercial development was the sort of progress Kasama strived for. I claim a small, and very insignificant contribution to Irish Aid's 30 year history in Northern Province, though will remain forever grateful to Zambia for the far greater impact it had on me.

Throughout the 1990s, adult HIV prevalence rates in Northern Province hovered around 16%, reflecting national prevalence at that time. Today, that prevalence rate has dropped to 14.3% nationally, and just 6.8% in Northern Province. The story of HIV & AIDS in Northern Province is far from over, but the contribution of Irish Aid to the fight against the pandemic has been significant.

Until 2000 Northern Province had not been a focus point for donors working to reduce the prevalence or mitigate the effects of HIV & AIDS in Zambia. It was in that year that Irish Aid first commissioned an extensive study to examine the scale of the pandemic in the Province, and to determine what response might be put in place. Irish Aid invited a number of key stakeholders (including representatives from the Government of Zambia, Churches and Non-Governmental Organisations) to consider the findings and discuss the way forward.

One of the most significant outcomes was a broad agreement that HIV & AIDS could not be addressed distinct from other social sectors such as education, agriculture or mainstream health. In fact HIV & AIDS cut across every aspect of life in the Province, affecting everything from children's attendance at school, to adult's ability to secure their livelihoods.

The concept of a multi-sectoral response was put forward – that was a response in which HIV & AIDS would not be addressed simply in terms of a health issue, but rather in a co-ordinated manner across the many different sectors it touched upon. In 2000, with the support of Irish Aid, Northern Province established a Provincial AIDS Task Force, and 12 District AIDS

Task Forces whose responsibility it would be to ensure that a co-ordinated, planned and multi-sectoral response to the pandemic would be put in place, a model that would later be adopted at the national level.

Apart from these important contributions to the governmental response, Irish Aid also recognised the crucial role being played by civil society organisations. Across the Province community based organisations were playing a vital role: educating people about HIV & AIDS; preventing infections especially in young people and children; advocating for access to treatment and of course caring for the many people who were living with HIV.

Amongst the most vulnerable people affected by HIV & AIDS in Northern Province were the great many orphans who had lost one, or both, parents to the pandemic. Irish Aid supported a number of organisations that worked to protect and care for these children – ensuring that they received supplementary food and that they could continue in education.

Irish Aid learned through this work in Northern Province that although community based organisations do not always have significant management or reporting capacities, they perform an invaluable role in the response to HIV & AIDS, when offered the necessary support. Organisations such as SWAAZ and Households in Distress continue to play that role even today.



Irish Aid Offices, Kasama, Northern Province.



“What should I tell people? That is what everyone asks once they realise they are positive.”

Chilubula People Living with HIV & AIDS, Kasama District

Boniface Mwansa, Chairperson of Chilubula People Living with HIV & AIDS, leans back into this armchair and explains the history of the organisation. “We started Chilubula in 2004, and in 2005 Irish Aid came in to support us,” he begins. “You see people living with HIV & AIDS need many things, they need drugs; blankets; mosquito nets; most especially they need food, and the means to produce food if they cannot afford it.”

Of course, farming can be difficult for people living positively, especially as they commence Anti-Retroviral Therapy. “Some of our clients were bedridden, they could not feed themselves, so the home-based care and the farming inputs that we could provide thanks to Irish Aid really helped them to recover,” Boniface continues. “Furthermore, some had been crippled by stigma, not able to leave their homes and requiring supplementary assistance.” Stigma continues to play a destructive role in the lives of the members of Chilubula, and Boniface explains that it can be difficult to face down. “What should I tell people? That is what everyone asks once they realise they are positive. But in Chilubula we say ‘Come out into the open!’ People see that we are improving, they see the benefit of confronting this stigma in us.”

Modesta Querere is 36 years old, and one of the 500 members of Chilubula. “For me,” Modesta begins, “it has really helped. I see that I can normalise my life again.” Boniface contributes, “Women have started to open up, but men are still in hiding.”

“Life was more challenging without the group,” Modesta continues. “The group is where we teach each other to adhere to medicines and look after ourselves. We have ploughed vegetables and we can sell crops to send our children to school.” Boniface concludes, “I’m still buying my own inputs through the foundation that I received from Irish Aid. My children are going to school.”



Peter Ndemena, Acting AIDS Coordination Adviser, Northern Province.



“Irish Aid has been a pioneer in terms of the response.”

“Making a decision requires you to understand the consequences.”

Acting Provincial AIDS Coordination Adviser, Northern Province

The office of Provincial AIDS Coordinator in the National AIDS Council plays an essential role in the response to the pandemic in Northern Province. Peter Ndemena, the Acting Coordination Adviser explains what some of the challenges are and how the Province, with the support of Irish Aid, has responded to them.

“HIV & AIDS have affected the community in many ways. Looking at the social aspect of course, but there is also an economic aspect,” Peter begins. “It is the productive age group that has been most affected. The mainstay of our economy is agriculture, and for those that are HIV positive, it can be difficult to work in the field. A person might not have the energy that they used to. Those who are affected by HIV, they too face challenges caring for family – parents, brothers, sisters. The amount of hours a person can work might be shortened.”

“Those that pass away,” continues Peter “they leave children who become orphans. In our culture the extended family system should take care of them, but in the end it is difficult to do anything because there are so many.”

“Irish Aid has been a pioneer in terms of the response. At that time we did not have the information that was required to operate District level AIDS Task Forces. Irish Aid provided the technical assistance that we needed. Eventually, that led to the establishment of the Provincial Aids Task Force,” explains Peter. “Now at provincial level we can plan, coordinate and monitor the response to HIV & AIDS.”

“We were at somewhere near 16% prevalence nationally,” says Peter “then we were at 8.8%, now at around 6% in Northern Province. Information is the key because if we want to change behaviour then we have to be able to talk about issues. Making a decision requires you to understand the consequences.”



Members of SWAAZ, including Co-ordinator Maggie Siame (c) outside their offices in Isoka.

Society for Women and AIDS in Zambia (SWAAZ), Isoka District

The Society for Women and AIDS in Zambia, or SWAAZ, was formed in September 2001. “Our main concern was to reach women in our communities and disseminate information relating to HIV & AIDS. We established branches in the village at grassroots level, so that they could report back to us. Now there are more than 150 branches in the District,” explains co-ordinator Maggie Siame.

Maggie explains some of the reasons that SWAAZ focuses on the rights of women specifically. “Women are the most vulnerable in terms of HIV & AIDS, and in terms of domestic violence. They are also the ones who take care of the orphans. All of us here are caring for orphans. As Zambian women, we face challenges that men don’t face. Women’s rights are at the centre of what we do.” Maggie also touches on an important point in relation to HIV & AIDS, “Men here were educated long before women could attend school. Therefore they got exposed to information about HIV & AIDS long before women knew about it, or understood. So as women, we moved in to bridge this gap and inform our fellow women.”

“Through Irish Aid,” Maggie continues, “we could move on from just giving handouts in the initial stages. We could teach people about HIV & AIDS, encourage them to access treatment and make it easier to care for the children, and to educate them. We help women to have their own gardens, and plant their own crops.”

“Taking care of these children is easier in a group. One finger alone cannot pick rice,” concludes Maggie, as a number of her fellow members gather with the orphaned children for whom they care. “It becomes easy when you join hands, to do things together.”



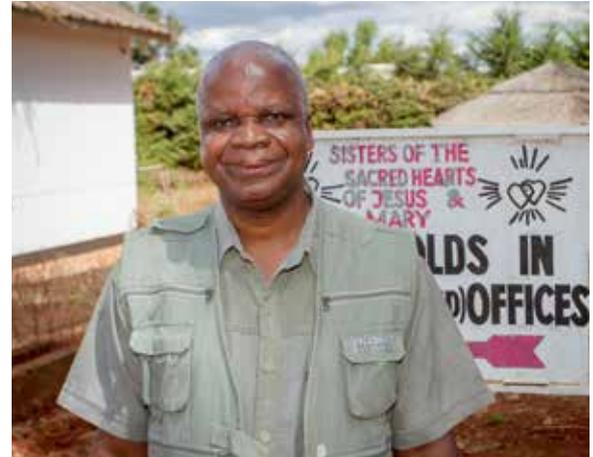
“Women are the most vulnerable in terms of HIV & AIDS.”

Households in Distress (HID), Mbala District

Elasto Matthias Kunda, Programme Co-ordinator of Households in Distress (HID) sets out the 23 year history of the organisation with remarkable precision. "In a way, this story goes all the way back to the work of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary in the 1960s, but I will just talk from 1991 when we formally began our work as HID," explains Mr Kunda. "When you talk of HID, we think; talk; act; nothing but HIV & AIDS. That is our focus."

Placing his work in context, Elasto reflects on how the HIV pandemic has affected Mbala District. "It is basically a poor rural farming community, there are no industries, high levels of illiteracy, challenges in accessing health facilities, and we also have these customs of polygamy and early marriage. So you can see how HIV & AIDS has not left Mbala untouched." HID uses three main strategies to respond to the challenges presented by HIV & AIDS – Prevention, Management and Empowerment. "The prevention component involves sensitising communities on HIV & AIDS, and raising awareness. The principal here is to empower people with knowledge and basic facts about the virus."

Of course, prevention does not always succeed, explains Elasto, "That is where we move on to management. Chronically ill is the starting point of our home based care, the person will be grounded and very sick by the time we meet them, they will be quite gone. We work to help them access Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART)." Elasto knows from his experience that accessing treatment is only part of the challenge, and that clients must stay the course of medication if they are to recover. "Adherence is important – you know ART is a battle, which is fought in the body. This is where Irish Aid has been our dependable partner. They provide food supplements as well as drugs. ART uses strong medication and some of our clients are very poor and don't have adequate food. If they are



Elasto Matthias Kunda, Programme Co-ordinator of Households in Distress, Mbala District.



"Chronically ill is the starting point of our home based care, the person will be grounded and very sick by the time we meet them, they will be quite gone."



Village orphan support groups use farming inputs, like these donkeys, to generate income that they reinvest in the community.



taking the medication without a nutritious diet, this will have a negative effect on them.”

“Another part of management is related to a different group – OVC,” continues Elasto, referring to the many orphans and vulnerable children in Mbala district. “For orphans we have a slightly different approach because these are children who are not in a position to handle any resource that we might give them directly. So we have formed committees which we call village orphan support groups. We can channel resources through them, and they use the resources to help the orphans. Irish Aid comes in here again as a major supporter because with their support we have resourced the village orphan support groups with farming inputs – oxen, donkeys, ploughs, cultivators, hammer mills. The income that can be generated raises money that is used to support the orphans.”

“This brings me to the third strategy – that is empowerment.” Elasto explains. HID came to realise that prevention and treatment were only parts of the puzzle. “We saw our clients improving. They would stand up and say ‘You guys have done a lot, thank you. You have moved me from a deathbed to where I am today. I am up and well. So, what next?’”

“As HID we started to look at our supports in a holistic manner. We worried that a client in such a state might regress. This is how our livelihood programme came into being,” clarifies Mr Kunda. “Once a client has recovered sufficiently, we look at what they can do. Of course, in this context most people are farmers, so we provide inputs and even training so that they can recover their livelihood as well as their health, empowering our beneficiaries so that they can integrate back into normal life and society. It is empowering these people so that they are useful again, for themselves and for the rest of the community.”

Mr Kunda concludes, “I think we are now seeing less HIV prevalence here in Mbala. It used to be worse but I think over time with the concerted efforts of all the stakeholders, both in Government and in civil society, at least the situation has improved somewhat. There is also a significant level of acceptance of people who are HIV positive, though there are still challenges. We cannot say that we are fully there yet.”

Brendan Rogers (Director General, Irish Aid)

Ireland and Zambia have had a long relationship marked by a deep mutual respect. Our connections go back to the arrival of Irish missionaries in Zambia at the end of the 19th century and they have deepened over the generations. On Independence it is no coincidence that the new Government of the Republic of Zambia turned to Ireland to help train the first generation of civil servants, army cadets and pilots. Let us remember that in 1964 there were barely 100 university graduates and 1200 secondary school graduates in Zambia. This was the human capital with which the Government had to build a new nation!

One of the greatest expressions of Ireland's strong relationship with Zambia has been our official development relationship built over the course of the last thirty years and in particular the close partnership on behalf of the poorest communities in Northern Province.

The stories collected in *Northern Voices* represent just a small example of the great many achievements of our development programme, the lasting friendships that have been forged and the great determination and resolve of the Province's people to overcome the many challenges which they have faced. I am delighted to contribute to this publication as I have very happy memories of the years I worked in Zambia and the many visits I undertook to every corner of Northern Province. The long drive from Lusaka to Kasama, on to Mbala and beyond familiarised me with the wonderful landscapes of that part of Zambia and the infectious humour and generosity of the people of Northern Province. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my personal

appreciation to the great many people, Zambian and Irish alike, who have come to play such an important role in the development of the Province.

In Northern Province, it has long been our joint purpose to ensure that lives and livelihoods, prospects and potential have been given every opportunity to grow and develop, and in these efforts we have enjoyed some commendable results. For these reasons it seems an entirely appropriate time to reflect back over our shared achievements, to mark our efforts and also to cast our eyes forward into the future of the Province, and Ireland's role within it.

I am very pleased to take this opportunity to report that Ireland's commitment to our development partnership with Zambia is set to continue with the recent approval of the Irish Aid Zambia Country Strategy 2013-2017. Over the course of the next five years, Ireland will continue to deliver on our commitment to Zambia, focussing on improving livelihoods, food and nutrition security in some of Northern Province's most vulnerable households. We are reimagining our relationship with Northern Province. It will be through working closely with the people there that we can make the optimal contribution to local efforts to make a real difference to the well being of the population. After all what is development, if it is not about making a difference where it counts most – on the ground.

It is our hope that the partnership will continue to grow and evolve, as it has for the last thirty years. *Northern Voices* should therefore be seen not only as a reflection of what has already been achieved, but also as a promise of great things still to come. I look forward to returning to Northern Province before too long.



All photographs used in *Northern Voices* were shot on location in Zambia's Northern Provinces by Chosa Mweemba, June 2012.

Irish Aid
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Volunteering and Information Centre
27-31 Upper O'Connell Street
Dublin
Ireland

Embassy of Ireland
6663 Katima Mulilo Road
P.O. Box 34923
Lusaka 10101
Zambia

For further information on the work of Irish Aid in Zambia go to: www.irishaid.gov.ie