Chapter 10
The Quest for a Family Policy in Zambia

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Introduction

Over the past 2 decades, major United Nations and other world conferences and summits have called attention to issues affecting families, including family roles and responsibilities, gender equality and men's greater participation in family life. Notably, the 1995 Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development acknowledged the importance of providing help to families so as to enable them to perform their supporting, educating and nurturing roles. This would entail, among other things, enacting social policies and programmes designed to meet the needs of families and their individual members (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2011:1). Despite these calls, families in many sub-Saharan African countries have not been adequately targeted by social policy. Typically families only inadvertently derive benefits from the outcomes of social policy and other social programmes, and not from mechanisms that directly targeted them. Instead, policies and programmes have been focused on individuals who comprise the family such as children, mothers, the young and older persons—whose interests and needs are related, but not identical to those of the family (Zeitlin and Megawanji. 1995). Moreover, such policies and programmes have in many instances not been comprehensive enough or well-thought out.

Due to the foregoing, this chapter uses the case of Zambia to illustrate the need for family policies in sub-Saharan Africa as it is evident that current social policies in many of the sub-continent's countries have not effectively responded to the institution of the family for decades. In addition, there is a dearth of evidence-based policymaking forays in the public sphere, coupled with a lukewarm culture of policy analysis. Lastly, in some countries such as Zambia, there seems to be no strong political will that can drive a forward-looking agenda of strengthening families in the country (Noyoo forthcoming 2013). Before proceeding, it is

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imperative to shed some light on the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of this chapter, in order to lend clarity to some of the issues it raises.

Conceptual and Theoretical Considerations

According to the United Nations (2009), as the basic, natural and fundamental unit of society, the family is entitled to protection by society and the state. Mattessich and Hill (1987) assert that families are social groups that display four systematic features, namely: Intimate interdependence; selective boundary maintenance; ability to adapt to change and maintain their identity over time and performance of tasks. The tasks performed by the family include physical maintenance; socialisation and education; control of social and sexual behaviour; maintenance of family morale and motivation to perform roles inside and outside the family; the acquisition of mature family members through procreation; and the launching of young people from the family when mature (Mattessich and Hill 1987).

Defining the Family

Although the aforementioned definitions will guide this chapter's point of departure, a word of caution is necessary. Despite agreement about the pervasiveness and continuity of some form of familial relationships throughout human history, there is—in the current context—no single uniform agreed definition of what a family is. Conceptualisations about the form, function and utility of families change over time as a result of a unique interplay of historical, political, economic and social forces (Trask 2004). Overall, existing definitions of family can be categorised in two ways: (i) *structural definitions* that specify family membership according to certain traits such as blood relationship, legal ties or residence; and (ii) *functional definitions* that specify behaviours of family members such as sharing economic resources and caring for the young, elderly, sick and those with disabilities (Trask 2004).

Family Policy

Discussions about the family cannot be divorced from the policy constructs relating to the family. In most cases family policies are couched in welfare paradigms, the character of which will give expression to a unique set of policies related to the family. For example, whilst following the typology of Esping-Andersen (1990), Neyer (2003) explains that welfare-state research has shown that European countries can be grouped into distinct welfare-state regimes according to the intentions of their social policies and the principles on which they are based.

Consequently, universalistic welfare states are characterised by welfare-state policies that are targeted at individual independence and social equality between individuals (not families). Public policies aim at covering social and employment-related risks and at upholding high living standards for everyone. Social benefits are granted on the basis of individual social citizenship rights. Extended social services contribute to the defamilialisation of welfare, that is, a reduction of the family's contribution to welfare. In addition:

> Conservative welfare states direct their welfare-state policies towards status maintenance and the preservation of traditional family forms. Social benefits correspond to work performance measured through the level and duration of contributions to social-security systems, or they depend on marriage. Conservative welfare states rely heavily on familialism that is on the family as a provider of welfare. Liberal welfare states encourage market-based individualism through minimal social benefits and through subsidising private and marketised welfare schemes. Social benefits are usually means-tested and poverty-related. Social welfare depends on market provisions and on familialism. The Southern European welfare states are often considered part of the conservative welfare-state regimes; but their stronger familialism merits that they are viewed as a separate welfare-state regime (Neyer 2003:11).

Crucially, in the making of policy certain assumptions must be made about families and family roles. Family policy can be explicit or implicit; manifest or latent; direct or indirect; intended or unintended in terms of its family effects and consequences. What is useful about these terms is that they alert the observer to the different dimensions in which the family aspects of different policies and programmes can be analysed and examined (Zimmerman 1995). For instance, explicit family policies include those policies and programmes deliberately designed to achieve specific objectives regarding the family unit or individuals in their family roles. These may cover such major family functions as: family creation (for example, to marry or divorce, bear or adopt children, provide foster care); economic support (for example, to provide for family members' basic needs); child-rearing (for example, to socialise the next generation), and family caregiving (for example, to provide assistance for the family members who are ill, frail, with disabilities, or older and in need of assistance or care (United Nations 2009). Explicit family policies may also include population policies (pro or anti-natalist); income security policies designed to combat poverty and assure families with children in a certain standard of living; employment-related benefits for working parents; maternal and child health policies; child care policies, maternity and paternity leave; domestic violence and family planning. In this context, family policy may assume a diversity and multiplicity of policies rather than a single monolithic, comprehensive legislative act (United Nations 2009).

Gauthier (1996) cited in Millar (2003:157) identifies four main approaches to family policy. The first refers to the *pro-family/pro-natalist* where policies to help mothers reconcile work and family life, so that employment does not act as a barrier to child-bearing. The second approach is *pro-traditional* where preservation of 'the family' is the main concern. Governments take responsibility for supporting families here, but the most important sources of support are seen as

families themselves, the communities they live in, and voluntary and charitable organisations including churches. These policies support women to stay at home rather than going out to work. The third slant is *pro-egalitarian,* where the promotion of gender equality is the main concern; here men and women are treated as equal breadwinners and equal carers and the policy aims to support dual parent/worker roles. The *pro-family but non-interventionist approach* is the fourth one which mainly is concerned with families in need. The families are viewed as basically self-sufficient and able to meet their own needs through the private market, with only limited help from the state.

For the purpose of this chapter family policy refers to the principles governing actions directed towards achieving specified ends, through the provision of welfare, minimum standards of income and some measure of progressive redistribution in command over resources, in such a way as to shape the development of families. In other words, the family policy identifies families as the deliberate target of specific actions, and the measures initiated are designed to have direct impact on family resources and ultimately on family structure (Harris 2004).

Social Policy

Social policy generally refers to the activity of policymaking to promote well-being by the state. It also refers to the academic study of such actions. It is an interdisciplinary field, drawing on and developing links with other cognate disciplines (Alcock 2003). Critically:

> In any society, social policy fulfils three main functions: social, political and an economic. The social function lies in reducing the life cycle risks through social insurance and alleviating poverty through social assistance. The political function of social policy lies in stabilising effects. Social justice and greater equality are vital factors for building trust and social cohesion and to contribute to political stability. The economic factor lies, among others, in widening the productive capacities of society through the inclusion of marginalised areas and social groups in the growth process, and through investments in improved health and education of the population (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia 2009:1).

Since this chapter is examining the terrain of a developing country which is located in a mostly impoverished and deprived continent—Africa—the following definition will guide its perspectives in relation to social policy:

> Social policy is collective interventions in the economy to influence the access and the incidence of adequate and secure livelihoods and income. As such, social policy has always played redistributive, protective and transformative or developmental roles. Although these different roles always work in tandem and synergistically, the weight given to each of these elements of social policies has varied widely across countries and, within countries, over time. In the context of development, there can be no doubt that the transformative role of social policy needs to receive greater attention than it is usually accorded in the developed countries and much more than it does in the current focus of "safety nets" (Mkandawire 2004:1).

The Need for Family Policy in Zambia

Situated in south-central Africa, Zambia is a multi-ethnic country comprised of 73 different ethnic groups with unique cultures and linguistics. Although agriculture, and lately tourism have also experienced marginal increases, thus adding to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth, copper is Zambia's major export and, as at April 2012, it accounted for 82.3 % of all major exports of the country.

Zambia's population stands over 13 million with 49.3 % being males and 50.7 % being females (Central Statistical Office 2011). The majority (60.5 %) of Zambians reside in rural areas whilst the remaining 39.5 % are found in urban areas. Zambia has a high population growth rate as suggested by the average annual growth rate of 2.8 % noted during the inter-censal period, 2000–2010. In addition, the country has a very young population with 45.4 % of its citizens below the age of 15 years. In rural areas 48.6 % of the population is below the age of 15 years compared to 40.5 % residing in urban areas. The population aged 15–24 makes up 20.8 % of the total population, of which 19.3 % are in the rural areas and 23.2 % are in urban areas (Central Statistical Office 2011). The implications of these youth statistics for social policy, in particular, and public policy in general, are that Zambia shoulders a huge dependency ratio. More resources are therefore needed to nurture and grow this young population for future productive endeavours.

From 1964 (when it gained independence from Britain) to 1991, Zambia was ruled by the United National Independence Party (UNIP) and its leader Kenneth Kaunda. For all the 27 years of this rule, Zambia was a socialist country and all policies were imbued with a socialist ethos, which entailed the State taking the lead role in economic activities. Thus, the Zambian economy was characterised by highly controlled markets and as a result of the rapid implementation of import substitution industrialisation strategies, a number of processing industries were established, and state involvement in business activities were intensified. Trade policy was inward-looking, with import and foreign exchange controls used extensively to influence imports and trading activities (OECD 2011:13). Despite this, evidence shows that between 1964 and the early 1970s, the country registered gains in economic growth and social welfare largely due to the good price of copper on the world market.

On the other hand, the post-1974 period tells a different story as Zambia exhibited a declining economic performance and most social indicators deteriorated. The situation worsened to such an extent that in 1985, the World Bank re-classified Zambia from a middle income to a low-income country. By the early 1990s, Zambia had reached a level where the United Nations General Assembly included it on the list of least developed countries (Saasa and Carlsson 2002:1).

In 1991, Kaunda and UNIP lost elections and were dislodged from power after a popular revolt against their one-party state system. The Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) was voted into power and the late Frederick Chiluba became Zambia's second president. The MMD immediately embarked upon institutional reforms which saw the country implementing free-market policies and

putting in place a comprehensive privatisation programme. However, Chiluba and his government were also seen by many Zambians as incompetent, corrupt and generally detrimental to the country's progress. When the late Levy Mwanawasa took over office from Chiluba in 2001, he waged a relentless campaign against corruption and also made the fight against poverty his number one priority through prudent macro-economic management and the stabilisation of the markets. He instituted pro-poor policies to not only reduce poverty, but also to help resuscitate families and the country's middle-class.

Mwanawasa, also ratcheted up Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows through the resuscitation of mining (particularly copper) industries. Agriculture and tourism were also boosted during this period; and hence from 2004 economic growth rose to 5.5 % and the annual inflation rate dropped to 18 % from 30 % and slightly more in the previous decades. By 2010 the country's GDP growth rate had increased to 7.2 % and the annual inflation rate had dramatically decreased to 7.1 % in 2010 (Government of the Republic of Zambia 2011).

After Mwanawasa's death in 2008 the new president Rupiah Banda continued from where his predecessor had left off. However, this was only until 2011 when he lost elections to the Patriotic Front (PF) headed by Michael Sata. Despite its many promises during the campaigns in the run up to the 2011 elections, the new government has not, to date, been able to proffer any sound policy proposals in respect to elevating social and human development in the country. It remains silent on social policy matters and has not provided concrete proposals on how the country's vulnerable populations are going to be protected against adversities and how they are going to be empowered by the state (Noyoo 2013).

Thus, despite Zambia's encouraging economic performance between 2004 and 2012 (OECD 2011; Africa Economic Outlook 2012), the quality of life of the citizenry remains appallingly low. This is because the economy continues to be inequitable and devoid of in-built mechanisms crucial for the redistribution of the generated wealth. Further, state led anti-poverty measures as well as those of civil society have been palliative and not comprehensive enough. They remain adjuncts of economic policy which is more tailored towards a trickle down approach as opposed to the redistribution of wealth. It is due to this anomaly that many Zambian families continue to miss out on the reported economic growth. Consequently, families have also not meaningfully and effectively contributed to the country's development process. Indeed, this deficit is clearly reflected in the country's low human development levels. For example, in 2011 the country's Human Development Index (HDI) was 164 out of 187 countries (United Nations Development Programme 2011a). In the same vein, for three decades, Zambian families have consistently come under pressure from HIV and AIDS with 17.1 % of adults in Zambia reported to be living with HIV in 2008. Closely linked, half of the country's mortalities are attributable to the pandemic.

The country is also grappling with high levels of child and maternal mortality, the causes of which are preventable with low cost and effective interventions. Child protection services have also not been able to reverse the negative circumstances facing children in the country:

> Evidence of how the HIV and AIDS pandemic has hit hard on a population already highly vulnerable are the 1.2 million classified as orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC). As the parent generation has succumbed to HIV and AIDS children have often been left to the care of elderly grandmothers. To date, the response to these vulnerable children has struggled to keep up with the growing need for intervention. Deprivation is a characteristic of the lives of many of the country's children, living in homes where relentless poverty is the norm, often in communities far from any services, denied education and in situations where the concept of rights and protection from exploitation is little known or understood (United Nations Children's Fund 2008:1).

The circumstances facing women are equally precarious. With so many women working in the informal sector and continuing to face huge challenges in meeting their needs and those of their families, the family in Zambia remains extremely vulnerable. Since women are the cornerstones of the family, their continued marginalisation from the economic sphere has been translated into poor outcomes for families. Indeed, the Gender Inequality Index (GII) which reflects gender-based inequalities in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and economic activity paint a gloomy picture. Zambia has a GII value of 0.627, ranking it 131 out of 146 countries in the 2011 index. Furthermore, unemployment is still very high in Zambia despite the country's improved economic growth. In 2005 unemployment hovered around 15.5 % with 70 % of the unemployed residing in urban areas and 30 % in rural areas (Central Statistical Office 2006). Again, women are at a disadvantage when it comes to employment opportunities available in the country, particularly in the formal sector. For example, male employment is around 71 %, compared to 29 % for females (United Nations Development Programme 2011, b). In 2005, women constituted 34 % of wage employment with the majority concentrated in the informal sector where they earned two-fifths of men's incomes (Central Statistical Office 2006). Furthermore, average earnings in the agricultural informal sector, where women are most prominent, were only slightly above half of those of the informal sector as a whole (United Nations Development Programme/ Government Republic of Zambia 2011).

In the rural areas, 82 % of people depend on the informal sector, and 90 % of them are women (Central Statistical Office 2006). In addition, many of the informal activities in the urban settings are survivalist in nature and do not offer meaningful income returns. Most of the work is highly labour-intensive and physical without corresponding financial rewards. Other activities entail the sale of agricultural produce on the sidewalks in cities and towns, and petty trading in all sorts of merchandise and wares. In this light, the informal sector also precludes women from balancing their work with family life, and thus they end up going with their children to the various hazardous locations where they ply their trade. The current situation where informality is the main source of income for many families is perilous and not sustainable for the country.

The growth of the economy has also been accompanied by high incidences of poverty and income inequality. The most recent statistics on poverty are from 2006, and they show that:

There is a huge difference in the incidence of extreme poverty between urban and rural areas and that it varies widely from province to province. Extreme poverty is also strongly associated with a number of household characteristics, including gender, age and the educational level of the person heading the household. In 2006, extreme poverty stood at 57 % in female-headed households compared to 49 % for male-headed households. Households with older people were also more likely to be poor. Thus, 66 % of households headed by people above 60 years lived in extreme poverty compared to 50 % for households headed by those aged 30–59 years. Additionally, extreme poverty was influenced by education. It was highest in households with heads without education (77 %) (United Nations Development Programme/Government of the Republic of Zambia 2011:11).

Concomitantly, inequality in Zambia is very high. The Gini index, which measures income inequality, shows that while there was progress between 1991 and 1996, little changed between then and 2006. The index in fact shows that inequality deteriorated in urban areas, whereas it improved slightly in rural areas from 2004 to 2006 (United Nations Development Programme/Government of the Republic of Zambia 2011).

Development of Social Policy in Zambia

During the colonial period, Zambia's welfare regime was discriminatory, exclusionary and race-based in regard to access to life chances. As a result, colonial social policy was largely determined by the colonial mission; it took a residualist approach (Aina 2004; Mhone 2004; Noyoo 2010) and was also restrictive both socially and spatially. In many cases, as in various countries across Africa, social services were located only in urban areas or neighbourhoods where the colonisers were found in large numbers (Aina 2004).

By the same token, social policy in Zambia has not mirrored a transformative agenda in the decades following independence. For the most part, it has only been palliative and it was only in the decades of the 1960s and 1970s when it had come closer to being a transformative one (Noyoo 2013). During these past decades, social policy was also determined by collective interventions in the economy in order to influence the access to, and the incidence of, adequate and secure livelihoods and income (Mkandawire 2004). To this end, social policy in the country aimed at extending social service provision to those who had been neglected by colonialism. Consequently, there was heavy investment in education, health; in the promotion of social equity and narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor. The guiding principle for social policy formulation and implementation, as stated above, was the ideology of *Humanism* (Masiye et al. 1998), which recognised that production of the means of existence was the basis of human life and it was also connected with how the production was equitably distributed to the populace (Kandeke 1977).

In this regard, social policy in Zambia extended to subsidies in food; transport; price controls—especially of essential commodities; agriculture inputs like

fertiliser, pesticides and seeds; and infrastructure development, such as the building of clinics, schools, colleges and hospitals. Employment was also guaranteed for the vast majority of Zambians through a localisation process known as *Zambianisation*. This ambitious post-independence programme of social reconstruction and development was made possible by finances from the sale of the country's main export, copper (United Nations Development Programme 2003; Mhone 2004; Noyoo 2010). However, nationalisation and import substitution strategies proved very costly for the country as Zambia failed to diversify the economy from copper mining. Import substitution industries also turned out to be inefficient and uncompetitive due to high input costs, high monopoly prices, reliance on government subsidies, and lack of technological dynamism.

More tellingly, Anderson et al. (2000) opine that the transition from one of the richest countries in Africa to one of the poorest took less than a generation. After 1991, the country's economy was extensively liberalised with all its facets deregulated. One such example was the comprehensive privatisation programme which led to the sale, unbundling or even closure of parastatal organisations, many of which were loss making entities. This resulted in the shedding of hundreds of thousands of jobs, with many Zambians suddenly finding no forms of livelihood. In the said period, the state was also compelled to reform the public sector which led to further shedding of jobs through retrenchments and downsizing. At this juncture, the economy was in rapid decline and people had to find ways of sustaining themselves. In order to survive many gradually gravitated towards the informal sector and self-employment ventures. The collapse of formal sector employment also saw the demise of employment-related benefits such as pensions, allowances, medical insurance, among others. There was also a rise in unpredictability in people's lives as many did not have incomes on a regular basis.

Hence, since 1991 Zambia's social policy has been reactive to the country's economic policy which is mainly neo-liberal in content. When Zambians rejected socialism in 1991 the government began to strictly adhere to the economic austerity measures of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) referred to as the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). However, SAP's economic prescriptions had serious and negative ramifications for family life in Zambia. Due to this, a multiplicity of challenges emerged in the country primarily from the breakdown of families. For example, the divorce rates rose during the 1990s as job losses and chronic poverty severely undermined family life and severely strained families. The hardest hit was the middle-class which simply imploded with the economic meltdown and the SAP antidotes. This was due to the fact that many middle-class families had breadwinners who were employed by the public sector and the various parastatal organisations which became redundant after 1991.

Evolution of the Family in Zambia

In the pre-colonial period families in Zambia varied as the manner in which lineage was reckoned determined their roles and responsibilities. Where family ties were matrilineal (where emphasis is the mother's lineage as opposed to the father's), women had more say in family matters. A patrilineal family, on the other hand, drew its essence from the father's lineage and was actually patriarchal. Those that were bilateral could either tilt towards matrilineal or patrilineal lineages depending on the prevailing circumstances. This was how families were defined in pre-colonial Zambia in the different ethnic polities (Noyoo 2000).

Regardless of whether it was patrilineal, matrilineal, or bilateral, the idealised family by Zambian politicians in the post-colonial era was the extended family as it was seen as the "African" way of existence. In this family system children could be looked after by uncles, aunts, grandparents or relatives if they were orphaned. However, the realities of urbanisation and the changing family patterns, engendered by the urban setting, militated against this notion of the family. In most cases, due to the economic realities, a good number of families began to gravitate towards the Western nuclear form. By the mid-1980s, with the economic stagnation setting in, and few Zambians managing to make ends meet, many families could not afford to take on extra mouths to feed. This scenario is corroborated by studies whose findings have shown that poverty decreases the altruistic allocation of resources, or the ability and willingness of the family to satisfy the needs and preferences of its members (Zeitlin and Megawanji 1995). In this sense, the extended family system was beginning to be seen by ordinary Zambians as a burden that threatened the well-being of the immediate nuclear family.

The latter part of the 1980s and the onset of the 1990s were witnesses to a new phenomenon of child-headed families, primarily due to the onset of the HIV and AIDS pandemic and its devastating effects on the social fabric. Equally, there was an exponential increase in the numbers of street children in Zambia, a problem which has been compounded since then by HIV and AIDS and an inequitable economic system. Previously, these children were *on* the streets—whereby they would come and beg on the streets, but later return to some kind of family set-up. Gradually, the children would not return to any family at all and have now become *of* the streets and as such, are a permanent feature of the Zambian urban landscape. Thus, just as industrialisation shaped and moulded the family in Europe in the nineteenth century, colonial penetration and urbanisation equally impacted on the Zambian family set-up in the early and mid-twentieth century. In contemporary times new forces such as, globalisation, migrations, interethnic or interracial marriages, among others, have emerged and equally left their imprints on the family.

Despite the many challenges brought about by these new forces, the family in Zambia has in most cases benefited from policies that have been implemented in other areas and which have had unintended outcomes or impacts for families. Moreover, in the post-colonial era, social policy was driven from the premise that

the extended family was the pillar of family life. After independence, this understanding was cemented albeit unintentionally, as the extended family was idealised to the point of policy obfuscation. The post-colonial government had firmly believed that family life should be predicated on the traditional value system and then anchored in the extended family. This meant that the extended family took precedence over state provision in many family related matters. State policy seems to have been *pro-traditional*. For instance, the homes for the aged which were inherited from the colonial authorities were almost discontinued after independence because they were deemed as "European" or "Western" aberrations. The post-colonial government thought that it would gradually phase them out. For example, the ruling party's ideology of *Humanism* had discouraged institutional care and advocated for family and community care despite the prevailing material conditions which did not support this policy position. The country's Department of Social Welfare concedes:

> Although the department discourages institutional care of the aged persons in preference to family and community care, in line with the party and government policy, in practice it has been realised that due to factors such as urbanisation, childlessness and certain cultural taboos connected with aging, there will always be some aged persons for whom the only mode of care will be an institution (Department of Social Welfare 1979:6).

Interestingly, this was also the case during colonial rule as the British authorities had always believed that the extended family was the safety-net which was crucial to those Africans who were in need (Lewis 2000).

Policy Proposals and Future Prospects

Given the above-mentioned, this chapter calls for the development of a family policy in Zambia, the rationale for which stems from the gap of not having any policy in the country that directly focuses on the family—since Zambia's independence in 1964. In addition it is apparent that high numbers of Zambians, notably women and even children, are facing monumental social and economic challenges. Such a situation also poses serious threats to the quality of life of many citizens. The chapter's bone of contention is that Zambia's current formulation of social policy is inadvertently inimical to family life as it does not put forth programmes that embolden this institution, but seemingly allows its continued erosion through piece-meal actions.

In essence, current initiatives are not profound enough to dramatically reduce poverty and inequality in the country. This is because family life is rarely regarded as a development imperative by both politicians and policymakers. Indeed, people's ability to earn an income is a very important yardstick of human well-being and it also lends to a predictable measure of choice in regard to one's ability to purchase goods and services. Furthermore, the Sixth National Development Plan (SNDP) which was drafted by the MMD government only focuses on social

protection in its palliative and residual form, and does not stem from a developmental and transformative social policy perspective.

Another way in which the family's standing is jeopardised in Zambia is through the outcomes and impacts of the inequitable economic system which is skewed in the favour of a small elite class. As Zambia continues to adhere to the neo-liberal tenets which gained currency in the 1990s, after the demise of socialism in the said period, the country's social policy is also cast in the same neo-liberal mould. Therefore, a progressive family policy which would duly consider labour-market variables and other economic factors in efforts to raise the living standards of Zambian families may be helpful.

Also given trends discussed in this chapter it is evident that Zambia needs a family perspective in policymaking. If better outcomes and impacts are to be attained in social and human development pursuits, families must be strengthened through a progressive and forward-looking family policy. Such a stance would acknowledge the important role that the family can play in a broad range of policy issues. Indeed, a family perspective in policymaking analyses the consequences of any policy or programme, regardless of whether it is explicitly aimed at families, for its impact on family well-being such as family stability, family relationships and the ability of the family to carry out its responsibilities (Bogenschneider 2006). This would require an integrated, holistic approach to family policy hinging on a better co-ordination and collaboration among all stakeholders, including the state, civil society organisations, and the private sector. In addition, families would need to have a stake in this process and empowered to participate actively in formulating and assessing family policy. Therefore, the country's family policy would have to be embedded in human dignity and uphold the rights of every individual in the family; be gender-sensitive, and observe the rights of children, older persons and persons with disabilities (United Nations 2009).

The first thrust of a family policy in Zambia would therefore have to be firmly placed on the base of mass employment for family strengthening. This is the surest way of redistributing the country's wealth to Zambians as well as enabling the state to mop up valuable tax revenues which could then be used for further social investments, for example, universal and high quality education and healthcare; high quality Early Childhood Development (ECD) services; and benefits for working mothers such as child allowances and a comprehensive maternity leave package. The following could be some of the pillars of such a policy:

- *Employment creation.* It is important for the state to generate employment opportunities in the country so that families can effectively meet their needs. Women must deliberately be targeted in such endeavours. But the jobs that are created must also be decent in the manner in which they enable Zambians to access benefits and other services, which then translate into viable, functional and economically stable families.

- *Improvement of informal sector conditions.* Since the evidence shows that the largest number of people who participate in the agricultural sector, on an informal basis are women, specific targeting of this group through: financial or

micro lending schemes, agricultural extension services and skills training could be prioritised by the government.

- *Tax rebates for Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives.* Tax breaks for mining conglomerates that are churning out enormous profits in the country could be made available by the government or to any other private firms in the manufacturing or tourism sectors, which are willing to engage in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to improve the social and economic situation of some of the most vulnerable members of society and families.

- *Addressing harmful traditional practices.* An example of such a practice that undermines families is what may be termed as misplaced traditionalism whereby widows from certain ethnic groups fall victim to unscrupulous relatives of the deceased who come to "claim" their property even before burial. This phenomenon known as "property grabbing" continues despite legislation that was promulgated to safeguard widows in the 1990s and, in most cases, leaves families destitute after the head has passed on. There are also other traditions which undermine families that the family policy, in conjunction with other pieces of legislation, could counteract by, for instance, overhauling existing legislation which does not reflect twenty-first century realities or is not at par with international standards.

All the foregoing would need to be interwoven with a family strengthening framework which is a comprehensive approach that aims to improve health, social, educational and economic outcomes for entire families and not just individuals. It also takes place in organisations that are grounded in a specific neighbourhood and often employ people who live in the community. Sometimes called family support, family strengthening practice is committed to developing the integrity of families within the context of their beliefs, values, customs and culture. Reciprocity is encouraged to create bonds between the organisation and families through the process of giving and receiving (California Family Resource Association 2007).

The strengthening of families is based on *family economic success* which focuses on helping individuals improve self-sufficiency through expanded opportunities to work, earn a living wage that provides for the basic needs of the family and build assets that grow the family over time, such as home ownership and retirement accounts; *family support systems* which stress on building appropriate and adequate systems of support for healthy family development that encompasses: health care, child care, education, and other essential components of strong families (National Human Services Assembly 2004). Lastly family strengthening is predicated on: *thriving and nurturing communities* and emphasises on building a nurturing and supportive environment in which healthy families pursue long-term goals crucial for sustainable family development. Essential components for family success also include access to affordable housing, strong neighbourhood institutions, safe streets, supportive social networks, and an environment that promotes communities and strengthens bonds between families (National Human Services Assembly 2004).

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