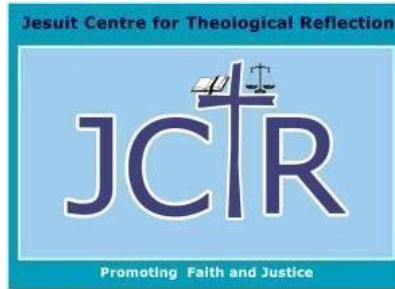


Implementation of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF):

A Religious Perspective

John Kunda Sauti



Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR)

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**The Implementation of the Constituency Development Fund
(CDF) from a Religious Perspective**

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Presented By

John Kunda Sauti (JCTR Programme Officer)

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Introduction

On 05th December 2023, JCTR received an invitation letter from the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) to make a presentation on the implementation of CDF from a religious perspective. The letter guided that the presentation needed to focus on positives, challenges and recommendations.

Human dignity is the epitome of all developmental discourse in societies. From the book of Genesis (Gn 1:27 – We learn that God created mankind in his image). It is this inherent image of God in each person that we derive our human dignity. Therefore, the end of development is to promote human dignity for all. Drawing insights from a Pope’s encyclical called “Popularum Progressio” (on the development of peoples) which was published on 26 March 1967, we learn that Development, the New Name for Peace.¹

“The progressive development of peoples is an object of deep interest and concern to the Church. This is particularly true in the case of those peoples who are trying to escape the ravages of hunger, poverty, endemic disease and ignorance; of those who are seeking a larger share in the benefits of civilization and a more active improvement of their human qualities; of those who are consciously striving for fuller growth”.²

“(64) When we fight 13 poverty and oppose the unfair conditions of the present, we are not just promoting human well-being; we are also furthering human's spiritual and moral development, and hence we are benefiting the whole human race. For peace is not simply the absence of warfare, based on a precarious balance of power; it is fashioned by efforts directed day after day toward the establishment of the ordered universe willed by God, with a more perfect form of justice among people”.³⁴

The objective of Constituency Development Fund (CDF) which is to alleviate poverty and foster community development.⁴ This objective of CDF resonates with the religious perspective on promoting human dignity through development.

“Today we see people trying to secure a sure food supply, cures for diseases, and steady employment. We see them trying to eliminate every ill, to remove every obstacle which offends a person's dignity. They are continually striving to exercise greater personal responsibility; to do more, learn more, and have more so that they might increase their personal worth. And yet, at the same time, a large number of them live amid conditions which frustrate these legitimate desires”⁵

The Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) is informed and inspired by the Catholic Social Teaching (CST). In one of the encyclicals called *Centesimus Annus* published on 01st

¹ Popularum Progressio. Pope Paul VI. 1967. Number 76

² Popularum Progressio. Pope Paul VI. 1967. Number 1

³ Popularum Progressio. Pope Paul VI. 1967. Number 76

⁴ CDF guidelines. Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development

⁵ Popularum Progressio. Pope Paul VI. 1967. Number 6

May 1991, the principle of subsidiarity is expounded. The principle of subsidiarity states that powers and responsibilities must be shared among different levels of governance. This entails that even the smallest unit like a community must have a special role in the place of governance. In the context of CDF, the principle of subsidiarity manifests as we see community members participating through project selection in the implementation of CDF. Additionally, the principle of subsidiarity permeates through the 2023 revised national decentralization policy. From *Centesimus Annus*, the Catholic Church shares the following about the principle of subsidiarity:

“In recent years the range of such intervention has vastly expanded, to the point of creating a new 38 type of State, the so-called “Welfare State”. This has happened in some countries in order to respond better to many needs and demands, by remedying forms of poverty and deprivation unworthy of the human person. However, excesses and abuses, especially in recent years, have provoked very harsh criticisms of the Welfare State, dubbed the “Social Assistance State”. Malfunctions and defects in the Social Assistance State are the result of an inadequate understanding of the tasks proper to the State. Here again the principle of subsidiarity must be respected: a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good”⁶

Furthermore, the encyclical emphasizes that people closest to their problems must take serious interest and care.

By intervening directly and depriving society of its responsibility, the Social Assistance State leads to a loss of human energies and an inordinate increase of public agencies, which are dominated more by bureaucratic ways of thinking than by concern for serving their clients, and which are accompanied by an enormous increase in spending. In fact, it would appear that needs are best understood and satisfied by people who are closest to them and who act as neighbours to those in need. It should be added that certain kinds of demands often call for a response which is not simply material but which is capable of perceiving the deeper human need. One thinks of the condition of refugees, immigrants, the elderly, the sick, and all those in circumstances which call for assistance, such as drug abusers: all these people can be helped effectively only by those who offer them genuine fraternal support, in addition to the necessary care”⁷

In the same line of thought, JCTR believes CDF is an avenue for actualizing the principle of subsidiarity. This is because, CDF gives the opportunity to community members to find local solutions to their local problems.

⁶ John Paul II. *Centesimus Annus*. 1991. Number 48

⁷ John Paul II. *Centesimus Annus*. 1991. Number 48

Therefore, from a religious point of view (Christian religion), CDF is there to ensure that human dignity, common good and subsidiarity are promoted.

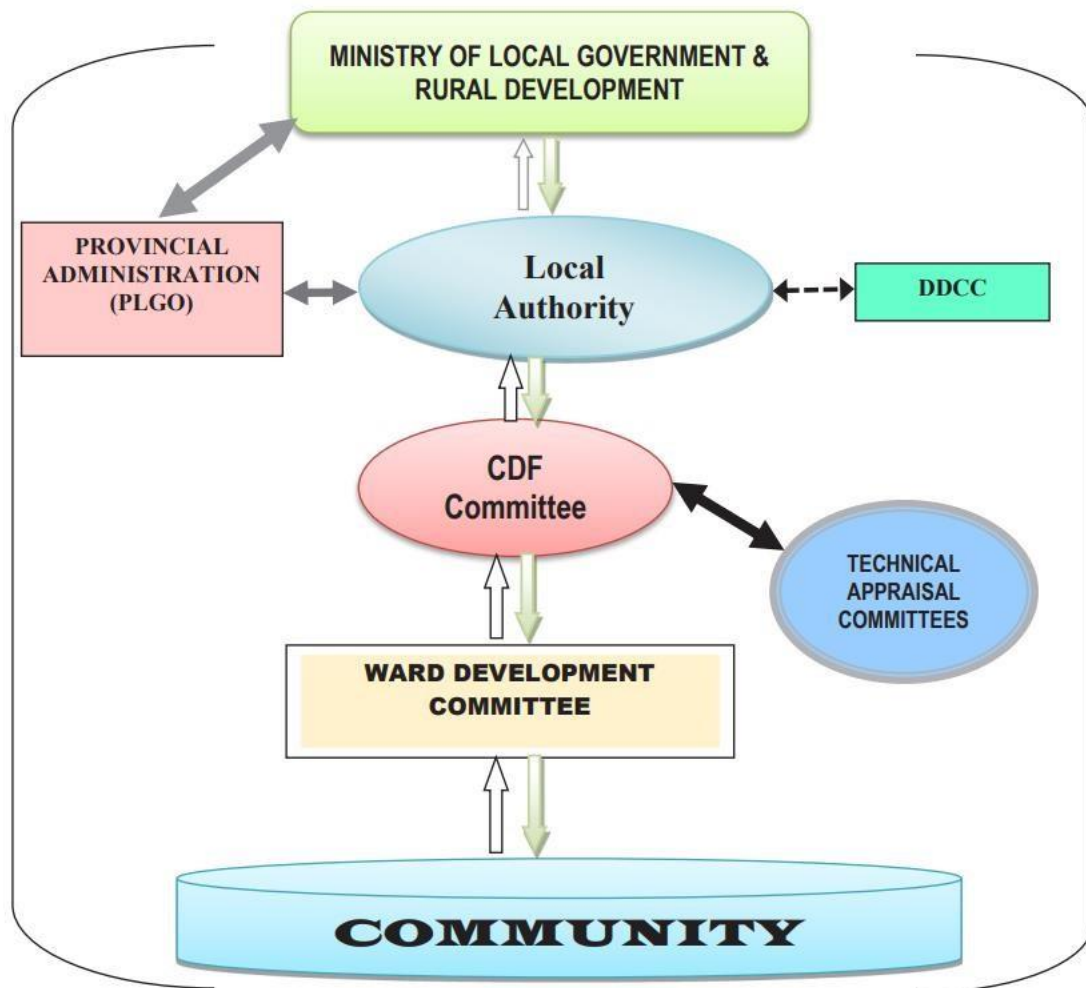


Figure 1: Sourced from the 2022 CDF guidelines

The above information flow chart shows the implementation structure of CDF in constituencies. The full implementation of the above information flow chart will make CDF transparent, accountable, full of community participation and social inclusion. These will lead to CDF promoting human dignity, common good and subsidiarity (responsibility being given to lowest structures).

Positives and Benefits of Constituency Development Fund (CDF)

Ever since CDF was established in 1995, it recorded numerous positives and benefits for the community members. Some of the positives include:

1. Promoting accessibility to Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR)

The hallmark of CDF is to alleviate community poverty. Similarly, the foundation of ESCR is to promote world peace and justice. Now, the concept of peace in this context traverses the confines

of understanding peace as the absence of war. Why? This is because, you can have a situation where there is no war, but people are struggling to access basic services like education, health, clean environment, water and sanitation and they would be wallowing in poverty etc. Some schools of thought understand ESCR as positive rights. Primarily because they give responsibility to the Government to provide. This, then seamlessly fits into the CDF implementation because CDF is an avenue for the Government to progressively realise ESCR. Further, CDF is connected to support the quality of social service provision like education, sanitation, water, health etc. It is through such facilities that people enjoy the ESCR. And that is why, when JCTR conducts social accountability in the implementation of CDF, they are implicitly asking themselves, “Is CDF helping the progressive realisation of ESCR?” In social accountability JCTR looks at the quality of service provision as well as building capacities of community members to hold duty bearers accountable in the utilisation of public resources.

Through CDF, community members’ accessibility to health, education and water and sanitation has improved. In some communities JCTR works/has worked, we have witnessed construction of laboratories, classroom blocks, procurement of desks, water reticulation systems teacher/nurse houses, ablutions, upgrading of roads etc. This is a positive from CDF since its establishment and the hope is that the enhanced CDF will scale up access to ESCR.

2. Enhancing economic emancipation of women, youth and community members

The enhanced Constituency Development Fund (CDF) as guided by the 2022 CDF guidelines has a scope on empowerment.⁸ Through this scope, some community cooperatives who have accessed the funds have economically emancipated themselves. This is being done through projects like poultry, gardening, farming etc. This in turn is increase the household income. This is a positive of CDF because it is reducing community poverty, vices. This initiative must be enhanced.

3. Enhancing social service delivery

Through CDF, we have witnessed some improvements in the quality of the social service delivery (education, health and water and sanitation). CDF has been instrument in improving social service delivery through road constructions, houses for teachers and nurses as well as taking social services closer to the people.

4. Enhancing infrastructure development at Local Level

Through CDF implementation, we have witnessed community infrastructure development like bridges, schools, health facilities, markets, roads etc. This is positive because the completion of these projects have helped uplift the dignity of the people in the communities. In some communities, women have dissent health maternity services, in some other cases children do not have to walk longer distances to access education.

5. Allowing community members to participate in the project selection process

Through the CDF guidelines and the aspirations of the 2023 National Decentralization policy, it is evident that people (community members or citizens) must be protagonists of their development. This is being done through community members participating in the selection of projects. This is

⁸ 2022 CDF guidelines. MLGRD. Lusaka. page

positive because it aids in community members identifying local solutions to their local problems. Furthermore, this enhances community ownership and stewardship of community projects.

6. Enshrining CDF in the Constitution and other pieces of legislation

The Constituency Development Fund (CDF) is enshrined in article 162 of the Constitution of Zambia (2016 amendment). Furthermore, there are other subsidiary laws like the Constituency Development Fund Act No. 11 of 2018 which facilitate the implementation of CDF. By having a legal and legislative framework for CDF, it creates an avenue for standardization, as well as promoting accountability and transparency.

7. Ward Development Committees as the entry point to CDF

The implementation of CDF through instructing WDCs to mobilise community members and select community projects is positive. This is because, it gives an opportunity for WDCs and community members to provide oversight on the implementation of CDF in their communities. If well executed, this would be a robust mechanism for providing monitoring at ward level as guided by the 2022 CDF guidelines.

8. Delegating the Provincial Administrators to be approving CDF projects

This is positive because it has reduced the time it would take to approve CDF projects by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. Going forward, it would be ideal to further delegate the approving authority to the districts. This would greatly improve the time it takes to approve and implement CDF projects.

9. Consistently budgeting for CDF

In the recent past, the Government has consistently budgeted for the CDF allocations per constituency. This is positive because Local Authorities, Community members and WDCs can adequately plan using CDF.

10. Local Authorities prioritizing community projects that started as community led projects

In some constituencies where JCTR is operating, there are projects that started as community initiatives. For example, the community in Kandabwe (Nkana Constituency) started constructing a 1x3 classroom block. However, the constituency picked up the project for completion as well as supplying 60 3-seater desks. This is positive because it gives an opportunity for continuation and completion of community projects (prioritization).

Challenges and Recommendations

This section presents both challenges and recommendations. Furthermore, the section presents who can take the task in order to enhance CDF implementation by Local Authorities. Below is the table detailing the challenges, recommendations and responsibilities:

CHALLENGE	RECOMMENDATION/ ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY
Lack of financial and adequate administrative support to WDCs	Provide transport or financial support for transport and refreshments	Local Authorities and MLGRD to ensure this through the CDF guidelines
WDCs not attending meetings where contractors who to undertake community projects applied are announced	Mandate WDCs to attend meetings where contractors who applied are announced (Local Authorities must provide means for the WDCs to attend meetings).	MLGRD to provide for this in the CDF guidelines
Low approvals rates for the community projects in both WDC and the CDFC	Increase civic education and awareness on CDF including developing IEC materials. This will enhance the quality of proposals and applications submitted.	MLGRD to provide a % allocation in the 5% admin cost that must be allocated to awareness raising activities.
Community members belonging to multiple cooperatives or applying to multiple constituencies	Develop a database	MLGRD to create data base on beneficiaries. MLGRD to provide guidance in the CDF guidelines on beneficiaries belonging to multiple groups
Low accessibility of CDF loans and grants among women and youth in rural communities	Simplify the CDF application forms	MLGRD, Non-State Actors etc.
Procurement challenges and delays	Local Authorities to internalize the ZPPA	Local Authorities
Limited capacities of WDCs to effectively monitor community projects	Build capacities of WDCs in monitoring community projects and producing timely reports (Trainings)	Local Authorities and non-state actors (CSOs etc.)

Weak Monitoring and Evaluation systems	Develop M&E Systems for each Constituency to govern the implementation of CDF	Constituency Office, MLGRD and Local Authorities
Not aligning CDF projects to Integrated Development Plans	Popularize IDPs to WDCs and community members	Local Authorities

WDCs and community members not monitoring CDF projects (due to lack of information on projects and administrative support)	Administrative support WDCs and Community members to monitor CDF projects in their wards	Local Authorities
Cooperatives and clubs disintegrating after receiving funds	Conduct due diligence before approving cooperatives and clubs. Consider relocating this scope to Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprise or MoUs	Local Authorities
Local Authorities struggling to monitor those benefiting from scope 3 (skills development and bursaries)	Local Authorities to create an inter-district collaboration to ensure learners are in schools. Consider relocating this scope to Ministry of Education, or developing MoUs	Local Authorities
Delays in commencing implementation of CDF projects	Local Authorities concluding paper work on time	Local Authorities
Local Authorities cutting budgets for applied projects by cooperatives and clubs (leading to change of projects)	Adequately engage cooperatives and clubs whenever there is a budget cut	Local Authorities
WDCs not producing monthly reports	Build capacities of WDCs on report production Develop a reporting template	MLGRD and Local Authorities

Poor quality of community projects	Continuously monitor implementation of community projects	Local Authorities, WDCs and Community members
Management of Local contractors undertaking CDF projects	Conduct due diligence and serious adherence to ZPPA	Local Authorities and MLGRD

Local Authorities struggling to produce CDF quarterly, biannual and annual progress reports.	Employ more staff at the Local Authorities to manage CDF projects. MLGRD demanding for reports before disbursing resources	MLGRD to employ more staff at Local Authority (those managing the implementation of CDF).
Reports on decisions made on CDF after monitoring not being shared with community members	Simplify reports by producing abridged versions and translation to local dialect	Local Authorities
No deliberate platforms for Local Authorities to provide feedback to WDCs.	Create dialogue platforms between WDCs and Local Authorities to give feedback on rejected proposals	MLGRD to provide for guidance on WDCs and Local Authorities meeting (at least quarterly).
Low accountability perception on CDF among community members, leading to distrust of the CDF processes	Disseminate information to community members on the CDF progress (monitoring reports) and conduct robust civic education	Local Authorities
Limited information about CDF information among community members	Increase CDF advertisement (radio, posters and announcements)	MLGRD to provide guidance on % allocation from the 5% admin cost to be allocated to advertisement.
Delays in disbursements	Local Authorities to ensure the reports and requests are on time	Local Authorities
Numerous executive directives, leaving little room for approving community selected projects	Limit CDF budget ceiling for the executive directives.	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development to put a ceiling on the Executive directives per CDF budgetary allocation

Political influence in community project selection processes	Revise the CDF Act on the composition of CDFC	Ministry of Local Government, Non-State actors and the legislature (NAZ) to ensure the scope of the CDFC is expanded
Lack of financial motivation for the WDCs to meet their mandate	Revise the LG Act No 2 of 2019 on the WDC role being voluntarily	National Assembly of Zambia, and MLGRD to ensure WDCs are financially incentivized.
Low participation by marginalised groups (people living with disabilities)	Develop deliberate interventions for the marginalised groups to participate (even in CDFCs)	Local Authorities and MLGRD to ensure social inclusion to enhance participation of people living with disabilities.

CDF opportunities identified by JCTR

Even though CDF has numerous challenges, there are many opportunities to make CDF effective. Some of the opportunities include:

- ❖ **Funds already budgeted for CDF:** Knowing that CDF has been budgeted for and that the Ministry of Finance and National Planning has disbursed the allocations, it is a great opportunity for Non-State actors to push for disbursements from the Ministry (MLGRD) to the Local Authorities.
- ❖ **Availability of CDFCs:** In almost all constituencies, there were functioning CDFCs with full members and willing to share information on CDF implementation.
- ❖ **Willingness of WDCs to execute their mandate:** Many WDCs are willing to carry out their mandate as guided by the Local Government Act No. 2 of 2019. In the constituencies that JCTR visited, WDCs were willing to carry out their mandate.
- ❖ **Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development:** The MLGRD has in place 2022 CDF guidelines governing the implementation of CDF in Zambia. The guidelines provide for standardization, benchmarks and procedures for the implementation of CDF in Zambia.
- ❖ **Legal and Legislative framework:** The Constitution of Zambia has established CDF in article 162 and further, 163 has established the Local Government Systems which fall under the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development to implement CDF and other functions (WDCs, CDFCs etc). Also, there are subsidiary pieces of legislation like the Constituency Development Fund Act No 11 of 2018 and the Local Government Act **No. 2 of 2019**.
- ❖ **On-going projects:** JCTR found numerous community projects under implementation (some completed this year, while others earmarked to be completed next year). This presents an opportunity for JCTR to substantially engage implementers as well as the beneficiaries (communities).

- ❖ **The revised 2023 National Decentralization Policy:** there is a revised 2023 National Decentralization policy that present the opportunity for further decentralization of CDF implementation.
- ❖ **Generosity of Constituency Offices:** The Constituency Offices have always warmly welcomed JCTR and showed keen interest to support JCTR by participating on their platforms.



Figure 2: Showing different voices on CDF

Conclusion

The implementation of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) is aimed at uplifting the living standards and conditions of community members through poverty alleviation and community development. This is because development is the new name for peace. Interestingly, community members are both the intended/target beneficiaries and custodians of CDF. Therefore, CDF resonates with the Christian principles of common good, subsidiarity and human dignity. Over the years, the implementation of CDF has recorded numerous positives and benefits to the community members. One of the epic positive is the enhancement in accessing economic, social and cultural rights (education, health, water and sanitation etc.). Even though CDF has scored numerous positives, there are still some challenges that stakeholders responsible must consider to address. In this presentation, the challenges have been shared in the context of transparency, accountability, community participation and social inclusion in the implementation of CDF. Evidently, the actualization of the below information chart will make CDF transparent, accountable, community participation, social inclusion. This will lead to CDF promoting subsidiarity, common good and human dignity.

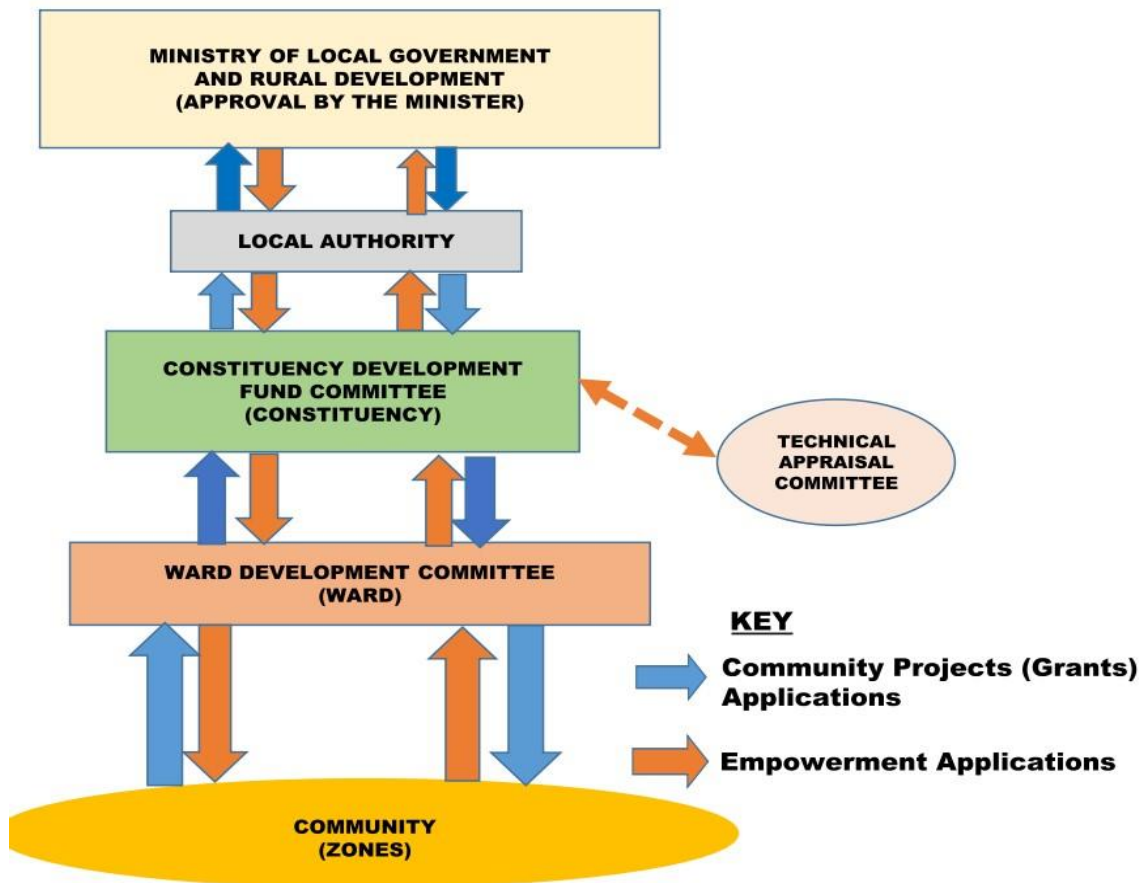


Figure 3: sourced from the 2022 CDF guidelines