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Assessing the Effectiveness of Constituency Development Fund (CDF) Initiatives in Alleviating Poverty: A Case Study in Katondo Ward, Kabwe Central Constituency, Zambia

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Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of Constituency Development Fund (CDF) initiatives in alleviating poverty. A case study of Katondo ward, Zambia. The research is aimed at evaluating how CDF-funded projects contribute to improving livelihoods, access to basic services (social services) as well as community development. A mixed-methods approach was employed combining questionnaires, interviews, and field observations to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from residents, community leaders, and government officials. Findings indicate that CDF initiatives have led to improvements in many social services such as infrastructure, education, and small-scale economic activities. Challenges such as inadequate funding, delayed disbursement, limited community participation, and poor monitoring mechanisms hinder their full impact. The study concludes that CDF has potential because it is a poverty reduction tool complemented by transparent management, enhanced stakeholder engagement, and consistent project evaluation. Recommendations such as strengthening participatory planning, ensuring timely release of funds, and implementing robust monitoring systems to maximize developmental outcomes in Katondo ward of Kabwe Township.

Keywords: Ward Development Committees, Constituency Development Fund (CDF), Community Participation Response, and Kabwe District

1. Introduction

This study focuses on assessing the effectiveness of Constituency Development Fund (CDF) initiatives in alleviating poverty within Katondo Ward, Kabwe Central Constituency, Zambia. The CDF represents a key decentralized financing mechanism aimed at promoting grassroots development by empowering local communities to identify and implement priority projects. Despite increased funding allocations and broadened project scopes under recent government reforms, concerns remain regarding the actual impact of these interventions on poverty reduction, particularly at the local level. The Constituency Development Fund (CDF) has emerged as a pivotal tool in Zambia's efforts to address localized socioeconomic challenges and promote grassroots development. In Katondo Ward, situated within Kabwe Central Constituency, persistent poverty remains a critical concern, despite the implementation of various CDF-funded projects.

1.1 Background

The Constituency Development Fund (CDF) is a decentralized financing mechanism aimed at promoting grassroots development and improving service delivery in Zambia. It was introduced in 1995 to provide constituencies with financial resources to implement small-scale, community-driven projects targeting local needs (Transparency International Zambia, 2022). Its design was influenced by the broader goals of decentralization, which seek to bring decision-making closer to the people, enhance local accountability, and enable community participation in prioritizing and implementing development initiatives (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 2023). The CDF has since evolved from a relatively small and politically controlled allocation to a more structured and legislatively guided fund, particularly after reforms under the "New Dawn" government, which significantly expanded its scope and budgetary allocation (International Growth Centre,

2024). However, despite the fiscal expansion, several challenges have been identified in translating increased CDF resources into tangible and sustainable poverty reduction. Auditor General reports and civil society monitoring highlight persistent low absorption rates, especially in the early years of the increased allocations only 19% in 2022 largely attributed to delays in project approval, cumbersome procurement procedures, and limited technical capacity within local authorities to manage and supervise projects effectively (Presidential Delivery Unit, 2024; Transparency International Zambia, 2025). Ultimately, such research contributes to improving the design and operationalization of decentralized funds, helping to ensure that increased fiscal allocations result in real, measurable poverty reduction at the grassroots level. This is especially important in contexts like Katondo Ward, where socio-economic vulnerabilities remain high, and effective local governance can make a tangible difference in people's quality of life.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Despite the significant increase in Constituency Development Fund (CDF) allocations under the "New Dawn" government, which aims to enhance grassroots development and alleviate poverty, there remain persistent concerns about the actual impact of these initiatives on local communities. In Katondo Ward, although several projects have been implemented ranging from road rehabilitation to borehole drilling and youth empowerment there is limited empirical evidence on whether these interventions have effectively translated into sustainable poverty reduction. Challenges such as low fund absorption rates, weak community participation, political interference, inadequate maintenance of infrastructure, and limited monitoring have been reported in various constituencies, raising questions about the governance and operational effectiveness of the CDF (Presidential Delivery Unit, 2024; Transparency International Zambia, 2025).

Specifically, in Katondo Ward, anecdotal reports indicate that some CDF-funded projects suffer from poor sustainability, lack of community ownership, and insufficient follow-up support, which may limit their long-term benefits for poverty alleviation. However, systematic assessment of the extent to which these challenges affect the fund's poverty reduction outcomes is lacking. This gap hampers evidence-based decision-making and the formulation of targeted interventions to improve CDF performance in the ward and beyond. Therefore, this study seeks to critically assess the effectiveness of CDF initiatives in Katondo Ward in addressing poverty, focusing on project implementation, community engagement, sustainability of benefits, and governance mechanisms.

1.3 Objectives

The general objective of this research study was to empirically an assessing the effectiveness of Constituency Development Fund (CDF) initiatives in alleviating poverty within Katondo Ward, Kabwe Central Constituency, Zambia. Specific Objectives of the Study include the following: To identify the institutional mechanisms adopted in the implementation of CDF initiatives in Katondo ward,to assess the effectiveness of the CDF mechanisms in addressing poverty reduction among residents of Katondo ward and To examine the key challenges hindering the optimal implementation and impact of CDF projects in Katondo ward.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

Decentralization Theory

Decentralization Theory posits that transferring authority and resources from central governments to local institutions enhances efficiency, accountability, and responsiveness in public service delivery (Rondinelli, 1981). This transfer of power is based on the premise that decentralized governance structures are closer to the beneficiaries and therefore better positioned to understand and respond to the unique socio-economic and cultural contexts of local communities. By devolving decision-making and financial control, decentralization aims to reduce bureaucratic delays, improve transparency, and foster greater community participation in development processes (Agrawal & Ribot, 1999) [2]. In the context of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), decentralization is operationalized by allocating financial resources directly to constituencies, thereby empowering local actors such as Ward Development Committees (WDCs) and Constituency Development Committees (CDCs) to identify, plan, and implement development projects (Smoke, 2015). This framework is intended to enhance project relevance by aligning interventions with locally identified priorities, promote timely execution by reducing administrative bottlenecks, and foster ownership and sustainability through active community involvement. Moreover, decentralization theoretically facilitates accountability by bringing governance closer to the people, enabling constituents to monitor project implementation and demand transparency from their representatives (Faguet, 2014). This proximity can also encourage Innovation and adaptation in development approaches, as local institutions are able to tailor solutions to specific challenges faced by their communities.

However, decentralization is not without its challenges. The effective functioning of decentralized systems depends heavily on the capacity of local institutions to manage resources, implement projects, and maintain oversight (Ribot, 2002). In many contexts, including Zambia, issues such as limited technical expertise, inadequate financial management skills, and weak institutional structures can impede the effectiveness of decentralized funds like the CDF. Additionally, decentralization can lead to elite capture, where local political and economic elites manipulate resources for personal gain or to entrench their power, thereby marginalizing vulnerable groups and undermining equitable development outcomes (Smoke, 2015; Manor, 1999).

1.5 Literature Review

Decentralized development funds like the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) operate within institutional frameworks designed to enable local participation, transparency, and accountability in resource management. Globally, institutional mechanisms often involve local committees, legal frameworks, and monitoring structures that govern fund allocation and project execution (Smoke, 2015). For instance, in countries like India and Brazil, decentralized development initiatives depend on Panchayat Raj institutions and participatory budgeting mechanisms, respectively, which empower local actors through legislated

mandates and structured community engagement (World Bank, 2013; Shah, 2007). These institutional designs typically emphasize multi-stakeholder committees, including elected representatives, civil society, and technical experts, to oversee project identification, approval, and monitoring (Crook & Sverrisson, 2001) [10].

Such institutional arrangements are critical in ensuring that development funds are not only allocated efficiently but also that they address the diverse needs of communities. For example, India's Panchayati Raj system provides a constitutional framework that mandates decentralized decision-making through elected village councils, which are responsible for planning and executing development projects (Mathew, 1994). This framework institutionalizes accountability through periodic elections and audit mechanisms, fostering community ownership and responsiveness to local needs (Jha & Rao, 2015). Similarly, Brazil's participatory budgeting, first pioneered in Porto Alegre, allows citizens to directly influence municipal budgets and project priorities through organized neighborhood assemblies and budget councils, enhancing transparency and reducing corruption (Wampler, 2012).

Empirical studies reveal that while these institutional mechanisms provide a formal structure for decentralized development, their effectiveness varies considerably across constituencies and wards. Banda and Mwale (2020) [3] highlight that in some Zambian wards, Ward Development Committees (WDCs) and Constituency Development Committees (CDCs) suffer from insufficient training and limited access to resources, which significantly constrains their ability to engage communities meaningfully or uphold standards of transparency and accountability. This capacity deficit often results in inadequate project planning, weak monitoring, and limited community feedback mechanisms, thereby reducing the overall impact of CDF-funded initiatives.

Moreover, successful institutional mechanisms often include capacity-building programs for local actors, transparent information systems for financial and project reporting, and legal provisions that protect against elite capture and corruption (Smoke, 2015). Monitoring and evaluation units play a pivotal role in providing ongoing oversight, enabling adaptive management to correct implementation challenges in real time (Mansuri & Rao, 2013). Additionally, effective grievance redress mechanisms empower citizens to hold local officials accountable, thereby strengthening the overall governance of decentralized funds (Fox, 2015).

The institutional framework also includes the introduction of formal guidelines and operational manuals, such as the 2022 CDF Guidelines, which specify the roles and responsibilities of CDCs and WDCs, procedures for community consultations, and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation (Presidential Delivery Unit, 2024). These guidelines emphasize participatory approaches to ensure that funded projects reflect genuine community needs and priorities, thereby enhancing the relevance and impact of development interventions.

Despite these strengths, many decentralized funds face challenges related to overlapping mandates between local institutions, inconsistent policy enforcement, and socio-political dynamics that can limit the inclusivity and equity of project benefits (Ribot, 2002). Therefore, the design and functioning of institutional mechanisms must be context-specific and continuously refined to balance efficiency, equity, and sustainability objectives (Crook & Manor, 1998).

However, challenges such as overlapping mandates, lack of capacity, and political interference often undermine the efficacy of institutional mechanisms, highlighting the importance of strong legal backing, capacity building, and community empowerment to ensure effective decentralized governance (Agrawal & Ribot, 1999 [2]; Mansuri & Rao, 2013). Overlapping mandates frequently create confusion and conflict among various local institutions, leading to duplication of efforts, inefficient use of resources, and gaps in accountability (Ribot, 2002). For instance, when different committees or government departments hold conflicting authority over the same projects, decision-making slows down, and project implementation suffers.

Decentralized development funds, such as Zambia's Constituency Development Fund (CDF), are globally recognized for promoting local development and poverty alleviation. In India, the Panchayati Raj system facilitates local governance through elected bodies at the village, intermediate, and district levels, enabling community participation in decision-making processes (Shah, 2007). Similarly, Brazil's participatory budgeting approach allows citizens to directly influence municipal budget allocations, fostering transparency and accountability in public spending (World Bank, 2013). However, the effectiveness of these funds is contingent upon robust institutional frameworks. Crook and Sverrisson (2001) [10] argue that multi-stakeholder committees, including elected representatives, civil society, and technical experts, are essential for overseeing project identification, approval, and monitoring. Despite these advantages, challenges such as overlapping mandates, lack of capacity, and political interference often undermine the efficacy of institutional mechanisms, highlighting the importance of strong legal backing, capacity building, and community empowerment to ensure effective decentralized governance (Agrawal & Ribot, 1999 [2]; Mansuri & Rao, 2013). Decentralized development funds, such as the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) in Zambia, are globally recognized as essential mechanisms for promoting local development and poverty alleviation. These funds aim to transfer financial resources and decision-making authority closer to communities, allowing for more responsive and context-specific interventions (Smoke, 2015). By empowering local actors, these mechanisms can improve the targeting of development projects, enhance transparency, and foster greater community ownership, which are critical factors in achieving sustainable poverty reduction.

In India, the Panchayati Raj system exemplifies a comprehensive decentralization model, institutionalizing elected bodies at the village (Gram Panchayat), intermediate (Panchayat Samiti), and district (Zila Parishad) levels. This multi-tier governance structure facilitates extensive community participation in planning and implementing development activities, including poverty alleviation programs such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) (Shah, 2007). The Panchayati Raj system's decentralized approach has been credited with improving service delivery outcomes in rural areas, particularly by enabling marginalized groups to have a voice in local governance.

Similarly, Brazil's participatory budgeting process, pioneered in Porto Alegre, allows citizens to directly engage

in the allocation of municipal budgets. This mechanism promotes transparency and accountability by involving community members in deliberations on resource distribution, ensuring that funds address pressing local needs such as sanitation, education, and housing (World Bank, 2013). Participatory budgeting has been linked to improved public service delivery and a reduction in poverty rates in several Brazilian municipalities, demonstrating the potential of decentralized funds when coupled with robust citizen engagement. However, despite these successes, the global literature also underscores that the effectiveness of decentralized funds depends heavily on the strength of local institutions, capacity of stakeholders, and the broader political and administrative context (Mansuri & Rao, 2013). Challenges such as elite capture, weak financial management, and limited technical expertise often undermine the potential benefits of decentralization (Agrawal & Ribot, 1999) [2]. Therefore, while decentralized development funds offer a promising framework for poverty alleviation, their design and implementation must incorporate mechanisms to mitigate these risks and enhance local governance capacities.

However, the effectiveness of decentralized development funds is heavily contingent upon the presence of robust and well-functioning institutional frameworks. Crook and Sverrisson (2001) [10] emphasize that multi-stakeholder committees comprising elected representatives, civil society actors, and technical experts are critical for ensuring transparency, accountability, and responsiveness throughout the project cycle. These bodies are responsible for identifying community needs, approving appropriate projects, overseeing implementation, and conducting monitoring and evaluation to guarantee that resources are used effectively and equitably. The inclusion of diverse stakeholders helps mitigate risks of elite capture and fosters greater legitimacy in decision-making processes. Despite the theoretical advantages of such inclusive governance structures, real-world applications often face significant hurdles. Overlapping mandates among various local institutions can create confusion and duplication of efforts, weaken accountability and delay project implementation (Agrawal & Ribot, 1999) [2]. For instance, when roles and responsibilities are not clearly delineated, local committees may lack authority or encounter resistance from other government agencies, undermining their effectiveness. Additionally, many local institutions suffer from inadequate capacity both in terms of human resources and technical expertise which limits their ability to manage funds, conduct participatory consultations, and monitor project outcomes effectively (Mansuri & Rao, 2013).

Capacity constraints significantly hinder the effective planning, implementation, and monitoring of Constituency Development Fund (CDF) projects in Katondo Ward. Members of the Constituency Development Committees (CDCs) and Ward Development Committees (WDCs) often lack adequate technical expertise and training, resulting in poor project execution and weak oversight (INESOR, 2021). This challenge is compounded by political interference, where project selection and resource allocation are influenced by political considerations rather than genuine community needs, undermining equitable development (Transparency International Zambia, 2025). Furthermore, delays in fund disbursement disrupt project timelines, causing incomplete initiatives and inefficient resource use, particularly in rural areas such as Katondo (Auditor General's Report, 2023).

Weak monitoring and accountability mechanisms also contribute to challenges in ensuring transparency and proper fund utilization. The Zambia Governance Foundation (ZGF) highlights that limited oversight at the local level increases risks of mismanagement and misuse of CDF resources (ZGF, 2022). Additionally, despite mandates for community participation, actual engagement remains minimal, affecting project relevance and sustainability as many residents feel excluded from decision-making processes (Afrobarometer, 2024) [1]. Infrastructural deficiencies in Katondo, including inadequate roads and limited access to technical support, further impede the successful implementation and maintenance of CDF projects, restricting the fund's overall impact on poverty alleviation (World Bank, 2023).

Political interference also remains a pervasive challenge that compromises the integrity of decentralized funds. Powerful local elites or politicians may manipulate committee membership and project selection to advance personal or partisan interests, often at the expense of the most vulnerable community members. Such patronage systems erode public trust, discourage genuine community participation, and skew resource allocation away from priority needs (Agrawal & Ribot, 1999) [2]. These dynamics underscore the critical need for strong legal backing that clearly defines institutional roles and enforces transparent procedures to reduce discretion and opportunities for abuse. Capacity building emerges as a fundamental strategy to address these challenges. Training local actors in financial management, project planning, and participatory governance equips them to fulfill their mandates more effectively and fosters a culture of accountability. Furthermore, community empowerment initiatives that promote awareness and active citizen engagement can enhance social oversight and pressure institutions to adhere to good governance practices (Mansuri & Rao, 2013).

In Africa, many countries have adopted decentralized development funds as mechanisms to foster local development and alleviate poverty. Kenya's Constituency Development Fund (CDF), established under the Constituency Development Fund Act of 2003, serves as a prominent example. The Act institutionalized the creation of Constituency Development Committees (CDCs), which are responsible for identifying priority projects, overseeing implementation, and ensuring transparency and accountability at the local level (Mwenda & D'Arcy, 2016). The CDF was designed to address historical imbalances in resource allocation and to empower local communities by providing them with direct control over development financing, thereby enhancing local ownership of projects and reducing incidences of corruption. Local Governments and Sub-County Committees, with explicit provisions for community consultations and financial accountability (Francis & James, 2003) [11]. Yet, research by Ssennyonjo (2018) reveals that institutional inefficiencies, including poor coordination between committees and limited enforcement of accountability mechanisms, hamper the realization of intended outcomes. In South Africa, Ward Committees and Integrated Development Plans form part of the institutional framework for local development funds, designed to integrate community needs into municipal planning and budgeting processes (Booysen, 2007). The emphasis on legal mandates and formal participation

structures has yielded some success in enhancing transparency, though disparities in committee capacities and political influences remain a concern (Heller, 2001).

Challenges in meaningful community participation further complicate the situation. Although Kenya's CDF framework encourages public involvement through barazas (community meetings) and participatory budgeting processes, studies indicate that actual grassroots engagement is often superficial. Communities may be inadequately informed or excluded from critical stages of project identification and evaluation, limiting their influence on decision- making and undermining social accountability (Mwenda & D'Arcy, 2016). This gap in genuine participation erodes trust in the fund's management and reduces the likelihood of sustainable outcomes. These experiences in Kenya mirror broader trends across the African continent, where decentralized funds face a complex interplay of political, institutional, and capacity-related constraints. Addressing these challenges requires strengthening legal frameworks, investing in capacity building for local institutions, and promoting inclusive governance practices that empower marginalized groups. Lessons learned from Kenya's CDF implementation provide valuable insights for other countries,Including Zambia, seeking to enhance the effectiveness of decentralized development financing in poverty alleviation.

Similarly, Uganda's Local Government Development Grant (LGDG) system exemplifies decentralized financing aimed at promoting local development and poverty reduction. The LGDG is administered through District Local Governments and Sub-County Committees, with institutional arrangements that explicitly mandate community consultations, participatory planning, and stringent financial accountability measures (Francis & James, 2003) [11]. These structures are designed to ensure that development projects are aligned with local priorities and that funds are managed transparently to maximize their impact on poverty alleviation.

However, despite the formal mechanisms in place, empirical research by Ssennyonjo (2018) reveals significant institutional inefficiencies that undermine the effectiveness of the LGDG. One major challenge is poor coordination between different committees at district and sub- county levels, which leads to fragmented planning and overlaps in roles and responsibilities. This lack of synergy impedes smooth project implementation and often causes duplication of efforts or resource wastage. Moreover, the weak integration between financial oversight bodies and project committees limits the enforcement of accountability mechanisms, allowing mismanagement and corruption to persist unchecked.

Ssennyonjo (2018) also highlights the limited capacity of local committees to effectively manage and monitor development projects. Many committee members lack the necessary technical skills in budgeting, procurement, and reporting, which compromises the transparency and efficiency of fund utilization. Furthermore, although community consultations are mandated, they are frequently conducted in a perfunctory manner, with low levels of genuine participation from marginalized groups such as women and rural poor. This exclusion diminishes the responsiveness of funded projects to actual community needs, weakening their potential to contribute to sustainable poverty reduction.

Similar findings by Kasaija (2017) emphasize that political interference and patronage networks often skew project selection towards politically favorable constituencies or individuals, reducing equity and fairness in resource distribution. This politicization undermines public confidence in decentralized funds and impairs the development of inclusive governance cultures at the local level.

Overall, Uganda's experience with the LGDG system illustrates both the promise and the challenges of decentralized development financing in Africa. While the establishment of legal and institutional frameworks for community involvement and financial oversight is a critical step, their success hinges on strengthening coordination, building local capacities, and fostering genuine citizen engagement. These lessons are highly relevant for Zambia's Constituency Development Fund and other similar initiatives aiming to enhance poverty alleviation through decentralized governance.

In South Africa, the institutional framework for local development funds is anchored in Ward Committees and Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), which collectively aim to mainstream community needs into municipal planning and budgeting processes. Ward Committees, composed of elected community representatives, serve as a critical bridge between residents and municipal authorities, facilitating grassroots participation in identifying development priorities and monitoring project implementation (Booysen, 2007). The IDPs, mandated by the Municipal Systems Act (2000), provide a comprehensive planning tool that aligns local development initiatives with broader municipal and national strategies, ensuring coordinated and sustainable service The sample size, though carefully selected using stratified random and purposive sampling techniques, is relatively limited to ensure manageability and depth within the timeframe available. This constraint may affect the statistical power and limit the generalizability of quantitative findings beyond Katondo Ward. Furthermore, the cross-sectional nature of the study captures a snapshot in time and may not fully account for evolving project impacts, seasonal variations, or ongoing policy changes affecting CDF implementation.

However, while the literature identifies these challenges, there is often a tendency to generalize findings without sufficiently accounting for the nuanced local dynamics that vary between wards and constituencies. For instance, the capacity deficits and political influences described may manifest differently in Katondo Ward compared to urban or more politically stable areas. Moreover, many studies focus heavily on the problems but offer limited exploration of successful mitigation strategies or best practices emerging within the Zambian context or elsewhere. Institutional factors have been widely acknowledged as key constraints on WDC effectiveness, yet the literature often under-represents the interplay between legal frameworks, political behavior, and administrative practice. Most global studies emphasize structural reforms but rarely account for the adaptive capacity of local institutions to navigate change. In the Sub-Saharan context, institutional bottlenecks are discussed, but there is limited empirical evidence on how WDCs innovate within constrained environments. Zambian scholars have commendably identified statutory weaknesses, political interference, and fiscal dependence as major challenges, but few provide actionable institutional reform

pathways grounded in existing policy processes. Moreover, the literature inadequately addresses how informal institutions such as traditional leadership and social norms interact with formal structures to shape WDC behavior. This oversight restricts a holistic understanding of how WDCs operate within hybrid governance systems. More comparative studies across wards, districts, and provinces could help uncover best practices for strengthening institutional performance within context-specific limitations. There is also a gap in longitudinal studies that track the long-term sustainability and community impacts of CDF projects, which are essential to understand how initial challenges translate into development outcomes over time. Lastly, greater attention could be given to the voices and experiences of grassroots community members themselves, whose perceptions and participation critically shape the effectiveness of these initiatives. Incorporating more qualitative, participatory research approaches could enrich understanding and inform more context-sensitive policy interventions.

Access to accurate records and documentation related to project budgets, implementation status, and outcomes may be inconsistent, particularly at the local ward level. This can affect the reliability of data concerning project effectiveness and sustainability. Lastly, language barriers and variations in literacy levels among respondents might affect comprehension of survey and interview questions despite translation efforts, potentially leading to loss of nuanced information.delivery.

2.1 Research Design/Methods/Approach

Research designs are differently and largely depend on how different researchers approach their studies from the beginning of the study. Sibwela (2017) described research design as a structural framework within which the study is to be implemented. According to Kothari (2004) descriptive statistics is concerned with the development of certain indices from the raw data collected. Indices that are used for this research are; common measures of central tendency, measures of dispersion, and measure of asymmetry commonly known as skewness. Describing the situation, fits this study at the same time, it gives a relative standing for the variable.

Two types of data were used for this study; qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative and quantitative data collected was primary in nature, primary in that the researcher was collecting the data directly from the sources of the data who are the respondents themselves. Both questionnaires and interviews were administered by the researcher. The researcher also used secondary data from various documents; researched documents, journals, books, unpublished reports mainly for literature review and discussion.

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of Constituency Development Fund (CDF) initiatives in poverty alleviation within Katondo Ward.

After the quantitative data was coded properly, it was entered into software for analysis called Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0. The purpose was to come up with descriptive statistics. Some statistics were later manipulated with the use of Micro Soft Excel to come up with graphs and figures of the researcher's choice. The statistics was also made into tables so that various graphical presentations were made. Once the statistics were used to make tables, graphs and figures, they allowed objectivity with regard to interpretation, valid conclusion and recommendations. The information collected from Key Informants using an in depth interviews were analyzed qualitatively based on the themes and contents. Content or thematic analysis is good because it grouped similar items or themes together from many voluminous words. An introductory letter will be used; consent forms will be supplied to the respondents; anonymity will be applied, and data collected will be kept confidential and purely used for academic purposes. In view of the above, the researcher will take into account ethical considerations when conducting the research and the following issues will be taken into account to adhere to ethics. Confidentiality-All respondents will be assured that the information collected from them would be used strictly for academic purposes and held in the strictest confidentiality.

The study ensured that informed consent was acquired from the participants before engaging with them. This was done by asking the participants if they were willing to take part in the study after having explained to them what the study was about. Anonymity of the participants was also ensured by excluding their identity on the responses of the interview as well as when reporting the findings. To add on, the study did not inflicted any kind of harm on the participants as they were interviewed within their contexts.

3. Results/Findings

a. Sex of Respondent

Response		Frequency	%	Cumulative
Valid	Male	25	41.7	41.7
	Female	35	58.3	100.0
	Total	60	100	

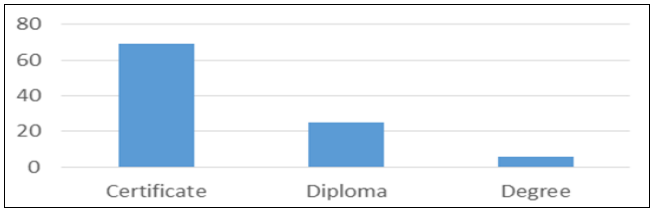
Regarding gender of participants, 41.7 % of total respondents were males while 58.3% were female.

b. Age group

Response	Frequency	%	Percentage
Valid	23 - 27 years	12	20
	28 - 32 years	22	36.7
	33 - 37 years	11	18.3
	38 - 42 years	12.0	20
	43 - 52 years	8.0	13.3
	Above 53 years	5.0	8.3
	Total	60	100

The findings show that most of the respondents were in the age group of 33 to 37 years, representing 23.8%, then 28 to 32 years representing 21.9%. The age group of 38 to 42 years was 19.0%, 43 to 52 years 12.4% and 11.4% represented 23 to 27 years and above 53 years as indicated in the table above.

c. Level of Education



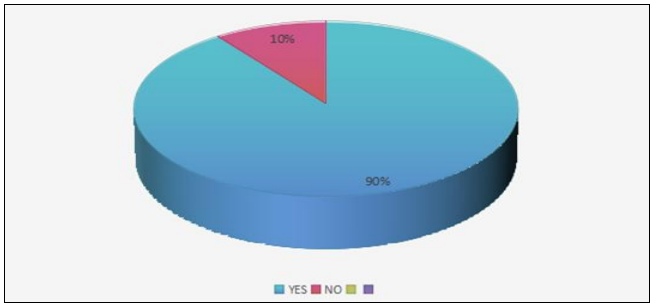
The Table 3 above shows findings on the level of education and 60% of the respondents hold school certificate. Those who hold certificates and diplomas were 20% certificate of diploma holders while those with bachelors comprised 10%.

d. The institutional mechanisms adopted in the implementation of CDF initiatives

Response	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	No	6	10	90
	Yes	54	90	100
	Total	60	100	

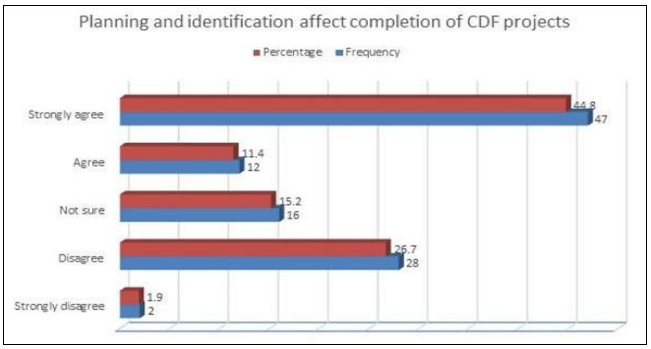
The findings indicated that 90.0% of the respondents knew what Constituency Development Fund meant while 10% respondents failed to know what CDF was. The findings revealed that most of the respondents knew about CDF activities, therefore, the information they gave in this regard could be accurate and reliable for the study.

e. Know the meaning of CDF



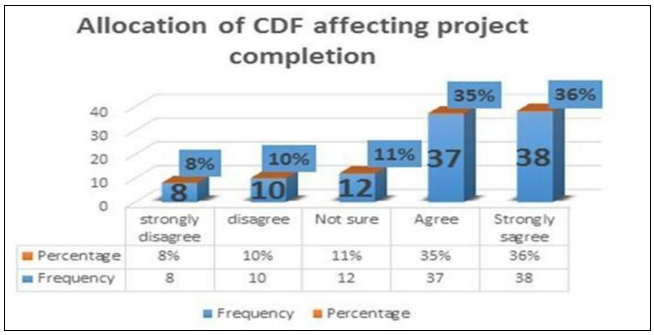
The findings indicated that 90% of the respondents knew what Constituency Development Fund meant while 10% respondents failed to know what CDF was.

f. Planning and identification affect completion of CDF projects



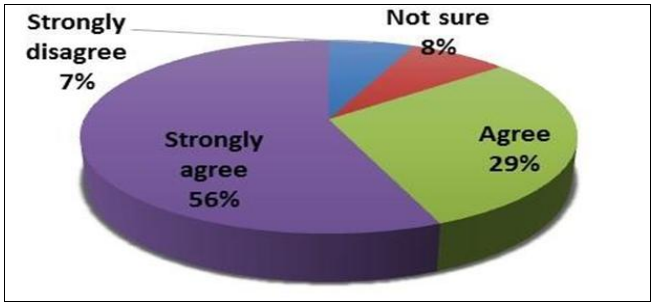
The figure above indicated that 44.8% of the respondents strongly agreed that planning and identification of projects affected their completion. The others were 26.7% who disagreed, 15.2% were not sure, 11.4% agreed and 1.9% strongly disagreed to the survey. This showed that the majority of the respondents viewed planning and identification of projects to be important.

g. Allocation of CDF affect completion of projects



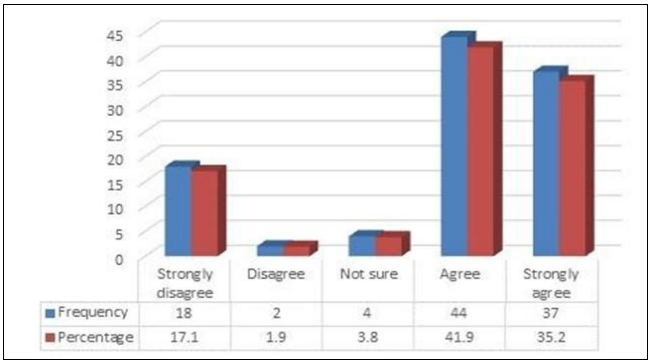
The findings from the study revealed that 36% of the respondents strongly agreed that allocation of CDF affects the completion of projects, and 35% agreed while 11% were not sure, 10% disagreed, 8% strongly disagreed and 12% were not sure. The study disclosed that the frequency and amounts allocated to CDF projects affected their completion.

h. Political involvement affects the completion of CDF project'



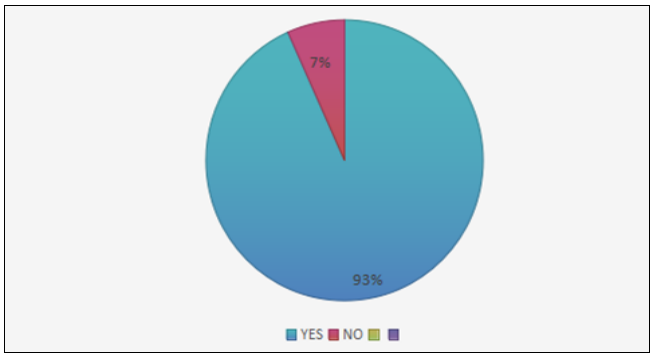
The results of the study indicated that 59 respondents representing 56.2% strongly agreed that Political involvement affected the completion of CDF projects followed by 31 respondents representing 29.5% who agreed, 8 of the respondents representing 7.6% were not sure while 7 respondents representing 6.7% strongly disagreed that Political involvement affected the completion of the CDF projects.

i. Monitoring and Evaluation affect CDF project Completion



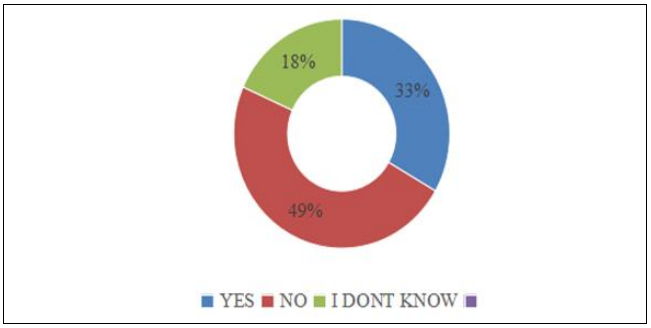
On monitoring and evaluation of CDF projects, the respondents indicated that 41.9% agreed and 35.2% strongly agreed that monitoring and evaluation affect the completion of the CDF projects. The other respondents indicated 17.1% strongly disagreed, 3.8% were not sure and 1.9% disagreed that monitoring and evaluation affect the completion of the CDF projects. The findings showed that the majority of the respondents viewed monitoring and evaluation of the CDF projects as influencing their completion.

j. Does involvement in planning and identification of CDF projects affect completion of CDF projects?



The findings from the community responses indicated that 93 % respondents said "Yes", to the question "does involvement in planning and identification of CDF projects affect completion of CDF projects?" The respondents 9.3 % did not know while the other 9.4 % were in disagreement. This shows that planning and identification of CDF projects affect their completion.

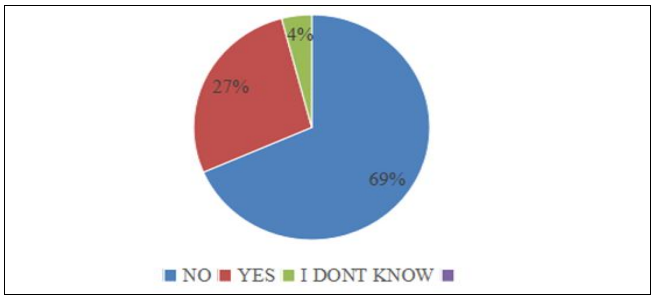
k. Does CDF projects improve the welfare of the Community?



The findings showed that 49.% of the respondents indicated that CDF was not improving the welfare of the community. And 33.0% assumed that the CDF had improved the welfare of the community while 18% held they did not know whether the CDF improved the welfare of the community.

For a project to be considered successfully completed it must improve the welfare of the community members. It is for this reason that the study sought to establish if the CDF projects improved the welfare of the community.

l. Should CDF Continue?



From the above study, 69% of the respondents answered in the affirmative that the CDF should be continued while 4% disagreed and wanted CDF to be discontinued. The remaining 27% of the respondents did not know whether CDF should be continued or not.The findings showed that most of the respondents understood the benefits of the CDF which if well implemented would help the community to have the basic goods and services.

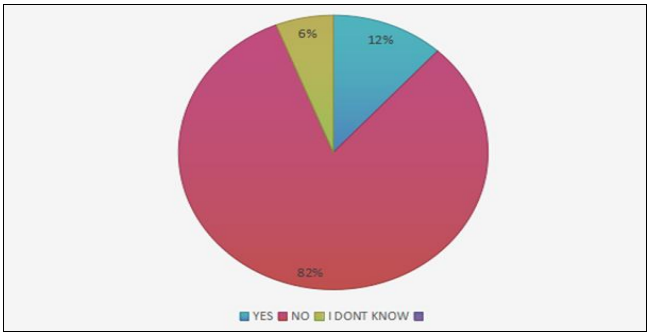
The key challenges hindering the optimal implementation and impact of CDF.

m. Are CDF adequate to complete CDF project?

Response		Frequency	%	Cumulative %
Valid	Yes	6	10.0	10.0
	No	46	76.7	86.7
	Do not know	8	13.3	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	

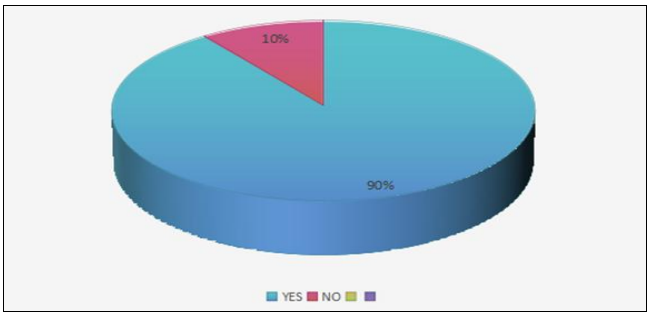
The findings of the study indicated that 76.7 % of the respondents said that CDF was not adequate to complete the CDF projects. The other respondents indicated 13.3% were not sure and 10 % represent one respondent said CDF was adequate to complete CDF project. The results show that most of the CDF projects would not be completed due to inadequate CDF. The section sought the views of the councilors on variables that affect the Completion of CDF projects. The variables were planning and identification, CDF allocation and Political involveme.

n. Are you involved planning and identification CDF projects?



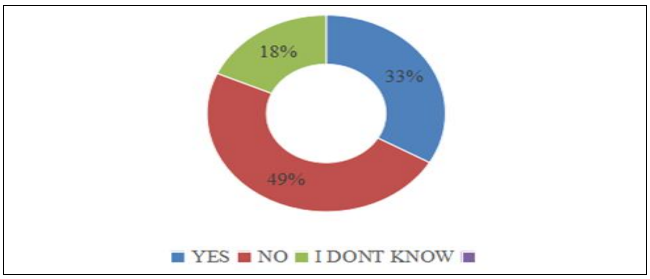
The research findings indicated 82.0% of respondents were not involved in planning and identification of the CDF projects. The other respondents representing 12.0 % indicated that they were involved in planning and identification of the CDF projects. The implication is that community participation in CDF projects was not considered in at planning and identification stages of the projects. Therefore, CDF projects will not be wholly accepted by the community.

o. Is CDF released used properly?



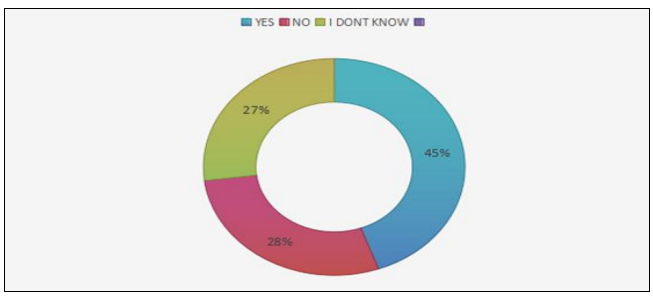
The findings indicated that 94.3% of the respondents knew what Constituency Development Fund meant while 5.7% respondents failed to know what CDF was.The findings revealed that the majority of the respondents knew about CDF activities, therefore, the information they gave in this regard could be accurate and reliable for the study.

p. Does CDF projects improve the welfare of the Community?



The findings showed that 49.% of the respondents indicated that CDF was not improving the welfare of the community. And 33.0% assumed that the CDF had improved the welfare of the community while 18% held they did not know whether the CDF improved the welfare of the community.
For a project to be considered successfully completed it must improve the welfare of the community members. It is for this reason that the study sought to establish if the CDF projects improved the welfare of the community.

q. Is their Political involvement in CDF projects?



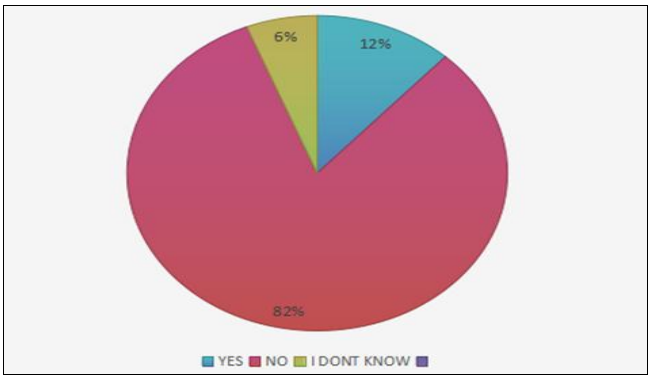
On Political involvement, 45% respondents indicated that there was Political involvement in CDF projects and 27% that there was no Political involvement. The remaining 28 % of the respondents did not know whether their Political involvement in the CDF projects. The results reveal that there is some Political involvement on CDF projects decisions made during implementation process.

r. Does Political involvement affect completion of CDF projects?

Response		Frequency	%	Cumulative %
Valid	Yes	32	53.3	53.3
	No	12	20	73.3
	Do not know	16	26.7	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	

The results from the research indicate that 53.3 % accepted that Political involvement affects the completion of CDF projects, 20 % did not know and 26.7 % said Political involvement does not affect completion of the CDF projects. The results show that most decisions conducted on CDF projects are political in nature, hence have a bearing on developmental projects.

s. Are you involved planning and identification CDF projects?



The research findings indicated 82.0% of respondents were not involved in planning and identification of the CDF projects. The other respondents representing 12.0 % indicated that they were involved in planning and identification of the CDF projects. The implication is that community participation in CDF projects was not considered in at planning and identification stages of the projects. Therefore, CDF projects will not be wholly accepted by the community.

3.2 Background characteristics: Below is the summary of the background characteristics.

3.3 Discussion and Implication of Findings
According to the table above, 58% of the respondents were aged between 31 and 55, 25% of respondents aged between 15-30,while a small proportion of the respondents (17%) were aged 55 and above. On the gender of the respondents the distributions below were observed. The results are shown in the study revealed that majority of the respondents (88%) were male while the rest, 12% were female. The study further sought to find out highest academic qualification of the respondent. The findings were as

recorded below. In terms of academic qualifications, 68% had certificates, 27% had diplomas whilst 6% had degrees. This study establishes that people cannot be forced to 'participate' in projects which affect their lives but should be given the opportunity where possible. This is held to be a basic human right and a fundamental principle of democracy. Community participation is especially important in emergency sanitation programmes where people may be unaccustomed to their surroundings and new sanitation facilities. Furthermore, this study has established that community participation requires some form of motivation and through community engagement; communities are enabled to participate in public affairs. The citizens are directly involved in the formation of policies and designing of developmental projects. Additionally, they will also be involved in the monitoring and evaluation of projects to ensure that desired goals are achieved. However, if the community is not engaged and decisions about the design of the project are not in the hands of the community as has been the case with top-down approaches, the objectives of development usually remain unchanged (De Beer, 1998).

Respondents in this study suggested that there was need for improvement in the WDCs. They argued that there was need for sensitisation to the members of the community if the objectives of WDCs were to be achieved. The community needs to learn basic civic literacy skills meaningfully by practising actively in the civic affairs of their community. Civic literacy skills include inquiry strategies, critical and creative thinking, decision making, resolving conflict and collaboration. The methods used in the teaching of Civic Education should attract the learners to participate in community affairs through proper guidance. In order for communities to participate in public affairs, the capacity building becomes a requirement as well as strategy for effective participation in public affairs. Capacity building is an on- going process of increasing the ability of citizens, groups and organisations to control and manage all the important areas of their lives or operations (Fawcett *et al*., 2007). Capacity building and empowerment are the best means to achieve sustainable community development. Capacity building and self-reliance help community to be empowered, and finally contribute towards sustainable community development. This is in line with Feire theory of conscientisation that if individuals can be trained to regain their human potential through the process of conscientisation, they will be in a state of intransitive consciousness. This process is empowering as it introduces human agency in the affected individuals to the local community and enable them to act in their challenges they face. Mbozi (2013) confirms the theory that the consequence of conscientisation is social change. When the community work together, participate in local decision making and share roles, what comes out is development.

From the findings, it was observed that many people are not aware of WDCs. This has been noticed from where residents report to whenever they have problems such as break down of mono pumps, rehabilitation of roads. The other problem is that the community does not know the Wards to which they belong. In view of this, it becomes difficult for the community to know where to report the problems they have in their community areas. The lack of awareness has a negative effect on people's participation in projects undertaken by WDCs. From the above, it can be clearly noted that the majority of the residents are not aware of WDCs. This can be seen from the participation of the community in the projects. The findings depict low participation in meetings. This is in line with Freire's theory of conscientisation that if the community is enlightened, they will take actions as a consequence of transformed perspectives. Consequently, they start to be more active in their daily activities. The community become more critical of their practices following the educational intervention (Shor, 1992). The benefits of community participation in public affairs cannot be over emphasised. This study has shown that when communities are directly engaged with government, policy and decisions made are seen as more legitimate, are challenged less frequently and policy initiatives have a greater success rate (Holzer, *et al*, 2002). The right of local authorities to manage the affairs of the community and to form partnerships, networks and associations to assist in the management of their respective districts and further their development is recognised (Constitution of Zambia, 2016). The study established that there are a number of projects identified in kabwe which are currently spearheaded by WDCs. These include; drilling of boreholes, water network rehabilitation projects, the building of schools, clinics and grading and upgrading of township roads which are aimed at uplifting the living standards of the people in the community.

Respondents also indicated that government and other players designed and implemented their programmes according to the specific target audience. That meant, therefore, that, audiences were identified with whom the players needed to communicate in order to achieve their mandate. The audiences ranged from the media houses, learners and educators, governmental institutions, civil societies and mere members of the public. This was with the understanding that poverty reduction programmes are to be designed and implemented to suit the levels of understanding of the selected audience. This was in line with UNEP (2007) which recognised that most programmes are often successful when they are targeted at specific groups because information can be tailored to the activities, needs and challenges of the group.

Various players at the local level, local governments and non-governmental organisations and local communities have the advantage of being closer to the communities than those representatives of Central Government bureaucracies formulating policies at the national level. Local authorities are usually in more direct contact with those stakeholders who reside in the communities and who depend on varying degrees from all the diverse community projects. Community development approach emphasises self-help democratic process and local leadership in community revitalization and so, most community works should involve the participation of the communities or beneficiaries involved. Community participation is an important component of community development as it reflects a grassroots or bottom-up approach to problem solving.

Best and Kahn (1993), describe limitations as those conditions beyond the control of the researcher that may place restrictions on the study and its application to other situations. In this study, the major limitations included: -lack of current literature on the subject matter to support the literature review especially in the Zambian context; time for data collection and analysis; and frequent changes to the legal framework relating to the subject matter have the potential of negatively affecting the accuracy of the findings

presented in this study. The other limitation was to do with the extent to which the findings can be generalized beyond the case studied.

According to the findings from the respondents, the community is not fully involved or consulted when it comes to project identification and initiating of the projects being undertaken in the community hence, the cause of low participation in the projects. However, projects currently being undertaken by WDCs are in conjunction with kabwe District Council (CDC). Community engagement is a process that involves inclusive participation and mutual respect of values. In addition, it supports strategies, and actions of people affiliated with geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of the community of focus (Fawcett *et al*, 2007).

This study was limited to the four main variables under the study and their influence on the completion of CDF projects in Kabwe district. More research is required to establish the other key variables which could be vital to the study in influencing the completion of CDF projects.

4. Conclusion

The study sought to find out the variables that influence the completion of the CDF projects in Kabwe district. The main variables under the study were: - planning and identification of the project, Political involvement, allocation of funds and monitoring and evaluation as independent variable and the dependent variable was completion of the CDF projects in Kabwe.

The results show that planning and identification of projects with all the stakeholders involved is important in ensuring that the project is completed successfully. Therefore, if there is no involvement of all stakeholders in planning and identification of the CDF projects their completion may be affected negatively.

The results from the study indicate that 44.8 % of the respondents strongly agreed that planning and identification projects affects their completion. The others were 26.7 % disagreed, 15.2 % were not sure, 11.4 % agreed and 1.9 % strongly disagreed. This shows that most of the respondents were in favors of involving stakeholders in the planning and identification of CDF projects in Kabwe district to be important.

This is the financing stage of projects. At this stage, decisions are made about whether to fund the project. This is the disbursement of funds from the Central government according to budget allocations as appropriated by parliament. 72 The results from the research revealed that 36.2 % of the respondents strongly agreed that allocation of CDF affects the completion of projects, and 35.2 agreed while 11.4 % were not sure, 9.5 % disagreed and 7.6 % strongly disagreed. This shows that the frequency and amounts of CDF allocated to projects affects the completion of the CDF projects.

The results from the study indicated that 59 respondents representing 56.2 % strongly agreed that Political involvement affects the completion of CDF projects followed by 31 respondents representing 29.5 % agreeing, 7.6 % respondents were not sure, and 6.7 % respondents strongly disagreed that Political involvement affects the completion of the CDF projects. This reveals that more than half of the respondents agreed that Political involvement affect the completion of CDF projects. This is asserted by Gikonyo 2008 who says that the Constituency Development Fund has the potential of being used by politicians to build their reputation in their constituencies and mobilize political support. This is an endless and regular review and management of the initiatives to ensure that work schedules, deliveries, target outputs and other necessary actions continue consistently with the project. It involves continuous methods of gathering information at systematic intervals about ongoing initiatives regarding the type and their performance. The results from the study indicated that 41.9 % agreed and 35.2 % strongly agreed that monitoring and evaluation affect the completion of the CDF projects. The other respondents indicated 17.1% strongly disagreed, 3.8 % were not sure and 1.9 % disagreed that monitoring and evaluation affect the completion of the CDF projects.

The findings show that most of the respondents viewed monitoring and evaluation of the CDF projects influencing their completion. The CDF projects which are not monitored and evaluated are unlikely to be completed successfully. According to Shapiro 73 2013, monitoring is assessing a project from initiation to its implementation geared to specific aims against agreed upon limits, specifications and requirements. Williams (2000) asserts that monitoring provides management and the main stakeholders of a development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of expected results and progress with respect to the use of allocated fundsWhile existing literature thoroughly documents the general challenges affecting decentralized development funds such as capacity limitations, political interference, delayed fund disbursement, weak accountability, and limited community participation, there is a notable lack of localized, in-depth studies focused specifically on Katondo Ward. Most studies tend to generalize findings across broader regions or national contexts without sufficiently exploring how these challenges uniquely manifest at the ward level. Additionally, there is limited empirical evidence on the long-term impacts and sustainability of CDF-funded projects in Katondo, particularly from the perspective of the community beneficiaries themselves. Furthermore, current research often emphasizes the identification of problems but falls short in examining effective mitigation strategies, best practices, and innovative approaches that could enhance the implementation and poverty alleviation outcomes of CDF initiatives. This gap underscores the need for context-specific, participatory research that investigates both the institutional dynamics and lived experiences within Katondo Ward to inform more tailored and effective policy interventions.

The study sought to relationship of the utilization of constituency development fund to public projects in Kabwe in Zambia: The findings from the four independent variables; identification of the project, Political involvement, allocation of funds and monitoring and evaluation indicate that these variables negatively affect the completion of CDF projects in Kabwe district.

5. Recommendations

This section gives recommendations for the effective and efficient implementation of CDF projects. Based on the findings of this study which examined the institutional mechanisms guiding the implementation of Constituency Development Fund (CDF) initiatives in Katondo ward, several recommendations are proposed to improve the

effectiveness, transparency and the impact of CDF projects on poverty alleviation.

The findings show that planning and identification of projects with all the stakeholders involved is important in ensuring that the project is completed successfully. Therefore, if there is no involvement of all stakeholders in planning and identification of the CDF projects their completion may be affected negatively. The recommendation is that there should be improved involvement of all stakeholders affected by the project and to improve co-ordination as regards planning and identification of projects. Improved co-ordination will provide for alignment of community projects with those of the local council and those intended for implementation by central government. This will ensure that the desired impact on the local community is achieved. It will also avoid skewed development, neglecting certain essential areas of need and replication of efforts.

This is the financing stage of projects. At this stage, decisions are made about whether to fund the project. This is the disbursement of funds from the Central government according to budget allocations as appropriated by parliament. For the allocation of funds, it is recommended that CDF should not use a "one size fits all" formula in allocation of funds. A formula should be established for appropriations of funds as opposed to allocating a uniform amount for all constituencies in the country. The formula should consider aspects such as size of the constituency in terms of population and physical size; type; levels of poverty, and level of development.

The study reveals that more than half of the respondents agreed that Political involvement affects the completion of CDF projects. It is, therefore, recommended that to avoid too much political involvement in CDF project implementations strict laws and regulations governing the CDF project implementation should be enacted. These CDF laws and legislation once enacted should be clear on selection of CDF projects and the people involved, the quality of projects by specifying minimum quality of materials to be used. It should be clear on the procurement procedures and explicitly stipulate requirements for bills of quantity and on use of expert advice.

This is an endless and regular review and management of the initiatives to ensure that input schedules, deliveries, target outputs and other necessary actions continue consistently with the project. It involves continuous methods of gathering information at systematic intervals about ongoing initiatives regarding the type and their performance.

The findings from the study show that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that monitoring and evaluation negatively affect the completion of the CDF projects. It is, therefore, recommended that there is need for periodic monitoring and evaluation of CDF projects, which is lacking in the CDF process in Zambia. This will provide a basis for accountability in the use of development resources and strengthen transparency. It will also help with strengthening project design and implementation so as to ensure project sustainability and achievement of CDF objectives.

In order to have effectiveness in proper implementations of CDF the local authorities as well as the community members need to practice transparency and accountability, Encourage independent monitoring through Local NGOs and community based Organizations. Local authorities should improve on introducing periodic public disclosure forums where CDFC and the council officials present progress reports to residents.

Best and Kahn (1993), describe limitations as those conditions beyond the control of the researcher that may place restrictions on the study and its application to other situations. In this study, the major limitations included: -lack of current literature on the subject matter to support the literature review especially in the Zambian context; time for data collection and analysis; and frequent changes to the legal framework relating to the subject matter have the potential of negatively affecting the accuracy of the findings presented in this study. The other limitation was to do with the extent to which the findings can be generalized beyond the case studied.

6. Acknowledgments

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