

**CHILD DOMESTIC LABOUR IN LUSAKA:
A GENDER PERSPECTIVE**

**The Case Of Kamwala, Kabwata, Libala, Chilenje,
Woodlands Extension, Nyumba-Yanga**

By

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APPROVAL

This dissertation by **Dakore Omolara Oyaide** is approved as fulfilling part of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Gender Studies of the University of Zambia.

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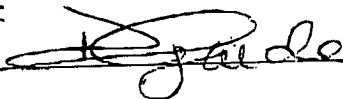
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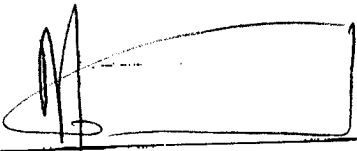
DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation was written and submitted in accordance with the rules and regulations governing the award of the Masters of Arts Degree of the University of Zambia. I further declare that the dissertation has neither in part nor in whole been presented as substance for the award of any degree, either to this or any other university. Where other peoples work has been drawn upon, acknowledgements have been made

Signature of Author:



Signature of Supervisor:



Date:

28/02/2002

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my daughter, Kesiena.

I also hereby dedicate this study to the loving and evergreen memory of my supervisor, teacher and friend, Dr Irene Maimbolwa-Sinyangue of the University of Zambia. She worked tirelessly to see me through, encouraged and gave me intriguing yet reassuring smiles each time I felt like giving up.

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Most importantly, my gratitude goes to God, to whom I give all the glory, and all the honour and all the praise.

LIST OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

ASI	Anti-Slavery International
CHIN	Children in Need Network
CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Florence, Italy)
CSO	Central Statistical Office
HIV/AIDS	Human Immuno-Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ICDC	International Child Development Centre
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
UNICEF	United Nations International Children Education Fund
ILO	International Labour Organisation
RDC	Residents Development Committee

ABSTRACT

This study examines the reasons why children are engaged in domestic labour in Lusaka, and the conditions under which they work. It also focused on the gender differentials in the work. The findings were discussed in the light of the Convention on the Rights of Children (1990) which Zambia ratified in 1991.

The socio-economic background of the children was examined to indicate the reasons why they are working. Since there is a high correlation between absence from school and working, the reasons why they are out of school was also investigated. The conditions of work included the types of work done by the children, working hours, remuneration, opportunities for play, recreation, family life, schooling or skill training activities.

The study found that poverty is the major cause of domestic child labour in Lusaka and that other reasons tend to either initiate or compound it. Additional findings indicate that the majority of domestic child workers are girls and that most of them live with their employers. The conditions of work include working from sunrise to sunset without specific job descriptions. The duties that are assigned to them seem to be too much for their age. In addition, they miss out on schooling activities and so miss out preparation for a better future. Though most of them are paid, many are not paid regularly and some are denied their wages. They lack the opportunity for social and family life and in addition, many are exposed to verbal abuses while some of them confess to having been sexually abused. The conditions of work reveal that wide gender differentiation exist in the causes and conditions of work.

The findings reveal that most of the conditions of work are deplorable and violate the rights of the children with relation to the CRC. The deep sense of loss expressed by the children at not being in school is a paradox to their willingness to help their parents by working. This dilemma suggests that though the children are willing to work to help their families, the lack of opportunity for schooling is very painful to them. Lack of schooling is a work hazard because it robs vulnerable children of the opportunity for upward mobility, and perpetuates poverty in the society. Lack of schooling and exposure to sexual abuse are hazards this study considers intolerable.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Child labour is a serious problem in the world today, especially in the developing countries. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 1998) the number of children aged between 5 and 14 who are working full time in the world, is at least 120 million and the large majority of them are in Africa, Asia and Latin America. In Zambia, child labour has also been acknowledged as a problem. Its implications for Zambia are particularly disturbing, especially with statistics of about 50 percent of the total population below age 15 (CSO 1996). Studies that have been focused on child labour in Zambia are however deficient of data on child domestics. This study intends to fill this gap by examining the causes and the conditions of the work and their gender implications.

1.2 Child domestics are children who are engaged in employment as housemaids, nannies, house-boys or 'horse-boys' within private households. Girls are hired to do household chores such as cooking, cleaning and child care, while boys are assigned work outside the house washing the car, tending the garden as garden boys, running errands or working in the stables as 'horse boys'. The privacy of the work makes them invisible workers. Their dispersal among various households, the lack of legal recognition for the work, its absence from systematic research, and from official statistics, all combine to reinforce its invisibility. The acquiescence of the public at large to the work in Zambia seems to be because of traditional socialisation, which gives the impression that domestic work is women's destiny; something that they were born to do and therefore, domestic

work cannot be harmful to children. Some tend to regard it as a better alternative to poverty and destitution, and therefore employers are performing a social obligation.

1.3 Studies have shown, however, that child domestics are often exploited, maltreated and abused. They miss out on schooling and skill training opportunities, family life, play and recreation. They are also exposed to psychological, physical and sexual abuse. The implications are that the work is harmful and not in the best interest of the children involved. Furthermore, it is harmful in the long run to the society at large because it generates a reservoir of future unskilled labour force. Despite the negative aspects of the work, due to increasing poverty, there appears to be a growing preference and demand for young domestics in Zambia (Times of Zambia, 7 March 1998). Employers claim that they are more obedient, hard working, and cheaper than adult workers.

1.4 The preface to Black's (1997) manual on child domestics, referred to a request by Anti-Slavery International (ASI, 1956) for systematic data to be collected in countries where children are commonly employed as domestic workers. According to the request, although child domestic work is known to be the most widespread form of child labour in the world, data on which to base international advocacy campaigns about its negative aspects is limited. Additionally, Convention 182 on the Intolerable Forms of Child Labour requests for data on the special situation of girls giving particular attention to hidden work situations in which girls are especially at risk. In 1991, Zambia ratified the Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC, 1990) which carries with it an obligation to report periodically on the protection of the rights of children.

1.5 This study is in response to global concerns about the exploitation of the labour of children. According to the study, *child labour* is defined as work that hampers access to

education, involves too many hours of work, too many responsibilities, irregular payment or lack of wages, and sexual, physical and psychological abuse. The study investigates the work of children aged between seven and fifteen years. This is because though most international conventions specify age 18 as the minimum age for work, more recent conventions such as the ILO Convention 182 permits different countries to decide a more realistic age that suits their economic and cultural demands. The choice of age 7 to 15 was based on age of primary schooling.

The Problem

1.6 Poverty is rising in Zambia. At the same time, orphans from the HIV/AIDS pandemic are increasing. The increase in the number of vulnerable children on the streets suggests that invisible workers are also likely to be increasing. The problem is that while the visibility of street children helps them to receive public attention and sympathy, the conditions of invisible workers are not known. Whatever is known about them is often clouded by misconceptions that arise from traditional socialisation. Since women and girls are brought up to do domestic chores, it is usually assumed that domestic work cannot be harmful. In addition to this, because they are usually children of the poor, and are housed and fed and out of public eye, it is assumed that the work is a better alternative to destitution. As a result, some feel that the employers are doing the children a favour and do not feel that the child worker has any rights.

1.7 While detailed information on its full extent and characteristics are not available, indications are that children are recruited from distant villages or from poor urban families or relatives. In some instances they are orphaned or children of poor relatives and are therefore completely dependent on the patron families. Total dependency means

that the children have to accept the harsh conditions that are associated with the work. Though the work is beneficial in the sense that it keeps the children off the streets and where they are paid provide financial support for needy families; those of them under room and board are usually subjected to very long hours of work. They are exposed to various forms of abuse, including verbal, physical and sexual. They are isolated and ostracised within the household and many of the conditions of work violate the rights of the children as human beings and as workers. The fact that they miss-out on schooling and any form of skill training and there is no pension scheme for the future social welfare benefits, prepares them for a future life of destitution. Despite the studies that have been done, many of the aspects of the work are still unknown in Zambia.

1.8 There is therefore a need for systematic study into the characteristics of the work such as the reasons why the children are working, details of the conditions of the work and the gender implications in the work. There is need also to evaluate the characteristics of the work with regards to the rights of the child in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC 1990). The prevalence of girls in the work makes the work a gender issue. The concern that due to increasing economic and social pressure their number is likely to be on the increase and the conditions of work to be worsening, underlie the basis for the study. It is against such background that this study was carried out.

Objectives of the study

1.9 The general objective of the study is to establish the nature, causes, conditions and effects of domestic child labour from a gender perspective.

More specifically, the study aims: (I) to establish the reasons why children seek

employment; (ii) to establish the conditions under which child domestics are working and to assess whether relative workers do the same work as employed child workers; and (iii) to establish the gender differences in the findings.

Research questions

1.10 The study was guided by the following basic questions:

- (i) Is domestic child labour in Lusaka a hazardous and intolerable form of child labour?
- (ii) Does domestic child labour in Lusaka violate the rights of the children in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)?

Rationale

1.11 The study is justified on a number of grounds. Firstly, it responds, as already indicated, to global concerns about the exploitation of child labour, including those of the Anti-Slavery International (ASI), the Convention 182 on the Intolerable Forms of Child Labour and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The study provides answers to the concerns of the ASI about servitude in domestic employment. The findings provide gender desegregated data on this invisible form of child labour as requested by the ILO Convention 182 (1999). They also serve to indicate whether the rights of the children are violated by the work. Secondly, the findings should generate interest and create awareness about the conditions under which child domestics are working among child advocates, policy makers, donors and the public. Thirdly, such awareness is expected to motivate further studies into the phenomenon. Lastly, the study is expected to suggest interventions on behalf of the children and to establish the gender implications in child domestic work. The findings will generate awareness and interest

in this neglected area of child labour and contribute to the general body of knowledge.

Definition of special terms

The key terms to be defined are '**Live-in and Live-out**' and '**Relative and Employed Workers**'

'Relative child workers' and 'employed child workers'

Relative child workers are children, orphans or non-orphans who are living with relatives other than their own immediate families. Employed child workers are children that are either orphans or non-orphans, who are employed for wages in homes of strangers.

Live-in and Live-out workers

Live-in workers are child workers who are fully resident in the homes of their employers while live-out workers commute to work daily from home.

Organisation of the study

1.12 This dissertation consists of the following eight chapters:

Chapter one introduces the study and gives a statement of the problem, the guiding research questions, the objectives, and the rationale for the research. The chapter concludes with the explanation of special terms that were used. Chapter two reviews past literature about the three objectives of the study while chapter three presents and discusses the methods that were applied in order to obtain relevant information to the objectives. Chapter four, which provides the geographical, political, economic and educational profile of the country, serves to furnish relevant background to the research. Chapters five and six consist of findings and discussions and chapter seven relates specifically to findings on the CRC and child domestic labour. Finally chapter eight provides overall conclusions and suggestions for future actions in the form of recommendations. Appendices follow the last chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 There is a gap in Zambia in literature about the causes of child domestic labour and the conditions of work. While the UNICEF ICDC (1999) review of studies on child domestics in different countries found that poverty is the most common cause of the work, the same was affirmed by studies in Zambia. For example, Mushota (1987) and Matoka's (1993) study found the same in Zambia. Other studies that confirm the same of child labour in general are Banda (1994) and Kamocha, Munalula & Miti (1997).

2.1 However, findings by Canagarajah & Coulombe (1997) in Ghana and Grootaert (1998) in Ivory Coast suggest that it is too simplistic to attribute child labour to poverty alone. Other factors associated reasons why children engage in domestic labour include the inadequacy of the school system, large family size, rural location of the family, and family dysfunction such as due to HIV/AIDS or marital breakdown.

2.2 The same issues are identified by studies in Zambia. Kelly's (1998) study found that the inability of the school system to admit and to maintain all children of school going age in school contribute to children having to work rather than being in school. The study found that the high cost of education, failure to cope with studies, long distance to school, inability of some children to secure admission to school, and pregnancy are some of the reasons why children are dropping out of the school system and working.

2.3 Lungwangwa's (1996) study added the dimension of orphans due to AIDS. The study attributed the alarming increase in the number of street children to the increase in the number of orphans from the HIV/AIDS. In addition, Kamocha et al. found that child labour predominates in large households and that 28 percent of all working children came

from households with 6-7 persons. These foregoing reasons determined the areas that the study investigated with regard to the reasons why children are working. It additionally examined the role of cultural gender discrimination in children's employment as domestics.

2.4 The UNICEF ICDC review on conditions of work in other parts of the world indicates that apart from places where religion protects girls from exposure, such as in the Kathmandu valley in Nepal, most child domestics are girls. The typical tasks are mostly household work and childcare. The review also indicates that the children tend to work prolonged hours, without rest, play, or recreation. Furthermore, visits to and from their families are restricted and severely limited and where parents live far away from the work place, children have no opportunity to visit their families or did so once a year in many cases longer. At the same time, friendship with peers outside the house of employment is usually discouraged or prohibited, and together with the lack of schooling opportunity, the social isolation of the child is complete. A study that was cited in the same review found that in Benin, *restaveks*, (relative workers) were not treated better than non-relatives.

2.5 The review further indicates that child workers are either unpaid, as in Kenya, or their pay was sent to their parents in the village, as in Rwanda. As a result, child workers themselves hardly handled their own wages. Findings in the review indicate that sexual abuse of child domestics is implicit in the work. It gave examples of Lima Peru, where sixty-percent of men who were interviewed confessed to having their first sexual encounter with the maid of the house. In Fiji, eight out of ten maids said they had been sexually abused.

2.6 In Zambia, Hansen's study of relational aspects of domestic work found that workers were mostly adult men and that there were many workers in each household and they were assigned different tasks, children only worked as helps to adult workers or play mates to children. Though there is inadequate literature on child domestic, studies by Mushota (1987) and Matoka (1993) represent the closest attempts to unravel the working conditions of child domestics. Using interviews and case studies, both studies conducted exploratory qualitative investigations. The studies found that the children were working in 'undesirable conditions' thereby confirming that most of the findings in other parts of the world also apply to Zambia. Both studies found that child domestics worked from 06.00 hours till around 20.00 hours (14 hours), as a daily routine except on Sundays, when some of them would be given half day off to visit relatives or friends. The children generally suffered from verbal abuse and their wages were very low. Both studies found that poor relatives were preferred but were treated worse than employed-workers.

2.7 While most of Matoka's conclusions tended to confirm Mushota's, Matoka additionally obtained information on the correlation between child labour and schooling. He found that few girls were found to have been in the same employment for a long time, indicating instability in the work, that the majority of child domestics were girls while only fifteen percent were boys. He attributed this prevalence of girls to the fact that domestic work is regarded as a protected work. He also found that although many children migrate from the rural areas to the urban cities to work, fewer girls did so compared with boys.

2.8 On the whole, both investigations were limited in their treatment of child domestics most likely because the studies were not on child domestics per se. This study

examined the conditions of work in relation to the rights of children in the CRC and the gender issues, including sexual abuse, all of which were absent from the two studies.

2.9 The conclusion of both studies were however different. Mushota condemned the 'blatant use of children as a source of family income' and that advocacy was needed to combat the practice. He concluded that work was not child work but child labour. Matoka's conclusion on the other hand was that it was not child labour but child work. They both however predicted an increase in the practice due to increasingly higher levels of poverty in the society.

Conclusion

2.10 In conclusion, with worsening economic conditions of the country since the previous studies, the findings of this study would most likely indicate not only worsened conditions of work but also the emergence of new sources of child workers. Moreover, past literature has not specifically identified domestic labour as a female dominated aspect of child labour. This study will indicate whether traditional cultural bias has continued to dictate gender imbalance in this aspect of child labour and that girls, more than boys, are exposed to its negative conditions of work. The study is also trying to find out whether the situation established by Mushota in 1987 and Matoka in 1993 still persisted in the year 2000.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Research Designs/methods used

3.0 The study applied both quantitative and qualitative research designs in order to obtain a holistic insight into the objectives of the study. The exploratory nature of the study necessitated a qualitative approach, in order to obtain the feelings of respondents and underlying issues, which quantitative data would omit. Both designs were used to complement each other in the analysis of the findings and in the discussions. Methods of data collection included survey questionnaire, group discussions, case studies and unobtrusive observations. These several methods were used for triangulation.

Research Site

3.1 The chosen research site, Kabwata, Libala, Chilenje, Kamwala, and Woodlands Extension/Nyumba Yanga areas of Lusaka, occupy an area of 32 square kilometres within Lusaka, the nation's capital. These sites, with an estimated population of 97,361 out of Lusaka's estimated population of 2 million, are situated to the south and south east of the city. Using an annual projection of 3.7 percent annual growth rate over the 1990 census figures, Kamwala has an estimated population of 15,821; Kabwata, 12,889; Libala, 18,583; Chilenje, 36,994; Woodlands, 8,086; and Nyumba Yanga, 4,987. CSO (1996) classified Chilenje South as one of the areas of highest population densities in Lusaka, while Chilenje North was classified as a medium density area. Woodlands' extension and the Madras area of Kamwala were classified as areas of lowest densities while Kabwata and Libala were regarded as areas of medium density in Lusaka. These classifications tend to designate the chosen research site as a mixed income area.

3.2 The choice of a mixed income research site was based on suggestions by Mr Louis Mwenwa of Children In Need (CHIN, a Non-Governmental Organisation) and as indicated in the ILO/IPEC's manual on how to find out quickly about child labour (1995:35). The manual suggests that for the sake of reliability, a mixed income area would be more representative of the city and would contain a sizeable proportion of invisible workers. The study was limited to only a portion of Lusaka due to its scope and so does not intend to be generalised to the whole country.

Target population

3.3 The target population was child workers between the ages of eight (8) and fifteen (15) years, who were employed in the homes of strangers, either for wages or not or schooling part-time or not. The second target group was that of children of the same age group who were living and working in the homes of their relatives either for wages or not, but were not attending school. Children in this second group are not regarded as workers because of the informal traditional method of their adoption and the cultural demand on the children to regard the host as parents. The situation tends to make them more invisible than employed child workers.

Sampling

3.4 Data for the study was collected from a total of 159 randomly selected samples. Since children in domestic work are dispersed invisible workers, a house-to-house enumeration was done to locate them. The samples were desegregated by gender. The only ten male child workers in the entire research site were used purposively.

Table 1 (a): Total sample frame of employed and relative child workers from each site

	No. of employed children		No. of relative workers	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Kamwala	28	3	18	19
Kabwata	19	Nil	21	10
Libala	17	Nil	15	5
Chilenje	25	3	22	12
Woodlands/extension/Nyumba Yanga	26	4	19	9
Total	115	10	94	55
Total sampled number	83		76	

Table 1 (b): Sample size of employed and relative child workers from each site

Research site	No of employed children		No of relative workers	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Kamwala	15	3	14	15
Kabwata	14	Nil	10	5
Libala	12	Nil	10	5
Chilenje	16	3	10	5
Woodlands extension/Nyumba Yanga	16	4	10	2
Total	73	10	54	22

3.5 The sample in Table 1 (b) was randomly sampled from the total sample frame in Table 1 (a). A total of 73 girls were sampled. The uneven number of samples from the different sites was due to differences in the number found in each site and lack of co-operation in some of the homes. The total sample of only ten boys that were found in the research site had to be used purposively due to the dearth of male child workers.

3.6 The first ten respondents in each research site were used as samples for observation. Those who were willing to participate in the group discussions were randomly selected. Ten children who were found to be in very typical or desperate situations were randomly selected from a list of sixteen cases. The primary determinant for selecting the employers, parents and guardians for the survey was accessibility, availability and co-operation. The first ten that were found were used purposively.

Tools for Data Collection

3.7 Secondary data involved research reports, journals, newspapers, and information from the inter-net web sites. Preliminary discussions were held with key informants. Primary data tool included survey questionnaires, which were self-administered. Unobtrusive observations were carried out during the administration of the questionnaires. Case studies and focus group discussions were also conducted.

3.8 Two research assistants, one female and one male, were hired and were sensitised on the objectives, the sensitive nature of the study and on the methods of gaining entrance. They were also taught on the various instruments to be used. The questions were discussed and several interpretations were compared to avoid misunderstandings.

3.9 Pilot interviews were conducted using randomly selected respondents-two girls and two boys employed child workers and relative workers. Two guardians, employers and parents of workers were also involved in the pilot interview. The pilot resulted in deleting or rephrasing questions that were threatening. Methods of gaining rapport were revised.

3.10 The data was analysed using the SPSS computer package for Windows, version. Verbal descriptions were made of the qualitative data.

Limitations of the study

3.11 As expected of invisible working situations, the greatest challenge that the study faced was gaining entry into private homes to locate child workers. Since child workers were sometimes not willing to talk in the presence of employers, the best responses were obtained from those whose employers were absent. Entry was secured by assuring

employers that this was an academic study, that their identities were confidential and that the interviews were anonymous. Group discussions proved very difficult to conduct because the workers worked everyday and many were not allowed outside the home or to interact with outsiders. The number that turned up was much below the intended number of participants. Transport and refreshments were provided as incentive to participate. Parents were also difficult to locate for the survey because the houses in the compounds were not easily accessible; several visits had to be made to locate them.

Ethical consideration

3.12 Care was taken not to deceive the participants, but to try and gain their confidence. There was a promise to conceal their identities and that they will not be implicated legally or otherwise. Explanations were given that the study is only an academic exercise and a letter of introduction from the department of Gender Studies, University of Zambia was presented to each employer to read to confirm the above statement.

3.13 In the course of the interviews efforts were made to avoid affecting the children negatively, such as avoiding placing psychological stress on them. In some cases we had to skip asking questions that could destabilise relative workers especially orphans because we found that some of them were very emotional. Attempts were made to soothe distressed children. Questions about sexual abuse had to be handled with tact and personally by the researcher as girls are embarrassed to discuss such issues.

CHAPTER FOUR

COUNTRY PROFILE

Introduction

4.0 This section introduces the situational background to the study. It includes physical geographical, economic, and political background of the country. It also includes data on demography and education.

Geography

4.1 Zambia is located in the Southern region of Africa. It covers 753,000 square kilometres and shares border with eight countries. These include Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia to the south, Tanzania and Zaire to the north, Angola to the west, and Mozambique and Malawi to the east. The country is divided into nine provinces including Lusaka province, with Lusaka, the nation's capital city, as its headquarters.

4.2 Lusaka is centrally situated at the junction of rail lines and main roads from the north, south, west and east. It began as a railway station in 1905. Covering an area of 360 square kilometres it became a municipality in 1953 and a city in 1970. Originally a farming settlement, it is increasingly becoming highly industrialised in recent years.

Population

4.3 According to the census figures of 1969, 1980 and 1990, the total population of Zambia were 4.0 million, 5.7 million, and 7.8 million respectively, with an annual growth rate of 2.7 percent between 1980 and 1990. The CSO (1996) estimated the population in 1997 to be 9.7 million with 63 per cent residing in the rural areas and 37 per cent in the urban making Zambia one of the most urbanised countries in Africa. Together with peri-urban and smaller townships, nearly half of the total population lives in urban areas.

Another demographic characteristic is that Zambia has a young population. Over fifty percent of the total population is below the age of fifteen.

4.4 Migration from rural to urban centres is a prominent feature in the living conditions in Zambia. It began at independence when the colonial administration's restrictions on movements were lifted. Together with the concentration of social services in the urban areas, there has been an increase in the number of migrants from rural to urban areas in search of better life. In addition to these, Zambia has a high rate of population growth of 3.2 percent per annum, high fertility rate of 6.7, and declining life expectancy. Some of the results of the foregoing are as follows: One, a population that is characterised by a large proportion of youths, 50 percent of the total population is below age 15. Two, high level of urbanisation. Three, uneven spatial population distribution and four, low rural and high urban population.

4.5 However, with hopes of employment in urban cities dashed by economic pressures, and with continued urban migration, there is a growing population of unemployed people in Lusaka. As a result, social amenities in the city are over stretched and large squatter residential areas have grown around Lusaka due to inadequate housing. Poverty is more extreme in the rural than the urban areas of the country.

Economy

4.6 Zambia has a two-tier economy consisting of a modern and urban formal sector and a rural agricultural sector. There has been a decline in the economy of the country in the last 20 years. Among other things, the heavy reliance on copper following independence exposed the country to economic shock, from the fall in copper production and in copper prices. Zambia's GNP fell from US \$ 500 with inflation of less than 5