Integration of Local Authorities in Zambia in the European Cooperation Programming Process 2021-2027

Analytical Report

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

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<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisation</td>
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<td>DDCC</td>
<td>District Development Coordinating Committee</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>Local Authority</td>
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<td>Local Government Association of Zambia</td>
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<td>MDA</td>
<td>Ministry, Department, Agency</td>
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<td>MMD</td>
<td>Movement for Multiparty Democracy</td>
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<td>7NDP</td>
<td>Seventh National Development Plan</td>
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<td>Strategic Development Area</td>
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<td>TALD</td>
<td>Territorial Approach to Local Development</td>
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<td>UNIP</td>
<td>United National Independence Party</td>
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<td>WDC</td>
<td>Ward Development Committee</td>
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1. Introduction

The programming process (2021-2027) of the EU cooperation is aimed at enhancing the preparedness of local authorities and their national associations in the dialogue and interaction with the central government and the EU delegation at country level.

Local authorities, through their national associations, should therefore be integral part in the programming process alongside the representatives of the national government, in the dialogue with the EU delegations. To this end, the UCLG Africa secretariat supported and coordinated the mobilization of a consultant to facilitate the task of the President and Executive Secretary of the Local Government Association of Zambia (LGAZ) in gathering basic information, and preparing the analytic work to be presented to the members of the association during the national webinar.

This Analytical Report constitutes the second, and last, of the two deliverables of the Consultant services to support the local authorities in Zambia, and their national association (Local Government Association of Zambia - LGAZ) in their preparedness for the Programming process of the 2021-2027 EC co-operation.

This deliverable follows the signing of a Services Contract between the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG – AFRICA), the umbrella organization and representative of African local authorities, AND DR. Peter Kaumba Lolojih, the Consultant.

The report is presented under the following headings:

1) Decentralization reforms;
2) Local Government Association of Zambia (LGAZ); and
3) Territorialisation of national policies and global agendas

Although the report adheres to treating the above topics as separate entities, the nature and scope of the relevant information in each topic may demand that reference be made to the other topics when dealing with a given topic. This cross-referencing is expected to enhance the overall understanding and appreciation of the report.

2. An Analysis of Political Economy

Decentralisation Reforms

It is important to state from the beginning that the background to the concept of decentralisation may appear to be somewhat detailed than perhaps expected of this document as some of the information may be common knowledge. However, the detail is deliberate given Zambia’s experience relating to its efforts on decentralisation whose results, thus far, may have a huge bearing on the extent and possibly the quality of local authority participation on the programming process.

It is widely observed, however, that the major obstacle to the effective performance of public bureaucracies in most developing countries is the excessive concentration of decision-making and authority within central government. This observation has, to a very large extent, won global acceptance among academics, scholars of public administration and development studies, and even central and local government practitioners. The acceptance of decentralisation underscores the rejection of the centralisation of power and authority in a country’s governance system.
The popular remedy to such centralisation is decentralisation, a term which is characterised by many positive connotations that include, but not limited to, proximity, relevance, autonomy, participation, accountability and democracy. Across the globe, decentralisation has been universally recognised and is being advocated for as an ‘administrative tool’ for promoting democratic governance, one that is capable of providing public services in an efficient, effective, and transparent manner. To this end, Rondinelli (1983)\(^1\) noted a number of arguments that have been advanced in favour of decentralisation, examples of which are listed below.

1) Decentralisation can be a means of overcoming the severe limitations of centrally controlled national planning by delegating greater authority for development planning and management, to field officials who are closer to the local people and their problems. It will allow them to tailor development plans and programmes to the needs of heterogeneous regions and groups.

2) It will lead to closer citizen-administration contacts leading to greater public participation in administration.

3) Decentralisation could also allow better political and administrative penetration of national policies into remote areas, where central Government plans are often unknown or ignored or undermined by local elite.

4) It would lead to the development of greater administrative capacity among local governments and private institutions in the regions and provinces.

However, the above observations do not imply that decentralisation has no blemishes and/or critics. According to Turner and Hulme\(^2\) (1997), decentralization can fuel regional identities; intensify forces for secession and create political instability; or a local elite might capture decentralized structures and consequently use them to meet its own narrow interests rather than those of the mass of the local population. Remmy Prud’homme\(^3\) (1995) has argued that decentralisation can be accompanied by more corruption at the local level. Prud’homme’s argument is that although corruption is hard to assess and measure, there are several reasons why it is likely to be more prevalent at the local than at the national level:

- There are probably more opportunities for corruption at the local level. Local politicians and bureaucrats are likely to be more subject to pressing demands from local interest groups (whose money and vote count) in matters such as taxation and authorizations;

- Local officials usually have more discretion than national decision-makers;

- Local bureaucrats tend to spend their careers in the same location. This makes it easier for them to establish unethical relations with local interest groups; and


There are fewer obstacles to corruption at the local level. Corruption, in many cases, requires the cooperation of both politicians and bureaucrats. The distinction between the two groups is less rigorous at the local level. Local bureaucrats have less independence from local politicians than national bureaucrats do from national politicians.

It is important to note that a detailed discussion about the pros and cons of decentralisation is beyond the mandate of this assignment. Suffice to state that overall, decentralisation has come to be accepted globally as a strategy for ensuring a governance system that, among other positive virtues, is responsive, effective, participatory, democratic, and one that promotes endogenous, incremental, multi-scalar and spatially integrated local development – territorial approach to local development.

Feasibility of Territorialisation of Development

In Zambia, the desire for “real” decentralisation reforms is associated with the Second Republic following the regime change in 1991 after the unseating of the country’s first president, Kenneth Kaunda of the United National Independence Party (UNIP) to that of the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) under the late president Frederick Chiluba. This observation is anchored on, and supported by Kaunda’s adoption of what he referred to as “Decentralisation in Centralism”. Kaunda defined this form of decentralisation as “a measure whereby through the party and government machinery, we will decentralise most of the party and government activities while retaining effective control of the party and government machinery at the center in the interest of unity” (Oluwu, 1990). It was not entirely surprising, therefore, that the “marriage” of the party (UNIP) and the government, coupled with the “type” of decentralisation adopted, did not yield the expected benefits of a decentralised government.

The new government reverted to multiparty politics. And notable changes brought about by the 1991 Act included the clear institutional divorce of party structures from the Council. The “coast” was now clear to embark on “genuine” decentralisation reforms.

However, a final draft of the decentralisation policy was only ready in March, 1997 close to 7 years under the new political regime. The policy was assented to by a new president in 2002, Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, who was elected in 2001 but the policy was only launched two years later in 2004. Following the launch, two Decentralization Implementation Plans (DIPs) have been developed (2009-2013 DIP, and 2014-2017 DIP) but nothing tangible has taken place with regard to implementation of the policy. The second DIP expired in 2017 with only the implementation of the HIV and AIDS coordination and management under the Ministry of Health. Currently, work is underway to develop the third Decentralisation Implementation Plan (DIP). It remains to be seen what this effort will amount to.

Given the above scenario, it is not objective and realistic to discuss opportunities and constraints created by the decentralisation reforms because implementation of the policy has not really taken place.

Potential Opportunities of Decentralisation Implementation

However, there is appreciable optimism that if and when the decentralisation policy is finally implemented opportunities would include, but not limited to:

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1) Increased central government’s recognition of the need for autonomy of the local authorities as provided for by the Constitution. This is especially necessary when it is considered that under the devolved system of government local authorities are in charge of development of their respective districts with officials from the devolved ministries of central government reporting to the local authorities.

2) Enhanced responsiveness of the local authorities to the needs and development priorities of local communities. The improved level of responsiveness will be buttressed by the knowledge, on the part of the local authorities (LAs), that the communities are aware of the increased responsibilities and operational autonomy granted to the LAs through the decentralisation reforms.

3) Enhanced accountability of the local authorities. As agents of development in their districts, LAs will need to embrace an entrepreneurial spirit in order to raise sufficient finances from local revenue sources, make “big” decisions to consolidate and drive their development agendas, avoid the misallocation of resources, and create an environment of trust and acceptability among many stakeholders. All this will certainly require an appreciable level of accountability in local authority operations.

4) Enhanced community participation in the operations of the local authorities. Under the devolved system of government, sub-district structures such as the Ward Development Committees (WDCs) are, among other things, expected to sensitise local communities about the importance their involvement in the activities of the LAs. Such sensitisation is likely to enhance the level of cooperation among community members with regard to paying various local taxes and levies, a situation that can greatly assist LAs to enhance their revenue base.

5) Enhanced public oversight on the operations of local authorities resulting from enhanced community participation. Public oversight will promote the accountability of local authorities and consequently improve service delivery.

3. SWOT Quick Analysis of the National Association of Local Authorities:

Local Government Association of Zambia (LGAZ)

The main objective of LGAZ is “promoting and protecting the interests and autonomy of local government authorities”. In recent times, however, the Association has played the role of facilitator of decentralisation, sustainable development and local democracy. Other functions of the Association include capacity building to ensure institutional effectiveness of its member local authorities.

In pursuit of its lobby and advocacy as well as service provision role, therefore, the Association works in two directions:

1) With respect to the linkage with central government, LGAZ strives to enable local government to be heard, to be consulted and to be represented at that level. For example, the decentralisation of responsibilities does not always coincide with the distribution of matching resources which places the Association in a strategic and strong position as a united voice to lobby for proper financial compensation and local tax-raising powers; and

2) With regard to its member local authorities, LGAZ strives to provide support and services as well as helping to build their capacities.
It is important to mention, however, that in its course of duty LGAZ is faced with a number of challenges even the midst of its strengths. This situation may be somewhat clearly appreciated by looking at what may be considered as its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Critical examples of the key strengths of LGAZ include: qualified and experienced personnel both the Presidency, Secretariat and Coordinators; defined LGAZ Constitution; reputable and recognised organisation; committed membership; hub of knowledge on local government; an organisation with a track record; an independent and autonomous organisation; and the sole membership organisation for local authorities.

The above strengths have greater potential to enable LGAZ to be recognised by a variety of local government stakeholders including local communities, civil society organisations, and the country’s cooperating partners. Such recognition creates a conducive environment in which LGAZ, among other considerations, can acquire the desired results in the areas of lobbying, and advocacy.

Weaknesses of LGAZ include: insufficient funding; lean staff complement; non-responsiveness by member local authorities to requests for information necessary for lobby and advocacy; biased towards politicians; and limited asset base.

Given the above weaknesses, it may be plausible to argue, among other things, that the association faces serious challenges when it comes to implementing programmes that require substantial financial outlays which include the financing of its annual conferences. The annual subscriptions from member local authorities can only support the day to day operations of the LGAZ office, and emoluments for the staff at the secretariat. In order to conduct its annual conferences LGAZ depends, to some extent, on assistance from cooperating partners both local and international. In addition, some of the weaknesses are potentially retrogressive with regard to ensuring operational effectiveness, and sustaining operational autonomy with regard especially to decision making.

Opportunities of LGAZ include the following:

1) Supportive Constitutional provisions on local government (2016);

2) from cooperating Approval in 2017, of the Intergovernmental Fiscal Architecture (IFA), a framework essential to guide, match and integrate the allocation of expenditure functions, the assignment of revenue resources, the design of the intergovernmental fiscal transfer system;

3) Broadened membership base following the creation of new districts to 116;

4) Supportive like-minded CSOs;

5) Membership to international local government organisations such as UCLG Africa; and

6) Goodwill partners both local and international.

Threats of LGAZ include: Ministerial Circulars compromising the autonomy of local authorities; high staff turnover through transfers; increase in energy prices; high rate of urbanisation; and low floor price of maize and other agro products affecting relevant levies.

The implications of the above threats are many and varied. A compromised autonomy of the local authorities can, among other things, negatively impact their ability to make decisions that adequately reflect and being capable of addressing local priorities. In addition to the loss of experienced personnel and institutional
memory, staff turnover may adversely impact the implementation of local programmes. The inability of local authorities to effectively compete for skilled manpower on the open labour market exacerbates the problem. High fuel and oil prices can be translated into reduced mobility of local authority equipped such as motor vehicles, and road construction and maintenance equipment, adversely affecting the delivery of services. A growing population calls on local authorities to double-up their efforts if they are to meet the attendant increase in demand for services. With a narrow revenue base and insufficient central government transfers, local authorities are less likely to satisfy increases in demand for the services they provide. All things being equal, local authorities should be able to collect sufficient revenue from crop levies especially grain levy, which is primarily maize. However, given the low flow price of agro-products including maize, this source of local revenue is not lucrative at all.

4. State of the art concerning the territorialisation of national policies and global programs, including SDGs, both at the level of policies and programs implemented within the framework of the National Development Plan.

The way forward

In order for the local authorities to promote the territorialisation of public policies and global agendas as well as local development programmes, and to respond to the problems revealed by the SWOT analysis, special attention and action will need to be focussed, among other considerations, on the following:

- **Image building** – overall, local authorities (LAs) are perceived by the general public as institutions that are incapable of delivering services in an effective, efficient, and transparent manner; accusations and counteraccusations of corruption are seen to characterise the operations of the local authorities especially with regard to land allocation; and in the area of revenue collection, especially from markets, LAs are usually accused of not being transparent and accountable noting that in some cases no receipts are given or sometimes fake receipts are issued. The implications of this poor image of the LAs among members of the general public are many and varied. It is important to note that members of the general public are the source of political legitimacy of those that represent them in the Council chambers, the local councillors. In the same vein, the general public constitutes the major source of local authority revenue, being the payers of the various local taxes and levies. Ordinarily, the general public is expected to provide oversight on the activities of the LAs in order to enhance effectiveness, efficiency, and transparency in the service delivery process. As things stand, various challenges may continue to characterise the management and administration of the local authorities. For example, revenue collection is less likely to improve as many would-be tax payers are likely to be less willing to pay what is due to their local authority. To this effect, LAs need to embark on image building in order to win public support.

- **Progressive legislation to anchor LA operations** – it is recognised that some pieces of legislation on local government have the capacity to promote autonomous, efficient and effective local authorities while others have the opposite effect. However, the expected positive impact of the progressive pieces of legislation is not being realised because in practice the provisions of such legislation are not followed. Consequently, the bad provisions seem to take the “driver’s seat” adversely affecting the management and administration of the LAs. There is need, therefore, for the LAs to (i) identify supportive legislation and adopt ways/mechanisms that would ensure that the intended objective/s of such legislation is achieved; and (ii) develop a strategy that would result in the call for local government reforms aimed at moderating or outright doing away with unsupportive legislation.

- **Central-Local relations** – the nature and scope of relationships between the central and local government has a significant impact on the overall performance of local authorities. Generally, local
authorities are seen as agents of central government in the process of public service delivery. It is mainly for this reason that central government has an interest to ensure that local authorities conduct their affairs in accordance with its expectations as well as that of the local communities. To this end, central government can exercise administrative and/or judicial control over local authorities with a view to instituting central oversight. The minister responsible for local government may exercise default powers to take action in the event of a local authority failing to perform its duties (administrative). Similarly, local government legislation can be repealed or amended, and local authorities are subject to the jurisdiction of the courts of law (judicial). Now, central government control is not necessarily retrogressive. It depends on what is being controlled. Overall, however, central government should be seen more to support rather than instituting control measures that can adversely affect the performance of the local authorities. The realization of the objectives of the programming process, among other considerations, would be greatly enhanced in an environment where government emphasis is on supporting rather than controlling, and where local authorities themselves appreciate the efficacy of being in charge of their operations. In order to create such an environment, local authorities in Zambia need to carry out a forensic identification to determine which legal provisions seem to unduly support central control. The identification would assist in determining the strategies to be adopted when advocating or lobbying for policy reforms.

- **LA - Civil society cooperation** – the lobbying capabilities of civil society organisations (CSOs) are well documented. Effective cooperation between LAs and CSOs has greater potential to promote fruitful central-local relations based on mutual respect and the acceptance of LAs as institutions that are better placed to drive sustainable socio-economic development at the local level and by extension at the national level. The membership of CSOs on the District Development Coordinating Committees (DDCC) does not seem to effectively bring out their “true colours” with regard to assisting local authorities to claim for their rightful position as development partners with central authorities. In effect, therefore, LAs need to develop strategies aimed at engaging CSOs, outside the DDCC, in order to enhance their chances of being able to relate effectively with central authorities.

- **“Re-inventing” the DDCC** – through Cabinet Circular No. 1 of 1995, government introduced the National Development Coordinating Committee (NDCC), Provincial Development Coordinating Committees (PDC), and District Development Coordinating Committees (DDCC) to spear head and coordinate development efforts at those levels. However, this “policy” has continued to face challenges with regard to effectively operationalising its intended objective. Regular Committee meetings, at the three levels of these committees rarely take place. At the district level, the DDCC is not taken seriously as some members, especially the technocrats from central government departments argue that the DDCC does not have the power of legislation having been introduce by a Cabinet circular. The commitment of such members on the DDCC is somewhat negative. Local authorities are key institutions on the DDCC whose membership also includes representatives from civil society organisations (CSOs). Clearly, the DDCC if well organised would enhance the visibility and responsibility of LAs with regard to local development, a situation that can promote and sustain the notion that LAs deserve to be considered as development partners of central government in their own right. To this end, calls on central government to reform these committees with a view to giving them the power of legislation would greatly enhance local development anchored on the commitment of rejuvenated local authority efforts.

- **The power of a broad revenue base** – the most lucrative source of local revenue for most, if not all, local authorities in Zambia is property rates. To effectively tap from this resource, LAs need to regularly update their valuation roll since it is illegal to receive rates from a property that has not been valued and placed on the valuation roll. However, regular updating of a valuation roll has
continued to be a serious challenge for the local authorities mainly because of the administrative cost involved. Consequently, LAs lose out on sure revenue that would boost their service delivery capacity. It is, therefore, very important for LAs to develop entrepreneurial skills and start investing in lucrative business ventures with a view to broadening their revenue base. The broader the locally supported revenue base, the less dependent a local authority is on central financing and consequently the higher the likelihood that it will enjoy an enhanced level of autonomy in decision making. Part of the answer to broaden the revenue base for local authorities lies in government surrendering all taxes of a local nature to the LAs. These include, motor vehicle licensing, road tolls, and trading in electricity.

- **Decentralisation and TALD** - it is abundantly clear that the implementation process of the decentralisation policy in Zambia is very far from being completed as evidenced by the fact that two Decentralisation Implementation Plans (DIPs) have thus far yielded no tangible results, and the third DIP is being developed. This is against the view that completing the implementation process of the Decentralisation Policy would undoubtedly enhance autonomy and effective performance of the local authorities. It would also effectively place the local authorities in a stronger position to act as social and economic development partners with central government, in their own right. The challenge relating to TALD, with regard to Zambia being a unitary parliamentary republic, has been analysed in the next section on territorialisation of national policies and global agendas. Overall, it is an intrinsic challenge that is anchored on the very nature of the unitary state. Be that as it may, the procrastinations surrounding the national decentralisation policy (NDP) implementation process and the challenges relating to TALD are not cast in stone. It is of paramount importance, therefore, that local authorities come up with strategies that have the force of expediting the NDP implementation process as well as to address challenges relating to the support for and adoption of TALD. With regard to TALD, strategic emphasis should, among other considerations, hinge on the need to recognise the peculiarities of the different Provinces and Districts in the country.

**Territorialisation of National Policies and Global Agendas**

The concept of territorial approach to development (TALD) has been variously defined. However, for the purpose of this report we adopt what seems to be the “overall” definition of the concept by Romeo G. Leonardo\(^5\) (2014) who observed that: a “Territorial Approach to Local Development” (TALD) is a national policy that promotes endogenous, integrated, multi-scalar and incremental local development by empowering autonomous and accountable local authorities. According to Romeo, TALD should be considered as a developmental policy that national governments in decentralising States may want to adopt, and international development partners may want to support, in order to (a) unleash the full potential of local development for national economic growth and social cohesion, and ultimately (b) bring to fruition the developmental promises of decentralization reforms.

From the above “analysis” of TALD, it is clear that empowered, autonomous, and accountable local authorities are very critical to local development, and ultimately to national development.

The fifth (2006-2010), sixth (2011-2015), revised sixth (2013-2016), and the current seventh (7NDP- 2017-2021) National Development Plans constitute very critical documents for guiding the implementation of various policies and programmes aimed at achieving the nature and scope of the desired national development. For the purpose of this report, however, we focus on the current seventh National

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\(^5\) Leonardo G. Romeo (2014). *The Territorial Approach to Development (TALD)*. EU/IBF Consulting
Development Plan (7NDP) which has been developed in a way that is expected to put the country on the right track to meeting the Vision 2030.

Zambia’s Vision 2030 (2006-2030) aims to transform Zambia into a prosperous middle income nation by 2030 and to create a new Zambia which is a “strong and dynamic middle-income industrial nation that provides opportunities for improving the well-being of all, embodying values of socio economic justice.” In effect, the aspirations of the Vision 2030 are operationalised through the national development plans.

Strategic Development Areas of the 7NDP include the following:

1) Economic diversification and job creation;
2) Poverty and vulnerability reduction;
3) Reducing development inequalities;
4) Enhancing human development; and
5) Creating a conducive governance environment for a diversified and inclusive economy.

Relevant Sectoral policies and other legislative provisions guide the pursuing of the strategic development areas (SDAs), their development outcomes, and the strategies for achieving the outcomes. The policies are national but largely sectoral in nature. Let us get the first strategic development area (Economic diversification and job creation) for illustration. This development area has ten (10) development outcomes with their attendant strategies for achieving the outcomes. The first development outcome is “a diversified and export oriented agriculture sector” and the second developmental outcome is “a diversified and export-oriented mining sector”. It is clear from the nature of the activities that the guiding policies include the National Agriculture Policy under the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, and the Mines and Minerals Development Act No. 11 of 2015 as read together with the Mines and Minerals Development (Amendment Act No. 14 of 2016) under the Ministry of Mines and Minerals Development, respectively.

With respect to territorialisation, it is important to note that Zambia is a unitary parliamentary republic, a unitary state with a republican form of government which is highly dependent on the confidence of parliament. In this case, Zambia has one constitution for the entire country, a general system of laws, and a unified system of institutions in which the power of the state is operationalised. For purposes of administering the state, Zambia is divided into ten (10) Provinces that are divided into a total of one hundred and sixteen (116) Districts. This means that provisions of the constitution and sectorial policies apply to all these divisions. In effect, therefore, we see a system of political organisation in which most if not all the governing power resides in a centralised government, when compared to a federal state. Overall, therefore, the concept of territorialisation seems to be readily compatible with federal rather than unitary states. However, with a little more thought that could lead to constitutional and/or policy reforms it may be possible to accommodate some or all features of the territorial approach to local development (TALD).

The above analysis with regard to the “centralisation” and/or “nationalisation” of the provisions of the constitution and sectoral policies also constitutes a challenge with respect to the handling of global agendas.

As an end to this section, it is important to note that the authority of local authorities to discharge various functions is cited in Section 16 (2) of the Local Government Act with such functions being listed in its first schedule. A close look at the nature of most functions local authorities perform clearly indicates and calls for effective interaction and collaboration with a number of Central Government Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs). Examples of sectoral Ministries from which local authorities provide some services include Agriculture, Community Development, Public health, Communication, Mining, and in Housing and Infrastructure Development. This scenario may, among other things, be an indication that it is possible to create an environment in which sufficient “space” is created to enable local authorities operate in line with the territorial approach to local development.
5. Conclusion

The report has analysed issues that are very critical to the programming process of the EU (2021-2027) that are aimed at enhancing the preparedness of local authorities and their national associations in the dialogue and interaction with the central government and the EU delegation at country level - Zambia. To this end, the report emphasises the need for local authorities in Zambia to be an integral part in the programming process alongside the representatives of the national government, in the dialogue with the EU delegations.

In order for the local authorities to effectively perform their mandate of delivering public services, enhance their visibility and be recognised as development partners of the central government in their own right, the need for autonomy, sufficient financing, and the completion of the implementation process of the National Decentralisation Policy (NDP) has been variously highlighted.

However, it has been noted that although a number of provisions of the Constitution, the Local Government Act, and other pieces of legislation provide for autonomy and opportunities for sufficient financial support from central government, such provisions are, in practice, not effectively operationalised. And with regard to the NDP, the report has observed that in spite of the final draft of the NDP being ready as far back as 1994 the implementation processes of the policy is still far from being completed.

The report acknowledges that the Local Government Association of Zambia (LGAZ) strives to enable local government to be heard, to be consulted and to be represented at that level. In addition, LGAZ strives to provide support and services as well as helping to build the capacities of its member local authorities. However, LGAZ is faced with several challenges even in the midst of some strengths. Consequently, a SWOT analysis of LGAZ has revealed that the strengths of the association are somewhat adversely impacted by some weaknesses such as insufficient funding; lean staff complement; and a limited asset base. Be that as it may, the association has some opportunities upon which it can build a stronger foundation for enhanced operational capacity in the future. Four examples of such opportunities include:

1) Supportive Constitutional provisions on local government (2016);
2) Broadened membership base following the creation of new districts, now 116;
3) Supportive like-minded CSOs;
4) Goodwill partners both local and international.

Based on results of the SWOT analysis, LAs have been strongly advised to build their image; identify and ensure genuine operationalisation of supportive legislation; work towards improved central-local relations; develop an entrepreneurial spirit to enhance revenue base; and work on strategies that can help expedite the NDC implementation process, among other considerations.

With regard to the territorialisation of national policies and global agendas, the report has recognised a challenge that is anchored on the observation that Zambia, being a unitary parliamentary republic, has one constitution for the entire country, a general system of laws, and a unified system of institutions in which the power of the state is operationalised. Overall, therefore, the concept of territorialisation seems to be readily compatible with federal rather than unitary states. However, this observation does not necessarily mean that it is not possible to, for example, institute progressive reforms that can have a positive impact on this challenge.