



Einar Braathen

# SOCIAL FUNDS IN AFRICA

A technocratic-clientelistic  
response to poverty?

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# Preface

This paper departs from two research projects funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad). The first project was a formative process research on the District for Development Cooperation programme in Zambia, 1998-2001. The second is a formative process research project, 2001-2005, on the Local Government Reform Programme in Tanzania.

It is a revised version of a paper first presented to a workshop, *The Role of the State in the Fight against Poverty/ Papel do Estado na Luta contra a Pobreza* in Recife, Brazil, 18-21 March 2003. The workshop was organised by the Comparative Research Programme on Poverty (CROP) in conjunction with Fundação Joaquim Nabuco. It is a draft contribution to a forthcoming book edited by Dr Hartley Dean, London School of Economics and Political Science. Warm thanks to Hartley for constructive comments on earlier versions.

Oslo, December 2004

Arne Tesli  
Research Director

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# Summary

*Einar Braathen*

## **Social Funds in Africa**

A technocratic-clientelistic response to poverty?

Working Paper 2004:130

The paper deals with a mechanism referred to as Social Funds (SFs). They were developed by the World Bank in Bolivia in 1987 and since transferred to more than 50 developing countries all over the world, with commitments of over US\$3.0 billion in World Bank resources, supplemented by an additional US\$3 billion from other sources .

The focus is on the two largest SFs in sub-Saharan Africa: Zambia Social Investment Fund (ZAMSIF) and Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF).

The paper first presents a critique of the SFs provided by Judith Tendler: the SFs promote technocratic clientelism and play mainly a political and conservative role in their respective countries. The paper then asks to what extent does the local context influence the features and functionings of structures initiated and funded by international financial institutions. To answer this, an analytical model termed the 'technocrats-in-action' approach is applied. The approach is inspired by a pioneering Norwegian scholar, Knut Dahl Jacobsen and his study on the role of the expert in the modernization of Norwegian agricultural society. The approach presupposes that the technocrats (i) are inevitably politicized by playing important political roles and (ii) enjoy a certain autonomy in defining these roles (action models). Hence the approach is useful to explore the alleged flexibility of the SFs, albeit within local political contexts.

Big differences between the SFs are found in the two countries. Local contexts do influence the features and functionings of structures initiated and funded by international financial institutions. In the concluding remarks, these findings are used to criticize both the World Bank's and Tendler's narratives of the SFs.

# 1 Introduction

What is the role of the state in poverty reduction? Many would argue that it is limited to receiving and implementing blueprint policies from international finance and development institutions like the World Bank. A technocratic belief prevails, extolling that poverty reduction is the domain of scientific-technical experts, that the policy they prescribe is always right, and that the main challenge is proper management and implementation of the policy. Social funds provide a suitable empirical starting point for analyzing technocratic-managerialist practice against poverty. Do we find the same approach in all countries? Is there room for divergent approaches among public servants?

In 1987, Bolivia designed the first social fund mechanism with support from the World Bank. According to a Bank report, its “objective was to provide short-term employment that would ease the hardships of economic crisis and adjustment in the late 1980s” (Chase and Sherburne-Benz 2001). In other words, social funds (SFs) were a temporary antidote to the adverse impact on the poor of the Structural Adjustment Programs. SFs provided a menu of possible projects with funding available to communities. The menu usually offered social infrastructure projects (construction of schools, health centers, roads and bore-holes). SFs were operated by semi-autonomous units or agencies, outside existing line ministries.

However, soon they became part of a larger strategy. SFs evolved to focus more on longer-term development issues of community development, capacity building and self-help at the community level and, more recently, at the local government level. By 2000, the World Bank had supported SF projects in over 50 countries with commitments of over US\$3.0 billion in World Bank resources, supplemented by an additional US\$3 billion from other sources (Chase and Sherburne-Benz 2001).

This paper focuses on the two largest SFs in sub-Saharan Africa: Zambia Social Investment Fund (ZAMSIF) and Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF).

## 2 Theoretical points of departure

First, we should build on Judith Tendler's seminal critique of SFs (Tendler 2000). She concludes that they have no documented positive impacts on poverty. Instead of socio-economic functions, the SFs fulfill certain political-ideological functions; a process which in this chapter is called *technocratic clientelism*. The SFs reproduce clientelistic relationships between the donor (World Bank) technocrats and recipient governments on the one hand, and between the politicians and their constituencies in the recipient countries on the other. As a consequence, democratic government structures, particularly at the local level, are weakened. However, Tendler's empirical evidence was limited to Latin-America and the 'first generation' of SFs before year 2000. A second generation of SFs was put into operation after 2000. They are characterized by being part of a more comprehensive strategy for Poverty Reduction, based on debt cancellation – the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative – and broad civil society dialogue – the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). Do Tender's conclusions apply even in a different context, namely the 'second generation' SFs in Africa?

Second, we need to test the World Bank assertion that '[b]ecause social funds are flexible, innovative financing mechanisms, they have different features and objectives depending on where they are implemented' (Chase and Sherburne-Benz 2001). If this is true, it represents a blow against the basic assumption in Tendler's critique. Tendler assumes that the SFs are trapped in a technocratic-economistic assumption that one-size-fits-all. To what extent does the local context influence the features and functionings of structures initiated and funded by international financial institutions?

To answer this, an analytical model will be applied which may be termed the 'technocrats-in-action' approach. It is inspired by a pioneering Norwegian scholar, Knut Dahl Jacobsen and his study on the role of the expert in the modernization of Norwegian agricultural society (Jacobsen 1966). The focus is on the political-social environment that put the public administration 'under pressure', and on the resulting response action strategies of the experts – their action models. The approach presupposes that the technocrats (i) are inevitably politicized by playing important political roles and (ii) enjoy a certain autonomy in defining these roles (action models). Hence the approach is useful to explore the alleged flexibility of the SFs, albeit within a local political context.

The approach corresponds with a theory of the role of the state in socio-economic transformation processes, developed by Peter Evans. The theory holds that public technocrats may contribute to effective transformation only when they (a) maintain a certain autonomy from the political power holders and (b) share certain ideals and transformation projects with change-oriented groups in the society. The resulting 'embedded autonomy' is the main characteristic of the developmental state and a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for socio-economic transformation (Evans 1995). A main aim of this chapter is to add to this theory that transformation requires public servants equipped with transformative, or radical, action models.

The chapter is structured in the following way. First, Tendler's critique of the SF is deepened, suggesting the postulate of technocratic-clientelism. Then the technocrats-in-action approach is outlined in more detail. Some universal components of the action models of the SF technocrats are suggested, including the principles of New Public Managerialism (NPM). This analytical approach is followed in a country-specific analysis in Africa. Two countries are selected: Zambia because it was the first one to introduce SFs in Sub-Saharan Africa, and Tanzania which was much later in setting-up SFs but rapidly made them a key component in the government's strategy for poverty reduction. The SFs in Zambia are subject to empirical analysis, followed by a comparative view of those in Tanzania. The analysis is based on fieldwork focusing on SFs in 2003 in connection with two separate research projects on local government reform (Braathen 2002, 2003)<sup>1</sup>. Differences between the SFs are found in the two countries. Local contexts do influence the features and functionings of structures initiated and funded by international financial institutions. In the concluding remarks, these findings are used to criticize both the World Bank's and Tendler's narratives of the SFs.



## 3 Questioning the success story

The World Bank's first in-depth study of the SFs was carried out in 2000 (World Bank 2001). It was conducted in six countries: Armenia, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Honduras, Peru and Zambia. It focused on financial issues and econometric effects at the household and community level. The study considered the following issues:

- Targeting. To what degree have SF resources reached the poor?
- Impact. What impact has the SF had on the community facilities it supported and households in those communities?
- Sustainability. Are the community projects supported by the SF likely to be sustainable?
- Cost Effectiveness. Are community efforts to rehabilitate facilities through SFs cost effective when compared to other ways of rehabilitating such facilities?

The study found that the SFs reached the poor, had a positive impact on the community facilities and households, provided cost-effectiveness and were sustainable.<sup>2</sup>

### 3.1 Tendler's critique

Tendler (2000: 114) confronted these conclusions in an article with the ironic title, *Why Are Social Funds So Popular?*:

They are said to reduce poverty and unemployment, and to bring services and small works to myriad poor communities in a way that is decentralized, demand-driven, participatory, low in cost, and fast-disbursing

Apart from the claim of fast disbursement of credits, Tendler finds evidence that none of the claims favoring SFs are true. Rather, they point in the opposite direction, as donor-driven, supply driven, not very decentralizing or participatory devices. The SFs produce no visible pro-poor sustainable impacts. Instead of supporting long-term public sector reform, aiming at improved pro-poor service delivery by means of a thoroughly democratic transformation of the state and the state-society relations, the World Bank seems to favor a strategy that produces more measurable short-term results: construction of service facilities 'low in cost, fast-disbursing'. Nevertheless, seemingly invulnerable to evidence-based criticism, the SFs play an ideological role, in boosting the (self-) esteem of the World Bank. In particular it plays a conservative-political role in promoting *technocratic clientelism*: It reproduces clientelistic relationships between the donor (World Bank) technocrats and recipient governments, on the one hand, and between the politicians and their constituencies in the recipient countries, on the other. The SFs help the Bretton Woods institutions sell austerity and neo-liberal reforms to borrower

countries, while presidents and other elected officials regard the SFs as a blessing to meet electoral needs. Like other distributive programs managed in a discretionary manner, the SFs are excellent vehicles for political patronage. They help leaders of local constituencies to make up for the losses stemming from austerity programs. Tendler's critique has been supported by recent research on the SFs in Malawi, which to some extent have been subject to elite capture (Bloom et al 2004).

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## 4 The technocrats-in-action approach

Although Tendler's criticism is welcome because it stimulates debate and new research, it is theoretically one-sided. Her approach is basically economic and assumes an *a priori* and unitary rationality on the part of the main actors – the technocrats and the politicians. There is a belief that because someone might have a direct interest in a certain social arrangement, this is why the arrangement came into being, and as a consequence they do everything to defend the arrangement as successful. However, the group interests may have been socially constructed contemporaneously or *aposteriori*. Consequently, it is likely that practice creates a multiplicity of experiences, assessments and perceived interests among the main actors. The challenge is to capture this multiplicity in practices and rationalities. Are they static or dynamic, solid or contested, converging or diverging? To what extent has one type of practice become hegemonic within one group of public managers and professionals, and why?

### 4.1 The technocrats' models of action

The concept of action model is a heuristic device to understand hegemonies as they are internalized and (re-) interpreted by professionals engaged in public services. Focusing on technocrats-in-action, we must look at how they interact with whom in their environments and work organization. Policies and power structures in the political-administrative system, like specific policies and management structures in their work organization, may influence the technocrats' scope of action. Since the technocrats are supposed to serve the public, two types of relationships are worthy of particular attention: those with the political authorities, and those with the clientele.

We should also identify what technocrats bring from their past when they enter into interaction with politicians and clients: the social identities, shared technical-professional values and ideological influences among the technocrats. These are the main components of an action model (Jacobsen 1966). This approach has many resemblances with Bourdieu's emphasis on the 'habitus' of the actors and their usually conflict-ridden 'fields' of action (Bourdieu 1977). The action model is usually dynamic – changing over time as a result of practice, and it is often contested by other actors with other models, within the work organization or the broader field of practice. It is of particular interest to examine what the action model is composed of, the extent to which it enables collective action among the technocrats, and the extent to which they can reshape their relationship to the political authorities and to the clientele in their own image.

In the concrete analysis of the SF technocrats and their action models we should distinguish between:

- a) A general 'influence' analysis, reconstructing the 'universal' policies, operational guidelines and professional-ideological values that constrain the technocrats and provide basic inputs to their action models. In the case of the social funds, they stem

from the headquarters of the World Bank which has tapped into a 'global' discourse on good governance/good management.

- b) A country specific analysis, looking at the concrete field of practice of the actors, in particular (i) the political environment, (ii) the SF technocrats' relationship to the political authorities, (iii) the technocrats' relationship to the clientele, and (iv) the technocrats' action model and the extent it has spurred a transformation of the practice and the field.

## 4.2 General influence analysis

There are two sets of ideas that seem to have influenced the SF technocrats when a 'second generation' of SFs was set up after 2000. The first set came out of a fusion between the discourses on 'Good Governance' and 'Poverty Reduction', in which the World Bank was instrumental in the policy innovation and fusion process. The second set is inherited from the 1990s – the New Public Management (NPM) principles (Braathen and Palmero 2001).

When Good Governance and Poverty Reduction emerged in the 1990s as two dominant themes in development studies and co-operation, they initially developed in partial isolation from each other (Goetz and O'Brien 1995). On the one side, 'poverty' was dealt with as a problem in itself, ignoring the fact that it results from the interaction of economic, social, political and other contextual factors (Øyen 1996). On the other side, the 'good governance' advocates focused on legally sanctioned institutions and relationships and thus on issues such as the judicial system, public administration reform, accountability, democratization, transparency etc. Thus, as Sobhan (1998) argued, few attempts were made to concretely link these concerns with development outcomes, and with poverty reduction in particular. However, the World Bank then appeared to effect some important interventions into the debate. First, they conflated the governance and management issues so that NPM became part of the 'good governance' agenda. Secondly, the Bank fed these management ideas into the international poverty agenda in publications like the World Development Report 2000/1 (Braathen 2000). In this context, social funds appeared to be a tool for well-governed and pro-poor public action. Therefore, it might be proper to assess to what extent we can identify influence of the NPM ideas on the SFs.

The main tenet of NPM was to meet the needs of the citizenry through effective service delivery. This is sought through several sets of measures. The first is increased discretionary powers to state managers, with a focus on results rather than procedures. The second is to make service provision more demand-driven, that is, to run it according to market or quasi-market principles. The third is an emphasis on 'public-private partnerships' (e.g. privatization in terms of outsourcing certain services to private businesses, as well as increased user participation in planning, running and financing service delivery). The emerging complex organizational arrangements are supported by principal/agent theories, suggesting a separation of policy-making (performed by principals), regulation and operations (performed by agents). A main critique has been that it tends to sideline democratically elected bodies and depoliticize public policy-making. It limits influence from the population to atomized or local user-committees, while the organization of citizens in nation-wide civil society or political organizations is discouraged (Kettl 1999; Christensen and Laegreid 2002).

When looking at the main principles of operations of Social Funds, they indeed reflect the main principles of NPM. SFs typically:

- a) are run by semi-autonomous units or agencies, operating outside line ministries (which is made easier when initiated and funded by the World Bank, the main principal);
- b) make grant funds available to communities or municipal councils, to enable them to choose from a menu of possible projects (such as a well, a health center, a school, a grain mill or road repair);
- c) out-source project design and construction to local and/or private actors, outside the government procurement regulations;
- d) require a local (community) contribution, roughly 10-15 per cent (Tendler 2000).

Principle a) supports the NPM norms of increased powers to managers to achieve certain results. Principle b) underscores demand-driven service provision and development, while c) and d) are in accordance with the gospel of demand-driven service provision and local community-based 'public-private partnerships'.

## 5 Country-specific analysis in Africa

### 5.1 The political environment

What many NPM reformers tend to ignore, is that the ‘modern’ institutions and mechanisms needed to bolster NPM forms, are too weak in the African political context. The post-colonial African state is usually very different from the Western state:

- The administrative systems in post-colonial states are hybrids of patrimonial (private oriented), bureaucratic (universal law and rule-oriented) and professional (client- and goal-oriented) subsystems. With Medard (1982, 1995), we may define such hybrids as *neo-patrimonial*. Patrimonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa is characterized by the following three features: *Personalistic* rule and politics centered around ‘big men’.
- *A lack of distinction between the public and private domain*. Although ‘modern’ legal and administrative systems are assimilated, they are invaded or co-opted by the private domains of the ‘big men’. Politics becomes a kind of business, because it is political resources that give access to economic resources. However, the formal co-existence of legal-rational and patrimonial logics of action makes the state *neo-patrimonial*.
- *Clientelism* – the ‘big men’ (patrons) may well abuse state resources not only for themselves, but also for their main supporters, and for political legitimation. Mass politics is structured around vertical clientelistic relationships. (Médard 1995; Bratton and de Walle 1997; Chabal and Daloz 1999; Braathen and Orre 2001).

When the patrimonial sub-system is dominant, NPM-related reforms have a very inadequate human resource basis. That condition cannot be changed through mere training and education (capacity building) programs.

Second, the political and social institutions that could provide a check on the patrimonial-administrative system are underdeveloped. Even in the most developed countries, increased discretionary powers to state managers, privatization and outsourcing tend to increase corruption and other side effects (nepotism, favoritism, clientelism and other patrimonial practices) (see Kettl 1999). If this takes place in the ‘developed’ world, what could one expect from NPM-related reforms in ‘developing’ countries? Particularly in Africa, the democratically elected bodies are weak, and their control of the administration through mechanisms of accountability is limited, at best.

In this African context, two crucial aspects of the role of the technocrats need to be clarified. First, the extent to which they manage to fence off their professional practice from undue interference from personalistic rulers. This is the question of technical autonomy. Second, the extent to which they can transcend the clientelistic practices of

‘big men’ nationally and locally – in other words, how the technocrats structure their embeddedness. Do they serve the democratic structures of the poor citizenry, or do they mainly operate in networks with the existing elites that blur the public-private divides?

## 5.2 The technocrats’ action model: radical or conservative?

A radical action model aims at changing the state of-the-art in the parameters mentioned: the political environment, the relationship to the political authorities, and the relationship to the clientele. A radical action model is a necessary, although not sufficient, device to produce such changes. A conservative action model helps to maintain the existing power relations. As ideal-types, the distinction between radical (transformative) and conservative (neo-patrimonial) action models might be found along the following dimensions.

In the relationship to political authorities, a *radical* action model is concerned to protect the collective technical autonomy of the professionals. They want recruitment to public service according to qualifications and merits. A radical action model unites the professionals and helps develop a strong professional ethos or ‘esprit de corps’, with strong commitment to certain goals, values or codes of conduct. It helps them combat patrimonialism and other particularistic, private- and elite-oriented types of conduct. Their loyalty is towards non-personalized institutions like the democratic constitution, the rule of law and approved public policies, They want organizational autonomy more from the political rulers than from other administrative and political institutions of the country (Jacobsen 1966). A *conservative* action model does not embody these concerns, and may emphasize the loyalty to the ruler in person. It conforms to the rulers’ interpretations at any time of constitutional and policy obligations, as well as to their representation of tradition, values and norms of the society. It may see recruitment on the basis of political and other elite connections as an advantage for the smooth operations of the technocrats.

As to the relationship to the clientele, a *radical* action model is responsive to the poor communities themselves, represented by their own spokesmen and women, with whom they may strongly identify. There is an ethos of *public service*: norms of neutrality keep in check political, religious and other bias in the relationship with the communities, as seen, for example, in the allocation of funds and services across regional and party political dividing lines. The public servant has obligations and the citizens have rights. A radical action model is willing to relinquish autonomy when it comes to being held to account to democratic institutions and legitimately elected representatives of the people, but without renouncing their principles of neutrality or compliance with stipulated policies, constitutional requirements and the rule-of law. It tends to emphasize capacity-building among the poor communities so that they can contribute to the effective co-management and/or monitoring e.g. of the construction, operations and maintenance of service delivery facilities.

A *conservative* action model is more prone to define local elites (politicians, chiefs or traditional businessmen) as well as businessmen as their main clients, with whom they identify strongly. The ethos is one of *effectiveness* and thus privatization: the public managers should be result-oriented, and fast disbursement of funds is more important than the right disbursement. To obtain results, it is advised that the managers make deals with any officeholder that they think might create ‘obstacles’. Hence, the managers may be tolerant of rent-seeking and political/electoral considerations in the allocation of funds,

and they are elite oriented. It is 'politics-as-usual/business-as-usual'. There is more emphasis on the interaction with contractors/subcontractors (service providers) than with end users (service recipients). The contractors are the most important 'customers'. Information is considered a business asset, and is shared on a particularistic and opportunistic basis.



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## 6 Social Funds in Zambia

### 6.1 The political environment

Zambia experienced a profound shift of political-economic regime in 1990-91. A popular movement introduced multipartyism and swept a trade union leader, Frederick Chiluba to power. Democratic local self-government was reintroduced, although the grassroots political-administrative structures were weakened once the one-party state of Kenneth Kaunda was dissolved. The donor community embraced Chiluba, and the World Bank chose Zambia to pilot social funds on African soil. The Social Recovery Project (SRP) started in 2001.

Chiluba quickly converted to pro-American religious and economic fundamentalism. An aggressive neo-liberal policy increased the hardships of an already troubled people. Poverty doubled during the ten years of Chiluba personalist rule, and the public sector – in particular the local government authorities – was starved nearly to death. At the same time the quality of governance worsened. After a wave of democratization and decentralization, one saw particularly in Chiluba's second period as elected president (1996-2001) increasing personalization, centralization and corruption of power. The privatization campaign, mainly of the mining sector, was surrounded by a series of corruption scandals. Indeed, President Chiluba excelled in practicing 'patrimonial democracy' (see Braathen 2002).

However, the people struck back. Chiluba's attempts to change the constitution and get elected for a third period were barred by civil society protests and opposition in his own party, Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD). In the general elections in December 2001, MMD's Presidential candidate was Levy Mwanawasa. He got only 29 per cent of the votes, but won narrowly due to the split among the many opposition parties. The new President gave a green light to a legal prosecution against Chiluba and promised to combat corruption and improve the democratic governance of the country (see Rakner 2003).

The SFs managed to keep an arm's length from Chiluba. The SRPs I and II from 1991 to 2000 supported approximately 1400 community initiatives. That covered nearly 10 per cent of Zambia's population, with a total of \$45 million for sub-projects. 76 per cent of the sub-projects supported education rehabilitations, while health projects made up 14 per cent and water supply projects 7 per cent. The World Bank evaluated SRP to be highly successful. Hence the third SF project in that country, the Zambia Social Investment Fund (ZAMSIF) became effective on 1 July 2000. It was to spend \$65 million for the five-year period 2000-2005 (ZAMSIF 2000, 2002).

## 6.2 The technocrats' relationship to the political authorities

ZAMSIF is managed by a semi-autonomous Management Unit based in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. The Programme Manager is assisted by a management team of six. The Unit at the central level had in total 25 managers and officers, plus support staff. At the regional level they had thirteen officers; one or two officers based in each of Zambia's nine provinces (ZAMSIF 2000). In total, ZAMSIF had nearly 40 officers, all with university degrees, and all hired on a consultant contract basis for five years. This caters for a far more competent, cross-disciplinary, coordinated and hence influential unit than other government agencies aiming at development interventions.

The integration with other central level stakeholders – ministries, donor agencies, NGOs, business associations – is formally ensured by the national level ZAMSIF Steering Committee. It meets every six months to “guide, develop and harmonize the policies of ZAMSIF and to monitor its performance. The Permanent Secretary for Budget and Economic Affairs in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development will be the chairperson, and the ZAMSIF Management Unit will be the secretary” (ZAMSIF 2000: 3). Hence, ZAMSIF appears ‘semi-autonomous’: fenced off from interference from cabinet members and politicians, but quite well embedded in the most influential technocratic decision-making circles of the country.

These two factors – a staff at the top well equipped for development intervention, with full support from leading donor and bureaucratic authorities – makes ZAMSIF a powerful force at the sub-national levels. The small size of the management unit, and above all its scant representation at the regional level, means that ZAMSIF depends heavily on cooperation with public servants at the provincial level and with the local government authorities. This seems to be a deliberate measure: ZAMSIF is designed to inject more dynamic cooperation across the sectors at the local levels. The government bureaucracy is co-opted into the ZAMSIF, rather than the other way round, along the lines of ‘adhocery’: flexible recruitment of officers to task forces and committees with tasks or purposes carefully defined by ZAMSIF itself. This is most clearly manifested in the most strategic instruments of ZAMSIF: the Provincial Assessment Committees (PACs), which are

[S]et up in every Province either as a sub-committee of the Provincial Development Coordinating Committees (PDCC) or as a separate committee. The PAC will agree the indicative planning figures for districts, approve District Investment Fund (DIF) projects, monitor performance of districts participating in the DIF and either demote or promote districts according to agreed criteria (ZAMSIF 2000).

Hence, the PAC is a forerunner in administrative decentralization (deconcentration) in the Zambian public sector, equipped with important decision-making powers. But even more important, the PAC-network is the axis of maybe the most concerted and radical attempt to reform the local government system in Zambia since 1992. ZAMSIF introduces a classification of the local councils according to criteria of managerial capacity (planning, implementation and financial management capacity). The assessments of the PACs decide the classification of each council from one year to another. There are five levels of classification and more grants, and greater local autonomy in the use of them (increased discretion and reception of ‘unconditional’ grants) are guaranteed for each higher level.

This provides an advanced incentive system, that is, an element of a quasi-market and competition between the councils to achieve higher status. It can also be used for fiscal decentralization reform purposes. In other words ZAMSIF is, through its PACs and five-level qualification system, heading a major measure to introduce national NPM reforms. This might be very much in accordance with the political program of the World Bank and other donor agencies, but it has not been debated or voted on in the national parliament or cabinet.

To sum up:

- (i) ZAMSIF is a powerful political tool for changing the political-administrative system of the country, in particular its inter-government (inter-ministry and central-local) relations.
- (ii) It has sidelined the central-level political system (Parliament and Cabinet). However, ZAMSIF does *not* introduce a (neo-colonial) parallel structure that sidelines and downgrades the national vertical administrative system. On the contrary, it helps 'upgrade' core elements of that system – particularly local government.
- (iii) ZAMSIF appears to be insulated from political manipulation by elected leaders at the national level. There seems to be a transparent and impartial system for allocation of funds. All Zambia's 72 local councils have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with ZAMSIF and received training in the required modules.<sup>3</sup>

### 6.3 The technocrats' relationship to the clientele

ZAMSIF's goal is to contribute to the improved, expanded and sustainable use of services provided in a governance system where local governments and communities are mutually accountable (ZAMSIF 2000: 1)

The main direct intervention to the district level is through capacity building workshops. Awareness workshops are organized first in the province with the political and administrative representatives of all districts; then in all districts including representatives from all villages/communities. In addition, the district planners are given extra training.

Apart from this, contact between the ZAMSIF officer and districts/communities takes place frequently during construction work. In addition, the district is visited by the PAC every six months. These visits are rather relaxed and supervisory by nature, and they do not seem to produce any authoritarian/clientelistic relationship.<sup>4</sup> After one year of operations, the districts may receive quarterly funds for their own capacity building activities.

Zambia established in 1995, in response to a cabinet circular, a District Development Coordinating Committee (DDCC) in all 72 districts of the country. The heads of all government departments present in the district, representatives of the Council (chairman/mayor and secretary/town clerk), plus invited representatives of NGOs or donor agencies operating in the district, sit on the Committee. However, in most of the districts, the DDCC has been dormant for lack of designated tasks and resources. ZAMSIF has changed this situation: it brings life to DDCCs.

The key person in this process is the District Planning Officer employed by the council. Very few councils had any DPO before year 2000. However, ZAMSIF makes it a minimum condition for a council to be eligible for funds (by signing a Memorandum of Understanding with ZAMSIF) that a DPO is in place. He then becomes the secretary of

the Planning Sub-Committee (PSC) of DDCC. The PSC prepares the main planning documents: a District Situation Analysis, a District Poverty Assessment, and a District Poverty Reduction Strategy. It also appraises projects, provides relevant technical input into the process of budgeting and costing, and recommends ZAMSIF proposals. These are discussed in the DDCC, which in turn presents them to a standing committee of the Council (consisting of elected councilors; their committee on plans, works and development) and the Full Council Meeting for approval.

ZAMSIF's main component is the Community Investment Fund (CIF). The stated aim of CIF is to "empower local communities through the financing of sub-projects identified, implemented, managed, operated and maintained by the communities" (ZAMSIF 2000:1).

Visits to a few districts indicate that there has so far been no 'democratic-participatory' process behind the selection of the beneficiary communities. The reason is that there has been no really representative political structure to link the villages with the district administration (the PSC/DDCC). There is the 'ward', which is the constituency of a councilor elected on a simple majoritarian basis. However, there are usually up to twenty villages in each ward. With the extremely bad feeder road and transport conditions in the rural areas, there is no way for the councilor to be truly responsive to all the villages. Hence, on average only 20 per cent of the electorate turn out for the election of the councilor.

The councilors standing committee might be consulted, but the fieldwork data point in the direction that the DPO and his Planning sub-committee will already have agreed on which communities are most 'in need' of which type of facilities (fresh water, schools, health centers). This is disclosed by their planning documents and other overviews. Then they consult the councilor of the area, and they ask for his support. What is left to the selected communities is to elect a Project Committee – for which gender balance is required. It sits for the year or so it takes to complete the project, and its main task is to guarantee local contributions to the construction project in terms of 'voluntary work'. This unpaid work should in the budget be quantified and approximate to 15 % of the total costs.

However, there is an agreement between ZAMSIF, the district management teams and the councilors in many districts that representative sub-district structures need to be built, to ensure bottom-up participatory planning. Hence, in one district visited, the council has built Area Development Committees (ADCs) in four of the fifteen wards. The ADC members are elected at different Zone Public Meetings, with one zone for approximately each 1000 inhabitants, and a minimum of 100 people must attend the meeting. The DPO will apply for capacity building money from ZAMSIF for that purpose. Local development of building contractors seemed to be a visible, but minor, consequence of the ZAMSIF intervention in the district. Not more than 30 per cent of the ZAMSIF project funds in the district was paid out to local contractors. In terms of 'empowerment', the subcontracting activity might also have increased the status and management capacity of the elected Project Committee.

To sum up:

- (i) The ZAMSIF officers and assessment committees interact with the district management in an ostensibly empowering and supportive manner. In particular, the district planners are becoming strengthened in the local political-administrative system.

- (ii) There are elements of community empowerment, but the absence or weakness of permanent sub-district democratic structures reduce the scope and sustainability of this empowerment. Local building contractors also seem to benefit, albeit modestly.
- (iii) This lack of sub-district democratic structures allows local politicians (the councilors) room for maneuver to influence the choice of beneficiary communities, but the power of the planning officers in the process has the potential to limit this type of local-political clientelism. Nevertheless, since ZAMSIF provides 60-70 per cent of the net resource inflow to the communities in the district visited over the current five year period, these districts may collectively enter a relationship of dependence on ZAMSIF. ZAMSIF is definitely popular in the districts, though the programs it delivers are not *necessarily* popularly controlled.

## 7 Social Funds in Tanzania – a contrasting case

### 7.1 The political environment

Tanzania is Africa's most aid-dependent country. 70 per cent of its GNP is financed by multi- or bilateral foreign aid. (In Zambia about 40 per cent of GNP is aid-funded). However, Tanzania with its estimated 33 million inhabitants (Zambia has 15 million) is also one of the politically most stable countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. One party, TANU/CCM<sup>5</sup>, has ruled Tanzania since independence in 1961. The official ideology formulated by the 'Father of the Nation', Mwalimu ('Teacher') Julius Nyerere was 'Ujamaa (village based) socialism'.

With the introduction of multipartyism in 1995, CCM and president Benjamin Mkapa has reverted to neo-liberal orthodoxy. However, in practice the political and economic changes – like the privatization of state owned enterprises – have been made much more cautiously than in neighboring countries. In contrast to Zambia, Tanzania's economy is showing signs of a sustainable growth and recovery from the lost decades of the 1980s and 1990s. At the grassroots level the unique structures of popular participation have survived the one-party system. There are multiparty elections of leaders at the neighborhood (hamlet) and village/township level, and the ward level has a proper administration with a ward executive officer and line ministry extension officers. Nonetheless, the non-elected tier between the district and the central state (the region) has been, and is still, much more powerful in Tanzania than in Zambia. Hence, the legacy of the one-party state equips Tanzania with a strange combination of, on the one hand, immense bureaucratic rule and, on the other, grassroots democracy. The problems of corruption that were identified with the elected leaders in Zambia, are in Tanzania more associated with senior (de facto one-party state) bureaucrats.

Compared to Zambia, Tanzania's recent experience with SFs is more recent. Tanzania Social Action Fund, TASAF, started in 2000 and runs in parallel with ZAMSIF, to 2005. The size of the 'IDA development credit'<sup>6</sup> agreed with the World Bank is \$60 million, slightly less than Zambias \$67 million.<sup>7</sup>

### 7.2 The technocrats' relationship to the political authorities

Like ZAMSIF, TASAF has a highly educated and slim central staff. It consists of nationals only, working on consultancy assignment terms. However, the staff appear to be more senior and closer to retirement age. At the headquarters in Dar-es-Salaam they are

only 23 managers and specialized officers. There are two major personnel policy differences from ZAMSIF. First, there are six desk liaison officers in the key partner ministries: Water, Community Development, Regional Administration and Local Government, Health, Education, Works. Second, TASAF has an army of district sergeants: 42 TASAF district accountants; (making 65 professionals in total on TASAF full-time consultant terms). In addition there are 42 TASAF project coordinators paid by the local government councils, and up to 40 officers hired on a part-time basis in each district to facilitate TASAF related participatory planning in the villages. The local corps includes about 107 full-time officers plus more than one thousand part time officers.

Hence, TASAF provides a small and coherent parallel structure to the civil service. The heavy bureaucracies of the line ministries are co-opted (as in Zambia) at central and local levels, but they are effectively by-passed at the intermediate regional level (unlike in Zambia). TASAF operates semi-autonomously under the auspices of the President's Office. There is a TASAF National Steering Committee of twelve or thirteen people. The chairman is appointed by the President of Tanzania. In addition there is the Permanent Secretary in the Vice-President's office for Poverty Eradication, a representative from the Regional Administration and Local Government department, a Regional Administrative Secretary, some other representatives from key ministries, and from civil society: one from the umbrella for the NGOs, some from faith groups, and some private sector representatives.

In Tanzania there is much less of a fair, balanced and impartial allocation of funds across regional and party political dividing lines than in Zambia. TASAF operates in only 40 of the 86 districts on the mainland, and in the Zanzibar and Pemba Islands. This may raise suspicions of political bias in the selection. The strongholds of the opposition – districts in Arusha and Kilimanjaro – are not among the TASAF beneficiaries, but this can be due to the fact that they are among the best off districts when it comes to social service infrastructures. There is a pressure in Parliament to extend TASAF to all the districts of the country. A cabinet minister told Parliament that the government was considering so doing in a second phase of TASAF in 2005-2010.<sup>8</sup> This politicization of TASAF is of course part of the ruling party's concern for the Presidential and Parliamentary elections in 2005.

The situation in the two countries in this regard can be summed up to be that the SFs have important political functions. There is a partial sidelining of existing structures: in Zambia of the central political authorities (giving ZAMSIF an image of neutrality), in Tanzania of the bureaucratic authorities (giving TASAF an image of non-corrupt effectiveness).

### 7.3 The technocrats' relationship to the clientele

A TASAF Project Coordinator is recruited among the Council employees, chosen by the District Executive Director. The coordinator is thus a Council employee, fully paid by the Council, but TASAF equips the coordinator well, with a vehicle, a computer, a fax machine and a photo-copier. TASAF dispatches an auditor on its own payroll to the district.

A more important difference from Zambia is that there is a District Steering Committee for the SF projects. The committee consists of the District Commissioner (a Presidential appointment), the District Executive Director (administrative head of the district council), plus a handful of councilors (council chairman, a woman councilor, chairmen of standing committees, plus the councilors from the piloting projects/wards). In this way, the local

political notables have potentially a much stronger influence over the selection of beneficiary communities than in Zambia, where a 'joint staff' of planning officers have the upper arm. Hence, when we visited two wards in a rural district, we found that the TASAF projects were usually allocated to the village where the councilor comes from. In the district as a whole, not more than one project was operating in each ward. Except for the village of the council chairman, which was the only one in the district that had received two projects.<sup>9</sup>

Another expression of the politicized and manipulative character of SFs in Tanzania, in marked difference from Zambia, is that people are informed that the projects are gifts from the Tanzanian Government, not based on loans from the World Bank. 'TASAF is only a funding mechanism, so we say: "This is not a donor agency project, it is part of the Government"'<sup>10</sup>. This was confirmed by a head teacher in a village, "People think TASAF is a CCM/government thing, not World Bank. I therefore think that TASAF helps to increase people's support to the Government".<sup>11</sup> However, this may be a sign of stronger 'national ownership' of the program.

To what extent are local sub-contractors disproportionately benefiting? On the one hand, 'one of the aims is to build entrepreneurial "private" capacity (skills) at the community level'. On the other, the scope seems to be quite limited, and the cumbersome World Bank procurement guidelines are used.<sup>12</sup>

How are communities affected? As with ZAMSIF, the main component is construction of social service facilities managed by community committees. In Tanzania the community involvement in the planning left a lot to be desired. It was based on 'Participatory Rural Assessments' (PRA) that had a very short-term and clientelistic orientation. A PRA team of three or four government extension officers 'invade' a village for five days. They establish focus groups and come up with 'a shopping list'. There is a vote in the village assembly on what are the major needs in the village; needs supposed to be met by TASAF. Hence, TASAF calls this exercise Community Needs Assessment (CNA). However, the District Planning Officer expressed concern with the quality of this type of exercise: "It is supposed to be bottom-up, but that is not the case. People at the grassroots level are not well capacitated. They just shop-list their problems, and want us deliver it".<sup>13</sup>

The 'auxiliary' fund component is different in the two countries. The District Investment Fund (DIF) in ZAMSIF is managed by the District Council, while the Public Works Programme in TASAF sidelines the councils to involve the communities directly, and it targets the poorest-of-the poor and the women in the villages who are also co-managing the projects. However, as strategy for community empowerment it was a bit double-edged, as we saw in our village visits. Such a public works program may create dependence and clientelism, particularly by undermining the longtime policy that development should be based on unpaid labor contributions from the communities – the so-called Self-Help principle. The public works program was based on paid labor to selected members of the community.<sup>14</sup>

To sum up: to a greater extent than in Zambia, we found that the Social Funds in Tanzania did tend to promote political clientelism at the local level. TASAF increased the resources for re-election of local politicians, favored certain villages against others, and introduced individual and non-inclusive arrangements for social assistance in the communities.



## 7.4 The technocrats' action model: radical Zambia, conservative Tanzania?

In both countries the SF technocrats represent a reforming – and hence ‘modernizing’ – faction of the state bureaucracy. However, their action models are contrasting in nearly every respect. In Zambia, they seek to radically change the government system of the country in favor of local councils, communities and their elected representatives (councilors). They try to insulate themselves from central and party political authorities and achieve a reputation of neutrality, while in Tanzania the SF technocrats admit that they are ‘politicized’ and accept that they build the popularity of the ruling party and its leaders. The Tanzanian technocrats seek to enhance their autonomy vis-à-vis the line ministry bureaucracies and local councils, which they consider to be corrupt and ineffective, while they try to present themselves as non-corrupt and effective. Like their Zambian colleagues, they are modernizing in the sense that they espouse a public service ethos emphasizing effective, non-corrupt and improved service delivery to the people, and they show no inclinations to advance the interests of private business elites. However, the selection of means is very different.

There are reasons to say that the Tanzanian technocrats reproduce a practice of manipulation from above. They allow national political leaders to instrumentalize the SFs. They themselves see no problem with interfering directly into the local government level by deploying their own planners and accountants, setting up their own district project committees, and choosing selectively the local councils, communities and councilors to cooperate with. In this way, the Tanzanian technocrats contribute to ‘conserving’ the clientelistic features of the political system of their country.

In Zambia, on the other hand, the SF technocrats attempt to elevate the status, power and resources of all the local councils. They recruit professionals from the provincial government level to supervise the councils, and they involve all the councilors and local planners in their efforts, using the existing government planning committees of the districts. They also try to build permanent participatory structures at the sub-district level and enhance community empowerment programs. Block grants, corresponding to transparent criteria of size, needs and accountability capacity, are transferred to the councils

In sum, although sharing some radical visions of reforming the service delivery system in their countries, the Zambian SF technocrats try to transform the country in a more decentralized, ostensibly democratic and self-governing direction, while the Tanzanian technocrats tend to reproduce the existing centralized and clientelistic political system. Still, the more developed and institutionalized grassroots democracy, at the village level, in Tanzania have potentials to change the picture and provide more effective popular-democratic control of development programs.

## 8 Concluding remarks

The Social Funds in Zambia and Tanzania, funded and supported by the World Bank, are genuinely popular. In this way they tend to ease the popular resistance against the Bretton Woods influence in the countries, and consequently they help legitimizing the clientelist relationship between the World Bank/IMF and these nations. At this level we find that the SFs indeed support technocratic clientelism. While there is no convincing evidence that the SFs help reducing poverty in a sustainable way, a focus on technocrats-in-action show that this World Bank-programme has important impacts on the central-local and state-society relationships in the respective countries.

However, the political-administrative impacts of one given program (the SFs) are far from uniform in the two countries. On this the World Bank writers were right – the SFs ‘have different features and objectives depending on where they are implemented’, and Judith Tandler was wrong. Nevertheless, the Tanzanian case supports Tandler’s account of technocratic clientelism at the domestic level, as seen in Latin-America. The SFs interact closely with the political-administrative local power-holders and become a tool in their efforts to reproduce power within a neo-patrimonial and clientelistic state. However, the Zambian case transcends this picture. In an international comparative perspective, the Zambian SFs are genuinely a political-radical influence. In both countries technocratic intervention has been politicized, albeit in a *conservative* direction in Tanzania, *radical* direction in Zambia.

This chapter has tried to argue that the technocrats’ perceptions and ideological orientations – their action models – count, but of course they have not determined the divergent function of the SFs in Zambia. The fact that the current Zambian ‘second generation’ SFs, unlike the Tanzanian, are built on the learning process of the ‘first generation’, and that they have far more resources available (67 million USD for the 15 million population, against 60 million USD for Tanzania’s 33 million population) and can embrace all the districts of the country, might have made a big difference. Moreover, structural factors like a strong political opposition, a more mature civil society, a weakening and delegitimization of dominant political structures, and the high level of education and self-esteem among civil servants interplay favorably for the Zambian case. These structural factors contribute to shaping *the role of the state* in the type of poverty reduction analyzed here, albeit subject to the inherent limitations of top-down modes of intervention. Though they may be managerially contrived, they contribute to providing elements of political radicalization, greater autonomy and increased room-for-maneuver, as well as more embeddedness in local societies and coalitions for change, among the technocrats in Zambia.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The duration of the field work focusing on SFs was about one week in each country. However, this field work was embedded in larger research projects on rural development (Zambia 1998-2002) and local government reform (Tanzania 2002-2005), respectively. Both research projects were funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation.

<sup>2</sup> Background Notes for the World Bank's presentation of the *Social Funds Impact Evaluation* at NORAD/MFA, Oslo 15 June 2001. See also Chase and Sherburne-Benz 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Interview with a ZAMSIF national manager, 4 February 2003

<sup>4</sup> Source: interview with the Planning Officer in a District Council, 7 February 2003.

<sup>5</sup> TANU was the acronym for Tanzanian African National Union, the dominant liberation movement of the country. It changed its name in 1975 to the People's Revolution Party, or Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) in Swahili (which is the official language of the country).

<sup>6</sup> IDA is the acronym for International Development Association, which is the soft loan/grant branch of the World Bank Group

<sup>7</sup> Source: interview with a national TASAF manager, 14 February 2003, and TASAF 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Source: the Tanzanian *Guardian* daily newspaper, 12 February 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Visit to a village in ward A, 25 February 2003; visit to a village in ward B on 27 February 2003.

<sup>10</sup> . Interview with the Planning Officer in a District Council, 26 February 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Interview 25 February 2003

<sup>12</sup> Source: interview with the TASAF district coordinator in a district visited 24 February 2003.

<sup>13</sup> The planning officer in a district council, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> The village constructed a dam for fish farming and agricultural irrigation. The workers were paid one dollar a day for six months. The chairman and members of the project committee were among those indicated as the poorest in the village. Most of the workers were women – widows or single mothers. The people selected for the work were those suggested by the neighborhood committee leaders to be the poorest of the poor. However, at the end of the day, only half of those being poor enough to be eligible for the work program were selected. Sources: The TASAF committee chairman and the Village Chairman in the village visited 25 February 2003.