

Exploration of Agriculture Cooperative Enterprising Performance in Kabwe District, Zambia

Mukwalikuli Mundia, Chewe Nkonde, Francis Simui, Joseph Imasiku

Abstract— In this study, we explored agriculture cooperative enterprising performance in Kabwe District. A qualitative approach was applied and four agricultural cooperatives were selected using stratified purposive sampling namely; Bantu agricultural cooperative, Mulungushi agricultural cooperative, Kasosolo agricultural cooperative and Katobo agriculture cooperative. The sample size comprised of the Senior Cooperative and Enterprise Development Officer, the District Cooperative and Enterprise Development Officer, Cooperative and Enterprise Development Inspector, 4 headmen in the localities of study, Four Agricultural Camp Officers and Cooperative Board Members of each of the four cooperatives. The specific objectives for this study were; (i) to establish cooperative enterprise performance in Kabwe District (ii) to explore the challenges faced by the agriculture cooperatives in Kabwe District. The findings of the study indicated that; there is poor cooperative enterprise performance in Kabwe District, as the majority of them are defunct. The study revealed that, the reasons behind the poor performance of agriculture cooperative in Kabwe District are; Lack of cooperative trainings, lack of Cooperative Inspection, shortage/inadequate number of cooperatives staff, lack of logistical support to the department and limited assistance of resources to the agricultural cooperatives. Thus, the study recommended that; the government needed to improve logistical support to the department of cooperatives, so that cooperative training and inspection can be enhanced. The government should also consider revising the cooperative staff structure at district level by increasing the numbers from two.

Index Terms— Agriculture; Cooperative Enterprise; Performance; Kabwe District; Zambia.

I. CONTEXT

Cooperatives have long been recognized to play important roles in society that translates into the improvement of living conditions of their members, particularly the low-income earning e.g. the neglected and the marginalized individuals of

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the population, as well as the society at large (Simamba, 2018). Being voluntary, democratic and self-controlled business associations, cooperatives offer the institutional framework through which local communities gain control over the productive activities from which they derive their livelihoods (Ofeil 2005). Participating members tap the energies of group effort and economies of scale to engage in economic activities that they would not have otherwise been able to carry out on their own, thereby enhancing their chances of improving their living conditions. It is for this reason that cooperatives continue to be promoted in Zambia and other parts of the developing world as some of the preferred instruments for poverty alleviation (Munzele, 2018). The cooperative model has to operate effectively for the members to reap benefits from its activity. Without proper guidance and monitoring, cooperatives can yield negative results, leading to stagnant livelihood conditions (Mundia et al, 2021) This sets the basis for this study, to analyze the cooperative enterprise performance in Zambia, the benefits and challenges faced by cooperatives in Zambia.

II. THE CURRENT COOPERATIVE ENTERPRISING STATUS IN ZAMBIA

Table 2 below indicates the categories of cooperatives in 2021 by province. The cooperatives were put into four (4) categories namely; “Successful, Merging, Non- enterprising and Defunct”

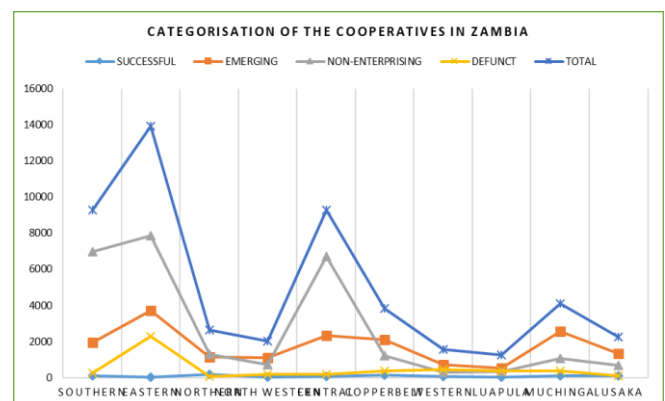


Figure 1: Categorization of cooperatives in Zambia



Source: Department of Cooperative annual report, 2021.

Key Note:

- **Successful Cooperatives:** Providing services to members; operates profitably; able to declare dividends to members; - linked to major off-takers;
- **Emerging Cooperatives:** Has paid-up members; mobilizing resources; beginning to actualize business plans, linked to minor off-takers; renting business premises;
- **Non-enterprising Cooperatives:** Registered coop, No core business, Seasonal activities; Non-profit making
- **Defunct cooperatives:** No traceable members

Source: Department of Cooperative annual report, 2021.

A. Successful Cooperatives

A successful cooperative is one which provide services to its members, operates profitably, able to declare dividends to its members and linked to major off takers (MCTI, 2021). These are the cooperatives which are capable of alleviate poverty among its members. When a cooperative is operating at this level, members will have full benefits, and it is every country's wish to have cooperatives operating at this level. Zambia had 50,265 cooperatives at the end of the year 2020 with only 818 cooperatives operating successfully representing only 1.8 percent of the total cooperatives in Zambia (MCTI, 2021). Implying that, only a very small fraction of cooperatives fully contributes to the wellbeing of the cooperative members, as the majority of the cooperatives don't contribute to livelihood improvement of its members.

B. Emerging Cooperatives

An emerging cooperative is one which has paid up members, mobilizing resources, beginning to actualize business plans, linked to minor of takers, and renting business premises (MCTI, 2021). Out of the total of 50,265 cooperatives in Zambia 17,507 are emerging, representing 37 percent of the total cooperative in Zambia. This is a very crucial stage, this is because, if they work hard and keep on improving, they move to a better stage called a "successful cooperative" and if they fail, they become "Non-enterprising" (MAL,2015). The number of successful cooperatives translate the number of emerging cooperatives which managed to pool through this stage. In this instance, we have 818 successful cooperatives, implying that; only this smaller number managed to improve themselves to the next stage. At this stage, cooperatives need a lot of coaching and trainings for it to be successful (Mundia et al, 2021). Under coaching, cooperatives department needs to play a critical role of monitoring these cooperatives closely by inspecting their books of accounts and tracking the booking records. Under trainings, various business/ entrepreneurship trainings in to be conducted like; business development strategies, principals of accounts, marketing research and record keeping (MAL, 2012). Under cooperative development, trainings like; cooperative conflicts and resolution, cooperative management and other cooperative dynamics trainings can be conducted to improve the

cooperative business operations. Failure to this, emerging cooperative will definitely fall on the non-enterprising cooperatives (Mundia et al, 2021).

C. Non-Enterprising Cooperatives

A non- enterprising cooperative is one which is registered, has no core business, it's for seasonal activities only and is not profit making (ICA, 2012). In Zambia, out of the total of 50, 265 registered cooperatives, a total of 27, 208 are not enterprising. This category has the highest number of cooperatives, representing a 50 percent of the total number of cooperatives in Zambia (MCTI, 2021). These are cooperatives which emerged and failed to grow to a successful category. This clearly indicates that, most cooperatives that emerge, fail to become successful as the majority of them become non-enterprising. Cooperatives under this category don't make profits, and the owners hardly benefit from there cooperatives (MAL, 2012). The only time they benefit can benefit is through seasonal government programmes e.g. benefiting from Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) or when they bring together their farm produce for marketing. This is a very bad stage, as it does not fully contribute poverty reduction of the cooperative members (MAL, 2015). This stage can be avoided only if cooperative trainings, business training and inspection can be enhanced at an emerging stage. From the table above, it's evident that, more than 98 percent of the cooperatives in Zambia are not fully contributing to the livelihood improvement of its members (MCTI, 2021).

D. Defunct Cooperatives

A defunct cooperative is one which has no traceable members and does no physically exist (ICA, 2007). This type of a cooperative does not contribute anything to the cooperative members, moreover, even its membership is not known (ICA,2012). Best to be done for this type of a cooperative is be deregistered. Currently, out of the 50,265 cooperatives in Zambia, 4,679 cooperatives are defunct, representing a 10 percent of the total number of cooperatives in Zambia (ICA, 2021). This stage holds all those cooperatives that failed on the above discussed stages, and once they are at a non-enterprising stage, if nothing is done to revamp them, they will definitely become defunct (Mundia, et al, 2021). It is mostly common that, members from such a cooperative migrate to other existing cooperatives which are performing better or forming a new cooperative all together. At this stage, the cooperative members are not even comfortable to talk about the previous cooperative which associates them with failure, hence very difficult to trace them.

III. CHALLENGES FACED BY ZAMBIAN COOPERATIVES

Cooperatives in Zambia like in many other developing countries face numerous challenges, ranging from political interference/control from the government, inadequate

trainings and inadequate cooperative inspections

A. Political control

Zambian cooperatives still face a lot of political control, hence making their operations negatively affected and this hinders their progress and sustainability (Mundia et al, 2021). For example, the new down government (UPND) is still emphasizing on the formation of more cooperatives in the country for youths, this is in line with trying to reduce the high levels of unemployment in the country. The questions to be ask are; do these new cooperatives really have the business vision? What is it that, they will start doing which the majority of the dormant cooperatives failed to do at national level? Have these cooperatives been oriented on cooperative development (both on cooperative business and cooperative management)? These are the government decisions which keeps the increase of dormant cooperatives at national level (Wanyama, 2009). Mostly, cooperatives formed under such decisions become political with very much poor cooperative business mission and vision, hence high levels of failure. On the other hand, those cooperatives who maybe be identified as “from the opposition” may not benefit from the finances and other resources from the government (Wanyama, 2008). Cooperatives should be left to operate willfully, with the government only coming in for policy guidance, financial assistance and other assistance without any political control or interference.

B. Inadequate Trainings.

It’s mostly argued that, our cooperatives in Zambia need more of changing the mindset than financial assistance. Zambian cooperative needs a lot of training for knowledge and skill acquisition on cooperative management and business development (MCTI, 2021). Unfortunately, Zambian cooperatives still don’t have access to cooperative trainings, the reasons range from lack of logistical support “finances and better transport” to the department of cooperatives in the country (MAL, 2015). From the study which was conducted, it was found out that, the department of cooperative don’t have reliable transport at district level and moreover, they rarely received funding from the government for them to conduct some cooperative trainings, hence the knowledge gap. If these training can be conducted frequently, the country can have hope for the increase in the number of successful cooperatives at national level, unlike the current prevailing situation, where, more that 50% of the cooperatives are dormant at national level (MAL, 2012).

C. Inadequate Inspections.

Cooperative inspection is very much important to cooperative development of any nation (Wanyama, 2009). This serves as a guide from the department of cooperatives to the cooperative members on their business operations and other cooperatives activities. Cooperative inspection must be conducted frequently to cooperatives in country, this helps in

continuously giving guidance to the cooperative members. Unfortunately, in Zambia, such activities rarely take place due to logistical support challenges (MCTI, 2021). Leaving cooperatives to operate on their own without inspections makes very difficult hence leading high business failure rates. With adequate cooperative inspections, mistakes in cooperatives activities are likely to be identified and corrected before the situation becomes uncontrollable.

IV. BENEFITS OF ENTERPRISING COOPERATIVES TO ITS MEMBERS.

cooperative is a community-centered development business, incorporating low-income people into the socioeconomic mainstream (Wanyama. 2009), a channel through which a community democratically takes control of its socioeconomic destiny, based on common geography, experiences, and a unified effort to achieve community-established goals. Cooperative members synergistically strive toward social, economic, and environmental self-sustainability. To achieve community-established goals, members believe in ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility, and reciprocal care (Wanyama. 2009). The community identifies its economic, social, political, and external resources. cooperatives must train and educate members in needed skills, promote group efforts, focus on community needs, create job opportunities, invest in community capital projects, and return net earnings to member owners, pro rata to involvement (Pinto, 2009). The quality of cooperatives in community development is associated with their ability to create interdependent economic, human, and social capital. Community networking combines social capital with community norms, each member trusting all others to ease coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. It improves access to economic capital and political influence, which sustains human capital, crucial for community development (Kayula 2018).

semantically, a cooperative remains ambiguous, proffering different interpretations of cooperative core functions like government extensions and non-governmental organizations or projects. Literature is succinct when semantically interpreting cooperatives. Ortmann and King (2007) hold that cooperatives respond to market failures and provide needed goods and services at affordable prices without compromising quality. On these bases, cooperatives are distinct vehicles for effective service delivery, empower people to improve their quality of life, maximize economic opportunities through self-help initiatives, developmentally favor the poor, and address strictly second economy setbacks. The establishment of a successful cooperative is not devoid of the institutional, organizational, and operational problems discussed below.

Cooperatives, as economic enterprises and as self-help organizations, play a meaningful role in uplifting the socio-economic conditions of their members and their local communities. Over the years, cooperative enterprises have successfully operated locally owned people-centered businesses while also serving as catalysts for social organization and cohesion. With their concern for their

members and communities, they represent a model of economic enterprise that places high regard for democratic and human values and respect for the environment (Siame, 2016).

each member having one vote, they empower people to own their own solutions, and because they pool risks at the level of the enterprise and offer micro-insurance they increase security.³ In addition, there is increasing evidence indicating that cooperatives also contribute directly and indirectly to meeting several of the other MDGs⁴, such as primary education for children, gender equality and reducing child mortality (Nkhoma, 2011). The cooperative enterprise also presents an important model as many of the world's poorest and disadvantaged face social exclusion, lack of access to opportunities and growing economic inequality. As the uneven effects of globalization have led to a rise in the unregulated informal economy, workers in the informal sector have formed shared service cooperatives and associations to assist in their self-employment (MAL, 2012). In rural areas, savings and credit cooperatives provide access to banking services which are lacking in many communities. Credit cooperatives also play an important role in the formation of small and micro businesses (Mundia, et al, 2021). They can affect the kind of financial 'deepening' that the World Bank envisages, as they consistently reach the poor in a sustainable way. The cooperative enterprise is also relevant in addressing the problem of food insecurity. Because cooperatives are economic associations, they provide the opportunity for poor people to raise their incomes.

IIX. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Overview

The approach for this study was purely qualitative using a case study. The methodology includes the following: study site, Data generation process and the findings of the study.

B. Study site

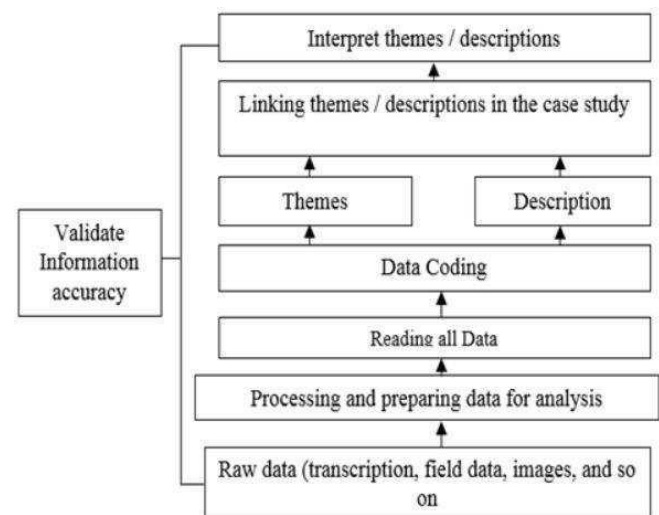
Currently, Kabwe District has 734 cooperatives, of which 668 are agricultural cooperatives (Dept of Cooperatives, Kabwe, 2021). The sample size for this study comprised of 4 agricultural cooperatives which were purposively selected because they are into agriculture entrepreneurial activities in Kabwe District. The cooperatives comprised the sample size are: Katobo women agricultural cooperative society, Bantu agricultural cooperative society, Mulungushi agro cooperative society and Kasosolo agricultural cooperative society. The study was conducted in the rural parts of Kabwe district. Katobo women agricultural cooperative society is located 60 kilometers away from Kabwe town with 27 members. The cooperative has a piggery business, after receiving a grant from Zambia Agribusiness and Trade Project (ZATP) amounting to K97, 000. They also own a feed mixer which they bought from a grant of K165, 000 from the same project. The cooperative also owns a solar powered hammer mill, which they received from the government through Zambia Cooperative Federation (ZCF).

The second cooperative is Mulungushi Agriculture Cooperative Society. The cooperative has a solar powered hammer mill, which it received from the government of the republic of Zambia (GRZ) through Zambia Cooperative Federation (ZCF). The cooperative has two tractors, a piggery, cattle, and houses which they rent to tenants. The cooperative has 200 cooperative members in total, and it is 60 kilometers away from Kabwe town.

The third cooperative is Kasosolo Agriculture Cooperative with a solar powered hammer mill, received from the government for mealie mill processing, they are also into buying and selling of maize. The cooperative has a piggery and currently has 4 workers. The cooperative has 28 members, and it is 32 kilometers away from Kabwe town.

The fourth cooperative is Bantu Agriculture Cooperative Society. The cooperative has a solar powered hammer mill, received from the government, as part of their current business. They have been into feed production (cattle, chicken, and ducks). The cooperative has a total number of 84 members, of which 39 are males and 45 females. The cooperative is 35 kilometers away from Kabwe town.

C. Data Generation Process.



(Creswell, 2008).

For data collection, the researcher used key informant interview guide and focus group discussions as instruments. The key informant interview guide was administered to two (2) cooperative board members of each of the four (2) agriculture cooperatives and two (2) non cooperative members with vast agriculture cooperative knowledge in those communities (the camp agricultural officers and headmen). The key informant interview guide was also administered to the District Cooperative Development Officer (DCDO) for Kabwe district, the senior cooperatives Officer for Central Province and Central Province Zambia Cooperative Federation (ZCF) officer.

The focus group discussion included; (chairperson, the vice chairperson, the secretary, the vice secretary, the treasurer, and the trustee members) from each agricultural cooperative enterprise. Focus group discussions helped to explore topics that were uncomfortable for participants to discuss as individuals (Creswell, 2008). The study had a total of 4 groups, which formed the focus group discussion as a sample for the study. Each group will comprise of 8 board members.

Qualitative data was analyzed by first organizing and preparing raw data for analysis, this is where validating the accuracy of the information started. After preparing the raw data, the next step was to read through all the data, in readiness for coding the data using hands. Since this was a case study, the descriptions were interrelated and finally interpreting the meaning of the descriptions and generated themes.

V. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

When the question was asked, on the cooperative enterprise performance in Kabwe district, responses indicated that, there is poor performance of cooperative enterprising in Kabwe district, as the majority of cooperatives are not enterprising and only a few are enterprising. This question gave birth to three themes as reasons to the poor performance. Theme one is lack of cooperative training, theme two shortage of cooperative members of staff, lack of logistical support and limited assistance of resources.

A. Theme 1: Cooperative poor performance.

In all instances, the findings from the participants of the focus group discussions and key informant interviews indicated that, generally, there is poor enterprising performance of cooperatives in Kabwe district as the majority are not enterprising. This is what was said by participant 10 from key informant interviews;

The majority of cooperatives at district level are not enterprising, only a few are enterprising, (P10, 2022)

B. Sub theme 1: Lack of cooperative trainings.

In view of the main theme, findings from the participants of the key informant interview and focus group discussion indicated that lack of cooperative training as one of the reasons contributing to poor enterprising performance of cooperative in Kabwe district. This is what was said by participant 11 from key informant interviews;

We rarely receive these trainings from the government (department of cooperative and enterprise development). In 2021 for example, we didn't receive any training from the government, (P11, 2022).

C. Sub theme 2. Lack of Cooperative Inspection

In line with the main theme, the findings from the key informant interviews and focus group discussions indicated that lack of cooperative inspection negatively affect the enterprising of cooperatives in Kabwe district. This is what was said by participant 6 from focus group 4;

Our agriculture cooperative was not inspected the whole year of 2021, (P4, 2022)

D. Sub theme 3: Shortage/inadequate number of cooperatives staff.

In line with the main theme above, the findings from the key informant interview and focus group discussion revealed that, the shortage/ inadequate number of cooperative staff at district level also contribute to the poor enterprising performance of cooperatives in Kabwe district. This is what was said by participant 3 from key informant interviews;

The cooperative structure has only two members of staff at district level and moreover, mostly, there is only one member of staff in every district Kabwe district inclusive, (P3, 2022)

E. Sub theme 4: Lack of logistical support.

In line with the main theme above, all the findings from participants from the focus group discussions and key informant interviews indicated that lack of logistical support from the government is one of the major contributor to the poor enterprising performance of cooperatives in Kabwe district. This is what was said by participant 4 from key informant interviews;

We receive funding twice or three times in a year instead of 12 times in a year, moreover we don't have reliable transport at district level, (P4, 2022).

F. Sub theme 5. Limited assistance of resources.

Arising from the main theme above, all the findings from the respondents during the key informant interviews and focus group discussions indicated that they rarely receive assistance from the government in form of money or assets. This is what was said by participant 6 from focus group 6;

We have never received any assistance from the government in form of money, we only received a hammer mill which is a loan as well, (P6, 2022).

VI. DISCUSSIONS OF THE STUDY.

The findings of this study are in line with those of Simamba, (2018) who studied on the "Barriers toward Enterprising of Cooperatives in Sesheke District, Zambia". The findings of the study indicated that, the majority of the cooperatives were not enterprising due to numerous reasons, some reasons line were, "Inadequate assistance of resources by the government and lack/inadequate trainings offered to the cooperative members by the government. In contrast, the study by Simamba, (2018), found out that, some other factors like "lack of vision, lack of markets and lack of collateral security", were major contributors towards the barriers of cooperative enterprising, whilst this study found out that, lack of cooperative inspection, poor logistical support to the department of cooperative and shortages of cooperative member staff are some of the reasons to the poor performance of cooperatives in Kabwe district.

The findings of the study were also in line with those of Nkhoma, (2011), who studied on "The Factors Hindering the Sustainability of Cooperatives in Malawi. His findings also indicated that, the majority of the cooperative in Malawi are

not sustainable, and in contrast, his findings indicated that, the factors hindering the sustainability of cooperatives are; lack of access to better markets, which is in line with the finding of Simamba of 2018, poor governance and lack of managerial skills among the cooperative members.

The findings of the study were also in contrast with the findings of Charinda, (2015), who studied on “Sustainable solutions to the resuscitation of cooperatives in Manicaland, Zimbabwe. The findings indicated that, Cooperatives are not sustainable as; members do not understand cooperative principles, only expectant to receive hand-outs, lack skilled management, poor policies and market problems.

VII. CONCLUSION.

The study generally concluded that, the majority of agricultural cooperatives in Kabwe District are poorly performing in their entrepreneurial activities due lack/inadequacy of logistical support, the study found out that, Kabwe District rarely receives funding and doesn't have reliable transport system to be used on facilitate cooperative activities like cooperative training, which leaves a wider gap between of communication and guidance between cooperative members of staff and the cooperative members. the other reason leading to poor cooperative enterprising performance is lack/inadequacy of cooperative inspection in the district. The study confirmed that, some cooperatives clocked a year without the them being inspected leading to poor performance. The other reason that that came out during the study was that, the majority of cooperatives have never received assistance of any resource from the government or donors (e.g. finances and/or equipment) to help facilitate their growth, this mostly makes them vulnerable and stranded on where to start from, as they need assistance in order for them to start operating on their own. Finally, the study also concluded that, the current cooperative staff structure is not adequate, as the structure only has slots for two positions and mostly occupied by individual (this could be the cooperative and enterprise development inspector or the District Cooperative and Enterprise Development Officer only).

VIII. RECOMMENDATION

- i. The government to improve the logistical support to the department of cooperatives at district level in terms of funding and providing reliable transport. By providing the logistical support to the department, the department of cooperatives will enhance inspections and trainings to cooperatives in the district. This will improve cooperative management and business skills and ultimately, improving the livelihood of the cooperative members
- ii. Enhancement of cooperative trainings gives a chance to cooperative enterprise enhancement and ultimately livelihood improvement. Therefore, the government and other concerned private entities and donors should concentrate on enhancing cooperative training to improve the livelihood of the cooperative members than cooperative registration.
- iii. The ministry/ government must consider revising the cooperative staff structure at district level, currently, the

cooperative structure only has two slots for the members of staff (District Cooperative and Enterprise Development Officer and Cooperatives and Enterprise Development inspector).

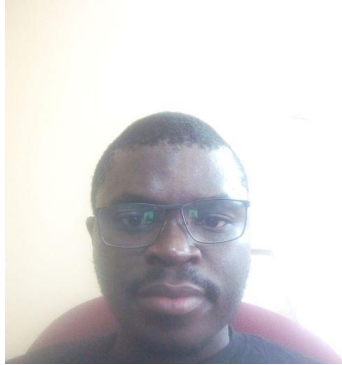
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