

Denial of employment opportunities and impoverishment of Barotseland by Zambia can no longer be ignored

by Saleya Kwalombota

The Zambian government's systematic denial of employment opportunities and impoverishment of Barotseland is a matter for serious reflection by all well-meaning citizens. This is the territory which agreed to proceed to independent with Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). It is a rich territory and has enough qualified human resource. It is comprised of the entire Western province, parts of Southern, Central, Copperbelt and North Western provinces. Minahan (2002:1117) aptly notes, "Formerly one of the wealthiest peoples in Southern Africa, the Lozi are among the poorest." The agenda of impoverishing and mutilating the territory of Barotseland by the state of Zambia is reflected in all social and economic spheres. Poverty levels in Barotseland are extremely high and cannot be divorced from Zambian policies tailored to hold the territory in perpetual enslavement.

The foregoing illustrates the extent of deprivation of Barotseland citizens in terms of employment in the public sector even before the disengagement process began. The government of Zambia through the Ministry of General Education has recruited 3,148 teachers, out of an estimated 85,000 graduates, countrywide according the Zambia Daily mail of November 23, 2017. The recruitment exercise saw Luapula receiving the biggest share of 554 teachers followed by Western province with 427 and the least is Lusaka with 182 teachers.

The recruitment exercise of teacher did not only bring out incidences of corruption but tribalism too. For example, out of the block figure of 3,148 for Western Province only 50 are Barotse. Worse still, the deployed number in Barotseland is mainly of names from Eastern, Luapula, Muchinga and North provinces. Since instruction in schools especially at lower grades is in language of the region, I wonder how such people will impart knowledge of our language and culture in our children. This has a telling effect in distortion of Barotseland culture and retardation in educational standards of our children.

Further, the 2017 report of Gross Domestic Product per provincial contributions projects Copperbelt as the highest followed by Lusaka and North Western provinces. Western province is at the bottom of the list. The report actually tallies with the outcome of the poverty census. In fact the poverty levels in Western Province not only remained the highest but also stagnant at 84% in both 1991 and 2006.

This calls for hastening of the disengagement process of Barotseland from Zambia in order to reinstate the dignity, prosperity and education standards of the territory. The Barotse will reclaim their lost jobs in both the public and private sectors. Barotseland as an independent state would have things like national stadium, bigger and with better facilities than Zambia's Heroes stadium, different sporting disciplines and facilities would allow more employment opportunities for our people. There shall be offices of the Monarch, The Prime Minister, the Legislature, the Judiciary, entire civil service, regional and local governments, Barotse Newspapers, Embassies abroad, Radio and TV stations, in addition to an entire private sector. All these would be a source of employment for our people. Today, the Zambian government is using Barotseland as a source of employment for their job seekers and a center for diverting donor funds into their pockets at the detrimental of the people of Barotseland.

Bulozi fasi la bo Ndata luna