

A governance rethink in an independent Barotseland is cardinal to spearhead the much needed development

by Saleya Kwalombota

There must be a governance rethink premised on the opportunities the former Barotseland protectorate would have achieved had it proceeded to independence alone. Zambia's political and public service agenda has nothing substantive to offer towards development of Barotseland territory and there is no equal share of Zambia's national cake. Thanks to discrimination of the former Barotseland protectorate and its dependent territories.

The foregoing is a revelation of how capital projects meant to improve livelihood of the territory's inhabitants have been neglected and frustrated by the occupying power, the government of Zambia. Most of the projects embarked upon during the late President Mwanawasa's administration have been abandoned or stalled while some projects like the Mongu stadium were for mere campaign purposes.

Among potential lead projects is the Shangombo sugar plantation. It was reported in the Daily Nation of 25th July 2014 that the program is spearheaded by The Programme Against Discrimination in Communities (PADIC). The NGO was given 30,000 hectares of land by the Barotse Royal Establishment (BRE) and were told the construction of an initial 30 unit housing complex at Shandambi area had begun.

This is out of 800 housing units expected to be built over a 15 year period. The project which would cost about US\$500 million would benefit over 1000 local people through employment creation. This is the project the Zambian government denied to have knowledge about through Western Province Minister Mubukwanu who said government was not part of Shangombo sugar plantation. It is out of desperation and shame for the government to cry to be involved in a private initiated project so that the GRZ can deviate funds outside the territory to deny the territory the much needed developments. Shangombo sugar plantation is a huge project, investing close to US\$11 billion which cannot be entrusted in the hands of the government that cheated the International Monetary Fund over its borrowing, the probability of looting such funds is high. The project is in phases but Nathaniel Mubukwanu expected to find all the dollars pumped in at once and when he did not find this he said his government was not aware of what was happening.

The other project of interest is the Sioma US\$200million hydro power project. This is expected to be the largest private sector investment in power energy in "Western province", to produce 80-megawatt (MW) of electricity. The project once implemented and completed is expected to accelerate rice and fish value chains in the territory, thus creating jobs and increasing the region's revenue base. Nevertheless, this very important project is not even sung by BRE! Other projects struggling to reach completion include the King Lewanika university at a cost of K200 million. According to a check on the works at Namushakendi by the writer, the work has stalled due to poor funding from the Zambian government. This leaves the people of Barotseland as tails in the developmental projects under the management of the Zambian government.

Finally, with much anticipated capital projects and programs, the Monarchy must show leadership by working together with technocrats and other stakeholders to open up more projects such as Barotseland mass media complex to provide Television and Radio facilities to Barotseland people. The Monarchy should awaken and together with the people of Barotseland make a difference and earn

revenue from our natural resources, inter alia exports of rice and Mulya tree (commonly known as Mukula tree in parts of Zambia).

Bulozi fasi la bo Ndata luna