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The world's most developed countries, for the most part, share the characteristic of being highly adaptive to change, whether economic, social, or technological. A country's ability to keep up with technological advances is often an indication of its economic stability. However, its ability to manipulate changing technologies for the purpose of increased financial stability is an indication of its economic wisdom.

Countries that are able to keep up with the fast-changing technologies are usually well informed, as users of these technologies must possess a sense of familiarity with the tools they are utilizing.

A major technological breakthrough in the past few years has been the emergence of ICT, which Information Communications Technology. ICT has become increasingly popular. It is effective in disseminating information, in addition to serving as an "environment [that] supports economic development." (Hesselmark and Esselaar)

The final draft of the National Information and Communication Technology Policy for Zambia defines ICT as "A generic term used to express the convergence of telecommunications, information technology, broadcasting and communications."

Furthermore, the Policy states "ICT is one of the enablers to building a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented information society; where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge by enabling individuals, communities, corporate bodies and the nation at large to achieve full potential in achieving sustainable social and economic growth – a precondition for poverty reduction thereby improving the quality of people's lives."

From 2002 to 2004, the Zambian government worked to build upon the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, which focus provides analytic reports on poverty levels in Zambia. The main goals of the PRSP is to promote economic growth with respect to manufacturing, to improve social conditions, and finally, to "incorporate crosscutting policies for HIV/AIDS, gender and the environment. (World Bank)

According to the Zambian PRSP:

Once a middle income country, Zambia has lived through three decades of declining living standards arising from poor

management of the government-owned copper mines, falling export revenues (over two-thirds of which is from copper exports), failure to diversify the economy away from mining, weak macro-economic management, rising foreign debt, and recurrent fiscal crises. Despite attempts since the mid 1990s to improve performance through macroeconomic stabilization and structural reforms (including privatization of the mines), growth has proved elusive. Per capita income in 2000 was about 60 percent of its level in the late 1 960s. It is appropriate therefore that the approach adopted in the development of the PRSP has been to analyze the lessons of the past and to focus on growth-promoting strategies for the future. However, in the last stages of finalization of the PRSP, Zambia has faced a new crisis, precipitated by the threatened withdrawal of the principal copper producer. This situation has introduced enormous uncertainty into the policy-making environment. However, the crisis has increased rather than diminished the relevance of the strategy of growth and diversification adopted in the PRSP, and the urgency of its effective implementation.

As with many other African countries, Zambia's economy continues to decline. It is ironic in light of the growing ICT industry, which has been praised for bringing financial resources into both growing and already developed nations. Zambia has an 86 percent poverty rate, which increased since 1998. Surprisingly, poverty levels have increased more in urban areas than in rural areas. (Zambian PRSP; ICT Survey for Zambia)

In African, more specifically Zambia, traveling is a fundamental means of acquiring information. People travel to hear news, to keep up with relatives and friends, to make telephone calls, and to attend school. It would be plausible to make the assumption that "5 million adults in Zambia makes two long bus trips each year in search of information." Considering that each person spends about $4.00 per year on their trips, a total of $20 million dollars is invested in the search for information. $20 million would be quite sufficient to fund an ICT Project, as Zambia's Gross Domestic Product is $8.5 billion PPP. (ICT Survey for Zambia)

In the midst of poverty, both government and industry suffer from corruption. Zambia is in high debt, and privatization of companies is not high on the agenda of the Zambian government,

although it would be favorable for the country's crippled economy. Outside investors are skeptical of the practicality of investing in Zambia, as business success is very unstable. In terms of ICT, an ISP company was forced to wait over a year to be granted a license from the Communications Authority. Other companies have thwarted the licensing policy, creating horrible financial risks and disasters for both issuing creditors and customers, alike. (ICT Survey for Zambia)

It would seem as Zambia is at the point of no return. Its multi-faceted social, political and economic system is in danger. However, as stated earlier, ICT is a viable solution to the county's many problems, particularly those pertaining to poverty. The $4.00 that people spent on trips could be used to fund electronic communications. Zambians could halve the number of trips they take, while investing $2.00 into communications, whether cell phone service or email. This would make $10 million available for the communications industry. In Zambia, an internet café charges an average of $2.00 per hour for internet usage, which, even the poorest, could manage to afford to pay for this quicker means of communication. Internet cafes are relatively easy to locate in most cities, with at least 10 in Lusaka, the capital. (ICT Survey for Zambia)

Efforts have already been to "[make] networking and knowledge sharing much easier." Link Net, an ICT developmental organization in Zambia, has began installing network connections in the rural areas of Zambia's Southern Province. (Haarhoff)

The network connections were implemented for a local hospital in 2004 to help the health staff. As a result, almost 200 Zambians were hired, and the community received an electronic link to the rest of the world. Obviously, the institution of the ICT project served to bridge multiple gaps, both social and economic. This ICT Project will also be executed in at least 25 more areas around Zambia, resulting in the creation of more jobs and increased social awareness. (Haarhoff)

If Zambia continues to expend its resources on similar programs, the country's future can take a change in path. A shift towards the ICT industry creates diversification in the economy, as communications encompasses a large number of sectors, including health, corporate, and transportation. ICT also provides a larger amount of people with jobs. An equal amount of ICT projects

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should be implemented in both urban and rural areas, though, as to bridge the communication gap.

The main task of the Zambian government is to align its policies with the Zambian PRSP, making the execution of such goals inevitable. In the country's installation of infrastructure such as network systems, it paves the path for much change in various areas of the country.

Rather than relying on the outside support from private investors, the Zambian government may sufficiently rely on its people and their own personal needs to fund communications projects. People in the search of knowledge will make ways to do anything they desire.

To summarize the paper, Zambia must make sure that its ICT Policy underscores the ideals stresses in the country's PRSP, which include fighting poverty, making social change, and combating HIV/AIDS. ICT Projects have the ability to combat all three problems, simultaneously. It is the responsibility of the Zambian government to see that private companies have the opportunity to institute such changes. The government must also utilize the money of its people and their own passions. It will be the country's responsibility to educate its people to enter the ICT workforce.

Zambia's hope is in ICT.

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