

## The Role of Islam in the Socio-Economic Empowerment of the Youth: The Case of Makululu Compound in Kabwe, Zambia

Barbara Mbolela, Joseph K. Hachintu, PhD

Department of Religious Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University- Zambia

**\*Corresponding Author:** Barbara Mbolela, Department of Religious Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University- Zambia

**Abstract:** This research article presents a comprehensive Exploration of the role of Islam in the socio-economic empowerment of the youth in Makululu community of Kabwe - Zambia. The aims of the study was to understand the Islamic context of youth economic empowerment, seek to know the strategies Moslems employed in empowering the youth and assess the benefits the youths derived from the empowerments. The study employed a purposively selected sample of 118 participants comprising 7 Muslim Leaders, 66 Muslim youths, 44 Non-Muslim youths and 1 NGO representative and used a combination of interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) as the foundation for data collection. A special aspect of purposive sampling strategy called the Exemplar of the phenomenon of interest was also applied in selecting a single significant case which was thought of having a wealth of rich information (key informant) required by the study. Transcripts of the interviews and recorded FGDs were analysed thematically for perceptions of the respondents on the role of Islam in the Socio-economic empowerment of youths. Findings: The study unearthed critical conclusion that Muslims do play a significant role in the socioeconomic empowerment of the youth in Makululu Community in particular, and Zambia in general. However, a few Non-Muslim Youths did not fully appreciate the impact of empowerment. This could be because Kabwe does not, as yet, have an Islamic Youth Centre for most youth to access information and support they need, as they do not visit the local Mosque. Appropriate recommendations are given.

**Keywords:** Role of Islam, Youth, Socioeconomic empowerment, Kabwe, Zambia.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the role of Islam in the socio-economic empowerment of the youths in Makululu Compound in Zambia. Makululu is a residential compound found in Kabwe town, some 139 kilometres Northeast of Lusaka - Zambia's capital city. It is the second largest compound in the Southern Africa, second only to Soweto in South Africa:

The Government of the Republic of Zambia has always engaged the donors, NGOs and Civil Society Organizations, the Private Sector and indeed Faith-Based Organisations as cooperating partners in national development. Though the country is constitutionally a Christian nation, her constitution also recognises the freedom of worship. It accommodates other faiths like Islam which has also attracted a significant following amongst Zambians, including the youth. The contribution of Christian organisations to the social, spiritual and economic development in Zambia is significantly documented and publicised; but many studies on development have been biased towards Christianity and that the economic development contributions of Islam have been relatively marginalised, not just by historians, but by anthropologists, economists and development planners as well.

Zambia has not been spared from global and domestic socioeconomic shocks; the youth have been more vulnerable to such shocks. According to the Ministry of Youth and Sport (2015), the country faces a critical challenge of low employment, particularly with high unemployment levels among young women and men. According to the central statistical office, the population of Makululu compound as of 2010 for males was at 1,854 and females at 1,974, thus this increase in population has led to people facing a lot of socio-economic challenges and these challenges prompted the researchers to explore the contribution of Islam towards the empowerment of the youth in alleviating the stated challenges.

### **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

Youths in Zambia continue to be on the periphery regarding their participation in national development, due to inadequate resources targeted at their welfare, resulting in most of them remaining unemployed, ill-educated and without formal skills to enable them to earn a living. Even though Religious Organisations are key partners in Zambia's socio-economic development, there is a perception that the contributions of Islam to the social, spiritual and economic development of Zambia have remained marginalised, unevaluated and not adequately documented. This study, therefore, aims at addressing that marginalisation, through examination of the role of Islam in the socio-economic empowerment of the youth in Makululu Compound.

### **1.2. Study Objectives**

The Objectives of this study were:

- i. To find out the meaning of the concept of socio-economic empowerment in the Islamic context.
- ii. To identify socio-economic empowerment strategies targeted on youth by Moslems.
- iii. To assess the benefits derived by the youth of Makululu from Islamic socio-economic empowerment initiatives.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND BRIEF REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

This study is anchored on two (2) theories, namely: Empowerment theory and the Needs Theory which are derived from Rogelberg (2007:733). The two theories fitted the dimensions posed by the researchers within the socio economic context, which included religion and livelihood. These were key to the study.

Zimmerman's Empowerment Theory assumes that there is a connection between individual well-being and the larger social and political environment, and suggests that people need opportunities to become active in community decision making in order to improve their lives, organizations and communities (Zimmerman,2000). According to Rogelberg (2007), the Empowerment theory focuses on processes that enable participation, enhance control through shared decision making and create opportunities to learn, practice, and increase skills. Casimir (2011) affirms that the Empowerment theory suggests that engaging youths in pro-social, meaningful, and community-enhancing activities that the youth themselves define and control helps youths gain vital skills, responsibilities, and confidence necessary to become productive and healthy adults. Rogelberg (2007) further explains that Empowerment is examined by six interdependent dimensions: psychological, community, organizational, economic, social and cultural. Psychological empowerment enhances individual's consciousness, belief in self-efficacy, awareness and knowledge of problems and solutions and of how individuals can address problems that harm their quality of life. Ledford *et al.* (2013) interpretes the Youth Empowerment Theory as having three components, which are: individual empowerment, organisational empowerment, and community empowerment. Individual Empowerment is where youth develop skills to exert control and improve competence, as well as developing critical awareness to effectively collaborate for the betterment of organisations and communities.

This theoretical dimension helped to bring out concepts on how to create self-confidence and the skills to acquire knowledge and skills which are critical resources for youth empowerment.

The **second theory** that guided this study is the **Need theories** based on psychological growth. This theory emanates from Abraham Maslow (cited in Bourne & Russo 1998: 526) who was a humanist orientated psychologist who offered a general theory of human functioning, in which he proposed five classes of human needs. Briefly, these are: The Physiological needs which are basically the needs for food, shelter, clothing, sex which can be regarded as the most primitive and fundamental biological needs. The second level of needs are Safety: needs for physical and psychological safety, i.e. a predictable and non-threatening environment; thirdly Belongingness, which is the need to feel a sense of attachment to another person or group of persons; fourthly, Esteem which is the need to feel valued and respected, by self and significant other people. Lastly but not the least, the Self-actualisation, which focuses on the need to fulfill one's potential, to develop one's capabilities and express them.

The five levels of need satisfaction were considered for this study because they have a critical bearing towards human empowerment. The assumptions raised were investigated into during this study to ascertain how they affected youth socio-economic empowerment in the Islamic context (*Ibid*).

### **2.1. Islamic Perspectives on Socio-economic Empowerment**

Empowerment is a concept shared by many disciplines and arenas: community development, psychology, education, economics, studies of social movements and organizations. Recent literature reviews of articles indicating a focus on empowerment across several scholarly and practical disciplines, have demonstrated that there is no clear definition of the concept.

#### *2.1.1. The Ganokendra Model*

In their pursuit of empowerment of youths, Muslims have come up with a people's centre called Ganokendra. The Ganokendra is a group of people who have come together to address issues affecting people which include: literacy, continuing and life-long education which are aimed at the alleviation of poverty and improving the quality of people's lives in general (Kazi, 2004). It is believed that if these issues are addressed, youths can gain control over personal, social, economic and political forces to improve their life situation.

The program ensured that people were involved at every stage of the design and its implementation. In organising Ganokendra, the following steps were undertaken: need assessment surveys, household surveys, resource identification surveys, and motivational campaigns. The beneficiaries of the program especially the women were closely involved. The Ganokendra was organised to facilitate the improvement of the quality of life, social empowerment and economic self-reliance. The model has gained wide acceptance and coverage in Bangladesh where its beneficiary-membership has grown. Ganokendra centres have now been recognised by many development agencies as focal points for community development. UNESCO also endorsed the Ganokendra initiatives and published them in its Asia Pacific Publications in 2003.

Muslims have come up with initiative in various countries on financing youths without attaching interest to money given to them. These monies given to youths are meant to finance them with regard to improvement their welfare in society. It's a way by which Islam empowers youths in socio-economic standing in order to produce youths with a better lifestyle. The money given to youths is put into various project such as opening up a entrepreneur business which can enable youths have a life that can enable them become key stakeholders in national development. An example of how this has work out is found in Malaysia as we can deduce from the report in their Islamic Finance Report (2015) which has outlined how the Muslims support macro small medium enterprises (MSMS) and Small medium enterprises(SMES) which are forms of empowerment for youths who may not be formally employed. These institutions provide opportunities to the poor as part of achieving their IFIs socio-economic agenda. In that report a lot of things were brought out with regard to how lives of youths have been affected by Muslims and how it's achieving its socioeconomic goals. Also were Muslims tap additional resources for example from zakat, waqf and qard al-hassan financial instruments that are designed to provide financial assistance to the poor such as Shariah-compliant microfinance and small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The report observes that both the MSMEs and SMEs, find it tedious to obtain funding or financing from IFIs due to various factors such as weak credit rating, lack of collateral negligent financial record-keeping or lack of documentations that are required by most formal financial institutions. But recognizing the importance of both MSMEs and SMEs to the economy, the IFIs addresses these by becoming the bridging link between the MSMEs and SMEs and government funds, guarantees, schemes and etc. Thus, these initiatives serve as roles through which youths are empowered by Muslims to become independent citizens and contribute to the socio-economic development of the country

#### *2.1.2. The Waqf Institution*

The Waqf is a form of religious institution in Islam that has a mandate to empower youths so as to alleviate their social problems and help them develop human resource and boost their social and economic empowerment .An article by Farid (2016) discusses Waqf as a religious institution in Islam, which has functional relevance as a solution to social problems .Waqf is involved in poverty

alleviation, human resource development and economic empowerment of the people. The article looks at money, not only as a medium of exchange, but also as a resource that can be channeled towards development in one way or another. It embraces both religious worship and economic empowerment through providing worship activities, facilitating educational activities as well as health, aid to the poor, displaced children, orphans, scholarship, progress and economic improvement as long as they do not conflict with the Shari'ah laws. Ulrika Mårtensson (2014), in Farid (2016) stressed that "Islam came as Rahmatanlil 'Alamin"; that is not only to destroy the social imbalances that occur in the community, but also desired to enhance public welfare. Islam is not only a religion that is loaded with value-normative elitist who do not have a social conscience, but Islam has integrally moral pretensions aimed at building and participating in various social and community problems (*Ibid*).

The importance of Waqf Economic Development has discussed at length by Budiman and Banjarmasin (2014), this was born from the contention from western scholars that the institutions of waqf are no longer relevant to the present economic dissensions and that waqf had become an impediment to the development in Muslim countries. Muslim scholars argue that there was no waqf in Arabia before Islam. Muslim jurists traced the institution to the time of the Prophet. Although the Holy Quran does not directly define Waqf or make any particular reference to it, Muslims are encouraged to do charity work. Allah has promised multiple rewards for those who generously spend wealth in his path. Muslim scholars explain that since the emergence of Islam, the Muslims have voluntarily given out of their wealth for the benefit of others in the form of waqf. They claim that Waqf is a dynamic institution which has existed since the early Islamic society, long before it did in the West, and provided a considerable contribution to the development and advancement of Muslim societies. Alhabshi, (1991) in Budiman and Banjarmasin (2014), states that Waqf should be regarded as a fundamental economic institution which was established for the purpose of generating economic activities whilst at the same time ensuring that the benefits accrue to certain parts of the society. In its economic sense, the waqf diverts funds and other resources from current consumption and invests them into productive and prospective assets which generate revenues for future consumption by individuals or society at large. Waqf is therefore a peculiar combination between the act of saving and the act of investment. In a nutshell the significance of Waqf is five-fold: firstly, it enhances economic progress; secondly it eradicates poverty. Thirdly, it restores and re-distributes income, fourthly it prevents deficit financing. Last but not the least, it reduces government expenditure.

### *2.1.3. Literature Gap*

From the literature reviewed, initiatives taken by Islamic institutions and the general overview of what empowerment entails have been made clear. Documentation on youth concerns in Zambia has also been reviewed. However, literature does not clearly spell out how Islamic institutions are dealing with unmet youth socioeconomic needs specifically in Zambia or elsewhere. This study set to provide the platform for bridging the information gap on what the Muslim Community in Zambia is doing to socioeconomically empower both Muslim and Non-Muslim youths.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

Methodically, the study employed Mixed Methods strategy. The research population was the Makululu Compound. The projected figures for Makululu Male youths was 1463 while that for females was 1573, bringing the total to 3036. The population of Muslims as projected by the Muslim leaders to be about 300. From these figures the sample was purposely drawn which comprised 118 participants: 7(6%) Muslim Leaders; 66(56%) Muslim Youths; 44(37%) Non-Muslim Youths; and 1(1%) NGO Representative. The researchers relied on two strategies: the first being **Convenience sampling, a strategy** in which participants were identified based on their accessibility ( Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2011); as was the case with Muslim leaders, Muslim and the Non-Muslim Youths. The second strategy was the **Exemplar of the phenomenon of interest, which is** a sampling strategy in which a single significant case was selected because it could provide a wealth of rich data that speaks directly to the research purpose and questions as the case was with the NGO representative and the Catholic Priest.

The collected data were analysed using a Mixed Data Analysis Method, where transformation of data from one form to another was involved. The approach entailed combining deductive and inductive designs to generate both quantitative and qualitative data and integrating the datasets in some way.

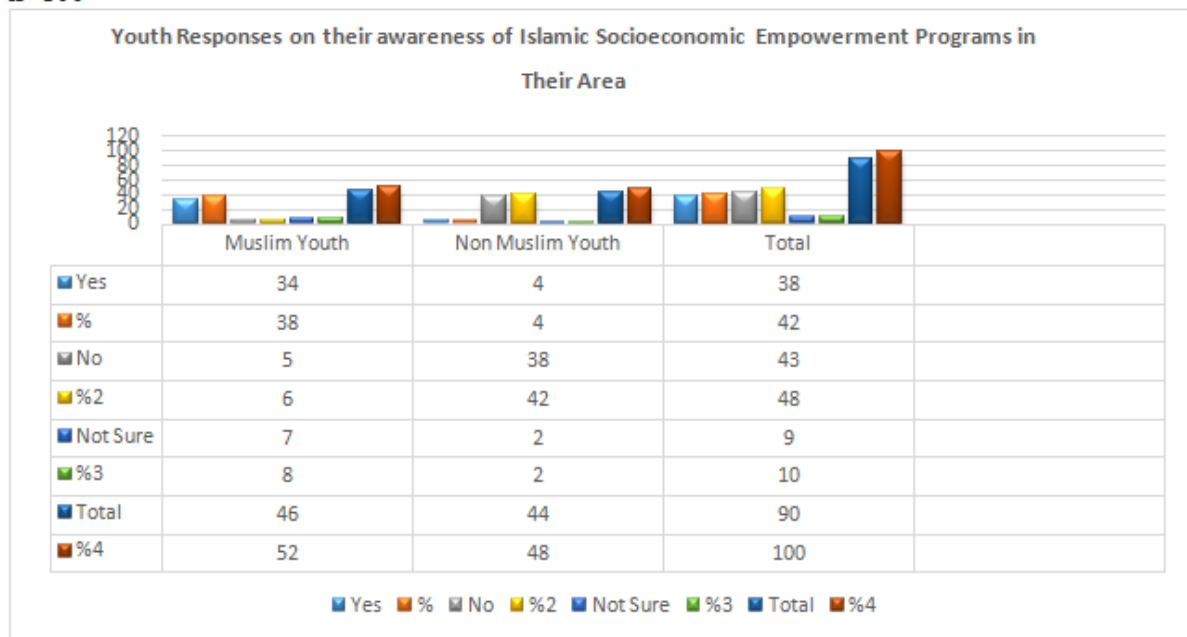
Databases were analysed separately and then brought together. It also involved transformation of data from one form to another; so that it would be possible to discern complex relationships in the data and identify patterns (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2015, 2011). Qualitative data were subjected to content analysis of the emerging themes and sub-themes hence, creating the qualitative data-base.

**4. FINDINGS**

**4.1. Responses of the Youth in Makululu Township on their Awareness of Islamic Socio economic Empowerment Programmes**

In Makululu Community, questionnaires were distributed to both Islamic and non-Islamic youths to find out on the awareness of the youth with regard to empowerment. The questionnaires revealed that 34(38%) of the Muslim Youth indicated that they were aware of the Islamic socio economic programmes for the youth in their area; 5(6%) were not aware and 7(8%) were not sure. The responses of the Non-Muslim Youth on the other hand was that 4(4%) were aware; 38(42%) were not aware; and 2(2%) were not sure. To sum it up, Figure 4 indicates that 38(42%) of the youth were aware; 43(48%) mentioned that they were not aware; and 9(10%) were not sure.

n=100



**Figure1.** Youth Responses on their awareness of Islamic Socioeconomic Empowerment Programmes in Makululu Area

Figure 1 further indicates that more Muslim youths were aware of the socio economic empowerment programmes that were facilitated by the Muslim community, whilst more Non-Muslim Youth were not aware.

Further on the same question, respondents in the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) said that Muslims do not advertise their programmes but engage with the youth who pass by their homes or shops looking for piece-work or those who linger around their premises. Instead of giving one piece-work, they would chat with those young people, offer some help like a bag of mealie-meal to share or some *Kapenta* ( fish) or beans which they keep in their shops, and invite them to visit the Mosque on a Friday. At the end of the prayers, one Muslim leader would meet all the young people to find out what they are doing and where they are living. They then will ask what the youth would like to do in order to help themselves. After that, they would inform the young people of the help that is available in terms of either education or training; some are directed to Muslims who run some businesses, who give the youth some items to sell so that they can help themselves. The youth also pass on this information to other youth in the compound especially those who are curious about their association with Muslims.



#### 4.2. The Socio-economic Empowerment Benefits Derived by Muslim Youth of Makululu from the Programs Sponsored by the Islamic Community

The respondents were asked to identify and rate the key areas in which they recognised Muslim support towards youth socioeconomic empowerment. The rating of 5 represented ‘Very good’ in terms of impact, 4 ‘good’, 3 ‘satisfactory’, 2 ‘bad’ and 1 ‘Very bad’. The areas identified were social economic support; Skills derived from capacity building; financial support; Charity in terms of alms; Decision Making in terms of claim making power, and leadership. Figure 7 below summaries the findings:

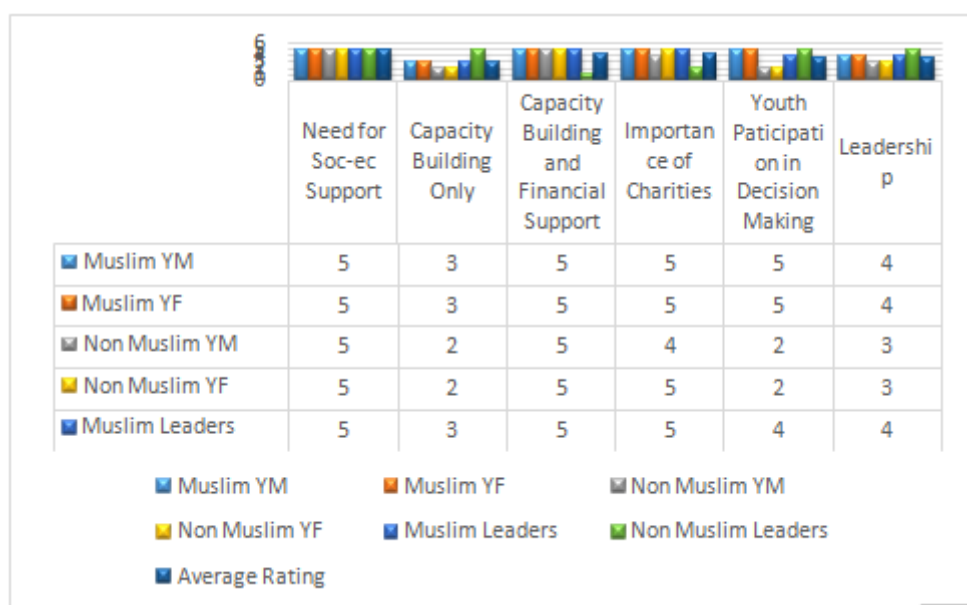


Figure 2. Rating of Responses on Key Issues by All Respondents

Figure 2 above shows the rated results of the respondents’ perceptions of Islam’s socio-economic support in general. The support was rated 5 by all respondents. The respondents were unanimous on citing socioeconomic issues such as relating to educational support; health, shelter and nutrition; clean water and sanitation; and employment. They explained that the Muslim community was meeting these needs.

Capacity building coupled with financial support was rated 4.3 in second place, whilst capacity building for self-reliance was rated 3, in last place. Muslim youth, male and female, and non-Muslim youth male and female, and Muslim leaders were of the opinion that the youth had little capacity to source their own capital after training, and that it would be a worst of effort if start-up funds were not made available to them to establish their own small enterprises or businesses; hence the Muslim community provided small capital for those who had received training in carpentry, tailoring, agriculture, and business or entrepreneurship. This view was supported by the Catholic Priest who mentioned that this approach was successful in West Africa as most youth who had received such training were thriving in their own economic ventures. The contrary view was received from the NGO (Restless Development) which gave it a rating of 1 on the premise that their organization did not support the giving of hand-outs and that training for self-reliance was more empowering.

Charities or alms giving was rated 4.3 by all respondents; all the fraternity of Muslim respondents rated it 5 and supported by the non-Muslim youth male and female who rated it 4 and 5 respectively. The Catholic Priest observed that Alms giving is part of the religious culture of Muslims and packaged it along other assistances given to the less privileged in all aspects aimed at empowering the underprivileged people. This aspect had a low rating of 2 from the NGO because of its negative stance on anything that entails handouts.

Youth participation in decision-making processes was rated 3.8 by all participants; it received a high rating of 5 from the Muslim youth and 4 from the Muslim leaders, it scored 2 with the non-Muslim youth, who said that they had never been involved in decision making processes as everything seem to

be decided by older people and people in authority. The overall rating of Leadership skills was also 3.8; all the Muslim respondents gave it a rating of 4; the non-Muslim Youth gave it a rating of 3; and the NGO (Restless Development) gave it a rating of 5. The Muslim leaders explained that their socioeconomic empowerment programs were not designed to encourage laziness amongst the beneficiaries especially the youth, who might look at them as consumptive; rather that the programs are drawn from a spirit of inculcating participation, leadership and decision making under the spirit of social justice and reciprocal obligation. They further explained that leadership of those youth who actually converted to Islam entailed that they were well versed in Islamic life according to the Quran. Restless Development were of the opinion that leadership skills given to the youth were part of the socio-economic empowerment programs in that it enabled the Youth to have a proactive stance to their issues rather than a reactive stance; they noted that the youth who were proactive were able to access development resources using their own initiatives than those who only waited until pronouncements about a funding somewhere were made.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

### **5.1. The Islamic Concept of Youth Social-Economic Empowerment**

This study established that the context of Islam socio-economic empowerment is a religious obligation as proscribed by the Quran; thus Muslims undertake programs for poverty alleviation, human resource development and economic empowerment of the people as their religious mandate; every Muslim who has been endowed by Allah with wealth of whatever magnitude has an obligation to contribute towards helping the underprivileged; this is the premise from which the socioeconomic empowerment of the underprivileged youth, emanates from.

The Islamic concepts of Youth Social Economic Empowerment were vouched for by a Catholic Priest who had worked for a considerable time amongst the Muslims in West Africa. His explanation was that Muslims approached socio-economic empowerment from a brotherhood perspective. He explained that Muslims looked at elevating the status of the underprivileged as a moral and spiritual obligation. He said that, from his experience in West Africa, the well to do Muslims contributed Funds to both the Government and Islamic Institutions (Farid, 2016. According to Farid, the teaching of Islam encourages the destruction of the social imbalances that occur in the community. Islamic doctrines, she says, emphasise on social justice, and abhors the neglect and lack of seriousness in the handling of the fate of the suffering people. She revealed that on this score the spirit of Islam has commitment and solidarity.

### **5.2. Muslim Strategies for Addressing the Socioeconomic Challenges of the Youth**

This study established that the socio-economic empowerment lies at the heart of the Muslims' religious belief. Through the inspiration of the Quran, Muslims have put in place the Zakat and Waqf institutions for facilitating socioeconomic activities which are Sharia compliant. Big business houses such as Trade Kings contributed financial resources towards the socio-economic empowerment of the vulnerable including the youth. The operational level of these institution in Zambia is still at the level of providing education, tertiary training, and basic skills training as attested to by some of the respondents during the FGDs. The results show that a number of youths have been sent to primary, secondary and colleges under the sponsorship of Islamic Institutions. Others are receiving basic skills training in practical areas such as carpentry, electronics, ICT, agriculture, tailoring, and plumbing amongst others. It was however mentioned that Kabwe is still at the embryonic stage where the construction of the Help-Yard is in the process; however, support is still being given to the youth who are being sent to both public institutions within and outside Kabwe. Other youths have attested to help given to them in terms of shelter and employment.

### **5.3. Socioeconomic Empowerment Benefits Derived by Muslim Youth of Makululu from the Programs Sponsored by the Islamic Community**

This study revealed that there were significant benefits derived by the youth from socio-economic empowerment initiatives of the Muslim Communities such as, general social support employment, education, vocational skills, financial support, charity in terms of alms, leadership skills, decision making in terms of claim making power.

The Study further established that general socioeconomic support was rated 5 thus was ranked highest by all the respondents. It was noted that the Muslims were faring well in meeting basic needs such as educational support; health, shelter and nutrition; clean water and sanitation; and employment. The respondents noted that without these the suffering of the community in general would escalate and the youth would suffer the most. Examples given included the outbreaks of waterborne diseases such as diarrhea, dysentery and cholera, and Malaria were rife during the rainy-season. Other health concerns noted were HIV/AIDS and sexual reproductive health issues. UNFPA (2003) through its photographic excursion made a panoramic presentation of the unmet needs of the youth in Zambia, which showed that inadequate provision of basic needs such as shelter, food, clothes, good health, and good water and sanitation, and unemployment were in fact a socioeconomic concern of the youth. The report also noted the need to prioritize issues such as HIV/AIDS, sexual reproductive health as they also affected the well-being of the youth greatly.

Capacity building coupled with financial support was rated 4.3 thus came in second place. Here the youth regarded basic skills training in areas such as carpentry, tailoring plumbing, agriculture, electrical maintenance, small-business administration and enterprise, agriculture and auto mechanics. The youth mentioned that after acquiring these skills, they were able to use them to earn a living. The financial support they received was for small capital, which enabled them to buy toolkits for their trade, or capital for engaging in trading. The overall rating of Capacity building without financial support was 3 which was satisfactory but not good enough. Only NGOs gave it the highest rating of 5 because for them the impartation of knowledge and skills for self-reliance was more empowering than handouts. The youth in general and the Muslim community leaders argued that giving people knowledge and skills without further support was like training to waste as the youth they were dealing with were coming from desperate backgrounds, hence would still struggle to take-off without support. According to the Malaysia Islamic Market Place (2015), the Islamic strategy is to provide the necessary support for entrepreneurship and development of SMEs through Zakat and Waqf institutions which receive funding from the Islamic Business Community and Islamic Financial Institutions. Farid (2016) noted that the economic outlook amongst the underprivileged like the youth, was still worrisome; however, the role and function Islamic economic instruments such as zakat, waqf, Sadaqah and others were undeniable and very important in the achievement of the provision of benefits that improve people's lives in the economy; this she said, needed to be managed through a neat, organised and professional manner by quality managers.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This Study looked at the role of Islam in the socio-economic empowerment of the youth in Makululu Compound, Kabwe Districtin Zambia. It examined the Islamic concept of socioeconomic empowerment; the how Muslims have empowered the youth, and the strategies that they have applied. The study also investigated on how much the Muslims have collaborated with other organisations in fostering development. It was concluded that Muslims do play a very significant role in the socio-economic empowerment of the youth; however, the socio-economic empowerment impact has not been fully appreciated by all the youths in Makululu Community, especially the Non-Muslim Youths. This could be attributed to the fact that Kabwedoes not as yet have an Islamic Youth Centre. As such, most youth are not able to access information and support as they do not visit the local Mosque. The Youth also look at association with Muslims with being converted to Islam.

### **6.1. Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the current study, the authors make the following recommendations:

1. To urge development facilitators like the Government, NGOs and Individual development experts in Zambia, to synergise the best youth socio-economic empowerment practices of the Islamic initiatives with those of the NGOs and government in order to sustainably beneficiate the youth.
2. To lobby Kabwe Municipal Council and the District Development Coordinating Committees to incorporate Muslim Community representation so as to benefit from, and enhance awareness, knowledge and information on the Muslim development initiatives without interfering with their core mandate.
3. To enhance the visibility of Muslim socio-economic empowerment initiatives through responsive processes in Kabwe, and Zambia in general without adulterating the Islamic socioeconomic empowerment values.



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## AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY



**Joseph Kayuni Hachintu**, holds a PhD (*DLitt et Phil*) and a Master's Degree in Religious Studies both from the University of South Africa and a Bachelor of Arts with Education (Religious Studies and Special Education) Degree from the University of Zambia. He taught briefly at Mpika Boys High School and served as District Education Planning Officer for Isoka District in Muchinga Province of Zambia for four years before he joined Kwame Nkrumah University in 2008, as a Lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies. Dr. Hachintu is the founding Director of Research, Postgraduate Studies, and Innovation at Kwame Nkrumah University. He is currently serving as Editor-in-Chief of the Kwame Nkrumah University Multi-Disciplinary Journal and former Head of the Quality Assurance Department at the same institution. Furthermore, he is the Professional Authors International (PAI) Deputy Coordinator for the Central Province of Zambia. Dr. Hachintu is also a Certified Consultant in Research and Grants Proposal Writing. He teaches Religious Studies at the Postgraduate and Undergraduate levels and has supervised over 37 student research works at the Master's and PhD levels. He has published several articles in both local and International Journals. Dr. Hachintu's extensive research interests include Religion in general, Theology, Social Anthropology, Education and Society, Women/Gender/Sexuality, HIV/AIDS, and Quality Education delivery.

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