

Decentralised Mineral Revenue Governance and Local Infrastructure Provision in Zambia's Copperbelt, 2000–2026

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ABSTRACT

The governance of mineral revenues in resource-rich African nations remains a critical policy challenge. In Zambia, fiscal decentralisation policies have aimed to channel a portion of copper revenues from the national treasury to local authorities in mining regions, with the explicit goal of improving local development outcomes. This working paper analyses the causal relationship between the decentralised mineral revenue sharing mechanism and the provision of local public infrastructure in the Copperbelt. It seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of this fiscal transfer system in translating mineral wealth into tangible community assets. The analysis employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of district-level fiscal data with qualitative case studies derived from fieldwork. The qualitative component includes semi-structured interviews with local government officials, community representatives, and mining company stakeholders. Preliminary analysis indicates a weak and inconsistent correlation between mineral revenue transfers and improved infrastructure provision. A key theme emerging from fieldwork is the prevalence of administrative bottlenecks and capacity constraints at the local government level, which divert funds and delay project implementation. For instance, approximately 40% of allocated funds in one district were routinely reallocated to non-infrastructure budgetary shortfalls. The paper concludes that the institutional design and implementation capacity of local government are more significant determinants of infrastructure outcomes than the mere availability of decentralised mineral revenues. The policy mechanism, while well-intentioned, is insufficient without parallel investments in sub-national governance. Policy reforms should prioritise strengthening local government planning, procurement, and monitoring systems. A portion of mineral revenue transfers should be ring-fenced for capacity building and accompanied by stricter, performance-linked disbursement criteria. This paper provides a novel, longitudinal analysis of a specific mineral revenue sharing formula's on-the-ground

impact, introducing original qualitative data on local administrative practices that critically mediate fiscal policy outcomes.

Keywords: *Fiscal decentralisation, Resource governance, Copperbelt, Local government, Infrastructure provision, Mineral revenue sharing, Zambia*

Article Highlights

- Analysis reveals weak correlation between mineral revenue transfers and improved infrastructure.
- Administrative bottlenecks divert ~40% of funds from intended infrastructure projects.
- Local government capacity constraints critically mediate fiscal policy outcomes.
- Policy mechanism insufficient without parallel investments in sub-national governance.

Policy Implication

Reforms must prioritise strengthening local government systems and ring-fence a portion of transfers for capacity building, tied to performance criteria.

This analysis combines district-level fiscal data with original qualitative fieldwork.

ABSTRACT-ONLY PUBLICATION

This is an abstract-only publication. The complete research paper with full methodology, results, discussion, and references is available upon request.

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