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BLOOD ON THE COPPER:

Child deaths and trafficking in Zambia's illegal mining economy.



By Charles Mafa and Beverly Subeti

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Traditional Healer Faces Child Trafficking Charges

By MakanDay Editor

The recent court appearance of Chilufya Chileya, 52—widely known as Kalonga Kanono, a well-known traditional healer based in Lusaka—has brought renewed urgency to our investigation. He is now facing charges of human trafficking, with disturbing links to the exploitation of minors.

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Mourners gather at a grave on the outskirts of Chingola, Zambia. They are burying 21-year-old Paul Chishimba, one of three informal miners killed when a pit collapsed at Sensele Mine in early July. The other two killed were boys, just 14 and 16 years old. We interviewed Chishimba’s grandmother, at her home in Mikiloni township, near the mine. She said the pit was the only source of income for her grandson and many other children in the nearby informal settlement. “It wasn’t even a deep pit ...The ground gave way and buried all three of them. I don’t know exactly what happened. I was only told that Paul was trapped,” she said. The man who hired Chishimba and his friends to extract copper from the pit paid for the funeral and provided food and transport for the burial. But the family says they do not know his name, only that he lives in the area. The families of the two boys would not speak to us.

A businessman involved in mining claimed that many people die mining, but hospitals often log these deaths as traffic accidents to avoid scrutiny. Staff at Nchanga North General Hospital told us they have observed a steady increase in “brought in dead” (BID) cases. As at 22 July, the hospital’s mortuary had recorded 116 BIDs for the month of which only five were officially linked to mine accidents. The medical superintendent, Dr Charles Chishimba, requested we send a formal query. We asked for mine-related death statistics and whether the hospital reports these to the ministry of mines. He never responded.

A hospital source, who asked not to be named, said bodies from illegal mining accidents arrive in bad condition. The ages of the dead vary, they said, from about 14 to 35.

Why children are needed

Mining insiders say children as young as 14 are sought after because their small bodies allow them to get into narrow underground tunnels. Using only picks and shovels, they risk their lives for around K100 (about US\$4 or R70) per day. Ministry of Mines and Minerals Development Permanent Secretary Hapenga Kabeta, interviewed in Lusaka, said security at any private mine lies with the licence holder, not the ministry.

BLOOD ON THE COPPER:

Child Deaths and Trafficking in Zambia’s Illegal Mining Economy

“Sensele [Mine] is licenced to a private individual, and according to the law, it is that individual’s responsibility to secure the area,” he said, referring to the Chingola mine where on 1 December 2023 over 30 informal miners were trapped in a collapse during unauthorised mining. “They are required to hire security personnel or put in place security infrastructure. ... There was a security presence at the site, but it was provided at the expense of the developer, not the government.” Kabeta said the government would take action. “Government has made a decision that security in all mining areas will not be compromised. If there are lapses, they are not the government’s lapses, but those of individuals deployed in those areas.”

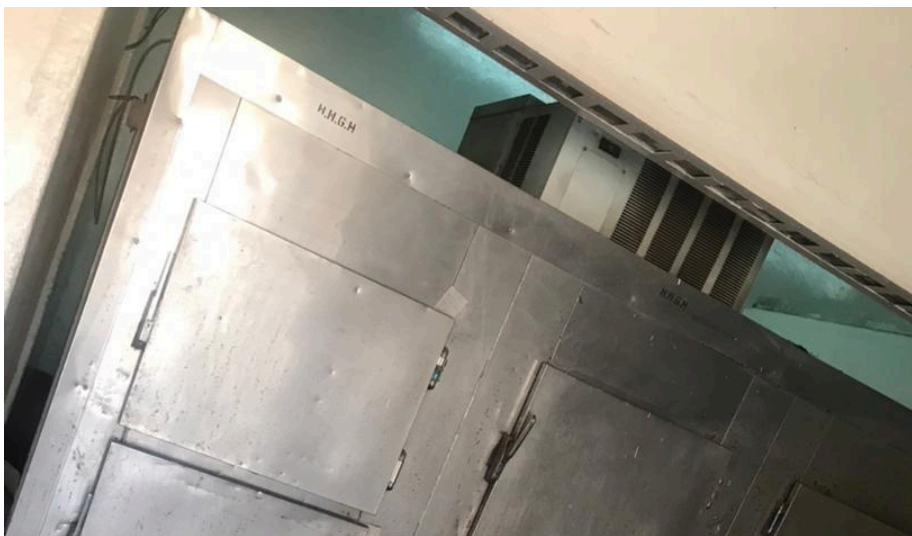
Government

But the illicit mining economy is driven by powerful government officials, ruling party representatives, and the businesspeople with whom they collaborate. A local businessman from Chingola told us that the police “simply take instructions from politicians and their allies”. He said police officers who try to do the right thing are often threatened with dismissal or transferred elsewhere. Police spokesperson Rae Hamoonga urged the public to report any officers who take bribes for allowing unauthorised access to mining areas. Police we spoke to say they are struggling to monitor illegal mining sites because the areas are large and the miners frequently change location to avoid detection. Two local businessmen with mining experience said illegal mining encourages child labour. “As we speak,” said one, “there was an accident at the mine. The earth collapsed killing two youth and leaving two others seriously injured. One of the boys who died was about 16.” Some of the children working in illegal mines come from nearby townships in Chingola. Others, from different regions, are enticed with false promises of good pay and better lives. Local businessmen as well as foreign nationals – some from China – drive this recruitment network. Zambia’s Anti-Trafficking Act of 2008 was aligned with international standards in 2022. There is no longer a need to prove force or coercion in trafficking cases involving children. The law now criminalises labour trafficking, setting penalties of 20 years to life imprisonment for trafficking adults and 30 years to life for trafficking children.

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Young men

With the Jerabo member now unwilling to put us in touch with young miners, our journalists turned to two young men they’d met at a local barbershop, who said they had taken the body of a colleague to the morgue on 28 July. He had collapsed at an illegal mining site and was suspected to be a victim of trafficking. We traced the body to Nchanga North Mine Hospital mortuary. The boy’s body was covered in brown soil. His name was listed as Peter Mwansa or Chansa; his friends, unsure of his real name. He was not from the area and his body was not claimed. Records from Zambia’s Patents and Companies Registration Agency (PACRA) confirm that Sensele Mine is a family business registered in January 2006. It has eight Zambian owners, seven are listed as directors, six as shareholders. The mine sits on land that was once part of Konkola Copper Mines (KCM), which is 80% owned by Vedanta Resources and 20% by Zambia’s state-owned ZCCM Investments Holdings. As a result, Sensele is privately owned, and KCM no longer holds the surface rights.. The mine, licenced under Small-Scale Mining Licence Nos. 8723-HQ-SML and 8724-HQ-SML, remains a hotspot for illegal mining activities in Chingola. The site was the scene of a fatal disaster in December 2023, when a mudslide caused by informal mining claimed 30 lives. We asked Permanent Secretary Kabeta what the government is doing to monitor mining sites to prevent children from working these dangerous sites. “The issue of Sensele involves illegal activity, and when people engage in such acts, the government cannot regulate who enters those areas, whether young or old,” he told MakanDay. Produced by [MakanDay](#) for [GroundUp News](#). The article has been edited and fact-checked by GroundUp and [IJ_Hub](#).



The Mortuary where they keep unidentified bodies at Nchanga North North General Hospital



Image from Sensele Mine

CDF ‘Boreholes for Sale’ Scandal

By Ennety Munshya,

How public boreholes in Kapiri Mposhi Constituency are being sold to citizens who should access them for free In the remote village in Kampumba Ward in Zambia’s Kapiri Mposhi Constituency, farmer Goodson Chimena traded away two bulls and a calf — not for land or farm equipment, but for something far more basic: clean water. “I gave them two bulls and a calf because my family had no water,” Chimena. Like many in his rural community, Chimena had grown weary of walking long distances to fetch water from muddy streams shared with animals. So when word spread that boreholes were being drilled nearby, hope surged. But there was a catch — the water, though already paid for by the government through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), came at an additional cost. In a scheme fueled by deception and desperation, local officials — including a ward councillor and members of the Ward Development Committee — allegedly turned public boreholes into private profits, demanding cash or livestock in exchange for access to infrastructure already meant for everyone. What unfolded next was a trail of lies, illegal sales, and broken trust, exposing a system where those tasked with delivering development instead sold it off — one borehole at a time.

Victims paid in cash or livestock

Community members were misled into paying up to K25,000 in cash or livestock, some as many as three cows, to own the boreholes. Victims visited by MakanDay including Elisha Mulangana, Chimena, and Grace Kangala, in Kampumba Ward in Kapiri Mposhi Constituency, only later discovered that the boreholes were publicly funded. Mulangana told MakanDay that he paid K22,000 in cash, a negotiated amount down from the initial K25,000, to have a water point installed in his yard. He explained that Collet Londe, a member of the WDC, contacted him to say water points were available for a fee. Londe initially quoted K25,000, but they settled on K22,000 after negotiations, as the payment was to be made collectively with others. “I was told these boreholes were not from CDF, that they had just sourced them from somewhere else,” said Mulangana. He added that four days later after the phone conversation, the councilor also called and told him to prepare for the drilling but warned him "not to tell anyone". On October 30, 2024, the councillor and a WDC member, identified as Best Choongo, visited Mulangana’s home to inspect and select the drilling site.

He explained that upon discovering the installation was part of a publicly funded CDF project, he requested a refund. He was told they could only return K5,000, which he refused, insisting on a full reimbursement. “I’m not happy. This was not a straightforward transaction. Corruption like this prevents real development,” he said. “They should return my money.” In another case, livestock was used as payment. Chimena told MakanDay he gave the councillor two bulls and one smaller cow, estimating their total value at K33,000, in exchange for a water point. After initially saying he had no money, the councillor allegedly accepted the animals as payment following negotiations. “When I gave him one bull, he refused and said that wasn’t enough. I added a second, and then a smaller cow for the drilling team,” Chimena said. He later realised the water point was part of the CDF-funded public project when the District Commissioner (DC) visited to inspect it. Chimena was summoned to a meeting with the DC, traditional leaders, and other affected residents, but the councillor denied the allegations, and no resolution was reached. Similarly, Grace Kangala, an elderly woman, said she gave up two bulls to the councillor for a borehole after struggling to access clean water for her family. They had been walking long distances to draw water, often from unsafe sources shared with livestock. “Now that I know the boreholes were meant for the entire community, I want my animals back,” she said.

According to data accessed by MakanDay from the Kapiri Mposhi Town Council website, 38 community projects were initially approved under the 2024 CDF, at a cost of K16,360,000. However, the 2024 Community Projects Progress Report later listed 39 projects with a revised total cost of K17,277,200. Among the listed projects was a contract awarded to Intel Engineering Limited for the drilling of 12 boreholes in Kampumba Ward, covering ten villages. The contract, worth K764,653, included borehole drilling, pump testing, hand pump installation, and associated civil works. As of 6th April 2025, the project was marked as complete. Despite this, allegations have emerged that some of the boreholes—fully funded by the CDF—were sold to individuals for personal use. When contacted on August 8 2025, Councillor Bruce Kalinda denied any wrongdoing, saying all boreholes were drilled based on WDC plans. He maintained that his role was limited to confirming the need for water points in specific communities. However, during follow-up calls, Kalinda referred the matter to Kapiri Mposhi MP Stanley Kakubo, who was with him at the time of the call. MP Kakubo acknowledged the councillor’s affiliation with the ruling UPND and advised that any questions be formally submitted to the local authority for an official response. WDC member Londe, who is also implicated, has had his phone switched off. CDF Chairperson Mute Kabamba confirmed awareness of the reports but said action could not be taken until a full investigation was conducted.

Meanwhile, District Commissioner Francis Hasalama confirmed that the district administration is looking into the matter but said they were not in a position to issue a formal statement pending the outcome of ongoing investigations. The Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR), a Catholic faith-based organisation, says access to information remains one of the biggest challenges for civil society groups monitoring the implementation and use of CDF resources. JCTR Programmes Officer John Sauti, whose organisation has monitored several CDF projects, cited persistent issues such as project delays, conflicts of interest—undermining the quality of works—and the politicisation of projects. Fellow Programmes Officer Martin Sikonda added that, in many cases, councilors and Members of Parliament dominate the project selection process, restricting genuine community participation and sidelining local priorities. “Conflict of interest in some areas we have monitored has negatively affected the quality and standards of work delivered,” Sauti said. “Those sitting on committees are also among the bidders. They fail to declare interest, and with no one to supervise or provide checks and balances — since they are part of the authorities — accountability is lost.”

By Mukwima Chilala

An alleged internal cover-up at Zambia’s anti-graft body, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), has come to light, involving the disappearance of over K700,000 that had been seized as exhibit money in a high-profile bribery case. The case dates back to 2020, when a mining company allegedly attempted to bribe a Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA) officer with K1 million in exchange for writing off a tax debt. According to court documents obtained by MukanDay, Peter Samboko, Managing Director of All Company Zambia, allegedly offered the bribe to a ZRA official in the Debt Recovery Unit as inducement to reduce the company’s outstanding tax liability. The attempt was reported by then ZRA Commissioner General Kingsley Chanda, prompting a sting operation by a combined team from the Zambia Police, ACC, and ZRA at StayEasy Hotel in Levy Mall, Lusaka. Samboko was reportedly arrested at the scene, found in possession of K1 million cash in a bag. The money was seized and secured in the ACC’s exhibit safe. However, despite the bribe money being collected as evidence, Samboko was never prosecuted. Two years later, it was discovered that most of the exhibit money had gone missing—only K295,000 remained. The ACC failed to provide a clear explanation, and no transparent investigation was carried out to determine how or when the funds disappeared. In response, two ACC officers—Clement Chansa, an investigations officer, and Paul Phiri, the exhibit officer—were charged and later convicted by the Lusaka Magistrates’ Court, despite the case lacking solid evidence.

Unanswered Questions at ACC

They were convicted of theft by public servant, contrary to Sections 267 and 272 of the Penal Code, Chapter 87 of the Laws of Zambia. Chansa appealed and was acquitted by the High Court, which found there was no evidence linking him to the offence. His co-accused, Phiri, is still serving a prison sentence—raising concerns that he may have been used as a scapegoat. A panel of three judges—Justices Pixie Yangailo, Ian Mabbolobbolo, and Sililo Siloka—on November 20, 2024, found, among other things, that the lower court had erred both in law and in fact when it concluded that the prosecution had proved the case against Chansa beyond reasonable doubt. The judges noted that the record showed no evidence to establish the material and essential elements of the offence for which Chansa was convicted. Despite being cleared, Chansa has not been reinstated or compensated. Both ACC management and the board have ignored his appeals for reinstatement. ACC board chairperson Judge Evans Hamaundu, speaking through the commission’s director of investigations, Raymond Chibobola, confirmed that theft of exhibits had occurred within the institution. He assured the public that the Commission has since implemented measures to prevent a recurrence of such incidents. However, neither Chibobola nor Judge Hamaundu could explain why Chansa has not been reinstated despite being acquitted of all charges.

Samboko was never formally charged, and neither he nor his company, All Company Zambia, was included in the theft case before the courts. According to an insider familiar with the matter, corruption allegations involving Samboko were dropped after he disappeared and abandoned his post. The insider revealed that there had been an attempt to settle the case out of court—an application the Commission strongly opposed. However, the ACC was unable to proceed with the case, as Samboko has since vanished and remains untraceable. The matter has now been closed due to his disappearance. MukanDay has also been unable to locate Samboko, who appears to have erased all traces of his digital presence. Brighton Tembo, Executive Director of the Community Action Against Corruption Commission, says the case raises serious questions about the ACC’s integrity and casts doubt on its commitment to the fight against corruption. Mukwima is a journalist based in Lusaka

Traditional Healer Faces Child Trafficking Charges

By MukanDay Editor

The recent court appearance of Chilufya Chileya, 52—widely known as Kalonga Kanono, a well-known traditional healer based in Lusaka—has brought renewed urgency to our investigation. He is now facing charges of human trafficking, with disturbing links to the exploitation of minors. On July 26, Chileya appeared before Resident Magistrate Amy Masoja, where he pleaded not guilty to the charges. Chileya, a businessman of Makeni Villa, is jointly charged with Natasha Chileshe, 21, and Ebba Chileshe, 32, also from Makeni in Lusaka. The trio faces charges of child trafficking, contrary to Section 3A (1) of the Anti-Human Trafficking (Amendment) Act No. 16 of 2022 of the Laws of Zambia. The Allegations It is alleged that Chileya and his co-accused targeted young girls between the ages of 13 and 16, exploiting their vulnerability through promises of love, protection, and financial support. Critics say Chileya used his spiritual influence to win the trust of these minors, offering them attention and affection they may have lacked elsewhere. According to the charge sheet, on June 2, 2024, in Lusaka, the three accused—acting together—trafficked a 15-year-old girl within Zambia for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Why This Matters MukanDay first reported in January this year on similar allegations involving Chileya. At the time, multiple accounts emerged suggesting that he was preying on vulnerable teenage girls under the guise of care and protection. With the Jerabo member now unwilling to put us in touch with young miners, our journalists turned to two young men they’d met at a local barbershop, who said they had taken the body of a colleague to the morgue on 28 July. He had collapsed at an illegal mining site and was suspected to be a victim of trafficking. In one case, a 15-year-old girl, whose identity is protected, shared her troubling experience. She said Chileya, who lives in her neighbourhood, had been pursuing her for some time—regularly stopping her on the street to compliment her appearance and asking her to get into his vehicle, which she consistently refused. She further revealed that he somehow obtained her phone number and began calling, texting, and sending money—all unsolicited. Feeling threatened and uncomfortable, she eventually confided in her mother. This court case, now in motion, underscores the grave and often hidden nature of child exploitation under the guise of cultural or spiritual authority. MukanDay remains committed to following the developments and exposing those who exploit vulnerable children for personal gain.



UPPZ Leader Charles Chanda Declared Bankrupt by High Court

By Linda Soko Tembo

A Zambian opposition party leader has been declared bankrupt following repeated allegations of involvement in questionable land deals through a company he controlled — Brook Cherith Estate Agents — which has since been forced into liquidation. Businessman and United Prosperous and Peaceful Zambia (UPPZ) leader Charles Chanda was officially declared bankrupt in a judgment delivered on 24 July 2025 by High Court Judge Malata Ononuju — a decision that could derail both his business interests and political ambitions. The bankruptcy ruling follows a petition filed on February 16, 2023, by Nathan Sinkala and 119 others. The group asked the court to declare Chanda bankrupt under Zambia’s Bankruptcy Act, and their application included a sworn statement confirming the debt and a list of all the petitioners. Their case was based on a judgment delivered on January 31, 2020 in High Court Cause No. 2019/HP/1476, in which Chanda was found liable to pay over K3.8 million (K3,837,637.00) for breach of contract and damages for fraud. Despite the ruling, Chanda failed to settle the debt, which remains outstanding to date. A bankruptcy notice was served on Chanda on April 05, 2022, but he did not comply. Justice Ononuju noted that the petitioners had met all the legal requirements for a bankruptcy order, including evidence that the 2020 judgment remained unsatisfied, proof of substituted service on 6 and 7 March 2025, and Chanda’s failure to respond to the bankruptcy proceedings served on 17 August 2022. “It is a well-established principle that a creditor holding an unsatisfied judgment is entitled to commence bankruptcy proceedings against a debtor by serving a bankruptcy notice,” the ruling reads. “Non-compliance with the notice renders the debtor liable to be deemed to have committed an act of bankruptcy.” The court accordingly issued a Receiving Order under Section 5 of the Bankruptcy Act, instructing the Official Receiver to take custody of Chanda’s estate.

Section five allows the court to issue a receiving order if someone is found to have committed an act of bankruptcy. This order can be requested by either the debtor or a creditor and is meant to protect the debtor’s assets while the case is being handled. A Lusaka-based lawyer, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told MukanDay that the bankruptcy declaration carries significant legal and political implications. “Under Zambian law, a bankrupt individual cannot hold certain directorships in companies and faces restrictions in managing business affairs. The ruling also has political consequences, as bankruptcy can disqualify an individual from holding or contesting public office,” he said. The lawyer added that, in legal terms, Chanda is now effectively considered “a minor” — unable to act on his own behalf in business and financial matters. An earlier investigation by MukanDay revealed that Chanda was facing renewed allegations of fraudulent land dealings through his now-defunct company, Brook Cherith, which was liquidated in 2020 after failing to deliver land to over 120 buyers. A MukanDay investigation found that many clients—some dating back to 2017—paid for plots in areas like Chaminuka and Nampundwe but never received titles or possession, while others were asked to pay additional fees unexpectedly. Court records show Chanda’s company was ordered to pay over K3.8 million in compensation, yet he has continued selling land through other entities. Some plots were allegedly sold without proper ownership, and buyers later discovered the land belonged to other companies. Chanda denied wrongdoing, insisting he was helping people on humanitarian grounds.

The Receiving Order

The court’s Receiving Order effectively strips Chanda of control over his assets, including his businesses and financial accounts. Management of these assets has now been handed over to the Official Receiver, who will assume his roles in any companies where he is listed as a director or bank signatory.



“Legally, he is incapacitated,” the lawyer said. “The receiver steps into his shoes and takes over everything — from bank accounts to company directorships.”

Chanda, who has been positioning himself as a prominent opposition figure and ready to become Zambia’s next president, has yet to comment on the court’s decision.

Supreme Court Orders Government to Pay Over K669,000 to Whistleblower

In the latest Supreme Court judgement, the court has ruled that whistleblower Grandy Ntumbo be paid over K669,000 in salary arrears owed to him by the government, following his removal from the Ministry of Finance payroll. Ntumbo, who has not received a salary since January 2023, applied to the court for an assessment of his salary. His removal from the payroll is believed to be part of sustained persecution after he exposed the theft of over K1 billion in public funds within the Ministry of Finance. As Principal Internal Auditor, Ntumbo led a 2019 special audit that uncovered a five-year payroll fraud scheme worth more than K2 million in the Ministry of Education. The audit also revealed the misuse of K500,000 from the World Bank-funded Zambia Education Enhancement Project (ZEEP) at the Provincial Education Office in Kabwe. Further findings exposed widespread financial misconduct within ZEEP and the Keeping Girls in School (KGS) programme, including irregular staff allowances, unauthorised withdrawals from government accounts, and violations of a presidential directive limiting official travel.



During the court hearing, Ntumbo testified that his last salary payment was in December 2022, and that he was entitled to basic pay, housing allowance, and a fuel allowance. The Supreme Court decision, delivered on July 16 by District Registrar Honourable Zulu, followed an earlier directive by Justice Catherine Kunda Makungu on December 13, 2023, which ordered that Ntumbo’s outstanding remuneration be paid without delay. More than a year after the judgment, the government has continued to ignore a Court of Appeal order that directed the payment of Ntumbo’s salary arrears, the withdrawal of his transfer, and the annulment of the disciplinary proceedings against him.

UNMASKED: Inside Zambia’s ‘Jobs for Sale’ Syndicate

A fraudulent recruitment scheme is preying on unemployed health workers in Zambia. MakanDay traces fake health job payments to a ZESCO clerk at the centre of a growing recruitment scam. By McStan Nga’ndu and Joanna Ndabala

A MakanDay investigation into an alleged corruption scam involving fake recruitment in Zambia’s public health sector—where desperate job seekers are duped into paying up to K40,000 for jobs that never materialise—has uncovered the identity of one of the suspected scammers.

The alleged agent behind the scam is a Zesco employee. He claims to have connections in the Ministry of Health and is collecting money from job seekers with false promises of employment. MakanDay traced phone numbers used in the scam to Daniel Sitali. Further inquiries with individuals who had paid for the fraudulent recruitment revealed that he works at the Zesco office in Buchi.

Zesco confirmed Sitali’s employment but said no formal complaints or police reports had been made against their employee. The company stressed its zero-tolerance policy on corruption, and said it would act if official reports are filed.

“ZESCO maintains a zero-tolerance policy towards corruption and any such criminal acts,” aid company spokesperson Matongo Maumbi in a statement. “Should any evidence or formal report be brought to our attention, we will take immediate and appropriate action in line with our policies and the law.”

Sitali was contacted for comment, but he denied the claims, saying that he was not in a position to employ anyone. He insisted on knowing the identities of those who had accused him of being a scammer.

“I would like to know those, madam, because I do not employ people,” Sitali said.

Less than five minutes later, one of the authors of this report received a call from an unknown number claiming to be a potential client wanting to run adverts with MakanDay. However, MakanDay is donor-funded and has never carried advertisements from individuals or companies.

Further investigation revealed that the caller was in fact Sitali, attempting to disguise himself as a client

Victims’ testimonies

One of the victims, Maxwell Tembo*, paid K10,000 in an attempt to secure a job for his wife, a trained midwife based on the Copperbelt.

WhatsApp messages shared to MakanDay show that Sitali asked Tembo to pay K10,000, starting with a downpayment of K7,500. The money was then paid in instalments. The first payment of K7,500 was sent to Sitali’s Airtel mobile money account via an agent, while the remaining K2,500 was sent from Tembo’s personal mobile money account on 27 May 2025. Sitali acknowledged receipt of the money on the same day. “I waited for a week to get feedback from him, but nothing came through,” Tembo said. “I then called to follow up, and he later texted saying he would call me in the next 30 minutes.”

After 30 minutes passed, Tembo sent a follow-up text message. This time, Sitali responded, saying he would call because he had an update.

The following day, Sitali sent a message assuring Tembo that everything had been finalised and he was only waiting for the appointment letters. He added that his wife’s letter would be ready the next day.

Tembo’s wife, a trained midwife, graduated in 2021 and has remained unemployed since.

Tembo is not alone. Several others have come forward with similar stories — including Mercy*, a registered nurse, who told MakanDay she paid K3,300 and was later asked to top up another K1,000.

Another victim, Mwenda*, paid K2,300 to help his sister and brother secure public sector jobs. Victims were shown fake confirmations via WhatsApp messages and mobile money receipts, with repeated assurances that “appointment letters are coming.” None of them ever received the promised jobs.

The transactions were conducted through Airtel and MTN mobile money platforms. MakanDay has seen screenshots of receipts bearing the name Daniel Sitali, confirming the payments made.

MakanDay also reviewed voice notes from desperate victims who shared how they were losing their hard-earned money on the basis of false promises. In one voice note, believed to be from Sitali’s accomplice, the sender claims that appointment letters had arrived and demands payment of outstanding balances.

“Mr Sitali, good morning. Kindly notify the people that the letters are in. The balance is needed as soon as possible—no excuses this time. We want to clear the other guys, but we’re stuck. We’re waiting for those payments, so please notify the people that the letters are in,” said Sitali’s accomplice in a voice note. The suspects, though publicly named and traced, continue to operate without legal consequences—no police action yet.

In a previous edition, MakanDay exposed an alleged corruption syndicate involving public service recruitment for health workers. Desperate job seekers reported paying up to K40,000 to secure positions—yet many ended up with nothing.

Despite evidence and victims’ testimonies, police have yet to take action against the Zesco employee allegedly linked to the fake job racket. Copperbelt Police Commissioner Pethias Siandenge described the conduct as corrupt.

He confirmed that the police had not yet received any formal complaints but urged the victims to report the matter. “Mr. Sitali will be held accountable for his actions,” Siandenge said, adding that members of the public should refrain from engaging in corrupt practices.

“Soliciting a bribe is also a form of corruption,” he emphasised.

Further investigation by MakanDay has revealed that Sitali is not acting alone in the fake job racket. The scheme also involves individuals within the Ministry of Health.

MakanDay reviewed a text message exchange in which Sitali assured a client that he receives a commission for each successful job placement—and encouraged the client to help recruit others.

A system in crisis

In an earlier report, a Ministry of Health official—who spoke to MakanDay on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation—described the recruitment system as broken and spiralling out of control.

According to the official, corruption within the hiring process operates like a chain. Middlemen act as intermediaries between job seekers and members of the selection committee, as well as other officials involved in recruitment.

These middlemen collect cash payments from applicants and manage all communication on their behalf. The use of cash, the source explained, is intentional—meant to avoid leaving a traceable record through mobile money platforms or bank transfers.

In February, Health Minister Elijah Muchima announced that the Anti-Corruption Commission would launch an investigation into the recent health worker recruitment exercise following allegations of corruption.

ACC told MakanDay that the Commission had received a complaint of alleged corruption in the recruitment of health workers under the Ministry of Health from the Resident Doctors Association of Zambia.

ACC Head of Corporate Communications, Timothy Moono confirmed that investigations have commenced and are ongoing, but declined to provide further details, citing concerns that doing so could jeopardise the process.

Civil Service Commission remains silent

The Civil Service Commission (CSC)—a constitutional and statutory body responsible for employing and managing human resources in government—is yet to respond to MakanDay’s request for comment. Its mandate includes, among other duties, appointing, confirming, promoting, and disciplining civil servants, as well as handling appeals, excluding those involving constitutional office holders.

In January 2025, the Civil Service Commission announced the recruitment of 4,140 health workers, including 646 professional cholera volunteers. According to the Commission, the remaining 3,494 were selected through a competitive process.

This marked the third major recruitment under the UPND government, following the hiring of 11,276 health workers in 2022 and 3,250 in 2023.

*The victims’ real names have been concealed for their safety.

Joanna and McStan are currently undertaking a three-month internship at MakanDay. Joanna was the recipient of the inaugural MakanDay Award for Overall Best Student in Specialised Reporting at the ZAMCOM 7th Graduation Ceremony, while McStan emerged third in the prestigious 2024 MakanDay Media Awards.

“Justice for Sale” : How Rural Zambians Pay Police to Arrest Criminals

By Angela Mtambo in Kasama | MakanDay Investigates

“The police are supposed to protect us, not charge us,” complained one farmer. “Now criminals are braver than ever.”

John Chibwe, a local farmer from Kopeka Village in Mpulungu District, Northern Zambia, recounted how he caught a thief stealing maize from his field—only for the suspect to walk free because police couldn’t respond.

“We called the village headman, who in turn contacted the police, but they said they had no transport,” Chibwe said. “We ended up letting the thief go with just a warning. What choice did we have? If this continues, people will stop reporting crimes altogether.”

In another village in the Northern Province, a man accused of rape also walked free—not because he was proven innocent, but because the victim’s family could not afford to cover the police’s transport costs.

“My daughter was defiled by someone we know in the village. We reported, but the police said we must find transport first. We don’t have money or a vehicle. The man is still here, walking around freely like nothing happened. How can we feel safe?”

Her identity has been withheld to protect her and the child.

Across rural Zambia, this is becoming the norm. Community members and traditional leaders say police officers working through the Community Crime Prevention Unit (CCPU) demand transport money every time they’re called to respond to crimes. When the money isn’t available, suspects are released or simply ignored.

“We’re now solving even serious crimes at home,” said one headman. “People are tired of begging the police.”

The CCPU was created to bring law enforcement closer to the people, especially in rural areas. However, officers say they’re poorly equipped – no vehicles, no fuel, and no operational funds. This has opened the door to informal charges and outright extortion. Three CCPU officers interviewed for this investigation confirmed that demanding transport fees has become common practice. One officer admitted, “Sometimes we have no choice. Without transport, we can’t arrest anyone”. The consequences are severe. Petty theft, farm invasions, and violent crimes are increasing, especially during the harvest season. Villagers say maize is being stolen directly from their fields, but reports to police are ignored unless transport fees are paid.

“We used to live peacefully, and most problems ended at the headman’s place,” said one villager. “Now crime is growing, and people no longer trust the police to intervene.”

Traditional leaders in at least three chiefdoms have raised the alarm, saying the police are failing their communities. “We understand that the government is struggling with resources, but this has become corruption,” one headman said. The provincial chairperson of the CCPU, Alfred Mwamba, acknowledged the issue, stating that while officers are dedicated, they’re working under extremely difficult conditions. He called on the Ministry of Home Affairs to urgently intervene with transport and logistical support.

Lucky Munkondya, Northern Division Commanding Officer, clarified that CCPU members are volunteers, recommended by community leaders, and work with passion to ensure peace in their areas.

She acknowledged that staffing shortages further limit police responsiveness, especially in newly created districts.

Munkondya noted that the current fuel supply does not match the growing number of police stations in the region. She added that the creation of new districts and additional police posts, without a corresponding increase in logistical and financial support, has placed further strain on police operations.

A police source familiar with fuel logistics revealed that Northern Province receives an allocation of 8,000 litres of fuel per month—6,000 litres of diesel and 2,000 litres of petrol. This amount, the source said, is not sufficient to sustain operations throughout the month.


The 2023 Parliamentary Committee on National Security and Foreign Affairs report found rural stations are chronically under-resourced and underequipped.


The Police Public Complaints Authority records show many cases of police inaction linked to lack of transport and investigative resources.



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• Got something to get off your chest? Email: editor@makanday.org



Benson Gondwe  by author

Human trafficking within the country is becoming common though most cases remain unreported, those mandated to teach children about such vices should up their game just as well as parents.

Care should be taken, if practical, virtual images should be captured for ease of reference.

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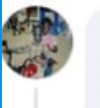
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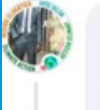
You are doing a good job. Kudos. This is plain evil.

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Makanday Centre for Investigative Journal...



Gilchrist Musolo

Some months ago, a senior government official disclosed that council officers at Kaoma Town Council were forming cooperatives to access CDF loans and grants, but nothing has been done to them. Now we have Councillors and WDC officials selling boreholes, this calls for heightened monitoring and evaluation of CDF projects if the general populace are to benefit.

3d Like Reply Message Hide 2 