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# Zambia's Trust Deficit in Constitutional Reform

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## Kamakonde's Long Wait for CDF Water

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# Kamakonde's Long Wait for CDF Water

By Ackim Mugala

Fifteen kilometres west of Kitwe lies Kamakonde – known also as Kitwe West, a new township sprouting along the route to Kalulushi, testimony of Kitwe's steady expansion.

In early 2023, men in work suits arrived with a clear mission, to construct a communal piped water station for Kamakonde's market traders.

The project, thanks to the Community Development Fund (CDF), was one of four sites where Kitwe City Council had earmarked new boreholes for Kamakonde's communities.

Typically, drilling a borehole and equipping it with the necessary hardware should not take more than a month.

For Kamakonde market's traders, over two years since the beginning of the project, the plastic taps still sit dry at the market.

This has forced traders to continue operating without running water.

The project, funded from the 2023 CDF allocation, saw Kitwe-based Ocean Drilling company winning the contract to sink the borehole at a cost of K51,000.

And so, the drillers came, drilled the borehole and then promptly disappeared and it was many months later that other men came.

The new crew, from another company, Chichema Construction Limited, was contracted to equip the borehole at the contract sum of K181,000.

But Chichema only moved on site in January 2025 to equip the borehole and despite this, the facility still remains dormant as at the time of writing this report.

By any measure, two years is a long time to wait for a borehole that could have taken a month to complete, and understandably, the traders at the market are frustrated by the delay.

Soon, rumours began to fly.

One version was that Conly Munji, chairperson of the CDF committee in charge of the Kamakonde market borehole, had awarded the contract for the borehole's drilling and construction to his own private company.

That was why completion of the project had stalled, according to several residents interviewed by this reporter.

Invited to respond to this allegation, Munji laughed it off as a total fabrication.

## So what happened? And why the two-year delay?

The first culprit in the chain of events appears to have been the procurement process and authorisation.

"Sometimes, project procurement officers are overwhelmed," revealed Lishomo Kazoka, Quantity Surveyor at Kitwe City Council.

"They are overwhelmed with numerous requests and tasks, and sometimes, jobs get stuck in the pile," he said.

Then there was the issue with the initial contractor tasked with drilling the borehole.

He failed to deliver after pulling out from the deal.

His quote for the works was later discovered to cost more than what had initially been quoted.

If it can take two years to complete a simple borehole, and with CDF allocation rising annually from K1.6 million in 2021 to next year's K40 million for each constituency, it is likely that implementation loopholes and bottlenecks will increase.

While the contractor and the council may have faced unforeseen hurdles to finalise the borehole project, the two-year delay to complete a basic borehole project points to serious weaknesses in CDF project management at council level.

Patrick Kambita, Kitwe City Council Town Clerk, puts these challenges into perspective when he says project implementation success rate is at 80% and that "CDF has been improving with every single annual allocation.

"If you want to see whether CDF has delivered, you must give yourself a picture of what it was like before CDF and after CDF," he argues.

Kambita cites contractor capacity as one of the main challenges encountered.

Initially, the assessment of contractors' capacity to deliver was based largely on claims made in their paper credentials, claims that were often false.

"But we now have a database of contractors who can perform and contractors who cannot perform. We now know each other," Kambita says.

"We also have contractors whose work speaks for itself. These are contractors who have proven they can deliver according to the expectations of the council and stakeholders."

Commenting on project completion delays, Kambita explains that the phased project design has been largely to blame.

For example, a contractor moves on site and completes the work. But thereafter "we discover that we cannot open the facility because it lacks the necessary equipment. Then we have to go back to the drawing board to start budgeting for the necessary equipment and it takes another year. Meaning after the completion of the project you cannot hand it over to the public because it is incomplete".

Kambita says future projects will need to integrate everything together so that "when we are handing over a completed project it can be used the following day by the public".

Meanwhile, as the CDF annual allocation increases, allegations of abuse and corruption continue to cloud the process.

Such as unscrupulous individuals reportedly taking advantage of the funds through bogus skills training centres.

In Kitwe and Ndola, some known training centres claim to offer CDF-sponsored courses in operating heavy mining equipment such as excavators, front-end loaders, and forklift machines that cost millions of U.S. dollars.

There are questions on the capacity of such training centres to acquire or access this expensive machinery, with some of the institutions operating from small rented rooms in Kitwe city centre.

At the Kitwe office of one such centre, a single small room is staffed by a woman seated behind a desk, while a large, colourful poster depicting various heavy-duty mining machines hangs on the main wall.

The woman says the centre has branches in Kitwe, Lusaka, Solwezi, Kalulushi and Choma but when the Lusaka, Solwezi and Choma numbers are called, they are unreachable.

At the number listed for Kalulushi, the woman who answers fails to confirm or prove the claims on the college's faded photocopied marketing leaflet with various high-end mining vehicles on offer to trainees.

One of the machines is the Rigid Dump Truck, at K10,500 for a month-long operational course with the centre.

But at a landed cost of about \$4 million, according to an FQM source, it is quite evident this particular centre, with its faded photocopied marketing leaflets, lacks the capacity to procure such a machine.

CDF chairperson for Kamfinsa constituency, Rodgers Nyirongo, confirmed that some training institutions were banned for offering sub-standard trainings by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.

This raises further questions about whether councils are adhering to the ministry's directive, as some of the banned institutions are reportedly still operating.

Former Ndola District Commissioner Joseph Phiri also revealed that a training institution in Ndola was banned from offering courses under CDF after it emerged that students were given "practical lessons" on machinery the institution did not possess.

Delays in project completion, coupled with the mushrooming of bogus skills-training institutions highlights the urgent need for stricter monitoring and enhanced accountability in implementation of CDF projects.

Where large sums of public funds are involved, the risk of abuse and corruption cannot be ignored.

Ackim Mugala reports for Kitwe's Radio Icengelo. This article was fact-checked and edited by MakanDay as part of an investigative journalism in-house reporting clinic collaboration with Icengelo radio.

# Zambia's Trust Deficit in Constitutional Reform

From 156 to 281 MPs, Bill Seven passed with ease in parliament but deepened public doubts about Zambia's constitutional reform process.

By Linda Tembo

After months of heated debate, public suspicion, and sharp resistance from some civil society groups and opposition parties, Zambia's Constitution (Amendment) Bill No. 7 of 2025 crossed its final hurdle, becoming law following presidential assent by President Hakainde Hichilema on Thursday 18 December 2025.

The Bill was passed by the national assembly on Monday, December 15, with overwhelming numerical support. At second reading, 131 Members of Parliament (MPs) voted in favour, rising to 135 at third reading, with no recorded opposition or abstentions. On paper, the numbers suggest consensus. In public discourse, however, Bill Seven remained deeply polarising.

For government, its enactment marks a defining milestone in Zambia's constitutional reform agenda, one it says is aimed at strengthening governance and widening political inclusion ahead of future elections. For critics, the process has raised persistent questions about transparency, power, and whose voices truly shaped the reform.

After signing the Bill at the Mulungushi International Conference Centre in Lusaka, President Hichilema described its passage as a moment that "belongs to all Zambians," insisting that the reforms were not designed to benefit any single group or political interest. He dismissed claims that the Bill sought to extend the presidential term, remove the running mate, or weaken the vice presidency, describing such assertions as misleading and deliberately divisive.

According to the President, the amendments were designed to add, not subtract, from the Constitution, particularly by expanding representation for women, young people, and persons with disabilities, while retaining the five-year presidential term limit. He acknowledged the intensity of the national debate but argued that robust disagreement, when conducted responsibly, strengthens democracy rather than undermines it.

Constitutional law expert Dr O'Brien Kaaba, a lecturer at the University of Zambia, offers a more cautious reading of the moment. While he agrees that the amendment process complied with the law, he cautions that legality alone does not resolve the broader political and democratic questions raised by Bill Seven.

Dr Kaaba notes that constitutional reform should not be reduced to adjusting isolated clauses, but should be treated as an opportunity for deeper institutional renewal, one that re-engineers public institutions to be more accountable, legitimate, and responsive to citizens.

"In my view, the provision that anchors constitutional amendments is Article 79. As long as the final product complies with Article 79, then the law is fulfilled in terms of what should or should not be considered appropriate for constitutional amendment," he said.



However, he added that whether the content of the Bill is desirable, acceptable, or politically sound is a separate debate altogether — one that remains unresolved in the public sphere.

One of the most contentious aspects of Bill 7, Dr Kaaba said, is delimitation. While the process is already provided for under the Constitution, he noted widespread concern over the lack of transparency, particularly the absence of a publicly shared roadmap outlining how delimitation would be conducted.

"Delimitation is a constitutional process already provided for under the current Constitution," he said. "What matters is that it is conducted transparently and strictly in accordance with the Constitution."

As parliament debated the Bill, controversy spilled beyond the chamber and into political circles and social media. Claims began circulating that some opposition and independent Members of Parliament had allegedly received as much as K3 million from the ruling United Party for National Development (UPND) to soften their stance and support Bill Seven.

Given the seriousness of the allegations and their implications for the integrity of Zambia's legislative process, MakanDay interviewed several of the MPs named to establish the veracity of the claims.

All the MPs contacted either denied receiving any money or declined to comment. Those who responded insisted that their positions on Bill Seven were informed by their understanding of the proposed amendments and consultations with constituents, not by any financial inducements.

Patriotic Front (PF) Chama South MP Davis Mung'andu dismissed the claims as false and malicious, warning that reckless and unverified accusations risk undermining democratic debate and placing lives at risk.

Independent MP Emmanuel Banda of Muchinga Constituency similarly denied receiving any money, saying he had not received "even K500," and questioned why his name appeared on lists circulating online.

PF Kanchibiya MP Sunday Chanda described the allegations as baseless and warned of possible legal action if evidence was not produced. PF MPs Anthony Mumba and Elias Daka also rejected the claims, urging anyone with proof to approach the courts. Isoka PF MP Marjorie Nakaponda declined to comment.

While MakanDay found no evidence of bribery, it documented a widening gap between public suspicion and the absence of proof, underscoring how deeply contested Bill Seven was, both within parliament and among the wider public.

Essentially, the Bill introduces some of the most far-reaching constitutional changes since 2016. It ushers in a mixed-member proportional representation system, combining the current first-past-the-post model with proportional representation seats for women, youth, and persons with disabilities, allocated by the Electoral Commission of Zambia based on party vote share.

It also significantly expands parliament, increasing constituency-based MPs from 156 to 266 following delimitation, while adding special seats for women, youth, and persons with disabilities, one of the largest structural shifts in Zambia's legislative history.

Taken together, Bill Seven redraws Zambia's political architecture. Whether it ultimately strengthens democracy or concentrates power will depend less on what is written in the Constitution, and more on how these reforms are implemented, contested, and enforced in the years ahead.

In simple terms, the amended Constitution provides that Zambia's national assembly will be made up of several different categories of members.

## Zambia's Trust Deficit in Constitutional Reform cont...

Most of them, 226 Members of Parliament, will be elected directly from constituencies.

An additional 40 MPs will enter Parliament through a proportional representation system, specifically to increase representation for women, young people, and persons with disabilities.

The president may also nominate up to 11 MPs. In addition to these, the Vice-President, the Speaker, and two Deputy Speakers are members of the Assembly. Altogether, this means the National Assembly can have up to 281 members.

The AI-generated image is for illustrative purposes and should not be interpreted as a depiction of any real person, action, or event described in this report.

### Looking Back

## Harassment, Cover-Ups, and Bribery in Multi-Billion Kwacha Finance Ministry Scandal

By Charles Mafa

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) continues to delay prosecution in what appears to be a cover-up involving officials who escaped arrest in the theft of over a billion kwacha in public funds at the Ministry of Finance. In the meantime, the whistleblower, Grandy Ntumbo, remains a target of ongoing victimisation.

A 2019 special audit into the Ministry of General Education, led by Ntumbo, a Principal Internal Auditor in the Ministry of Finance, uncovered a five-year payroll fraud scheme worth over K2 million within the Zambia Educational Projects Implementation Unit (ZEPIU), along with other major financial irregularities.

The audit also revealed the misuse of K500,000 from the World Bank-funded Zambia Education Enhancement Project (ZEEP) and overwhelming evidence from the Treasury Single Account (TSA) and the Integrated Financial Management System (IFMIS), pointing to widespread financial misconduct in both ZEEP and the Keeping Girls in School (KGS) initiative. Numerous staff members received irregular allowances.

Further investigations revealed unauthorised withdrawals from government accounts and breaches of a presidential directive prohibiting travel by directors, ministers, and permanent secretaries without Cabinet approval.

As Ntumbo pursued the case and engaged with the ACC, deeper inquiries exposed a far-reaching corruption and money laundering network rooted in the Ministry of Finance. The scheme extended to the Auditor General's Office and key institutions, including the Drug Enforcement Commission (DEC).

For example, over a span of 30 years, more than 200 government officials participated in systematic embezzlement, siphoning funds daily and weekly through treasury accounts and government loan and investment accounts.

The financial misconduct within the finance ministry involved the embezzlement of over K1 billion from the state treasury through fictitious allowances and a five-year payroll fraud.

Despite multiple requests by MakanDay, the ACC has yet to provide an update on the arrests of 18 officials, including the

Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Finance, the Accountant General, and the Controller of Internal Audit.

However, in a rare statement during its third-quarter media briefing on October 25, 2023, the ACC said that "investigations into allegations of corruption against Ministry of Finance officials are almost concluded, and the Commission will advise on the next course of action."

MakanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism takes a closer look at this large-scale theft and the ongoing victimisation of whistleblower, Ntumbo. His efforts to expose corruption have led to severe reprisals, including suspension and removal from the payroll. Since 2021, he has faced persistent persecution from ministry officials who have evaded arrest.

### Timeline of Key Events

#### December 2019

- Joyce Sundano Phiri, the Controller of Internal Audit, forms a team of Forensic Internal Auditors to investigate allegations of large-scale money laundering and corruption at the Ministry of General Education (MoGE) following intelligence reports about significant theft of public funds, corruption, and money laundering activities.
- The probe focuses on the Treasury Single Account (TSA) and donor funds from the World Bank, particularly within the Zambia Education Enhancement Project, Keeping Girls in School, and the Zambia Educational Projects Implementation Unit.
- Audit verification begins in Central Province Provincial Education Office.

#### February/March 2020

- Ms Phiri, appoints Ntumbo as the team leader of the forensic internal auditors.

#### May 2020

- Controller of Internal Audit, Phiri, is replaced by Chibwe Mulonda.

#### June 20, 2020

- Ntumbo is offered a bribe.

- State security agencies gather crucial evidence of the bribe related to falsifying the audit report, secure the evidence, and obtain a statement regarding the bribe and the audit findings.
- Ntumbo reports the bribery attempt to his superiors—Assistant Director of the Specialised Audit Department David Kajokoto, Assistant Director Ndalama Chilumba, Director of the Specialised Audit Department Nora Mwila Sichilongo, and Controller of Internal Audit Chibwe Mulonda—as well as to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

#### September 2020: Attempts to Recover Seized Evidence

- The ACC seizes the K5,000 bribe in Ntumbo's account.
- A Ministry of General Education official from the Provincial Education Office in Kabwe, who had deposited the bribe into Ntumbo's account, calls him, attempting to retrieve the documents that were seized by the ACC along with the bribe money.
- The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance writes to the Controller of Internal Audit, requesting access to the documents Ntumbo had signed for as forensic evidence.

#### December 2020: ACC contacts Ntumbo and instructs him to surrender documents to ACC.

- Ntumbo responds in writing, stating that accepting the bribe would have been a criminal offence and that the documents were seized by the ACC as evidence in an ongoing investigation.
- Victimisation of Ntumbo by superiors at the Ministry of Finance begins. This included various actions, such as withholding work assignments, transferring him from the Forensic Audit Unit to the Revenue Audit Unit, and assigning him junior officers to supervise.
- The ACC begins collaborating with the Ministry to safeguard Ntumbo.

### February 2021: ACC Attempts to Retrieve Key Documents

- An ACC Officer approaches Controller of Internal Audit, with a search warrant to seize documents obtained by Ntumbo from the MOGE Provincial Education Office and the Forensic Audit Report for the 2019 investigation.
- The attempt to seize the documents fails.
- ACC arranges for Ntumbo to voluntarily surrender the documents he obtained from MOGE PEO in Kabwe.
- Ntumbo complies, and the ACC issues an acknowledgment.
- Despite the ACC issuing a caveat to protect Ntumbo, the Ministry of Finance refuses to allow him to operate from its offices.

### May/June 2021: ACC Investigates Ntumbo's Victimization

- Overwhelmed by Controller of Internal Audit's persistent attempts to retrieve the seized documents, the ACC summons Ntumbo for an interview to establish the extent of the victimisation.
- During the interview, Ntumbo discloses to the ACC the presence of a cartel within the Ministry of Finance involved in a 30-year-old money laundering scheme, which he said is even more widespread than the one at the Ministry of General Education.
- He further discloses that K110,000 was deposited into his account as an attempt to recruit him into the cartel. To substantiate his claims, Ntumbo prints out records from the Integrated Financial Management System (IFMIS).
- Despite this evidence, the state fails to seize the illicit funds deposited into his account.

### July 2021: ACC Issues Protection Order for Ntumbo as Victimization Heightens.

- The ACC formally writes to Assistant Director of Specialised Audit, instructing that Ntumbo should not be transferred until criminal investigations are concluded.
- However, while the ACC was still building its case on victimisation, Assistant Director of the Specialised Audit Department transfers Ntumbo from the Forensic Audit Section to the Revenue Audit Section.
- July 21, 2021: Ntumbo is transferred to Mongu, Western Province, which he appeals on grounds of victimisation.
- ACC warns Ministry of Finance officials for harassing Ntumbo and obstructing the ongoing investigations.
- The Controller of Internal Audit arranges for Ntumbo to be placed on the Western Province payroll without following government procedures, which require an arrival advice form before such placement.

### August 2021: ACC Warns Against Interference in Investigations

- Assistant Director instructs Ntumbo to re-audit MOGE.
- The ACC cautions Assistant Director against this directive, stating that MOGE was under investigation.
- Ntumbo resumes reporting to the Ministry of Finance.
- August 3, 2021: Ntumbo formally writes to key authorities—including the Secretary of the Civil Service Commission, the Secretary to the Cabinet, the Permanent Secretary (Financial Management and Administration) at the Ministry of Finance, the Director General of the ACC, and the Director of Human Resources—appealing his transfer on the grounds of victimisation.

### September 2021: Escalation of Victimization

- The Director of Human Resources at the Ministry of Finance writes to Ntumbo, giving him 48 hours to explain why he had not reported to Mongu.
- September 7, 2021: Ntumbo is asked to collect an exculpatory letter from the Ministry of Finance.
- September 23, 2021: Ntumbo responds to the Ministry, explaining that he had appealed to the Secretary to the Director of Human Resources and the Civil Service Commission, citing documented evidence of victimisation.

### October 2021: ACC Intervenes

- The ACC phones the Controller of Internal Audit and the Director of Human Resources at the Ministry of Finance to caution them over their continued victimisation of Ntumbo.
- ACC officer summons Ntumbo to his office, urging him to reconcile with his superiors and drop the corruption cases against Ministry of Finance officials.
- Later that month, Ntumbo personally reports life-threatening attacks to Deputy Inspector General of Police, and submits a written complaint to Inspector General of Police.
- However, after the initial interview and submission of evidence, Deputy Inspector General of Police stops taking Ntumbo's calls.

### November 2021 – May 2022: Internal Audit and Further Retaliation

- Ntumbo is assigned to lead the internal audit verification of pharmaceutical drugs in Southern Province.
- November 3, 2021: Ministry of Finance Targets Ntumbo
- The Permanent Secretary of Economic Management and Finance informs the ACC that Ntumbo was charged in June 2021 for the loss of a government laptop, as flagged in an audit query by the Office of the Auditor General.

- The Ministry claims that Ntumbo's transfer to Western Province was routine, but acknowledges that he never reported to the new station, citing victimisation.

### December 2021: Threats and Expulsion from Office

- December 5, 2021: Ntumbo reports for work at the Ministry of Finance but is forcibly removed from the premises by Director of Internal Audit Operations, Human Resource Officer, and Director of the Specialised Audit Department.
- In response, Ntumbo files an email complaint with Controller of Internal Audit, Director of Audit Operations, and Director of the Specialised Audit Department.
- December 6, 2021: Secretary to the Treasury summons Ntumbo and threatens him, accusing him of pretending to be an ACC whistleblower.
- Secretary to the Treasury also claims that Ntumbo exposed an irregular K950,000 loan he obtained from the Ministry of Finance and National Planning.
- He warns that if Ntumbo fails to report to Mongu within 10 days, he will be retired in the "national interest."
- December 20, 2021: ACC Issues Legal Protection for Ntumbo
- The ACC writes a caveat letter to the Secretary to the Treasury, copying the Secretary to the Cabinet.
- The letter officially legally protects Ntumbo from further retaliation.
- It confirms that Ntumbo has suffered workplace victimisation at the hands of Assistant Director of Treasury and other senior Ministry of Finance officials

### February 2022

- Ntumbo writes to President Hichilema requesting intervention but receives no response.
- He meets then DEC Director General, submitting a parallel complaint and requesting an assessment of his security situation,
- He provides her with evidence of economic plunder involving four aircraft (two ATRs and two Boeings) by the previous government.
- Documents reveal a \$3 million transfer by the government, but the aircraft were never delivered.
- Reports indicate that money was collected using the Presidential Challenger aircraft.
- DEC provides Ntumbo with state security and a safe house within seven days.

- The restriction on the K5,000 bribe in Ntumbo's bank account expires, and he informs the ACC. No action is taken until Ntumbo requests a progress report in October 2022.

### March 2022

- The Civil Service Commission acknowledges Ntumbo's appeal against his transfer to Mongu, stating discussions with the Ministry of Finance are ongoing.
- The Civil Service Commission transfers several directors from the Ministry of Finance to the Cabinet Office.

### June 2022

- Ntumbo contacts new ACC DG Gilbert Phiri regarding the Ministry of Finance's failure to comply with protective measures.
- Ntumbo seeks a meeting with DEC DG Chirwa regarding the promised arrests of Ministry of Finance officials.
- Chirwa declines, referring him to Assistant Director of Money Laundering, Mukelabai Kwaleyela.
- Ntumbo insists on the DG's attention.
- Three hours later, a DEC official calls, questioning why Ntumbo is still in the safe house, suggesting his stay was only meant to be temporary.

### August 9, 2022

- Civil Service Commission advises the Ministry of Finance that Ntumbo was absent without valid authorisation and recommends disciplinary action. The Commission never communicates this to Ntumbo.

### October 2022

- Additional intelligence reveals the Ministry of Finance theft amounts to K533 million, far exceeding initial estimates.
- Ntumbo informs DEC DG. She offers a meeting, but Ntumbo declines, opting for private prosecution.
- Ntumbo writes to ACC DG requesting progress reports on the MOGE and Ministry of Finance cases. He also inquires if the ACC has abandoned the MOGE bribe case, as the K5,000 remains in his account since February 2022. ACC fails to respond but reimposes the restriction on the K5,000 without informing him.

### December 22, 2022

- Ntumbo reports to the Ministry of Finance as usual. A Senior Internal Auditor calls, questioning his presence.

### January 2023

- Ministry of Finance removes Ntumbo from payroll.
- Ntumbo believes ACC insiders shielding corruption are behind attacks on his life and salary suspension.

- Former Internal Audit Controller (among those arrested) removes Ntumbo from the payroll.

- January 27, 2023: Ntumbo's lawyers (LCK Chambers) write to the ACC DG citing reprisals against him and requesting a progress report within seven days.

- They also write to the Attorney General demanding his reinstatement and protection from further reprisals.

- January 31, 2023: Ntumbo receives a charge sheet from the Ministry for absenteeism since September 2021.

- He responds the same day but receives no reply.

- Charges include absenteeism and the loss of a government laptop, which he previously reported stolen.

### February 2023

- Senior officials at the Ministry of Finance and Auditor General's Office are transferred as investigations continue.

### March 2023

- Under new DG Tom Shamakamba, ACC arrests 18 senior Ministry of Finance officials for theft and fictitious payments.
- An unnamed person claims to relay a message from the President, requesting evidence of the looting at the Ministry of Finance.
- March 23: Ntumbo writes to ACC summarising his victimisation and transfer.
- March 30: Ntumbo's lawyers requests a meeting with the ACC DG regarding legal action.

### April 20, 2023

- Ministry of Justice responds to LCK Chambers' February 24 letter, stating that Ntumbo was transferred in July 2021 but failed to report to his new post.
- Citing Section 60(b) of Public Service Terms, the Ministry states his salary is withheld due to absence, though he was not officially removed from payroll.

### May 11, 2023

- Ntumbo writes to ACC DG, copying LCK Chambers, expressing concerns over his reinstatement and safety.
- He alleges that Secretary to the Treasury Felix Nkulukusa is blocking his return to payroll.
- He requests state protection.
- ACC issues a restriction order on properties belonging to Assistant Director and Assistant Director of the Specialised Audit Department. Assistant Director had issued clean Internal Audit Reports for MOGE until December 2019, particularly regarding the Zambia Education Project Implementation Unit.

- May 24, 2023: Transparency International Zambia releases a statement on ACC's suspect refund negotiations.

### September 06, 2023

- DEC orders Ntumbo to vacate safe house.
- Ntumbo writes to the DEC Director General, seeking an update on his disclosures regarding the US\$3 million and K5 billion Ministry scandal, reminding them of their promise to dismantle the cartel within two weeks.
- September 2023 – Ntumbo files for judicial review in the High Court.
- December 13, 2023 – Court of Appeal ruling.
- January 2024 – Attempts made to settle the matter out of court.
- May 15, 2024 – Case returns to court after failed out-of-court settlement. The Ministry of Finance insisted they would only pay Ntumbo upon written confirmation from the ACC that he had been staying in a safe house.
- January 9, 2025 – Three church mother bodies meet with Honourable Musokotwane, Minister of Finance.
- February 22, 2025 – Ringo Zulu, Controller of Internal Audit, is fired.
- This story was first published on 26 March 2025



# Opinion | Zambia's Stolen Tomorrow: When Alcohol Reaches Our Children

This year's Christmas has come and gone, and now is the time to take stock, to look back and reflect on how we are slowly turning the birthday of Christ Jesus into a day that risks ruining our children's lives.

Each festive season is meant to remind us of hope, family tables, laughter, rest after a hard year. Yet beneath the carols and fireworks, a quieter tragedy is unfolding across Zambia.

Children as young as ten are drinking alcohol openly during Christmas celebrations, mimicking adults, borrowing from unguarded bottles, or buying from sellers who ask no questions. What should alarm us most is not that it happens, but that it is increasingly treated as normal.

Alcohol is robbing Zambia's future in slow, devastating increments.

A ten-year-old with a cup of alcohol is not a harmless curiosity. It is a warning sign. At that age, the brain is still developing, judgment, impulse control, and learning capacity are fragile.

Early exposure to alcohol raises the risk of addiction, poor academic performance, violence, and long-term health problems. It also shortens childhood itself, replacing play and imagination with adult vices that children are not equipped to manage.

The Christmas season exposes the problem because it magnifies it. Homes are stocked with alcohol, celebrations spill into the streets, supervision loosens, and social pressure pushes boundaries.

In too many communities, children are encouraged to "taste," to "learn early," or are simply ignored while adults drink. When children see intoxication celebrated, they absorb the message that alcohol is a rite of passage rather than a risk.

This is not only a parenting issue. It is a societal failure.

Alcohol is aggressively marketed, cheaply packaged, and widely available, even near schools and playgrounds. Enforcement of age restrictions is weak, and penalties for selling to minors are rare.

Community silence compounds the problem, neighbours look away, relatives laugh it off, and leaders speak only after tragedy strikes. By then, the damage is already done.

The cost to Zambia is enormous. Classrooms lose learners to poor concentration and dropout. Families struggle with conflict and neglect. Health systems absorb preventable illnesses.

Employers inherit a workforce battling dependency rather than building productivity. When childhood is undermined, national development falters, quietly, persistently.

What makes this crisis particularly painful is that it is preventable. We know what works. Consistent parental supervision, firm community norms, responsible celebrations, and real enforcement of the law.

We know that children need safe spaces during holidays, sports, reading, church and community activities that give structure and joy without substances. We know that sellers must be held accountable and that public leaders must speak plainly and act decisively.

Christmas should not be the season when childhood is lost.

If we continue to excuse early drinking as tradition or harmless fun, we are choosing convenience over conscience. Zambia cannot afford that choice. Our future depends on children who are protected, educated, and given time to grow, not rushed into habits that steal their potential before it has a chance to unfold.

The question this Christmas is simple and urgent - will we keep celebrating while our children drink, or will we finally draw a line to defend the future we claim to cherish?

**The image used is AI-generated and is used for illustrative purposes only. It does not depict real people or an actual event.**



This week in the Bulletin and Record

## Renard's return

“You have to understand why people behave the way they do”

By Ponga Liwewe

Almost a year ago, Zambia was on the verge of a semi-final place at the 2010 Africa Cup of Nations in Angola. They were the underdogs and they faced a Nigerian team brimming with stars.

After 120 minutes, however, the Zambian team, although eliminated, were being looked at in a new light. They had taken the Nigerian team to the brink and it was only that team's greater experience that kept them from succumbing to the Zambian onslaught.

The team returned to a heroes' welcome in Lusaka, but they arrived without their coach, Herve Renard, who had been wooed by the African Nations Cup host, Angola, and had signed a deal with the Angola Football Federation despite attempts by the Football Association of Zambia to renew his contract.

There is a general belief that Renard went to Angola for the cash, but he dismisses this: “The real reason I left Zambia was for personal reasons around my family life. Money was never the issue.

It was difficult for me because we were going somewhere with this team. I was sad but I was obliged to make this decision. The big mistake I made was that I didn't communicate the reasons for my departure.”

After six months Renard decided to leave Angola because he was not happy. “My life there was fine. I lived in a nice hotel with good facilities, but I didn't do much football work.”

## Renard's return cont....

After a spell in France, when Renard received an offer to coach one of the biggest teams in Algeria, USM Alger, he did not hesitate. And when he left, along with his assistant Patrice Beumelle, USM were top of the league after six matches.

However, when he signed his contract, there was a clause saying that if he got a good offer from a national team he could leave. "That's why I was able to come to Zambia without any problem."

Thus Renard is back in charge of the Zambia national team following the dismissal of his predecessor, Italian coach Dario Bonetti. His arrival was met with mixed feelings - his supporters and detractors almost equally apportioned.

Renard feels that he has unfinished business with the Zambian team and that the performance in Angola was the first step of a journey to bigger things. "It was a really good tournament for us and I think the spirit in the team made the difference."

We sit in a coffee bar at Jo'burg airport. "I think I am an honest person," he says. "If I tell you it is white then it is white, if it is black then it is black. I can't stay in the middle. Sometimes it can be a weakness because, especially in Africa, you have to adapt yourself to the circumstances. When I came four years ago to Africa it was not easy because I was too direct. Now I am more adaptable."

His mother, the dominant influence in his life, taught him it is better to speak the truth than to hide something. In doing this he acknowledges that in his time away from Europe he has come to understand and respect diverse cultures and divergent ways of doing things that, while they may not be the same as in Europe, are not in any way wrong, just different.

Since he arrived in Zambia for the first time after the 2008 African Cup of Nations in Ghana where he worked as assistant coach to the philosophical and deep-thinking Claude Le Roy, Renard could have followed Le Roy to the oil-rich Gulf to a life of petrodollars and less stress. Instead he grabbed the opportunity to delve into the unknown with a team that had not made much impact in the African game for over a decade.

"I have worked in seven different countries and my best memory is in Zambia. If I have one thing I never forget, it is when we were travelling to Chililabombwe from Kitwe for a match. We were in bus with the players and along the road, the people with scarves, their support was fantastic. When we were 15 minutes from the stadium the players were singing, they were praying and when we went back after winning the game it was something I will never forget. I will keep this memory for the rest of my life."

Perhaps then, it is not so strange that Renard prefers psychology books to thrillers or drama. "You have to understand why people behave in one way or another. You have to know where they are coming from, their life. It's too easy to judge people when you see them the first time. It is not possible to know someone in a short time."



So Chipolopolo, beware. Renard is looking to stamp his authority on the way the team will play. His philosophy is quite different from the one adopted by his predecessor whose focus was on restricting the team's opponents at the expense of positive play. His doctrine is based on the thinking of his one-time mentor, Arsene Wenger.

"I was in the academy at Caen and during this period Arsene Wenger was the coach. I like my teams to keep the ball on the floor and to move it quickly. The best team in the world today is Barcelona, though it is difficult to play in the same way, but this is what we aspire to because it is great to play this type of football. I don't think it is possible to play more direct football with long balls because the players in Zambia are not accustomed to playing in this way. They have real skill so passing football is better for Zambia," he says.

The players will also have to be aware that Renard is a fitness fanatic. He is said by football followers to have often outlasted most of the current national team players in certain training exercises that require much physical exertion. For him, working out is very much a part of who he is and what he stands for. "It is psychology. If I am feeling very good in my head, I am strong... if I am fit I am not doubting anything." His training regime is a daily routine that is the norm for him. "It's just for me. I need it," he says.

Renard has almost movie star looks, so does he see himself one day emulating his French football counterparts Eric Cantona and David Ginola and going into acting? He thinks not. Ginola and Cantona, he says, have a huge image. "Cantona is a very charismatic person. He was one of the best players of the century for Manchester United. He has the talent for that. Me? I think I don't have," he says, laughing.

With the African Cup of Nations barely a month and a half away, Renard is looking to once again to ensure that the team rises to the occasion and stakes its claim to a place at the top table of the African game.

For Zambia to emerge victorious the team will have to overcome the might of the likes of Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal from West Africa and the North African giants of Morocco and Tunisia. Renard feels that despite the superiority of those teams in the individual player stakes, Zambia has the potential to beat any of them with the right preparation. He says: "On paper we may not be the best but I think we have the ability to beat all the teams in Africa on our day. What we do have is a fantastic spirit. If we go to the Africa Cup of Nations with this attitude I think we can do wonders."

It will indeed be a wonder if Zambia becomes African champions given that the team has yet to win the African Cup of Nations. This tournament however presents a good chance to get much further than the team has in recent competitions. If Renard can get the team to play to its full potential there could be a surprise in the offing.

And Renard? Having spent most of his last eight years in Africa, he confesses it is to Zambia that he feels the greatest attachment. "My heart is in Zambia up to the end of my life. Even when I have worked somewhere else, I think this country has marked me forever. I will always be coming back to Zambia."

