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Coal Mine Displacement Leaves Sinazongwe Families Poorer and Unheard

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Scarce in Hospitals, Sold on the Streets

A drug meant to stabilise mental health patients is missing from hospital shelves but flooding Kasama’s streets, exposing a troubling disconnect between official assurances, regulatory oversight, and the lived reality of patients and their families.

By Angela Mtambo

When a family in Kasama returned to Kasama General Hospital to collect artane, a prescribed medication their relative, a mental health patient, relies on for daily stability, they were once again told the drug was unavailable.

It was not the first time.

For months, the family says, shortages at the government-run hospital have forced them to buy the medication from private pharmacies at their own expense. On days they cannot afford it, treatment is interrupted, with visible consequences.

“The condition worsens when the medicine stops,” a family member said. “It affects the whole household, emotionally and financially my son becomes violent, we have to tie him up and if the brothers and father are not around it’s a struggle I have to lock him up, sometimes we have to pay extra for peace to reign.”

Yet while patients struggle to access artane through the public health system, the same drug has quietly found a second life outside it.

A prescription drug, openly sold

What should be a tightly controlled medicine is now widely available on Kasama’s streets, particularly among young people.

Several youths admitted to abusing artane, saying it is easy to obtain despite being a prescription-only medicine. According to those interviewed, a single tablet sells for as little as K10, while a strip of 10 tablets goes for about K100.

Some said the drug is taken before, or mixed with, strong local brews such as kachasu, a practice medical experts warn can be extremely dangerous.

The contradiction is stark. A drug in short supply for patients is plentiful and cheap on the street.

Regulators ‘not yet certain’ how it is leaking

The Zambia Medicines Regulatory Authority (ZAMRA) says it is concerned.

Senior Public Relations Officer Ludovico Mwape confirmed that the authority is aware of the abuse of Artane and other prescription medicines, but said the medicines regulatory body has not yet established how the drug is entering the illegal market.

“This drug is supposed to be used by rightful users,” Mwape said. “We are concerned that it is being abused and sold for personal gain.”

He said investigations are ongoing and called on the public to report suspected pilferage and illegal sales.

However, ZAMRA did not explain how a prescription-only medicine can be widely sold at such low prices without detection, nor did it provide timelines or outcomes from its investigations.

Awareness without data

The Drug Enforcement Commission (DEC) has also acknowledged the growing abuse of artane, particularly among young people.

Public Relations Officer Allan Tamba said the commission has intensified sensitisation programmes in schools, churches, and communities to warn against prescription drug abuse.

“It is becoming a concerning matter, and everyone should be careful,” Tamba said.

But despite acknowledging the scale of the problem, DEC could not provide statistics on arrests, seizures, or trends related specifically to artane, raising questions about enforcement beyond public awareness campaigns.

Ministry rules out hospital pilferage

In a written response dismissing allegations of theft or diversion from public hospitals, the Ministry of Health said preliminary investigations show that while artane is being abused, it is not being stolen from health facilities. This position directly contradicts MakanDay’s findings, which traced the drug’s source to Kasama General Hospital, where officers are allegedly supplying the black market.

Ministry spokesperson Georgina Mutale Chimombo said the illegal trade is largely driven by patients who are legitimately prescribed the medication but later resell it to others. The ministry also said some individuals have been detained in connection with the illicit sale, although it did not disclose details of the cases, charges, or any convictions.

“As a Ministry, we will continue to work closely with relevant stakeholders, including the police and regulatory authorities, to conduct further investigations and put in place measures to curb this abuse,” Chimombo said.

memory loss and impaired concentration, severe drowsiness and confusion, worsening depression and suicidal thoughts, liver damage, as well as seizures and irregular heartbeat.

Mental health professionals also warn that sudden interruption of treatment, common during drug shortages, can trigger relapse, anxiety, aggression, and suicidal ideation.

“Continuity of treatment is critical,” Pharmaceutical Society of Zambia president Keegan Mwape said. “When medication is disrupted, patients are put at real risk.”



However, the response leaves a critical question unanswered: if patient-level resale is the primary source, how is the drug entering the market in quantities large enough to flood the streets while public hospitals report shortages?

MakanDay’s investigations indicate a different supply chain. Reporters traced the drug to Kasama General Hospital and were able to purchase it directly from a street supplier, with a half-full bottle of 100 tablets selling for K500. To conceal the source, batch numbers are reportedly removed from the bottles before the drug reaches the market.

Health risks for users, and patients left behind

Medical experts warn that abusing artane, especially when combined with alcohol, carries serious health risks. These include dependence and withdrawal symptoms,

A system failing at both ends

As authorities investigate and sensitisation efforts continue, families say the consequences are already clear.

Those abusing the drug do so with little fear of detection. Those who genuinely need it are left scrambling, paying out of pocket or going without.

“Despite travelling from Lukulu South to Kasama General Hospital and spending over K200 to collect the medicine for my son, which is strictly issued by prescription and which I carefully keep so I don’t lose it, we still cannot get the drug from the hospital pharmacy,” one father said. “We are forced to buy it elsewhere, yet we keep hearing that it is sold freely on the streets, even without the prescription that I have.”

MakanDay has also established that illegal mining sites across the country have become another space where these drugs are widely used.

Illegal miners reportedly mix the drugs with alcohol to get high and suppress fear before entering narrow underground tunnels. Armed only with picks and shovels, they risk their lives daily while working under intoxication.

Without clearer accountability, transparent enforcement data, and tighter controls along the medicine supply chain, mental health advocates warn that Kasama’s quiet crisis could deepen, with devastating consequences for both users and patients.

Why artane should not be abused – pharmacist explains

Artane (trihexyphenidyl) is a controlled prescription medication commonly used in mental health care. It does not treat mental illness itself, but is prescribed to manage movement-related side effects caused by certain psychiatric medicines, particularly antipsychotics.

The drug works by helping rebalance chemicals in the brain that affect muscle control. Because it also affects the nervous system, Artane can influence concentration, memory, alertness, and behaviour, which is why its use is closely monitored by healthcare professionals.

Common side effects include dry mouth, dizziness, blurred vision, constipation, and difficulty focusing. When misused or taken without medical supervision, artane can cause confusion, restlessness, hallucinations, impaired judgment, and loss of self-control, increasing the risk of accidents and violence, according to pharmacist.

He warned that abusing artane, especially when mixed with alcohol or other substances, can be dangerous and life-threatening. The drug is not intended to numb fear, induce euphoria, or enhance physical endurance, and using it for these purposes can cause serious harm.

For this reason, pharmacists play a critical role in educating patients on correct dosage,

safe use, possible side effects, and when to seek medical help. Artane prescriptions are typically reviewed regularly to ensure the medication is still necessary and that its benefits continue to outweigh the risks.

Health professionals stress that any use of artane outside prescribed medical guidance constitutes abuse and undermines both patient safety and public health.



Angela Mtambo is an investigative journalist based in Kasama and a former MakanDay fellow. This story was edited and fact-checked by MakanDay.

Medical Students Under Siege

By Brenda Muzeya

Crime, silence, and policing caps around Levy Mwanawansa University

Between midnight and 4 a.m., medical students training to save lives are being attacked in their boarding houses in Lusaka’s Mtendere and Presidential Housing Initiative (PHI) areas, often just minutes from police posts. Yet despite repeated reports, police records, patrol logs, and response timelines remain unavailable.

Over the past several months, students from Levy Mwanawansa Medical University Teaching Hospital say they have become primary targets of coordinated night-time attacks involving theft, threats, and violence. Laptops, phones, and personal belongings are stolen, items essential not only for daily life, but for medical training.

“They came in groups and were very organised,” one student told MakanDay. “They took our laptops and phones, then forced us out of the boarding house to an unfinished building nearby. We thought they were going to kill us.”

Students say attacks consistently happen during the same time window, between

midnight and 4:00hrs in the morning, suggesting perpetrators understand police operating patterns and response limitations.

Calls for help, late responses

Multiple victims interviewed said they called police emergency lines during attacks, with response times ranging from 30 minutes to over an hour.

“We called the police for more than 30 minutes and no one came,” another student said. “Police only arrived after the thieves had already escaped and fired gunshots into the air.”

MakanDay requested incident reports and case numbers relating to reported attacks in Mtendere B and PHI between August and November 2025. By the time of publication, police had not provided the records, despite the Inspector General of Police directing the Lusaka Division Commanding Officer to act on MakanDay’s request in a letter dated 1 December 2025.

On two occasions when MakanDay visited the Commanding Officer’s office, the officer was either unavailable or out of the office, according to his secretary.

Local leaders say the lack of timely response is not accidental.

“Bennie Mwiinga police post and Mtendere police station are understaffed,” said Mwila, a neighbourhood and youth leader. “Criminals know the police operating hours and move when patrols are weakest.”

New details have emerged about the severe manpower shortages at Mtendere Police Station, revealing significant gaps in night-time law enforcement. A police source disclosed that during night shifts, only five officers are on duty, three assigned to respond to incidents, while two remain behind to guard the station.

“We can’t afford to leave the station unattended,” the officer said, explaining why response capacity is often stretched thin. As a result, routine patrols are rare. “We only go to a place unless something is happening,” the source admitted, adding that limited manpower makes sustained patrols impossible.

The shortage helps explain the surge in thefts and attacks reported by residents, particularly affecting students from Levy Mwanawansa Medical University living in the Mtendere area.

In contrast, afternoon shifts have more officers on duty, while patrols are reportedly scheduled only on Fridays and Saturdays.

For residents, the implications are clear. “It’s no wonder thieves operate freely, they know the police are overstretched,” one resident said. Students say the situation has created an atmosphere of fear. “We came here to study, not to be traumatised,” a student said, questioning whether current police responses are enough to keep the community safe.

“Bring transport”: Policing by victims?

Several victims reported being asked to provide transport for officers to visit crime scenes, an allegation that raises serious questions about operational readiness and public funding.

“We reported the cases, but nothing has happened,” said Mirriam Zulu, a medical student and victim. “Police ask for transport to go to the scene. We don’t see patrols at night.”

Public budget documents show allocations for community policing, patrol fuel, and operational logistics. MakanDay asked police command to explain how these funds are being used in Mtendere and PHI. No response was received.

Medical Students Under Siege Cont...

Known escape routes, no intervention

Residents point to a thick forest bordering a golf club near PHI as a regular hideout and escape route for attackers.

“They jump over the wall fence and disappear into the bush,” a resident said. “It’s the perfect escape point.”

Despite repeated complaints, the area has no lighting, fencing, or visible police surveillance. Questions remain over who is responsible for securing the space—the local authority, property owners, or police, and why no preventive measures have been implemented.

University concern, but limited action

On 11 November 2025, the Registrar of Levy Mwanawansa Medical University posted on school’s social media platform, expressing concern over the “recent spate of armed attacks” targeting students living in boarding houses around PHI and Mtendere.

However, the university did not indicate whether it has conducted a formal safety audit of boarding areas, engaged police leadership on patrol failures, or provided alternative secure accommodation for affected students.

Students say the attacks are already affecting their studies, mental health, and sense of safety.

“We came here to study medicine, not to live in fear,” one student said. “We now sleep in groups and avoid late-night study.”



Brenda Muzeya is an intern at MakaanDay under the Free Press Initiative’s Journalism Graduate Internship Programme, which aims to promote excellence in journalism.

What the Sino-Metals Waste Dam Spill Reveals About Mining Oversight in Zambia

A new Environmental and Social Incident Impact Assessment shows that while rivers have partly recovered, soil contamination remains and weak enforcement continues to put communities at risk.

By MakaanDay

Although the immediate environmental emergency following the tailings dam collapse at Sino-Metals, the Chinese government–owned copper mine in Kalulushi, has eased, a new official report shows that the incident exposed serious and long-standing weaknesses in mining oversight on the Copperbelt.

The assessment finds that Zambia’s environmental laws were in place, but weak enforcement, monitoring, and preparedness allowed the disaster to occur. Without sustained clean-up and accountability, the report concludes, similar incidents remain likely.

The report found that at least 158 people were directly affected by the spill, many living within areas now classified as environmentally dangerous. While some compensation was paid, the report warns that recovery remains incomplete and uneven, particularly for communities whose livelihoods depend on farming.

What Happened

On 18 February 2025, a waste storage dam operated by Sino-Metals collapsed in Kalulushi, releasing acidic mining waste into the surrounding environment. The spill flowed into Chambishi Stream, Mwambashi River, and eventually reached parts of the Kafue River, raising concerns about water safety, ecosystems, and downstream communities.

How Serious Was the Spill?

Laboratory tests found the discharged waste to be highly acidic, with extremely high levels of dissolved solids—conditions confirmed by the report to pose a significant environmental hazard, especially in areas closest to the source of the spill.

Impact on Rivers

In the weeks following the collapse, water quality in Chambishi Stream and Mwambashi River deteriorated sharply,

reaching levels unsafe for human use and aquatic life.

About eight months later, monitoring showed that most water quality indicators had returned close to levels recorded before the spill. However, the report notes that these rivers were already polluted by multiple mining operations, meaning the dam failure occurred in an already stressed river system

What About the Kafue River?

The assessment found no evidence of long-term toxic contamination in the Kafue River that could be linked solely to the Sino-Metals spill. Instead, downstream pollution was attributed to cumulative impacts from historical and ongoing mining activity, highlighting broader challenges in river basin management.

Groundwater Concerns

Most shallow wells used by nearby communities were not contaminated through groundwater movement from the collapsed dam.

However, the report identified localised groundwater pollution near other waste storage facilities, particularly TD6 and Werner’s Dam, where elevated sulphates and electrical conductivity were recorded—indicating that groundwater risks persist beyond a single site.

Soil Contamination Remains a Major Concern

One of the report’s most serious findings relates to soil pollution. Tests detected copper and cobalt concentrations exceeding international safety guidelines in several locations.

A heavily contaminated area measuring approximately 5.35 square kilometres poses long-term risks to farming, ecosystems, and livelihoods, raising concerns about land use and food safety well after river conditions improved.

Ecological Damage Has Not Fully Healed

Environmental damage remains most severe in upper Chambishi Stream, where elevated metal levels persist in sediments and vegetation.

The Mwambashi River shows partial recovery, while downstream sections of the Kafue River were largely protected by natural filtration systems such as the Lukanga Swamps.

Farms and Communities Bore the Cost

Agricultural land near the spill suffered crop destruction, stress, and contamination, with the report warning that farming should not resume normally without proper soil remediation. Crops grown in polluted soils risk absorbing heavy metals, posing dangers to food safety.

The assessment identified at least 158 people as directly affected, many of whom remain vulnerable to displacement. While compensation was paid for crop losses, the report found that these payments encouraged some residents to return to contaminated areas, complicating clean-up efforts and increasing long-term risk.

Air Quality Not a Lasting Problem

Air monitoring detected no long-term danger from acid mist or harmful gases. Odours reported immediately after the spill were short-lived and did not persist.

Governance Failures Exposed

Perhaps most damning is the report’s conclusion that the disaster occurred despite adequate environmental laws. The core failure, it finds, was weak enforcement, particularly in, tailings storage facility management, routine monitoring and inspection, and emergency preparedness.

These gaps, say the report, allowed risks to go unaddressed until the dam collapsed.

What the Report Recommends

To prevent similar disasters, the assessment calls for full environmental remediation funded under the polluter-pays principle, alongside long-term monitoring of water, soil and ecosystems.

It also recommends the resettlement of people living in pollution control zones and stronger coordination among regulators, including the Zambia Environmental Management Agency, the Water Resources Management Authority, and the Mines Safety Department.

The Bigger Picture

The report makes clear that the Sino-Metals spill was not just an isolated accident, but a warning. Without sustained oversight, transparent enforcement and real accountability, mining-related environmental disasters on the Copperbelt are not a question of if, but when.



Killed by Wildlife, Abandoned by the Law

By Malacki Ndlovu

In Chama district in eastern Zambia, living alongside wildlife has become a matter of life and death.

In Kalikhu village, a young widow struggles to explain how her husband never returned from a routine evening visit to their maize field. He had gone to check on the crop, as many farmers do after nightfall, guarding against roaming animals. He was later carried home dead.

“He went to check the field in the evening and never came back,” she says, holding her one-year-old child. “People later brought him home dead. The elephants had attacked him. The Department of National Parks and Wildlife did nothing, not even help with the funeral.”

Her story is not unique.

In Kapilingizya another village in Chama, an elderly man was killed by a buffalo while harvesting a tree on his farmland. His family received no compensation. Instead, the only form of assistance came in the form of buffalo meat distributed at the funeral.

“The way people wait for game meat after someone dies is painful,” his widow said. “It does not replace a life.”

Across Chama, such deaths have become part of a wider crisis. Wildlife incursions are not only claiming lives but also destroying crops, livelihoods, and food security. Families living near wildlife corridors are increasingly forced to choose between protecting their fields and risking death, often with no compensation or protection when tragedy strikes.

When a person is injured or killed by a wild animal in Zambia, the law offers their family no compensation, no structured support, and no clear pathway to justice. As fatal human–animal conflicts rise across the country, communities living near wildlife zones are left to absorb the cost of conservation with little protection from the state.

This investigation finds that despite government acknowledgment of a national crisis, Zambia’s legal and institutional framework has failed to protect citizens living alongside wildlife, particularly in Game Management Areas such as Chama district.

Zambia recorded over 2,200 cases of human–animal conflict in the second quarter of 2025 alone, according to Tourism and Arts Minister Rodney Sikumba. The most affected regions include Muchinga, Eastern, Southern, Western provinces, and the Lower Zambezi, with incidents involving elephants, buffalos, hippos, crocodiles, and bush pigs.

“This is a national emergency,” Sikumba said in a press statement, acknowledging the threat posed to communities living near wildlife habitats.

But while the government recognises the scale of the crisis, families of those killed by wildlife remain without compensation or sustained support. A review of the Zambia Wildlife Act No. 14 of 2015 shows that the law is silent on compensation for injury or death caused by wild animals.

The Wildlife Act governs conservation, wildlife ownership, and the management of Game Management Areas. However, it does not provide for financial compensation when a person is injured or killed by wildlife.

Section 76 of the Act allows compensation only in limited and symbolic terms. When a wild animal is killed while a person is defending property, the law permits the affected individual to be granted ownership of the carcass or meat.

Beyond this, the legislation makes no provision for funeral assistance, medical expenses, or compensation for loss of income. It also offers no structured support for widows, children, or other dependants left behind when a breadwinner is injured or killed, leaving families to absorb the full social and economic impact of the loss.

As a result, families who lose breadwinners to wildlife attacks are left to fend for themselves.

In Chama district, where communities farm and settle near wildlife corridors, the consequences are deadly.

In Chankhalanga village of Chief Kambombo, Rhosa Goma lost her husband after he was attacked by wildlife while cutting timber to build a shelter. After his death, officials from the

Department of National Parks and Wildlife provided one bag of mealie meal, some beans, and a buffalo for funeral rites.

“That support ended there,” she said. “I was left with two children and no source of income.”

Beyond fatalities, wildlife incursions are destroying livelihoods and food security.

On the outskirts of Chama town, farmer James Kumwenda surveys his ruined maize field.

“The elephants came at night and ate everything,” he says. “All the food we depended on is gone.”

Across the district, farmers report entire fields flattened overnight, food stores destroyed, and homes damaged. To protect crops, villagers light fires, beat drums, and take turns guarding fields, often sleeping in forests for weeks at a time.

Many of those killed were attacked while guarding fields at night. Some farmers have stopped planting altogether, saying it is “a waste of seed”.

At Chama District Hospital, medical staff say the official figures understate the scale of the crisis because not all cases are reported at the hospital.

Senior Resident Medical Officer Dr Gift Zimba says the hospital records serious wildlife-related injuries every month.

“Some victims die before reaching the hospital,” he said. “Others are buried immediately without postmortems. These deaths are never captured in official statistics.”

Without accurate data, policy planning and prevention remain weak.

Where is DNPW?

A visit to the Department of National Parks offices in Chama found the premises deserted.

“They are all in the field,” a local source said.

Yet community members and local leaders say the department’s response to human–animal conflict is often delayed, inconsistent, or entirely absent. No publicly available data shows how many officers are deployed in the district, how many incidents they respond to, or how mitigation funds are allocated.

Authorities blame environmental stress, climate change, and human activity for rising conflict. On the ground, communities point to deeper failures: poorly planned settlements, unprotected migration corridors, and conservation success that has not been matched with safeguards for people.



As water sources shrink, both wildlife and communities converge on the Luangwa River, often at night, when fatal encounters are most likely. Entire maize fields are destroyed overnight. Some farmers have stopped planting altogether, calling it “a waste of seed”.

“We accept conservation, but not death”

Traditional leaders in Chama say coexistence with wildlife has become unsustainable.

“Chama is a Game Management Area. We know animals bring tourism money,” said Senior Headman Lameck Mphande of Mundalanga village. “But people are dying. Let wildlife be kept in protected zones. Communities cannot live like this.”

Officials say plans exist to install solar-powered electric fencing and to use Constituency Development Funds for mitigation. But timelines remain unclear, and most high-risk areas are still unfenced.

Responsibility is fragmented across institutions, wildlife authorities, central government, parliament, and local councils. In Chama, that fragmentation has meant warnings without action, and deaths without accountability.

Zambia’s wildlife is a national asset and a pillar of tourism. But in districts like Chama, its costs are borne entirely by the poorest communities. Without compensation, enforcement, and preventive infrastructure, conservation remains dangerously unbalanced.



Zambia Is Losing Millions as State Assets Abroad Fall into Disrepair

Why is the government allowing millions of kwachas in overseas assets to decay while domestic services face funding shortages, and who is responsible?

By Gibson Zulu.

While Zambia struggles to fund schools, hospitals and public infrastructure at home, government-owned properties abroad, some worth millions of dollars, are quietly crumbling due to neglect, weak oversight and administrative failures.

A MakanDay review of the 2025 Auditor General’s Report, supported by interviews with former diplomats, reveals widespread deterioration of Zambia’s foreign mission properties across Africa. Many have been declared unsafe, structurally compromised, or in urgent need of rehabilitation.

The audit findings suggest Zambia is sitting on deteriorating overseas assets worth millions of dollars, with no clear plan to protect, rehabilitate or replace them.

“The maintenance allocation was usually inadequate,” a former Zambian envoy told MakanDay in an interview. “At one point, I had to surrender rental income from a property in Lisbon just to maintain the chancery in Germany.”

Legal obligations ignored

The decay persists despite clear legal obligations. Section 108(i) of the Foreign Service Rules (2022) requires housing committees at foreign missions to maintain government properties and submit regular inspection reports.

Morgan Sitwala, Member of Parliament for Kaoma Constituency in Western Province and a member of the parliamentary committee on national security and foreign

affairs, confirmed the existence of the committee overseeing such matters. He said it operates under the oversight of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, with technical support from the Ministry of Infrastructure, Housing and Urban Development.

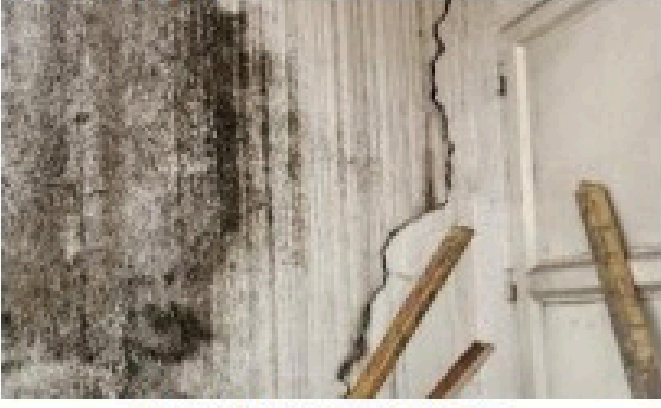

In a phone interview with MakanDay, Sitwala acknowledged the challenges facing Zambia’s foreign missions abroad. He said that while the issues are complex and cannot be resolved all at once, there are “notable efforts being made” to address them. He disclosed that renovation works are currently underway at Zambia’s embassies in Namibia and Zimbabwe.

Beyond dilapidated properties, inadequate funding and transport constraints, the committee’s 2022 parliamentary report, chaired by Sitwala, highlighted additional challenges facing foreign missions. These include the absence of a professional cadre of staff, inadequate staffing levels, and difficulties in the procurement of goods and services, many of which remain unresolved.

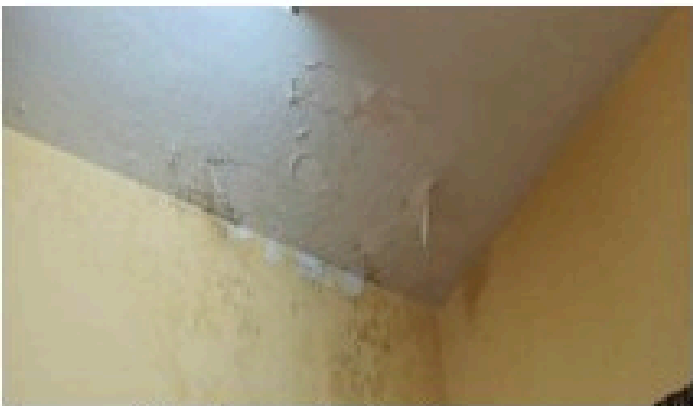

Earlier reports paint a similar picture. In 2013, the committee flagged persistent problems affecting foreign missions abroad, including deteriorating infrastructure and a lack of adequate and timely funding.

Despite repeated recommendations by successive parliamentary committees, and

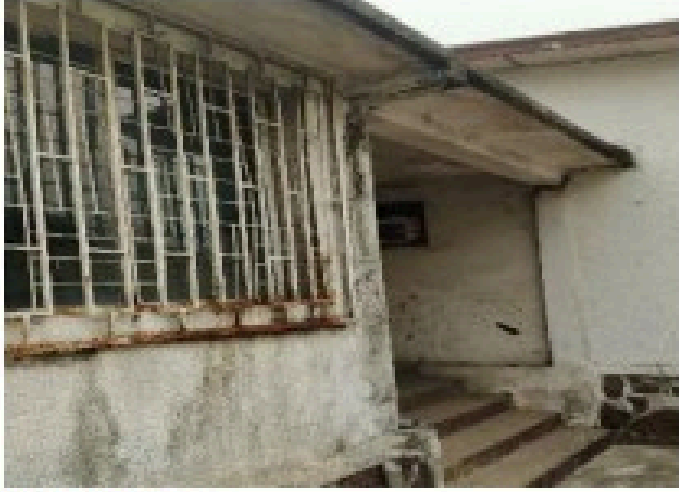
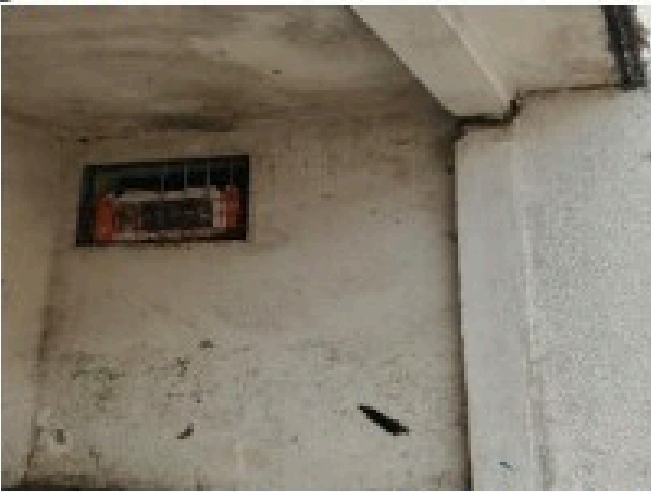
- The Chancery is surrounded by shops, compromising the security.
- There were cracks on the walls of the chancery buildings.



- Leakages on the roof in the foyer



- Sections of the ceiling board were either warping or had fallen off.
- Cracks on sections of the walls.
- Leaking roof.



General poor state of Mbiza House

acknowledgements by the executive, the reports show that little action has been taken to address the long-standing management and operational challenges facing Zambia’s foreign missions.

A pattern of neglect across the continent

The Auditor General’s findings reveal consistent decay across multiple countries.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Consul General’s residence in Lubumbashi was found with a cracked perimeter fence, a leaking roof, and a generator housed in an unsecured structure. Other government houses in the city had damaged ceilings and bathrooms with peeling tiles. In Kinshasa, cracks were observed in the

ambassador’s residence, while the chancery is now surrounded by shops, posing serious security risks.

In Kenya, a vacant double-storey government property on Ngong Road in Nairobi had a collapsed wall fence, temporarily replaced with iron sheets. The building also showed roof leakages and damaged bathrooms, even as it sat unused.

In Tanzania, the High Commissioner’s six-bedroom residence in Dar es Salaam had multiple leaking toilets. A separate four-storey government building in the city’s central business district had an entire floor lying vacant, while parts of the ground floor and annex were rented out to private institutions, raising

questions about asset utilisation and revenue management.

In Malawi, the official residence of the High Commissioner in Lilongwe remains vacant and damaged. The Auditor General described broken ceilings in the ambassador’s office and servant quarters as “dilapidated”.

Similar concerns were documented in Namibia, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Botswana and Mozambique, painting a picture not of isolated lapses, but of systemic failure.

Assets decaying, risks mounting

Beyond visible damage, the neglect has resulted in mounting financial losses as valuable state assets deteriorate without clear rehabilitation or disposal plans. It has also heightened security risks from poorly secured or encroached properties, while undermining Zambia’s diplomatic image abroad.

“Most of Zambia’s chanceries were purchased in the late 1960s,” the former envoy explained. “They are now too old and too expensive to maintain, yet there is no decisive policy response.”

He added that while funding comes from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, assessments are conducted jointly with the Ministry of Infrastructure and embassy staff, raising further questions about why repeated warning signs have gone unaddressed.

A question of accountability

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is responsible for the management of all foreign missions abroad. However, despite multiple requests for comment, the ministry did not respond to MakaanDay.

Efforts to obtain comment from the ministry’s Permanent Secretary, Margaret Miyoba, after referral by Minister Mulambo Haimbe, were unsuccessful by the time of publication.

The silence leaves critical questions unanswered:

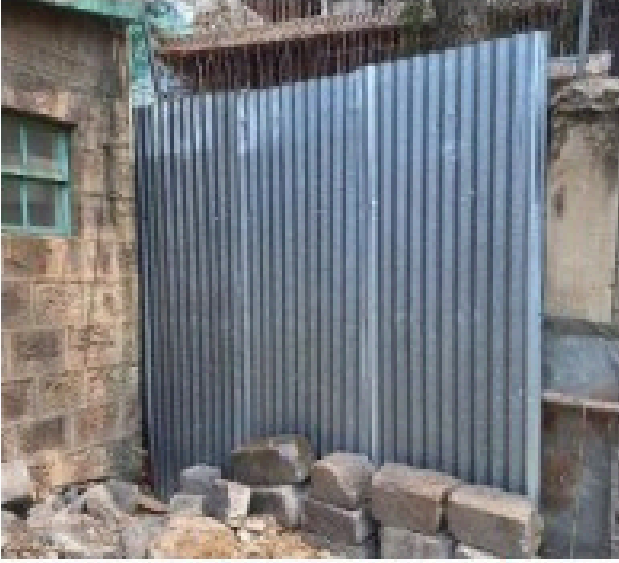




Who is responsible for enforcing compliance with the Foreign Service Rules? Why are inspection reports not triggering remedial action? And how much public money has already been lost through prolonged neglect.

Sell, rebuild—or keep losing millions

According to the former envoy, the government now faces a clear choice.

“The government should sell these old properties and buy new ones, while ensuring that adequate funding is allocated,” he said.

The 2023 report of the parliamentary committee on defence and foreign affairs made a similar recommendation.

 <i>Fallen part of wall fence replaced by iron sheets</i>	 <i>Damaged ceiling</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The offices had cracked walls• Leaking roof• Part of the wall fence was dilapidated	
 <i>Cracks in Accounts office</i>	 <i>Dilapidated Wall fence</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Leakages from the tank on the roof causing damage to the outer walls of the house.	
 <i>Stained Outer wall</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Crack in the wall fence.◦ Leaking pipe in the toilet at the servant’s quarter.	

Coal Mine Displacement Leaves Sinazongwe Families Poorer and Unheard

Families displaced for a coal mine say development left them poorer, sicker, and unheard.

By Mukwima Chilala

In the hills of Sinazongwe’s Mweemba village in southern Zambia, where dust from coal trucks settles on cracked mud houses, more than 50 families say development has cost them their homes, their land, and their dignity.

Residents say they were pushed off their ancestral land to make way for a coal mine operated by African Power Coal Limited, a project they were told would bring modern housing, fertile farmland, and prosperity. Two years later, many are living in collapsing structures, walking long distances for water, and battling dust-related illnesses.

What was presented as development, they say, has instead become a stark example of broken promises, environmental neglect, and weak protection for displaced communities.

Promises that never came

Interviews with residents across Mweemba chiefdom reveal a consistent story of unmet commitments.

“We were told they would build us decent houses,” said 72-year-old Agness Hamoonga. “Instead, we are living in makeshift shelters. This is the second time we’ve been removed, first for the Kariba dam in the 1950s, now for coal.”

Families say they were relocated before houses or basic infrastructure were completed. Many ended up on borrowed land or squeezed into small structures prone to collapse. The land allocated for resettlement, they say, is less fertile, and destroying household food production. Children walk long distances to school, while water sources that once sustained the community have either dried up or become unsafe.

A timeline of failure

A review of events shows that displacement moved faster than safeguards.

- 2022: African Power Coal Mine begins negotiations with village leaders.
- 2022–2023: Families told to vacate land; promises of houses and fertile land.
- April 2023: Relocation begins before housing is completed.
- 2023–2024: Complaints mount over housing, water, and farmland.
- 2025: Officials deny receiving complaints; residents say reports were ignored.

Residents say once they were moved, their concerns were left unresolved.

Living with the consequences

“The mine has made life worse for us,” said Sinkila Siamachoka, a father of

six. “We lost our farmland, and the houses built here can collapse at any time.”

Mothers walk up to five kilometres daily in search of drinking water. Elderly residents say daily life has become harder than before displacement, compounding historical trauma dating back to earlier resettlements linked to the Kariba dam.

“This is history repeating itself,” said Elias Mweemba. “Our parents suffered. Now it’s us.”

Rivers turn brown

In neighbouring Mulungwa village, just metres from the mine, residents say their once-clear river, a tributary linked to the Zambezi and Lake Kariba, has turned brown from mine runoff.

Livestock have fallen sick, children suffer persistent coughs, and farmers report declining crop yields due to coal dust settling on fields.

A video recorded during this investigation shows thick brown water flowing downstream, though no independent chemical analysis has been publicly released.

Environmental activist Freeman Mubanga said communities feel abandoned.

“ZEMA (Zambia Environmental Management Agency) should be protecting people like these in Sinazongwe,” he said. “This is why Zambia urgently needs a Resettlement Act.”

Residents say no environmental audits have been shared with them.

A legal gap that leaves communities exposed

Zambia’s National Resettlement Policy, relaunched in 2024, focuses largely on flood and disaster displacement, leaving communities displaced by mining and other developments without binding protections.

“The laws protect mining companies more than communities,” said Patrick Musole of the Zambia Land Alliance. His organisation and other civil society groups are now calling for a comprehensive Resettlement Act that would mandate compensation standards, livelihood restoration plans, independent monitoring, and penalties for non-compliance.

Without such a law, displaced communities have limited recourse when promises are broken.

Thin capital, high impact

Corporate records from the Patents and Companies Registration Agency (PACRA) show that African Power Coal Limited was incorporated in 2016 with a nominal share capital of just K20,000, despite undertaking a large-scale mining operation that has displaced more than 50 families.

The low share capital suggests the project was structured around minimal shareholder risk and heavy dependence on borrowed money.

Operations are largely financed through loans and mortgages, meaning lenders, not communities, are prioritised in any financial crisis.

Ownership and control

PACRA records show that effective control of the company rests with foreign shareholder Huang Jibo and Zhongyun Weng, a Zambian national of Chinese origin, who together hold the majority of the company’s shares. In contrast, Zambian shareholders Davies Simbaya and Jonathan Kondowe Kays hold significantly smaller stakes, limiting local influence over key decisions. Analysts say such a structure raises questions about accountability and financial capacity.

Mounting debt

The filings reveal deep financial strain, including multiple unpaid mortgages running into hundreds of millions of dollars. These include at least four separate USD 46 million

mortgages registered in April 2024, alongside earlier unpaid loans from Zambia National Commercial Bank.

Taken together, the records raise serious questions about whether the company had the financial capacity to deliver promised housing, land, resettlement, and environmental protection, and whether regulators adequately scrutinised the project before displacement occurred.

Political proximity and company claims

One of the shareholders, Kays, attracted public attention in 2022 after purchasing President Hakainde Hichilema’s red jacket, worn during his 127-day detention on treason charges in 2017, at a fundraising auction for K2.5 million. The purchase was widely shared on social media.

Kays denied allegations of neglect raised by residents, saying the mine has engaged in corporate social responsibility, including building houses for displaced families.

However, field visits by this journalist show incomplete and deteriorating structures, makeshift shelters built from sticks and mud, and families without farmland or reliable access to clean water.



Official silence

Local council officials declined to comment, shifting responsibility to Lusaka.

Asked whether the mine was under investigation, Minister of Green Economy Mike Mposha said government had received no official complaints contradicting residents’ accounts. He said monitoring had been intensified but provided no evidence of inspections specific to African Power Coal Mine.

ZEMA requested additional time to comment, saying it would issue a response later. By the time of publication, no response had been received.

A national pattern

The Sinazongwe case mirrors broader displacement challenges across Zambia, where mining and energy projects often advance faster than safeguards for affected communities.

Experts warn that with new mineral discoveries emerging, displacement scandals are likely to grow unless enforcement improves.

“We are not against development,” said local resident Agness Hamoonga. “But development should not destroy our lives. All we want is fairness and dignity.”

Mukwima Chilala is a fellow under the Wildlife Crime Prevention (WCP) environmental fellowship for journalists.

The MukanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism, in partnership with Wildlife Crime Prevention (WCP), supported the reporting of this story.

Relief at Last for Mtendere B—But Will It Last?

The prolonged sewer blockage in Mtendere B has finally been resolved by the Lusaka Water and Sewerage Company (LWSC) following an [earlier report](#) by MukanDay.

The blockage, which persisted for close to a month, had posed serious public health risks, with raw sewage overflowing into yards and onto roads. Residents say such incidents are recurring in the area due to poor drainage and sewer lines running beneath damaged community roads, which easily collapse during heavy rains.

One resident, Catherine Mainza, welcomed the intervention but expressed concern that the problem could return as the rainy

season intensifies, noting that sand is often washed into sewer manholes because of the lack of proper drainage.

While residents have thanked Lusaka Water and Sewerage Company for addressing the issue, they have urged the utility to respond more swiftly to future emergencies to prevent similar health risks.

This development follows MukanDay’s [earlier report](#) highlighting the sewage overflow in Mtendere B, which drew public attention and calls for urgent action. For now, the community says it is relieved.



Living Next to Raw Sewage: The Crisis in Mtendere B

By Brenda Muzeya

Residents of Mtendere B township in Lusaka are facing a persistent sewer blockage crisis that continues to spill raw sewage into residential yards, posing serious public health and environmental risks. Despite repeated complaints, residents say no lasting solution has been provided.

The sewer system serving Mtendere B and surrounding areas was constructed under the US\$355.5 million Millennium Challenge water supply and sanitation project (Contract Package 3), which covered works in Mtendere West and East. However, recurring failures across Mtendere B and Mtendere East have

raised questions about the durability, maintenance, and oversight of this publicly funded infrastructure. Lusaka Water and Sewerage Company denied receiving the specific complaint from Mtendere B, suggesting it may not have been reported through the correct channels.

The utility attributed the blockages to indiscriminate waste disposal, theft of manhole covers, and illegal construction on sewer lines, and said it is conducting sanitation sensitisation and routine sewer-cleaning programmes.

Comment

OPINION: Kikonge’s Lesson - Army Action May Stop the Illegalities, but Reform Must Follow

The government appears set to deploy the Zambia Army to confront illegal gold mining at Kikonge in Mufumbwe district, North-Western Province. The move was announced by Army Commander Lieutenant General Geoffrey Choongo Zyelee, who warned illegal miners to vacate the area by next week or face military action aimed at dismantling armed gangs that have taken over the goldfields.

The warning comes months after MakanDay, working with journalists from Kasempa and Mufumbwe, investigated the dark side of the gold rush in the district and uncovered a deepening breakdown of law and order. The investigation carried out in September last year found that Kikonge gold mine, located in Chiefs Kasempa and Kizela’s chiefdoms, had been overrun by armed gangs, rampant illegal mining, and widespread violence.

Chief Kizela’s spokesperson, Labson Samola Kayombo, told MakanDay that police deployed to the area had failed to restore order and alleged that some officers were profiting from the chaos.

“They are involved because they charge people to access the mine,” he claimed, openly calling instead for the deployment of soldiers. When pressed for evidence, Kayombo challenged MakanDay to visit Kikonge and speak directly to residents, many of whom, he said, had repeatedly reported the situation to traditional authorities.

Those allegations marked a critical turning point in understanding the crisis. What is unfolding at Kikonge is not simply a story of illegal mining or criminal gangs, it is a case study in state failure.

It shows how weak governance, under-resourced policing, and rushed resource exploitation can turn a mineral discovery into a national security threat.

The gold rush in Kikonge was never going to be orderly. Tens of thousands of people flooded into an informal mining site on customary land with no licence holder, no infrastructure, and no security plan. Instead of prosperity, the result was violence, armed gangs, deaths, and a collapse of law and order. When the state failed to organise entry, regulation, and protection, criminal actors filled the vacuum.

This outcome is not accidental. Zambia continues to encounter mineral discoveries without the institutional readiness to manage them. Regulation follows chaos instead of preceding it. Kikonge shows what happens when the state arrives late to its own resources.

Policing, which should have been the first line of response, collapsed under the strain.

Despite the deployment of hundreds of police officers, violence persisted and public trust steadily evaporated. Communities and traditional leaders accused some officers of accepting bribes to allow illegal access to the mine, while officers on the ground struggled with severe shortages of transport, food, water, and basic logistical support. In these conditions, enforcement became inconsistent, corruption flourished, and police legitimacy collapsed.

This breakdown has since been acknowledged at the highest level of the police command. In the latest edition of the police news magazine,



Inspector General of Police Graphael Musamba concedes that illegal mining in areas such as Mufumbwe has become a serious national concern, fuelling violence, environmental destruction, and public disorder.

He says police, working with other security agencies, are now implementing measures aimed at preventing a recurrence of the chaos, an admission that the earlier response was overwhelmed.

Once policing loses credibility, order cannot be restored by numbers alone. This is why Kikonge became effectively ungovernable. Armed gangs openly threatened police, controlled territory, and dictated access to the mine. The state’s monopoly on force, one of its most fundamental functions, was effectively suspended.

It is in this context that calls for military involvement must be understood. Army deployment in a civilian setting should never be celebrated or normalised. But neither should it be dismissed outright when policing has demonstrably failed.

A limited, clearly mandated military intervention can serve as a necessary reset: disrupting entrenched criminal gangs, stabilising the area so civilian

institutions can function again, and signalling that the state has reclaimed authority after months of fragmentation and fear. This is not an argument for militarising resource governance. It is an argument for recognising that in moments of extreme institutional breakdown, temporary military stabilisation, under civilian oversight, with clear timelines and respect for human rights, may be unavoidable.

The real test, however, lies in what comes after the soldiers.

If Kikonge is merely pacified and then abandoned to the same structural weaknesses, the violence will return. Sustainable peace requires properly resourced policing, serious reform of mining governance, and the meaningful inclusion of traditional leaders in decision-making.

Kikonge offers a hard lesson: natural resources do not automatically bring development. Without strong institutions, they magnify inequality, violence, and state weakness. Army deployment may stop the immediate bleeding, but only governance reform can prevent the next crisis.

Music and the making of Zambia

How Zambia’s first president Kenneth Kaunda used music to build the newly independent nation

By Walima T. Kalusa

Few people would doubt that Kenneth Kaunda spearheaded the nationalist struggle out of which Zambia was born in 1964. According to popular discourse, Dr Kaunda succeeded in undermining colonial hegemony through a peaceful but spirited nationalist campaign through which he mobilised mass support against imperial hegemony in colonial Zambia, undermined the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in the 1950s, and ultimately secured independence from reluctant colonial masters in the 1960s. In this discourse, Dr Kaunda waged the war for political liberty on the constitutional terrain.

Convincing as this perspective may be, it obscures the full range of the strategies that the nationalist and other leaders in the African National Congress (ANC), and later in the United National Independence Party (UNIP), deployed to contest colonial rule and, after 1964, to imagine and to construct the sovereign state of Zambia. As Dr Kaunda himself admits in his Letters to My Children, one of the strategies he resorted to in the fight against colonial misrule and to mobilise nationalist support was singing political songs, a topic that largely still awaits its historian.

Dr Kaunda was born in 1924 into a Christian family at Lubwa, Chinsali, where his father David Kaunda was an evangelist under the Scottish Missionary Society. Apparently Kenneth’s father was a fine clergyman with, more importantly, an abiding love for music. He unfailingly sang Christian hymns with his family before the itinerant preacher left home to spread the Gospel in surrounding villages. There, as at home, the father of Zambia’s future president sang hymns as a tool of proselytisation. It was from his father that his son inherited a lifelong passion for music.

Dr Kaunda’s love for music blossomed at the age of nine after his brother purchased an “autoharp” from a friend who also taught the latter to play it. In his own words, Dr Kaunda persuaded his brother to also teach him to play the instrument, which had three bars of music and twenty-one strings. Henceforth, the young musician embarked

on a career of instrumental music. When he became a teacher at Lubwa in later years, Dr Kaunda bought his own guitar.

Dr Kaunda soon became an accomplished musician. At first he played on his instruments Western songs imported from the Copperbelt to entertain his friends. But he also began to compose and play his own songs, much to the delight of his friends who reportedly took pleasure in and contentedly danced to the young musician’s music. Indeed, there are still people in Chinsali today who recall that Dr Kaunda regularly performed at weddings in the district before he was swept off his feet by the irresistible wind of African nationalism after the Second World War.

Dr Kaunda’s passion for music was reinforced by his South African teacher, Daniel Sonquishe, at Munali Secondary school between 1941 and 1942. Dr Kaunda and Mr Sonquishe, who seems to have also been an accomplished guitarist, created a musical band, which they christened the The Evening Birds. At the end of his second year at Munali, Dr Kaunda and the band toured many towns on the Zambian Copperbelt, performing to large, enthusiastic crowds. But the tour was not financially successful; a thief made off with the bulk of the band’s proceeds.

Playing music became extremely important once Dr Kaunda enlisted in the nationalist crusade in Chinsali under the ANC in the late 1940s, and he would continue to sing long after 1958 when he broke away from the ANC to form the United National Independence Party (UNIP). As the vice-secretary of the ANC branch in Chinsali in the 1940s, and later as the organising secretary of the party in Northern Province (which then included the present Luapula Province), Dr Kaunda frequently resorted to singing loudly as he cycled in the lion-infested region to address political rallies in order to drum up popular support against colonial rule. In so doing, he bolstered his own courage. At rallies, the nationalist frequently sang political songs to arouse anti-colonial consciousness.

Besides singing to allay his fears and to stir anti-imperial awareness, the UNIP leader deployed music to overcome

stammering and shyness when he addressed audiences. When he was unable to express his thoughts clearly in words to the audience, he reportedly broke into a song that re-energised the young nationalist. Often, the audience found itself singing along with him.

Like most other nationalists elsewhere in colonial southern Africa, Dr Kaunda transformed music into an effective instrument for political mobilisation. As the following song suggests, his hymns served various political functions. They not only reminded his listeners of the past wrongs Europeans had inflicted upon them but also urged them to join UNIP, to brace themselves for the difficult struggle that lay ahead and to relentlessly combat colonialism until the day of liberty dawned:



That Dr Kaunda harnessed music to pursue political goals is perhaps best expressed by the song he composed against Harry Mwanga Nkumbula in the late 1950s after UNIP split from the ANC. Part of the song went as follows:

*UNIP is my shield
UNIP is my shield for
ever
Nothing shall I fear at
all
Even though chains of
slavery... bind me
Always shall I remember

Gnashing of teeth and
misery
Is [the] black man’s
curse indeed
Shedding of tears and
weariness
These are our daily show

To lead never shall I
forsake
In my own land of birth
Until I see liberty
Under [the] black man’s
own rule*

In another song, Dr Kaunda and UNIP implored imipashiyabena Zambia (the ancestors of Zambia) to come to the aid of nationalist fighters in their combat against foreign rule. Interestingly, such songs made no mention of the ethnic or linguist

identity of the ancestors but referred to them as Abeneba Zambia (the owners of Zambia). Such songs thus stripped the ancestors of their narrow ethnic identities and, at the same time, conferred upon them a much wider nationalist identity. In this way, Dr Kaunda effectively employed the living dead to mobilise followers irrespective of their ethnic, linguistic or historical backgrounds. This in turn solidified his party’s inter-ethnic solidarity and cohesion.

That Dr Kaunda harnessed music to pursue political goals is perhaps best expressed by the song he composed against Harry Mwanga Nkumbula in the late 1950s after UNIP split from the ANC. Part of the song went as follows:

*Some are mourning for
suits
But we are mourning for
the country.*

This song ridiculed Mr Nkumbula’s penchant for suits at a time when Dr Kaunda himself regularly appear in public dressed in a toga to display his cultural nationalist credentials. The song discredited Mr Nkumbula as a blind worshipper of Western materialism, who was thus unfit to govern. Through music, therefore, Dr Kaunda dismissed his main rival’s claim to political power, with telling effect for Mr Nkumbula’s future political career.

Dr Kaunda did not stop at singing to mobilise a mass following or to disqualify political foes. As Zambia’s president from 1964 on, he also perceived music as the soul of the new nation. Convinced that music transcended ethnic

Music and the making of Zambia Cont.....

and linguistic barriers, he hoped to use it to weld the 73 disparate ethnic groups that inhabit the territory into one nation, in keeping with his slogan of “One Zambia one nation”.

His enthusiasm for fostering national integration and solidarity through music is aptly illustrated by his favourite song, *Tiyende Pamozi* (Let Us Walk Together). In this song, which the president performed wherever he went and which is consequently widely known in southern Africa today, Dr Kaunda cajoled Zambians and other Africans to be united.

The significance Dr Kaunda attached to music as a vehicle of nation-building may further be discerned in his attitude towards the Zambian music industry with its musicians. He perceived music with its artists as far from peripheral to the country’s social, political and economic development but as integral to national development.

Dr Kaunda held that music was the mirror through which the new country would reflect its history, its identity, its triumphs and its failures. To this end, he ardently championed the music industry. Not only did his government create institutions to support it but he also personally regularly feted leading musicians at State House, supported their foreign trips and conferred upon them prestigious awards on important national days.

It is clear, then, that from his childhood Dr Kaunda deployed music as a means to achieve shifting goals. In his early life, he used it as a means to entertain people, as well as to overcome fear and shyness. And music continued to occupy a special place in his political career.

As a nationalist, he successfully sang political songs to stir anti-colonial sentiments, and, after independence, to build a unified nation. In the early 1990s,

however, his endeavour to sing away the threat that the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) exerted upon his grip on power earned him more public ridicule than support. And, in 1991, the MMD dislodged him from office, partly thanks to anti-Kaunda songs played at political rallies.

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Kenneth and Betty Kaunda singing at a party held to mark Dr Kaunda’s 50th birthday

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