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LEARNING AT WHAT COST?

- An investigation into the CDF Skills Bursary programme in Mansa



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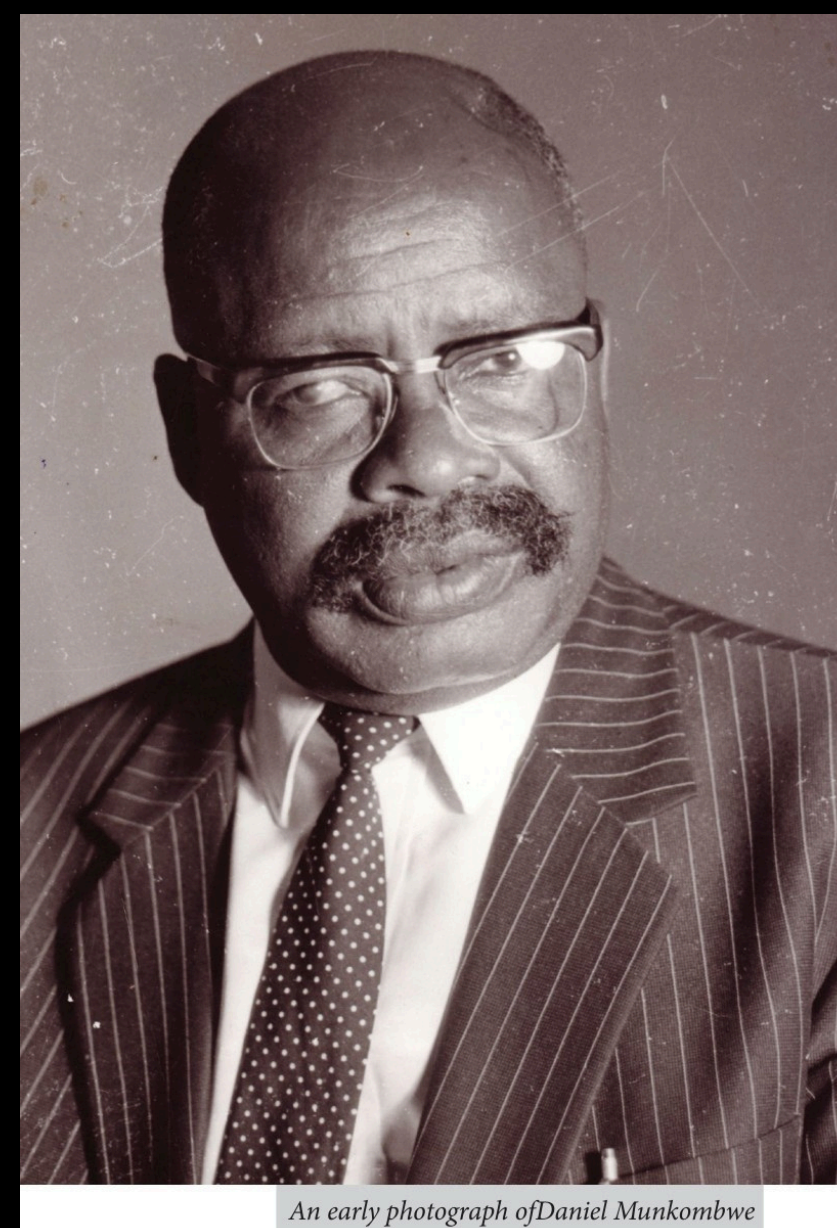
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CDF Skills Bursary Under Scrutiny as Institutions Struggle With Rising Enrollment

By Hegar Chola | Mansa

The Constituency Development Fund (CDF) skills development bursary programme, one of the government's flagship initiatives aimed at equipping vulnerable youths with practical skills and improving economic opportunities is facing growing scrutiny in Mansa district amid concerns over training costs, institutional capacity and value for money.

An investigation by KFM in Bahati Constituency, one of the two constituencies in Mansa, found mounting questions from beneficiaries, civic leaders and education sector representatives over whether the programme is delivering the quality of training promised while ensuring prudent use of public funds.

Official records issued by Mansa Municipal Council on February 2, 2026, and signed by Town Clerk Dr. Josephine Mwanza, show that 295 students were selected to benefit from the programme in Bahati Constituency. More than K6.2 million was allocated towards skills development training. However, a review of some of the allocations has sparked debate among citizens.

Among the beneficiaries is a student selected to pursue a one-year Fashion Design and Tailoring course at Mansa School for Continuing Education at a cost of K21,850. Another beneficiary enrolled in a one-year Food Production course was allocated K25,815.

Further inquiries by KFM revealed significant variations in training costs. A skills training institution in Luapula Province offering a comparable food production course under self-sponsorship quoted K9,600 for a one-year programme — considerably lower than some of the allocations reviewed under the CDF bursary scheme.

While the comparison alone does not establish any irregularity, it raises questions about how bursary-funded training costs are determined and whether sufficient scrutiny exists to ensure value for money before public funds are committed.

Although the allocations fall within the approved bursary budgets, the disparities prompt broader questions about whether the amounts paid are consistent with prevailing market rates for comparable training programmes and whether existing oversight mechanisms provide adequate safeguards for value for money.

The concerns are not limited to costs. Some beneficiaries interviewed by KFM said they were experiencing challenges that raised questions about the preparedness of institutions receiving large numbers of CDF-sponsored students.

Felix Mwila, who was initially selected to pursue a driving course, said practical lessons had not commenced despite the programme already being underway. He further disclosed that he was later redirected to another institution, a development he said created uncertainty about his training.

At Mansa Trades Training Institute, Student Union President Malcolm Mudenda said the rapid increase in enrolment under the bursary scheme had placed pressure on institutional resources.

He also said some students were receiving predominantly theoretical instruction because of limited practical equipment and shortages of protective gear required for hands-on learning.

Institutional authorities, however, rejected suggestions of wrongdoing. Mansa Trades Principal Mukupa Musanse defended the institution's fee structure, saying charges were approved by the Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA) and relevant government ministries.

Musanse maintained that the fees were standard and complied with regulatory requirements.

The concerns have also attracted the attention of local leaders. Chansunsu Ward Councillor Emmanuel Bwanga questioned whether the programme was delivering maximum benefit to learners,

arguing that there was a need for greater transparency around training costs and stronger oversight of participating institutions.

"We need to ensure that public funds are translating into quality training and meaningful skills for the beneficiaries," Bwanga said.

Mansa Trades Principal Musanse acknowledged that the increase in enrolment resulting from CDF sponsorship had stretched the institution's capacity, particularly in relation to training resources and infrastructure.

Mudenda also cited delays in the disbursement of meal allowances, saying some students struggled to meet basic needs while waiting for payments.

But Mansa Municipal Council Public Relations Officer Joel Kashi attributed delays in publishing beneficiary lists and processing allowances to verification procedures and late submissions

but maintained that participating institutions were monitored and could be blacklisted if found to be in breach of programme guidelines.

She also said the council was executing decisions made by the CDF Committees and was not solely responsible for determining beneficiary placements or institutional selections.

As public investment in skills development continues to grow, observers say greater transparency and accountability will be vital to maintaining confidence in the programme.

This article was produced by MakaanDay's Local Reporting Network. Subscribe through our website and follow our Facebook page to receive stories like this one as soon as they are published.



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BUILT ON THE TRACKS

How illegal settlements are swallowing strategic TAZARA land in Kapiri Mposhi

By Precious Mwambula | Kapiri Mposhi

What was once reserved for railway expansion is now dotted with houses.

Inside the Kapiri Dry Port site in Northpark area in Kapiri Mposhi, structures have quietly emerged on land belonging to the Tanzania-Zambia Railway Authority (TAZARA), despite years of warnings, stop orders, and eviction notices.

The land, considered strategic for future railway and trade logistics development, is now at the centre of a growing battle involving land governance failures, weak enforcement, and unanswered questions over who allowed construction on protected railway property.

According to TAZARA Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Bruno Chingag'andu, the encroachment at the Kapiri Dry Port site was formally detected in 2010. But the broader problem along the railway corridor dates back to the 1990s.

Of the 12 hectares, land equivalent to nearly 17 football pitches out together, originally reserved for the dry port project, approximately eight hectares have already been affected by illegal occupation.

TAZARA says at least six structures have been identified within the restricted zone.

But investigations by ZI FM suggest the problem may be larger than isolated illegal structures.

At the site, some of the houses appear occupied only by caretakers, while neighbours say the actual owners do not live in Kapiri Mposhi — raising questions about whether the land is being held for speculation or by individuals with political or financial influence.

Under the [TAZARA Act of 1995](#), a 50-metre reserve exists on either side of the railway line where construction is prohibited.

Despite this legal restriction, construction activities continued even after stop orders were issued.

“Those occupying the land were instructed to cease developments, but some ignored the directives,”

Chingag'andu said in responses made available to ZI FM through TAZARA Head of Public Relations Conrad Simuchile.

The authority says it has since escalated enforcement by issuing formal eviction notices and engaging local leadership.

Some occupants have reportedly agreed to vacate the land, although full compliance remains uncertain.

Yet the bigger question remains unanswered: who allocated or facilitated access to the land in the first place?

That question becomes more critical given that the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources has confirmed that the area is officially reserved for railway use.

Ministry Principal Public Relations Officer Delphine Hampane told ZI FM that land allocation is managed either by the Ministry of Lands or local authorities.

She said the ministry operates an online verification system intended to prevent illegal allocations.

However, Hampane confirmed that no ministry official has been investigated or disciplined in relation to the encroachment.

Meanwhile, efforts to obtain answers from the planning department at Kapiri Mposhi Town Council proved unsuccessful despite repeated press queries and follow-ups seeking clarification on whether the council approved or was aware of the developments.

That silence leaves critical questions unanswered.

If the land is protected railway property, how were structures allowed to emerge over several years without intervention from local planning authorities?

And if no allocation was officially made, who sold or occupied the land?

In February this year, TAZARA Regional Manager Kambani Ndhlovu disclosed the encroachment during a tour of

the railway station by Central Province Permanent Secretary Dr Milner Mwanakampwe and Permanent Secretary for Transport and Logistics Frederick Mwalusaka.

The two officials urged TAZARA management to engage the residents occupying the land.

But the situation highlights a deeper national problem — the growing pressure on public land and the apparent inability of institutions to prevent encroachment even on strategic infrastructure corridors.

Rail experts warn that settlements near railway lines pose serious safety risks.

Structures built too close to tracks increase the danger of fatalities in the event of derailments or rail accidents.

The encroachment also threatens future expansion plans at the Kapiri Dry Port, a project viewed as important to regional trade and cargo movement between Zambia and neighbouring countries.

Internally, TAZARA now says it is working to improve land protection systems, including boundary demarcation, enhanced security, and closer coordination with local authorities. But after decades of encroachment, questions remain over whether enforcement is already too late.

This story was produced through the MakaanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism's community journalism network, amplifying local voices and holding public institutions accountable.



FACT CHECK | Did PF infrastructure investment make Western Province no longer Zambia's poorest province?

By MakaanDay

Claim

Former diplomat and Patriotic Front (PF) member Emmanuel Mwamba claimed in a Facebook post that Western Province is no longer Zambia's poorest province because of major infrastructure investments undertaken during the PF administration.

Among the projects he cited were the Mongu–Kalabo Road, Sioma Bridge, the Mongu–Senanga and Mongu–Sesheke roads, township roads in Mongu, the cashew infrastructure programme

and the construction of new secondary schools.

What did MakaanDay check?

MakaanDay examined two questions:

- Did Western Province receive substantial infrastructure investment during the PF administration?

- Do official statistics show that these investments made Western Province no longer Zambia's poorest province?

FACT CHECK | Did PF infrastructure investment make Western Province no longer Zambia's poorest province? Cont...

What the evidence shows

Official records confirm that Western Province benefited from significant public infrastructure investment over the past two decades, with several major projects completed during the PF administration.

These include the completion of the Mongu–Kalabo Road, Sioma Bridge across the Zambezi River, the Mongu–Senanga and Mongu–Sesheke roads, township roads in Mongu, implementation of the cashew infrastructure programme, and construction of secondary schools in districts such as Sesheke and Sikongo.

The latest official poverty statistics also show that Western Province no longer records the highest poverty incidence in Zambia.

According to the 2022 Living Conditions Monitoring Survey (LCMS) published by the Zambia Statistics Agency, Muchinga Province has the highest poverty incidence at 82.6%, followed by Western Province (78.6%), Northern Province (78.0%) and Luapula Province (76.5%).

This means it is factually correct that Western Province is no longer the province with the highest poverty incidence.

Did infrastructure investment cause the change?

The available evidence does not establish that conclusion. The Living Conditions Monitoring Survey measures poverty levels across Zambia but does not analyse the reasons why poverty increased or declined in particular provinces. It therefore cannot be used to conclude that infrastructure projects implemented under the PF administration caused Western Province to move from having the country's highest poverty incidence.

Changes in poverty levels are influenced by a range of factors, including household incomes, agricultural production, employment, economic growth, social protection programmes, migration and demographic changes. The LCMS does not attribute changes in provincial poverty to specific government projects or administrations.

While it is therefore accurate that Western Province no longer has the highest poverty incidence, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that the infrastructure investments cited by Mr Mwamba were responsible for that change.

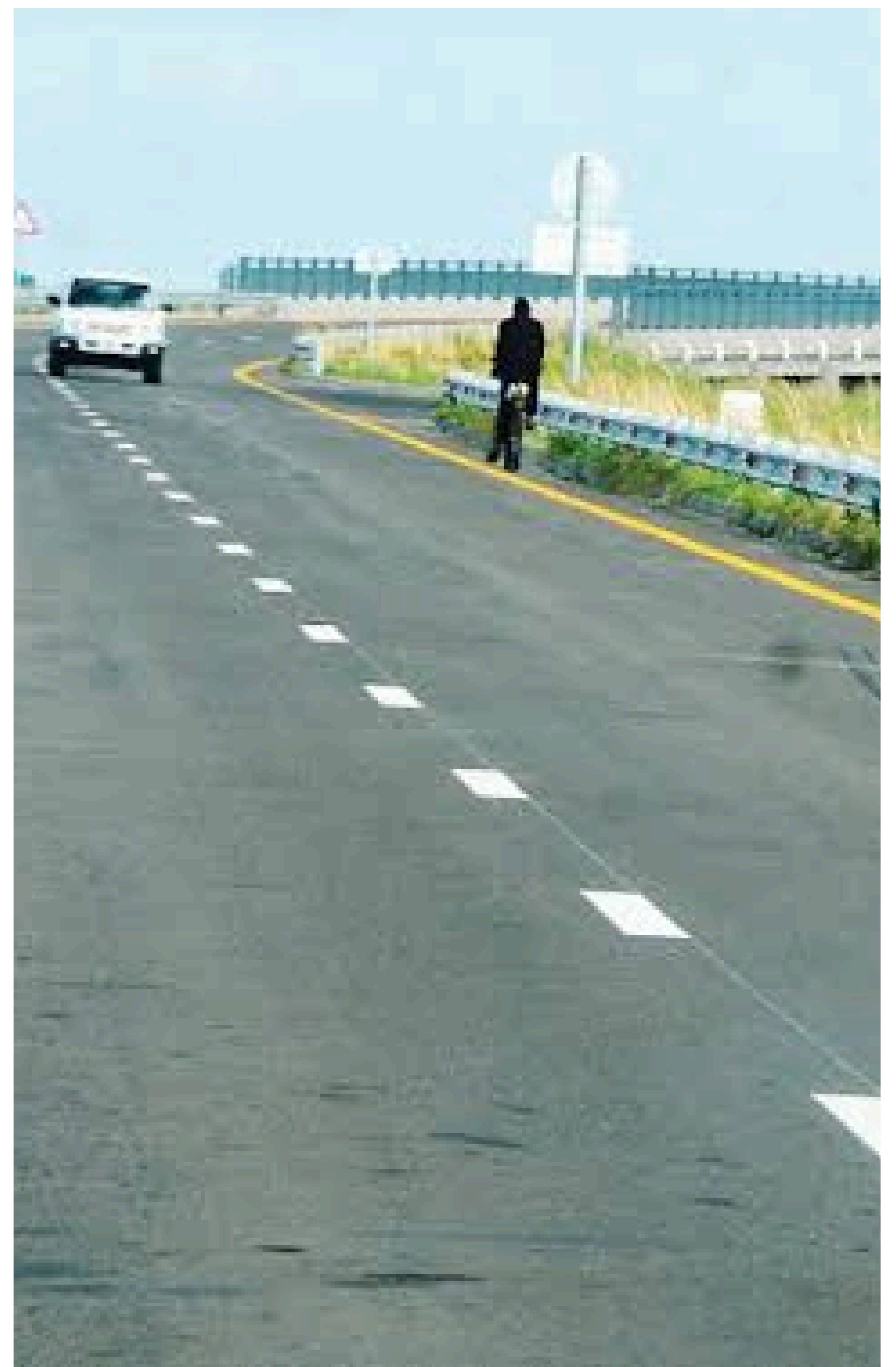
Verdict

Claim: PF infrastructure investment made Western Province no longer Zambia's poorest province.

Rating: Partly Correct.

Official records support the claim that Western Province benefited from substantial infrastructure investment during the PF administration. Official poverty statistics also confirm that Western Province no longer has the highest poverty incidence in Zambia.

However, there is no evidence in the 2022 Living Conditions Monitoring Survey showing that the infrastructure projects cited caused this change. While both statements are individually supported by available evidence, the causal link between them has not been established. Therefore, the claim is only partly supported by the available evidence.



FACT CHECK | Two Claims by Charles Chanda Checked

By MakanDay Reporter

From page 1

During the launch of President Hakainde Hichilema's official campaign on Sunday, 28 June, ahead of the 13 August general election, United Prosperous and Peaceful Zambia (UPPZ) president Charles Chanda made two claims in a statement that has since circulated widely on social media. He claimed that:

1. Zambia produced about 70,000 kilogrammes of emeralds in 2017, worth enough to finance the country's national budget for about 26 years.
2. He suspended his 2026 presidential campaign because President Hakainde Hichilema deserved another five years in office.

MakanDay checked the facts.

Claim 1: Zambia produced about 70,000kg of emeralds in 2017

The facts

Official production data does not support this claim.

The 2017 annual report of the Zambia Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (ZEITI) records Zambia's production as 60,063 kilogrammes of emerald and beryl combined, not 70,000 kilogrammes of emeralds alone.

The 2016 ZEITI Annual Report records 71,878.66 kilogrammes of emerald and beryl, a figure much closer to the 70,000 kilogrammes cited by Chanda.

Importantly, neither report records production of emeralds alone. Instead, both classify

production as "emerald and beryl".

This distinction matters.

Beryl is a mineral species that includes several gemstones, one of which is emerald. Official production statistics therefore combine emerald with other forms of beryl, meaning it is inaccurate to describe the entire recorded production as emeralds.

Furthermore, production volume alone cannot be used to estimate market value. The commercial value of emeralds depends on factors such as gemstone quality, colour, clarity, size, recovery rates and international market prices. The official data does not support the conclusion that Zambia produced emeralds worth enough to finance the national budget for decades.

FACT CHECK | Two Claims by Charles Chanda Checked Cont...

Verdict: Mostly False.

Official records show Zambia produced 60,063kg of emerald and beryl combined in 2017—not 70,000kg of emeralds. The figure cited by Chanda more closely resembles 2016 production data and incorrectly treats all recorded beryl as emerald.

Claim 2: Charles Chanda voluntarily suspended his presidential bid

The facts: Available evidence shows Chanda did not voluntarily withdraw from the 2026 presidential race.

The Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ) rejected his nomination after determining that he did not meet constitutional eligibility requirements.

Announcing the commission's decision, ECZ Chairperson Mwangala Zaloumis said Chanda had been disqualified under Article 100 of the Constitution of Zambia (Amendment) Act No. 2 of 2016, together with Regulations 11 and 18 of the Electoral Process (General) Regulations.

According to the commission, the Office of the Official Receiver wrote to ECZ on 22 April 2026 enclosing a court judgment showing that Chanda had an undischarged bankruptcy.

ECZ also found that the adoption certificate submitted with his nomination papers did not bear the name of the party's secretary general as required, rendering the document defective.

The commission therefore rejected his nomination.

Publicly available ECZ proceedings announcing the decision confirm that Chanda's candidature was rejected before the election campaign.

Verdict: False.

The available evidence shows Chanda did not voluntarily suspend his presidential campaign. His nomination was rejected by the Electoral Commission of Zambia after it found that he did not meet constitutional and regulatory requirements.



OPINION | Why Chasing Foreigners Will Not Fix South Africa

What my conversations with migrants in England revealed about migration, belonging and Africa's shared destiny.

There is a dangerous illusion taking root in South Africa—that a country can solve its problems by turning against foreigners. My recent visit to England reminded me just how false that belief is.

Migration is as old as humanity itself. People have always crossed borders in search of peace, opportunity, education, security and a better future. No amount of hatred, violence or political rhetoric has ever stopped people from moving. It never has, and it never will.

During my stay in England, I encountered people from every corner of the world. The driver who collected me from the airport was originally from Pakistan. At my hotel, I met two other foreigners working at the hotel—one from Russia and another from Pakistan. On the day I departed, my driver to the airport was a Ugandan.

Their stories were different, but they all carried a common theme.

Most had left their countries because economic or political circumstances had made life difficult. Yet despite having established themselves in England, many still spoke with affection about the countries they had left behind. Home, they told me, remained home.

One conversation, in particular, has stayed with me.

The Ugandan driver explained that he had lived outside his country for more than 20 years. His greatest wish was to return home permanently. But he admitted he was unsure whether he could safely rebuild his life under President Yoweri Museveni's government. At the same time, he felt increasingly uncomfortable with some of the social changes taking place in England.

He believed the country was drifting away from its Christian foundations and expressed concern about the growing influence of other religions and other cultural shifts.

Whether one agrees with his views or not, they reflected the difficult reality many migrants face. They often find themselves caught between a homeland they miss and a host country that is itself changing.

These conversations reminded me of a simple truth: people rarely leave their homes because they want to. Most leave because circumstances compel them to. And even after decades abroad, many continue to dream of going back.

That is why the recurring attacks on foreign nationals in South Africa are not only tragic—they are profoundly misguided.

Driving fellow Africans out of South Africa will not create jobs. It will not reduce poverty. It will not fix inequality. It will not solve the country's economic challenges. Those problems require sound governance, economic reforms and accountable leadership—not scapegoats.

The reality is that Africa has always depended on the movement of people, skills and investment across borders.

South Africa itself is a beneficiary of that history.

During the struggle against apartheid, countries across the continent opened their borders to South African exiles. Zambia, in particular, played an extraordinary role by hosting the headquarters of the African National Congress (ANC) in Lusaka for many years. Thousands of South Africans found safety, education and solidarity beyond their country's borders when they needed it most.

Today, the relationship has come full circle. South African companies operate extensively throughout the continent. In Zambia, virtually every major shopping centre hosts South African retailers and businesses.

They employ thousands of Zambians, generate tax revenue and contribute to economic activity. That is precisely what free movement, regional cooperation and economic integration are meant to achieve.

OPINION | Why Chasing Foreigners Will Not Fix South Africa cont...

If Africans can welcome South African businesses into their countries, surely South Africans can extend the same humanity to fellow Africans who come seeking honest work and a better life.

To those who have experienced discrimination or violence simply because they are foreigners, my appeal is this: never allow hatred to shape your response.

The Prophet Amos urges us to "seek good, and not evil..."

hate evil, love good, and establish justice" (Amos 5:14–15). The Apostle Paul echoes the same principle in Romans 12:21: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

These are not merely religious teachings. They are timeless principles for building peaceful societies.

He maintained that both

The generation that fought for Africa's liberation believed in Pan-African solidarity.

They understood that the continent would only prosper if Africans stood together. Their vision was one of unity, not division; cooperation, not exclusion.

Where is that leadership today?

Why do so many leaders remain silent when fellow Africans are attacked, humiliated or even killed because of their nationality?

Silence in the face of injustice is not neutrality—

it is complicity.

Africa's future will not be secured by building walls between neighbours. It will be secured by building stronger institutions, stronger economies and stronger bonds between our people.

Our shared humanity demands nothing less.



This week in the Bulletin & Record

The Lion from Mbole Village

A profile of Daniel Munkombwe, new Minister of Southern Province

By Charles Mafa

Daniel Munkombwe defies categorisation. He has been called a radical, a lion and even someone "from the archives". Whatever anyone may call him, he is a man for all seasons. He has worked with both the UNIP and MMD governments and, at age 81, many people thought there might not be a role for him in modern politics. They were wrong.

His nomination as a Member of Parliament and subsequent appointment as Southern Province Minister by President Michael Sata proved him to be a "roof compound", as he puts it himself.

"If there is a patch which I can patch," he says cheerfully, "if I can be a stabilising force, if I can be glue... if I can seal any leaking hole, why should I say no?"

This was Mr Munkombwe's reaction when he was asked whether he was ready to take up a position in the Patriotic Front government when called upon.

Some observers believed he was being rewarded for assisting the PF to win the Livingstone parliamentary by-election, while others argued he had mastered the art of Zambian politics and knew exactly what to say to attract the attention of appointing authorities.

Indeed, there may be some truth in that. He has often openly suggested that politics is about personal benefit. Yet his unique

character has endeared him to Zambia's leaders.

"I think these will one day describe me as a father who never feared anything," he says, referring to his children. "Physically, I'm a lion. They call me munyama. I have a big heart to look after people."

Mr Munkombwe's candid character has earned him both enemies and friends. It has seen him rise and fall under different political regimes.

During an interview at his Kabebya Farm in Choma, he criticised regional politics, arguing that leaders who confined themselves to regional support would struggle to reach State House.

"If you're a regional leader you don't go to State House," he said. "You will remain in the opposition."

He recalled his own experience in the African National Congress (ANC), then led by the late Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula, which controlled Southern and Central provinces.

"In Tonga we have a saying, mukali uzwa mubunji (a tough person comes from among the many)."

Mr Munkombwe described serving under every Zambian government since independence as one of the great privileges of his life.

"Kenneth Kaunda is a fantastic man... Chiluba was eloquent... Mwanawasa was legalistic..."

Rupiah Banda also allowed me to work freely."

He served as Minister of State (1983–1987), Minister of Decentralisation (1987–1991), a UNIP Central Committee member, MMD Southern Province Minister and Deputy Minister in the Office of the Vice-President.

Born on 16 May 1932 in Mbole Village under Chief Maacha, he came from a peasant family. His father, Phillip Chibbwalu Moono, served in the Second World War as a Regimental Sergeant Major. Because of this, Munkombwe only started school in 1945 at the age of 13.

He attended Macha Central, Muyanda, Sikalongo Mission and later Matopo Secondary School in Zimbabwe.

He jokingly describes himself as "a beneficiary of child labour" after spending his childhood herding cattle.

His political career began in the 1950s with the ANC. In 1956 he became Livingstone District Secretary and later helped organise anti-colonial boycotts that led to his arrest alongside other activists.

Beyond politics, he has sponsored football teams including Choma United and Kabebya United and helped establish the Chipolopolo Supporters Association.

Speaking about President Michael Sata, Munkombwe argued that the PF government was reviving some of

Kenneth Kaunda's developmental ideals through reclaiming strategic national assets and promoting national unity, while insisting this did not mean returning to a one-party state.

He concluded optimistically that Zambia was "going the right way" and expressed his wish to be remembered as "a politician that is admirable, a politician that is likeable."

Regimental Sergeant Major—the highest position held by an African at the time—Daniel Munkombwe's father fought in the Second World War from 1939 to 1945. While he was away, the family moved to Chief Maacha's village, where young Daniel spent his childhood herding cattle, delaying the start of his education until the age of 13.

He attended Macha Central, Muyanda, Sikalongo Mission and Matopo Secondary School in Zimbabwe before returning to Zambia in December 1954.

Describing himself humorously as "a beneficiary of child labour", Munkombwe said the experience instilled discipline and perseverance. His fiery temperament also became evident early in life when he rejected his first government job after being addressed by a British researcher as "my boy", which he regarded as insulting.

Munkombwe began his political career in the 1950s with

The Lion from Mbole Village Cont...

the African National Congress (ANC). In 1956 he became ANC Livingstone District Secretary and later helped organise anti-colonial boycotts that led to his arrest alongside fellow activists.

He later became ANC Provincial Vice-President and Provincial Chairman, emerging as a close ally of Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula.

Away from politics, he sponsored football teams including Choma United and Kabeya United and helped establish the Chipolopolo Supporters Association, where Rupiah Banda served as his deputy.

Following his appointment as Southern Province Minister, Munkombwe said he believed he could remain active in politics well into his nineties if he remained healthy.

He praised President Michael Sata's government for reviving aspects of Kenneth Kaunda's vision by reclaiming strategic national assets while stressing that this did not imply a return to a one-party state or abandonment of the market economy.

Expressing optimism about Zambia's future under the Patriotic Front government,

he said the country was "going the right way" and concluded that he hoped to be remembered as "a politician that is admirable, a politician that is likeable."

Munkombwe died on 15 June 2018 at Livingstone General Hospital at the age of 86 after a short illness. May his soul rest in peace.

Editor's Note: This story was first published in the June 2013 edition of The Bulletin & Record magazine.

