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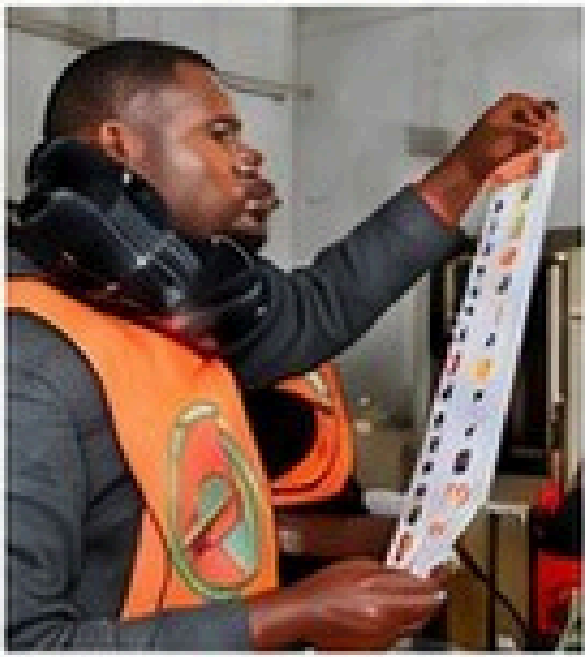
11TH 17TH SEPTEMBER 2026

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Zambia Cannot Celebrate Champions and Leave Them to Pay the Bill

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from the

EDITOR



MakanDay
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YOUR ARGUMENT.
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Eastern Deputy PS Linked to Unregistered FRA Buying Point Where Farmers Paid to Sell Maize

A maize-buying point that does not appear on the official Food Reserve Agency (FRA) depot list was operating at Liondo Village in Chipata, with FRA-marked bags and a weighing scale moved from an established depot. Farmers say they were also required to pay to sell their maize there. One farmer who delivered 200 bags told MakanDay he paid K1,500 to officials at the site.

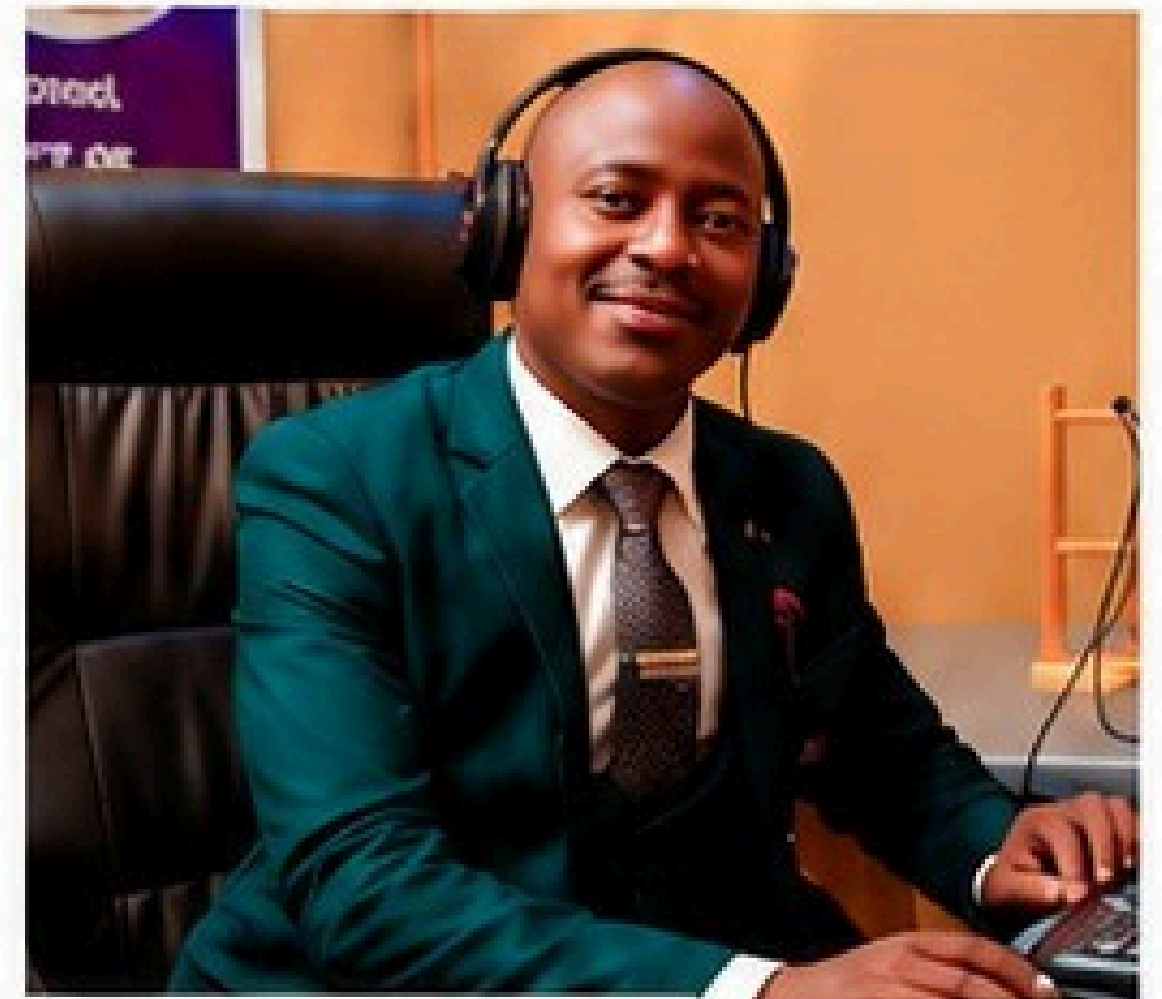
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Picture Credit: Victor Musonda

From Asking Questions to Answering Them:

**The Test Facing
Solwezi's New Mayor**



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HOUSE BUSINESS

Zambia's newly elected MPs have taken their oath ahead of the first sitting of the National Assembly. As the new Parliament prepares to get down to business, MakanDay is launching a dedicated space to follow what MPs say, what they do, how they vote and why it matters to you.



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Eastern Deputy PS Linked to Unregistered FRA Buying Point Where Farmers Paid to Sell Maize

From page 1

By Esther Nkhoma in Chipata

For the past month, MakanDay has been trying to establish who authorised a maize-buying point at Liondo Village in Chipata, where maize was being purchased from farmers under an arrangement involving alleged Food Reserve Agency (FRA) officials.

The investigation has now established another important detail: farmers using the buying point say they were being charged a fee to sell their maize there.

One farmer who delivered 200 bags of maize told MakanDay that he paid K1,500 to officials at the site, providing a specific account of payments that farmers had previously alleged were being collected at the buying point.

MakanDay has not established who ultimately received the money, what the K1,500 payment was for, or whether FRA authorised officials or anyone operating at the site to collect such fees from farmers.

FRA headquarters in Lusaka asked MakanDay for more time to establish the circumstances surrounding the buying point but has yet to provide its findings.

Eastern Province Deputy Permanent Secretary Dr Lewis Mwape, one of the officials linked to the arrangement, acknowledged that he helped facilitate the establishment of the maize-buying point at Liondo Village.

A buying point outside the official list

Liondo Village, in the Luangeni area of Chipata district, is located in Chief Mpezeni’s chiefdom.

Dr Mwape acknowledged that he was involved, together with FRA officials and a ruling United Party for National Development (UPND) official, in establishing the buying arrangement.

He said it was intended to make it easier for farmers in the area to sell their maize and confirmed that the site was not registered as an official FRA depot.

Under the Food Reserve Act No. 6 of 2020, FRA has powers to buy designated agricultural commodities and to establish, manage, lease and maintain storage facilities and equipment used in connection with those commodities.

The law also allows the Agency, when buying commodities locally, to identify, enter and operate markets in rural areas, as well as other domestic markets determined by the Agency.

Liondo’s absence from the official depot list does not, by itself, establish that the buying point was unauthorised. But questions remain about the authority under which it was established and whether those operating it were permitted to collect money from farmers.

Farmer says he paid K1,500

When MakanDay visited Liondo, hundreds of bags bearing FRA markings were stacked near a loading point as a truck was being loaded.

The site does not appear on the official list of FRA buying depots examined by MakanDay.

Farmers interviewed in the area said they had been directed to take their maize to the site and sell it through a buyer operating there. They also alleged that they were required to pay a fee to sell their maize at the buying point.

One farmer provided MakanDay with a specific account, saying that after taking 200 bags of maize to Liondo, he paid K1,500 to officials at the site.

The payment raises questions about the operation of the buying point: who was collecting the money, on whose authority, and what were farmers paying for?

MakanDay has not independently established who ultimately received the farmer’s K1,500, whether the payment itself was recorded or receipted, or whether FRA regulations permit such a charge.

What MakanDay has established, however, is that farmers who sold their maize at the Liondo buying point were being issued with official FRA receipts for their maize transactions.

Was it a ‘Feni Sub-Depot’?

Questions about the status of the buying point first arose after Mabvuto Mbuzi, who was alleged to be coordinating maize purchases at the site, described Liondo as an officially registered sub-depot under Feni Depot.

However, when MakanDay visited the official Feni Depot, members of its depot committee said they were unaware of any sub-depot operating under Feni at Liondo.

MakanDay also established that the weighing scale normally used at Feni Depot had been moved to Liondo, leaving farmers at Feni unable to sell their maize there.

The question of who authorised the Liondo operation has been further complicated by conflicting accounts from officials and people operating at the site.

Mbuzi told MakanDay that he was acting on instructions he said had been issued by FRA Eastern Province Marketing Coordinator Clyde Muunza.

Officials give conflicting accounts

Muunza initially told MakanDay that he was unaware of the Liondo buying point.

However, when he was informed that a person operating at the site had identified him as the FRA official who issued instructions for the operation, Muunza requested an in-person meeting with the journalist.

FRA headquarters in Lusaka has yet to provide an official explanation of who authorised the Liondo buying point, under what arrangement it was operating, who authorised the movement of the weighing scale from Feni, and why farmers say they were required to pay to sell their maize there — a service ordinarily provided free of charge at FRA buying points.

Photo Credit | Victor Musonda



From Asking Questions to Answering Them: The Test Facing Solwezi’s New Mayor

At 31, former journalist Evans Lubelenga takes office as mayor of Solwezi, promising to champion better basic services and greater transparency in a mining town where wealth coexists with persistent development challenges. He speaks to Linda Soko Tembo about his priorities and the task ahead.

From page 1

Lubelenga does not have to look far to see the scale of the job he has taken on.

Across Solwezi, the new mayor will find many of the problems he encountered while working as a journalist — poor roads, inadequate water supply, unemployment and communities questioning why the wealth generated around them has not produced better public services.

Only his position has changed.

“Journalism taught me to see the real pain of people. For years, I asked why there was no development in Solwezi, but I felt the answers were not enough. Therefore, I decided to stand for the mayor’s office and not just report on issues affecting my community,” he said.

Elected as an independent, Lubelenga has moved from questioning public officials to an office where residents will increasingly expect answers from him.

But the powers of that office have limits. Under Zambia’s Local Government Act, the mayor heads the council, presides over its meetings, promotes public participation and oversees implementation of council decisions and resolutions. Many of Lubelenga’s promises will therefore require council decisions, implementation by the council administration or action by other public institutions.

A mining town with basic problems

Lubelenga takes office in a municipality whose fortunes are closely connected to mining.

Kansanshi Mining Plc, 80 percent owned by Canada-based First Quantum Minerals (FQM) and 20 percent by ZCCM-IH, reported paying K95.3 million in property rates to Solwezi Municipal Council during the 2025 reporting period — the largest payment identified in MakanDay’s recent examination of mining rates paid directly to six local authorities.

Council financial statements examined by MakanDay show how heavily Solwezi’s property-rate collections have depended on mining.

In 2021, the council collected K63.98 million in mining rates, compared with K3.5 million from industrial and commercial properties and K1.24 million from residential properties. Mining accounted for about 93 percent of the K68.7 million collected across those categories.

In 2022, the pattern continued, with K53.99 million collected from mining rates compared with K3.79 million from industrial and commercial properties and K1.20 million from residential properties.

The figures do not show that mining revenue has been misspent, nor that the council has enough money to meet the demands created by Solwezi’s rapid growth. But they raise an important question for the new mayor and council: how can the resources available to the municipality be translated into services residents can see?

MakanDay has previously documented more than 2,000 traders at Kyawama Market operating without running water or drainage and sharing just four toilets and two bathing rooms. A K53.5 million modern market project, whose groundbreaking ceremony was held in January 2024, had still not progressed to construction of the main market almost two years later.

MakanDay has also documented residents in communities such as Kimakolwe struggling to access clean water. Lubelenga says such conditions helped drive him into public office.

“If people visited Solwezi, I would proudly show them the mines and the hardworking people of Solwezi,” he said. “But I would be ashamed to show them a dusty central business district without water, young people engaging in illicit activities because of a lack of jobs, and old schools that cannot

- accommodate the growing population.”
Roads, water and opportunities

Lubelenga identifies roads, water and opportunities for young people as his immediate priorities. He says he will push for improved roads and drainage and better access to reliable water for households, schools, health facilities and businesses.

He also proposes a “Mayor’s Skills Initiative”, aimed at creating skills and employment opportunities for more than 10,000 young people. The programme, he says, would equip young people and women with practical skills and help connect them with employment opportunities, particularly in mining and other sectors. It is one of his most specific commitments — and therefore one of the easiest to measure.

But the mayor cannot establish and finance such a programme simply by announcing it. How it will be funded, who will implement it, when it will begin and what will count towards the 10,000 target remain important questions.

Making mining wealth work for Solwezi

Lubelenga believes Solwezi has not received a fair return from the mineral wealth extracted from the area. But the challenge extends beyond persuading mining companies to spend more through corporate social responsibility programmes.

Research examined by MakanDay suggests Solwezi has historically struggled to broaden its municipal revenue base as the town expanded around mining.

Social anthropologist Professor Rita Kesselring, who studied Solwezi and observed the council’s planning department, describes a local authority struggling to keep pace with rapid mining-driven urban growth. Her research suggests development expanded faster than the council’s ability to capture properties within its revenue system.

That matters because the same growth increased demand for roads, drainage, sanitation, markets and other services.

Lubelenga says he wants the council’s relationship with mining companies to combine partnership, regulation and advocacy. He wants their corporate social responsibility programmes better aligned with council priorities, particularly roads, water and youth employment. He also says cooperation should not prevent the council from speaking out when residents’ interests are threatened.

On environmental concerns, Lubelenga says he would initially engage a mining company if it were found to be polluting a water source or harming a community, and make the matter public if the problem persisted.

His ability to advocate for residents should, however, be distinguished from the statutory enforcement powers of environmental and other regulatory authorities. Lubelenga acknowledges the broader limits of council authority.

“The council must remain accountable and honest about what it can and cannot deliver,” he said. “Where issues fall outside the council’s authority, I will lobby the central government through the relevant channels.”

His performance will therefore depend not only on whether problems are solved, but on what proposals he champions, how the council responds and how effectively its decisions are implemented.

From journalist to public official

Lubelenga says journalism shaped his approach to leadership, particularly the importance of listening.

“I am a servant of the people, and I will never work in isolation,” he said. “I intend to work with people with massive experience, including traditional leaders and other stakeholders.”

• From Asking Questions to Answering Them: The Test Facing Solwezi’s New Mayor cont..

He describes himself as a mayor for all residents, regardless of political affiliation. But perhaps the clearest test of his journalism background will be his attitude towards information now that he is on the other side of journalists’ questions.

“Once a journalist, always a journalist,” he said.

Lubelenga promises to push for information about council activities to be accessible to residents and journalists and to communicate regularly through the media.

“The council belongs to the people and should therefore not operate with secrets,” he said.

Promoting public participation in local governance is, in fact, one of the functions assigned to the mayor under the Local Government Act.

The land question

Lubelenga also wants residents to hold him accountable for improving access to land ownership.

“Only a small percentage of Solwezi residents have access to land ownership,” he said. “I want to help more residents secure ownership of the properties where they have lived for many years.”

But land administration involves legal processes and institutions beyond the mayor acting alone. The test will therefore be what measures Lubelenga can champion within the council, what the local authority can lawfully implement and what requires action by other authorities.

From questions to answers

Lubelenga begins his tenure with ambitious commitments – better roads and drainage, improved water supply, opportunities for more than 10,000 young people, greater access to land ownership and a more transparent council.

He does not have unilateral authority to deliver them all.

But residents can ask what proposals he championed, what decisions the council made, whether those decisions were implemented and how openly the council accounted for the results.

Lubelenga says he welcomes that scrutiny and is willing for journalists to return during and at the end of his tenure to assess his record.

As a journalist, he could ask why Solwezi’s mineral wealth had not translated into better conditions for its residents.

As mayor, he cannot provide every answer himself. But residents can now judge what he does with the powers he has.



Lubelenga being annointed

From page 1

Disputed truck puts spotlight on Zambia’s fight against illegal logging

By Gibson Zulu

A dispute over a truck seized in an illegal timber case has raised questions about the evidential hurdles authorities can face when seeking to confiscate property allegedly connected to environmental offences.

The Mambwe Circuit Court in Eastern Province ordered 190 timber planks forfeited to the State in July but directed that a Tata truck seized in the same case be returned to an interested party, after finding that the State had failed to provide sufficient evidence of the party’s involvement in the offence.

The State subsequently filed a notice of intention to appeal against the decision to return the vehicle.

The dispute followed the conviction earlier this year of four men for unlawful possession of forest produce after they were found with 190 assorted timber planks in Mambwe district.

Patrick Mwanza, 41, Paul Mbao, 45, Rodgers Mbewe, 23, and Nelson Phiri, 18, were arrested in the Kamwanjili area on December 12, 2025, by officers from the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) and the Forestry Department.

According to DNPW, the men were found in possession of assorted planks of Mupapa, Muzumba and Shaumbo. Officers also seized a white and dark blue Tata truck in connection with the case.

The four were charged with unlawful possession of forest produce, contrary to Section 89,

as read with Section 99, of the Forest Act No. 4 of 2015.

Mbewe pleaded guilty on May 21, 2026, and was convicted and fined K6,000, which he subsequently paid.

Mwanza, Mbao and Phiri pleaded not guilty and went on trial. On June 3, the court convicted all three. Mwanza was fined K10,000, while Mbao and Phiri were each fined K8,000. They subsequently paid the fines.

Following the convictions, the State applied for both the timber and the Tata truck to be forfeited.

But in a ruling delivered on July 29, the court drew a distinction between the timber involved in the offence and the vehicle.

It ordered the 190 timber planks forfeited to the State but directed that the truck be restored to the interested party.

The court found that prosecutors had not presented sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the interested party was involved in the commission of the offence.

“It is cardinal to note that the applicant has the evidential burden to show that the interested party was involved in the commission of the offence,” the court said.

The court also found that the fact that the truck had been found in Mambwe did not, by itself, establish the interested party’s involvement in the offence. The State filed a notice of intention to appeal against the ruling

on the truck on August 5, according to DNPW.

DNPW’s statement does not identify the interested party or provide further details about the grounds on which the State intends to challenge the ruling. It also does not state whether a substantive appeal has since been filed or whether the truck has been returned.

Wider pressure on Zambia’s forests

The case comes as Zambia continues to record significant forest loss.

According to figures provided by the Forestry Department, the country loses an estimated 172,000 hectares of forest to deforestation each year, while a further 38,400 hectares are affected by forest degradation annually.

The department identifies agricultural expansion and wood extraction among the main drivers of deforestation.

As of 2021, forests covered about 60% of Zambia, or approximately 45.5 million hectares, according to the department.

DNPW says illegal harvesting and trafficking of valuable timber species contributes to deforestation, habitat destruction and ecosystem degradation.

However, the Mambwe case alone does not establish the extent to which illegal timber harvesting contributes to Zambia’s overall rate of forest loss.

The Forestry Department says its efforts to combat deforestation are -

Disputed truck puts spotlight on Zambia’s fight against illegal logging cont...

constrained by limited staffing, inadequate transport and insufficient access to modern technology, which affect its ability to conduct regular and comprehensive patrols

It has also identified the absence of a dedicated law-enforcement unit and specialised law-enforcement training among the challenges facing forest protection.

The government says it is responding through community forest management, forest restoration, law enforcement and increased use of remote sensing and drone technology to monitor forest resources.

According to the Forestry Department, 439 Community Forest Management Groups are managing about 11.5 million hectares of forest, while approximately 8.8 million hectares with restoration potential have been mapped.

Conservation organisations have also argued that reducing pressure on forests requires addressing the economic circumstances that lead some communities to depend on forest resources for income.

DNPW and the Forestry Department say they remain committed to combating illegal logging and other environmental

crimes and have urged citizens to report suspected illegal activities.

The details of the

- Mambwe prosecution and the State’s notice of intention to appeal were contained in a statement issued by DNPW.



PROUD MAKANDAY MOMENT | FROM INTERN TO AWARD NOMINEE

We are delighted to see Emmanuel Mazombwe Banda, who previously interned with MakanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism, nominated for Best Journalist of the Year – Southern Africa at the Zikomo Africa & Caribbean Awards 2026.

For us, this is a special moment. Mazombwe spent part of his journalism journey in the MakanDay newsroom, learning, reporting and sharpening his craft. Seeing him go on to earn regional recognition is something worth celebrating.

Internships are meant to provide young journalists with space to learn, make mistakes, ask questions and grow. Moments like this remind us why investing in the next generation of journalists matters.

Congratulations, Mazombwe!

From the MakanDay newsroom to a Southern African journalism nomination — keep going. We are proud to have played a small part in your journey.

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EDITORIAL From page 1

Zambia Cannot Celebrate Champions and Leave Them to Pay the Bill

Our athletes should worry about beating the clock—not paying the airfare.

When Muzala Samukonga speaks about the state of Zambian athletics, the country should listen.

This is not an athlete struggling to prove that he belongs on the international stage. Samukonga is an Olympic bronze medallist, Commonwealth Games champion and Zambia's 400 metres national record holder at 43.74 seconds. He has carried the Zambian flag at some of the world's biggest sporting events.

That is why his latest complaint deserves more than the usual administrative response.

Samukonga has raised concern about athletes having to meet expenses, including airfares, when travelling to represent Zambia. His argument is simple: "You cannot build champions when you burden them with costs that government through the association should cover."

If athletes selected to represent Zambia are indeed being required to pay for their own international travel, Zambia Athletics (ZA) and the Ministry responsible for sport owe the public an explanation.

Representing Zambia is not a private outing.

When an athlete steps onto the track wearing national colours, we call that athlete "Team Zambia". When they win, government officials congratulate them. Their victories are celebrated as national victories. The flag is raised, the anthem is played and photographs of the athlete are shared across official platforms.

The responsibility cannot suddenly become personal when the airline ticket arrives.

This is particularly troubling because ZA itself has been talking about raising resources for athlete development. In April, association president Major Bernard Bwalya announced that the 2026 Inter-Company Relay was targeting more than K2 million to support youth athletics, talent identification, athlete preparation for regional and international competitions and provincial structures.

Those are worthwhile objectives. But Samukonga's complaint raises an obvious accountability question: how is ZA financing national representation, and under what circumstances are athletes expected to pay their own way?

This should not become merely a personality contest between Samukonga and the current athletics leadership. Nor should the debate descend into comparisons between the present executive and that of former president Elias Mpondela. The issue is bigger than individuals.

Zambia needs a transparent system under which an athlete selected for national duty knows exactly what government, ZA and the athlete are each responsible for paying. That information should not depend on who the athlete is, who leads the association or whether a sponsor happens to come forward.

There have been efforts to support elite athletes. Earlier this year, the National Olympic Committee of Zambia awarded Olympic Solidarity Scholarships to ten athletes preparing for Los Angeles 2028, including Samukonga and fellow athletes Niddy Mingilishi and Edna Ng'andula. Such initiatives are welcome, but scholarships and occasional sponsorship cannot substitute for a properly funded national system.

And there is another reason authorities should address Samukonga's concerns transparently. This is not the first public disagreement over support for the athlete. In 2024, the National Sports Council of Zambia disputed earlier complaints about unpaid support, publishing figures for allowances, medical expenses and other assistance government said it had provided him.

That history makes transparency even more important now.

ZA should therefore explain what happened in the present case. Which competition or competitions were involved, what costs

Samukonga or other athletes were asked to meet, why they were asked to meet them, and what the association's policy is on funding athletes selected for national duty.

The Ministry of Sport should equally explain where its responsibility begins and ends.

But beyond Samukonga lies the athlete whose name Zambia does not yet know.

A world-class athlete may be able to find sponsors, scholarships or personal resources. A talented 18-year-old emerging from Chipata, Ikeng'e, Kasama, Mongu, Solwezi or Shang'ombo may not.

If the price of representing Zambia becomes the ability to finance yourself, the country will not necessarily select its best athletes. It risks selecting from among those who can afford to participate.

That is not athlete development.

Zambia has already demonstrated that it can produce champions. The harder task is building institutions capable of finding, financing and protecting the next generation.

Our athletes should worry about beating the clock—not paying the airfare.





INVESTIGATE.
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YOUR SAY

Your opinion. Your argument. Your space.



A space for our readers to share their views, challenge ideas and contribute to conversations about the issues shaping Zambia and our communities. Opinions expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of MakanDay.

Readers react to our FRA story

- FRA needs to investigate why their officers at buying points should be asking for a fee. This is serious and daylight robbery - Fredrick Mwale.
- These are false stories. You guys are not even an established media with IBA who are you accountable to? - Conrad M Chisumpa.
- This story is not true, go on the ground and check. This DPS (Deputy Permanent Secretary) is a level headed man and would not sink so low - Khuzwayo Kambalange.
- This system of paying a fee (to FRA) is happening in many areas - Fredrick Mwale.

From page 1

Zambia Must Fix Its Electoral Institutions Before 2031

PART TWO | In Part One of this series, Dr Blessing Vava assessed how digital platforms, misinformation and artificial intelligence are reshaping Zambia’s democracy. In Part Two, attention shifts from the digital battlefield to the institutions responsible for protecting electoral credibility. Dr Tamuka Charles Chirimambowa and Dr Vava argue that Zambia should not spend the next five years perpetually contesting the 2026 election. Instead, the country should use the questions it exposed to repair its electoral institutions well before voters return to the polls in 2031.

By MakanDay Editor

In their post-election briefing, Zambia After the Ballot: The Result, the Anomalies, and the Road to Institutional Renewal, Dr Tamuka Charles Chirimambowa and Dr Blessing Ivan Vava argue that Zambia should resist turning the disputed aspects of the 2026 general election into a five-year political contest.

Instead, they argue, the country should begin repairing the institutions whose weaknesses were exposed during the electoral process.

Their central argument is that Zambia’s priority should now be institutional repair rather than perpetual electoral contestation. The credibility of the next election, they say, will depend on reforms undertaken well before 2031 and on whether Zambian institutions can demonstrate how an election result was produced rather than simply asserting that it was sound.

Their argument begins from a position that may be uncomfortable for both sides of Zambia's post-election divide.

The authors conclude that President Hakainde Hichilema won the 2026 presidential election. They say the available independent evidence does not establish that another candidate received more votes, while two independently conducted verification exercises placed Hichilema above the 50 percent threshold.

At the same time, however, Chirimambowa and Vava reject the suggestion that confirmation of the winner settles every question about the election.

They identify unresolved concerns involving results management, presidential-parliamentary turnout discrepancies, the interruption of the national count, differences between the Electoral Commission's declared tally and two independent parallel verification exercises, the declaration and re-declaration of

parliamentary results and broader questions of institutional transparency.

Their central distinction is between an anomaly, malpractice and an outcome-changing manipulation.

The report argues that these are three different propositions requiring different standards of evidence. While some anomalies are sufficiently documented to require investigation, the authors say the available evidence does not establish the full chain from those discrepancies to deliberate, coordinated manipulation capable of changing the presidential result.

But they warn that the opposite conclusion would be equally problematic. The fact that an irregularity has not been shown to have changed the winner does not mean it should be ignored.

That distinction changes the question Zambia should now be asking. Instead of remaining trapped between claims that the election was stolen and assertions that everything was sound, the authors argue that the outstanding questions should be settled through evidence.

“The correct response is therefore neither to declare the argument proved nor to declare it refuted. It is to obtain the evidence required to test it,” Chirimambowa and Vava argue.

Let the documents speak

One of the strongest arguments running through the report is that electoral credibility should be demonstrable.

Chirimambowa and Vava point to differences between the official presidential result and two independent verification exercises. Both exercises placed Hichilema above the constitutional threshold required to win, but both also estimated his share below the Electoral Commission's declared figure.

The Electoral Commission declared Hichilema at 60.5% and Brian Mundubile at 37.8%. The Christian Churches

Monitoring Group estimated the two at 56.0 percent and 42.3% respectively, while a separate civil society consortium estimated 57.9% and 40.2%.

The authors stress that this does not establish manipulation.

What it establishes, they argue, is something that requires explanation. They therefore propose a publicly accessible reconciliation of the entire results chain, covering polling stations, constituencies, provincial aggregation, the national results centre and the final declaration.

They recommend that polling-station results for all contests be published in machine-readable form and that electoral materials — including ballots, forms, seals, logs and digital audit trails — be preserved until statutory dispute processes have been exhausted.

“Polling-station results for all contests should be published in machine-readable form. Ballots, forms, seals, logs and digital audit trails should be preserved until all statutory dispute processes are exhausted,” Chirimambowa and Vava recommend.

Such transparency, they argue, would not undermine the Electoral Commission. It could strengthen it by allowing the Commission to demonstrate, through the electoral record itself, how the final result was reached.

The institutional problem goes beyond ECZ

The report argues that the institutional weaknesses exposed in 2026 were not confined to election administration.

The two academics also raise concerns about access to electoral justice, particularly the closure of Zambia's superior courts on 24 August, the final day of the constitutional window for filing an election challenge.

“Election disputes are time-bound by law. The closure of courts on the final day of the petition period therefore raises a constitutional question

independent of the merits of any particular petition,” Chirimambowa and Vava argue.

They argue that Zambia should establish an election-period judicial protocol guaranteeing access to the courts even during security emergencies. They also recommend clearer legal distinctions between clerical errors, procedural irregularities, material electoral violations and systematic manipulation, including clearer thresholds for when irregularities justify annulment.

The authors' broader point is that institutions are tested most seriously when political pressure is greatest.

An electoral justice system cannot work only when circumstances are normal. Its credibility depends on remaining accessible precisely when an election is disputed.

Opposition parties also have work to do

Chirimambowa and Vava do not place responsibility for reform solely on the government or Electoral Commission.

They argue that the opposition's organisational weaknesses contributed to its difficulties in documenting its allegations after the election.

The report notes that the UPND deployed polling agents to almost all polling stations, while the NRPUP struggled to deploy agents particularly in areas where it had not actively campaigned. Because polling agents receive copies of the GEN-20 forms, weak coverage also meant weaker access to the documentary evidence required to independently verify results.

For the authors, this produces an important principle: the burden of evidence must apply equally.

They argue that the Electoral Commission must explain discrepancies in its returns, but political parties claiming to possess

• **Zambia Must Fix Its Electoral Institutions Before 2031 cont..**

alternative results must similarly publish the stations, forms, aggregation methodology and statistical assumptions upon which those claims are based.

Political parties therefore need to strengthen their nationwide structures long before the next election.

2031 must not start in 2030

Perhaps the most important lesson from the report is about timing. Electoral reform cannot be left until Zambia is already campaigning for the next election.

The authors identify several reforms they believe should be completed well before 2031, including publication of polling-station-level results, a permanent results-audit mechanism, stronger chain-of-custody procedures, clearer rules governing declarations and corrections, guaranteed access to electoral justice, greater transparency around parallel vote tabulations and campaign-finance disclosure.

They also recommend stronger protections for election observers and journalists and the establishment of a standing information-integrity mechanism involving the Electoral Commission, civil society, the media and digital platforms.

Chirimambowa and Vava further propose a post-election national dialogue involving government, opposition parties, the Electoral Commission, churches, civil society, the media and academia.

But they make an important distinction: such a dialogue should not become another

negotiation over who won in 2026. Instead, it should look forward, focusing on electoral reform, institutional independence, political-party reform, electoral justice, civic space, campaign finance and peaceful political competition.

The objective, as the report puts it, should be to “fix the system before 2031 rather than litigate the same problems again in 2031”.

That perhaps captures the central lesson of their assessment. Chirimambowa and Vava argue that the 2026 election should neither be presented as administratively flawless nor dismissed as fraudulent without sufficient evidence. Their assessment is that Hichilema won, but that significant institutional questions remain.

For Zambia, therefore, the question is no longer only what happened in August 2026, but what the country does with the weaknesses the election exposed. If electoral records become more transparent, results independently auditable, courts reliably accessible, political parties better organised and electoral institutions capable of answering disputes with documents rather than declarations, Zambia will enter the next election with stronger safeguards and greater public confidence.

If those reforms are postponed, the country risks carrying the unresolved institutional weaknesses of 2026 into another election. The credibility of Zambia's next election, the authors' analysis suggests, will depend on what the country chooses to repair now.



From page 1

Zambia needs a political and mind-set turning point – it has always needed it!

By Dr. Privilege Hang’andu & Dr. Gregory Gondwe

Recent political context

On August 13 2026, Zambia went to the polls that resulted in the incumbent President Hakainde Hichilema defeating his opponents, including the closest contestant Brian Mundubile of the National Reconciliation Party for Unity and Prosperity (NRPUP). This was the first election under the Constitution of Zambia (Amendment) Act, No. 13 of 2025, that significantly altered the constitution of Zambia’s National Assembly with the introduction of the mixed-member proportional representation.

In the parliamentary race, numerous independent parliamentary candidates won seats, occasioned by disputed intra-party adoption processes. Despite these decisive victories and losses, Zambia is now confronted with post-electoral grievances, including unfortunate loss of life, ethnic rhetoric, and political polarity.

On August 15, Secretary to the Cabinet, Mr. Patrick Kangwa, made stunning announcements of law enforcement busting an underground militarised group that planned lethal political resistance to unfavorable political outcomes. In the said operation, law enforcement exchanged gunfire with the alleged militarised group leading to several arrests.

The country later learned that a former minister was killed in the crossfire. After the confirmation of the death of former minister under the Patriotic Front (PF), Mutotwe Kafewaya, Zambian social media has been replete with commentary from prominent Zambians, reverberating the mantra “no life should be lost due to elections”.

International media, international human rights organisations (including the United Nations and the Commonwealth Secretariat), and other activists have weighed in, condemning the killing of the former minister and several arrests of opposition leaders caught in the highly sensitive and inflammatory criminal allegations.

It should be universally accepted that life should not be lost in the process of electoral disputes in a democracy. Human life must be preserved at all cost and electoral disagreements should be settled with utmost civility and, when contested, through established institutional mechanisms.

While the death of Mr. Kafwaya is regrettable and raises concerns, Zambia has always had the need to examine its pre- and post electoral political management. The country has had bloodier electoral experiences (See Figure 1 below). The difference is that previous deaths from political violence have not involved prominent elites. It has been ordinary Zambians without similar social and political standing that have been killed over the years under successive governments, without similar civil society, UN, or academic agitation.

Many of those deaths occurred without comparable national security concerns currently obtaining in Zambia, and were almost always met with little recognition or heightened civil society or UN reprimands. A few years ago, a Rwandan Jesuit priest, academic and friend of ours worked on a brilliant PhD thesis at Boston College that theologises the experience of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Fr. Marcel Uwineza was a young teen in Rwanda in 1994. He was beaten and his home and all his family’s belongings were burned. His two brothers, a sister, and an aunt were killed. His mother was beaten and later died from her injuries. Fr. Uwineza and his three younger siblings were saved when a Hutu man hid them on his property. He would later narrate his experiences of these hideous experiences in his memoir, *Risen from the Ashes: Theology as Autobiography in Post-Genocide Rwanda*.

One thread out of this work is that it’s only when a society pieces together seemingly isolated occurrences that it understands collective wrong and begins to address it!

Zambia needs a political and mind-set turning point – it has always needed it! cont..

A society that fails to conceptualise its experiences as trends will not understand the need for systemic changes and solutions to negative experience. Zambia has, by now, witnessed numerous enough of such hideous pre- and post electoral calamities and deaths to arrive at a turning point. We must confront these seemingly isolated experiences and piece together what ugly larger reality they could be pointing to. Before we attempt to construct that ugly global picture, let us recount those seemingly isolated incidents of political ruptures, the pieces we need to glue or piece together to arrive at the moment of decision.

A broken past with selective blame apportionment

Who are the heroes and the villains in Zambia’s tainted political history? Are the 2026 election aftermaths, despite the death of an individual or individuals and several arrests, the darkest mark in our political history? Have Zambians apportioned equitable blame to worse previous experiences? Has the 2026 incident been placed within its rightful contest of national security threat? Should external actors determine how independent states deal with national security threats? These are all seemingly simple but important questions for supporting one’s epistemic analysis of the pre and post 2026 electoral experiences (See figure 1 below for a violence trends analysis)

1991 Elections

The 1991 general election was preceded (in fact occasioned by) widespread food riots, leading to clashes between the police and the public. This resulted in numerous reports of death (~23). Riots were followed by a failed coup attempt. May Zambians were killed pre and post the 1991 elections.

1996 Elections

The 1996 elections were preceded by a period of heavy political tension, resulting from President Frederick Chiluba’s attempts to constitutionally disqualify the former president, Kenneth Kaunda who, at the time, led the largest opposition political party, the United National

Independence Party (UNIP). There were widespread fears that the new constitutional amendments by the ruling Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) parliamentarians, amid protests from the opposition, civil society organisations and individual citizens could cost the country’s newly earned democracy. President Kaunda and his supporters had repeatedly threatened to lead a civil disobedience campaign and create violence to make it impossible for Chiluba to govern, if the bill was not changed to allow him to contest the elections.

2001 Elections

In 2001, when then Republican Vice President Christon Tembo resigned from his position, occasioning a parliamentary by-election in Lusaka’s Chawama Constituency, the nation would be introduced to one of the bloodiest political scenes in national memory. Michael Sata—then serving as the national secretary for the ruling MMD—led a group of supporters into the Chawama Constituency, triggering a bloody riot following a tense parliamentary by-election. Some modern Zambian political analysts argue that this singular incident, and Sata’s political character and style, are responsible for modern-day political violence in the country.

2006 Elections

The 2006 tripartite elections in Zambia were characterised by lots of contention, including legislative uncertainties and disputes, electoral management disputes and allegations of vote thefts, ballot paper printing and transparency doubts, and outright incidents of political violence. The pre-election period was punctuated by increased incidents of political violence. Violent clashes were reported in Lusaka between different political party supporters. MMD and PF cadres also fought in Lusaka and the Copperbelt Provinces. It was reported that at one point, a mob of PF activists blocked the motorcade of President Patrick Mwanawasa who was returning from campaigning. Violence also accompanied the removal of campaign posters of rival candidates.

The ECZ Director, Dan Kalale, condemned the violence as violations of the electoral code of conduct and as criminal offences, appealing “to all parties to desist from violent behaviour”. Violence persisted during the pre and post election periods

2011 Elections

Like the 1991 elections when the MMD defeated Kenneth Kaunda’s UNIP which had been in power for 27 years, the 2011 election was a decisive experience in Zambia’s democratic experience and, arguably, one of the most violent. In that election, Sata’s PF defeated the well-established MMD under President Rupiah Banda. The country witnessed yet another bloody pre- and post electoral experience. On January 14, 2011, approximately 19 Barotseland activists and citizens were killed in Mongu when state security forces violently cracked down on a meeting calling for self-determination and honoring the 1964 Barotseland Agreement. Mkhondo Lungu, then Minister of Home Affairs, carried the ugly tag of this bloody occasion the rest of his political career. There were several other reports of killings during and after the elections.

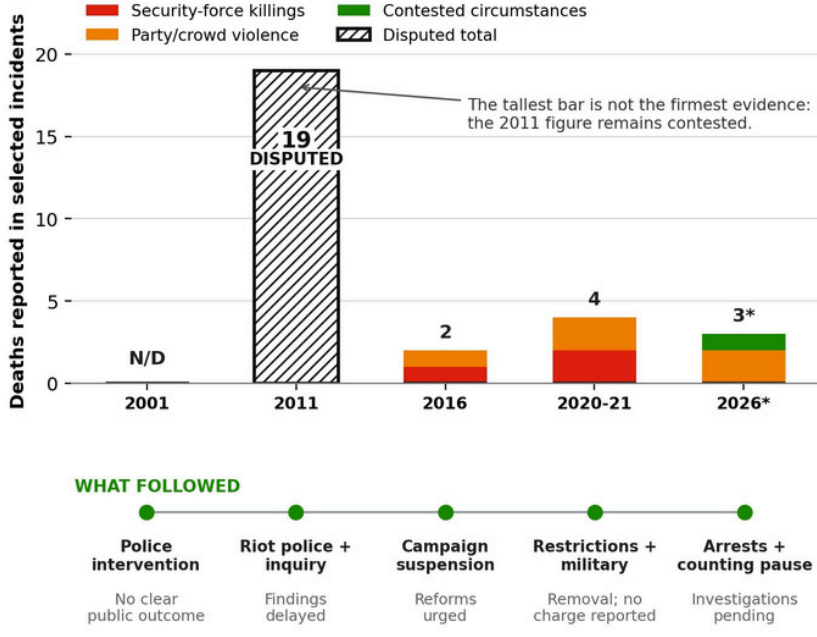
2016 Elections

Prior to the 2016 general elections, several incidents of political violence and death were reported. For example, Mapenzi Chibulo, a supporter of the then opposition United Party for National Development, was shot and killed by police on July 8, 2016, during a political disturbance in Lusaka. As the 2016 U.S. Department of State Human Rights Report indicates, state institutions were instrumentalised to violate human rights pre- and post elections. “In one of the more prominent examples, police teargassed and raided the family house of the opposition UPND’s vice presidential candidate on July 20, ostensibly to search for illegal weapons”. The report further notes that “the government remained sensitive to criticism in general and by the political opposition in particular. It was quick to prosecute critics on the pretext of incitement of

public disorder and hate speech.”

FIGURE 1: ELECTION VIOLENCE AND THE ACCOUNTABILITY GAP IN ZAMBIA

Reported deaths and institutional responses in selected major incidents, 2001-2026



Note: Bars show deaths reported only in the selected, source-checked incidents. N/D means violence was documented but no reliable fatality total was established. The 2011 total of 19 is shown separately because it is disputed. The 2026 figure is provisional through 25 August 2026. Across election cycles, authorities repeatedly restore immediate order through suspensions, deployments or arrests, while publicly documented evidence of completed investigations and individual accountability remains limited or delayed.

- Also note that the 23 deaths sometimes associated with the 1991 election occurred during food-price riots in June 1990. Zambia’s October 1991 election was largely peaceful, so those deaths are excluded.

2021 Elections

The 2021 elections under President Edgar Lungu were probably among the bloodiest in Zambia’s political memory. In February 2020, police shot and killed a 13-year-old boy Frank Mugala in Lusaka under unprovoked circumstances. In December 2020, Police in Lusaka shot and killed Joseph Kaunda, a supporter of the then opposition UPND in Lusaka. Kaunda was among the UPND supporters that went to offer solidarity to their leader when he was summoned for questioning at the police headquarters in Lusaka.

In December of 2020, Police shot and killed Nsama Nsama, an innocent passerby, while opposition leader

• **Zambia needs a political and mind-set turning point – it has always needed it! cont..**

Hakainde Hichilema appeared for questioning at the police headquarters in Lusaka. Pictures and videos from the day project a country at war, without functioning institutional restraints. To imagine that President Edgar Lungu presided over such anarchy and horror (to not even mention the rampant corruption, obnoxious prevarication of policy and morality, drunkenness, etc.) and still be presently considered a political hero in a country of sane human beings is mind-boggling! But that’s a discussion for another day.

Lessons for the country

What we see from this historical account is a country gripped with political indiscipline, punctuated by rogue presidents, political elites, and unruly state police functionaries. If one was intellectually honest, it is clear that Presidents Sata and Lungu win the trophy for presiding over the bloodiest political establishments in living Zambian memory. President Lungu, though deceased, was an influential figure in the August 2026 elections. The opposition NRPUP fronted him as their model and summoned his legacy as exemplary. His violent political persona and culture were probably equally influential in determining alleged political militarisation of the opposition NRPUP groups.

Stop political violence

Political violence is a cancer Zambia must address, and address decisively! It must be clearly legislated and sufficiently punished to prevent it. Violences should never be part of the political discourse, and its elimination cannot be left to the benevolence of a sitting president. While President Hichilema has positioned himself well in addressing political violence and other forms of political violence, the solution must outlive an incumbent president. The solution should be institutional, impersonal, universal, enduring, and uncompromising.

De-politicise the Zambia Police Service

National law enforcements must be professional, non-partisan, and be seen to be credible by all citizens. Zambia must make the Zambia Police Service independent – a truly national police not answerable to political elites. Police must be sufficiently trained to manage crowds and to not use live ammunition when dispersing crowds. Above all, Zambia Police must be accountable to the constitution and the law so no extrajudicial killings could possibly go unpunished.

End tribal hate and marginalisation

Any objective intelligent political observer in Zambia understands that ethnicity has increasingly become problematic and a determinant of political analysis, allegiance, and political perception. This trait particularly characterises political descent and acrimony during the Sata and Lungu periods. Increasingly, particularly during this period of time under these two former Presidents, certain ethnic identities have increasingly become politically marginalised, spoken about in the negative, and almost made to apologise for their existence. This is despite the fact that the country is deeply integrated socially through cross-cultural marriages, family ties, religious and professional cleavages, etc. It is almost irrational to harbour hate of another fellow citizen because of ethnic identity. Unfortunately, despite all odds, ethnic hate is rife in Zambia, and it must be addressed to avoid regrettable ethnic ruptures.

The 2026 elections are instructive about what we could potentially become when political elites rally masses along ethnic and tribal lines, feed those allegiances with propaganda, and potentially militarise them for citizens to rise against each other. Unfortunately, some religious leaders and academic commentators have band-wagoned on this atrocious rhetoric and fueled the hatred. In the days after the 2026 elections, videos, sometimes from children, have surfaced uttering hateful messages against Tonga-speaking people.

This ethnic and tribal hate has its most recent roots in the political culture of the PF under both Sata and perfected by Lungu. One could be almost excused for concluding that the PF is the worst political mistake ever to have happened in Zambia’s democratic history, and its toxic legacy will take balanced, bold, and decisive political, religious, and civil society leadership to annihilate. It will take a new generation of leaders in the country to nip this tribal and ethnic cancer in the bud which, sadly, has infiltrated even the historically balanced Catholic church. We should remember that the Catholic Church, in spite of its global fame for neutrality, balanced leadership, was complicit in the massacre of Tutsis in the 1994 Rwanda genocide.

Introspect and avoid more catastrophic political deaths and harms

Zambia just can’t afford to continue on its current path! We can’t all sit in fear of future elections because of current extremes we have witnessed and entertained. The larger picture is this: Zambia needs to introspect and determine a political course that practices politics where ideas are either accepted or rejected, where citizens accept political outcomes without veiled agitation for violence.

There are no Zambians entitled to political leadership and there are none without that right to seek public office. The 2026 election stands out in many ways. We had key political players vowing commitment to violence, killing, as a price tag to the importance of the election. We had, according to publicly available government reports, militarised positions by political players.

On top of this, we have witnessed a deeply polarised church that has previously risen above partisan inclinations. For example, we have seen select Catholic bishops endorse political candidates, ignore inflammatory remarks by significant political actors, and basically bulldoze the Bishop’s conference into issuing

hollow and pastorally poor comments on issues needing more depth and pastoral guidance. We have collectively reneged our responsibility as a people and we need to introspect. We, as a country, need to insist on forbearance, management of political expectations, and avoidance of extremes such as we are seeing in the post August 13 2026 elections. This requires serious systemic and structural initiatives to build a sustained solution to these seemingly isolated incidents which, just like in Rwanda, could result into immeasurable costs to national identity, history, and security.

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From page 1

HH’s Second Term: Planting Is Not Enough

When Hakainde Hichilema first took office in 2021, MakaanDay described the aftermath of that election as a political whirlwind that had left behind “a cloud of political dust” for the new president to settle. There would be no honeymoon, we argued.

Zambia faced a high cost of living, youth unemployment, unsustainable debt, governance problems and the difficult task of rebuilding institutions.

Five years later, Hichilema has taken the oath again. The political circumstances are different, but the question is remarkably similar: what happens after the celebration?

In his message following his inauguration, Hichilema offered an answer. His first term, he said, was about “restoring stability and laying the foundation.” His second would focus on growing the economy, creating jobs, strengthening communities and ensuring progress reaches every home.

It is an important distinction. But it also creates the standard against which his second term should be judged.

Perhaps St Paul offers an unexpectedly useful way of looking at it.

Writing to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 3), Paul confronts a community divided into camps: some declaring allegiance to Paul, others to Apollos. He reminds them that leaders are ultimately servants performing different tasks.

His famous agricultural metaphor follows: one plants, another waters, but growth comes from God. More importantly for politics, Paul says those doing the planting and watering share one purpose and each will be judged according to their labour.

Zambia could borrow something from that wisdom.

The danger after elections is that politics remains trapped in the language of who belongs to whom: UPND or opposition NRPUP, winner or loser, our stronghold or theirs. Paul regarded that sort of factionalism as a sign of immaturity. Zambia should too.

Hichilema’s declaration that those who did not vote for him will receive equal treatment is therefore more than conciliatory inauguration language. It should become a measurable principle of government.

A road should not know which party a constituency voted for. Neither should a hospital, a school, a government contract, a police officer or the Constituency Development Fund.

There is another lesson in Paul’s metaphor.

If Hichilema’s first term planted the seed, the second must show us the crop.

“Foundations” cannot become a permanent explanation for hardship.

Economic stability matters, investment matters and restructuring debt matters, but citizens ultimately encounter an economy at the kitchen table. They measure progress through food prices, transport, rent, jobs, wages and whether a small business can survive.

In 2021, MakaanDay wrote that the new president faced the immediate challenge of the cost of living, unemployment,

debt, governance and reform. Five years later, some circumstances have changed, but the fundamental test of government remains delivery.

There is also humility embedded in Paul’s message that political leaders might find useful. The planter is not the harvest. Neither is the person who waters.

Presidents inherit institutions, investments, failures and achievements from those before them. They add something and eventually hand the country to somebody else.

That makes Hichilema’s description of leadership as “not a prize, but a sacred duty to serve” particularly appropriate.

The election is finished. The speeches have been made. The inauguration is over.’

Now comes the watering.

And by 2031, Zambians will not simply ask what was planted. They will want to see what grew.

The measure of that growth should not only be found in economic statistics, new investments or government programmes,

but in how many Zambians are better able to stand on their own feet. Fewer families should need Social Cash Transfer simply to survive. More farmers should be productive enough to graduate from dependence on FISP. More young people should be earning livelihoods from decent jobs and viable businesses rather than waiting for the next government empowerment programme.

Social protection will always have a place for those who genuinely need it. But Hichilema himself has called for “a culture of productivity and self-reliance.” By the end of his second term, the fairest test of that promise may therefore be simple: has government merely supported more Zambians, or has it helped more Zambians reach the point where they no longer need supporting?

St Paul wrote: “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.”

Hichilema says the planting has been done. The next five years must show the harvest.

Hello MakaanDay editor.

Kimroy Bailey here, writing alongside my wife, Sherika. Your September 5 commentary, “HH’s Second Term: Planting Is Not Enough,” caught our attention because our family has been wrestling with a related question on sandy ground in Prado, Bahia: what makes planting become a functioning system rather than simply putting crops in soil?

Our current field record treats each plant as infrastructure. Pumpkin can provide food, living ground cover, shade and biomass. Banana can provide food, vertical structure and organic material. Flowers can support pollinators while food plants occupy the same landscape. The practical question is not only “what did we plant?” but “how many useful jobs is each living thing performing while it grows?”

Our latest field record is here: <https://trottbaileyfamily.com/prado-bahia-lesson-about-planting-on-sandy-soil/>

It may fit MakaanDay’s interest in asking what actually happens after policy promises reach the ground. Warm regards,

Kimroy Bailey, alongside Sherika Trott Bailey
TrottBaileyFamily.com



Zambia’s newly elected MPs have taken their oath ahead of the first sitting of the National Assembly. As the new Parliament prepares to get down to business, MukanDay is launching a dedicated space to follow what MPs say, what they do, how they vote — and why it matters to you.

Zambia’s newly elected Members of Parliament (MPs) have taken their Oath or Affirmation of Office, one of the final steps before the new National Assembly begins its business.

Under Standing Order No. 3, a member is required to present himself or herself before the Speaker to take the Oath or Affirmation of Office at least seven days before the first sitting of the National Assembly.

The ceremony therefore marks an important transition.

The election determined who will represent Zambians in Parliament. The oath commits those representatives to their new responsibilities. What comes next is the part that MukanDay believes deserves sustained public attention: what they actually do with that responsibility.

That is why we are launching House Business, a dedicated space in MukanDay Weekly for close and consistent coverage of Zambia’s National Assembly.

Every week, we will look beyond political speeches, party positions and the drama that sometimes dominates parliamentary coverage. We will follow the actual business of the House: the laws MPs consider, the questions they ask, the answers ministers give, the motions they move, the committees on which they serve and, where the record allows, how they vote.

We will also ask what all of this means beyond Parliament.

Because what happens in the National Assembly does not remain within its walls. Decisions made there can affect how public money is spent, how government is held accountable and ultimately the everyday lives of the people MPs have been elected to represent.

The 2026 election produced a new group of constituency representatives from across Zambia, drawn from political parties as well as independents. The election records provide a starting point: they tell us who contested and who emerged as the elected representative in each constituency.

House Business begins where that election record ends.

Who is your MP? What are they saying in Parliament? What issues are they raising on behalf of their constituency? Are they participating in the work of the House and its committees? What legislation are they supporting or opposing? When Parliament makes a decision that affects you, what position did your representative take? And when MPs make claims in the House, what does the evidence say?

These are questions citizens should be able to answer throughout the life of a Parliament — not only when politicians return to ask for their votes.

Making Parliament easier to follow

Parliamentary business can be difficult to navigate. The National Assembly operates through Standing Orders and procedures, and terms such as motions,

petitions, questions, points of order, divisions, readings and committee stages can make an institution belonging to the public appear remote from it.

House Business will help bridge that gap.

When procedure is important, we will explain what the Standing Orders say. When a Bill comes before Parliament, we will explain its important provisions and what they could mean.

When ministers answer questions, we will examine those answers.

When MPs debate matters of public importance, we will separate political rhetoric from facts where we can.

And where the parliamentary record allows citizens to measure an MP's words against their actions, we will put the two together.

Our purpose is not to tell readers what political position to take. It is to give them the information and context they need to judge the performance of the people exercising public power in their name.

A record that grows with Parliament

This will not be a one-week exercise.

Over the life of this National Assembly, House Business intends to build a public record of parliamentary activity that allows readers to follow not only the big political moments, but also the less dramatic work through which Parliament performs its functions.

Government MPs will be scrutinised. Opposition MPs will be scrutinised. Independent MPs will be scrutinised. And the expanded categories of representation in the new National Assembly will form part of that scrutiny.

The standard will be the same: What does the record show?

The MPs have taken their oath. The first sitting and the business of the new National Assembly lie ahead. As the House prepares to begin its business, so do we.



This week in the Bulletin & Record

Patrick Mucheleka sticks to his guns, will not be persuaded to join PF

• Originally published in September 2014

Twelve years after this interview, Patrick Mucheleka is back in Parliament — this time on the ruling party's ticket.

Mucheleka was elected MP for Luwingu Central on the United Party for National Development (UPND) ticket in Zambia's 2026 general election, marking his return to the National Assembly after a long and eventful political journey.

His return gives this 2014 Bulletin & Record interview an interesting contemporary twist. At the time, Mucheleka was an independent MP for Lubansenshi and was adamant that he would not abandon the mandate voters had given him to join the then-ruling Patriotic Front.

“I was elected as an independent MP for a five-year period. I have been given that mandate,” he told B&R, arguing that switching sides would amount to betraying the people who elected him and could trigger an unnecessary by-election. Mucheleka would later become a prominent UPND figure and serve in government before returning to electoral politics.

His political circumstances have changed considerably since that interview. In 2014, he was an independent MP criticising the government from outside the ruling party. In 2026, he returns to Parliament as an MP for the party in government.

But the question at the heart of his old interview remains strikingly current: What does an MP owe the voters who put them in office — their party, their political ambitions, or the mandate on which they were elected?

By Charles Mafa

Keep your friends close, but keep your enemies closer. These are not exactly the sentiments of Patrick Mucheleka, MP for Lubansenshi, but he has taken the high road by telling the PF he will not join them because he would consider doing so as a betrayal of the people who voted for him.

Ruling political parties have a reputation of luring independent MPs to their side, and Mr Mucheleka has had his share of discreet enquiries from the PF, but there is no indecision on his part. There were three independent MPs after the 2011 general elections, one resigned to join the Patriotic Front while the other is serving as a deputy minister. Mr Mucheleka would consider such a move as one lacking personal integrity on his part.

“I was elected as an independent MP for a five-year period. I have been given that mandate,” he says. “Why should I suddenly change and resign to cause an unnecessary by-election at the expense of development? This is money that should be used to enhance service delivery in my constituency.”

He refers to the tactic used by ruling parties in saying an opposition MP can never take development to his constituency as “huge lies”. He says this “misconception” is especially common in rural areas. Money used for development belongs to the people of Zambia as “that is taxpayers’ money”, he says.

“Even when the funds are borrowed, as is the case now when we have this propensity for borrowing, we’re still borrowing on behalf of the Zambian people,” he says.

The independent MP believes there is a price to pay for participating in the country’s leadership. His reflection on the on-going debate concerning the “low salaries” of MPs is that “Parliament is a service to humanity”. He says that as much as the salaries and allowances are low, the MPs should be ready to sacrifice and that “some of us are paying that price”. I am ready to pay that price. That is why those who have crossed the floor are being motivated by personal gain.”

Mr Mucheleka, born in 1965, has come a long way in politics. In 2001, he was caught up in the third term debate as he joined forces with members of civil society organisations in opposing Frederick Chiluba’s push for a third presidential term.

That same year, he contested a Parliamentary seat in Lubansenshi. His motivation was to stand under General Godfrey Miyanda’s Heritage Party and its “village concept”.

“This concept was seriously misunderstood and distorted,” he says. In my view the HP did not do enough to explain what the concept was all about. What attracted me was the whole concept of bringing about balanced development. We were talking about transferring the terms of trade from the urban economy

and also promoting the economic activities of the rural areas.”

Mr Mucheleka has a Masters in Development Studies with a specialisation in agriculture and rural development; his interest is to see that the country attains equitable wealth distribution. He worked in the civil society movement before making his second effort to re-contest the Lubansenshi Parliamentary seat, which he won in 2011.

“It’s so important that we identify what can be done by linking the rural areas to the urban economy.” He adds: “That is why the country requires a rural development policy, which I pushed through as a private member’s motion. But to date that policy is not forthcoming.”

In analysing the performance of the PF government, Mr Mucheleka observes that “they have lamentably disappointed”. He pointed out that there is “massive corruption” going on in the current government, making the MMD’s fraud “look like child’s play”. He says PF have failed in democracy and government by turning 360 degrees on the Constitution-making process and that apart from weakening constitutional offices, they have also stifled freedom of expression and assembly -- they have deliberately delayed enacting the Access to Information Act, so that people are kept in the dark.

The Lubansenshi MP is busy man and has to find a balance between family life – he is married with four children -- and the job of being the “voice of the voiceless”. When the B&R requested a meeting with him, he was in his constituency to meet his people. There was only a day between his return from the more than 2,500 kilometres road trip from Lubansenshi and air travel to South Africa for the Pan African Parliament. In fact, he is head of delegation for the country’s five MPs to Africa’s legislative assembly.

Mr Mucheleka is a member of the Bemba Royal family. He was born with leadership in his blood. His late father, Mr Alexander Mucheleka who was part of the liberation struggle, spent his life as a politician and held various positions in UNIP including District Governor for Luwingu in Northern Province. His mother is a retired teacher who lives in Kasama. Both his parents hail from the royal Bemba families. Despite this, he does not take his position as MP for granted. He says he is ready to be led by others if the people decide otherwise. His evaluation of Zambia’s fifty 50-year journey is that there have been more challenges than successes. He says the country was on a success path from the time of independence to 1973 when all the industries where nationalised. He says economic challenges that took place eventually forced Dr Kenneth Kaunda to revert to a multiparty political system.

This week in the Bulletin & Record

“Poverty levels have remained high despite the economic growth. Also, we a have multi-party system but the mentality is still that of a one-party system and most institutions have not transformed, they’re still tilted towards operating under a single party environment,” he observes. “This in my view is where we have wasted part of our 50 years.”



This story was first published in the September 2014 edition of the Bulletin & Record. It is republished as part of MakaanDay's “This Week in the Bulletin & Record Archive” series, with an update reflecting Patrick Mucheleka's return to Parliament in 2026.