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Building for the Future: Lessons from Zambia’s Community Water Conservation Projects

From page 1

By Gibson Zulu

For communities in Mutama Bweengwa in Chief Hamaundu’s area in Pemba district – Southern Province, the struggle is no longer just about finding water. It is also about protecting the structures built to conserve it.

Thousands of soil bunds, trenches and check dams were constructed under a multimillion-euro donor-funded project to slow rainwater runoff, prevent soil erosion and help replenish underground water sources.

But years after the work began, some of these structures are deteriorating, and the communities that helped build them say they lack the resources to maintain them.

Coswell Hatuleke, a project supervisor with the local Water Users Association, says no rehabilitation work has been carried out on the structures since 2022. “The water-holding capacity is now very low,” he told MakaanDay.

His concern reflects a wider challenge facing communities that benefited from the €17.2 million Accelerate Water and Agricultural Resources Efficiency in Zambia (AWARE 1.0) project: what happens when donor support ends, but the need to maintain the investments remains?

Thousands of trees planted, hundreds survive



Soil bands

In Mutama Bweengwa, the AWARE project supported the construction of about 3,500 soil bunds, trenches and two 55-metre-long check dams to capture runoff and allow water to seep into the ground.

The community also planted approximately 7,860 trees to restore vegetation and protect the environment, alongside star grass to stabilise the soil and prevent erosion.

But according to Hatuleke, only about 500 trees survived.

Some were destroyed by floods, while others failed to adapt to local conditions. Livestock also damaged some of the surviving trees.

“Some trees were lost during floods, while others supplied by the Forestry Department failed to adapt to the local conditions,” he said.

Despite these setbacks, residents say the interventions have made a huge difference.

One community member who participated in the project told MakaanDay that improved water retention had helped farmers access water for gardening and supported livestock grazing during the dry season.

The resident said no borehole in the area had dried up since the interventions were introduced.

However, the same resident expressed concern that one of the check dams was beginning to collapse in places because of soil erosion, unstable soil and heavy rainfall.

Without regular maintenance, the community fears that some of the improvements could be lost.

For Hatuleke, the immediate challenge is finding the labour, materials and financial support needed to rehabilitate the structures before further damage occurs.

When a project ends, who takes responsibility?

Mutama Bweengwa was among the communities that benefited from AWARE 1.0, which ran from 2019 to 2023.

The project was funded by the European Union, which contributed €13.5 million, and Germany’s Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), which provided €3.7 million.

Implemented in the Lower Kafue sub-catchment across Southern and Central provinces, the programme supported water conservation,

agricultural advisory services, farmer training and the rehabilitation of small-scale water infrastructure.

According to Anke Peine-Ellis, Water and Energy Cluster Coordinator at the German development agency GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) in Zambia, the project initially planned eight pilot sites for nature-based solutions before expanding to 16, eight of them in Southern Province.



Participating community members initially received payments through a Cash for Work arrangement. This was later replaced by non-monetary compensation, including agricultural inputs and bicycles.

“Payments to participating community members and the provision of inputs were handled directly by the project,” Peine-Ellis said. But the transition from donor-supported implementation to community responsibility has exposed a difficult question.

While residents may have the knowledge and willingness to maintain the interventions, do they have the resources?

At Mutama Bweengwa, Hatuleke believes Government and local authorities should consider using Cash for Work and other support mechanisms to help communities rehabilitate the damaged structures.

Another community source said that although residents were encouraged to take ownership of the interventions, they often lacked the money and materials required to

sustain them.

In Sibuchinga, the lessons remain, but resources are scarce

The experience is similar in Sibuchinga, where residents also participated in tree planting and the construction of soil bunds, trenches and half-moon structures to conserve water.

Mr. Monde

Charles Monde, a Water Users Association project supervisor, recalls how the initiative started with just 20 community members mobilised through the Forestry Department.

Participation eventually grew to 83 people, including supervisors, team leaders and field workers.

The community set out to plant 14,000 trees but managed approximately 9,000. Drought proved to be one of the biggest obstacles.

“We tried watering some of the seedlings using a borehole, but they still did not survive,” Monde said.

Nevertheless, he believes the interventions have improved local conditions. He said groundwater levels, vegetation and grazing conditions had improved, making water more accessible to residents.

The structures also helped prevent a gully from extending into agricultural fields by intercepting rainwater runoff.

Importantly, residents have continued applying what they learnt.

In areas previously affected by flowing water, community members have constructed contour ridges to reduce erosion and protect their fields.

But some work remains unfinished.

The community has identified a site for a check dam and gathered stones for its construction. GIZ has also supplied gabion wire, a material used to hold stones together in erosion-control structures.

What is missing, according to Monde,

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is the support needed to complete the work.

He said residents were ready to proceed if Government Cash for Work or other assistance became available.

The situation illustrates how community commitment alone may not be enough to complete and sustain conservation projects.

Mbabala offers another approach

In Mbabala Ward in Choma, residents have taken a different route, using knowledge acquired through donor-supported training to develop their own conservation initiative.

Ward councillor Offer Haluciso said the community received training from GIZ before organising and implementing its own nature-based solutions project.

Residents constructed soil bunds and trenches with support from the Government’s Cash for Work programme.

Unlike interventions that depend primarily on direct donor implementation, the Mbabala approach links community conservation work to an existing Government financing mechanism.

Haluciso believes the experience offers lessons for other communities seeking support to protect water sources and restore degraded land.

But the model has also encountered difficulties.

He said the community was unable to achieve its wider targets or extend the interventions to other parts of the ward after the Cash for Work programme was halted.

Haluciso remains hopeful that the programme will resume, allowing residents to expand the work using Government support alongside other available resources.

For communities such as Mbabala, the challenge is not necessarily a lack of willingness to participate, but the uncertainty surrounding continued financial and technical assistance.

GIZ: Communities cannot carry the burden alone

GIZ acknowledges that communities cannot be expected to meet every maintenance requirement without outside support.

Peine-Ellis said nature-based solutions are generally designed to require limited technical maintenance once vegetation has become established.

However, she acknowledged that soil conditions and environmental pressures can create a need for rehabilitation.

In Mbabala, for instance, sandy-loam soils may require periodic clearing of soil bunds to restore their ability to hold water.

“Community participation is essential, but communities should not be expected to address every maintenance or rehabilitation need without support,” she said.

Peine-Ellis explained that the second phase of AWARE seeks to strengthen the connection between community conservation activities and Government planning, technical services and financing.

AWARE 2.0 began in November 2023 and is scheduled to run until April 2028, with a budget of €16.5 million.

The European Union is contributing €8 million, while Germany, through BMZ, is providing €8.5 million. Sweden is also a co-funder of the wider Green Nexus Programme.

The second phase combines soil and water conservation with farmer-managed natural regeneration, improved rangeland management and wetland restoration.

It is also intended to strengthen Government institutions responsible for planning and financing catchment protection.

Peine-Ellis said communities with check dams are being advised to register the structures under the Department of Water Resources Development’s annual dam maintenance activities, through which the Ministry makes materials and tools available for water infrastructure maintenance.

The approach is intended to reduce dependence on individual donor-funded projects and establish longer-term Government support.

Government calls for community ownership

Government officials, meanwhile, emphasise that communities must take responsibility for the projects they receive.

Gibson Chingwalala, Provincial Water Development Officer at the Ministry of Water Development and Sanitation in Choma, said sustainability depends on community ownership, supported by Government policy, technical assistance and monitoring.

“Once the project is handed over there should be that full ownership to drive sustainability,” Chingwalala said.

He said Government’s responsibilities include monitoring progress, identifying challenges, providing technical expertise and working with partners to strengthen successful interventions.

But the experiences of Mutama-bweengwa, Sibuchinga and Mbabala reveal the tension between expectations of community ownership and the resources required to make that ownership meaningful.

Residents have participated in building conservation structures, planting trees and learning techniques to protect their land.

Some have continued applying those techniques after the initial interventions.

Yet damaged structures, unfinished works and interruptions to Government support programmes continue to threaten progress.

A source familiar with the project told MakaanDay that GIZ was working with the Zambian Government to develop guidelines that could enable farmers and communities implementing nature-based solutions to access Cash for Work funding.

The source said the programme’s initial structure lacked clear guidelines for this type of work.

The real test begins after the funding

The experiences of the three communities illustrate both the promise and the fragility of donor-supported environmental projects.

In Mutama-bweengwa, residents have seen improvements in water availability but now face deteriorating structures that need rehabilitation.

In Sibuchinga, communities have retained the skills to conserve soil and water but are waiting for support to complete additional works.

And in Mbabala, residents have demonstrated how Government financing can support locally driven conservation, although interruptions to the programme have limited expansion.

For Peine-Ellis, long-term success will depend on making catchment protection part of routine Government planning and financing rather than treating it as a temporary donor intervention.

“Scaling up depends on integrating catchment protection into government planning, financing and technical services, alongside community participation,” she said.

Back in Mutama Bweengwa, the urgency is already visible in structures that are losing their ability to hold water.

For residents who depend on the land for farming, gardening and livestock, maintaining these interventions is more than a question of protecting a donor investment. It is about preserving the water and grazing conditions that support their livelihoods.



From page 1

Sishuwa Sishuwa and the Limits of Academic Freedom

By Dr. O’Brien Kaaba

There have been several statements of solidarity with Sishuwa Sishuwa by foreign academics following the cancellation of his passport by the Zambian government. The most recent of these is a short statement by Jeremy Seeking claiming that the decision by the government is in response to Sishuwa’s trenchant criticism of HH and his government and, therefore, undermines Sishuwa’s academic freedom.

Surprisingly, however, there has been a deafening silence from the Zambian academia on Sishuwa’s predicament. There is no string of statements of solidarity. No outpouring of sympathy. No grieving over his fate. No defence of his academic freedom. Silence. What could be the reason for this dichotomy? I argue that the people who live in the context in which his “activism” has a bearing have a better understanding of Sishuwa’s “activism” and are better placed to judge his actions.

The local academics have a better understanding that Sishuwa had gone rogue and acted in a territory beyond academic freedom as many of his commentaries cannot be defended on the basis of academic freedom. He had crossed the line of academic integrity into the world of conspiracy and alternative reality, personalised attack, fake news, misinformation, disinformation and hate speech, and possibly cyber bullying and cyber harassment.

This is not to argue that the action by government to revoke is passport is justified. I don’t have sufficient information of the basis on which the government acted and would not like to make assumptions for or against.

Let us start with academic freedom and responsibilities of academics. Principle 1 of the Human Rights Council’s Principles for Implementing the Right to Academic Freedom (2024) defines academic freedom

as “the human right to acquire, develop, transmit, apply, and engage with a diversity of knowledge and ideas through research, teaching, learning, and discourse”.

Similarly, the Dar es Salaam Declaration on Academic Freedom and Social Responsibilities (1990) defines academic freedom as “the freedom of members of the academic community, individually or collectively, in the pursuit, development and transmission of knowledge, through research, study, discussion, documentation, production, creation, teaching, lecturing and writing”.

Academic freedom, like any other right, is not an open cheque to abuse others, to denigrate those with divergent views, to fabricate lies, spread misinformation, defame others and engage in conspiracy theories and belittle others. Academic freedom comes with responsibilities and academic ethics. As the Dar es Salaam Declaration noted, these include the need for academics to “perform their academic functions in accordance with ethical and highest scientific standards,” perform their role “without prejudice to the rights of others and the needs of our society,” and to engage in academics with “spirit of tolerance towards differing views and positions and enhance democratic debate and discussion.” Academic freedom is not unlimited. As Judge Oliver Wendell Holmes famously stated, “The right to swing my fist ends where the other man’s nose begins”.

Sishuwa’s social and political commentaries have not always respected the responsibilities that come with academic freedom. He often fabricates facts, demeans those with contrary views, makes wild and unsubstantiated claims and often makes claims that border on hate speech, purveys false/fake documents. He has often called academics who have

exposed some of his falsehoods or hold different views from his as simply driven by their stomachs and not principle. He has made unsubstantiated claims and personalised attacks against some diplomats, such as the British High Commissioner and the UN Country Coordinator for simply holding views that do not align with his.

If reality does not fit into his political views, he manufactures his own set of facts and tries to fit reality into his manufactured facts using conspiracy theories. For example, in the lead to the 2026 election, Sishuwa came up with totally fake outline of what he called a government strategy for re-election, that the government planned to burn markets and then offer support to affected individuals as a campaign strategy.

In shock at such a baseless claim, for example, Tarcisius Mukuka, a respected senior retired academic posted: “I must have missed the memo in which Sishuwa Sishuwa mutated from government critic to conspiracy theorist evident in his tweeter feed. Should he not provide evidence of UPND market burning campaign strategy.”

Even where Sishuwa has the right like anyone to comment on public affairs, he had crossed the academic line of dispassionate and objective commentary and moved into the realm of toxic emotional, personalised venom and toxic vitriol. For example, when making his prediction for the 2026 election outcome, Sishuwa posted: “Hichilema will lose the election on 13 August. The only thing that can save him from defeat is pre-ballot death or industrial scale vote-rigging. Never again should Zambia elect a lying, tribal, corrupt, unpatriotic, vindictive, hypocritical, lawless, and undemocratic scumbag.”

By the time his passport was revoked, many media houses had long stopped entertaining or publishing his commentaries or giving him space to engage with the public as they were seen as not enlightening but deleterious. In his own post in June 2026, Sishuwa indicated that News Diggers, Radio Phoenix, Lusaka Times and the Mail and

Guardian of South African had blacklisted him, but speculated that these media houses had colluded with the government to block him. No evidence of this collusion was furnished. An impression should not be created that academic freedom is unlimited or that whatever proceeds from an academic, no matter how unethical or unprofessional, should be entertained as academic freedom. History is full of academics who crossed the line and committed atrocious crimes for which they were held accountable. For example, Bilijana Plavsic, a biology professor, was convicted by the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) based on her hate speech and propaganda that led to atrocities and killings of innocent people, while Augustin Ngirabatware, an economics professor and government official, was convicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) for his propaganda that incited violence and genocide.

Given this context, it is not surprising that there is hardly any public discourse among local academics about the Sishuwa fate. Claims of a clamp down on academics do not resonate with what is on the ground in Zambia. It seems there is a nuance the foreign academics have missed, demonstrating their costly naivety and ignorance of the context. Sishuwa is not one thing and his academic life must be separated from his social or political commentaries where he often goes rogue and makes claims that are not driven by any evidence or are simply fake. Sishuwa himself has personally acknowledged this. When asked why he was spreading fake or unsubstantiated news, Sishuwa responded in a post on X in September 2025: “There is a difference between Sishuwa the public intellectual or political commentator, and Sishuwa the scholar. The former draws inspiration from the world of public debate, the latter from that of scholarship. The former can proudly take a partisan position in the service of a social cause, the latter almost always claims objectivity as an observer”. It is this dichotomy in Sishuwa that the international scholars have not appreciated as they are removed from the context and have given flesh to the ugly stereotype of a concubine who mourns louder than the bereaved wife.

Aggravated Robbery Trial Begins For Two Lusaka Men After Eight Months In Custody

By Gibson Zulu

Two Lusaka men have pleaded not guilty to aggravated robbery in the High Court, more than eight months after they were arrested.

Solomon Mbewe, 26, and Felix Chipili, 22, appeared before High Court Judge Mutinta Kaumbi Ndulo-Mundia on Monday, 5 October 2026, and denied the charge.

The charge relates to an alleged robbery at about 02:00 in Mulobela Village, Ten Miles on 3 February 2026 in which K9,000 was allegedly stolen from complainant Michael Kalebwe.

Mbewe and Chipili were arrested on 3 February and initially held at Muanjuni Police Post.

MakanDay understands that they remained there until 26 February before being transferred to Ngwerere Police Station on 27 February.

They appeared before a subordinate court on 01 June, when the matter was committed to the High Court for trial.

The two were subsequently remanded at Lusaka Central Prison before being transferred to Mwembeshi Correctional Facility on 12 July.

When the case came before the High Court on Monday, Mbewe and Chipili both pleaded not guilty to the aggravated robbery charge.

The court adjourned the matter to 8 October 2026 for the commencement of trial.

MakanDay has been following the case since the men’s arrests in February.

Mbewe and Chipili remain in custody. They are presumed innocent unless and until proved guilty.



Entries Open for the MakanDay Investigative Reporting Award

Now in its fifth year, the Eminent Prize for Investigative Journalism celebrates Zambian journalists whose reporting goes beyond the headlines to expose corruption, abuse of power and injustice.

Entries close: 31 October 2026

An independent panel of judges will review the submissions and select up to two winners.

What’s at stake?

Overall Winner: A brand-new laptop
Runner-up: A fully paid internship at MakanDay
Honourable Mentions: Up to two outstanding entries may receive special recognition, with the journalists invited to MakanDay’s awards ceremony.

Winning and finalist investigations will also be showcased on the MakanDay website and across our social media platforms, giving exceptional investigative journalism greater visibility.

Who can enter?

The award is open to journalists based in Zambia, including MakanDay contributors. However, journalists employed by MakanDay are not eligible to enter.

Entries should demonstrate strong investigative reporting by uncovering information of significant public interest, particularly reporting that exposes corruption, abuse of power, wrongdoing or injustice.

Journalists may submit their own work or nominate another journalist’s work with their permission.

Submission Guidelines

Eligible work must have been published or broadcast between 1 December 2025 and 31 October 2026.

Entries published or broadcast in languages other than English must be accompanied by an English translation.

For print or written entries, submit a scanned or digital copy. Where the text is difficult to read, include a transcript in Word or PDF format.

For radio, television or online video entries, provide a working link or attach the relevant audio or video file.

Every submission must include a short biography and photograph of the entrant or entrants.

Ready to enter?

Send your submission to editor@makanday.org by 31 October 2026.

Visit the MakanDay website for more information.

Great investigations deserve to be recognised. If your journalism uncovered what others wanted hidden, we want to see it.



PART TWO: The Deal and where did the money go?

From page 1

\$5.1 million, 160 people and a deal that began behind closed doors

This investigation is part of The Deportation Project — Inside the Trump administration’s secret deals to expel people worldwide, a collaborative investigation led by Forbidden Stories involving 24 media organisations in 15 countries.

By Inhlase Reporter

The men sent to Eswatini did not arrive by accident.

Their transfer was the product of an agreement negotiated between the governments of the United States and Eswatini in the first months of Donald Trump’s second administration.

At the centre of the arrangement was a five-page document signed in Mbabane on 14 May 2025.

It was called a Memorandum of Understanding Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Eswatini Concerning the Removal of Third Country Nationals.

Under its terms, the United States agreed to provide Eswatini with US\$5.1 million to build its border and migration-management capacity.

In return, Eswatini agreed to facilitate the removal of up to 160 third-country nationals from the United States.

The people could arrive in separate groups. The agreement did not require all 160 to be transferred at once.

The arrangement became one of dozens of third-country deportation agreements pursued by the Trump administration.

The consortium’s database compiled and cross-checked using the Berkeley Human Rights Center, Human Rights First, Refugees International, news reports, government sources and lawyers handling individual cases, recorded at least 25,427 third-country nationals transferred from the United States between January 2025 and August 31, 2026.

Eswatini accounted for 32 of those people in the consortium’s final database.

But the numbers conceal the more important question:

A deal some ministries did not know about. By the time the money arrived, one of the government’s most important financial institutions says it had not been involved in negotiating the arrangement.

Finance Minister Neal Rijkenberg confirmed in Parliament in November 2025 that Eswatini had received the US\$5.1 million.

He said his ministry only discovered the purpose of the payment after making enquiries.

The Eswatini Observer reported the minister as saying: “We were told it was for the US deportees after we enquired”.

Reuters separately reported that Rijkenberg said the transaction had been handled by the Prime Minister and that he was unaware of it until afterwards.

The revelation raised an unusual question about the structure of the deal. The agreement was between two governments.

The United States was providing millions of dollars.

Eswatini was undertaking an international commitment involving immigration, security and the reception of up to 160 foreign nationals.

What the agreement actually says

The written agreement is more specific than the released public statements initially suggested.

The United States undertook three principal commitments.

First, it would work with Eswatini to identify third-country nationals (TCNs) who were in the United States and could be removed to Eswatini. Second, it would provideUS\$5.1 million to build Eswatini’s border and migration-management capacity. The document says that this could

include relocation assistance and infrastructure needed to administer assistance for TCNs removed from the United States. Third, the United States would engage the International Organization for Migration or another service provider, where necessary, to assist with further relocation of TCNs within one year of their arrival in Eswatini.

Eswatini, meanwhile, undertook to act according to its national laws and international obligations.

The agreement specifically refers to the 1951 Refugee Convention, the 1967 Protocol and the Convention Against Torture, including prevention of refoulement and access to asylum and protection systems.

It also agreed to apply its immigration procedures to the transfers and to provide each TCN with “appropriate immigration status or other legal accommodation” under Eswatini law for up to one year.

Washington chose the people

The MOU also makes it clear who controlled the selection process.

Under Annex A, U.S. officials determine independently and under their own authority which third-country nationals they want to remove to Eswatini.

The United States then provides Eswatini’s designated liaison with a list of people, demographic information, criminal records where applicable and an estimated removal schedule.

The Eswatini liaison confirms that the identified group may be removed to Eswatini. The U.S. liaison then coordinates the flight, with the agreement setting a target of carrying out the transfer within 96 hours of Eswatini’s confirmation. That arrangement puts the two governments in

distinct roles. Washington chose whom it wanted to remove. Mbabane agreed to receive the groups. The agreement does not provide for Eswatini to independently select individual deportees.

That matters when considering the subsequent cases of people with humanitarian protections in the United States. It also raises a question that neither the agreement nor public statements fully answer:

Why a ceiling of 160 people?

The agreement sets the ceiling at 160 people. The text does not explain why and does not specify a price per person.

The \$5.1 million is described as funding for border and migration-management capacity rather than as a per-person payment.

The document establishes a relationship between the United States providing funding and Eswatini accepting up to 160 TCNs, but it does not say that Washington would pay Eswatini a fixed amount for every person transferred.

The consortium’s global research shows why this distinction matters. By 31 August 2026, the collaborative investigation had identified 35 countries with agreements or arrangements to accept third-country nationals, of which 28 were known to have received people. The consortium identified more than 105 transfer flights and more than 25,427 people transferred worldwide.

The money attached to the wider system was much larger than the Eswatini payment, although it came through several different channels and should not be treated as a single pool of payments for deportees. The consortium reporting identified \$410.1 million sent through the State Department’s Bureau of Population,

PART TWO: The Deal and where did the money go? Cont...

Refugees and Migration to governments and international organisations.

That included payments to governments, IOM, UNHCR, the ICRC and the Pan American Development Foundation. Eswatini’s \$5.1 million therefore sits within a much broader financial system — but its precise purpose and spending remain an Eswatini-specific accountability question.

Where did the \$5.1 million go?

The money did not initially move through the ordinary government budget in the way many public funds do.

According to reporting by the Eswatini Observer on a Finance Committee report tabled in the House of Assembly in March 2026, the \$5.1 million, about E89 million, had been deposited into a private account rather than the Government Consolidated Fund.

The committee said only about E82 million remained in the account, leaving a reported E7 million shortfall, and recommended that the funds be transferred to the Consolidated Fund and managed like other government money.

The reporting requires further primary-document verification before we describe the E7 million as missing or misappropriated.

What is established by the reporting is that Parliament’s Finance Committee raised concerns about the location and accounting treatment of the money.

The agreement was broader than the money The \$5.1 million is the most visible part of the bargain.

But the MOU itself describes other commitments. The United States was to engage IOM or another service provider for onward relocation. Eswatini was to facilitate access for that organisation.

And both governments reaffirmed their existing international obligations. That means the real bargain was not simply: \$5.1 million for 160 people.

It was a system.

Washington would identify the people. Eswatini would confirm that groups could be received.

The United States would organise the flights.

Eswatini would provide legal accommodation.

An international organisation could become involved in onward relocation.

And, at least on paper, the process was supposed to operate within national and international law.

The question is whether that system worked as the document described.

What was not in the document?

The MOU is striking for what it does not say.

It does not specify that the people will be held in Matsapha Correctional Centre.

It does not establish a criminal sentence.

It does not explain the legal mechanism by which a person who has arrived under the agreement may be prevented from leaving the facility.

It does not identify a maximum period of detention.

It does not specify who has final authority to order an individual’s release.

It does not explain what happens if the person refuses voluntary repatriation.

And although it anticipates further relocation within one year, it does not set out a detailed mechanism for what happens if onward relocation has not occurred when that period expires.

These omissions do not necessarily mean that other legal instruments or administrative arrangements do not exist.

They mean that those instruments need to be identified.

That is one of the central reporting questions for Part Three.

The agreement could also be ended

There is another provision with consequences for people already in Eswatini. Either participant can discontinue its participation in the MOU at any time, although it should endeavour to provide written diplomatic notice through diplomatic channels.

The document says

discontinuation does not require acceptance by the other participant.

What happens when the arrangement ends?

The agreement gives either government the right to discontinue its participation without requiring the other government’s acceptance. But ending the arrangement does not, on the face of the document, provide a separate procedure for people who have already been transferred to Eswatini.

The US–Eswatini MOU, signed on 14 May 2025, says Eswatini will provide each third-country national with “appropriate immigration status or other legal accommodation under Eswatini law” for up to one year. It also says the United States will engage the International Organization for Migration, or another service provider, to assist with further relocation within one year of arrival.

The agreement therefore establishes a transitional arrangement: Eswatini provides the person’s legal accommodation under its law, while the United States undertakes to engage a service provider to assist with onward relocation.



PART TWO: The Deal and where did the money go? cont....

But the MOU does not set out a specific procedure for a person who remains in Eswatini after that one-year period without an onward destination. Nor does its termination clause specify what happens to people already transferred when either government ends its participation.

Instead, the agreement leaves Eswatini’s domestic immigration procedures in place. Section 2.3 of the MOU says Eswatini will “implement its immigration procedures in accordance with Eswatini law,” while section 2.4 provides for legal accommodation for up to one year.

That makes the person’s status under ordinary Eswatini immigration law important once the MOU’s transitional arrangements no longer provide a route to onward relocation.

The government has said the people received under the arrangement are being hosted temporarily while arrangements are made for their onward movement. On 27 August 2026, Acting Government Spokesperson Thabile Mdluli said two additional third-country nationals had been received under the bilateral arrangement according to established procedures governing their “admission and temporary hosting.” On 9 July 2026, she similarly described the July arrivals as being in Eswatini temporarily and said their fundamental rights would be respected and protected during their stay.

The government has also reported individual departures. Some third-country nationals have been repatriated to their countries of nationality, while others have requested voluntary repatriation and the government has said it was engaging relevant authorities and partners to facilitate their departure.

What remains unclear from the public record is what legal status applies to a person in Eswatini when the one-year accommodation period expires and no onward destination has been secured.

That is not a question answered by the MOU itself.

It is a question of the domestic legal framework governing the person’s continued presence and movement in Eswatini.

Why did Eswatini say yes?

Eswatini’s government initially presented the arrangement as the product of a lengthy diplomatic process.

On 16 July 2025, after the first five third-country nationals arrived, Acting Government Spokesperson Thabile Mdluli, in a government statement issued to the media, said their arrival was “the result of months of robust high-level engagements” between the United States and Eswatini. She said the government had undertaken risk assessments and that the five men posed no threat to the country or its citizens. The government also said Eswatini and the United States would work with the International Organization for Migration to facilitate the men’s eventual transit to their countries of origin.

Mdluli’s statement also placed the arrangement within the broader relationship between the two countries. She said Eswatini and the United States had enjoyed “fruitful bilateral relations spanning over five decades.”

The following week, the issue reached Parliament. On 21 July 2025, during the House of Assembly Portfolio Committee’s consideration of the Prime Minister’s Office First Quarter Performance Report, MPs questioned the bilateral agreement, including Eswatini’s obligations, national-security implications and the potential benefits to the country.

The government’s explanation was also that the arrangement was intended to be temporary. In her 16 July statement, Mdluli said the men would ultimately be repatriated to their respective countries, with Eswatini and the United States working with IOM to facilitate their onward movement.

That explanation would become more complicated as the programme expanded.

When another 11 third-

country nationals arrived in July 2026, Mdluli again spoke on behalf of the government. In a statement reported on 9 July 2026, she described their presence as temporary and said their fundamental rights would be respected and protected in accordance with Eswatini law and the country’s international obligations.

By then, the arrangement was no longer limited to the five men who had arrived a year earlier. It had developed into a continuing programme involving multiple groups of people transferred from the United States.

Reuters reported that Eswatini was among the first countries to volunteer after learning Washington was seeking African partners. The report cited three senior government sources who said the Prime Minister took the proposal to the King.

The High Court eventually dismissed the case Eswatini Litigation Centre and Others v Prime Minister of Eswatini N.O. and Others [2026] SZHC 10 in February 2026 on standing grounds. It did not rule that the agreement was constitutional.

It did not rule that the detention was lawful. And it did not determine the substantive constitutional questions surrounding the agreement.

That distinction is important.

The legal challenge therefore did not resolve the political and accountability questions surrounding how the agreement was made.

A bargain still being implemented By the end of August 2026, the arrangement was no longer merely a document. The United States had transferred people to Eswatini in multiple operations.

The consortium’s database records 32 people transferred to Eswatini by 31 August. Some had subsequently left.

Others remained. On 27 August 2026, Acting Government Spokesperson Thabile

Mdluli announced that two further third-country nationals had arrived in Eswatini under the bilateral arrangement with the United States. The government said the two were “of Latin American nationality” and had been received according to established procedures governing the “admission and temporary hosting” of third-country nationals.

Their arrival brought the cumulative number of people transferred to Eswatini under the arrangement to 32 by 31 August, according to the consortium’s verified database. The figure should not be confused with the number of people still in the country: the government said on 27 August that 27 TCNs were then being hosted, following recent repatriations.

The government’s statement did not identify the two people’s individual nationalities. It described them only as “Latin American”.

The government continued to describe the people as temporarily hosted.

The MOU described legal accommodation and eventual further relocation.

But the men described in Part One experienced the arrangement through the walls of Matsapha.

The difference between “temporary hosting” and being held inside a correctional facility is more than a question of language. It goes to the legal status of the men, who controls their movement, and what happens when there is no immediate country to which they can go.

Part Three follows that unresolved legal trail from the MOU and Eswatini law to the courts, the international organisations involved and the men still waiting for a way out.



Fake Fur, Real Impact? Can Synthetic Skins Help Protect Zambia’s Leopards?

By Ennety Munshya

For generations, animal skins have formed part of the ceremonial regalia worn during some of Zambia’s traditional ceremonies, carrying symbols of status, power and cultural identity.

But the use of genuine leopard skins has also created a conservation challenge, with demand for the distinctive spotted fur linked to the killing and illegal trade of the animals.

Now, a study of a programme replacing genuine leopard skins with synthetic alternatives suggests the intervention has coincided with a sharp decline in authentic fur ownership among ceremonial users — alongside reduced detections of leopard poaching and an increase in estimated leopard density in the study landscape.

The study, published in Conservation Biology, examined the Furs for Life programme, led by wild cat conservation organisation Panthera in collaboration with Zambia’s Department of National Parks and Wildlife, traditional leaders and other stakeholders, including Wild Crime Prevention (WCP).

The programme distributes synthetic garments known as Heritage Furs, designed to resemble genuine wild-cat skins while allowing traditional regalia to retain its cultural appearance without requiring more animals to be killed.

Presenting the study at the Taj Pamodzi Hotel in Lusaka on September 30, 2026, Panthera said the intervention had achieved high levels of adoption among communities where wild-cat skins have historically been used as ceremonial attire. Researchers examined the programme using questionnaires, law-enforcement and court records, camera-trap monitoring and interviews with stakeholders.

One focus of the research was the use of leopard fur among paddlers associated with the Kuomboka traditional ceremony in Western Province.

The study estimates that historical demand among ceremonial users could require about 176 authentic leopard-fur garments annually, corresponding to an estimated 44 leopards.

But researchers found that, following the introduction of synthetic alternatives, self-reported ownership of authentic leopard fur among paddlers associated with the Barotse Royal Establishment fell by 78 percent between 2020 and 2024.

Adoption of synthetic alternatives exceeded 80 percent by 2024.

The study also found that detected leopard-poaching incidents declined during the period under review, while estimated leopard density across the study landscape increased from an average of 2.7 to 3.8 animals per 100 square kilometres.

The findings raise an important question: how much of that apparent recovery can be attributed to replacing genuine skins with synthetic ones?

Researchers caution that the synthetic-fur programme was not operating in isolation.

Counter-poaching and counter-trafficking operations were also being implemented during the study period, meaning the observed changes cannot simply be attributed to synthetic fur alone.

The findings nevertheless suggest that reducing demand for genuine skins could form part of a broader strategy for protecting wild leopard populations.

Panthera says the programme is designed to address that demand while preserving the cultural significance of ceremonial regalia.

Heritage Furs have been supplied to users of traditional ceremonial attire, including communities associated with the Lozi Kuomboka ceremony and the Ngoni Newala ceremony.

Traditional leaders have also been involved in promoting the synthetic alternatives.

Speaking during the Lusaka event, Newala Organising Chairman Dumisani Tembo said the adoption of synthetic leopard skins offered a way of supporting conservation while maintaining cultural traditions.

Mr Tembo said poaching and trafficking of leopards for their skins had contributed to pressure on the animals and argued that communities needed to recognise that wildlife resources were finite. “Wildlife is not infinite,” Mr Tembo said, stressing the need for communities to support conservation efforts.

In a separate interview with Makanday, Maswabi Lishandu, a representative of the Panthera project in Western Province, said the initiative sought to balance wildlife conservation with the preservation of culture. “The motive of the project is conservation and preserving culture,” Mr Lishandu said.

He said demand for wild-cat skins for ceremonial attire had placed pressure on the animals and that synthetic alternatives offered a way for communities to maintain the appearance and cultural significance of their traditional garments while reducing demand for genuine skins.

The intervention also raises questions about what happens to authentic skins that are no longer being used and whether reduced ownership among participating ceremonial groups translates into a lasting reduction in the wider illegal market for leopard skins.

The study’s findings show an association between the period in which synthetic furs were increasingly adopted and several positive conservation indicators: fewer ceremonial users reporting ownership of genuine leopard fur, fewer detected poaching incidents and higher estimated leopard density. But with law-enforcement and other conservation measures operating alongside the programme, determining how much of the apparent improvement is directly attributable to synthetic fur remains difficult.

For conservationists and traditional leaders, the longer-term test will therefore be whether communities continue to embrace synthetic alternatives, whether demand for genuine leopard skins continues to decline, and whether the gains recorded in Zambia’s wild leopard populations can be sustained without sacrificing the cultural traditions in which the regalia has long played a role.



EDITORIAL

From page 1

Opinion | You Can Fire the Officials, But Can You Fire the System?

The latest laying off of workers at the Zambia Medicines and Medical Supplies Agency (ZAMMSA) is just the latest in how Zambia has perfected a peculiar response to institutional failure: fire the officials, appoint replacements, announce reforms and wait for the next scandal.

At ZAMMSA, this revolving door has become almost routine. Yet medicines continue to go missing, procurement controversies persist, and patients are left wondering whether the drugs prescribed to them will ever reach their hospitals.

The uncomfortable question is this: Are we fighting corruption in the medical supply system, or merely changing the people who control it?

The problems at ZAMMSA did not begin with the United Party for National Development (UPND). Neither did they originate under the Patriotic Front (PF) or its predecessor, the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD). They are longstanding national problems, inherited, perpetuated and, in different ways, worsened by successive governments.

When the PF government transformed Medical Stores Limited into the Zambia Medicines and Medical Supplies Agency (ZAMMSA) on 3 February 2021, under the Zambia Medicines and Medical Supplies Agency Act No. 9 of 2019, it expanded the institution’s mandate to include the procurement, storage and distribution of medicines and medical supplies.

The transfer of procurement responsibilities from the Ministry of Health to ZAMMSA was intended to insulate the process from political interference and undue influence by senior ministry officials. But did it achieve that objective?

The recurring procurement scandals and allegations of interference suggest otherwise. If anything, the experience has demonstrated that changing an institution’s name, legal status and mandate does not

necessarily change its institutional culture, strengthen its independence or protect it from the very political interference it was meant to eliminate.

The UPND came to power promising to do things differently. Its New Dawn administration presented a strategy to transform the medical supply system, improve accountability and restore reliable access to essential medicines.

Five years later, what happened to that transformation?

MakanDay's investigations have repeatedly exposed troubling weaknesses in Zambia's pharmaceutical supply chain: allegations of political interference in procurement, questionable contracts, financial mismanagement, leadership instability and the erosion of ZAMMSA's operational independence.

One investigation revealed that ZAMMSA had experienced eight directors-general, including acting appointments, within four years.

Another examined serious irregularities surrounding a controversial medicines procurement exercise involving contracts worth hundreds of millions of kwacha.

These revelations raise a fundamental question: How can an institution deliver consistent reforms when its leadership is constantly changing and its decisions are allegedly influenced by powerful individuals outside its management structures?

The government's efforts have not been entirely without results.

Medicine availability has improved from the prolonged shortages that previously plagued public health facilities. That progress deserves acknowledgement.

But improved stock levels do not necessarily mean a healthy supply system. Medicines sitting in warehouses, stranded at borders or failing to reach rural clinics offer little comfort to patients.

And while dismissals, investigations and prosecutions may demonstrate a willingness to confront wrongdoing, they cannot substitute for structural reform. Those accused of criminal conduct must face due process, and guilt must be established in court.

The real test of reform is whether the system becomes less susceptible to abuse, regardless of who occupies State House or runs ZAMMSA.

Why does political influence appear to persist in an agency established to operate independently within a clearly defined legal framework? Why do procurement decisions remain vulnerable to interference? And why do funding and distribution failures continue despite repeated promises of reform?

Perhaps the more uncomfortable question is: Who benefits from keeping ZAMMSA institutionally weak?

Consider the agency’s reported prolonged absence of a board of directors, the very body entrusted with providing strategic direction and oversight. If ZAMMSA has been operating without a board for years, who has been exercising those responsibilities? Who appoints the Director-General, and under whose authority? More importantly, who holds the Director-General accountable?

These are not merely administrative questions. They go to the heart of ZAMMSA’s independence, transparency and accountability. An institution cannot be expected to operate free from undue influence if the structures designed to safeguard its independence are absent or ineffective.

Zambia needs more than another round of dismissals. It needs independent oversight, transparent procurement, predictable financing, professional appointments and enforceable accountability extending beyond ZAMMSA's employees to everyone who influences its decisions.

The health of a nation cannot depend on political loyalty or the fortunes of connected suppliers.

Ultimately, the success of ZAMMSA should not be measured by how many officials are fired, how many investigations are announced or how many contracts are awarded.

It should be measured by whether a patient entering a public health facility can obtain the medicine they need.

Until that becomes the measure of success, Zambia will continue changing the faces of failure while preserving the system that produces it.



INVESTIGATE.
INFORM.
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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.

When Does Academic Freedom Stop Being A ‘Passport’?

- Academic freedom is not absolute just like other freedoms. It also carries with it responsibility. I have, for example, difficulties to appreciate calling other human beings scam bugs. Civility perhaps is part of academic discourse - Godfrey Lingenda reacts to our story on When Does Academic Freedom Stop Being A ‘Passport’?

The Catholic Bishop They Called “Polish Mad-Man”

- I read that foreword in the social teachings of the Catholic Church. I discovered the rich history of the Church even in colonial era where they spoke truth to the powers that be. Interesting to see that they have been prophetic and consistent. - Louis Mwape reacts to our story on the Polished Mad - Man



From page 1

Who's Who in Parliament — and the Words You Need to Know

By MukanDay Editor

As President Hakainde Hichilema opens the 14th National Assembly on Friday, 9 October, MukanDay explains the parliamentary titles, rules and procedures citizens will encounter as their representatives get down to business.

When President Hakainde Hichilema officially opens the First Session of Zambia's 14th National Assembly on Friday, 9 October 2026, attention will turn to his address outlining the government's priorities for the coming year.

But once the ceremony is over, the real business of parliament begins: debating proposed laws, questioning ministers, examining public expenditure and holding the government to account.

As these proceedings unfold, Zambians following parliament on television, radio or online will hear unfamiliar terms: backbencher, Government Chief Whip, Opposition Whip, party whip, motion, division and committee stage, among others.

What do these words mean? Who holds these positions? And why should ordinary citizens care?

In our previous [House Business explainer](#), MukanDay explained terms such as session, sitting, meeting, order paper, motion, point of order and hansard.

This week, we go further, looking at the people who organise parliamentary business, the rules MPs must follow and the procedures through which decisions are made.

Backbencher: An MP who is not a minister
The term backbencher may sound as though it refers to an MP who sits at the

back of parliament or holds a less important position.
But Zambia's National Assembly Standing Orders, give it a specific meaning.

A backbencher is simply an MP who is not a cabinet minister.

Backbenchers can belong to the ruling party, an opposition party or be independent MPs.

They play an important role in parliamentary scrutiny because they can question ministers, introduce motions, participate in committees and propose legislation.

Why it matters: Your MP does not need to be a minister to raise concerns about poor roads, shortages of medicines or the use of public funds. In fact, ministers do not ask parliamentary questions; their role is to explain and defend government policies and respond to questions from backbenchers. Backbenchers therefore play a critical role in raising citizens' concerns and holding the government accountable.

Government Chief Whip: The ruling party's organiser in parliament.

The Government Chief Whip is appointed by the party in government from among its MPs.

The word whip may sound harsh, but the role is primarily about organising MPs and maintaining party discipline during parliamentary business.

Under Standing Orders 47 and 48, the Government Chief Whip ensures that ruling-party MPs attend sittings, participate in proceedings and are present when important votes are taken.

The Chief Whip also coordinates parliamentary business with the Leader of the Opposition and other party whips.

Why it matters: When parliament is voting on an important Bill, the Government Chief Whip helps ensure that enough ruling-party MPs are present to participate. The role can therefore be significant in determining whether parliamentary business proceeds smoothly.

Party Whip: Keeping MPs organised

A Party Whip is an MP appointed by a political party to organise and maintain discipline among its members in the House.

The whip helps ensure that MPs know when they are expected to attend, what business is coming before Parliament and when votes may take place.

A Deputy Party Whip assists and performs the whip's duties when the whip is absent.

Why it matters: Political parties may announce positions on proposed laws, but those positions do not automatically translate into parliamentary votes. MPs must participate in the actual proceedings.

Leader of Government

Business: The link between Government and Parliament

Under Article 74(1) of the Constitution and Standing Order 42, the Vice-President serves as Leader of Government Business in the National Assembly.

The role includes explaining and defending Government policy, ensuring Government Bills are introduced, coordinating responses to parliamentary questions and facilitating accountability between the executive and parliament.

The Leader of Government Business also answers questions during the Vice-President's Question Time.

Why it matters: This office helps connect decisions made by Government with the parliamentary processes through which those decisions are explained, questioned and scrutinised.

Leader of the Opposition: Who speaks for the largest opposition party?

The Leader of the Opposition is elected by the opposition party holding the largest number of seats in the National Assembly.

Under Standing Orders 45 and 46, the office-holder liaises with parliamentary leaders, examines Government policy and proposes alternatives during debate.

The Leader of the Opposition also assists in maintaining discipline in the House.

Why it matters: The office provides an organised channel through which alternative policy positions can be presented and Government proposals scrutinised.

• Who's Who in Parliament — and the Words You Need to Know cont...

Speaker: The person who keeps order

The Speaker presides over parliamentary proceedings, interprets the rules and maintains order.

Under Standing Order 35, the Speaker and other presiding officers must act fairly and impartially when carrying out their duties.

An MP cannot simply stand up and speak whenever they wish. The presiding officer must first recognise the member.

The Speaker may also rule on procedural disputes and take action when members breach parliamentary rules.

Why it matters: Parliament brings together people with competing political views. The Speaker's responsibility is to ensure that debates take place according to agreed rules, regardless of which party an MP belongs to.

Clerk of the National Assembly: The procedural adviser

The Clerk is the principal adviser to the House, its presiding officers and MPs on parliamentary procedure, practice and privileges.

The Clerk also oversees the preparation and circulation of parliamentary documents, the custody of records and the production of Hansard. Unlike MPs, the Clerk is a parliamentary official rather than an elected political representative.

Why it matters: Parliamentary decisions must follow established procedures. The Clerk helps ensure the House has the documents, advice and records needed to conduct its business.

Motion: A proposal for Parliament to decide

A motion is a proposed resolution asking the National Assembly to take a position or make a decision on a particular matter.

For example, an MP might propose that Government take measures to address a shortage of health workers or improve access to clean water. When an MP moves a

motion, the member formally presents the proposal for consideration.

Depending on the applicable rules, the motion may be debated, amended, approved or rejected.

A Private Member's Motion is introduced by a backbencher rather than a minister.

Why it matters: Motions allow MPs to bring issues before the House and seek parliamentary decisions. But passing a motion does not necessarily mean that the Government has already implemented the proposed action.

Seconding a motion: Supporting its consideration

When an MP seconds a motion, the member formally supports its being placed before the House for consideration.

Seconding does not necessarily mean the MP agrees with every argument made in support of the proposal.

Standing Order 94 provides for motions to be seconded, subject to the applicable exceptions.

Why it matters: Citizens should distinguish between an MP helping a motion proceed and an MP ultimately voting for it.

Amendment: Changing what has been proposed

An amendment is a proposed change to a motion or Bill.

For example, MPs considering a proposal about education funding might seek to change its wording, scope or specific provisions.

Amendments allow Parliament to consider alternatives rather than simply accepting or rejecting every proposal in its original form.

Why it matters: The final version of a law or resolution may differ significantly from what was first introduced. Citizens should pay attention to what changes during debate.

Division: When MPs' votes are formally counted

Parliament sometimes decides questions through a voice vote,

with members indicating whether they support or oppose a proposal.

But where a decision is challenged and a division is called, members' votes are formally recorded through the prescribed voting procedure. The Standing Orders provide for electronic and roll-call voting.

Why it matters: Divisions can provide evidence of how MPs voted on particular issues. This helps citizens compare what their representatives say publicly with their actions in Parliament.

Quorum: The minimum number needed for business

A quorum is the minimum number of members required for the House to conduct business.

If the required number is not present, parliamentary proceedings may be interrupted in accordance with the Standing Orders.

The Government Chief Whip has an explicit responsibility to help ensure a quorum is maintained.

Why it matters: An MP's attendance is not merely ceremonial. Insufficient attendance can affect Parliament's ability to conduct business.

Bill: A proposed law, not yet an Act

A Bill is a proposed law placed before Parliament for consideration. It may be introduced by a minister or, where permitted, a backbencher.

A Bill generally passes through several stages, including First Reading, Second Reading, Committee Stage, Report Stage and Third Reading. During these stages, MPs have opportunities to examine, debate and propose changes to its provisions. A Bill does not become an Act merely because it has been introduced or debated. The required legislative procedures, including presidential assent where applicable, must be completed.

Why it matters: A proposal to change taxes, education policy or another area of public life is not automatically law simply because a minister announces it in Parliament.

Committee Stage: Examining the details

During the Committee Stage of a Bill, its provisions are examined in detail and amendments may be considered.

This is different from the work of parliamentary committees that investigate policy matters, examine expenditure and scrutinise Government activities.

Committees can invite witnesses, receive submissions and prepare reports for the House.

Why it matters: Some important changes to legislation happen during detailed consideration rather than during the most widely reported parliamentary speeches.

Point of Order: When an MP says the rules have been broken

A point of order is raised when an MP believes a parliamentary rule, procedure or privilege has been breached.

It is not simply an opportunity to disagree with another member's political argument.

The presiding officer determines how the matter should be handled under the Standing Orders.

Why it matters: A point of order concerns the rules governing parliamentary proceedings. Citizens should distinguish procedural objections from political disagreements.

Tabling a document: Formally placing information before Parliament

When an MP or minister tables a document, it means the document has been formally presented to the House.

Documents may include Government reports, committee reports and other materials permitted under the Standing Orders.

Why it matters: Tabled documents can provide evidence behind parliamentary debates. They may also help journalists and citizens assess whether Government claims are supported by official records.

Adjournment: Parliament stops sitting

When the House adjourns, its sitting comes to an end or business is suspended until the next appointed time. This does not necessarily mean the parliamentary session has ended.

Adjournment sine die means the House adjourns without fixing the date of its next sitting.

• Who's Who in Parliament — and the Words You Need to Know cont...

Why it matters: Citizens should not confuse the end of a day's sitting with the end of a parliamentary session or the dissolution of Parliament.

Motion of Thanks: What happens after the President's address?

When President Hichilema delivers his address at the ceremonial opening, MPs are required to listen in silence under Standing Order 21.

The President's speech will outline the Government's policy

direction, but the House does not debate the address while it is being delivered. Afterwards, a Motion of Thanks on the President's Address is moved by an MP nominated by the Government Chief Whip.

Under Standing Order 18, the debate lasts 10 sitting days unless the House Business Committee determines otherwise.

This provides MPs with an opportunity to respond to the President's policy pronouncements.

Why it matters: Citizens should follow not only

what the President promises, but also how their MPs respond. Do they question the proposals? Raise constituency concerns? Suggest alternatives? Or offer general support without examining the details?

Parliament belongs to the people

The language of parliament may seem complicated, but the decisions taken there have consequences far beyond the Chamber.

A debate about health funding can affect whether a clinic has

medicines. A question about roads can draw attention to neglected infrastructure. A Bill can change the laws governing businesses, workers and families.

Understanding parliamentary terms is therefore more than learning political vocabulary. It helps citizens follow who is speaking, what is being proposed, which rules apply and whether their representatives are fulfilling their responsibilities.

As the 14th National Assembly begins its work, MakanDay's HOUSE BUSINESS will continue examining the questions MPs ask, the laws they debate, the answers ministers give and, where records permit, how individual MPs vote.



This week in the Bulletin & Record

The Ancient Rock Art Of The Twa People

ByNgelima Chisanga MM

Mwela Rock Paintings is a heritage site managed by the National Heritage and Conservation Commission of Zambia, about 5 km east of Kasama central business district. Its rich paintings date back an astonishing 10,000 years. They occupy a site of some 100 squares kilometres believed to have been home to people in the Late Stone Age, who left behind more than 700 identified rock art paintings depicting pre-historic events and activities.



Through these pre-historic remnants, the Mwela Rock Paintings are testimony to the area’s early history, and their way of life is experienced through their creative thoughts, preserved in the rock art in Mwela’s caverns and caves.

Who were these people? They were the Twa, small hunter-gatherers, who inhabited the area before the arrival of the Bantu. When the Bemba-speaking people first arrived in the area and discovered the ancient and mysterious nature of the paintings, they attributed the works to the spirits.

Twa art depicts animals and the environment they encountered in the different areas in which they lived. The wildlife depicts elephants, bush pigs, birds, lions and eland. The paintings are also rich in human and geometric art, and in fertility symbols, intelligently showing the rites of passage of these ancient people of Zambia.

Modern historical research is beginning to produce a clearer picture of the origins of Mwela’s ancient art.



Historical evidence suggests that the Twa lived in the area’s caves and rock shelters to escape the attentions of wild animals, to prepare food, work on their tools and to shelter from unfavourable weather. Intheir wake they left clues to their identity such as animal bones, rock paintings, and a variety of stone tools.

Archaeological studies carried out in 1999 by archaeologists from Moto Moto Museum of Mbala and Lansmuseet Gavleborg Museum of Sweden, suggests that the people of the Late Stone Age were very good hunters who followed the animals they hunted. They were nomads, moving from place to place searching for food, collecting it from the forest where they could.

Studies of rock art in Kasama by Benjamin Smith (1997), show that it takes two distinct forms - pictographic and petroglyphic. Pictographic is paintings or drawings on the surface of rocks, whereas petroglyphs are engravings carved or chiselled into rock.

At Mwela, the art is pictographic, expressed in schematic and naturalistic paintings. The schematic paintings are not easy to understand, composed as they are mostly of dots, lines and shapes.

Naturalistic paintings show human beings, animals and objects as we see them in nature. In Zambia there are four main rock art traditions - Red Animal Tradition, Red Geometrical Tradition, The White

Spread-eagled Tradition and The White Zoomorph Tradition. The rock paintings at Mwela have two of those four main traditions, namely Red Animal Tradition and Red Geometrical Tradition.

The Red Animal Tradition paintings depict animal figures and in some cases human figures in which red pigment has been used, whereas Mwela’s Red Geometric Tradition mostly depicts simple geometric forms such as circles, lines, ladders and sets of parallel lines. In these, red pigment was also used. The red pigment is said to be a mixture of animal blood and red soils, and in order to make it stick to walls it was mixed with animal fats.



Oddly, most of the paintings at Mwela face west. Katongo Kangwa, a guide at Mwela, believes this was aimed at preserving the paintings because the sunset is weaker than the sunrise. Also, most of the paintings rest on canopied surfaces, further protecting them from direct exposure to sun and rain.