MakanDay

INVESTIGATE.
INFORM.
EMPOWER.

A FREE SOCIETY
NEEDS A FREE MEDIA.

MAKANDAY weekly

TRUSTED. BOLD. INDEPENDENT. | 13TH - 19TH NOVEMBER 2026 | ISSUE. NO 0064 | www.makanday.org

LOCAL

Civil society groups raise concern over K15 Billion funding Shortfall across ministries

Page 2



HOUSE BUSINESS

Who Protects Zambian Workers When Labour Inspectors Are Too Few?

Page 8



Zambia's agricultural expansion plans: Will new plans avoid past mistakes?

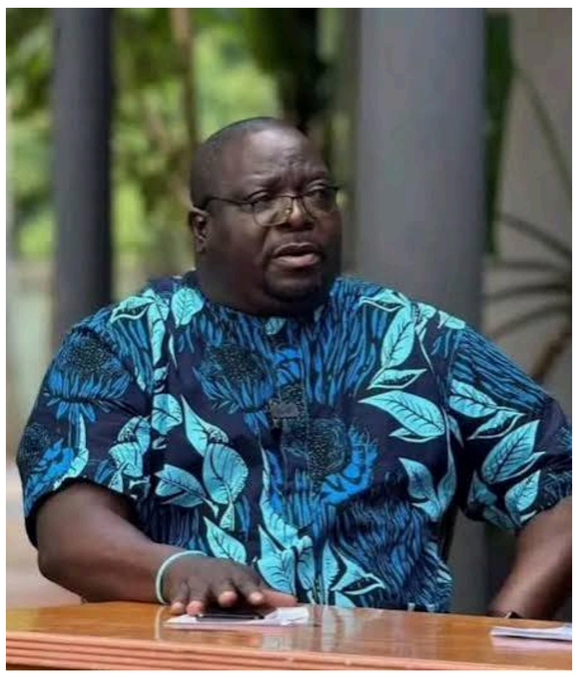
Story on page 4



FROM THE ARCHIVE

The saga of the "boastful billionaire"

Kambwili takeover of golf club land gives members a handicap - and a headache



Page 9

INVESTIGATIVE AWARDS

Entries Open for the MakanDay Investigative Reporting Award

Deadline: 15TH November 2026

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Forest Homes For The Wealthy, Sewage Water For The Rest

Page 11

EDITORIAL

Zambia needs agricultural growth, not another Ilomba

Page 6

Civil society groups raise concern over K15 Billion funding Shortfall across ministries

By Gibson Zulu

From page 1

Billions of kwacha allocated to key government ministries went unfunded in 2025, while critical projects in healthcare, education, agriculture and water supply missed their targets, raising fresh concerns about the delivery of essential public services.

An analysis of the Auditor General's Report for the financial year ended December 31, 2025, by the Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) and ActionAid Zambia revealed that five ministries recorded combined funding shortfalls of nearly K15 billion, with agriculture and health accounting for the largest share.

The findings reveal that none of the 40 planned early childhood education centres were constructed, only 15 of 100 targeted piped water schemes were completed, and billions of kwacha in agricultural loans remained outstanding.

In a joint statement issued on November 10, 2026, CSPR and ActionAid Zambia warned that the funding gaps, coupled with recurring financial irregularities and weak accountability systems, risk undermining essential services.

The organisations called for stronger parliamentary oversight, improved financial controls and greater transparency to ensure that public spending delivers measurable benefits to citizens.

The organisations argued that accountability should go beyond announcing budget allocations and releasing funds to demonstrating measurable results from public expenditure.

They warned that recurring audit findings pointed to unresolved weaknesses in financial controls that could undermine public confidence and affect access to essential services.

Health sector records K4.553 billion funding shortfall

According to the Auditor General's Report, the Ministry of Health received K16.945 billion against an authorised budget provision of K21.498 billion, leaving a funding shortfall of K4.553 billion.

Under the Primary Health Services Programme, K1.429 billion remained unfunded, including K1.350 billion allocated to primary healthcare grants. Other affected budget lines included antiretroviral drugs, vaccines, medical supplies and clinical equipment.

Of the 17 targeted outputs under the programme, 10 were fully achieved, three were partially achieved and four were not achieved.

The audit also identified 6,720 units of renal fluids valued at US$11,500, equivalent to K222,640, which had expired at two health facilities and had not been disposed of 12 months later.

At Mbala General Hospital, the absence of an oxygen plant resulted in K853,291 being spent on procuring and transporting oxygen from Kitwe and Kasama.

The ministry also had outstanding obligations amounting to K3.564 billion, with some invoices dating back to 2014.
CSPR and ActionAid Zambia said the findings highlighted weaknesses in planning, procurement and financial management that could affect patient care and increase the cost of delivering healthcare services.

They called for predictable domestic financing for primary healthcare to reduce disruptions in essential services, particularly for vulnerable households unable to afford private healthcare.

Education funding gap raises concerns over service delivery

The Ministry of Education received K29.148 billion against an authorised provision of K30.410 billion, resulting in a funding shortfall of K1.262 billion.

The audit revealed that none of the 40 targeted early childhood education hubs and satellite centres had been constructed during the period under review.

It further showed that only 36 percent of Grade One entrants had prior early childhood education experience, against a target of 60 percent.

The printing of syllabi and sample teaching and learning materials for Form One was also still in progress a year after the introduction of the new curriculum.

In addition, the audit identified 125 officers at 24 stations who received salaries totalling K1.229 million despite not appearing on staff returns or being known to management at the respective stations.

CSPR and ActionAid Zambia said education financing should be assessed against improvements in learning conditions, including completed classrooms, availability of teaching materials and adequate support for teachers and learners.

They called for stronger payroll controls and closer monitoring of education programmes to ensure that public expenditure delivers the intended benefits.

Water and sanitation projects fall short of targets

The Ministry of Water Development and Sanitation recorded a funding shortfall of K705.1 million.

Despite receiving 80 percent of the budget allocated to the Water Supply and Sanitation Programme, the ministry implemented only 67% of its planned activities.

The audit showed that only 15 of the targeted 100 piped water schemes were constructed, while 103 of the planned 500 boreholes were rehabilitated.

It further revealed that 374 boreholes were constructed against a target of 947, while only 19 of the targeted 100 piped water schemes were rehabilitated.

CSPR and ActionAid Zambia expressed concern that delays in water infrastructure development could prolong difficulties faced by communities without reliable access to safe water and sanitation.

They warned that inadequate water infrastructure could increase exposure to waterborne diseases and affect children's education and women's livelihoods, particularly in communities where households spend considerable time searching for water.

The organisations called for government payments to contractors to be linked to independently verified physical progress and for project information to be made accessible to beneficiary communities.

Audit identifies K41.974 million in unpaid customs duties

On revenue mobilisation, the Auditor General's Report showed that the Zambia Revenue Authority collected K160.654 billion against a budget provision of K158.995 billion.

However, the audit identified K41.974 million in customs duties and taxes that remained unpaid as of August 31, 2026, despite the assessments having been registered between 105 and 467 days earlier.
The report also identified 13 temporary import permits covering goods valued at K9.033 million for duty purposes, for which there was no supporting evidence of extensions or payment of applicable duties.

Other findings included unremitted immigration fees amounting to US$39,940 for 2024 and US$393,880 for 2025.

The audit further recorded K3.501 million in unpaid seed royalties, K30.479 million in outstanding mining area charges and K626.640 million in uncollected penalty fees.

CSPR and ActionAid Zambia said the revenue collection performance should not overshadow weaknesses in the enforcement and recovery of outstanding public

Civil society groups raise concern over K15 Billion funding Shortfall across ministries cont...

revenue.

They called on the Government to distinguish between assessed, disputed, recovered and lawfully written-off amounts, while publishing clear timelines for recovering outstanding payments.

The organisations warned that failure to collect revenue lawfully owed to the Government could reduce resources available for essential public services and national development programmes.

Agriculture records K7.710 billion funding shortfall
The Ministry of Agriculture received K11.808 billion against an authorised budget provision of K19.518 billion, leaving a funding shortfall of K7.710 billion. The audit revealed that nine key output targets under the Agriculture Development and Productivity Programme were not achieved.

Projects involving roads, power lines, agricultural extension tablets, farmer training centres, nutrition centres and screen houses recorded no achievement against their respective 2025 targets.

The report also identified weaknesses in the administration of the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP).

According to the audit, 62,052 farmers in 21 districts had remained on the programme for eight years, despite a graduation plan providing for a maximum participation period of five years.

The farmers redeemed agricultural inputs valued at K520.988 million.

The report further showed that 466,400 farmers who had not fulfilled their Food Reserve Agency marketing bond obligations accessed inputs costing K186.560 million in the following farming season.

Separately, 345 households received FISP inputs valued at K3.054 million after benefiting from K1.590 million under the Food Security Pack.

Under the Sustainable Agriculture Financing Facility, K793.460 million was disbursed to 8,886 beneficiaries, but only 363 had fully repaid their loans. The audit recorded K725.123 million in outstanding loans, representing a reported recovery rate of nine percent. The figures require consideration of the repayment schedules to establish how much was overdue.

The report also found that 960 individuals who had not applied for loans were allocated loans amounting to K83.194 million.

Of these, seven redeemed K559,940, which had not been recovered as of August 31, 2026.

CSPR and ActionAid Zambia said the findings raised concerns over beneficiary verification, coordination of agricultural support programmes and the management of public funds.

They called for transparent beneficiary selection and graduation procedures, stronger verification systems and improved loan recovery arrangements.

The organisations also cautioned against measures that could unfairly exclude vulnerable farmers from government support programmes.

Social protection payments flagged over missing disability records

The Ministry of Community Development and Social Services recorded a funding shortfall of K756.754 million.

The Auditor General's Report identified K1.166 million paid to 162 beneficiaries under the disability component without supporting disability cards or medical certificates.

The finding raised questions about documentation and verification controls but did not, on its own, establish that the beneficiaries were ineligible for assistance. The audit also highlighted overlaps between beneficiaries of the Food Security Pack and the Farmer Input Support Programme.

CSPR and ActionAid Zambia called for stronger verification procedures to safeguard public resources while ensuring that eligible beneficiaries are not unfairly excluded from social assistance.

They urged the Government to publish information on programme coverage, payment timelines, eligibility requirements and grievance procedures to improve transparency and accountability.

CSPR, ActionAid demand action on recurring audit findings

Following the audit findings, CSPR and ActionAid Zambia called on the Government, Parliament, the Public Accounts Committee, controlling officers, internal auditors and law-enforcement agencies to take measurable steps to address weaknesses in public financial management.

The organisations recommended the publication of an audit action matrix identifying unresolved findings, responsible institutions and officers, corrective measures, recovery targets and implementation deadlines.

They also called for predictable financing of essential services, particularly healthcare, education, water and sanitation, agriculture and social protection.



Zambia's agricultural expansion plans: Will new plans avoid past mistakes?

By Charles Mafa

Zambia is preparing another major expansion of commercial agriculture, promising higher production, increased exports and greater private investment. But previous projects have faced allegations of land displacement, failed employment promises and limited benefits for rural communities.

The government now wants to increase maize production to 10 million tonnes, soya beans to three million tonnes, and wheat and sugar to one million tonnes each under its proposed 2027 agricultural reforms. It also aims to generate US$1 billion annually from beef exports.

Five of the eight targets under the Grow Zambia Agenda focus on agriculture and livestock, reflecting the government's ambition to make the sector a major driver of economic growth.

Its plans include establishing a farm block development agency, attracting commercial investors, expanding mechanisation and bringing at least 500,000 hectares under irrigation by 2031.

The government argues that producing more than Zambia consumes will create export opportunities and improve farmers' incomes.

But past investments show that expanding commercial agriculture does not necessarily translate into better livelihoods for surrounding communities.

A 2013 investigation by the international human rights organisation FIAN documented concerns over displacement, land access, employment and the distribution of benefits from large-scale agricultural investments in Zambia.

Although the findings are more than a decade old, they expose weaknesses that remain relevant to the government's latest expansion plans.

Two decades of agricultural expansion

Zambia has pursued large-scale agricultural investment before. In 2002, under the late President Levy Mwanawasa, the government introduced a farm block development strategy to attract commercial investors and increase agricultural production.

The model envisaged large commercial farms operating alongside medium- and small-scale producers, including through outgrower schemes.

According to FIAN's 2013 report, the proposed farm blocks generally covered between 65,000 and 155,000 hectares. Each was designed to accommodate a major commercial farm of approximately 10,000 hectares, alongside smaller commercial and agricultural holdings.

The strategy targeted areas with productive soils, water resources and transport infrastructure.

But FIAN found that some land earmarked for investment was already being used by communities for farming, grazing and other livelihood activities. It also questioned whether customary land rights were adequately protected.

More than two decades later, the government is proposing a new agency to coordinate farm block development, infrastructure and private investment.

Yet the budget speech presented by Finance Minister Situmbeko Musokotwane on 7 November 2026 offers no assessment of the earlier programme's performance, including how much land was developed, how many jobs were created or whether smallholder farmers benefited.

That leaves a critical gap: what will the new agency do differently?

Mumbwa: Investment promises and land disputes

One case examined by FIAN involved Amatheon Agri, a German-backed agricultural company operating in Mumbwa district, Central Province.

At the time of the 2013 study, the company reportedly held approximately 30,000 hectares in the Big Concession farming area, with plans to expand.

The investment was expected to increase production, create employment and contribute to food security. However, FIAN cited reports that approximately 39 homes faced displacement linked to the development.

It also identified a gap between projected and reported employment. The project's environmental impact assessment anticipated approximately 1,000 jobs, but the company reported just over 100 permanent employees at the time of the study. Amatheon Agri's website has since reported 200 permanent employees.

The figures relate to different periods and may not be directly comparable. They do, however, demonstrate why employment promises need to be measured against independently verified outcomes.

FIAN also questioned the employment potential of increasingly mechanised commercial farms.

The historical findings do not establish Amatheon's current landholdings, employment levels or resettlement outcomes. But they illustrate the need for transparent reporting on what large agricultural investments deliver to surrounding communities.

That is particularly important as the government seeks to attract more commercial producers while accelerating mechanisation.

Choma and Kalomo: The value of communal grazing land
In Southern Province, FIAN examined agricultural investments associated with the DWS Global Agricultural Land and Opportunities Fund, then linked to Deutsche Bank's asset management business.

The report stated that the fund acquired approximately 27,000 hectares in Choma and Kalomo districts in 2008, reportedly through African Crops Limited.

The farms produced crops including tobacco, wheat, soya beans and maize.

According to FIAN, communities raised concerns that the reopening and consolidation of commercial farms could restrict access to grazing areas used by small-scale livestock farmers.

The study also recorded some benefits, including improved water access following the construction of a dam, although it questioned how secure those arrangements were.

The case highlights a problem with treating land that is not cultivated as land that is not being used.

Communal land can support grazing, firewood collection, water access and other activities essential to rural livelihoods. Allocating it to commercial investors can therefore have consequences beyond the loss of farmland.

The government's latest strategy prioritises land near water resources and transport infrastructure, but the budget speech gives little indication of how existing communal land uses will be assessed before allocation.

Mkushi: Mechanisation versus employment

FIAN also examined investments by Chobe Agrivision, a commercial agricultural business associated with Chayton Africa.

At the time of the study, Chayton had acquired seven farms covering approximately 16,916 hectares in Zambia, including operations in Mkushi.

The report cited a projected 1,639 jobs, compared with approximately 390 workers reportedly employed during the investment period. More than half were casual workers.

FIAN also referred to research suggesting that farm takeovers and mechanisation had contributed to job losses.

These figures reflect a particular period and cannot establish the investment's eventual employment performance. Nevertheless, they point to a tension in the government's latest strategy.

Zambia wants to expand mechanisation while improving rural incomes.

The proposed reforms include establishing six agricultural mechanisation centres in each district by 2031, building on 125 existing centres.

Zambia's agricultural expansion plans: Will new plans avoid past mistakes? cont....

Mechanisation can improve productivity, reduce physically demanding work and help farmers cultivate more land. But its economic benefits depend on affordability, access and the effect on employment.

The budget speech provides no estimates of jobs likely to be created or displaced by the programme, or details of how smallholder farmers will access the proposed services.

Mpika: When promised investment fails

A proposed biofuel project involving German company Ferrostaal in Mpika district provides another warning.

According to FIAN, the land proposed for jatropha production ranged from approximately 150,000 to 191,103 hectares, depending on the account.

Ferrostaal reportedly withdrew from the project in 2010 following a change in corporate strategy.

Although only about 7.5 hectares had initially been planted, researchers reported displacement and other negative effects on local communities.

FIAN also raised concerns about the conversion of customary land into state land for investments that failed to materialise.

The case illustrates how communities can face consequences from proposed developments even when the anticipated investment never takes place.

The government now says it will prioritise credible investors with demonstrated financial capacity and export potential.

Who benefits from agricultural expansion?

Large-scale farming can attract capital, introduce technology, increase production and improve infrastructure. It can also create markets for surrounding farmers. But these benefits are not guaranteed.

FIAN's 2013 study questioned whether some commercial agricultural investments generated sufficient employment or improved food access for poorer rural households.

It argued that investments should be assessed not only by the capital committed, but also by their contribution to employment, food security and the protection of land rights.

That distinction matters as Zambia prepares to establish an agency responsible for coordinating farm block development and engaging private investors.

Its effectiveness will depend partly on whether investment agreements contain measurable commitments on employment, community participation, environmental protection and productive land use.

Agricultural expansion and the environmental cost Zambia's agricultural ambitions come amid growing pressure on its forests and tree cover.

An analysis of data from Global Nature Watch, an online platform operated by the World Resources Institute, identifies agriculture as the leading recorded driver of tree-cover loss in Zambia between 2001 and 2025.

In 2025, Zambia recorded approximately 276,687 hectares of tree-cover loss. Permanent agriculture accounted for 188,827 hectares, or 68.2%, while shifting cultivation accounted for a further 82,010 hectares, or about 29.6%.

Together, the two categories represented nearly 98% of recorded tree-cover loss that year.

The longer-term trend is striking.

Annual tree-cover loss attributed to permanent agriculture rose from 22,613 hectares in 2001 to 188,827 hectares in 2025. Loss associated with shifting cultivation increased from 5,739 to 82,010 hectares over the same period.

These figures do not mean that all tree-cover loss amounts to permanent deforestation. Nor do they establish that large-scale commercial farming alone is responsible.

They do, however, demonstrate the scale of pressure associated with agricultural land use.

The government's plans include expanding irrigation to at least 500,000 hectares by 2031, using existing reservoirs, rivers, lakes and dams, including Mwomboshi and Kafulafuta.

It also intends to promote high-yielding, climate-resilient seed varieties.

What remains unclear is how much additional production will come from higher yields on existing farmland and how much will require bringing new land under cultivation.

That distinction has significant environmental implications.

Improving productivity on existing farmland could reduce pressure to clear additional land. Expanding cultivation into new areas could increase competition for land and water while accelerating tree-cover loss.

Export ambitions versus domestic food security
Exports are central to the government's agricultural strategy.

It plans to promote large-scale crop production along the TAZARA and Lobito railway corridors, while allowing investors to consider other transport routes, including Nacala.

The government also wants to simplify export procedures and introduce bulk export permits for large-volume traders.

These measures could reduce administrative costs and improve access to international markets.

But increased exports do not necessarily mean improved food security for Zambian households.

FIAN's 2013 study emphasised the distinction between producing more food nationally and ensuring that poorer households can afford and access sufficient, nutritious food.

For rural communities, access to productive land and reliable incomes can be as important as overall agricultural output.

The government's export targets must therefore be considered alongside domestic food prices, household incomes and access to food among vulnerable populations.

Beyond crop production, the government aims to generate US$1 billion annually from beef exports and increase fish production from a projected 270,000 metric tonnes in 2026 to 300,000 metric tonnes in 2027.

The test for Zambia's new agricultural strategy Zambia's agricultural expansion could increase production, attract investment and generate export earnings. But past projects show why those outcomes alone are insufficient measures of success.

The historical cases documented by FIAN reveal concerns over land rights, employment promises, communal resources and the distribution of economic benefits.

The government's latest proposals set ambitious production targets but provide less clarity on safeguards, accountability and how rural communities will benefit.

The central test is whether the new strategy can deliver more than increased output: secure land rights, meaningful opportunities for smallholder farmers, measurable employment benefits and agricultural growth that does not come at the expense of the environment.

Without clear commitments and independent monitoring, Zambia risks repeating the weaknesses of earlier expansion programmes.



FRA Depot Kasama Photo Credit: Victor Musonda

EDITORIAL

Zambia needs agricultural growth, not another Ilomba

As Zambia prepares to establish a new agency to drive agricultural expansion, former Vice-President Dr Guy Scott's warning about resource-hungry statutory institutions raises an important question: Will the agency improve the lives of farmers or become another burden on public resources?

In his book Adventures in Zambian Politics: A Story in Black and White, former Vice-President Scott draws on the legend of the Ilomba, a mythical bloodsucking creature, to describe statutory institutions that develop an appetite for resources while delivering little in return.

It is an analogy worth revisiting as Zambia prepares to establish another government agency, this time to drive agricultural expansion.

In the 2027 national budget, the government has outlined plans to increase maize production to 10 million tonnes, soya beans to three million tonnes and expand irrigation to at least 500,000 hectares by 2031. The intention is to attract investment, increase exports and make agriculture a stronger driver of economic growth.

These are worthwhile ambitions. Zambia has enormous agricultural potential, much of which has yet to be fully realised. The country needs greater production, modern farming methods, reliable markets and more employment opportunities.

But Zambia has travelled this road before, often with similar promises of investment, employment and improved agricultural production.

As our analysis published earlier this week shows, more than two decades ago, the government introduced the farm block development programme with much the same ambitions.

Yet research into some of those investments documented concerns about displaced communities, restricted access to grazing land and employment opportunities that fell short of expectations.

In Mumbwa, Mkushi, Choma and Kalomo, large-scale agricultural investments raised questions about whether surrounding communities were receiving a fair share of the benefits.

These experiences should not be ignored simply because the government has announced new targets and proposed another institution to coordinate agricultural development.

We are not opposed to commercial farming. On the contrary, Zambia needs serious investment in agriculture. But investment should improve people's lives rather than leave them poorer or more vulnerable.

For a small-scale farmer struggling to access land, affordable inputs or reliable markets, another government agency means little unless it brings real improvements. And for rural communities that have lost land to commercial farming investments, the promise of agricultural growth can ring hollow.

A farming project that produces thousands of tonnes of crops while neighbouring communities struggle to access land, employment or affordable food cannot automatically be described as a success.

There is also an environmental cost that deserves attention.

Our analysis of forest-monitoring data shows that agriculture remains a major driver of tree-cover loss in Zambia. Expanding production by clearing more land, without adequate safeguards, risks damaging the very natural resources on which agriculture depends.

The government must therefore explain how much of its planned production increase will come from improving yields on existing farmland and how much will require opening new areas.

But perhaps the most troubling issue is the protection of customary land.
In an interview with MakanDay, Zambia Land Alliance Executive Director Patrick Musole raised concerns about weaknesses in the country's land laws, particularly the conversion of customary land into state land.

He explained that once customary land is converted, there is no straightforward legal pathway for returning it to its original status, even where an investor abandons the intended project.

What happens then to communities whose ancestral land has been converted for investments that never materialise?

Mr Musole also challenged the assumption that land without buildings or cultivated fields is unused. He said rural communities depend on such land for grazing, collecting firewood, harvesting mushrooms and accessing other natural resources.

Land that appears vacant to an investor may already be serving important community needs.

He called for stronger legal protection of customary land and legislation to regulate compensation for displaced communities.

These concerns deserve serious attention as the government prepares to expand commercial agriculture.

Before allocating land to investors, authorities must ensure that affected communities are genuinely consulted, their rights protected and any resettlement commitments honoured.

The proposed farm block development agency must not become another Ilomba, consuming public resources while delivering little in return. Its success should not be measured merely by hectares allocated, investment pledges announced or the size of its administrative structures.

Instead, the government should demonstrate how the agency will improve access to land, support small-scale farmers, create decent jobs and ensure that surrounding communities share in the benefits of agricultural investment.

Agricultural growth should mean more than bigger harvests and higher export earnings. It should mean secure livelihoods, affordable food, decent jobs and opportunities for rural families.

Zambia has an opportunity to learn from the mistakes of earlier agricultural investments.

The real achievement will not be how much land is brought under commercial production, but how many Zambians are better off because of it.



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.





Who Protects Zambian Workers When Labour Inspectors Are Too Few?

With only 179 labour inspectors nationwide, MPs have questioned whether the government has enough personnel and resources to protect workers from exploitation and enforce employment laws.

By Gibson Zulu

Imagine working for months without an employment contract, earning barely enough to support your family and fearing dismissal if you complain about your working conditions.

For some Zambian workers, these are everyday concerns. But who ensures that employers respect their rights?

This question dominated proceedings in the national assembly this week when Labour and Social Security Minister Misheck Nyambose delivered a ministerial statement on the status of the labour inspections and compliance with the laws in Zambia.

The minister revealed that Zambia has just 179 labour inspectors, acknowledging that the number is insufficient to effectively cover the country's districts.

Labour inspectors are responsible for checking whether employers comply with employment laws, including requirements relating to contracts, wages and working conditions.

However, without enough inspectors or money to conduct inspections, workers may struggle to obtain protection when their rights are violated.

Chama Central MP Yotam Mtayachalo questioned why some employers continued operating without providing employment contracts, particularly in workplaces where employees had no trade unions to represent them.

Mr Nyambose assured parliament that the ministry would continue engaging employers to ensure workers received contracts.

Another MP questioned how the 179 inspectors were distributed across the country, given that some districts had no dedicated labour officers.

The minister acknowledged the shortage and explained that the government's preferred arrangement was to have at least two labour inspection personnel in every district.

One would conduct workplace inspections while the other handled administrative responsibilities.

However, he said achieving this would depend on funding. In the meantime, the Ministry would consider redistributing existing inspectors.
But MPs were concerned about more than staffing.

Shiwang'andu MP Stephen Kampyongo questioned whether minimum wage remained adequate in the face of rising living costs, noting that some workers were forced to borrow money to meet basic needs.

Mr Nyambose said consultations on reviewing minimum wages were ongoing, although the process could take years.

Kankoyo MP Bishop Chomba also raised concerns about workers being denied employment benefits, particularly where trade unions were absent.

Another troubling issue was the fear of victimisation among employees who report labour violations.

The minister encouraged workers to report suspected abuses anonymously through the Ministry's toll-free number, 7010, promising that complaints would be followed up.

However, he also emphasised the importance of maintaining good relations with investors.

"At the end of it all, government needs to strike a win-win situation with investors," he told Parliament.

Holding ministers accountable for implementing government policies is one of Parliament's key responsibilities.

A ministerial statement allows MPs to seek explanations, challenge government performance and raise concerns affecting their constituents.

But parliamentary questions alone cannot guarantee better working conditions.

For workers without contracts, adequate wages or protection against dismissal, the real test is whether the ministry can investigate complaints and enforce the law.



From the Bulletin & Record Archives

Time is perhaps the greatest teacher in politics. It reminds those who wield power that no position is permanent, no matter how influential or untouchable they may appear.

When the Bulletin & Record published this investigation in 2014, Chishimba Kambwili was a powerful minister in late Michael Sata's Patriotic Front government, known for his outspoken personality and controversial business dealings.

Twelve years later, the tables have turned. The PF is out of power, Kambwili is no longer a minister, and the political influence he once enjoyed has faded.

In this week's MakanDay Weekly, we revisit the story of the man once dubbed the "boastful billionaire" of Luanshya — a reminder that power comes and goes, but the questions surrounding its use can endure.

The saga of the "boastful billionaire"

Kambwili takeover of golf club land gives members a handicap - and a headache

By Charles Mafa

MPs often face grizzles and complaints from their constituents but in the case of Chishimba Kambwili, MP for Roan constituency and also Minister of Sport, that discontent seems to be bordering on resentment, even hostility.

The Kambwili of today is almost unrecognisable from the rookie who Michael Sata took under his wing and gave him the sports portfolio, after a brief stint as foreign affairs minister, where he was replaced by Given Lubinda. Today he is described in his constituency as the "boastful billionaire" of Luanshya. Some say he may well be one of Zambia's 10 richest men.

What is it that makes people rate him that way? Well, he is a big man and he talks big, and loud. If you were to meet him travelling along the road you couldn't miss him, the cars in his convoy have personalised number plates all bearing his initials – CK. Is it true that personalised number plates reflect a boastful ego? Maybe.

Do the people of Roan in Luanshya have a genuine grievance against their MP, or are they merely jealous of him, his wealth and his success? The B&R wanted to find out from the man himself and so calls were made to his office and a letter was submitted asking Mr Kambwili how he had amassed his wealth. But he has avoided all approaches, which might be considered unusual for a man who normally likes to express himself forcefully.

A follow-up to his office resulted in the secretary tersely sending this writer away. She would say only, "The letter is on his table. We received it on the 16th of September, 2014."

Part of the content of the letter asked the minister to respond to Luanshya people's concerns over his business dealings and leadership style.

It seems that the position of government minister has brought fame and, possibly, fortune to Mr Kambwili. Luanhsya people describe him as a big shot who does not like to fly into Ndola airport without being greeted by a delegation of followers, along with a little girl holding out a bouquet of flowers for him. A kind of mini-presidential arrival, perhaps? Could it be this flamboyance that led President Sata to recently sound a warning to his followers to "stop campaigning for him" after the ever-loquacious sports minister announced that Mr Sata had selected him as his successor?

Mr Kambwili seems to have quickly acquired a chain of luxurious, newly-built mansions and businesses dotted around Luanshya – a feat that has amazed some of the townsfolk, many of whom are barely surviving the plunge in fortunes of this town, once called The Garden City of the Copperbelt.

Mr Kambwili has a company called Mwamona Engineering and Technical Services operating in Luanshya. Mwamona was registered as a company in 2001. Its directors are Carol Chansa Kambwili and Chishimba Mwamba and its business address is plot 458, 5th street, Nchanga South in Chingola. It is believed this company is used to acquire road contracts in Luanshya.



The Minister is owner of a spacious new garage in Luanshya's rundown industrial area where he parks a fleet of large goods vehicles. The lorries carry names of his children and family members inscribed on them; among them are Mwamba Nsala and James Chewe Chansa. Within the same vicinity is an almost identical garage and office said to belong to former Luanshya mayor, Mr Nathan Chanda, who is seen to be an ally of Mr Kambwili.

Mr Kambwili also owns an assortment of luxurious houses tucked away behind a smart wall fence. These have been built on land said to belong traditionally to the Luanshya Golf Club, although there is some doubt now about who actually owns the land. It was once mine land but when the mine was sold, ZCCM retained control of the land, including the golf course. The Luanshya city council then became involved in selling plots of the land, though their right to do so is questioned by many. The residential address of Mr Kambwili's buildings is 1 Westeria, and they are on the controversial golf course land.

Thus, the "Kambwili Estate"controversy reached boiling point when the minister decided to build on land that had traditionally been part of the golf course. The issue was further inflamed when Mr Kambwili allowed his domestic animals to graze on the golf course. This appeared to enable him to build an access road across the golf course to his new estate.

When members of the club decided to question the minister's authority to do this, he emerged in the night banging his fists on the tables and threatening to close the place down. In his company were former mayor, Mr Chanda, and Mr Alex Mwansa, former Luanshya Town Clerk who was later transferred to Lusaka.

Even if the minister's threats might have been just bluff, they were quite effective. The golf club was closed for three weeks. Police were stationed there to ensure that no one disobeyed orders relating to the takeover of club land.

In addition to the mansions by the golf club, other of the minister's buildings are under construction along the Luanshya-Ndola Road. On one plot, there are several dwellings. Those familiar with the area say they are residential houses

From the Bulletin & Record Archives

The saga of the "boastful billionaire" cont...

earmarked for rent. In the Luanshya city centre, another structure set aside for a shopping centre is under construction behind the National Pensions Fund building.

The minister has also opened a nightclub in former sports buildings at the Luanshya Sports Complex. Called Belle Isle, the nightclub doubles as a restaurant and beer garden during the day. Once upon a time the sports complex housed a number of recreation and indoor sports such as badminton, tennis and gymnastics.

People in Luanshya accuse Mr Kambwili of "bullying", saying he uses his influence to amass wealth for himself. They also accuse him of conducting government business in a manner that benefits himself, his close family members and friends. They say he is ruthless and no one dares oppose him openly.

Most information available about Mr Kambwili is scanty and unrevealing. According to the National Assembly website, he was born on 3rd June 1969, married, and his education qualifications include a diploma in business management, a certificate in industrial relations, an MA in legislative studies and a recently acquired degree in public administration from Copperstone University on the Copperbelt. He has on two occasions from 2006 to date, been elected MP for Roan Constituency, which adjourns Luanshya Central.

He has many critics in Luanshya, no doubt about that, but whether they are correct in saying that his background is "dodgy" is anybody's guess. The fact, as relayed by locals, is that prior to being an MP he was supported by his wife, a nurse working in the UK. Nothing wrong with that. He later started dealing in scrap metals said to have come from the mine during the time it was closed. Again, who knows? He is not saying anything.

Earlier this year the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) opened an inquiry into Mr Kambwili's alleged use of public funds to run adverts congratulating himself for obtaining a degree.

The minister was alleged to have directed his ministry to advertise congratulatory messages in the Times of Zambia and the Zambia Daily Mail for the recent degree he obtained from Copperstone University.

This case was later dropped by the state's corruption watchdog for what it termed a lack of proof. The ACC however, advised that administrative action be taken against some officers at the sports ministry. The Commission did not say why this action should be taken, or for what.

With his bulk and grumpy demeanour, Mr Kambwili looks ready to pounce on whoever comes his way. He has on several occasions threatened violence and in the process has angered people. During a Confederation Cup match involving Nkana Football Club and Etoile du Sahel of Tunisia, Mr Kambwili confronted Ethiopian referee, Tessema Weyesa, accusing him of biased officiating. Only a quick intervention by police saved the referee from the minister's ire at the end of the match. Nkana was later fined US$ 10,000, equivalent to K60,000 for pitch invasion.

His latest brawling has been within the ruling party, where some of his colleagues demanded an investigation into his business contracts. This came, according to The Post, after President Sata told Copperbelt youth chairperson Nathan Chanda to stop campaigning for Mr Kambwili. What followed were several PF members having it out in public, with several spats directed towards Mr Kambwili, who surprisingly has chosen to lie low.

Observers say, Mr Kambwili might be enjoying the version of fame that comes with being a minister, but this might cost him a severe dressing-down eventually from the people he is meant to be serving. They say in order to survive the 2016 contest, he will surely have to mentally assemble everything he has learnt about politics, much as a commander assembles his decimated regiment, for a final assault.

Refuge at the Golf Club threatened by loss of land

By Charles Mafa

The older generation in Luanshya, home to one of Zambia's original copper mines, experienced the rugged ups-and-downs caused by closure, botched takeover and subsequent privatisation of the mine. Almost every pocket relied heavily on the mine, miners and townsfolk alike. All felt misery and hopelessness when the mine began to lay off workers.

A place of refuge for many townsfolk was the Roan Antelope Golf club, once one of Zambia's premier golfing locations, built in 1931 by RST, the mining company at the time. Two South African professionals, the famous Gary Player and Herold Henning, designed the course. It has attracted many distinguished golfers, including Bobby Lock. In 1968 President Kaunda invited the Roan Antelope team to play at State House.

But years later the privatisation shambles meant a loss of sponsorship from the mine and little or no spending from its members. For years the club was closed. It is only now that a few residents are struggling to bring it back to life. They say the 18-hole golf course is an important piece of history that should not be allowed to die.

Members who came together to ensure its revival currently own the golf club. They work hard to make it self-reliant by providing as much of their time and resources as they can to help sustain it. They have had to give up part of their incomes and make donations of whatever they could bring to the table. Now, the bar and restaurant is up and running, and the members have banded together almost as a family to restore the club.

Their task is not easy, says chairman and local businessman Mr Dilip Bodalia, who heads a committee of six. He appeals to corporates and local investors to support their efforts. Members have managed to raise K75,000 for a tractor to work on the fairways and greens – an effort that someone described as an example of the power of vision in the face of adversity. Membership is reported to be growing by the day.

Mr Bodalia would not answer questions about the row that ensued with the Minister of Sport over his alleged encroachment on to golf club land, insisting that that was water under the bridge. (See main story) Other members who spoke on condition of anonymity said they are deeply disappointed with the minister's decision to claim part of the golf course's land.



From the Bulletin & Record Archives

Seven years ago, MakanDay investigated how land in Lusaka's Forest Reserve No. 27 was being cleared for an exclusive housing development, raising questions about political influence, environmental destruction and threats to the city's water supply.

First published on 2 July 2019, the investigation documented the allocation of forest land to prominent public figures and concerns about sewage contamination and the destruction of an important water recharge area.

As we revisit this story, we remember environmental activist Robert Chimambo, who was at the forefront of efforts to protect Forest Reserve No. 27 and whose voice featured prominently in our investigation. We also acknowledge the passing of former Chief Justice Irene Mambilima, who died in June 2021.

Although some of the people featured in the original investigation are no longer with us, the questions it raised about environmental protection, land allocation and public accountability remain relevant today.

Forest Homes For The Wealthy, Sewage Water For The Rest

By Charles Mafa and John Mukela

"Your dream home coming soon," say big bill boards and newspaper adverts in Lusaka. Pictures of brilliantly white large mansions surrounded by majestic trees illustrate how the happy few will enjoy residing in the new suburb-under-construction, Kingsland City, in beautiful Lusaka forest.

The housing estate, in the middle of what was once a nature reserve called Forest No. 27, will be equipped with every hearts' desire, from a shopping mall to a sports complex, a "world class" university, a golf course, even an amusement park. "For your noble life," the developers' website, Sunshare estates, says. Sunshare is a partnership of Chinese construction companies and the Zambian Air Force, that somehow obtained control over what is supposed to be protected state land.

Life may indeed be noble for those – among whom two ministers – who have bought into the project; as long as they can afford bottled water, that is. Many others fear that the bulldozing of Forest No. 27 to make place for Kingsland City will dry up Lusaka's water resources, forcing extra pressure on underground water reserves and porous sewage systems.

In short, Lusaka will be relying on sewage water, is what environmental activist Robert Chimambo tells us when we meet under a tree outside his house in a city suburb close to the forest. Documents and maps of the forest reserve are splattered all over the ground. "The bulldozers have already destroyed much," he says. "This is all that remains." He points at a map that shows how the forest has grown smaller, and how construction and sewage drains are enclosing on the Chalimbana river in the reserve.

We will be drinking poo

"We need that river," Chimambo continues. "For the rest Lusaka depends on ground water, but that aquifer is under threat of contamination by human waste from our sewers. Lusaka's soil is porous dolomite. Without the protection and preservation of water recharge areas such as in this forest we are sitting on a time bomb." Lusaka's sewage systems and water supply have long been at risk of colliding, given that most inhabitants use pit latrines. From what Chimambo tells us, this nightmare may become a reality if that river goes. We will be drinking poo.

A glass bridge for newly weds

The bulldozers in the forest have been let loose by the individuals in charge of the US$ 1,4 million Kingsland City project. With its hotels, residential housing, university, sports and amusement facilities and car service stations, plus -as stated by Sunshare sales manager Echo Chen in a press conference when the plan was first announced in 2017- a police station, hospital, children's play-ground, and a glass bridge called 'Rose Street' where newly-weds can pose for photos, it will be enormous. Some 1100 houses, Chimambo says, have already been built by the Zambia Air Force, the state's partner in the project with the Chinese developers.

It was said that some people get sick of diarrhoea

On the precise spot where the building has started, human waste is already seeping into the river, says a report from Government's own Water Resources Management Authority (WARMA) dated January 2018. "Raw sewerage is being released into the Chalimbana river, from the ZAF (Zambia Air Force) Twin Palm Housing Complex sewer ponds and via the Sikasokwe Stream." The report continues to say that the existing old sewer ponds will not be able to cope with more residents. "These were built for a limited number of houses. Now the ponds cannot cope with the volume of sewer from these units. Just downstream of the discharge point are households living who drink water from a nearby well. People who had little knowledge about the source of the water drunk the sewer water at the crossing point. It was further said that some people get sick of diarrhoea."

Apamwamba, is what the activists in Chimambo's group – the Chalimbana River Headwater Conservation Trust, CRHCT – call the Kingsland City project: the place for the rich. One of the activists' immediate concerns now is to find out who these 'rich,' exactly, are. Because there is a mystery surrounding those that are selling and buying houses and land in the forest.

For example, even though the development is widely advertised, interested buyers from the general public are told, upon inquiring, that they will be "phoned back," without having been connected to the individual who is the owner and seller of the land, or its contracted estate agent. The same response is given to us when we phone to ask about buying a house in the area: "I can see your number. You will be phoned back," a male voice says when we try. But the phone call doesn't come.

Robert Chimambo has seen people he re-cognises as high-level ruling Patriotic Front party members around in the area. It is further known that the developing companies, called Datong Construction, Drimtown Investments and Shangrila Investments, whose parent company is Chinese Fujian Kaiyuan, or Sunshare, are carrying out the Kingsland City project in a public-private partnership with the Zambia Air Force (ZAF).

But that military partnership is a mystery, too. The Zambia Air Force is formally only involved because, it says, it wants to construct an air force training academy and a number of mess halls in the area: the aforementioned ZAF Twin Palm Housing Complex. This is the area where thousands of people already live and where sewage is already entering the river. But the public private partnership that the ZAF is part of is, as is apparent from the adverts, billboards and bulldozers, doing a whole lot more than that. The activists suspect that a number of individuals in the ZAF are using the army for their private interests with regard to the non-military parts of Kingsland City.

The former air force commander was charged with money laundering

What has further fueled that suspicion is that one of the ZAF individuals involved in Kingsland City, former air force Commander Eric Chimese, was charged on several counts of abuse of office and money laundering last February. The police says his current properties – nine fully-furnished apartments and a building with a guest wing and a semi-detached cottage on a farm, which he tried to conceal through front companies – are 'proceeds of crime.' The trial is currently ongoing.

From the Bulletin & Record Archives

Forest Homes For The Wealthy, Sewage Water For The Rest cont...

And then, there is the fact that one of the directors in the Kingsland City companies is one Edgar Lungu, which happens to be the name of Zambia's president.

Lifting the protection

The Edgar Lungu in Kingsland is not President Edgar Lungu. "But these people used his name in order to make it look like the President was involved in this Kingsland development, in the hope that that nobody would dare question its illegality, since the President was involved," says a source close to the developing companies.

The name of Lungu, and his seeming protection, may also have emboldened the initiators to ignore a Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA) directive from September 2017, that ordered the developers to stop construction works at Kingsland City and to restore the area to its previous state. What also may have emboldened them is the act by which Edgar Lungu – the real actual President Edgar Lungu – degazetted Forest No. 27 as an environmentally protected area already one month before that, in August 2017.

The lifting of the environmental protection of the area by the President is puzzling, since it has long been known that the area is an indispensable water and nature resource for Lusaka. It was originally gazetted in 1957 as a nature reserve for this very reason and furthermore, re-gazetted again in 1996 by then President Chiluba. No plausible reason has been given for the degazetting by Lungu.

As we visit one of Chimambo's neighbours (who wants to remain anonymous) at his farm on raised ground overlooking the Chalimbana river, he points at the damage already done. "The river always flowed amazingly strongly all year round," he says.

The river actually dries up

"But for the last six to seven years or so" – ever since the Air Force started building houses, CM/JM – "it actually dries up." Indeed, the rocky valley along which the Chalimbana River had once flowed freely is now almost completely dry. With regard to the forest, Chimambo's neighbour says that in the space of the past eighteen months alone, a nearby section of what was pristine woodland, there is not a tree left.
Looking for the new owners of the forest land we visit the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources next to the cabinet office on Independence Avenue, the road to State House where President Lungu lives. The sprawling gloomy grey-brick multi-storey building does not welcome anyone seeking information and the ministry's land title deeds record is not easily publicly accessible. Luckily, after some effort, we manage to obtain some names and some papers.

The ministers' land contracts

And there it is. It turns out that among those who have recently obtained land in the forest reserve are Vice President Inonge Wina, Lands Minister Jean Kapata, Mines Minister Richard Musukwa, Chief Justice Irene Mambilima and a businessman whom we know to be a close friend of the president, Edgar Lungu (the real Edgar Lungu this time). Ground rent bills from the Ministry of Lands show that Wina is beneficiary of property number LUSAK/LN-520/100. Mambilima is owner of property number LUSAK/LN-520/97 given to her for 'agriculture purposes' while Kapata has been allocated property number LUSAK/LN-52062/38 also for agriculture.

High walls and fences

Shortly after this find, Chimambo calls again. He says that his group has started legal action against the people cutting trees in the forest, but instead of an investigation by the authorities, what has happened is an escalation of the damage. Squatters, among whom he again identifies some ruling Patriotic Front party cadres, "have moved in into what remained of the protected forest. Beacons have already been erected". As we arrive, we see that the now tree-less area is indeed being developed by unknown new tenants. Plots are demarcated by beacon markers and a couple of high walls and fences have been erected. Earth-moving machinery and excavators are buzzing around and gravel streets and long wide avenues are being levelled and graded. Gigantic slabs of schist rocks lie strewn in heaps along the path of the newly excavated roads and streets.

Chimambo thinks that the legal action he and his group have started is at the root of the increased activity. "It will now be out in the open what they tried to do in secret, flouting all kinds of rules, ranging from human rights and land legislation to the principle of free, prior and informed consent. The grab of Forest Reserve 27 flouts all of these. You can see that these people are now trying to work very quickly and to move in as fast as possible. It means that when the legal writs are served to halt all activities, the matter can be presented to the plaintiffs as a fait accompli."

These people are now trying to work very quickly

This is serious. We may have to temporarily drop another story we are working on to fully focus on this one for now. The other case is important too, though. It concerns Minister of Infrastructure and Housing, Ronald Chitotela, the latest high profile official to face charges of corruption while serving in president Edgar Lungu's government. The government's Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) arrested Chitotela in February this year, accusing him of concealing property believed to be proceeds of crime: the same charge that former ZAF Commander Eric Chimese is facing.

The arrest in itself is no reason for us to leave Chitotela alone, since the charges so far only seem to skim the top of the iceberg. As minister in charge of infrastructure development, with its massive procurement contracts running into billions of US dollars, he has overseen numerous overpriced projects: among them, the US$ 1,2 billion Ndola-Lusaka dual carriage way and the Ndola-Kitwe toll plaza which cost Zambian tax payers US$ 4,3 million. Chitotela has also been linked by local media to millions of suspicious financial transactions. These were, however, left out of the charge sheet slapped on him.

Threads of a spider's web

Investigating theft from the state in Zambia tends to be like getting one end of a thread of the spider's web and then suddenly seeing another. In the end many of them are connected, which may be one reason why President Edgar Lungu has chosen to keep Chitotela in his cabinet, maintaining that he cannot dismiss him since the minister is "innocent until proven guilty by the court." This is a very different stance from the one President Lungu took when in September last year, Britain, Sweden, Finland and Ireland suspended their development assistance to Zambia after over US$ 4 million meant for an anti-poverty programme was stolen. Lungu then immediately acted by firing Community Development Minister, Emerine Kabanshi.

Lungu's political opponents have speculated that one explanation for his apparent protection of Chitotela could be that Chitotela knows about certain corrupt affairs involving the President himself. Chitotela could also be one of the unnamed Ministers in a Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC) report, dated last year June, that found some cabinet members and presidential aides had siphoned off the equivalent of close to US$ 350 million from government coffers in 'suspected tax evasion and corruption.'

Some cabinet members had siphoned off close to US$ 350 million

Big construction projects like Apamwamba are a common destination for illicitly acquired money. Whether there is a link between the project and the stolen US$ 350 million remains to be seen, but in the meantime, with the court challenge continuing, the country now prepares for a sensational legal battle that promises to highlight legislative weaknesses,

From the Bulletin & Record Archives

Forest Homes For The Wealthy, Sewage Water For The Rest

bad governance, unlawful misappropriation of land and environmental degradation.

The legal action is taken in two separate but related cases: one where the activists have issued a legal writ against Zambia's government, represented by Attorney General Likando Kalaluka, itself. The second action is against the three developing companies, together with the Zambia Air Force projects division and Kingsland City Investments.

Chimambo's group's court action is spearheaded by nine traditional leaders, with principally among these Choolwe Nkomeshya, a princess of the regional Soli people who is also a staunch civil liberties campaigner. Forest Reserve No. 27 lies within Soli traditional lands and princess Nkomeshya, a tough-talking no-nonsense leader, is its principal custodian and representative.

In their writ of summons against the government the plaintiffs argue that despite the environmental sensitivity of Forest Reserve No. 27, the defendants proceeded without legal authority to construct houses on what is now the Zambia Air Force Twin Palm Housing Complex, and that the Zambia Air Force is already responsible for discharging raw sewerage into the Chalimbana River, contrary to Zambia's legal provisions contained in both the Environmental Management Act and the Water Resources Management Act. In the other case the activists claim that individual army officials are using the cover of the Zambia Air Force to build the houses – the ones that are already polluting the river with sewage – as a government project when it was just the individual senior ZAF officials who stood to benefit.

Institutional heads must clarify

According to princess Nkomeshya, "this matter is very serious as it threatens the health and well-being of (...) future generations and (it) must therefore be attended to urgently." As the most senior representative of the Busoli Royal Establishment, princess Nkomeshya has also written to the clerk of Zambia's parliament, requesting the parliamentary committee on agriculture, lands and natural resources to undertake an inspection of the forest area. She wants the inspection to include the director generals of ZEMA, the Water Resources Management Authority WARMA, Regional & Country Planning, the Forestry Department, as well as the Human Rights Commission. "This will ensure that these institutional heads clarify and explain their mandates and actions taken (or not taken) in this tragic saga," the princes wrote in her letter to the clerk of Zambia's parliament.

This matter threatens the health and well-being of future generations

Despite the urgency, and the fact that the Princess' letter to parliament was dispatched in February, Parliamentary sources approached to shed light on whether or not the fact-finding inspection team had commenced its investigation said it had not yet done so. Pressed to disclose why the team was not yet in place, the source said parliament was "still trying to source the funding to expedite the team's work."

Challenging powers-that-be

The state's own structures will likely still act slowly to implement action. But on the bright side, popular protest against state power abuse is growing. In September of 2017 large protests were staged outside the country's parliament to highlight the abuse of public funds. It was then particularly the procurement of 42 fire trucks by the state for an alleged cost of US$ 42 million – a million dollars per truck – clearly done to slice off millions for officials involved, that enraged many Zambians. Activists were arrested at those protests, but the arrests gave rise to new protests in turn. Now it is the defense of Forest No. 27 that has caused activists to challenge the powers-that-be.

Just as we were winding up the drafting of this story, there was a breakthrough. A Lusaka High Court injunction is now restraining the Kingsland promoters from continuing with their development project in Forest No. 27 while the case is before the court.

Asked to comment on her acquisition of a plot in Kingsland City, Minister of Lands Jean Kapata answered the phone, but when hearing our questions said, "why me of all the people" and cut the line. Mines Minister Richard Musukwa did not respond to phone calls. Irene Mambilima responded to questions about her plot in Forest No. 27 as follows: "Sometime in 2016, I verbally requested the Commissioner of Lands for a small holding, preferably east of Lusaka on which to build my retirement home and engage in horticultural activities. In August 2017 I was informed that a portion of a forest reserve in Lusaka east had been de-gazetted and re-planned and a number of plots and small holding had been created. I was advised, if I was still desirous of acquiring a small holding, to formally apply and this I did on 30th August 2017. I was allocated the plot in issue in September 2017.

President Edgar Lungu's office was asked why he degazetted the forest, thereby undoing its environmental protection, but the office did not respond to the query. Vice president Inonge Wina was not reached. We were told that she is out of the country for health reasons.





Photo Credit: Lusaka Star