

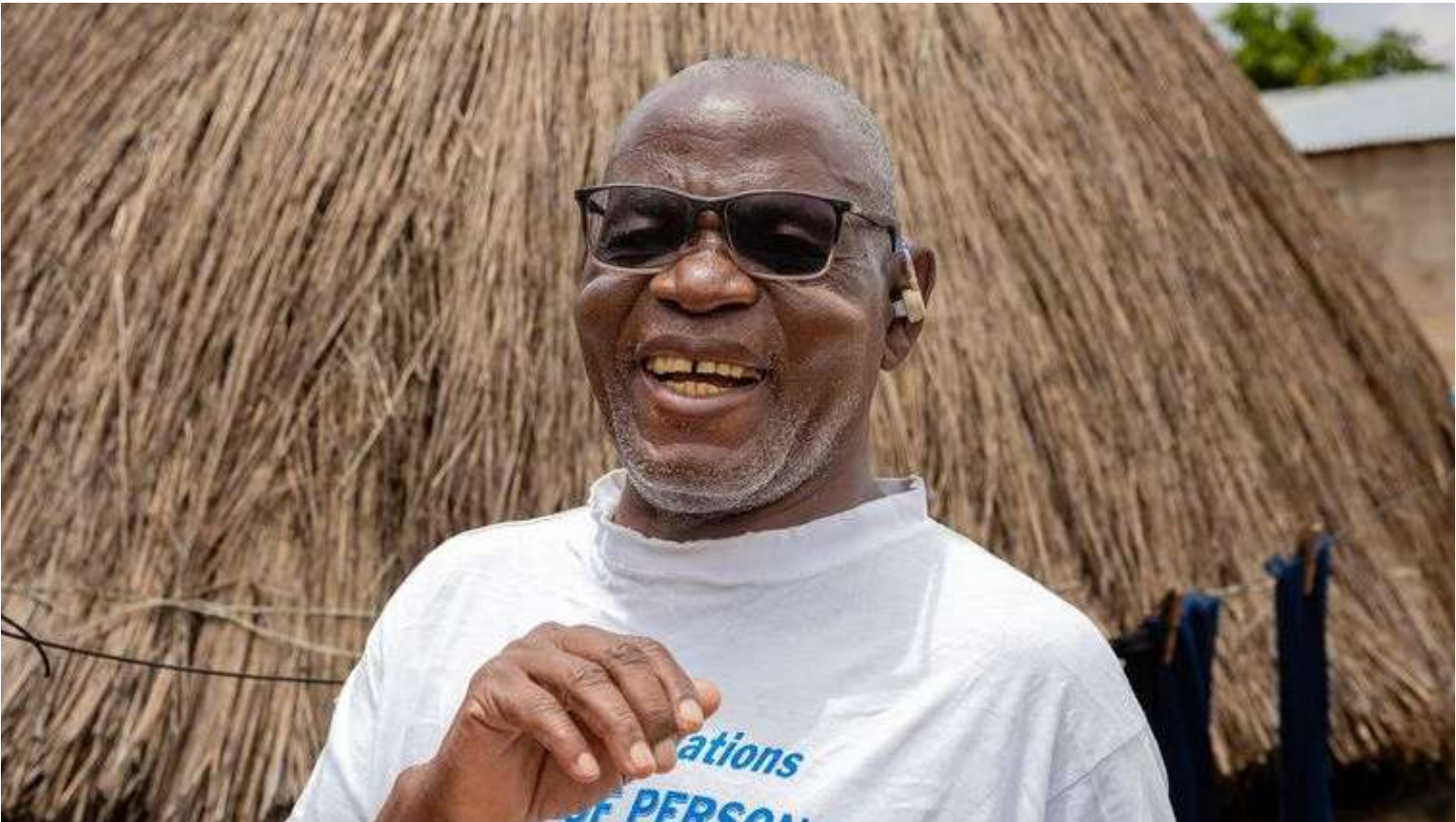


UNITED NATIONS
ZAMBIA



NEWSLETTER

JANUARY - JUNE 2025



FOREWORD

BY THE RESIDENT COORDINATOR



The first half of 2025 has demonstrated Zambia's resilience, innovation, and unwavering commitment to inclusive development. This newsletter captures the spirit of collaboration between the United Nations and the Government of Zambia, as well as the tireless efforts of communities, civil society, and development partners working together to uplift lives and build a more equitable future.

From empowering learners through agri-technologies and promoting climate-resilient agriculture, to advancing social protection and health services for vulnerable populations, the stories within these pages reflect the transformative impact of our joint initiatives. We celebrate the courage of individuals like Clotildah, Lilian, and Nkumbu, whose journeys remind us that meaningful change begins with opportunity, dignity, and support.

As we continue to address challenges such as child labour, gender inequality, and climate change, we reaffirm our commitment to leaving no one behind. The United Nations in Zambia remains dedicated to supporting national priorities, fostering innovation, and amplifying the voices of youth, women, and marginalized communities.

Let this newsletter serve not only as a record of progress, but also as a call to action—to deepen our partnerships, accelerate our efforts, and ensure that everyone in Zambia can thrive in a just, sustainable, and inclusive society.

Happy Reading!

Beatrice Mutali
UN Resident Coordinator



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Zambia Uses Agri-Technologies to Empower Learners in School Garden Initiatives

Zambia's national Home-Grown School Meals programme has transformed the lives of young leaders like Abigail (14) and Penjani (13). Despite attending different schools—Abigail in Central Zambia's Mumbwa district, and Penjani in the East's Katete district—they share a common passion for cultivating school gardens using hydroponic technology, drip irrigation systems, and sack gardening, ensuring a continuous supply of fresh produce for their school meals.

Beyond their school, Abigail and Penjani are dedicated to educating their families and communities about the benefits of irrigation systems supported by borehole water. "The irrigation system is amazing! Before, we couldn't grow vegetables year-round, but now we can!" exclaims Abigail.

Their teachers have guided them on how to increase agricultural production. "The school garden allows us to conduct practical classes for agricultural science. We're learning how various irrigation systems and hydroponic technology can help us grow a variety of vegetables, as well as other crops like maize and beans," Abigail explains. She is thrilled that the local community is recognizing the benefits of their gardening project. "We have a consistent water supply and easy regular watering. We understand the importance of these skills and technologies because we're eating what we grow. The food is always fresh and nutritious. Plus, we earn money for our school by selling the surplus," Abigail proudly shares.

In Katete district, Penjani highlights how drip irrigation and sack gardening have revolutionized their agriculture classes, inspiring dreams of enhancing food production to feed the whole of Zambia and beyond. "Drip irrigation is like a straw for plants. It gives them water little by little so they don't dry out and can survive during drought. The system is great at conserving water. It's one thing to theoretically learn about something and try to visualize the impact, and another when you get to see and experience the impact," says Penjani.

"We are also learning how to grow food in sacks through sack gardening. This is an efficient way of growing food, especially for people with limited space or who have land with low soil fertility, as the sacks are filled with soil mixed with manure. This process is also cost-effective because local materials are used, allowing production of food with little water as the sack helps to retain moisture," Penjani explains.

With the support of the World Food Programme, the Zambian Government is implementing sack gardening and innovative technologies to enhance agricultural education with 71 hydroponic school food production plots in 16 districts, as well as six irrigation systems in four districts. Transforming schools into agricultural community learning centres, this initiative is part of a broader effort to promote sustainable school meal models that benefit children and their communities while strengthening food systems across Zambia.

"This demonstrates the Government of Zambia's strong commitment to reach 4 million school children with nutritious meals every day by 2026," says Ms. Cissy Kabasuuga, the World Food Programme Representative in Zambia. Supporting school gardens, she said, diversifies food production, sustains a fresh food supply, and guarantees that children always receive their nutritious meals at school.

Abigail reflects on the positive changes in their meal provisions and emphasizes the importance of creative solutions for school meals. "We should all do what we can to promote school meals, and I appreciate the support from teachers and so many others. It means they believe in us! I am happy that I am gaining excellent skills which will benefit me beyond school. I am lucky I get to learn how to produce the food and get the opportunity to also enjoy the food," she says





Climate Resilience Agriculture: GIZ Knowledge Sharing for Lead Farmers from the Mayukwayukwa Settlement and Host Community

The drought in Zambia during 2024 exposed the vulnerabilities faced by forcibly displaced people and their host communities, who, like most smallholder farmers in Zambia, depend on rainfed farming for their livelihoods. Many families, facing food shortages and economic struggles, turned to harmful coping strategies. This situation highlighted the need to make farming more resilient to climate change to help communities better prepare for future disasters. To address this, the German development agency GIZ, in partnership with UNHCR, organized a training event to teach farmers in the Mayukwayukwa area about sustainable, low-cost water management techniques.

On December 19, 2024, technical staff from GIZ, the Office of the Commissioner for Refugees (COR), UNHCR, and Caritas Czech Republic welcomed lead farmers from the Mayukwayukwa Settlement in Western Province to Mumbwa in Central Province.

They were joined by representatives from the Ministries of Agriculture and Water Development and Sanitation, as well as the Division for Resettlement in the Office of the Vice President. These farmers, who play a coordinating role in their agricultural communities, participated in an all-day training focused on nature-based solutions for managing water.

The event included both a theoretical session on water conservation techniques and a practical part, where participants visited farms around Mumbwa. There, they learned about GIZ's AWARE programme, which teaches communities how to set up water reservoirs on farms to collect rainwater.

Mayukwayukwa's land is not only drought-prone but also faces flooding risks during heavy rains, making it difficult to store water for future use. Water runoff from the rain can damage crops and erode

the land, leading to lower crop yields. This affects food security and prevents farmers from producing extra crops to sell, limiting their income.

During heavy rains, reservoirs can slow down water flow, support groundwater recharge, and reduce crop damage. The water stored in these reservoirs can also be used for irrigation during dry periods. Through partnerships with organizations like GIZ, these affordable, nature-based farming solutions are now accessible to farmers in Zambia's refugee-hosting areas.

Involving refugee farmers in these efforts is an important step toward building resilience and improving agricultural practices. UNHCR and its partners will continue to explore nature-based solutions to improve the lives of refugees and their host communities in Zambia.



FAO Boosting Cassava Production in Zambia: Combating Cassava Brown Streak and Mosaic Diseases

A Key Milestone in the Transformation of Cassava Farming

In a significant leap for Zambia's cassava sector, the Technical Support and Interventions for Mitigating Cassava Brown Streak and Mosaic Diseases project has celebrated the transformative success of smallholder farmers in Chiengwe and Kaputa districts. These farmers, empowered with knowledge on pest and disease management and improved methods of cassava production, have witnessed impressive boosts in cassava yields. Crucially, these achievements would not have been possible without the provision of healthy cassava cuttings, which served as the foundation for the success of the targeted interventions. Through this initiative, smallholder farmers are better equipped to combat the challenges of cassava farming, showcasing the power of innovative solutions and collaborative efforts in transforming agriculture. The success is not just a victory for food security but also a powerful example of how targeted interventions can uplift entire farming communities.

Mercy Mwape Kaunda, a successful cassava farmer in Chiengwe district, shared, "Before this project, my



cassava yields were low, and I struggled to make ends meet. But after the training and receiving disease-resistant planting materials, my production

has more than tripled. I'm able to sell more, feed my family better, and send my children to school. This project has truly changed my life."

Cholera at Kasumbalesa: A Mother's Fight to Keep Her Family Safe and Still Make Ends Meet





At the edge of Chililabombwe lies Kasumbalesa border, where Zambia meets the Democratic Republic of Congo. Life pulses with endless activity as traders are in full swing with all kinds of commodities, from farm products to clothing and more. However, the only market here is overcrowded and overwhelmed by the stench of raw sewage, mixed with the sour smell of rotting food and stagnant water during this rainy season.

The ground is a slippery mess of mud, scattered with plastic waste, discarded food scraps, and pools of contaminated water. Consequently, every step is a careful negotiation through filth.

This is where Agnes Mpundu spends her days, selling fish to provide for her five children. Her oldest is 19 years old, and her youngest is 3 years old.

Her youngest, three-year-old Rosemary is always by her side. With bright, curious eyes and a chatter that never ceases, Rosemary is well known among the marketeers. She is a very smart and talkative girl who even out-talks her mom and peers.

Cholera cases continue to rise in Chililabombwe District, and in Chabele Compound—where Agnes lives—the situation feels increasingly dire. New cholera cases are identified and reported daily, a constant reminder of how vulnerable children from this community, like Rosemary, are. “We are really struggling both at home and in the market here,” she says, shaking her head. “When it rains, the drainages overflow, and the whole place turns into a swamp of filth.”

“There are no working toilets in the market, so traders who sleep in the market resort to relieving themselves in plastic bags and bottles, which are then discarded around the market and in abandoned buildings,” she explains.

Agnes does what she can to keep her space clean. She sweeps diligently each morning and treats her water with chlorine. But in a place where hygiene is nearly impossible, a key milestone in the transformation of cassava farming.

Zambia's cassava sector, has celebrated the success of cassava smallholder farmers in Chiengwe and Kaputa districts. These farmers, empowered with knowledge on pest and disease management and improved methods of cassava production, have witnessed an increase in cassava yields. These achievements would not have been possible without the provision of healthy cassava cuttings, which served as the foundation for the success of the targeted interventions.

Participants achieved a remarkable increase in cassava yields, rising from an average of 6 tons per hectare to an average of 25 and 52 tons per hectare in Chiengwe and Kaputa Districts, respectively. This success has not only contributed to enhanced food security but has also provided smallholder farmers with higher incomes and improved livelihoods. The initiative has reached over 1,000 farmers and extension workers with essential training on pests and disease identification and sustainable cassava farming techniques.

The increase in cassava production in these regions is a testament to FAO's cassava technical support project's effectiveness in addressing the persistent challenges of Cassava Mosaic Disease (CMD) and Cassava Brown Streak Disease (CBSD), which have long been threats to Zambia's vital cassava crop.

A key intervention of the project is the provision of high-quality, disease-free planting materials to curb the spread of CMD and CBSD. As part of these efforts, 8,500 bundles of disease-resistant cassava planting materials of the Mweru variety were distributed to 1,000 farmers in Chiengwe and Kaputa districts. Each bundle, consisting of 100 healthy one-meter cuttings, met stringent quality standards to maximize planting success and bolster cassava production.

Through this initiative, smallholder farmers are better equipped to combat the challenges of cassava farming, showcasing the importance of innovative solutions and collaborative efforts in transforming agriculture.

The success is not just a victory for food security but also a good example of how targeted interventions can uplift entire farming communities.

Mercy Mwape Kaunda, a successful cassava farmer in Chiengwe district shared, “Before this project, my cassava yields were low, and I struggled to make ends meet. But after the training and receiving disease-resistant planting materials, my production has more than tripled. I'm able to sell more, feed my family better, and send my children to school. This project has truly changed my life.”

Cassava is a vital staple crop for an estimated 30% of the population in Zambia, providing food security and livelihoods for millions of smallholder farmers. Over the years, several initiatives have played an instrumental role in addressing cassava diseases and strengthening the sector.

This initiative which builds upon these previous interventions provides innovative and targeted solutions for cassava farming communities in Chiengwe and Kaputa districts, aiming to enhance household and national food security,

increase incomes, and improve livelihoods in the affected areas.

Over 1,000 smallholder farmers and their respective extension officers were trained in cassava production methods, pest and disease identification, and seed crop maintenance. These training sessions combined theoretical knowledge with practical demonstrations, empowering farmers to adopt sustainable cassava farming practices. The training sessions were designed to ensure maximum impact and included an interactive approach with farmers learning through practical demonstrations on disease symptom recognition, pest management, land preparation, and planting techniques.

Real examples of CMD and CBSD symptoms were showcased to improve farmers' diagnostic skills. The training, spread over 10 working days, targeted 100 farmers daily.

Patrick Mapemba a cassava farmer in Kaputa district shared his experience: “The training has transformed how I manage my cassava field. I now know how to identify pests and diseases early and improve my farming practices for better yields.”

An extra 11,396 farmers and 89 district staff covering 85 agricultural camps were educated on identifying CMD and CBSD symptoms and implementing management strategies to reduce disease spread.

The initiative also evaluated improved cassava varieties with dual resistance to cassava mosaic and cassava brown streak diseases, providing farmers with access to better-performing crops. One potential cassava variety is being earmarked for further evaluation and recommendation for release.

Suze Percy-Filippini, FAO Representative in Zambia, emphasized: “This initiative underscores FAO's commitment to sustainable agriculture and food security. By equipping farmers with disease-resistant planting materials and training, we are building resilience in Zambia's cassava sector.”

Increased awareness has helped farmers adopt better practices, reducing the spread of the two diseases in the two districts. Research and evaluation of improved cassava varieties have identified potential sources with dual resistance to the diseases, enhancing yield potential and resilience. John Mulongoti, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, noted: “By addressing the root causes of cassava yield challenges, this project has not only improved food security but also boosted farmer incomes and confidence.”



The 30th Meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts of Southern Africa



Member States Commit to Energy Diversification for Economic Resilience and Sustainable Development

"Energy poverty remains a significant barrier to development. Approximately 50 percent of the Southern African population, and over 600 million people across the continent, lack access to electricity. Millions still rely on biomass fuels, such as firewood and charcoal, for heating, which leads to severe indoor pollution and health-related adverse effects," said Mr. Credo Nanyuwa, Provincial Minister, Southern Province, during the official opening of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials (ICSOE) and Experts of Southern Africa Session that took place from 20-21 November 2024 in Livingstone, Zambia.

The Minister encouraged participants from the eleven member states to use the ICSOE platform and theme of the 30th Session, "Addressing the energy deficit in Southern Africa through investments in new and renewable energy technologies to reduce energy poverty and accelerate sustainable industrialization and structural transformation," to discuss how the region's vast new and renewable energy resources could be exploited to support the clean and just energy transition and help reduce poverty in the region.

Ms. Constance Nalishebo Muleabai, Mayor of Livingstone, highlighted the adverse impact of the energy deficit and climate change on local communities, the Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park, and the Victoria Falls. She noted that, "in recent years, the City has felt more adverse impacts of climate change and thus welcomed the relevance of the ICSOE discussions, particularly the importance of building climate resilience and exploring sustainable energy solutions."

Ms. Eunice Kamwendo, Director of the ECA Sub-Regional Office for Southern Africa (SRO-SA), spoke about the importance of diversification as a way of ensuring the sustainability of

energy supply within the energy transition efforts. She noted that Zambia must transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources and diversify the energy mix. "This transition is not just an environmental necessity; it is a pathway to social equity and economic resilience," she emphasized. "By harnessing the abundant solar, wind, and hydropower resources, Zambia can enhance energy security and stimulate economic growth."

Ms. Beatrice Mutali, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Zambia, further underlined the need to accelerate the uptake of renewable energy to give hope for Zambia as it hastens its climate change adaptation. She reminded delegates of the impact of climate change on women, noting that "denying women access to energy erodes the productive capacities of countries and undermines children's access to education and health."

Meanwhile, Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Secretary General, in remarks delivered on her behalf by Dr. Malama Chileshe, COMESA energy economist, stressed the necessity to align national energy frameworks to those of the Regional Economic Communities. The Southern Africa Development Community Secretariat, Executive Secretary Mr. Elias Mpedi Magosi, also emphasized the importance of alignment and harmonization of all regional energy policies with the SADC regional frameworks, such as the SADC Energy Cooperation Policy and the Renewable and Efficiency Strategy, to facilitate trade and integration.

Ambassador David Claude Pierre, Permanent Representative to the African Union for Southern Africa, COMESA, and SADC, said the regional commission alignment should be complemented with the African Union's Blueprint for Africa's transformation, Agenda 2063, and the Sustainable

Development Goals, particularly SDG 7, which aims to ensure access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy.

The two-day meeting was enriched by presentations and panel discussions on energy access, energy poverty, and the development of renewable energy resources. It included a site visit to the Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation power station and an exhibition by major energy institutions in Zambia, including the Ministry of Energy, Energy Regulation Board, Copperbelt Energy Corporation, the private sector, and a women's association that exhibited their products and shared the challenges that Small and Medium Enterprises are facing due to the energy deficit.





From Initiators to Protectors

At Mkaika Clinic in Katete district, a group of local traditional marriage initiators, known as "alangizi," gathered for their bi-weekly meeting. For centuries, these older women have played a vital role in marriage rites, mentoring young women for marriage including conducting lessons on sexual and reproductive practices and traditional household roles. Traditionally, the alangizi conduct these lessons through a camp called "chinamwali," where guardians take their daughters for initiation. However, this particular meeting had a unique agenda, it was the beginning of a lifetime resolution to protect young girls from child marriages.

Sixteen-year-old *Mary Daka, had adamantly resolved to get married after failing her grade seven (7) examinations and dropping out of school. Accompanied by her mother, she came to the alangizi seeking mentorship and possible initiation into marriage. However, the alangizi had no intention of initiating Mary into marriage, reaffirming the position of Mary's mother that she was too young to get married, instead, they aimed to persuade her to return to school and realise her full potential. This group of alangizi had evolved into a team of

protectors, fighting against child marriages and adolescent pregnancies in their chiefdom. They resolved to ensure that all young girls at least completed secondary school and were above the age of 18 before being prepared for marriage.

"We feel our community has lagged behind due to lack of education, largely caused by early marriages and teenage pregnancies," explained Martha Banda, the group's chairperson. "When our children are educated, they bring ideas that will drive development in our communities and the entire village. Early marriages and pregnancies hinder their education."

Child marriage is a major facilitator to high rates of adolescent pregnancy which not only deprive the of childhood, education, mental and physical wellbeing, while carry huge implications on the social and economic development of the nation.

With support from UNFPA's Gender, Adolescence, Pregnancy, and Social Norms Programme (GAPS), implemented by YWCA with funding from Sweden, the alangizi have been conducting the Protecting

Girls Initiative through Safe Spaces since 2023.

"We've changed our teaching approach, whenever parents bring their children to us for lessons, the first thing we ask for is the under-five clinic card, which indicates the child's birthdate. Here in the rural areas, most children finish school late, so even though the legal age of marriage is 18, we try to enroll only girls aged 20 and above. By that age, we know they would have completed their schooling," Martha said. The alangizi collaborate with local school head teachers to monitor school attendance. This collaboration led them to Mary's situation.

In December 2023, Parliament passed a landmark legislation making all marriages for persons below the age of 18 illegal, both under statutory and customary law. The tremendous stride has provided a holistic legal framework to curtail the practice with emphasis on holding perpetrators accountable. In 2024, the Safe Spaces programme enrolled 159,610 adolescent girls aged between 10 - 19 and 122,578 successfully graduated with the highest graduation rates (53.8%) among girls aged 10-14.

From a Fistula Survivor to Aspiring Midwife



Charity, a 23-year-old midwifery nursing student, has defied odds to pursue her dream of becoming a nurse. Her journey has been marked by immense challenges, but through perseverance and hope, she has overcome them.

In 2020, Charity discovered she was pregnant while preparing for her final Grade 12 exams. The news was devastating and distracted her studies. "I was attending a co-educational boarding school, though I wasn't a boarder. I found myself pregnant by my fellow pupil after getting caught up in the excitement of finishing Grade 12," she recalled.

After completing her exams, Charity moved back to her mother's rural home. As labor began, she initially believed she could deliver at home. However, complications arose, and after two



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After completing her exams, Charity moved back to her mother's rural home. As labor began, she initially believed she could deliver at home. However, complications arose, and after two days of labor, her mother took her to a District Hospital where she underwent a caesarean section and delivered a healthy baby. But her joy was short-lived, two days later, she began leaking urine. Charity had developed an obstetric fistula, a condition caused by prolonged labor without medical intervention.

Her aspirations were slowly fading away with her condition worsening, she continued suffering in silence, unsure whether her condition could be treated. One day, she heard about the UNFPA Zambia's Fistula Program on the radio. Inspired by the information, she decided to seek medical assistance at the District Hospital and she was booked for the fistula repair camp which was scheduled at the General Hospital in a month. The procedure marked the beginning of her healing journey. No longer isolated by her condition, Charity was able to return to her education. She enrolled back in secondary school to retake

the science exams, a subject she had struggled with and needed for her midwifery training. With renewed determination, Charity passed her exams and was finally able to pursue her dream of becoming a midwife.

"After my recovery, I couldn't hold back my emotions. I knew I had to go back to school. I was determined to not just become a nurse, but a midwife," she said. Today, Charity is a fierce advocate for fistula awareness. She shares her story to encourage other girls and women who may be suffering from similar conditions to seek medical help and, most importantly, to prevent early pregnancies. "I encourage young girls to stay focused on their education and dreams," Charity said. "Pregnancy at an early age can derail your future. I want to be an example that no matter how difficult the circumstances, you can still overcome them," she added.

In January 2025, Charity took another bold step forward in her journey by enrolling at a Midwifery Training College. With the support of her mother, who agreed to care for her daughter while in training school, Charity is now on the path to realizing her dream. She knows the road ahead will be challenging, but she is filled with confidence and determination.

Despite progress in maternal health worldwide, obstetric fistula remains a major challenge, affecting over 500,000 women and girls. Globally, UNFPA has played a pivotal role in combating obstetric fistula by supporting nearly 150,000 repair surgeries between 2003 and 2024.

In Zambia 62 fistula survivors had their dignity and pride restored in 2024 through successful fistula surgeries. Since 2005, UNFPA Zambia in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, has conducted over 4,200 successful repairs in Luapula and North-Western Provinces.

During a recent trip to Kazungula District in Southern Zambia, I found the dry, barren landscape transforming into one full of promise. Trees stood vibrant, and previously desolate fields brimmed with life. Nine months earlier, droughts had devastated the area, leaving rivers as trickles, fields lifeless, and livestock struggling to survive. For smallholder farmers, survival was uncertain. Now, the return of rains brings hope. Yet, this recovery is more than rain; it's about resilience—arming farmers with tools to adapt to a changing climate.

The Strengthening Climate Resilience of Agricultural Livelihoods in Agro-Ecological Regions I and II (SCRALA) project has championed this effort across 16 districts through climate-smart agriculture. Following the devastating 2023/2024 drought, which affected 9.8 million people and halved Zambia's planted area, above-normal rains arrived in 2024/2025. While providing relief, heavy downpours triggered flooding, compounding food security concerns before recovery from the drought could fully take hold.

In Nyawa village, I met Beauty Fenete, a smallholder farmer embodying resilience. Unpredictable rains once threatened her livelihood, but training from the SCRALA project transformed her practices. By diversifying crops such as millet, cowpeas, and sweet potatoes, Fenete ensured food security for her family. She also expanded her livelihood by saving through a cooperative, eventually opening a grocery store and constructing a house—a testament to the financial independence stemming from savings groups supported by the project. In 2024 alone, 1,418 savings groups amassed over ZMW 20.35 million, empowering thousands of farmers, especially women.

Beyond farming, access to fair markets remains a challenge. The Kabuyu Bulking Centre helps farmers like Fenete aggregate produce, boosting their bargaining power and reducing post-harvest losses. In 2024, this marketing approach generated over K700,000, enabling financial stability. Plans to expand the initiative with eight new marketing centers promise broader economic benefits.

Additionally, farmers gain alternative incomes through initiatives like the goat pass-on mechanism, which has supported 8,000 farmers and increased alternative income generation by over 70%. Weather stations provide vital advisories, enabling 312,000 farmers to plan effectively, adopt resilient crops, and reduce losses.

As I left Kazungula, I felt hopeful but aware that much work remains. Through partnerships with the Ministry of Agriculture, UNDP, and others, Zambia can scale these efforts, ensuring no one is left behind in the fight against climate change—ultimately achieving food security, climate resilience, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Powering Agriculture: Weather, Savings and Markets



**My Journey to Southern Zambia under the SCRALA project;
by Laurent Rudasingwa, UNDP Zambia Deputy Resident
Representative**



ILO and UN Hand Over \$12,000 Worth of Advanced ICT Equipment to Enhance Disability Training in Zambia



The International Labour Organization (ILO), through the United Nations Joint Programme on Social Protection Phase Two (UNJP-SP II), has handed over state-of-the-art office and Information, Communication, and Technologies (ICT) equipment, including an industrial printer and a Canon digital camera, worth \$12,000 to the National Vocational Rehabilitation Centre.

The ILO, along with UN agencies such as UNDP, UNICEF, and WFP, is supporting the implementation of the Government of Zambia - United Nations Joint Programme on Social Protection from August 2019 to April 2025. This initiative aims to assist the Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) in achieving an effective, efficient, and rights-based social protection programme. The programme is being implemented with financial assistance from the governments of Ireland, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and Sweden.

Speaking at the handover ceremony held at the Ndola-based institution, ILO Country Office Director for Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique, Mr. Wellington Chibebe, said the donated equipment and furniture

would help improve the efficiency of the disability training institution. Mr. Chibebe explained that the National Vocational Rehabilitation Centre plays a pivotal role in equipping Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) with the skills needed to thrive in the workplace.

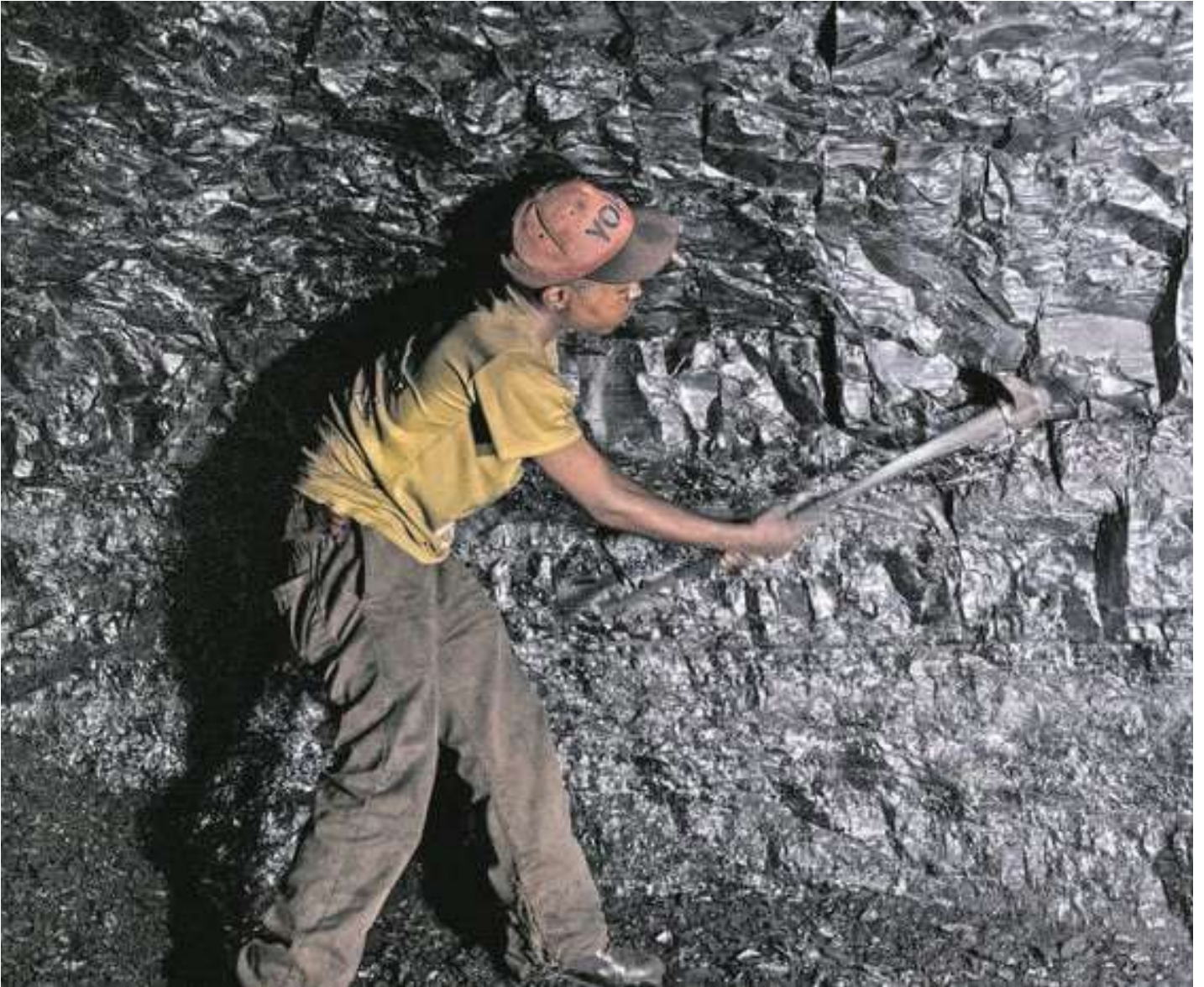
"The ILO's commitment to disability inclusion is reflected in its Global Disability Inclusion Strategy, which aims to promote inclusive development and ensure that Persons with Disabilities are equal players in the labour market," he said. "This framework underpins the actions we take in Zambia, where we support the country's vision to effectively integrate Persons with Disabilities into the labour market."

Meanwhile, Copperbelt Province Permanent Secretary, Mr. Augustine Kasongo, expressed gratitude to the UN through the ILO for advancing the rights and job opportunities of Persons with Disabilities in Zambia. Officiating at the occasion, Mr. Kasongo said the government would continue partnering with the ILO and other stakeholders to ensure that Persons with Disabilities not only have

access to education and training but also lead sustainable livelihoods.

"These resources will enhance the institution's capacity to provide quality training, documentation, and evidence-based research in support of employment for Persons with Disabilities. The provision of this equipment ensures that the staff will have the necessary tools to perform their duties efficiently, creating a conducive environment for the integration of Persons with Disabilities into the workforce," he said.

Zambia Federation of Employers (ZFE) Executive Director, Mr. Harrington Chibanda, revealed that employers have embraced disability inclusiveness, hence the formation of the Zambia Business Network for Persons with Disabilities. Mr. Chibanda commended the ILO for collaborating with the government in promoting the welfare of Persons with Disabilities by supporting the work of the Zambia Business Disability Network and donating equipment and furniture to the Centre.



Southern Africa Must Process Its Own Critical Minerals

Op-ed by James Wakiaga, UNDP Zambia Resident Representative

Southern Africa's critical minerals are at a pivotal moment as the global shift to clean energy sparks soaring demand for materials like cobalt, lithium, and copper, essential to technologies like electric vehicle batteries and solar panels. Despite holding 30% of the world's critical mineral reserves, Africa processes only a fraction, exporting raw materials while importing costly finished goods. This leaves the region at the mercy of commodity price fluctuations and limits economic growth.

Transforming into a hub for processing and manufacturing these resources requires addressing significant obstacles: unreliable electricity, a lack of technical expertise, high capital costs, and the need for regional coordination. The rewards, however, are immense, with potential for skilled jobs, industrial development, and increased export earnings. For instance, bauxite sells for 65perton, but its value skyrockets to 2,335 when

processed into aluminum. By moving up the value chain, Southern Africa can lead rather than merely supply the global energy transition.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Zambia illustrate both potential and challenges. The DRC produces over 70% of the world's cobalt, but China dominates refining, handling 60% of global cobalt, 59% of lithium, and 95% of rare earth minerals. Zambia, one of the largest unrefined copper exporters, plans to dramatically increase production but faces chronic power shortages and a significant skills gap in mineral processing.

Renewable energy offers a solution. Southern Africa's solar potential can support mineral processing facilities while advancing a just energy transition. Recent initiatives, like the Lobito Corridor, aim to improve infrastructure, linking Zambia and the DRC to international markets and enabling an integrated battery value chain involving Zimbabwe's lithium and Zambia's copper and cobalt. Regional

integration is critical to overcoming scale and policy coordination challenges.

Zambia's new National Critical Minerals Strategy ensures regulatory certainty for investors while encouraging local benefits. Collaborations between Zambia and the DRC on producing electric vehicle batteries further highlight progress. Initiatives like the UN Development Programme's Minetech hub in Lusaka are also fostering youth-led innovation in sustainable mining.

International partnerships, technical support, and sustained investment are vital to advancing these efforts. By systematically addressing barriers, Southern Africa can transform its global economic role, building industries, creating jobs, and playing a pivotal role in the clean energy transition. The foundation is set, but maintaining momentum is key to realizing this historic opportunity.



Empowering Generations:



Clotildah's Journey of Resilience through the GRZ-UN Joint Programme on Social Protection

Retired professional social worker Clotildah Banda, 74, is known for her warm and welcoming nature. With years of experience working with vulnerable individuals, she deeply understands the importance of social protection. Having cared for her mother, a Social Cash Transfer (SCT) beneficiary, until her passing in 2018, and becoming a beneficiary herself of the COVID-19 SCT in 2022, Clotildah appreciates the value of building resilience and investing in a sustainable future.

In 2022, Clotildah received her first cash transfer of ZMW 400 (approximately USD 14) bimonthly and decided to invest in two cows. One of the cows gave birth, and over time, her herd grew to five cows. Encouraged by this success, she expanded her animal husbandry ventures to include rearing pigs and chickens. A large pig pen next to her home houses several piglets, eagerly awaiting their meals. When the pigs are ready for sell, she plans to sell them for profit, using some of the proceeds to buy feed and sustain her business. Clotildah lives on her homestead with her two grandchildren, aged 29 and 31, who support her work on the farm. The financial support through the SCT has aided the entire household with business ventures that provide additional income for food to sustain themselves.

"The money from the Social Cash Transfer has been very helpful in making investments that help me buy mealie meal and relish for me and my two grandchildren who live with me and help me with farming," she says.

She also has a bustling coop full of chickens, which she uses in exchange for additional labour in her fields. In addition to her livestock ventures, Clotildah has been growing vegetables, maize, and groundnuts for sale and personal consumption. Aside from the SCT Programme, Clotildah also praises

Zambia's National Health Insurance Management Authority (NHIMA) Scheme for providing essential support in times of illness. She has disclosed that she suffers from high blood pressure at times and is thankful for the relief that comes through contributory social protection initiatives like NHIMA, which allows her to purchase medications.

"Through NHIMA, I have one less burden to think of regarding my health, and that is buying medicine from the hospital. Although the distance to the hospital is far, I am grateful that I don't have to worry about the high cost of medicine," she says.

The Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ), through the GRZ-UN Joint Programme on Social Protection, is supporting vulnerable families with cash assistance to meet their needs, which can include food, shelter, and support for their children's school supplies. The GRZ also implements several social protection initiatives, including NHIMA, to support improved access and affordability to healthcare for all people.

Clotildah's story is a testament to the positive impact of these initiatives, highlighting how social protection can empower individuals to build a better future for themselves and their families.

The Social Cash Transfer programme is made possible with support from cooperating partners, including the governments of the Republic of Ireland, the Kingdom of Sweden, the Swiss Confederation, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, with technical support from the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Food Programme (WFP).

Lilian's Journey from Period Poverty to Empowerment



"Sometimes, girls in our community are in class, and their periods start unexpectedly, causing stains on their uniforms. It's embarrassing for them, and many even stay home until their period ends," said 19-year-old Lilian from Western Province. Her words shed light on a harsh reality: girls in her community face significant challenges when menstruating, especially because many families cannot afford menstrual products.

Lilian shared that when girls reach puberty, they undergo an initiation ceremony called "Sikeneg," which teaches them how to care for themselves and respect their elders. However, the cost of sanitary products remains out of reach for many parents. As a result, many girls resort to using pieces of cloth or other makeshift materials during their periods, leading to stained uniforms and, ultimately, school absences. This disruption often contributes to girls dropping out of school, and in some cases, it leads to early marriages and increased vulnerability to sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Recognizing the urgent need for change, the Global Programme introduced the Safe Spaces initiative—a transformative intervention that provides education, skills training, and mentorship for young people. Within these safe spaces, participants gain invaluable knowledge about menstrual hygiene, reproductive health, and the importance of education in preventing early marriage. For Lilian, the program became a turning point in her life.

"Safe Spaces gave me the tools to change my life," she said. Through peer education sessions, Lilian not only gained crucial knowledge but also built the confidence to manage her menstrual health. She was also provided with a pair of reusable pads and underwear. This intervention was a lifeline for Lilian, helping to break the cycle of period poverty and social stigma that affects so many girls in her community.

Since the launch of Safe Spaces in Litaba, Lilian has witnessed significant changes. "I've seen fewer girls getting married early," she shared. The program has allowed girls to stay in school, which she believes is key to reducing child marriages. With more girls receiving the support they need, they now understand the value of education and how it can help prevent early marriage.



ECA and Partners Hold a Draft Financial Assessment Report Validation to Help Lusaka City Council Expand Its Fiscal Space

In 1997, the General Assembly, through its resolution 52/12B, established the United Nations Development Account to enhance the capacities of Member States in the priority areas of the United Nations Development Agenda. It serves as a mechanism to fund capacity development projects designed to contribute to the implementation of long-term programs of the United Nations Secretariat. The project is designed to enhance the ability of city governments in Africa to develop and implement strategic policy reforms aimed at expanding and strengthening urban fiscal space as part of broader national "building forward" priorities. The Lusaka City Council is one of the beneficiaries.

To review and validate the Financial Performance Assessment report of Lusaka City Council, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in collaboration with UN-Habitat and the United Nations Capital Development Fund, organized an Expert Group Meeting from 26-27 November 2024 in Livingstonstone.

ECA, represented by Ms. Sweta Saxena, Director of Gender, Poverty, and Social Policy, applauded the collective effort that laid the groundwork for the assessment report between the Lusaka City Council technical working group and the United Nations technical team. She underlined that the report demonstrated how partnerships between local governments and international organizations could create actionable insights to expand municipal fiscal space and improve service delivery. Officiating at the event, Ms. Chilando Chitangala, Mayor of Lusaka City Council, noted that the validation meeting was a culmination of rigorous

data collection processes, compilation of relevant financial data, and the generation of a financial assessment report—all aimed at helping local authorities build resilience, fiscal autonomy, financial stability, debt management, and sustainable development.

"My vision for Lusaka City Council and other local governments is that through partnerships with stakeholders such as the United Nations, we can move towards developing digital tools that will help enhance our fiscal spaces as local authorities. Once sustainable and concrete digital tools are rolled out, only then can we attain financial growth as we move towards more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive cities," said Ms. Chitangala.

Mr. James Njoroge Muchiri, Deputy Governor of the County of Nairobi, shared the experience of enhanced revenue collection and expanded revenue sources that they have implemented to improve revenue collection efficiency. He underscored that "digital technologies have become

a major part of modernizing city operations and transforming service delivery. The City County of Nairobi has invested in modern technology to promote service delivery and streamline revenue collection processes. We are also in the process of implementing automated systems to track payments, fines, fees, and taxes to reduce leakages and improve collections."

Ms. Beatrice Mutali, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Zambia, further emphasized the importance of UN joint programmes and commitment in supporting government efforts in addressing complex urban challenges, like rapid population growth, climate change, and economic disparities. She concluded that "as partners, we all share a common goal: to enhance the ability of city governments across Africa to develop and implement strategic policy reforms aimed at expanding and strengthening urban fiscal space. These efforts are critical to supporting broader national 'building forward' priorities, without leaving anyone behind."





Empowering Refugees and Host Communities Through Solar Energy: Zambia's Commitment to Sustainable and Clean Energy for All



In a dynamic shift towards enhancing sustainable energy access for refugees and host communities, the Government of Zambia, in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), inaugurated the Solarization of the Offices of the Commissioner for Refugees (COR) Project at the Makeni Refugee Transit Centre in Lusaka. This modernization initiative aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 7, 'Affordable and Clean Energy,' and aims to provide reliable and renewable energy to power essential services for asylum-seekers, refugees, former refugees, and their hosts in Zambia.

The ZMW 3.5 million (USD 124,000) Solarization Project, generously funded by UNHCR's core donors, installed 12 kW of security lighting and 48 kWp of solar photovoltaics to electrify the offices of the Commissioner for Refugees (COR) in Lusaka, including the Makeni Health Post, Nchelenge

town, and the Mantapala and Meheba refugee settlements in Luapula and Western Province. This development is crucial in strengthening refugee protection efforts, especially in a country grappling with frequent power outages and load shedding, which have severely impacted many communities, including those facing the additional challenges of displacement.

Due to the extreme power shortages and load shedding, UNHCR and COR offices have relied on costly, carbon-emitting diesel generators. The switch to solar energy is now powering clean, consistent, and cost-effective provision of essential health, protection, administration, and registration services.

The launch ceremony, held in Lusaka on January 28, 2025, included the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs and Internal Security,

represented by Mr. Goodson Sinyenga, Director of Planning and Research, and representatives from UNHCR, including Senior Protection Officer Ms. Sarah-Jane Savage on behalf of UNHCR Representative Ms. Preeta Law, and Energy Officer Eng. Ranya Sherif, who spearheaded the project.

Ms. Law emphasized the project's impact, stating, "Access to reliable energy is essential for delivering crucial services. Through solar energy, we are taking a significant step toward a sustainable future that empowers both refugees and local communities." Home Affairs Permanent Secretary Mr. Dickson Matembo expressed gratitude for UNHCR's unwavering support, highlighting that this initiative aligns with Zambia's broader mission of empowerment for both refugees and their host communities.

This initiative is rooted in Zambia's commitments under the Global Compact on Refugees, which advocates for comprehensive solutions addressing both the emergency needs of refugees and the sustainability of their host communities. By investing in renewable energy, Zambia aims to promote enduring impacts that extend beyond the current humanitarian crisis, fostering development in regions that bear the brunt of this challenge.

Zambia's commitment to solar energy showcases its dedication to

environmental sustainability, positioning the country as a leader in tackling and mitigating the effects of climate change. Looking ahead, in partnerships with Zambia's Rural Electrification Authority, Commissioner for Refugees, Division of Resettlement (Office of the Vice-President), and development partners, UNHCR intends to expand on-grid and off-grid energy access to power refugee and host community settlements, further promoting a greener, more climate-resilient future.



UNESCO, Sida and Ministry of Education successfully Launch the “Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future” Phase II Project, 10th October 2024, Lusaka Zambia

Chainda Primary School, Lusaka, Zambia – The second phase of the Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future (O3) Project was successfully launched on 10th October 2024. The project, aimed at equipping young people aged 10-24 with life skills and health education, was officiated by the Honourable Minister of Education, Mr. Douglas Siakalima represented by Dr. Charles Ndakala as guest of honour.

The event was also graced by the Swedish Ambassador to Zambia, Mr. Johan Hallenborg, and UNESCO Regional Advisor for Education, Health, and Wellbeing, Dr. Patricia Machawira. In his keynote speech, Minister Siakalima emphasized the importance of investing in Zambia's youth, who comprise 34% of the population, to ensure a prosperous future. He highlighted the key challenges faced by young people, particularly in the area of Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH), noting the disproportionate impact of HIV on young women.

“Our young people face pressing challenges, especially in sexual and reproductive health. Half of all new HIV infections in Zambia occur among adolescents and youth, with young women at greater risk,” the Minister stated. He underscored the government's commitment to life skills and health education as a strategic

approach to addressing these challenges. He commended the strong partnership between the Zambian government, UNESCO, and the Government of Sweden, which has been instrumental in driving these efforts.

Ambassador Johan Hallenborg reaffirmed Sweden's commitment to improving the health, education, and well-being of Zambian youth. He announced Sweden's financial investment of USD 6.8 million over the next four years to support the O3 project, which will reach three million learners across seven provinces.

“Sweden has been a steadfast partner of Zambia in supporting life skills and health education since 2014. This financial commitment reflects our shared vision of a brighter future for Zambian youth,” said Ambassador Hallenborg. He praised the Zambian government for its leadership in advancing life skills education, which has positively impacted learners' health, educational outcomes, and overall well-being.

Dr. Patricia Machawira, UNESCO's Regional Advisor, highlighted the significant achievements of the first phase of the O3 project, which successfully reached 2.2 million learners with life skills and health education from 2019 to 2024. She noted that the second phase aims to build on these successes and

drive greater impact by focusing on key areas such as gender equality, HIV prevention, and reducing early and unintended pregnancies.

“This project not only informs but empowers our youth, providing them with the knowledge and skills to navigate life's challenges confidently.

It is a beacon of hope for the future of Zambia,” Dr. Machawira said. She emphasized that the O3 program is an inclusive initiative, ensuring that young people, including those with disabilities and those living with HIV, are empowered to lead positive changes in their communities.

The O3 Phase II project aligns with Zambia's National Education Policy and Vision 2030, contributing to the country's aspirations of becoming a prosperous middle-income nation. The program will also engage various stakeholders, including parents, religious leaders, and civil society organizations, to ensure a comprehensive approach to empowering Zambian youth. The launch marked a pivotal moment for Zambia's education and health sectors, setting the stage for continued success in enhancing the lives and futures of the nation's young people.



UNODC Regional Director Visits Zambia to Strengthen Support for People Who Use Drugs

On the 25th and 26th of March, UNODC Regional Director Ms. Jane Marie Ongolo, accompanied by the UNAIDS Country Director, Mr Isaac Ahemesah undertook a two-day mission to Lusaka, Zambia.

The purpose of the mission was to strengthen the partnership between UNODC and UNAIDS for expanded harm reduction interventions in Zambia, given the current alarming high rates

of drug consumption and the decreasing funding landscape.

In Southern Africa, around 12% of young people consume cannabis, and approximately 200,000 people inject drugs—of whom 44,000 are living with HIV (UNODC, 2022). According to the latest HIV bio-behavioral sentinel survey, HIV prevalence among people who inject drugs (PWID) in Lusaka

stands at 7.3%, with some districts reporting even higher rates (21.3% in Ndola and 12.2% in Livingstone). Sanity House routine HIV testing at Chibolya indicates an alarming rate of 26% HIV prevalence among illicit drug users, which is disproportionately much higher than the national HIV prevalence of 11%.

During the visit to the Drug Enforcement Commission, the Regional Director emphasized the need to engage the private sector in the prevention and rehabilitation of people who use drugs.

She encouraged national partners to use the national drug day celebration on June 26, as an opportunity to raise public awareness and ensure high level Zambia's representation at the next Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) in Vienna in March 2026.

She expressed concern about the reference of people who use drugs as "junks". This terminology is not only stigmatizing and discriminatory but serves as a major barrier to addressing the needs of people who use drugs.

In response to this situation, UNAIDS and UNODC jointly visited Chibolya on the 25th of March, followed by a visit to Sanity House, a Drug Addiction Treatment Centre in Lusaka, on the 26th of March. Sanity House offers a safe space and rehabilitation for drug users by providing medical, psycho-social and vocational training for drug addicts and by fostering a strong sense of community among the groups. The center has already transformed many lives by fostering a home-like institutional care for all its clients.

During the visit to Sanity House, the delegation met with both male and female recovery groups. Participants shared powerful personal stories about their journeys towards recovery, where stigma, family challenges, lack of law enforcement to curb drug availability and social isolation were possible triggers of addiction. Despite these obstacles, the community members also spoke of their resilience and hopes for the future, expressing the belief that the hardships they endured could serve a greater purpose in their lives.

The principals from both UNODC and UNAIDS expressed their admiration and support for the work being done by the mentors and community members and their commitment to advocating for the scale-up and financing of similar initiatives.

They emphasized the importance of safe, supportive environments where people who inject drugs can access services and reintegrate into society with dignity, health, strength, and hope.





A Transformative Journey into Behavioral Science for Climate Action in Zambia



In Zambia some community behaviors have exacerbated poor climate actions. The Facility for Action for Climate Empowerment to Achieve Nationally Determined Contributions (FACE-NDC) launched an innovative virtual Behavioral Science Training program.

This initiative successfully united 25 local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and youth groups in a shared commitment to environmental sustainability. FACE-NDC is a transformative project financed by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK), through the International Climate Initiative (IKI), and implemented by a consortium of partners composed of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Copperbelt University (CBU), and the University of Zambia (UNZA). The project aims to educate, train and empower all generations to confront climate change effectively.

Over the course of the training, 47 dedicated individuals immersed themselves in the principles of behavioral science, as an essential tool for reshaping community engagement with the climate crisis. The program combined insightful discussions, hands-on workshops, and expert-led sessions where participants explored the influence of behavioral science on mindsets to promote actions related to sustainability.

Langizya Masengu, the founder of the Zero Waste Organization, shared her thoughts after attending a recent behavioral science training. "The training was incredibly informative," she said, reflecting on the valuable insights she gained. "It offers an excellent additional concept that will help NGOs in the country connect more effectively with their target audiences."

Her excitement and commitment to spreading the knowledge within her organization highlight the training's impact and its potential to foster positive change across the sector. The program succeeded in illustrating how behavioral science can shift social norms, encouraging environmental stewardship as a collective priority.

A central focus of the training was cultural sensitivity and community acceptance. The program emphasized the importance of understanding local values and norms when crafting climate change messages. Participants learned to create outreach strategies that resonate with Zambia's diverse communities, ensuring that the promoted behavioral changes would be both effective and culturally appropriate. By embedding local practices and traditions into their messaging, the training fostered a sense of ownership among community members.

The training also drew attention to cultural norms within the context of climate change. Recognizing the disproportionate effects climate change has on women, and highlighting the importance of integrating gender considerations in education. Marvin Kapenda Behavioral Science Specialist articulated, "Involving everyone isn't just fair, it's essential. Their unique insights can lead to more effective and long-lasting solutions."

Equipped with actionable tools, participants were motivated to return to their communities with tailored

plans reflecting local needs and aspirations. Each organization crafted strategies that incorporated innovative outreach tactics and partnership-building initiatives. The training transcended theoretical learning, empowering participants to actively shape social norms and influence behaviors at the grassroots level.

Ultimately, the FACE-NDC initiative represents more than a series of training sessions; it is embodied on a commitment to a well informed and sustainable future for Zambia. By incorporating behavioral science into climate action strategies, the project is laying groundwork for a cohesive and culturally sensitive approach to environmental change.

Focusing on gender inclusivity and community-driven action, the project aims to empower local organizations to expand the climate narrative, ensuring that all voices regardless of gender are heard and acted upon. The ultimate goal is clear: to forge a sustainable and resilient future for Zambia and its communities.





President of Zambia, Hichilema Reaffirms Commitment to Youth Empowerment at Fourth Youth Indaba



President Hakainde Hichilema has called for young people across the country to embrace diligence, innovation, and discipline while steering clear of harmful activities such as drug abuse and violence. He said this during the Youth Day Commemorative Indaba, which was organized by the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts with technical support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Celebrated under the theme "Voices Amplified

and Innovations Ignited" President Hichilema reiterated his government's clear vision to double Zambia's economy, creating jobs and business opportunities for youths saying "we have introduced tailored policies to support youth empowerment, encouraging them to leverage initiatives in energy, agriculture, and other sectors to become innovative entrepreneurs.

Speaking soon after the UNDP Resident Representative, Mr. James Wakiaga who spoke on

behalf of United Nations (UN) Resident Coordinator in Zambia, Ms. Beatrice Mutali urged quasi-government institutions and the private sector to expand internship and mentorship opportunities, fostering a supportive ecosystem for Zambia's youths.

"To our young people, I want to emphasize the importance of hard work, integrity, and responsible behavior. Let us unite in building a stronger Zambia, where young people's dreams are nurtured and realized".

Ms Mutali, who also reiterated the UN's commitment to supporting youth empowerment and development in the country, commended Government for its steadfast leadership in prioritizing youth development. She called on the public and private sector stakeholders to create more opportunities that empower youth across various industries.

"This year's Youth Week has demonstrated the energy, creativity, and determination of Zambia's young people," she said. She further noted, "from crucial discussions on mental health and drug abuse, to entrepreneurship fairs and environmental stewardship activities, we have seen firsthand the potential of youth-led solutions to some of the most pressing challenges of our time."

She highlighted the progress made since the launch of Zambia's updated National Youth Policy in 2024, which has catalyzed key youth development initiatives, including the GRZ-UN Joint Programme on Youth, which has strengthened access to employment and economic opportunities for young people through initiatives such as the Internship, Volunteer, Apprenticeship, and Graduate (IVAG) Programme, the equipping of Youth Resource Centres, and the introduction of a Digital Platform for Youth, which was officially launched at the Indaba.

Ms Mutali recognized that there is still a lot more that needs to be done particularly considering the rapid technological changes, climate change and the global economy demand, "as we celebrate these successes, we must also recognize that more needs to be done. The rapid changes in technology, climate, and the global economy demands that we continue equipping our youth with the necessary skills and opportunities to thrive."

The United Nations expressed its commitment to work alongside the Government of Zambia, private sector, civil society and youth to ensure that no young person is left behind in the development process. Ms Mutali called for youths to seize the opportunities presented at the Indaba to transform ideas into tangible solutions that drive sustainable development in Zambia.



UN Zambia joins in commemorating the 2025 International Women's Day

The 2025 International Women's Day (IWD) commemoration under the theme: "For ALL Women and Girls: Rights, Equality and Empowerment," was held at Kasama Boys Secondary School, Kasama, a landmark event for the Northern Province, Zambia.

On 8th March 2022 at the Lusaka showgrounds during the National Commemorations of the International Women's Day, His Excellency the President of Zambia Hakainde Hichilema declared that to ensure inclusion, the National Commemorations of IWD will be held in all provinces of Zambia in a round robin manner. IWD is a global day to recognize and celebrate women's achievements and reaffirm the call for action to promote and protect their rights and rectify gender inequality, aligning with SDG5.

The UN Team led by the Resident Coordinator Beatrice Mutali, that included UNFPA Country Representative Seth Broekman, UNICEF Country Representative Penny Campbell and Isaac Ahemesah UNAIDS Representative were part of the commemorations in Kasama.

Delivering the keynote speech, His Excellency Hakainde Hichilema acknowledged that International Women's Day allows stakeholders to celebrate and reflect on progress made through specific measures towards achieving gender equality annually. He emphasized that gender equality advocacy is beyond debate, but a focus on implementation of measures and drivers towards gender equality.

The President said that inspired by the Beijing declaration, the country has made notable progress towards advancing gender equality including ensuring more girls are given opportunities to be in school through the free education policy and Constituency Development Fund supported skills development; deliberate recruitment of more women into the police service and national army; and, ensuring that all health facilities have maternity wings with running water in an effort to ensure that every child birth is safe.

President Hichilema thanked the UN Resident Coordinator Ms Mutali for acknowledging the progress that the government has made towards mainstreaming gender equality. He also acknowledged that more needs to be done, assuring the gathering that the country's leadership will ensure continued appointments of more women into positions of responsibilities including facilitating an enabling environment for their participation in politics. The President also pledged to ensure that all maternity wings have electricity either through the main or micro grid or through solar systems to enhance the safety of mothers and newborns.

In her remarks, Ms Mutali expressed pleasure at the launch of the Zambia Chapter of the African Women's Leadership Network (AWLN) in March 2024, with full support from the Government through the Office of the Vice President. The AWLN Zambia

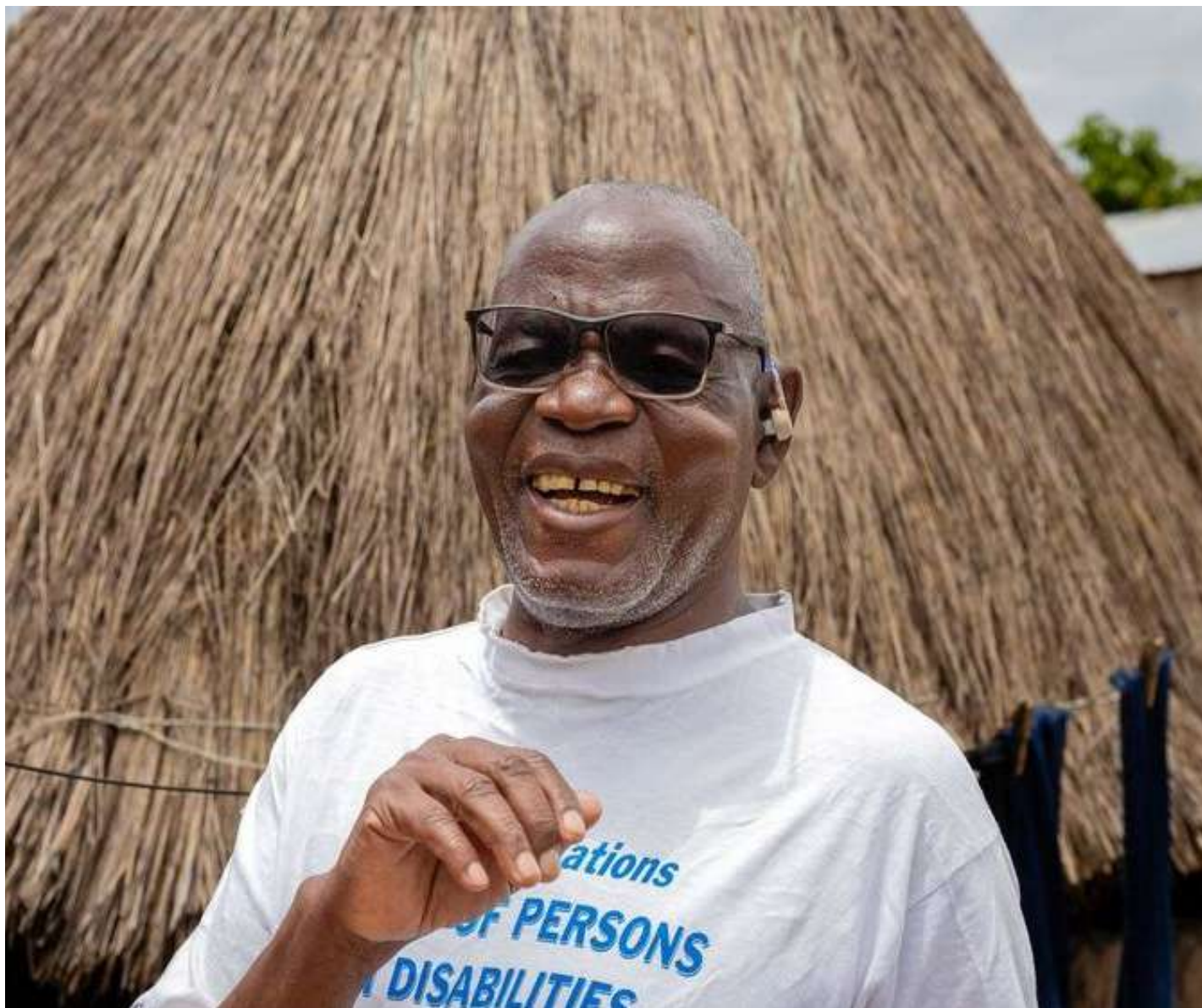


Chapter will enhance the transformative leadership of women in line with the Africa Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

She also affirmed that the UN System in Zambia, will continuously strive for action to lift the status of women and girls. Ms Mutali also commended Zambia's ratification and domestication of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the recent submission of reports to the CEDAW Committee. She recognized the positive steps taken towards implementing the Convention and related laws, including reforms to Customary Marriage Law and the implementation of

the National Gender Policy to address inequalities.

Ms Mutali revealed that the UN is embarking on the Spotlight Initiative 2.0, a high-impact intervention to end gender-based violence and harmful practices (including child marriage) against women and girls in Isoka and Chinsali districts in Muchinga Province. The Spotlight program adopts a Leave No One Behind approach, targeting the most vulnerable women and girls by addressing harmful gender norms, attitudes, and behaviors to prevent violence and advance gender equality and women's empowerment



From Struggle to Strength: How Social Protection Changed Mudekwa's Life

In the quiet fields of Kafue district, 70-year-old farmer Luka Mudekwa is living proof that support at the right time can be life-changing.

A father of six and grandfather of four, Mr. Mudekwa has spent most of his life growing maize to feed his family. But during tough seasons, food was scarce, and life was hard—until help came through Zambia's Cash Plus social protection programme.

This programme does not just give money but also connects beneficiaries to healthcare, farming support, and skills training.

Through the Single Window Initiative (SWI), he was enrolled in both the Social Cash Transfer programme and the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIMA). It brings services closer to communities and trains local teams to support people better.

"Before, I had to walk long distances just to get information," he says. "Now, government officers come to us. They explain everything and help us sign up."

Thanks to the cash support, Mr. Mudekwa was able to grow more maize and take better care of his family. And because of his hearing impairment, he qualified for NHIMA, which gave him access to free healthcare.

"I got free eyeglasses that helped me see clearly again," he shares. "Before, I couldn't afford medicine. I just had to live with the pain."

Mr. Mudekwa says the NHIMA registration was quick and easy. Within a week, he was receiving treatment—even before his card arrived. "I'm so grateful," he says. "Without this support, I wouldn't be able to work on my farm or care for my family."

Mr. Mudekwa's story shows how powerful social protection can be when services are brought together and made easy to access. Through the efforts of the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, and other partners, more people like Mr. Mudekwa are getting the help they need.

The SWI is part of the GRZ-UN Joint Programme on Social Protection, supported by the governments of the European Union and the governments of the United Kingdom, Ireland, Sweden and Switzerland.



UNFPA and MAZ reaffirm a simple but powerful truth: Midwives save lives!

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Midwives Association of Zambia (MAZ) have signed an agreement to strengthen the role of midwives in saving lives - particularly in humanitarian emergencies. This new partnership focuses on building midwives' capacity to deliver life-saving care through the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) and Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (EmONC), while also supporting advocacy for greater investment in midwifery-led primary health care.

Zambia has made commendable progress in reducing maternal and neonatal mortality, strengthening the midwifery workforce and expanding access to essential services. In the last three decades, maternal mortality rates have reduced by 75%, from 752 in 1994 to 187 per 100,000 in 2024. However, despite this progress, the gain falls short of the government's goal to reduce maternal mortality to 100 by 2021. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) global target for maternal mortality by 2030 is to reduce the global maternal mortality ratio (MMR) to less than 70 deaths per 100,000 live births.

Humanitarian and climatic initiated crises, such as floods, disease outbreaks, and the recently

experienced drought - the worst in 40 years and its effects, have highlighted the importance of resilience-building and emergency preparedness in health systems. These emergencies strain the health system and often interrupt access to essential health services including sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) information and services.

UNFPA and MAZ are acting to ensure that more midwives are trained, equipped and empowered to meet women's and newborns' needs, even in the most difficult circumstances.

"This partnership comes at a critical moment," said UNFPA Zambia Representative Seth Broekman. "Midwives can provide up to 90% of essential SRHR services. They are the frontline of care and often the only health provider a woman sees during pregnancy or childbirth, especially in times of crisis."

Echoing this sentiment, the President of MAZ, Sarah Ngoma "expresses deep gratitude for the capacity-building grant" stating that: "MAZ is committed to using the funds wisely to enhance Zambia's midwifery workforce and improve maternal and newborn health outcomes".

Through this agreement, MAZ will roll out targeted training on MISP and EmONC, focusing on critical

skills like safe delivery, antenatal and postnatal care and emergency response during natural disasters and health crises. These services are critical in protecting the lives of mothers and babies during emergencies. UNFPA is also supporting MAZ's efforts to advocate for increased domestic investment in midwifery and to amplify midwives' voices in national health policies. By strengthening MAZ's ability to mobilize support and resources, the partnership aims to ensure the long-term sustainability of midwifery services across the country.

This collaboration builds on a long-standing relationship between UNFPA and MAZ. Since helping establish the Association in 2011, UNFPA has supported the development of MAZ's strategic plan and promoted midwives' frontline insights in health policy dialogue. Zambia is currently working to formalize a national model of midwifery-led primary health care, recognizing midwives as central to achieving better health outcomes for women, newborns and communities.



The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Dialogue with Kabulonga Secondary School for Boys



On 21 May 2025, the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) Lusaka held an engaging outreach event at Kabulonga Secondary School for Boys under the theme "Acknowledge the past. Repair the present. Build a future of dignity and justice." Around 100 learners participated in an immersive program designed to educate, reflect, and inspire action on the Transatlantic Slave Trade and its modern-day implications.

Mark Maseko, UNIC Lusaka's National Information Officer, opened the discussion with a presentation detailing the horrors of the Transatlantic Slave Trade—the forced migration of millions of Africans, their inhumane treatment, and the generational impact. He emphasized the need to honor the victims and use history to forge a more equitable future. His message urged learners to draw connections between historical injustices and contemporary issues like inequality and modern slavery.

A highlight of the session came from Grade 11 learner Timothy Chibaya, who presented on the origins and effects of the slave trade, examining its motivations, cruelty, and long-term consequences on African communities. He also explored the realities of modern slavery in forms such as human trafficking, child labor, and domestic servitude. Chibaya passionately advocated for education, awareness, and ethical consumer choices, encouraging youth to report trafficking and stand against all forms of discrimination.

A short video followed, vividly portraying personal stories from enslaved individuals, deepening the emotional resonance of the session. It prompted

further reflection on the systemic dehumanization they endured and the legacy it left behind.

The event culminated in a lively question and answer session led by UNIC Lusaka Public Information Assistant, Charles Nonde. Learners asked insightful questions, addressing the economic roots of slavery, its psychological impact, and how youth today can challenge modern forms of exploitation. Their engagement demonstrated a keen interest in both historical understanding and social transformation. School Headteacher, Mrs. Gertrude Musiwa, remarked, "Empowering youth to engage with issues of justice and sustainability is key to shaping a more equitable tomorrow," reinforcing the importance of historical education and civic responsibility.

The theme of the event resonated throughout: acknowledging historical truth, repairing today's injustices, and envisioning a just future. Grade 11 learner, James Zulu, captured this spirit, saying, "We are the generation that can rewrite the future, one of peace, inclusion, and opportunity for all."

Wrapping up the day, history teacher Ms. Nakamba Suwilanji noted, "The youth are the architects of tomorrow's world. Empowering them with knowledge of our history helps shape a more just and inclusive future."

UNIC Lusaka's outreach at Kabulonga Boys successfully promoted historical awareness and civic engagement, equipping Zambia's youth with the tools to become agents of justice and change in their communities.

Luckson's Journey: A Mother's Hope and the Power of Support



How European Union and UNICEF Zambia are Transforming Lives of Malnourished Children in Zambezi District

Prisca is a mother whose love and determination has been her driving force. Her son, Luckson just 1 year old, is the real hero of this story, showing incredible strength as he faces the challenges of his young life. Together, they have faced challenges that many in the remote Kapombo village of Zambezi District could never imagine.

Zambezi, a picturesque region in Zambia's North Western Province, captivates with its lush trees, wide floodplains, and the shimmering river that gives the area its name. Despite its serene beauty and joyful sounds of children at play, the community faces significant challenges living in this remote area, where everyday life requires resilience and resourcefulness.

For Prisca, the journey to finding help for her son was one that took both time and unwavering resolve. At just 1 year and 1 month old, Luckson was already facing an uphill battle. Born with a leg condition that left the bones in his legs loose and weak, Luckson struggled to move or even sit up on his own. His world, up until now, had been limited to the few people and things he could reach in his small surroundings.

In February 2025, Prisca undertook a



two-day journey from Kapombo village to Chitokoloki Mission Hospital, hoping to find help for her son, Luckson. While she had believed his leg condition was the main issue, doctors discovered he was severely malnourished, weighing just 7.5 kilograms—far below the expected weight for his age. This diagnosis revealed a deeper struggle beyond his birth defect and reshaped Prisca's understanding of her son's health challenges.

Thanks to Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food, Luckson's health began to improve rapidly. His hair color returned to normal, his energy levels soared, and his playful spirit emerged, bringing unexpected joy to his mother, Prisca. The quiet child she once held was now full of life and movement.

Prisca gained more than medical support—she learned to nourish her son with homemade porridge, helping him regain strength and joy. Though his leg remains fragile, Luckson's renewed energy brings her hope for a brighter future. "I didn't realize how much his inactivity was linked to his malnutrition; I thought it was all because of his legs. Now I see how important it is to give him proper food to make him feel

better." Prisca expressed.

Thanks to the support of the European Union, many children like Luckson in Zambezi District are receiving the care they need. Through initiatives that address malnutrition exacerbated by the recent drought, over 1,527 children have been treated for malnutrition in the district, with 47,660 beneficiaries—children under five, as well as pregnant and lactating mothers—targeted in the drought response.

This initiative is part of a larger European Union-backed effort aimed at addressing the ongoing nutritional needs of Zambia's most vulnerable communities. Working together, UNICEF Zambia and its partners, including World Vision Zambia, continue to provide critical support, ensuring that children like Luckson have the chance to grow healthy, strong, and joyful, despite the obstacles they face.

For Prisca, the hope is simple but powerful: that Luckson will continue to receive the support and care he needs, allowing him to grow into the bright and energetic child he is meant to be.

New hope for youth and women: 96 graduates celebrate skills training milestone in Mazabuka



On 04 June 2025, joy and pride lit up the faces of 96 young men and women as they graduated from a transformative skills training programme supported by Zambia Sugar Plc and the International Labour Organization (ILO) at the colourful ceremony held at Mazabuka's Nakambala Community Hall. Among them were 19 students trained under the ILO's Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP), designed to create sustainable jobs for youth and women in Zambia.

The journey began in March 2020, under the ILO's Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA) funded project, "More and Better Jobs for Youth and Women," in partnership with the Government of Zambia, the National Council for Construction (NCC), and private sector partners like Lafarge Cement and Zambia Sugar Plc.

As part of their training, students helped construct a 140-metre demonstration road in Mazabuka's Lubombo community using cold mix asphalt and

cobblestone paving –innovative, labour-intensive methods that are now part of NCC's training curriculum.

Zambia Sugar Plc Managing Director, Mr. Oswald Mangwenzi, praised the collaboration.

"This partnership has helped us develop the skills of our local suppliers, especially as we begin upgrading 2,700 staff houses. We hope to continue training more people in the future," he said.

ILO Country Director for Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique, Mr. Wellington Chibebe, encouraged graduates to use their new skills to create jobs and start businesses.

"We want public and private investments to be not just economically productive, but socially transformative," he said, adding that Phase II of the EIIP is already in the works.

Mazabuka Town Clerk, Ms. Judith Mukwita-Maambo, expressed hope that the graduates would help the council better utilize the Constituency Development

Fund (CDF) and manage local projects more efficiently. "We now have a pool of skilled workers who can take on government projects without needing retraining," she said.

Graduate Loveness Nyirenda gave a heartfelt vote of thanks: "We are grateful to Zambia Sugar, NCC, and the ILO for believing in us. We are ready to use our skills to help develop our communities."

NCC Executive Director, Professor Paul Makasa, emphasized the importance of a skilled and resilient construction workforce.

"As Zambia expands its infrastructure, we must ensure our workers can deliver quality results on time and within budget," he said.

The graduates received certificates in various construction-related fields. Many are already applying their skills in real-world projects, including the ongoing upgrade of staff housing for Zambia Sugar employees.



Lions School for the Visually Impaired in Ndola celebrates International Albinism Awareness Day

In a powerful show of solidarity and advocacy, the Lions School for the Visually Impaired in Ndola hosted a vibrant outreach program to commemorate International Albinism Awareness Day (IAAD) under the global theme: "Demanding our rights: Protect our skin, Preserve our lives." The event gathered more than 100 students, educators, disability rights advocates, and UN partners in a powerful effort to amplify awareness and promote the rights of persons with albinism (PwA).

Spearheaded by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the UN Information Centre (UNIC) Lusaka, and the UN Zambia Leave No One Behind (LNOB) Theme Group, the outreach initiative aimed to educate young minds and confront the myths and persistent discrimination that stand in the way of PwA fully enjoying their rights in Zambia and beyond.

Speaking via a video message, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Zambia, Ms Beatrice Mutali, noted that many persons living with albinism in Zambia and elsewhere continue to face stigma, discrimination and violence fueled by harmful myths and misconceptions.

"As a community, we must remain resolute in standing together to fight for the rights, dignity and inclusion of persons with Albinism. This means rejecting false beliefs, promoting awareness and ensuring access and availability to essential healthcare like skin protection. Additionally, education and employment opportunities must be open to all, creating an environment where persons with Albinism can

thrive without fear."

The commemoration was marked by engaging visual presentations, an engaging question-and-answer session, and a touching testimony from one of the learners. The school was purposefully chosen for its inclusive environment, and diverse student body, which includes learners living with albinism.

Opening the event, Ms Sekani Bwalya from OHCHR emphasized the critical importance of the day's message, calling for immediate and sustained action to protect the rights and lives of PWA. She said that "Every person with albinism has the right to live free from fear, discrimination, and violence—human rights are for everyone, without exception."

The program highlighted the genetic nature of albinism, the serious health risks posed by exposure to the sun, and the deeply rooted harmful superstitions that have led to violence, exclusion, marginalization targeting persons with Albinism. The audience was reminded of the UN's ongoing commitment to protecting persons with Albinism through legal reforms, awareness-raising campaigns, and initiatives that promote their full inclusion and participation in society.

A teacher from Lions School, Mr. Dauti Chanda, reflected on the impact of the event, "Our students now understand that their condition is not a curse, but a part of their identity that deserves respect and protection. This program has empowered them to speak up and stand tall."

A learner, Victor Mwelwa who participated in the outreach said, "Sometimes people treat me differently because of how I look. But today, I feel

proud. I know I have rights, and I know I'm not alone."

In a generous gesture of support, Disability Rights Watch group and Cheshire Homes International donated sunscreen and protective hats to learners living with albinism—an essential step in helping them manage the health risks associated with their condition.

The event concluded with a collective call to action: to dispel myths, end discrimination, and ensure that no one is left behind as enshrined in the Pact of the Future.





A Breath of Hope: New Oxygen Plants Commissioned in Kabwe and Kasama



Zambia continues to make critical progress in strengthening its healthcare system, with the commissioning of two new medical oxygen production plants at Kabwe Central Hospital and Kasama General Hospital. These developments mark significant steps in the country's efforts to ensure access to life-saving oxygen therapy, especially for patients suffering from respiratory illnesses and those in emergency care.

The oxygen plant at Kasama General Hospital was officially commissioned on May 7, 2025, with the Kabwe Central Hospital facility following on June 16, 2025. These new plants are part of a larger USD 10.4 million project funded by The Global Fund and implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), in partnership with the Ministry of Health. UNOPS led the procurement, design, and construction of the plants, supporting the Ministry's mission to build a strong, self-reliant healthcare system across Zambia.

Speaking at both ceremonies, Minister of Health Hon. Dr. Elijah J. Muchima emphasized the symbolic and practical importance of these plants. "This plant breathes new life into Kabwe Central Hospital. It is a symbol of hope, a promise that every breath, every life, and every Zambian matters," he stated during the Kabwe launch. In Kasama, he expressed heartfelt gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Zambia under President Hakainde Hichilema, and to The Global Fund and UNOPS for their steadfast commitment to improving healthcare delivery. "Your commitment to the well-being of the people

of Zambia will make significant impacts in the fight against respiratory illnesses," he said.

Each oxygen plant is built with cutting-edge Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) technology, which extracts medical-grade oxygen from ambient air. Beyond the core production units, the projects include the full installation of oxygen distribution infrastructure—pipelines, manifolds, and backup generators to ensure uninterrupted service—as well as skip trucks to support the safe and efficient transport of oxygen cylinders to where they are needed most.

The Kabwe plant is designed to serve Central Province and surrounding areas, while the Kasama facility will provide critical oxygen support to Northern Province and neighboring regions. This brings the number of commissioned plants to three, with installations in Chinsali and Kalindawalo completed and awaiting

commissioning. Construction is also progressing at St Paul's Mission Hospital in Nchelenge.

UNOPS Director for Eastern and Southern Africa, Rainer Frauenfeld, reflected on the wider impact of the initiative, stating, "With each new facility, we are reinforcing the foundation of a stronger, more resilient health system—one that can respond swiftly to emergencies and serve communities sustainably."

He added that these developments are bringing Zambia closer to a future where no patient is left behind due to a lack of essential resources. These oxygen plants represent more than bricks and machines; they are lifelines.

As Zambia continues on its journey to strengthen healthcare for all, these investments will help ensure that every Zambian has access to the oxygen and care they need, when they need it most.





Rebuilding lives, one day at a time: A journey from addiction to recovery in Zambia

Nkumbu's Second Chance: From Addiction to Advocacy

At 24, Nkumbu has just finished a medical school exam in Lusaka. He's been sober for six months. "Six months ago, I was wandering the streets thinking: am I ever going to make it in life? But today, I'm here."

Growing up, he dreamed of becoming the first Medical Doctor in his family. But alcohol derailed him early. He began drinking in high school to ease social anxiety. "My first girlfriend, I met her while I was intoxicated, so I thought it worked." What began as weekend partying became daily dependence, leading him to drop out of medical school twice. Raised by his aunt after his parents' death, he recalls her heartbreak when he was suspended for drinking. "She didn't say a word on the drive home. That should have been the wake-up call." Instead, his life spiraled—until he found Sanity House.

A safe space to heal

Sanity House, in Lusaka, is a rehabilitation and harm reduction centre providing medical, psychosocial, and vocational services. Staff—many in recovery themselves—mentor clients, helping them heal and re-enter society with

dignity.

Routine testing there reveals HIV prevalence of 26% among people who use illicit drugs—more than double Zambia's national average of 11%. A 2022 survey found HIV prevalence among people who inject drugs (PWID) at 7.3% in Lusaka, 21.3% in Ndola, and 12.2% in Livingstone. According to UNAIDS, around 30,000 people injected drugs in Zambia in 2023, and 1.3 million were living with HIV. Yet harm reduction services remain scarce due to stigma, criminalization, and limited funding. In this context, Sanity House is reducing HIV risk, preventing addiction, and giving young people like Nkumbu another chance.

"Rehab is one day at a time. One day turns to 10, 10 turns to a month. And now, six months later, I'm back in class," he says. "Some of the people I drank with are dead, in prison, or struggling to continue their studies."

The power of community

At Sanity House, Nkumbu found hope. "Other patients reminded me how great I am. I began to see it again in myself and told myself: I got this." Now a youth advocate, he shares his story on Zambian television to raise awareness about youth and substance use.

House Manager Daniel Mbazima stresses that

"lasting change requires sustained community support and investment" and calls for linking recovery with HIV, TB, and hepatitis prevention and treatment. Stigma, he warns, is a major barrier to care.

Peer mentor Clinton Kruger, a former client, adds: "Recovery is possible. Don't give up on us. Sometimes, one person's care can be the light in the darkness."

UNAIDS and UNODC urge governments to decriminalize drug use for personal possession and scale up harm reduction services, such as needle exchange and overdose prevention.

Nkumbu's journey shows the power of second chances. "I could have caught HIV, or worse. But I didn't. I'm lucky. And now I get to help others."





Strengthening South-South Cooperation: UNAIDS Fosters Strong Partnership Between China and Zambia

On 28 May, UNAIDS Zambia hosted a delegation from the Chinese Association of STD and AIDS Prevention and Control (CASAPC) and the National Disease Control and Prevention Administration (NDCPA), accompanied by China CDC and the UNAIDS China Office. These are key institutions in China's HIV/AIDS response, and the visit marked a significant step in strengthening South-South cooperation between Zambia and China.

The visit followed UNAIDS Executive Director Winnie Byanyima's signing of two Memoranda of Understanding in July 2024, laying the groundwork for deeper collaboration between China and partner countries across the Global South. As a follow-up, CASAPC and China CDC organized a workshop for 16 UNAIDS-supported countries in September 2024.

This was followed by a one-week study tour to Malawi (25–28 May) and Zambia (28 May–1 June) with objectives to:

- Exchange knowledge and best practices in HIV prevention, treatment, management, and community outreach.
- Strengthen partnerships with African health organizations and communities.
- Gain cultural insights to inform future

cooperation.

- Build capacity by learning from African HIV/AIDS care and prevention models.

In Lusaka, the delegation met with the Ministry of Health's Permanent Secretary, the UN Resident Coordinator, the Chinese Ambassador, Zambia's UN Joint Team on HIV, and communities of people living with HIV and key populations. They toured the 1,200-bed Levy Mwanawasa Hospital—a vital facility in Zambia's COVID-19 response and rehabilitation services, supported by the Chinese Government.

Zambia showcased significant progress in its AIDS response, with new infections dropping from 28,000 in 2023 to 23,000 in 2024, thanks to innovations such as the rollout of long-acting injectable PrEP (Cabotegravir), expanded condom distribution, and community-led service delivery.

The country has surpassed the global 95-95-95 HIV targets, achieving 96-98-97 by 2024. However, funding cuts from major donors like USAID threaten these gains. The study tour allowed Zambia to share successes, discuss challenges, and explore collaboration with China in areas such as local pharmaceutical production and innovative health information systems.

China shared its experience using digital technologies to track and deliver health commodities to communities and its innovative financing models engaging the private sector, including pharmacies. CASAPC reaffirmed its role in advising the Chinese Government and pledged to advocate for investment in Zambia's pharmaceutical production. The Chinese Embassy has already pledged donations of HIV test kits, reagents, and lab equipment.

This visit went beyond diplomacy—it was a timely show of solidarity. As Zambia implements its newly launched Sustainability Roadmap, a partnership with China offers opportunities for sustainable support, innovation, and resilience. The Ministry of Health identified priority areas for collaboration, including strengthening health systems and laboratories, developing infrastructure, building the health workforce, and supporting local manufacturing of HIV commodities.

Facilitated by UNAIDS, this engagement has laid a strong foundation for deeper Zambia–China cooperation, with the potential to drive a more resilient, sustainable, and technology-driven HIV response in Zambia and across the region.



Zambia stands up for children: fighting child labour together



On June 12, 2025, children, parents, and leaders gathered at Munkuye Primary School in Nkeyema to mark the World Day Against Child Labour. The theme was: "Progress is clear, but there is more to do: Let's speed up efforts."

Labour and Social Security Minister, Ms. Brenda Tambatamba, said the government is working hard to stop child labour, saying that since 2021, more than 4,000 children have been removed from dangerous work in farms, mines, markets, and homes.

"We want every child to be safe, healthy, and in school," she said. "No child should be forced to work instead of learning and growing," Ms. Tambatamba said.

She said to help families, the government was giving support through programmes like Social Cash Transfer and Cash for Work to reduce poverty so that children do not engage in child labour.

Ms. Tambatamba asked communities, businesses, and leaders to work together to end child labour. She also encouraged children to report any abuse or forced work.

Western Province Minister, Mr. Kapelwa Mbangweta, also called on people in Nkeyema to protect children and keep them in school.

International Labour Organization (ILO) Social Protection Manager, Mr. Yu Jie Koh said the ILO has been supporting the country to revise the National

Action Plan II 2020-2025 to end the worst forms of child labour by 2025.

Chief Mwene Kahare of Nkeyema made a strong promise: "No child in my area will be stopped from going to school. Education is the key to ending poverty. Let's keep our children in class, not in the fields."

In a vote of thanks, Munkuye Primary School Grade Seven pupil, Karen Mukanka, encouraged her fellow learners to stay in school and avoid child labour.

"There are children who are working in the fields every day and missing school," said 13-year-old Karen. "Some of them have come back to school, and they want to become teachers."





Shaping the Global AIDS Strategy 2026-2031: Results from Zambia Country Consultations

On the 30th of April 2025, over 130 people gathered at the Taj Pamodzi Hotel in Lusaka, including high-level representation from the Government of Zambia, the UN Resident Coordinator, the Civil Society Self-Coordinating Mechanism (CSSCM), Constituencies of People Living with HIV (PLHIV), Key Populations, Youth, and People with Disabilities, for a national consultation on the next Global AIDS Strategy 2026-2031.

This event marked the culmination of a month-long, inclusive consultative process that engaged with more than 300 participants across six constituencies, through online and hybrid meetings: PLHIV & CSSCM, Key Populations, Youth, Civil Society, the HIV Technical Working Group, and the UN Joint Team on AIDS (JUNTA). The UCO team, supported by NAC and the JUNTA, engaged with participants asking them what the HIV response should look like in Zambia immediately, and in the next 5 years and beyond, looking at the successes and challenges encountered so far, and asking what roles the government and communities should play moving forward.

The consultation wasn't just a series of meetings to inform the strategy, it was a collective reaffirmation of Zambia's multisectoral commitment to ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030, despite the staggering financial pressure. Voices of People Living with HIV, Youth,

Key Populations, Civil Society took center stage in defining the recommendations.

The final National Consultation held on the 30th of April and led by the National HIV/STI/TB Council (NAC) and the Ministry of Health, with the support of UNAIDS, ensured that the recommendations were discussed across the different constituencies in Civil Society and the Government altogether, making this process truly multisectoral!

Focusing on Priorities: Results from the National Consultation

Fifteen key recommendations emerged from the National Consultation and are expected to inform the Global AIDS Strategy 2026-2031. These included the strengthening the community response at all levels through community-based approaches; enhancing HIV integration through technology, innovation, and digitalization; and increasing domestic financing via an AIDS fund, private sector engagement, and the promotion of local manufacturing of HIV-related commodities and supply chains.

A High-Level Commitment

We were pleased to have a high-level representation on our side. Hon. Douglas Syakalima, Minister of Education, provided remarks on behalf of the Minister of Health, emphasizing the urgent need to address Zambia's high rates of new HIV infections and the country's responsibility to safeguard future generations. UN Resident Coordinator Beatrice Mutali stressed the importance of using

the consultation to align the next Global AIDS Strategy with Zambia's national priorities and Sustainability Roadmap, ensuring no one is left behind. Julius Kachidzya, representing the Civil Society Self-Coordinating Mechanism, added the civil society perspective, urging increased domestic funding to prevent service disruptions and protect communities.

Lessons Learned

We stretched our small UCO team across multiple hybrid and online sessions, but the payoff was real, with better reach at every consultation, and a sense of country ownership at the national consultation that no single online consultation could achieve alone! Our approach showed that even with limited resources, thoughtful design and team collaboration can lead to inclusive and impactful engagement!



PHOTO FOCUS

The UN in Zambia acted swiftly and in unity to help fight Cholera



UN TEAM IN ZAMBIA



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