ZEMA Enviro-Line

A New Era for Environmental Impact Assessment in Zambia



IN THIS ISSUE

Zambia Launches First-Ever Digital Carbon Registry

Mining a Cleaner Future: planetGOLD Zambia Drives Mercury-Free Gold Sector

Served: A Round-Up of Successful ZEMA Court Prosecutions, 2025 – June 2026









Editorial Team

Editor-in-Chief:

Ruth Kanyanga Kamwi

Reviewers:

Benson Chongo, Tobias Kanyanga, Ruth W. Chalungumana, Mutale F. Chileshe

Contributors:

Mercy Zulu, Ruth W. Chalungumana, Mutale F. Chileshe, Dr. Charity Nalweya, Dalla Simasiku, Victor Kanguya, Mwenya Masabo, Mudenda Simwale, Jefferson Kapasa.

Contents

3 Acting Director General's Remarks

4 Editor's Remarks

5 A New Era For Environmental Impact Assessment In Zambia

8 Served: A Round-Up Of Successful ZEMA Court Prosecutions, 2025 – June 2026

9 From Crackdown To Care: ZEMA Hands Over Forfeited Goods To Zambia Correctional Service

11 Zambia's First National Environmental Laboratory: A Game Changer

14 Strengthening Climate Transparency And Unlocking Carbon Market Opportunities In Zambia

16 Zambia Launches First-Ever Digital Carbon Registry

18 ZEMA's Developmental Support Through Donor-Aided Projects

20 Mining A Cleaner Future: Planetgold Zambia Drives Mercury-Free Gold Sector

21 The Young Faces Shaping Zambia's Environmental Future

25 Beyond The Chalkboard: Why Environmental Education Is More Than Teaching And Talking

28 ZANEEP: Hope Rekindled

ACTING DIRECTOR GENERAL'S REMARKS



Dear Colleagues and Stakeholders,

It is my pleasure to introduce this Mid-Year 2026 edition of the Enviro-Line, which we share with both our staff and the many partners, regulated entities and stakeholders who work alongside us in advancing environmental management in Zambia.

The first half of the year has been one of strong delivery against our mandate. Our overall institutional performance for the second quarter of 2026 reflects the collective effort of employees across all Directorates and gives us a solid foundation on which to build for the remainder of the year. This has been underpinned by significant regulatory delivery: between January and June, the Agency considered 851 project applications and approved 808 across six sectors under the new Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2026 (Statutory Instrument No. 3 of 2026), while issuing 579 environmental licences against a Quarter 2 target of 375 bringing the cumulative total to 962 against our annual target of 1,500. Compliance monitoring kept pace, with 570 facilities inspected as at 30th June against an annual target of 630. Areas that continue to require our attention include the timeliness of our emergency response, the pace of Environmental Assessment reviews, and compliance with licence conditions among regulated facilities and we remain committed to improving on all three.

This has also been a period of deepening partnership. We are grateful to Government for its continued support of the Agency's work, to the European Union, FAO and the African Development Bank for their partnership on climate transparency, laboratory strengthening and chemicals management respectively, and to the financial institutions, cooperating partners and private-sector actors who feature in this edition, including planetGOLD Zambia and Teta Metal Limited for demonstrating what responsible, collaborative environmental stewardship looks like in practice.

Looking ahead, we are investing in the systems and capabilities that will let us serve stakeholders better: the ongoing rollout of a unified digital platform to strengthen our internal processes, continued progress toward operationalising the ZEMA Laboratory, and the technical capacity we are building in climate transparency and carbon markets through international certification and training programmes.

To our staff, thank you for your professionalism and dedication over the past six months. To our stakeholders and partners, thank you for your continued trust and collaboration. I have every confidence that, together, we will continue strengthening ZEMA into the responsive, innovative and high-performing environmental regulator that all Zambians deserve.

Christopher Kanema
Acting Director General
Zambia Environmental Management Agency

EDITOR'S REMARKS

A Half-Year of Reform, Resilience and Results



As we mark the midpoint of 2026, this edition of the Enviro-Line brings together the stories that, together, capture what the Agency has been building and enforcing over the past six months. We share it, as always, with our own staff and with the partners, regulated entities and stakeholders who follow the Agency's work closely.

The centrepiece of this half-year has been the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2026 (Statutory Instrument No. 3 of 2026), the most significant reform to Zambia's EIA framework in nearly three decades, a milestone that reshapes how the Agency approves and manages development across the country, and one you'll find covered in full, figures and all, in the feature story in this edition.

Regulation, however, means little without enforcement, and this edition's coverage of the Coco Foods case is a reminder that the Agency's mandate extends beyond approvals into holding non-compliant operators to account.

On the climate front, the launch of Zambia's Carbon Registry marks a genuinely historic step: a digital backbone that will bring transparency to how the country's carbon credits are tracked and traded, built in partnership with Sweden, Norway and Switzerland. Read alongside Dr Charity Nalweya's analysis of climate transparency and carbon markets, the two pieces together set out both the infrastructure and the thinking Zambia will need as it positions itself in this fast-moving space.

None of this work matters if it stays within the Agency's walls, which is why this edition also carries the voices reaching outward: the ZEMA Laboratory feature, the youth environmental education op-ed by Ruth W. Chalungumana, and the Environmental Education feature by Mutale F. Chileshe, which reminds us, in its own narrative voice, why this work is ultimately about the next generation.

This edition also carries two guest contributions from partners doing consequential work alongside the Agency. planetGOLD Zambia writes on its drive to formalise artisanal and small-scale gold mining and phase out mercury use, in "Mining a Cleaner Future: planetGOLD Zambia Drives Mercury-Free Gold Sector." And Teta Metal Limited shares its own story of turning electronic waste, once considered a liability, into a resource, in full compliance with the Agency's guidelines. Both are reminders that some of the most consequential environmental work happens well outside the Agency's own gates and that our role as regulator often means walking alongside partners doing that work on the ground.

To everyone who submitted a story, sat through a review sitting, or chased down a fact or a figure for this edition, thank you. This newsletter is only as strong as the departments willing to tell their own story honestly, and this edition has no shortage of that. And to our readers beyond the Agency, our partners, cooperating agencies and the stakeholders we regulate, thank you for the continued engagement and trust that make stories like this worth telling.

We welcome your feedback, as always, as we look ahead to the next edition.

Ruth Kanyanga Kamwi
Manager – Corporate Affairs

REGULATORY UPDATE

A New Era for Environmental Impact Assessment in Zambia

By Ruth Kanyanga Kamwi

New Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations replace a 29-year-old framework, introducing faster reviews, lower fees and revised penalties for non-compliance.



QUICK FACTS

Instrument: Statutory Instrument No. 3 of 2026

Effective date: 9 January 2026

Replaces: Environmental Protection and Pollution Control (EIA) Regulations, SI No. 28 of 1997

Enabling law: Environmental Management Act No. 12 of 2011 (as amended in 2023)

Key reforms: project classification introduced; impact-based fees; shorter timelines; revised penalties (K120,000 maximum fine); explicit power to cancel/suspend a decision letter

Projects approved (Jan–Jun 2026): 808 of 851 considered (95%) across mining, energy, infrastructure, manufacturing, agriculture/fisheries/forestry and tourism

In one of the most significant reforms to Zambia's environmental governance framework, the Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA) has promulgated the Environmental Management (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations, Statutory Instrument No. 3 of 2026. The new Regulations came into force on 9th January 2026, replacing the Environmental Protection and Pollution Control (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations, Statutory Instrument No. 28 of 1997, which had governed the country's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process for 29 years.

The reform eliminates a long-standing gap that had left the EIA process anchored in an older statute, even though the Agency's mandate changed in 2011 through the Environmental Management Act, Chapter 204 of the Laws of Zambia.

Why the reform was needed

Developers, investors, and communities had to navigate an EIA procedure created for a different age of development for almost thirty years. Since then,

Zambia's project landscape has undergone significant changes due to the expansion of mining and extractive sectors, the increased need for renewable energy, and the growth of new industries like electronic waste management, all of which need a more adaptable and contemporary regulatory framework.

What has changed

The new EIA Regulations have brought about the following significant changes:

- Introduced project classification - previously, projects were simply identified as Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or Environmental Project Brief (EPB). The new Regulations introduce, for the first time, a classification system under a revised First Schedule, determining both whether a project requires an EIA and the applicable review fees, based on its potential environmental and social impact.
- Reduced review fees - fees for Environmental and Social Project Briefs (ESPBs) and Environmental and Social Impact Statements (ESISs) are now calculated based on a project's anticipated environmental and social impact, rather than its total investment cost.
- Shorter review timelines - review processes have been streamlined to reduce turnaround time for developers awaiting a decision. ESPB reduced from 45 days to 25 days while ESIS reduced from 65 days to 35 days without public hearing and 45 days with public hearing.
- No objection - not all projects require an EIA; instead, upon screening, ZEMA can issue a no objection. For example, solar power generation below 10MW, or installation of telecommunication towers.
- Revised penalties for non-compliance - the previous fine cap of 556 penalty units, set in 1997, had long lost much of its deterrent effect; the maximum fine has been revised to K120,000, an increase of K20,000. ZEMA now has an explicit power under the EIA Regulations to cancel or suspend a decision letter as an additional sanction.

What it means for project developers

For project developers, the reform is straightforward: cheaper EIA fees and shorter ZEMA decision timelines mean doing business in Zambia is now more affordable - without compromising on environmental and social safeguards.

By the numbers: EIA decisions, January to June 2026

In the first half of the year under the new Regulations, ZEMA considered 851 project applications across six sectors, approving 808, a 95% approval rate - while 22 were rejected and 21 deferred pending further information.

Sector	Considered	Approved	Rejected	Deferred
Mining / Prospecting	392	366	17	9
Energy	150	146	2	2
Infrastructure Development	129	122	1	6
Manufacturing / Processing	139	136	1	2
Agriculture / Fisheries / Forestry	31	28	1	2
Tourism	10	10	0	0
Total	**851**	**808**	**22**	**21**

A total of 851 applications were considered, of which 808 (94.9%) were approved, 22 (2.6%) were rejected and 21 (2.5%) were deferred pending further information.

Mining and prospecting accounted for the largest share of applications, at 392 (46.1% of the total), reflecting continued investor interest in Zambia's extractives sector. Of these, 366 (93.4%) were approved, 17 (4.3%) were rejected and 9 (2.3%) were deferred. The sector accounted for 17 of the 22 rejections (77.3%).

Energy followed with 150 applications (17.6%). Of these, 146 (97.3%) were approved, 2 (1.3%) were rejected and 2 (1.3%) were deferred.

Manufacturing and processing recorded 139 applications (16.3%). Of these, 136 (97.8%) were approved, the highest approval rate among the larger sectors, while 1 (0.7%) was rejected and 2 (1.4%) were deferred.

Infrastructure development accounted for 129 applications (15.2%). Of these, 122 (94.6%) were approved, 1 (0.8%) was rejected and 6 (4.7%) were deferred.

Agriculture, fisheries and forestry had 31 applications (3.6%). Of these, 28 (90.3%) were approved, 1 (3.2%) was rejected and 2 (6.5%) were deferred, the highest deferral rate of any sector.

All 10 tourism applications (1.2% of the total) were approved.

Across all sectors, the high approval rate reflects both the volume of compliant submissions and the efficiency gains introduced by the new Regulations.

A milestone for sustainable development

The Agency promulgated the new Regulations as part of its ongoing efforts to strengthen Zambia's environmental management framework.

Speaking on the significance of the reform, ZEMA Acting Director General Christopher Kanema said:

"This new regulation gives project proponents an opportunity to consider not just the environmental impact of their investments, but the social impact as well. By classifying projects according to their environmental and social impact — rather than their investment cost — the Regulations place a premium on sustainable development that safeguards the interests of current and future generations."

The new Regulations reaffirm ZEMA's commitment to being a world-class, service-centred regulator, balancing the ease of doing business with the protection of Zambia's environment for current and future generations, in line with the Agency's mandate under the Environmental Management Act.

For more information on the Environmental Management (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations, 2026, visit www.zema.org.zm or contact the ZEMA Corporate Affairs Unit.

Served: A Round-Up of Successful ZEMA Court Prosecutions, 2025 – June 2026

From cease-operation orders to conviction and fines exceeding K1.4 million, ZEMA's Directorate of Legal Services has secured a string of successful prosecutions over the past year — a reminder that non-compliance with environmental law in Zambia carries real consequences.



Between 2025 and June 2026, ZEMA's Directorate of Legal Services (DLS) successfully prosecuted five separate matters against companies found in breach of the Environmental Management Act and its Regulations - securing convictions, fines, and, in one case, the forfeiture of goods to the State. Together, these cases sent a clear message to industry: cease-operation orders, compliance orders and EIA approval requirements are not optional.

The People v. Coco Foods

Coco Foods Enterprises Limited was prosecuted for failing to comply with an Order to Cease Operations and for operating without ZEMA approval. The company was convicted on both counts and fined a total of K220,000, which it paid. ZEMA further secured a court order forfeiting the company's seized goods the State - including carbonated drinks, cases of juices, water, cup juices and biscuits which the Agency donated to the Zambia Correctional Service. (Full story elsewhere in this edition.)

The People v. Golden Eagles Recycling Company Limited and Huang Zhiyong

Golden Eagles Recycling Company Limited and its director, Huang Zhiyong, were indicted on two counts of contravening a cease-operations order and implementing a project without approval. On 1st April 2026, both were convicted and fined a total of K250,000, which was paid in full.

The People v. Dashun Company Industry

Following an inspection by the Directorate of Licensing and Compliance Services, Dashun Company Industry was indicted on three counts: contravening a prescribed measure, failing to comply with a compliance order, and implementing a project without concluding the EIA process. The company was convicted on all three counts and fined K250,000, K100,000 and K100,000 respectively - a cumulative K450,000. Notably, this was the second successful prosecution against the company: an earlier matter had already resulted in a conviction and a K200,000 fine, also paid in full.

The People v. Avocado Mining Limited

Avocado Mining Limited was prosecuted for failing to comply with a Compliance Order. The company was convicted and fined K140,000, which it paid accordingly.

The People v. Yongly Investments Limited

Yongly Investments Limited was prosecuted for failing to comply with a Compliance Order and was likewise convicted and fined K150,000, paid in full.

From Crackdown to Care: ZEMA Hands Over Forfeited Goods to Zambia Correctional Service

By Ruth Kanyanga Kamwi



A year-long compliance case against Coco Foods Enterprises Limited ended not in a courtroom footnote, but in a warehouse full of biscuits and beverages finding new purpose, feeding inmates who, in some cases, have not tasted a soft drink or a biscuit in over a decade.

The Morning Enforcement On Camera

It is not every day that the public sees a ZEMA inspector effect an arrest. Most enforcement unfolds quietly, no cameras, no headlines, just the serious, unglamorous business of a regulator holding a non-compliant client to account. But when defiance threatens to spill into public unrest, ZEMA moves differently. It acts, and it lets the outcome be seen.

That moment arrived on 29th October 2025, when ZEMA arrested one of the Coco Foods Enterprises Limited managers, pursuant to Section 16 of the Environmental Management Act.

This marked the opening of a court case that would end in conviction. Coco Foods Enterprises Limited was found guilty on two counts: failing to comply with an Order to Cease Operations, and operating without ZEMA's approval. The company was fined and paid **Two Hundred and Twenty Thousand Kwacha (ZMW220,000.)**

The Case: A Year of Non-Compliance

The story, however, began long before the handcuffs. It traces back to 19th June 2025, when ZEMA issued Coco Foods Enterprises Limited a Demand Letter after the company pressed ahead with a project requiring a Project Brief, without first concluding the Environmental Impact Assessment process , a breach of Regulation 3, read together with Regulation 34(1) (g), of the EIA Regulations, SI No. 28 of 1997.

Four days later, on 23rd June 2025, Coco Foods Enterprises Limited was formally served an Order to Cease Operations. The company admitted guilt and paid the prescribed fine. Then, on 20th October 2025, during a stakeholders meeting, it was given a further directive to obtain ZEMA's approval and install proper pollution controls before resuming operations.

The instruction went unheeded. An inspection just over a week later, on 28th October 2025, found the facility running in open defiance of the Order to Cease Operations, a case of wilful, deliberate non-compliance that left ZEMA with little choice but to take further action. The following day, inspectors seized the company's goods and arrested one of the managers. ZEMA prosecuted the matter, and the court ruled decisively in the Agency's favour.

What Was Seized and What Happened Next

The scale of what was recovered was staggering: more than 27,700 cases and 3,200 bottles of beverages, alongside at least 10,400 boxes of biscuits and 10,800 packets of biscuits. The total value of the products recovered was estimated at a whopping Two Million Four Hundred Sixteen Thousand Eight Hundred Ninety-Nine Kwacha (ZMW2,416,899) according to the records obtained for the company. In line with the court order and public health requirements, every expired or unsafe beverage was destroyed by ZEMA.

Turning Enforcement into Impact

Not everything was lost. A significant portion of the seized stock remained wholesome and fit for consumption. The National Food Laboratory confirmed it was safe, and the ZEMA Board approved its redirection for public benefit to the Zambia Correctional Service.

"Today, we handover the certified items to the Zambia Correctional Service to support inmates feeding programmes. This outcome turns regulatory enforcement into social protection," said ZEMA Board Chairperson, Auditor Mazuba, who presided over the handover ceremony.

Addressing the Correctional Service as receiving partners, the Board was assured that the goods would reach their intended beneficiaries.

For Zambia Correctional Service Commissioner General, Fredrick Chilukutu, the donation carried real weight. He was visibly elated to receive the items on behalf of the Commission.

"The gesture will go a long way in feeding the inmates. Some have been in prison for over ten years and have not had such kind of drinks or biscuits," he said.

A Second Act of Empowerment

The story did not end with drinks and biscuits. As ZEMA disposed of the expired beverages, the empty bottles were also put to good use. The bottles were donated to Manja Pamodzi, a recycling organisation made up mostly of women waste pickers.

Even the waste from this case ended up helping people, not just inmates, but women and young people earning a living too.

A Message to Industry

The Board used the occasion to deliver a pointed message to every licensed facility in Zambia: "comply with licence conditions and the law, or face prosecution, forfeiture, and the loss of business".

Case Closed, Site Cleared

Reaffirming the Agency's resolve to protect the environment, safeguard public health, and ensure that the law works for the people of Zambia, a case that began with a warning, and ended with biscuits and beverages reaching a prison cell, and bottles reaching a recycling facility was fully close out.





Zambia's first national environmental laboratory: A Game Changer

By Dalla Simasiku

Zambia's new national environmental laboratory is putting scientific evidence at the heart of how the Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA) monitors pollution, enforces compliance, and protects public health.

QUICK FACTS

Located at ZEMA's Northern Region Office, Ndola.

Handed over to ZEMA on 16th October 2024; built with World Bank support under Zambia Mining and Environmental Remediation and Improvement Project (ZMERIP).

Four specialized labs: General Chemistry, Inorganic Chemistry, Organics, and Microbiology - plus Ambient Air Quality Monitoring.

Full commissioning scheduled for January 2027.

Achieved 95% accuracy for pH and 84% for Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) and Electrical Conductivity (EC) against an accredited reference laboratory.

Joined 200+ labs worldwide in UNEP's Fifth Global Interlaboratory Assessment for POPs and Mercury.

Laboratory accreditation (ISO/IEC 17025:2017) targeted for Year 3 of operations.

A Milestone for Environmental Science in Zambia

For decades, Zambian companies needing specialized environmental testing services have had limited options among them, sending samples abroad. This works, but it is slow and expensive; export permits, international shipping, customs clearance, and long turnaround times, adding to the cost of doing business. The Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA) is changing that.

The ZEMA Laboratory, based at the Agency's Northern Region Office in Ndola, is Zambia's first national environmental laboratory. Established under the Environmental Management Act (Chapter 204 of the Laws of Zambia), which mandates ZEMA to run analytical laboratories, set analytical methods, monitor pollutants, and promote research into pollution's impact on health and ecosystems, the facility gives the country something it has never had before: in-house scientific capacity to verify the state of its own air, water and soil.

Built with support from the World Bank under the Zambia Mining and Environmental Remediation and Improvement Project (ZMERIP), the laboratory was officially handed over to ZEMA on 16th October 2024.

Four Labs Under One Roof

Housed in a modern, double-story facility, the laboratory is designed as a national and regional center of excellence. It is organized into four specialized units, each targeting a different layer of environmental risk:

- General Chemistry - tests core water quality indicators like pH, electrical conductivity, total dissolved solids and hardness.
- Inorganic Chemistry - detects heavy metals such as lead, mercury and manganese, along with nutrients like nitrates and phosphates.
- Organics - screens for pesticide residues, persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and antibiotic residues in environmental and food samples.
- Microbiology - tests for Escherichia coli (E. coli), faecal and total coliforms, and cholera - a strategic public health indicator.

A fifth capability, Ambient Air Quality Monitoring, extends the laboratory's reach beyond water and soil into the air Zambians breathe. All major equipment across all four (4) laboratories has already been procured and delivered, with full commissioning and operationalization scheduled for January 2027.

Proven Accuracy, from Day One

Numbers matter more than intentions in laboratory science, and the ZEMA Laboratory's first major field test delivered a strong result. As part of the Copperbelt Hotspot Pollution Mapping Exercise, the laboratory analysed water samples collected from rivers and

streams across Copperbelt Province, alongside an independent accredited private laboratory running the same samples for comparison.

The outcome: 95% accuracy for pH, and 84% accuracy for both total dissolved solids and electrical conductivity, closely matching the accredited lab's findings - a strong early validation of the laboratory's procedures, quality control, and staff competency.

That credibility rests on a quality management system built around ISO/IEC 17025:2017, the global benchmark for testing and calibration laboratories. Every test method the laboratory runs will be validated against this standard, with formal accreditation targeted for the laboratory's third year of operation - the point at which its results carry full international recognition as accurate, reliable and legally defensible.



From Internal Testing to National Service

The laboratory's first real client was ZEMA itself. From 2nd June 2025, it began providing analysis for the Agency's own Compliance Monitoring Unit - initially covering four core water quality parameters: pH, electrical conductivity, total dissolved solids and turbidity. As the facility moves toward full operationalization, that scope will widen to cover chemical pollution indicators, priority toxic contaminants, and microbiological indicators.

The next phase reaches further: opening the laboratory's services to external clients - mining companies, industry, environmental consultants, researchers, government agencies and private individuals - who currently have no choice but to look abroad for specialized testing. For businesses working to meet Zambia's environmental licensing conditions, that means faster answers, lower costs, and one less reason to send samples across borders.

A Seat at the Global Table

Zambia's environmental commitments don't stop at its borders. As a party to Multilateral Environmental Agreements including the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the country needs laboratory data that the rest of the world trusts. The ZEMA Laboratory has already taken a step in that direction, joining more than 200 laboratories worldwide in the UN Environment Programme's Fifth Global Interlaboratory Assessment for POPs and Mercury - a global quality-assurance exercise that puts Zambian data on the same table as the rest of the worlds.

Why This Matters for Zambia's Future?

Zambia's economic trajectory more mining, more agriculture, more energy development, more manufacturing and value addition makes environmental oversight more important, not less. As ZEMA works to streamline Environmental Project Briefs, Environmental Impact Statements, and licensing processes, the laboratory becomes a strategic asset: a way to verify environmental data faster, support enforcement action, and back up pollution cases with scientific evidence that holds up in court.

Ultimately, the case for the laboratory is a simple one. Environmental health and human health are not separate stories - they are the same story. By generating reliable, defensible data, the ZEMA Laboratory will shape policy, sharpen enforcement, and help safeguard something that belongs to every Zambian: the right to a clean, safe and healthy environment.

Strengthening Climate Transparency and Unlocking Carbon Market Opportunities in Zambia

By Dr. Charity Nalweya

Zambia's first Biennial Transparency Report is more than a UNFCCC filing obligation - it is the foundation for credible carbon market participation and climate finance.

Zambia is strengthening its climate governance and accountability systems following the submission of its first Biennial Transparency Report (BTR1) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in November 2025, and is now preparing for the next reporting cycle which includes the Second Biennial Transparency Report (BTR2) and the Combined Third Biennial Transparency Report and Fourth National Communication. Together, this work marks an important step in the country's transition to the Enhanced Transparency Framework under the Paris Agreement, which aims to build and enhance transparency on climate action and support under the UNFCCC. Biennial Transparency Reports are the backbone of the Paris Agreement, built to establish trust and confidence that all countries are contributing their share to the global effort of combating climate change.

Transparency, therefore, is more than a reporting obligation. It is increasingly becoming a strategic asset for climate action, investment, and participation in international carbon markets. The BTR process is helping the country strengthen the systems needed to generate reliable climate data, coordinate climate action across sectors, identify implementation gaps, and track progress towards national climate commitments highlighted in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). It also highlights the importance of stronger greenhouse gas inventories, data management, measurement, reporting and verification, quality control and quality assurance systems, and institutional coordination, all of which are critical to credible carbon markets.

From Transparency to Carbon Market Opportunities

Under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, Zambia signed bilateral cooperation agreements with Norway and Sweden in November 2024 , Switzerland in November 2025 and a memorandum of understanding with Singapore in November 2025 to facilitate cooperation on mitigation activities, in line with the rules of the Paris Agreement, the Green Economy and Climate Change Act, the carbon market regulations and framework, and the appropriate safeguards set out in the Environmental Management Act, these partnerships are expected to mobilise investment in sectors with significant mitigation potential, including renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable agriculture, forestry and land use, waste management, and transport while strengthening the adaptive capacity and resilience of these sectors. Under the Zambia-Norway Bilateral Agreement, a Mitigation Outcome Purchase Agreement (MOPA) in January 2026 was signed, leading to the launch of the Carbon-Feed-In Premium program aimed at unlocking and accelerating renewable energy investments through international carbon markets. The program will generate a total of 300 MW renewable energy that will be feed to the national grid.

A key development in Zambia's carbon market is the operationalisation of the sovereign digital national carbon registry infrastructure, managed by the Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA). The registry, together with a clear regulatory framework governing the authorisation, accounting, and reporting of mitigation outcomes, will strengthen transparency and provide greater investor certainty in the carbon market space. The application of corresponding adjustments, and reporting through the Biennial Transparency Report, will further support the integrity and credibility of mitigation outcomes transferred internationally.

The Agency is working towards building stronger national transparency systems to reinforce this investor confidence, by demonstrating that emission reductions and removals are measurable, credible, and properly accounted for.

The opportunity, however, is not simply to generate and sell carbon credits, but to mobilise finance for projects and programmes that support Zambia's development priorities, while delivering measurable climate benefits through bilateral cooperation in international carbon markets, in line with Governments Grow Zambia 2026 - 2031 Agenda



Making Carbon Markets Work for National Development

Carbon market participation can support implementation of Zambia's NDC by helping finance mitigation actions, encouraging private sector investment, and accelerating the transition towards a low-emission economy. To achieve this, carbon market activities must be aligned with national priorities and supported by strong environmental and social safeguards. Mitigation outcomes need to be credible, appropriately accounted for, and protected against double counting. Equally important are stakeholder participation, social and environmental safeguards, and fair benefit-sharing arrangements, so that carbon market revenues contribute to inclusive development.

Bilateral agreements can also serve as platforms for technology transfer, technical cooperation, capacity building, and investment. They can strengthen domestic expertise in carbon market monitoring and verification, while creating partnerships among government, business, financial institutions, communities, and development partners.

Turning Transparency into Investment

As Zambia prepares for its next transparency cycle, the priority will be to ensure that climate information does not remain confined to reports. The data contained in Biennial Transparency Reports should inform national planning and budgeting, investment decisions, sector programmes, and carbon market strategies. Reliable climate information can reduce uncertainty for investors and international partners by clearly demonstrating the country's emission trends, mitigation potential, climate risks, and financing needs.

The stronger the country's ability to measure, verify and demonstrate results, the better positioned it will be to attract high-quality climate finance and responsible carbon market investments.

Therefore, the Biennial Transparency Reports is an economic and climate development asset and not merely a reporting obligation. Building on BTR1 and advancing preparations for the next reporting cycle, the country can strengthen the foundations for credible Article 6 cooperation, unlock new sources of climate finance, and attract investments that support national priorities. With robust governance, credible accounting, and strong environmental and social safeguards, carbon markets can become more than a source of finance, a catalyst for resilient, low-emission, and climate-informed development in Zambia.

Zambia Launches First-Ever Digital Carbon Registry

By Victor Kanguya

A new sovereign digital platform gives Zambia the infrastructure to register, track and report carbon projects transparently - and positions ZEMA at the centre of the country's emerging carbon-market governance.



QUICK FACTS

- Launched 7th August 2026 by the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment and ZEMA
- Zambia's first sovereign digital National Carbon Registry
- Supports compliance with the Green Economy and Climate Change Act and Article 6 of the Paris Agreement
- ZEMA is host and administrator, responsible for project registration, credit issuance, tracking and reporting
- Publicly accessible at registry.zema.org.zm
- Underpins upcoming bilateral Article 6 carbon transactions with Sweden, Norway and Switzerland
- Built through South-to-South cooperation with Ghana's Environmental Protection Agency
- Funded by the German Government's International Climate Initiative; led by the Global Green Growth Institute with GFA Consulting Group and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Copenhagen Climate Centre

A New Digital Backbone for Zambia's Carbon Market

On 7th August 2026, the Government of Zambia, through the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment and the Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA), launched the country's first digital National Carbon Registry, a major step toward transparent, secure and high-integrity participation in international carbon markets.

The registry gives Zambia sovereign digital infrastructure for registering carbon projects and for tracking, managing and reporting the greenhouse gas emission reductions they generate. It supports compliance with Zambia's Green Economy and Climate Change Act (Act No. 18 of 2024), national carbon-market regulations (SI No. 25 of 2026), and Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.

Open to the public, the platform makes key information on Zambia's carbon-market activity visible and traceable; strengthening public confidence, giving investors and project developers greater certainty, and reducing the risk of double issuance and double counting of credits.

ZEMA's Role as Host and Administrator

Zambia's Carbon Market Framework places responsibility for managing the National Carbon Registry with ZEMA, which also compiles the country's greenhouse gas inventory. The framework has the registry performing core functions: project registration, carbon-credit issuance, tracking and reporting and folds the platform into Zambia's wider Integrated Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (iMRV) system.

As host and administrator, ZEMA is responsible for maintaining the platform and protecting the credibility of the information and carbon assets recorded within it, overseeing project records, monitoring the status of mitigation activities, and maintaining accurate data on emission reductions, credit issuances and transfers. The Agency will also help ensure that credits exported from Zambia are properly accounted for as Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes under Article 6.

"As the host agency entrusted with maintaining and administering the national registry system, ZEMA is committed to ensuring that the registry operates to the highest standards of integrity, security, transparency and reliability," Christopher Kanema, Acting Director General, ZEMA

Why Transparency Matters

The registry strengthens regulatory oversight by creating an auditable record of carbon-market activity. Government agencies, project developers, investors and members of the public will all be able to follow a project's progress and review the information the platform makes available.

That transparency matters even more as Zambia prepares to undertake carbon transactions under bilateral Article 6 cooperation agreements with Sweden, Norway and Switzerland.

"We will ensure that all activities conform to the provisions of Zambia's Green Economy and Climate Change Act and the Paris Agreement, and that actions related to our carbon credits are visible and can be reviewed by members of the public," Dr Douty Chibamba, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Green Economy and Environment

What's Next?

The registry's launch is a milestone, but also a foundation. The next phase focuses on developing and operationalising Zambia's iMRV system, to which the registry will connect, letting carbon-market information flow into the country's wider greenhouse gas accounting and climate-reporting processes.

Where the registry records projects, emission reductions, credits and transfers, the iMRV system will bring together climate data from across Zambia's economic sectors, enabling the country to monitor emissions and mitigation measures, assess progress toward its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and produce transparent reports under the Paris Agreement's Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF).

For ZEMA, the iMRV system marks an expansion of its role, from administering individual carbon-market records to coordinating an integrated national climate-data architecture, requiring common data standards and reliable reporting arrangements with ministries, local authorities, project developers and other data-producing institutions.

The registry is also expected to become interoperable with the UNFCCC's Centralised Accounting and Reporting Platform, facilitating the exchange of information on mitigation activities and internationally transferred outcomes while strengthening safeguards against double counting. Future development will extend registry coverage to voluntary carbon-market activities as well.

Built Through African Partnership

The registry was developed through South-to-South cooperation with Ghana's Environmental Protection Agency, a demonstration of African institutions sharing technical expertise and practical experience in carbon-market development.

Its establishment was supported by the Supporting Preparedness for Article 6 Cooperation programme (SPAR6C), funded by the German Government through the International Climate Initiative, led internationally by the Global Green Growth Institute, and implemented in Zambia with support from GFA Consulting Group and the UNEP Copenhagen Climate Centre.

Accessing the Registry

With the registry now operational, Zambia has moved from developing carbon-market policy to building the infrastructure needed to implement it. The next test will be building the iMRV system around this foundation, so that high-quality information supports every stage of Zambia's climate action, from individual projects to national and international reporting.

Visit the registry: registry.zema.org.zm

ZEMA's Developmental Support Through Donor-Aided Projects



The Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA) implements projects on behalf of Government in order to enhance development. Through the implementation of these projects, institutional capacities are strengthened, translating into stronger public sector capacity and reinforced national ownership.

Project implementation supplements the Agency's mainstream programmes and activities, particularly where domestic resources are not sufficient — work that resonates with both national and international development goals.

ZEMA is currently implementing more than 15 projects, supported by a range of funders. The Agency provides technical support and oversight throughout, particularly where it acts as focal point for jointly implemented projects. Working jointly with selected stakeholders who are party to a given project gives the Agency an opportunity to deliver on shared objectives, strengthening effectiveness in public service provision.

Projects Currently Under Implementation

SN	Project	Objective	Funder(s)/ Host	Implementation Partner
1	Enabling Activities for Zambia's Initial Biennial Transparency Report and Fourth National Communication to the UNFCCC	Prepare Zambia's first Biennial Transparency Report and Fourth National Communication (BTR1/ NC4) to the UNFCCC	UNEP	Ministry of Green Economy and Environment (MGEE)

SN	Project	Objective	Funder(s)/ Host	Implementation Partner
2	Eastern Province Jurisdictional Sustainable Landscapes Project (EPJSLP)	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from land use while improving rural livelihoods and conserving natural resources in Eastern Province, generating verified emission reductions distributed under an agreed Benefit Sharing Plan	Ministry of Green Economy	
3	Initiative for Climate Action Transparency (ICAT)	Strengthen countries' capacity to measure, track, report and verify the impact of climate policies and actions, supporting transparency and ambition under the Paris Agreement	ZEMA/ UNEP — MoU between ZEMA and UNOPS	
4	Sustainable Landscape through Integrated Management (SLIM)	Strengthen ecosystem resilience and improve local livelihoods through Integrated Landscape Management	DAPP	
5	Programme for Integrated Development and Adaptation to Climate Change in the Zambezi Watercourse (PIDACC Zambezi)	Strengthen the resilience of Zambezi River Basin communities to climate and economic shocks through integrated, inclusive investments and ecosystem-based solutions	Ministry of Agriculture	
6	Montreal Protocol Programme on the Phase-Out of Ozone-Depleting Substances (ODS)	Phase out ozone-depleting substances in Zambia in support of global ozone layer protection	UNEP and UNIDO	
7	Review and Update of the National Implementation Plan (NIP) for the Stockholm Convention on POPs	Support implementation of the Stockholm Convention through development, review and update of Zambia's National Implementation Plan		
8	Environmentally Sound Plastic Management Project (ESPMP)	Protect human health and the environment from plastic waste, in support of relevant SDG targets	Norwegian Agency for Development (Norad), UNEP and Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS)	
9	Special Programme	Strengthen institutional capacity for sound chemicals and waste management, including GHS implementation, legislative reform, emergency response capacity and sustainable financing mechanisms	UNEP	

SN	Project	Objective	Funder(s)/ Host	Implementation Partner
10	E-Mobility	Support the transition from fossil-fuel-based transport to electric mobility, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution	UNEP	
11	planetGOLD	Reduce mercury use in Zambia's artisanal and small-scale gold mining sector through formalisation, access to finance, and mercury-free technologies	UNEP	planetGOLD Zambia
12	WWF Partnership	Strengthen environmental governance and promote sustainable natural resource management in Zambia	WWF	
13	AFLDC-2	Scale up investment and technology transfer for implementation of the Stockholm and Minamata Conventions in African Least Developed Countries	African Development Bank	
14	Zambia Country Umbrella Program (ZamCUP)	Strengthen mining sector governance by operationalising the Minerals Regulation Commission and improving mineral revenue management	World Bank	
15	18th Tranche, Development Account: Better Water Quality Monitoring Using Traditional and Local Knowledge	Strengthen capacity to monitor and improve water quality using traditional and local knowledge of indigenous peoples, women and other vulnerable populations	UNEP	
16	Monitoring of POPs and Mercury under the Stockholm and Minamata Conventions in the Africa Region	Strengthen regional capacity for sustainable monitoring of POPs and mercury, supporting Convention effectiveness evaluation and implementation		

Mining a Cleaner Future: planetGOLD Zambia Drives Mercury-Free Gold Sector

Guest Article



The planetGOLD Zambia Project is a global initiative funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and executed by the Artisanal Gold Council in partnership with the Government of the Republic of Zambia through the Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA). The Project works to reduce mercury use in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (ASGM) through four thematic areas: Formalisation, Access to Finance and Formal Markets, Uptake of Mercury-free Technologies, and Communication and Knowledge Sharing. Over its five-year implementation period, the Project aims to reduce mercury use by 1.16 metric tonnes across the sector.

Advancing Formalisation

Development of National Gold Strategy to Strengthen ASGM Sector

The planetGOLD Project reviewed the Policy, Legal and Institutional Framework for the ASGM sector, giving stakeholders an opportunity to assess existing frameworks and identify areas needing strengthening to support formalisation, responsible mining and sustainable development. To support the review, ASGM Technical Committees were established at national, district and community levels (NASGM, DASGM and CASGM). The findings were presented to the Ministry of Mines and Minerals Development (MMMD), which is now collaborating with the Project to develop a national gold strategy.

51 Mining Cooperatives Established to Advance Formalisation

The Project has made significant progress in strengthening formalisation, with 51 mining cooperatives established to date. This organises miners into formal structures, creating a stronger foundation for improved access to finance, formal gold markets and technical support. The Project aims to raise the level of formalisation in the ASGM sector from a 5 percent baseline to 50 percent over its lifetime.

Access to Finance and Formal Markets

ZCCM-IH and planetGOLD Zambia Partner for Mercury-Free Gold Offtake

On 17 March 2026, the Project and ZCCM-Investment Holdings Plc (ZCCM-IH) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to facilitate the offtake of gold produced through mercury-free processing at selected ASGM sites. The partnership strengthens formal, traceable and environmentally responsible gold supply chains, connecting mercury-free producers to a formal offtaker, improving transparency and economic opportunities for mining communities, and supporting the transition of ASGM miners into the formal economy.

planetGOLD Zambia Advances Access to Finance for Artisanal Miners

The Project is developing a financial flow model tailored to the ASGM sector. On 5 March 2026, it convened a stakeholder roundtable with government and financial institutions to explore sustainable financing solutions, including a revolving fund and risk-sharing mechanism to give miners accessible capital for equipment and mercury-free practices. Following a call for interest, 11 financial institutions responded, with four expressing firm interest: ABSA through Auric Migodi, Microfinance Zambia Limited, ZANACO through Ethaleni Financial Solutions, and Oranji Solutions. Their proposals are being considered through the Project's Finance Management Committee, which strengthens governance and financial inclusion in the sector.

Uptake of Mercury-Free Technologies

planetGOLD Zambia Launches Contextual Study on Zambia's ASGM Sector

On 28 July 2026, the Project launched its Contextual Study Report on Zambia's ASGM sector, drawing on research from six mining sites: Mpika, Mumbwa, Chisamba, Vubwi, Lusangazi and Rufunsa. The study provides an evidence base for strengthening interventions, highlighting challenges including mercury use, occupational safety, formalisation, access to finance and environmental management. At the launch, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, Dr. Douty Chibamba, reaffirmed Zambia's commitment to the Minamata Convention on Mercury, while Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Mines and Minerals Development, Dr. Hapenga M. Kabeta, reaffirmed Government's commitment to formalising the ASGM sector. A stakeholder panel discussion followed, exploring practical solutions for a safer, more formal ASGM sector.

planetGOLD Zambia Advances Procurement of Mercury-Free Processing Systems

On 14 July 2026, the Project advanced procurement of Mercury-Free Processing Systems (MFPS) for pilot sites in Kanyelele, Mpika District, and Matipa, Chisamba District, following a successful technical evaluation at Appropriate Processing Technologies (APT) in South Africa. The systems will operate as centralised demonstration and shared processing facilities, enabling miners to recover gold more efficiently without mercury, contributing to the Project's target of reducing mercury use by 1.1 metric tonnes over its lifetime.

Information and Knowledge Sharing

planetGOLD Zambia Engages Students on the Future of Responsible ASGM

The Project continued engaging young people on opportunities and challenges in the ASGM sector through awareness events at the Copperbelt University (CBU) and the University of Zambia (UNZA). These events brought together students, academics, industry representatives and mining practitioners to explore responsible mining, youth participation, formalisation and career opportunities across the ASGM value chain. At UNZA, the latest contextual study findings were shared, including an increase in women's participation in ASGM from 17% to 22.31%. Students were encouraged to view ASGM as a sector for innovation, entrepreneurship and sustainable economic development.

Media Tour Highlights Realities of Artisanal Gold Mining in Mpika

From 2–3 June 2026, the Project hosted a media tour to the Kanyelele mining area in Mpika District, Muchinga Province, giving journalists firsthand insight into Zambia's ASGM sector. Representatives from six major Zambian media houses engaged with local leaders and miners to explore mercury use, environmental risks, formalisation and miners' livelihoods. The tour promoted informed reporting and strengthened public awareness of the need for safer, mercury-free and responsible gold mining practices.



The Young Faces Shaping Zambia's Environmental Future

By Ruth W. Chalungumana



Walk into a Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA) inspectorate office on an ordinary working day, and one thing stands out before the paperwork and environmental reports: there are a lot of young people.

Of the 163 staff members at ZEMA, 83 are young professionals. Among the 83 young people are the inspectors under the Directorate of Licensing and Compliance Services, heading out for compliance checks, officers reviewing environmental impact assessments, and teams working on issues ranging from ozone protection to pollution control.

They may be early in their careers, but their work already places them close to some of Zambia's most pressing environmental challenges and their roles offer a glimpse into just how broad environmental management really is.

Different roles, one responsibility

For Nanyinza Nakaundi, a licensing inspector attached to the National Ozone Unit, environmental protection has been an opportunity to see how global issues connect to what happens locally.

"Working in the Ozone Unit has helped me understand the importance of protecting the ozone layer and the role Zambia plays in meeting its international environmental commitments," she says.

"It is rewarding to be part of work that supports the phase-out of ozone-depleting substances and promotes practices that are better for both the environment and future generations."

Her work supports Zambia's continued compliance with its international ozone obligations, while encouraging responsible practices among those who use or handle ozone-depleting substances.

For Nanyinza, the responsibility comes with an equal opportunity to learn.

"Being part of ZEMA allows me to contribute to protecting our environment while learning and growing every day," she says.

"As young professionals, we have the energy and the responsibility to ensure that the future we inherit is sustainable."



For Gift Chongo, environmental protection is often about what happens after the rules have been established. As an inspector working in the Compliance Unit, her work puts Gift closer to the day-to-day reality of environmental regulation; checking whether requirements are being followed, and addressing non-compliance.

"Working in compliance has shown me the importance of ensuring that environmental requirements are not only established, but actually followed," she says.

"Every inspection and engagement with regulated facilities is an opportunity to identify gaps, encourage compliance, and ensure that activities are carried out in a way that minimises harm to the environment."

Being part of that process, she says, has given her a deeper appreciation of the Agency's role.

"One of the things I value about this work is seeing how compliance can translate environmental requirements into practical action. It requires attention to detail, consistency, and a willingness to engage with different stakeholders."

For Chomba Kawambwa, who works in the Environmental Impact Assessment Unit, the environmental implication of development is something he understands right at the beginning of a proposed project. His work involves assessing what proposed developments could mean for the environment and the communities around them, often putting him in conversation with people excited about the opportunities a new project could bring.



"So many young people in communities around Zambia hold on to the hope of being employed through the coming of major developmental projects in their localities, without a full appreciation of what these developments could mean in terms of environmental impact," he says.

It is an understandable hope, a new mine, road, factory, or other major projects can mean jobs and new opportunities, particularly for young people. But Chomba believes communities also need to understand the environmental side of development.

"It is our responsibility not only to ensure that these developments are sustainable, but also that people, especially the youth, understand what this could mean for them and their families if the environment is not protected."

Together, Nanyinza, Gift, and Chomba's experiences offer a glimpse into the breadth of environmental management in Zambia. The work may look different from one unit to the next, but the responsibility is shared: making sure environmental considerations remain part of the decisions that shape the country's development.

Building careers in a changing sector

For these young professionals, the future is not about moving away from environmental work, it is about growing within it and finding more ways to make an impact.

Nanyinza hopes to deepen her experience and take on greater responsibility.

"In the next few years, I hope to have grown into a more experienced environmental professional, taking on greater responsibilities and contributing to programmes that make a tangible difference to environmental protection."

Gift would like to continue developing her expertise and contributing to effective environmental regulation.

"I would like to continue growing my experience in environmental compliance and contribute to approaches that strengthen compliance and accountability among regulated facilities. I want to be part of a system where environmental requirements are understood and consistently put into practice."

Chomba's ambitions remain closely tied to the work he is already doing.

"I would like to contribute to a ZEMA that is even stronger in ensuring that development is sustainable, and that communities, particularly young people, understand their role in environmental management."

Their paths may differ, but there is a common thread in what they hope to achieve: becoming better at the work, taking on greater responsibility, and making a practical contribution to protecting Zambia's environment.

What they would tell the next generation

For young Zambians considering a career in the environmental sector, their experiences offer some useful advice.

Nanyinza encourages young people to remain curious: *"Be curious and willing to learn. The environmental sector is constantly evolving, and there are many opportunities to make a difference."*

Gift's advice reflects the practical demands of compliance work: *"Develop your technical knowledge, pay attention to detail, and be willing to keep learning. Environmental compliance requires you to understand both the regulations and how they apply in real situations."*

For Chomba, the most important quality is a willingness to see the wider picture: *"The environment is connected to almost every aspect of our lives, including jobs, health and development. If you are interested in this sector, pursue it with an open mind and a willingness to serve."*

The 83 young professionals at ZEMA represent only part of a much bigger generation that will have to confront Zambia's environmental challenges in the years ahead. For now, they are learning the work, doing the work, and finding their place in it.

Their contributions take different forms. For one, it is protecting the ozone layer. For another, it is ensuring that environmental requirements are followed. For the other, it is examining the potential consequences of development before projects take shape.

But together, they represent something bigger: a generation gaining the experience to help shape how Zambia protects its environment while it continues to develop.

For these young professionals, that future is not somewhere down the road. It is the work they are doing today.

Beyond the Chalkboard: Why Environmental Education Is More Than Teaching and Talking

By Mutale F. Chileshe



Ask most people what "environmental education" means, and they will likely picture a classroom poster of the water cycle, or a school assembly about not littering, a subject taught, tested, and forgotten by the time the bell rings. ZEMA's education programmes, as they exist today, look very little like that.

This year, across four very different corners of Zambia, that difference has been the whole point. In Mkushi, farmers sat down to make sense of environmental impact assessments and licensing, the fine print that governs whether their land can be built on, farmed further, or sold. In Livingstone, young learners traded classrooms for open ground, hands in the soil, planting the trees they will one day walk past as adults. In Chipata, students spent a June morning learning why the air conditioner humming in the corner of a shop is connected to a hole in the sky most of them will never see. And in Kabwe, a room full of women learned to do something few environmental education programmes ever attempt: handle refrigerant gases safely enough to be licensed for it.

Four places. Four audiences. One underlying idea: environmental education works not when it talks at people, but when it meets them exactly where they already stand, in their classrooms, their fields, their workshops, their livelihoods.

A School Visit with Substance

In March, 2026 the ZEMA Northern Region Office welcomed a delegation from Ndola Trust School, 27 pupils and three teachers, Grades 9 and 10, filing in with the particular energy of teenagers who suspect they're about to be bored and are curious enough to find out. They weren't. The pupils were greeted by Allen Polito, Manager North - Licensing and Compliance Services, and Dalla Simasiku, Manager - Laboratory Services, and spent the day getting something rarer than a tour: a working explanation of the legal architecture behind environmental protection in Zambia, the Environmental Management Act, and the statutory instruments that give it its bite.

Principal Inspector Kayombo Ngimbu walked the pupils through Environmental Impact Assessments and the balancing act at their core, development on one side, sustainability on the other, and a process designed to keep both honest. Senior Inspector Chekwe Chileshe took them through how ZEMA licences actually work, including the three-year renewal cycle that keeps businesses accountable long after their first approval. The day closed in Zambia's first Environmental Laboratory, where Laboratory Analyst Emmanuel Lungu showed the pupils how testing and monitoring, the quiet, unglamorous science of measurement, underpins nearly every decision the Agency makes.

The timing mattered. Coming so soon after Youth Day, the visit was less a courtesy than a statement: youth engagement isn't a side note in environmental protection, it's the load-bearing wall. The pupils who toured that laboratory in March are, whether they realise it yet or not, the generation that inherits every decision ZEMA makes today.

Meeting Farmers Where They Farm

Mkushi is one of ZEMA's newer offices, set up specifically to keep pace with a district whose agro-dealer network is expanding and whose energy projects are multiplying faster than most regulatory frameworks are built to handle. In May, Principal Inspector and Head of Mkushi Office Ryan Chola put that mandate to work, convening a stakeholder engagement session with local farmers on EIAs and licensing.

For many farmers, "environmental compliance" can sound like something that happens elsewhere, in Lusaka boardrooms, to other people, in language that has nothing to do with soil or seasons. Sessions like this one exist to close that distance: translating regulation into the practical questions farmers actually have, what an environment assessment involves, when a licence is required, and how compliance protects not just the land, but the livelihood built on top of it.

A Marathon of Conversations

June 2026 was the year's busiest month, and it arrived in two distinct waves.

Around World Environment Day, ZEMA officers held environmental talks at Hillside Secondary School and SOS Hermann Gmeiner Secondary School in Livingstone and used the occasion to publicly recognise both schools for their tree-planting initiatives. It was a small gesture, but a pointed one: proof, delivered directly to a room of teenagers, that environmental stewardship, once started, doesn't go unnoticed.

Days later, the team was on the road to Chipata for what can only be described as a marathon: St. Monica Girls Secondary School, Chizongwe Secondary School, and Anoya Secondary School, three talks in quick succession. The timing was no accident: the sessions were framed around World Refrigeration Day, marked annually on 26 June, and used to introduce students to a subject environmental education rarely touches, ozone protection, and the outsized environmental footprint of the cooling systems working quietly in the background of daily life.

That same thread, refrigeration, ozone, the invisible machinery of modern comfort, ran straight into Kabwe, where a group of women received hands-on training in the safe handling of refrigeration systems. ZEMA licenses the technicians who work in this field, and sessions like this one exist to build a pipeline of properly trained, safety-conscious practitioners entering a trade that badly needs them. It is proof that environmental education, done properly, doesn't stop at awareness. Sometimes it ends in a certification, and a job.

The Pattern Behind the Programmes

Laid side by side, these engagements, a laboratory tour in Ndola, a farmers' meeting in Mkushi, a tree-planting recognition in Livingstone, a refrigeration workshop in Kabwe, don't resemble a single, uniform curriculum. That is precisely the point. ZEMA's education work isn't built around a poster or a script; it's built around audiences. Farmers who need to understand licensing. Women entering a technical trade. Students who will one day be the farmers, technicians, and regulators themselves.

Environmental education, approached this way, stops being something that happens to people and becomes something that happens with them. And if this year's map is any indication, pupils in Ndola, farmers in Mkushi, students in Livingstone and Chipata, technicians in training in Kabwe, that shift is not a side effect of the programme. It is the programme.





ZANEEP: HOPE REKINDLED

By Mercy Zulu

For 24 years now, the Zambia Network for Environmental Educators and Practitioners (ZANEEP) has existed bringing environmental professionals together to connect, collaborate, and participate in activities that advance environmental education and awareness, while promoting sustainable practices among communities.

The Network was established on World Environment Day in 2002, a day set aside globally to raise public awareness and promote environmental education.

Since inception, ZANEEP has continued to use its networking platform to facilitate information exchange among members and communities.

ZANEEP's Secretariat is hosted at the Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA). The Agency's support is in line with its role to coordinate Environmental Education (EE) as provided for in the Environmental Management Act.

To date, ZANEEP boasts a broad membership across the country, comprising academicians, teachers, civil society, public sector employees, students, environmental consultants and practitioners, as well as environmental activists.

In order to propel its performance, ZANEEP embarked on a vigorous membership drive in 2026. As at June 2026, the Network recruited close to 50 individual and 3 corporate members. This came after a moment of slumber triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the growth in membership, the Network had in the first half of the year participated in various activities.

Apart from commemorating its 24th anniversary, ZANEEP enhanced its participation in World Environment Day national activities in Lusaka, as well as a satellite activity held in Chingola. The activities were spearheaded by the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, alongside several stakeholders from within and outside the environment sector.

The entire month of June was dedicated to environmental awareness and education activities, among which was the 'Run for Climate' Marathon, held to culminate the activities planned for World Environment Day 2026. The Marathon was organised by the National Sports Council of Zambia under the auspices of the Ministry of Youth and Sport, as well as other sponsors.

ZANEEP members were among the participants in the marathon and also took part in the tree-planting exercise that followed thereafter at the National Sports Council of Zambia grounds.



As part of its efforts to promote practical environmental education, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable livelihoods, ZANEEP has partnered with Mwekera Forestry College in Kitwe in a beekeeping project. The project currently has six (6) beehives, providing an opportunity for students and other stakeholders to gain practical knowledge and skills in beekeeping and sustainable natural resource management.

The Network hopes to continue to grow its membership across the country and implement more networking activities, some of which will be income-generating. These concerted efforts will contribute to sustainable development.



ZEMA

A National Environmental Regulatory Agency established under the Environmental Management Act No. 12 of 2011

Head Office

Plot No. 6975/1 Corner Church and Suez Roads,

P.O. Box 35131, Lusaka, Zambia

Tel: +260 211 254 130 | 254 023 | 254 059

Fax: +260 211 254 164
