



The Electoral Promises and Government Performance Nexus-A Comparative Case Analysis of Malawi and Zambia

SIPHOSAMI MALUNGA

NOVEMBER 2025

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Context	3
Promises vs Performance	8
Economy	8
Governance	12
Corruption	15
Social Development	19
Climate Change	23
Did the MCP and UPND Promises Align and Respond to the Key National Issues or Problems?	24
To What Extent did the Government's Performance Impact on Future Electoral Performance?	26
Conclusion	28
References	30

List of Figures

Figure 1: Overall Performance: Zambia and Malawi	4
Figure 2: Economy: Zambia and Malawi	9
Figure 3: Governance: Zambia and Malawi	12
Figure 4: Corruption: Zambia and Malawi	15
Figure 5: Social Services: Zambia and Malawi	19
Figure 6: Climate Change: Zambia and Malawi	23

List of Acronyms

ACB	Anti-Corruption Bureau
ACC	Anti-Corruption Commission
ADMARC	Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation
AIP	Affordable Inputs Programme
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ESCOM	Electricity Supply Corporation of Malawi
FCD	Financial Crimes Division
FEWS NET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
IPPI	Information Platform for Public Infrastructure
JCE	Junior Certificate of Education
MMD	Multi-Party Democracy
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
NAP	National Action Plan
NCCMP	National Climate Change Management Policy
NEEF	National Economic Empowerment Fund
NOCMA	National Oil Company of Malawi
NYCOM	National Youth Council of Malawi
NYS	National Youth Service
PAYE	Pay as You Earn
PF	Patriotic Front
TB	Tuberculosis
UNIP	United Independence Party
UPND	United Party for National Development
UTM	United Transformation Movement
YEFFA	Youth Entrepreneurship for the Future of Food and Agriculture

This study builds on and is aimed at contributing to the work of SIVIO Institute on supporting citizens' tracking the government performance in Africa; <https://africancitizenwatch.org/>. The work began in Zimbabwe: <https://www.zimcitizenswatch.org/> and was expanded to Botswana, <https://africancitizenwatch.org/botswana>; Zambia: <https://africancitizenwatch.org/zambia>; Malawi: <https://www.africancitizenwatch.org/malawi> and South Africa <https://africancitizenwatch.org/south-africa>



Introduction

In contemporary democratic processes, election manifestos ostensibly serve as blueprints of pledges by political parties of the policies they propose to deliver if and once elected (Dolezal et al., 2016). On the face of it, during the electoral campaign, they comprise a structural link between a political party's policy and program, the perceived voters' demands, and what becomes government policy, bringing policy and demand together. They often cover issues such as promising the provision of education, healthcare, water, employment, safety and security, and infrastructure, including roads, among many other things. In ideal circumstances, political parties then mobilise support around their leaders and their manifestos, which carry

their policies, programs (Budge et al., 1987), and priorities, and once they win, form the government and implement their policies and programs. Electoral manifestos are essentially the only documented set of promises that voters can hold politicians accountable. In due course and for subsequent elections, the electorate ideally assesses the performance of the party in government based on the policies and programs they promised and the extent to which they delivered on these commitments as a way to decide whether to re-invest political support for the next election.

In practice, however, political party electoral promises contained in manifestos are not legally binding and have often failed to respond to the real concerns of the electorate, responding instead to what parties believe will win them votes. In addition, once in power,

political parties have failed to transform these promises into government policy and to deliver them. Whilst this matrix of promises-election-government performance appears simple and straightforward, the current global democratic crisis –and the resurgence of authoritarian and hybrid regimes requires its review or introspection. This paper focuses on the nexus between election promises, as contained in manifestos of ruling parties in Malawi and Zambia, and the subsequent government performance as a tool for accountability.

The paper seeks to do four things. First, it identifies the relevant and key national problems/issues ahead of the elections in Malawi and Zambia. Second, it reviews and assesses the electoral promises contained in the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) and the United Party for National Development (UPND) manifestos and the performance of the government in delivering the electoral promises. Third, it assesses the alignment of the main electoral promises to the key national issues or problems. Fourth, it evaluates the impact of the government's performance on subsequent electoral performance.

The comparative case analysis commissioned by SIVIO Institute will aim to answer these questions regarding election manifestos and their impact on government performance in Malawi and Zambia. These countries have been identified and selected on account of similarities- they have all held regular

multiparty elections in the past five (5) years, in which political parties, the MCP and the UPND, have presented election manifestos, and proceeded to win and form governments whose performance can be readily tracked and analysed. These countries have also experienced democratic alternation of power and held elections that enabled relatively free voter choices. The countries also present differences- especially in terms of government performance and, in the case of Malawi, an electoral coalition in what became the governing party. The analysis will review political party manifestos, voter choices, and government performance.

The research will employ various qualitative approaches, including literature and document reviews and data analysis. The data collection will comprise within-case data analysis for each country to allow for a nuanced and individualised understanding of the country dynamic, before comparing with other country cases, and also cross-case, systematically analysing and comparing data from the two country cases to identify patterns, similarities, and differences. The examination will use comparative analysis to identify causal factors and the impact of context on different outcomes - that is, on whether and the extent to which election manifestos have translated into meaningful service delivery by ruling political parties, and what the implications for future electoral performance have been and how these lessons can influence similar change in other contexts.



Context

Multi-party electoral politics returned to Malawi in 1993 after 30 years of one-party rule. To this extent, Malawi has been a multi-party state for half of the period since the end of colonial rule in 1960. Malawi has successfully held regular elections every five years in 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019. In 2019, the Malawi Supreme Court found irregularities and annulled the presidential election and ordered a re-run. In the rerun, the then-ruling party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) under President Peter Mutharika, lost to a coalition (Tonse Alliance) led by Lazarus Chakwera of the MCP and Saulos Chilima of the United Transformation Movement (UTM).

Like Malawi, Zambia returned to multiparty democracy in 1990 after almost 30 years as a one-party state. The liberation and founding

party, the United Independence Party (UNIP), under the founding President Kenneth Kaunda, governed the party from 1964 to 1991 with no opposition. UNIP lost the first election after it introduced multiparty democracy to the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD). Kenneth Kaunda accepted the result, facilitating the first democratic transfer of power in Zambia. Since 1990, Zambia has had regular elections and peaceful and democratic transfers of power. In the last election in 2020, the ruling party, the Patriotic Front (PF), led by President Edgar Lungu, lost the election to the UPND led by Hakainde Hichilema.

With regards to Malawi, this analysis, focuses on the electoral promises and government performance of the MCP, the lead party in the Tonse Alliance government from 2019 to 2024, culminating in the recent 2025 election, which the MCP lost to DPP on one hand and on the promises of the UPND which won elections against the PF in 2021 and the mandate to govern Zambia from 2021 to 2026.

The analysis will not review all the individual promises of the MCP and the UPND – given their numbers, neither time nor space allows – but will evaluate overall performance under the several broad categories set out in their respective manifestos, namely governance, corruption, economy, social development, and climate change, referring where appropriate to specific promises. In all, in its five (5) years in government, MCP made 204 promises, implemented only 14, broke 10 and failed to commence 42 promises. With four (4) years in government and one year remaining, the UPND has made 248 promises, implemented only six (6), broken two (2) and failed to commence 71 promises (See Figure 1).

To answer the question of whether the election manifestos of governing parties responded to “real” national issues, challenges, and questions, it is necessary to examine

the national context regarding the issues addressed in the manifestos. Malawi has suffered from serious governance deficits, characterised by poor public administration and high levels of corruption involving senior public officials over the years (Anders, n.d; Spotlight, 2025). Some notable grand corruption scandals that influenced the 2019 elections include the Cashgate Scandal (Strasser, 2016), where over USD\$32 million of government funds were corruptly misappropriated by high-level government officials by manipulating the government's national payments system between April and September 2013. A forensic audit showed that the corrupt scheme possibly dated back to 2009 and that up to USD\$356 million may have been misappropriated. The scandal resulted in prosecutions of up to 20 suspects who were convicted and jailed for between three (3) and 12 years, and the recovery of only

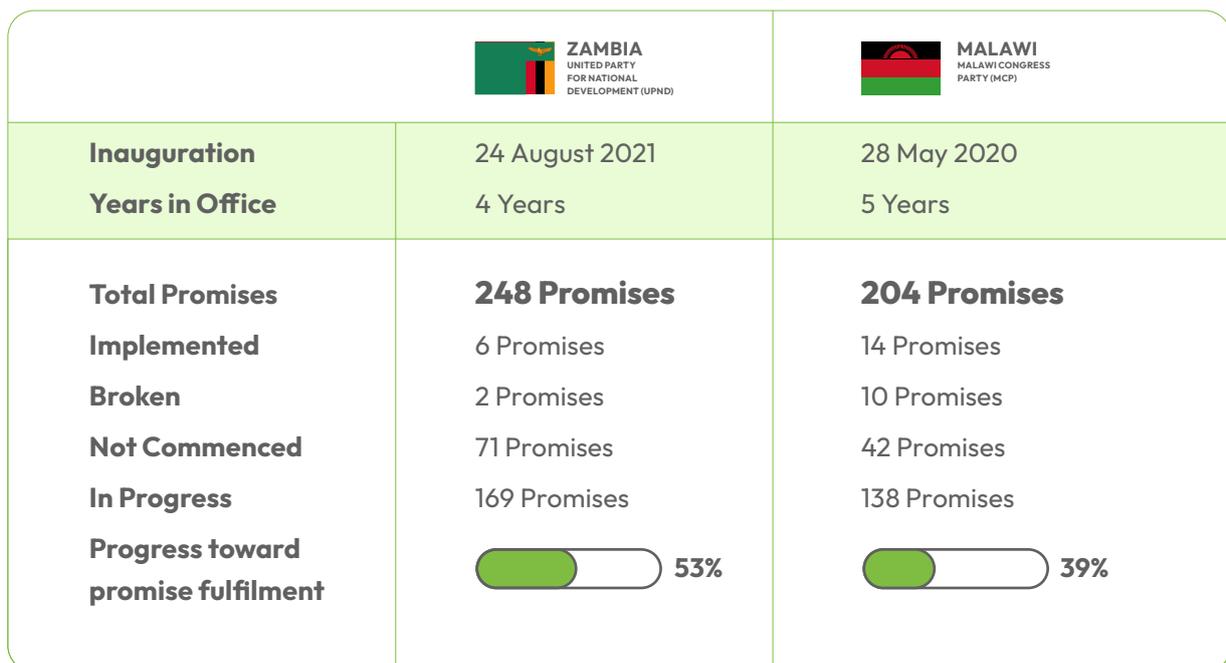


FIGURE 1: OVERALL PERFORMANCE: ZAMBIA AND MALAWI

Source: [African Citizens Watch](#)

USD\$1.4 million in cash and property. In May 2018, ahead of the 2019 election, the former Agriculture Minister, George Chabonda, was acquitted of corruption charges related to the Maizegate Scandal for allegedly facilitating maize purchases from Zambia (Masina, 2017). In 2018, a year before the election, President Peter Mutharika faced calls for resignation from civil society after a report by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) was leaked in June, alleging that he had received a kickback of USD\$4 million from a contract to provide food to the police (BBC News, 2017). Despite its existence, the asset declaration law for senior civil servants was not strictly enforced. In addition, government annual audit reports were not made publicly available to ensure budget transparency, whilst the Access to Information Act, which had been signed into law in 2017, had still not come into effect, hampering efforts at government transparency and openness.

When UPND took over in 2021, Zambia was reeling under serious political, governance and economic crises. The country had experienced severe democratic backsliding under the PF government of Edgar Lungu, who jailed political opponents (News Agencies, 2017), including Hichilema, intimidated UPND officials, muzzled the free press (Mwape, 2022), and stifled the opposition's electoral campaign (Associated Press, 2021). The PF government had also mismanaged the economy, with economic growth at 3.7%

(Mapenzauswa, 2016), borrowing heavily, with some of the debt hidden, and failing to pay, leading to default on Eurobonds in 2020 (Stein & Chitonge, 2025). Inflation was high at 23% and with regular and persistent fuel and food shortages due to the unstable macro-economic situation, which relied on the volatile mining and agricultural sectors, impacted respectively by climate shocks (Ngoma et al., 2023) and fluctuating commodity prices. The country was also still suffering from the impact of COVID-19 (Kalikeka et al., 2021). Like Malawi, Zambia also faced severe governance deficits with high levels of corruption (Rahman, 2020). For these reasons, fixing the economy and, in particular, the debt crisis and reversing the default was one of the UPND's main priorities – contained in its manifesto- with a focus on undertaking crucial economic reforms, introducing financial transparency, pursuing diplomatic engagement of debtors to restructure the debt and attracting investment.

In 2020, MCP took over one of the world's poorest countries, with a population of 22 million people, of whom over 75% were living below the poverty line. The country is landlocked, with its economy heavily reliant on agriculture, which is itself vulnerable to persistent and recurrent climatic shocks, including drought (El Niño) and floods (La Niña), making the country highly food insecure, with at least a quarter of the population in need of food. Malawi also has

the 10th densest population in Africa. Malawi faces significant economic challenges with poor economic growth, poor infrastructural development, and poor social indicators in health, education, water, and energy access, among others.

The MCP took power shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic broke out and, like every other country in Africa and around the world, faced significant challenges in responding to the pandemic. Even before COVID-19, Malawi faced substantial challenges in providing universal health coverage to its citizens. Maternal mortality at 439/100,000 births was one of the highest ratios in the world. The country carried a high disease burden, including malaria (affecting 42% of school-going children and 27% of pre-school children); HIV/AIDS, respiratory infections, diarrhoea, and perinatal infections. According to the Harmonised Health Facility Assessment Report for 2018/2019 availability of health facilities was 31% with health workers at 45%. Availability of health services for communicable diseases such as Tuberculosis (TB) was 49% whilst access to HIV/AIDS treatment and medicine was between 50% and 60%. Availability of essential medicines stood at 38%. These challenges were exacerbated by supply-side challenges of insufficient numbers of health workers, poor working conditions, brain drain, and funding shortages impacting essential drugs, equipment, and health

supplies. Between 2019 and 2021, the country's health system was overwhelmed with dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

When UPND came into power, Zambia was experiencing a huge disease burden with high prevalence of communicable diseases, in particular, TB accounting for 5% deaths, malaria accounting for 7% and HIV/AIDS accounting for 15% deaths (World Life Expectancy, 2024). In 2021, the country had 139,397 disease-related deaths, 59% of which were from communicable, maternal, perinatal and nutritional conditions. Most significantly, in 2021, Zambia was in the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic (Kalikeka, 2021). Zambia's first COVID-19 case was confirmed in March 2020, by which time the country had restricted social gatherings and instituted lockdowns. The country experienced several waves in 2020 and 2021.

At the start of the MCP term, despite very high enrolment rates (up to 85%) the Malawi education sector was riddled with many challenges related to access (low access to Early Childhood Development [ECD], poor secondary school completion rates for girls (22%) and for boys (24%) in 2018, poor enrolment in tertiary and post-secondary school training with enrolment at 2% and 1% for girls), quality (overcrowded classrooms, inadequate teaching and learning materials including textbooks, poor teacher professional

development capacities), infrastructure (inadequate numbers of schools, no learning equipment, facilities including libraries, laboratories and computers) and workforce (serious shortage of teachers in primary and secondary schools and poor pay). The sector also faced gender inequalities, as the significantly lower enrolment and completion rates for girls show. The challenges faced by the education sector were exacerbated by Cyclone Idai in 2019, which severely hit Malawi, causing significant damage to 600 schools across the country and 3500 classrooms, affecting over 330,000 learners (UNICEF, 2019). It was then further impacted by COVID-19, which caused a national shutdown, stopping all classroom learning nationally.

One of COVID-19's greatest casualties was the education system in Zambia. After the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 and the shutdown during parts of the year, all schools were closed, causing education in Zambia to suffer (Matafwali & Masaiti, 2024). With schools, access to schooling was heavily impacted, with only 20% of children able to access virtual learning, with the majority relying only on take-home assignments and textbooks (UNICEF, 2019). During the shutdown. The majority of students lost contact with half of their teachers for

the entire duration. The shutdown also contributed to a spike in teenage pregnancies (UNICEF, 2023). Apart from COVID-19, Zambia's education sector already faced some structural challenges, including a shortage of teachers, inadequate learning materials and a shortage of educational infrastructure in particular schools, which all affected learning outcomes. In addition, the requirement to pay fees in the context of economic hardship severely affected access. Other serious challenges included gender disparities in access, lower completion rates for girls due to teen pregnancies and early forced marriages (UNFPA Zambia, 2020).

At the start of the MCP term, access to energy was a major challenge, with Malawi having one of the lowest rates of household electrification in the world at 15% with at least 97% of households relying on solid fuels for cooking. Persistent interruptions or blackouts in the electricity supply severely impact the reliability of energy. Malawi derives almost all (95%) of its electricity generation from hydropower, but the supply is inadequate to meet the demand, with transmission capacity of the electrical grid exceeding installed capacity by 170%. Most of the access is limited to urban areas whose population is rapidly increasing, causing greater demand.

Promises vs Performance

For consistency of analysis regarding methodology and across countries, the analysis relies largely on the SIVIO Institute election promise and government tracker (African Citizens Watch), which has tracked the promises derived from the commitments made by the MCP in their manifesto, as well as other key policy pronouncements between 2020 and 2025 (Dzida, 2022). The analysis will not analyse the individual promises but will evaluate performance under the five (5) categories: economy, governance, social services, corruption and climate change. A common feature and weakness of the election promises by both MCP and UPND is that they tended to be very broad, with no specific articulation of indicators or timelines for delivery or achievement. Both parties, therefore, were able to argue that they had five (5) years to deliver. This argument no longer applies to MCP, whose 5-year term expired, culminating in it being voted out, whilst the UPND can continue to argue that it has time. However, for many of the UPND promises, it is increasingly clear that time is running out to deliver.

As a whole, MCP promised far more than it delivered, implementing only 14 of its 204 promises. In its four (4) years in power, with one year remaining, UPND has so far delivered only six (6) of its 248 promises (see Figure

1). The MCP and UPND promises in each of the five (5) sectoral categories, and their respective performance in government, are analysed below.

Economy

Whilst different in size, nature and type, the economies of both Malawi and Zambia constitute the greatest challenges for the government. As the contextual analysis above shows, both countries faced significant economic challenges when the MCP and UPND took charge.

When the UPND took power, Zambia was in the throes of an economic crisis, including a debt default. For this reason, promises related to fixing the economy constituted 58% of all promises and numbered 143. 48% of the promises related directly to improving the economy. The economy was the UPND's stated priority prior to coming into government (see Figure 2).

Under the heading: Improved Policy Environment, the UPND promised to “firmly strengthen the formulation and implementation of the credible macroeconomic, social, external sector and sectoral policies, including specific policy reforms to bring stability to the economy, enable a speedy recovery in economic growth, and ensure debt sustainability.” The UPND government was able to successfully restructure 90% of Zambia's debt and to significantly reduce inflation from 23% to

16% (Kunda, 2021), although it rose again in 2021. Despite this success, one challenge has been the continued accumulation of debt from USD\$14 billion in 2021 to USD\$2.4 billion by the end of 2024 (International Monetary Fund, 2025). This suggests that the country continues to be vulnerable and at risk of another debt crisis and default. The debt accumulation also suggests challenges in maintaining fiscal discipline, which was one of the UPND’s promises. In addition, instead of the Zambia Kwacha firming against the United States dollar as promised by UPND, it has continued to dramatically weaken (Savage & Mfula, 2024). Yet another paradox related to the debt restructure is that some of the conditions required austerity and removal of fuel and mealie meal subsidies, which were a key promise by UPND. As a result, instead of the price of fuel and mealie meal going down as promised by UPND, it actually dramatically

increased (Chelwa, 2024). In this regard, whilst the debt restructure was itself a success, the impact has not been positively felt by the ordinary citizens because of some of the conditions.

The MCP manifesto made 89 promises in this category related to the economy (see Figure 2). By the end of its term, it had only delivered 8% of its promises, discussed below.

In Malawi, the MCP’s key economic promise was to raise the minimum wage from MK 25,000 to MK 50,000 and Pay as You Earn (PAYE) tax from MK 35,000 to MK 100,000. The government was able to keep this promise by successfully raising the minimum wage by 40% in May 2025, from MK90,000 to MK126,000 per month, to help workers cope with the rising cost of living (Singini, 2025). MCP also promised to set up a bank to

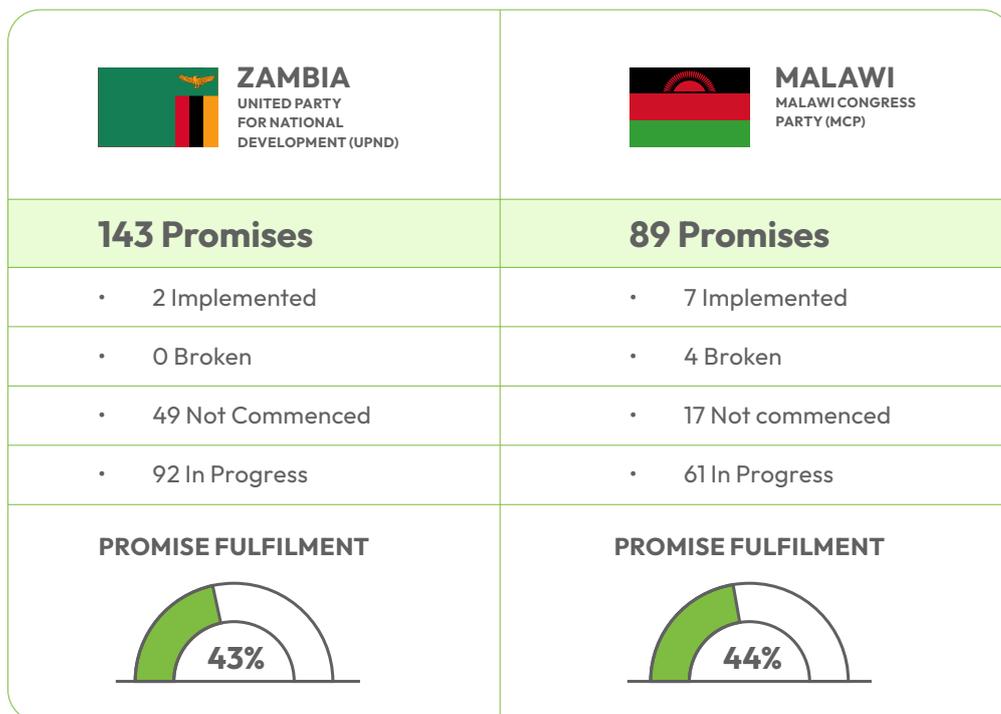


FIGURE 2: ECONOMY: ZAMBIA AND MALAWI
 SOURCE: [African Citizens Watch](#)

concentrate on giving credit to the youth and women to increase their access to and full participation in the country's mainstream economic processes. The MCP government established the National Economic Empowerment Fund (NEEF), which by May 2021 had disbursed MK5,56 billion and by 2024 a total of MK1 trillion in cash to women and youth groups to support their involvement in entrepreneurship (Chauwa, 2021).

Another key promise in this category, which had resonance with the largely agriculture-based economy, was to introduce a Universal Farm Input Subsidy Program. Farm input subsidies are not new to Malawi. The MCP government was able to allocate MK131.6 billion to the Affordable Inputs Programme (AIP) in the 2025/26 financial year. However, this was less than the MK161 billion allocated in the previous year but higher than the 2023/2024 allocation of MK110 billion (Mtemang'ombe, 2025). Despite these allocations, agricultural productivity remained very low. Hunger continued to rise during the MCP term, and the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) projected that between January and March 2025, up to five million Malawians required food assistance, mostly in the Southern Region (FEWS NET, 2024). Thus, the introduction of the subsidy did not address the structural challenge of productivity and food security.

The failure to improve productivity and food security was also linked to the failure to deliver on a related promise to revitalise the

operations of the Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC). On this, the MCP failed to deliver this promise. In 2025, Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC) shut down operations due to a lack of government funding (Jobe, 2025). The shutdown of ADMARC has resulted in the shutdown of its depots countrywide that supply communities with affordable maize and other staple commodities, worsening food security concerns.

The MCP delivered on its promise to change the fiscal year to run from 1st April to 31st March to align it with the country's agricultural season. With effect from the 2022-2023 fiscal year, the government changed the fiscal year from 1st July to 30th June to commence on 1st April and end on 31st March (Rais Online, 2020).

The MCP had also promised to review all existing tax and interest rate policies and legislation and successfully delivered on this promise. In 2019, the Reserve Bank reduced the policy rate from 16% to 14.5% and subsequently to a further 13.5%, thereby allowing a reduction in interest rates charged by commercial banks (World Bank, 2019). A key challenge for Malawi, which had significant implications for the economy whilst also generating widespread public disaffection, was the energy crisis characterised by crippling electricity blackouts. For this reason, MCP promised to deal with electricity blackouts within the first year, targeting to generate at least

2000 megawatts of electricity within five years. However, the government failed to deliver on this promise. On 22 March 2020, the Electricity Supply Corporation of Malawi (ESCOM) reported that an increase in electricity demand had led to 7-hour blackouts or power outages. In 2025, the country's energy production had a capacity of 350MW, far short of the ambitious 2000MW promised by the MCP. The total available capacity of 350MW was itself vulnerable to fluctuations due to technical challenges and demand spikes, which led to load-shedding. As of July 2025, electricity generation from the country's ageing hydro-electrical facilities

stood at around 444.67MW, less than 25% of what was promised in the election manifesto (Our Reporter, 2025).

At the end of its term, the MCP delivered only seven (7) of its promises related to the economy, broke four (4) and failed to commence 17. It had 61 promises at various stages of implementation. With one year of its term remaining, the UPND has implemented only two (2) of its promises related to the economy, with 92 in progress and 49 yet to be commenced (see Figure 2).

Governance

When the MCP and UPND campaigned for elections, both Malawi and Zambia faced significant governance transparency and accountability crises in public administration. It is thus unsurprising that both parties made bold promises to improve governance. The MCP manifesto had eight (8) promises addressing governance. These promises constituted 21% of all promises by the MCP alliance (see Figure 3).

The MCP promised to “practice transparency and accountability in the procurement and administration of contractors to ensure value for public money for all investments.” In March 2025, the government passed a new Public Procurement and Disposal of Assets Act (2025) to advance transparency

and accountability in procurement. The act mandates beneficial ownership disclosure and the implementation of e-procurement systems to digitise processes. The Act envisages a role for the involvement of civil society in the procurement process in demanding information and monitoring procurement projects by using open data platforms such as the Information Platform for Public Infrastructure (IPPI) as a way to ensure accountability and hold officials responsible. The Act transforms the procurement process in Malawi by introducing a beneficial ownership register to an e-live procurement dashboard.

The MCP promised to bring dignity to the presidency through a culture of servant leadership that will make the presidency the primary driving force for service, change

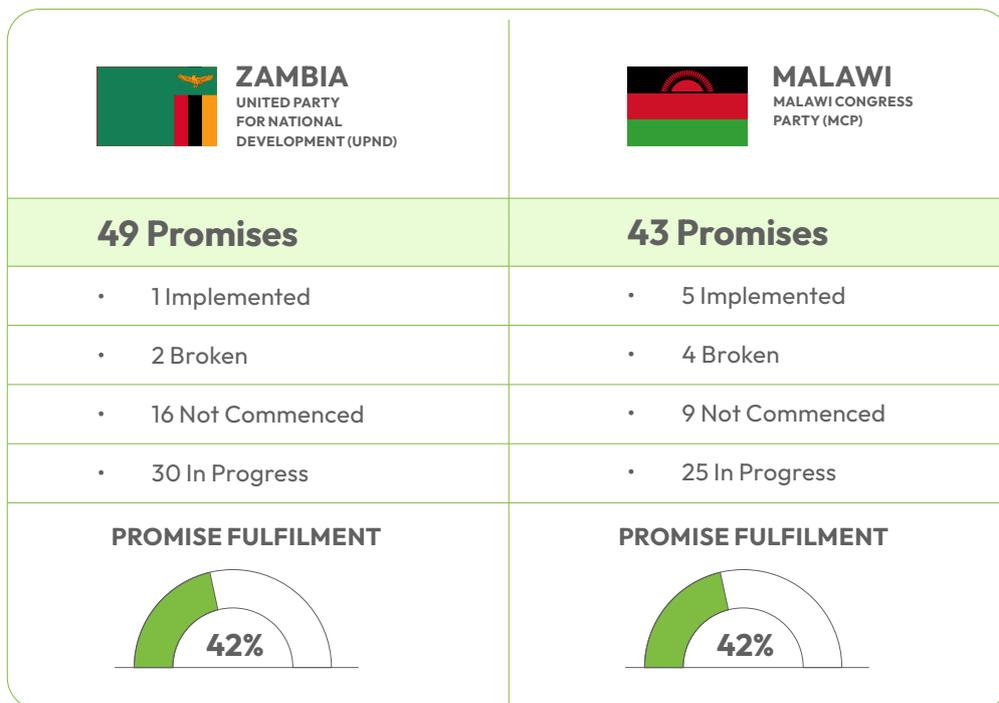


FIGURE 3: GOVERNANCE: ZAMBIA AND MALAWI
 Source: African Citizens Watch

and transformation. However, Chakwera's United Kingdom trip controversy, very early on into his presidency, worked to undermine this electoral promise. Subsequent grand corruption scandals implicating Ministers in his Cabinet and high-level officials in his government further eroded trust and confidence in his commitment to bring dignity to the presidency. The fact that he had to dismiss his entire cabinet on allegations of corruption, separately addressed below, is further testimony of the continued challenge of corruption in his administration, but failure to meaningfully hold perpetrators to account, including by prosecuting and recovering stolen public assets, suggests failure to meet the promise of effectively addressing corruption.

There is no evidence that the MCP government implemented its promise to undertake a comprehensive audit to develop fit-for-purpose organisational structures that perform their functions effectively. Positively, President Chakwera kept his promise to appear before Parliament to answer the people's questions relating to his office for the sake of transparency and accountability in government affairs. This is one of the few promises that the MCP government kept. President Chakwera successfully appeared before Parliament on several occasions to answer questions from members of Parliament (Mwale, 2023).

President Chakwera, however, did not meet

his promise to work from the Capital Hill office regularly and implement service level agreements for every government ministry and department as a basis for holding office bearers accountable to Malawians. There is no evidence of the implementation of service level agreements.

In Zambia, the UPND promises related to good governance constituted 20% of all its promises (see Figure 3). It pledged to "ensure that public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources in a transparent and accountable manner to achieve the high economic efficiency and competitiveness required to lift the living standards of the people."

On the rule of law, the UPND promised to "uphold the rule of law, security and justice." The government was able to successfully address the historical challenge of political violence and intimidation and the practice of cadrerism by the PF (Mofya, 2021).

However, there have been limited incidents of cadres threatening political violence (Transparency International Zambia, 2023) and using intimidation against perceived opponents. Whilst there have been significant improvements in respect for human rights and freedoms, including of the press, assembly, expression, and protest from the PF period, the Zambia Police Service has, however, continued to abuse the archaic Public Order Act against perceived government opponents

(Chisalu, 2023).

Regarding its promise to ensure that public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources transparently, the appointment by President Hichilema of his unqualified brother into the Zambian foreign service as Deputy Ambassador to Malaysia –widely criticised as nepotism– has irredeemably tainted his record and called into question his promises to run a transparent, corruption-free government based on merit (Chief Editor, 2022). This clearly constitutes a

broken promise.

At the end of its term, the MCP delivered only five (5) of its 43 promises related to governance, broke four (4) and failed to commence nine (9). It had 25 promises at various stages of implementation. With one year of its term remaining, the UPND has implemented only one (1) of its 49 promises related to governance, with 30 in progress and 16 yet to be commenced (see Figure 3).

Corruption

When the MCP and UPND campaigned for elections, both Malawi and Zambia faced a significant crisis of corruption. It is thus unsurprising that both parties made bold promises to improve governance and address rampant corruption. In addition, corruption scandals by public officials tend to generate a great deal of public attention, frustration and anger and can usually influence voter choices in elections. The MCP made four (4) promises related to corruption (see Figure 4). It could be argued that, given the spectre of corruption leading up to the 2019 election, corruption ought to have had a larger share of promises. With regards to corruption, the MCP promised to “run a corruption-free, efficient, effective, and responsive government anchored in the

culture of rule of law and constitutionalism.” Notably, very early in President Lazarus Chakwera’s term, he faced allegations of corruption himself when he travelled to the United Kingdom for a virtual meeting with his entire family (BBC News, 2021). To make matters worse, in an apparent attempt to demonstrate action, the late Vice President, Saulos Chilima, was arrested in November 2022 on allegations of receiving bribes for government contracts (Jegwa, 2022), allegations he denied- but the charges were later dropped, and he resumed his full duties whilst several other implicated government officials were dismissed. In January 2022, President Chakwera was forced to dismiss his entire Cabinet amidst allegations of corruption against several ministers (News Agencies, 2022), in particular the Labour Minister, who was alleged to have

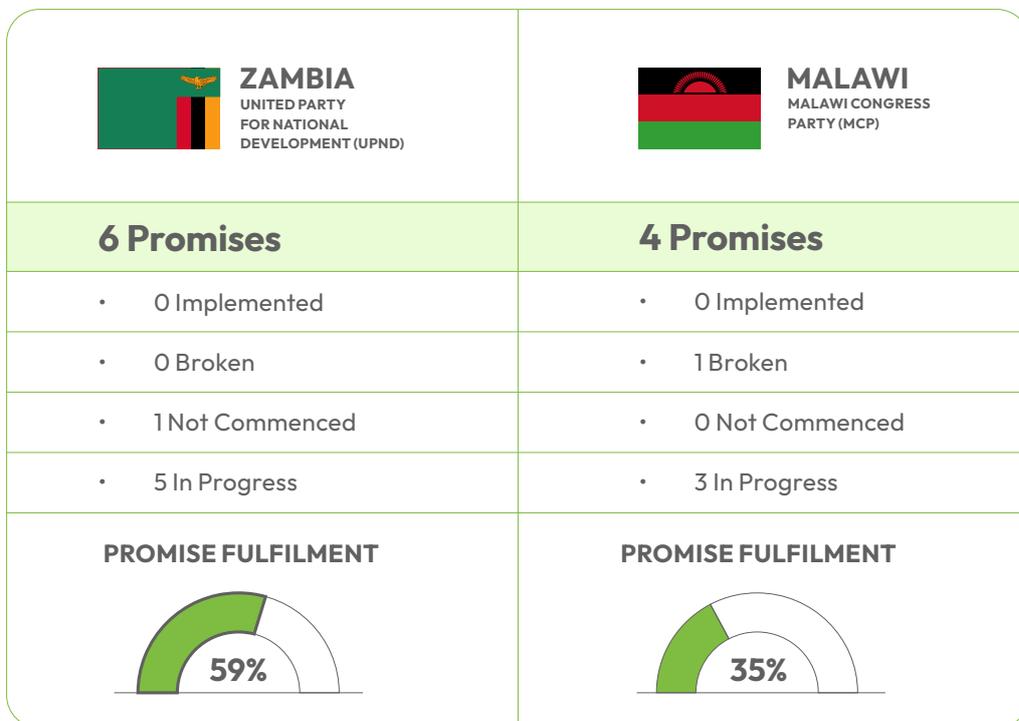


FIGURE 4: CORRUPTION: ZAMBIA AND MALAWI
 Source: [African Citizens Watch](#)

misappropriated COVID-19 funds, the Energy Minister, who was accused of meddling in a fuel import deal, and the Lands Minister, who was arrested for bribery in 2022. In 2022, the Ministry of Agriculture admitted to paying MK750 million for fertiliser, which was never delivered (Kantchentche-Donga, 2022). In a clear contradiction to his election promise, in April 2023, President Chakwera pardoned former Minister of Homeland Security, Uladi Mussa, who had been jailed for corruption in 2020 (Masina, 2023). These multiple cases of the involvement of high-level government officials of the MCP/Tonse Alliance provide a clear demonstration of not only the failure but also the deliberate unwillingness to deliver on the promise to tackle corruption, even when the opportunity presented itself. Corruption is one of the areas in which the MCP government was considered to have failed to deliver, and regarding which it lost the election to the DPP in September 2025.

The MCP promised “to establish special anti-corruption courts to clear the backlog of outstanding corruption cases and expedite the conclusion of similar cases going forward.” Whilst the MCP government successfully established the Financial Crimes Division (FCD) of the High Court, which has sole jurisdiction over corruption cases, during its term (between 2019 and 2024) by amending the Court Bill in 2021 and inaugurating the division in May 2024, this had no impact on corruption. This specialised court was created to expedite the disposal of financial crimes, including corruption-related matters

(Schütte, 2024). It should be stated that the establishment of this division took place four (4) years after the MCP took power and only a year before the end of its term and the next election. This essentially meant that the division was unable to achieve its intended purpose of clearing the backlog of outstanding corruption cases and expediting the conclusion of other corruption cases. Notably, five (5) years after his initial arrest for the National Oil Company of Malawi (NOCMA) fuel scandal, the case against former Energy Minister Newton David Kambala remained unresolved (Center for Investigative Journalism Malawi, 2025). To make matters worse, in cases where the ministers were convicted of corruption by the courts, as already highlighted, they were subsequently pardoned by President Chakwera.

UPND made six (6) promises to address corruption in Zambia (see Figure 4). UPND promised to strengthen the Anti-Corruption Commission “The UPND is fully committed to fighting this scourge, based on a strong principle of zero tolerance to corruption in all its forms. In addition to strengthening the Anti-Corruption Commission, the UPND will increase the benefits of being honest and the costs of being corrupt.” President Hichilema has made the right noise about corruption (Africanews, 2021) in an effort to set the policy direction in addressing corruption. However, the government is yet to finalise the National Anti-Corruption Policy, although the policy is at an advanced stage. Most importantly, the legal framework remains inadequate and

unsuitable. The current Anti-Corruption Act No. 3 of 2012 contradicts the Constitution (Amendment) No. 2 of 2016 in how a public officer is defined. This renders it completely ineffectual and inapplicable against public officers. For this reason, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) cannot prosecute public officials. An additional impediment is that the Act requires the consent of the Director of Public Prosecution for any prosecution which undermines the autonomy, authority and effectiveness of the ACC. Another positive development has been the quick appointment of the ACC director by UPND. In addition, in its first year in power, the UPND government increased budget allocations to the Anti-Corruption Commission from K72.3 million in 2021 to K101.1 million in 2022, a 39.8% increase (Ministry of Finance and National Planning, 2022). Another challenge is that the ACC has presence and office in only 12 of Zambia's 116 districts, significantly impacting its reach, effectiveness and impact.

Like the MCP, the UPND also promised to “establish special fast track anticorruption courts to clear the backlog of outstanding corruption cases and expedite the conclusion of similar cases going forward.” In 2021, the government established the Economic and Financial Crimes Fast Track Court” (Judiciary of Zambia). However, the court struggled to be operationalised with no regulations to govern it, no judges to work in it and no buildings to operate from. In 2022, 59 cases were filed in the court, with 14 convictions secured (Malila,

2023). On 4 September 2025, the former Foreign Minister, Joseph Malaji and Treasury Secretary Fredson Yamba were sentenced to four (4) and three (3) years imprisonment respectively for corruption (Basel Institute on Governance, 2025).

UPND is also committed to ensuring all government officials declare any new wealth annually. The UPND president declared his own assets during the election, although the declaration was not made public. In addition, some Ministers and not all have declared their assets, meaning that the promise is partially unfulfilled.

The UPND also promised to conduct lifestyle audits and to suspend any civil servant found wanting pending court rulings. Despite a private members' parliamentary bill to implement the audits, there has been no action. The government has suggested that the National Anti-Corruption Policy will govern the audits (Daka, 2024).

On 10 May 2023, Amos Chanda, the former special assistant to former president Edgar Lungu, was convicted for stealing a court record related to a case of corruption against him (National Prosecution Authority, 2024). In October 2025, the former Zambia Revenue Authority Commissioner-General Kingsley Chanda was convicted on three counts and jailed for six (6) years for failing to follow established procedures in the disposal of motor vehicles (Chaile, 2025).

In May 2022, the United States withdrew \$50 million in funding to Zambia's health sector, alleging "systematic theft of medical donations and stating that it was no longer willing to underwrite the personal enrichment of fraudsters (U.S. Mission Zambia, 2025).

The withdrawal of funding and the reasons provided by government inaction underscore the failure of the UPND government to address corruption by government officials as promised. Thus far, the focus of corruption cases and convictions has been on former PF government officials.

The UPND promised to "introduce unexplained wealth orders to allow law enforcement to seize any property purchased using means that cannot be proven within

the courts of law." The government has used the 'Forfeiture of Proceeds of Crime Act No. 19 of 2010 ' to pursue individuals (mainly from the previous government) with unexplained wealth and seized their assets and wealth (Njenga, 2022).

At the end of its term, the MCP failed to fulfil any of its four (4) promises related to corruption and actually broke one. It had three (3) promises at various stages of implementation. With one year of its term remaining, the UPND has not implemented any of its six (6) promises related to corruption, with five (5) in progress and one promise yet to be commenced (see Figure 4).

Social Development

Social development or the delivery of social services features prominently in the manifestos of both MCP and UPND. UPND made 38 specific promises in this area (see Figure 5).

Under the heading of improved service delivery and productivity, it promised to “ensure adequate investment in the social sector (education, health and water, and sanitation) so that [we] have well-trained and healthy citizens to power the economic transformation agenda.”

The UPND invested a lot of money into successfully delivering this promise. The most prominent investment was in the increase in the allocation to the Constituency Development Fund from K1.6m to K36m per constituency- keeping an electoral promise it had made. Another key flagship promise the UPND kept was to make all primary school education free. Related to this was the recruitment of 30,000 teachers, 11,000 health workers from 2020 to 2023, with another 4000 recruited in 2024. The UPND also kept its promise to strengthen healthcare facilities by building five (5) new hospitals and 120 community health centres. However, the delivery was not without challenges. Despite President Hichilema’s pledge that the country

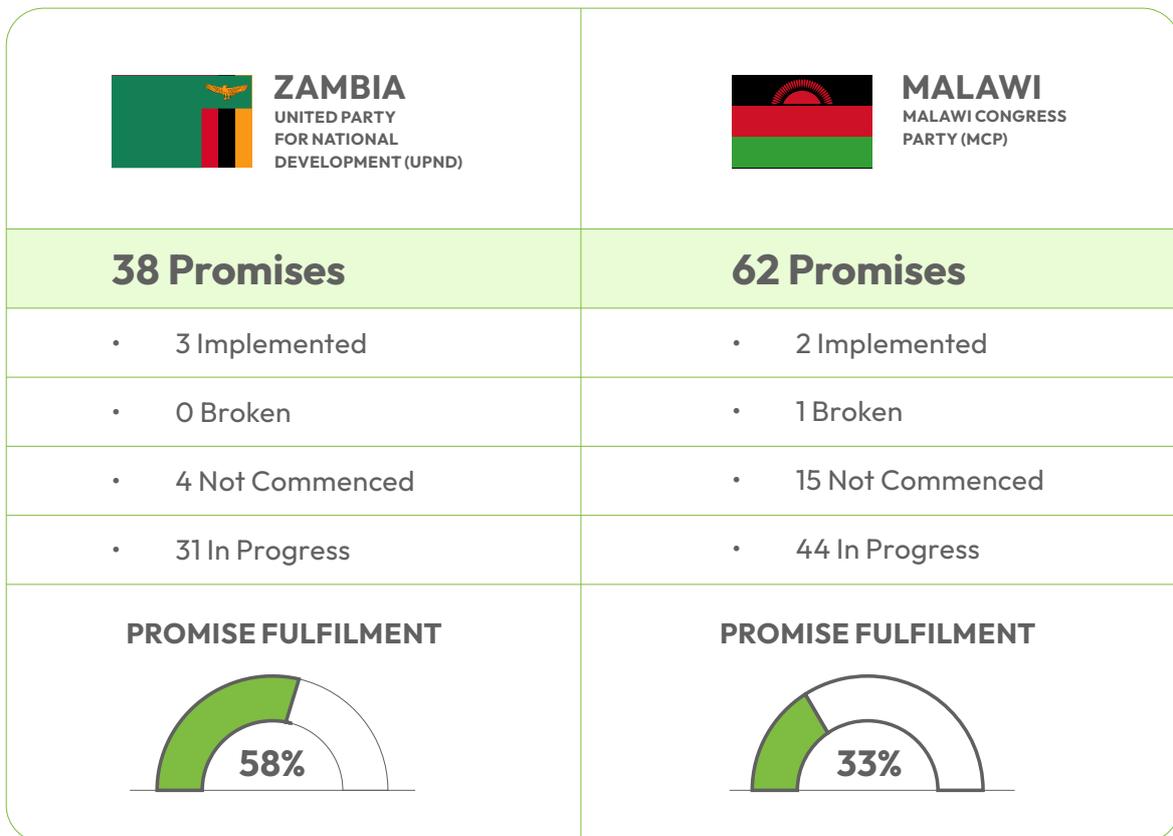


FIGURE 5: SOCIAL SERVICES: ZAMBIA AND MALAWI
 Source: African Citizens Watch

had up to 80% of medicines in stock, the health ministry was riddled with allegations of corruption when 61 containers of medicines were allegedly diverted, resulting in the dismissal of the permanent secretary for health and the institution of a forensic audit whose results were withheld.

In Malawi, the MCP made 62 promises related to education, health, rights of people with albinism, gender equality, youth and truth and reconciliation (see Figure 5).

Regarding improving health outcomes, the MCP promised to ensure that no Malawian dies in hospital due to negligence, unhygienic practices, or lack of and mismanagement of basic health care facilities. However, regarding the delivery of this promise, there is no available data on the prevalence of negligent hospital deaths under the MCP government, although during its term of office, there were reports of continued deaths in hospitals, including the death at Queen Elizabeth Hospital of Florence Chimanya following a caesarean section in April 2025.

On education, the MCP promised to abolish the discriminatory quota system of selecting students for tertiary education, improve terms of service for teachers, and computerise secondary and tertiary education. The MCP government successfully delivered on this by abolishing the quota system for university selection in 2020 (Mashinga, 2020). This introduced a fairer, more equitable

opportunity for all Malawians to access tertiary education. The government took steps to improve the conditions of service of teachers by promoting 26,000 primary school teachers and ordering their replacement. There is, however, no evidence that this occurred. In May 2022, the government announced the introduction of hardship allowances of up to MK 30,000 for teachers in remote locations, although this was criticised by some as too little. There is no evidence that the government delivered on the promise to computerise all secondary schools and tertiary institutions.

MCP also promised to reintroduce the Junior Certificate of Education (JCE) as a strategy to monitor and improve students' academic progress and performance during their secondary school education. In 2020, the government, through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, reintroduced the JCE (Chimbayo, 2020). The MCP also promised to end the abduction and killing of people with albinism by treating these crimes as capital offences punishable by death without the option for clemency.

Despite several convictions and heavy sentences, the MCP was unable to deliver on these promises as persons with albinism continued to be vulnerable to abductions and killings throughout the MCP's term. Several incidents, including the attempted abduction of a 12-year-old in January 2021 and the killing of a 26-year-old in February

2021, demonstrated an escalation of attacks (Amnesty International, 2021). The courts had attempted to take a strong position even before MCP took power. In 2019, the High Court sentenced Willard Mikaele to death for the ritual murder of Mphatso Pensulo, a man with albinism (Rickard, 2019). Again in 2022, the high court sentenced a gang of three who had killed a man with albinism for his body parts to life imprisonment (Rickard, 2021). The presiding judge also recommended that the convicts should not be granted any reductions in sentence under any circumstances by the President. The MCP government was not able to implement measures to stop the killings of people with albinism, nor was it able to guarantee their security and safety at personal and community levels.

The MCP made the promise to implement the National Action Plan for protecting persons with albinism and introduce social cash transfers for them to have a dignified way of life. Malawi's National Action Plan (NAP) on Persons with Albinism, launched in 2018, provided a comprehensive strategy to combat violence and discrimination, focusing on civic education, justice, security, health, and education for persons with albinism. The implementation of the NAP for Persons with Albinism led to increased awareness and improved access to health services and security, but also faced challenges with large-scale, sustained implementation and full victim support. Notably, the government did not introduce social cash transfers specifically

for persons with albinism between 2020 and 2025.

With regards to youth empowerment, the MCP promised to introduce a National Youth Service (NYS) and Jobs4Youth Program that offers vocational skills training to all out-of-school youth. In October 2023, the government launched the National Youth Policy (2023-2028) (AfricaBrief, 2023). In March 2025, the President initiated the Youth Entrepreneurship for the Future of Food and Agriculture (YEFFA) initiative with the goal of enhancing youth involvement in the agriculture sector, supported by AGRA (2024). The Government of Malawi launched the Youth Innovation Fund in July 2025 at the Youth Summit organised by the National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCOM) and opened by President Chakwera under the theme "Harnessing Youth Innovation for Economic Empowerment and Sustainable Job Creation towards MW2063." It remains unclear but doubtful whether the initiatives launched equate to a National Youth Service and the extent to which actual jobs were created for the youth. In addition, it is difficult to see the impact of these initiatives launched in 2025, months before the end of the MCP term.

With regards to sports, the MCP promised to construct a state-of-the-art national netball complex capable of hosting international competitions to fast-track our 10-year goal to become the number one netballing country in the world. The MCP government was able to

successfully construct and open the Mwanza Stadium, a large, modern facility that includes provision for netball, supporting talent development in the Mwanza district.

The MCP promised to enforce and promote the 2013 Gender Equality Act as the basis for redressing the gender imbalance in the employment and appointment of women in decision-making positions. It, however, failed to deliver on this promise. Malawi's 2013 Gender Equality Act aims to ensure gender quotas of 40-60% in the public service, combat discrimination, and provide enforcement and promotion of sexual and reproductive health. Implementation of the Act has produced mixed results. Operationalising the Act has proved challenging, particularly in ensuring access to sexual reproductive health services (contraceptives) for adolescent girls. In

addition, addressing issues of gender disparity in pay has been affected by the lack of data on pay gaps across the country.

The MCP failed to implement its promise to establish a National Truth and Reconciliation Commission to facilitate a nationwide process of addressing prevailing historical wounds and charting a united way forward.

At the end of its term, the MCP implemented only two (2) of its promises related to delivering social services and actually broke one. It failed to commence the implementation of 15 promises and had 44 promises at various stages of implementation. With one year of its term remaining, the UPND has implemented only three (3) of its 38 promises related to the social services, with 31 promises in progress and four (4) promises yet to be commenced (see Figure 5).

Climate Change

In view of both Malawi and Zambia’s dependence on agriculture as well as their high exposure to climatic shocks and the impact of natural disasters (droughts and floods), addressing climate change is unavoidable. Malawi has suffered more from the annual tropical cyclones in view of its geographic proximity to coastal Mozambique. In recent years, as stated above, Malawi has been devastated by Cyclones Idai in 2019, Gombe in 2022, Freddy in 2023, and Cyclone Chido in 2024, all of which have caused floods which killed thousands of people and destroyed crops, swept away houses, schools, clinics and other infrastructure across the

country. The MCP made six (6) promises to address climate change (see Figure 6). The MCP promised to “finalise the national climate change policy framework and implement priority actions” to increase resilience to climate change. When it came to policy, Malawi already had a National Climate Policy adopted in 2012. The MCP was able to deliver the National Climate Change Management Policy (NCCMP) and also revise its nationally determined contributions climate change priorities for 2020–2024. In revising the Nationally Determined Contributions, the government established concrete priorities for both adaptation and mitigation, setting concrete strategies for climate change mitigation with 35 measures, and for climate change adaptation with 80 measures.

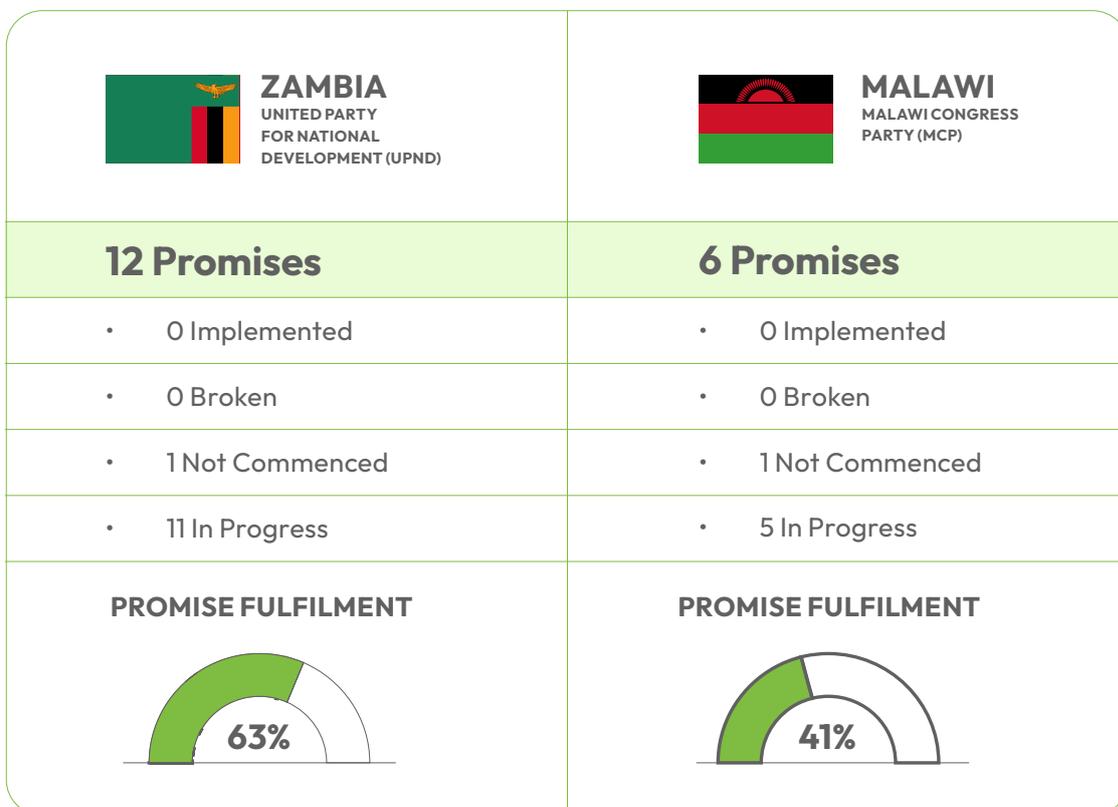


FIGURE 6: CLIMATE CHANGE: ZAMBIA AND MALAWI
 Source: [African Citizens Watch](#)

UPND made 12 promises related to climate change (see Figure 6). The UPND delivered none of its promises, failed to commence one promise and had 11 promises in progress. Notably, the UPND has backtracked on developments in forests and the issuance of mining licenses in national parks.

Did the MCP and UPND Promises Align and Respond to the Key National Issues or Problems?

Relevance and level of ambition: Given the enormity of Malawi’s development challenges, ranging from poverty, governance, corruption, and poor economic development, highlighted above, it can be argued that whilst the MCP manifesto promised the right things in general, seeking to address the various aspects of the problems, it lacked the bold ambition required to transform Malawi. It can be argued that an inherent weakness of the governance mandate of only five years is that it is simply not sufficient to fix the deep-seated structural development challenges in a country such as Malawi. With 75% of the population living below the poverty line and an agrarian economy that is vulnerable

and constantly exposed to repeated climatic shocks and where structural challenges such as energy, health and education access are so severe it could be argued that a more realistic and nuanced presentation of the challenging development context of Malawi was needed in framing the electoral promises and proposing some impossible deliverables. One notable example of a promise that was clearly impossible to deliver and was known to be so or ought to have been known, given the development context of Malawi, is the promise to move electricity generation to 2000MW. With the ageing hydroelectric infrastructure, no definite and planned new electricity generation projects, and slow rollout of renewable energy across the largely rural country, the MCP promised what it knew it could not deliver.

Yet another example relates to the MCP’s overly ambitious promise on infrastructural development. In the absence of significant investment, it is impossible to see how it would deliver on its promised “bold infrastructure expansion project aimed at doubling the tarred road network, modernising cities, and building new airports, houses, bridges, and schools” and how it would establish a modern bus terminal in every district of Malawi. Part of the problem is the paradox of electoral campaigns, where in order to secure votes, political parties are usually incentivised to out-promise each other. It can be argued that the entire nature of electoral politics itself incentivises

outlandish and unattainable promises – especially in low-income and underdeveloped countries such as Malawi, where the myriad of challenges is simply impossible to address in a single government term.

UPND took over a country that had defaulted on its sovereign debt due to a combination of economic and financial mismanagement and external factors. It had an insurmountable task and pressure to restructure Zambia’s debt with a diverse range of creditors, put in place sound macro-economic management policies and practices and deliver tangible results to Zambians that manifested in better food and fuel prices and reduced inflation. Its focus on promising to fix the economy is clearly aligned with the contemporary challenge facing the country. In addition, both the MCP and UPND promised to combat corruption was particularly relevant given the scourge of the problem in both countries.

Realism and feasibility of delivery of promises: A common characteristic of many of the promises made by both parties is that they are largely broad, lacking in specificity and a timeframe for delivery. It can thus be argued that for this reason, many of the promises are incapable of being delivered. Despite the contradictions and pressure parties such as the MCP face in seeking to attract voters, the MCP could have been more realistic in some of its promises. Given that many of the challenges it promised to solve were structural and longstanding and required significant economic and human resources,

which it was aware were unavailable, it could have been realistic in identifying and delivering on those issues that it actually could. Many of the promises related to structural issues were too broad and lacked specificity, making it impossible to deliver or demonstrate delivery. One crucial issue that was missing in MCP’s performance was the recognition of the impact of both COVID-19 and climate-related shocks. Similarly, for UPND, fixing the debt default and securing an agreement to restructure the debt proved far more difficult and took longer than envisaged. The restructure also carried austerity conditions that ran counter to other promises regarding reducing prices of fuel and mealie meal- both considered crucial by Zambian voters.

Integrity: Granted that some of the promises it made were inherently impossible to deliver given the resource and other constraints, an important question relates to the MCP’s integrity in fulfilling those promises it actually could. This is particularly the case related to governance and corruption. The MCP faced no challenges or constraints in dealing with corruption. When it took office after defeating the DPP in 2020, it had no baggage and was in a position to deal with previous cases of corruption. None of its own leaders had outstanding cases. It therefore had an opportunity to deal with corruption honestly and sincerely. It, however, failed to deal with corruption cases that emerged. Starting with the United Kingdom trip by the President and his family, the MCP, to the

inability to deal with VP Chilima (arrest, then release and suspension from government, then reinstatement), to the dismissal of the entire cabinet without remedial action, the MCP set the tone for the entire term. Most importantly, the pardoning of the convicted former Minister of Homeland Security, Uladi Mussa, demonstrated a lack of commitment to the electoral promise to hold corrupt public officials accountable. On its part, the UPND can be said to have been intent on addressing corruption and did but only to the extent of doing so against PF officials. President Hichilema's appointment of his brother demonstrates a lack of integrity in delivering transparent and accountable government as promised. Whilst the commitment to fix the economy was ambitious, it can be argued that the UPND honestly followed through in seeking to address the debt default crisis. However, the accumulation of further debt to almost double the original demonstrates an inability to effectively manage the macro-economic fundamentals as promised. The UPND government made little effort to follow through on its climate change-related promises, and given the urgency of action needed on climate change, four (4) years into its term, with only one year remaining, it can be argued that it lacked integrity in making these promises.

To What Extent did the Government's Performance Impact on Future Electoral Performance?

By the end of 2024, and less than 10 months before the end of its term, the MCP had only delivered on 12% of the promises it made related to improving governance. On corruption, it had failed to deliver (Woods-Nkhutabasa, 2025), a shocking record given the emphasis it had placed on establishing special anti-corruption courts and fast-tracking corruption cases in the backdrop of the major corruption scandals that had rocked the country. Despite the enduring food security crisis in Malawi, with 75% of the population living below the poverty line, which was exacerbated by Cyclones Idai in 2019, Gombe in 2022, Freddy in 2023, and Cyclone Chido in 2024, the shutdown of ADMARC depots countrywide, supplied communities with affordable maize and other staple

commodities, significantly worsened the food security situation countrywide.

In the election held in September 2025, President Chakwera and MCP lost to former President Mutharika's DPP, who gained 57% of the vote against Chakwera's 33% (Maseko, 2025). Political analysts argued that the main reason for Chakwera's loss was due to his poor handling of the economy, inability to rein in corruption, and his mishandling of the death of his former vice president. The election of 85-year-old Mutharika is widely considered as less of a vote of confidence in Mutharika but more of a vote of no confidence in Chakwera. Chakwera is widely considered by the voters to have failed to steer Malawi's economy towards recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic, with inflation remaining at above 20% for over three (3) years. He is also considered to have failed to steer the country's response to several cyclones and a regional drought, which devastated crops and worsened hunger. In this context, the closure of ADMARC exemplifies his failure.

Whilst the specific causes of the loss of election by MCP may never be known, its dismal performance in delivering on its electoral promises in 2020 can be rightly assumed to have contributed especially on issues considered most critical by the electorate, such as the economy, food security, energy, health and education and corruption. With regards to performance, the UPND has

performed commendably in some of its main promises but only moderately in fulfilling other campaign promises in four years of its mandate, with only one year to go. One area where UPND performance has been notably commendable is in addressing the debt crisis, which constituted a significant political, economic and social threat to Zambia. Unfortunately, the subsequent debt accumulation risks pushing the country back to the same place. Granted that most of the UPND promises were broadly framed with no specific delivery timeframes, with only one more year to go, it is increasingly clear that unless there is an acceleration of effort to deliver by UPND, there is a high risk of it failing to achieve its promises. In particular, the UPND will need to do far more to balance the impact of the austere conditions the debt restructure imposed on livelihoods, in particular, the prices of mealie meal and fuel, and other social services. Crucially, whilst the UPND has been seen to act against corrupt former officials of the PF government, prosecuting and securing convictions, there has not been a similar zeal to act against implicated UPND officials. In addition, the appointment by President Hichilema of his unqualified brother to the Zambian foreign service has irredeemably tainted his record and called into question his promises to run a transparent, corruption-free government based on merit.

Conclusion

The paper sought to do four things. *First*, it identified the relevant and key national problems/issues ahead of the elections in Malawi and Zambia. It outlined the political, economic and social context in both countries at the time the MCP and UPND took power. A common characteristic is that both countries faced political crises and constrained political, democratic and civic space ahead of the elections, with the previous governments of Mutharika and Lungu intimidating and restricting the rights and opportunities of the opposition to freely organise and campaign, and also manipulating the electoral process. Both MCP and UPND defied the electoral odds to win elections. Both MCP and UPND won elections in the immediate aftermath of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and faced significant and unanticipated challenges in responding to the health crisis, which had severe economic, political and social implications. MCP and UPND inherited struggling economies which were very vulnerable to external shocks – financial, climatic and geopolitical. MCP and UPND had to contend with climatic shocks and cyclones that devastated the country, which negatively impacted agricultural productivity with serious implications for the agro-reliant economies. UPND had to confront an economic meltdown induced by a debt default.

Both parties inherited a significant governance crisis, with previous regimes having corruptly mismanaged the countries. Crucially, MCP and UPND inherited very high levels of grand corruption in the public service and citizenry that were frustrated and expected action on it. Related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crises, both parties, more so for the MCP, inherited countries with poor social development outcomes in education, health, gender equality, access to energy and others.

Second, the paper reviewed and assessed the electoral promises contained in the MCP party manifesto and the performance of the government in delivering the electoral promises. It found that the MCP failed to deliver on the majority of its promises by the time its term of office ended in September 2025, leading to its defeat by the DPP in the election. The UPND was assessed to have achieved a score of 53% in terms of progress made towards the fulfilment of promises, with only one year to go in its term.

Third, the assessment of the alignment of the main electoral promises to the key national issues or problems showed that, in general, the promises mirrored the contemporary political, economic and social national challenges both Zambia and Malawi faced, although the promises tended to be very broad, non-specific, with no delivery timelines. This made it difficult to effectively

hold both parties to account regarding the timeliness of delivery, as they could argue that they had five (5) years to deliver.

Fourth, the evaluation of the impact of the government's performance on subsequent electoral performance could only be applied to the MCP, which has since contested and lost the election. Whilst the MCP electoral loss cannot be conclusively attributed to its failure to deliver on most of the promises it made in 2019, a strong argument can be made for the substantial contribution of its poor

government performance to the poor electoral performance in 2025. The UPND faces elections in 2026 and thus has only one year to accelerate delivery of outstanding promises. It is doubtful whether it can deliver on the remaining 50% of the yet unfulfilled promises in only one year, but that assessment can only be made next year. In addition, it remains to be seen what impact, if any, the performance of the UPND government regarding its electoral promises of 2020 will have on its electoral performance in the 2026 election.

References

AfricaBrief. (2023, October 30). *New National Youth Policy Puts Emphasis on Youth Involvement in Governance and Development*. Substack. <https://africabrief.substack.com/p/new-national-youth-policy-puts-emphasis>

Africanews. (2021, September 10). *Zambia's new leader vows 'zero tolerance' on corruption*. <https://www.africanews.com/2021/09/10/zambia-s-new-leader-vows-zero-tolerance-on-corruption/>

AGRA. (2024, May 20). *AGRA Convenes Youth for The YEFFA Program in Malawi, Paving the Way for Youth in Agriculture*. <https://agra.org/news/agra-convenes-youth-for-the-yeffa-program-in-malawi-paving-the-way-for-youth-in-agriculture/>

Amnesty International. (2021, February 4). *Malawi: Resurgence of killings and abductions of persons with albinism spells a dangerous escalation*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/02/malawi-resurgence-of-killings-and-abductions-of-persons-with-albinism-spells-a-dangerous-escalation/>

Anders, G. (n.d). *Policy Brief: Law Enforcement and High-Level Corruption in Malawi: Learning from Cashgate*. GIACE. <https://giace.org/resources/policy-brief-law-enforcement-and-high-level-corruption-in-malawi-learning-from-cashgate/>

Associated Press. (2021, June 28). *Zambia approaches elections amid repression, says Amnesty*. Courthouse News Service. <https://www.courthousenews.com/zambia-approaches-elections-amid-repression-says-amnesty/>

Basel Institute on Governance. (2025, September 4). *Zambia convicts former foreign minister in "helicopter corruption trial" with international support*. <https://baselgovernance.org/news/zambia-convicts-former-foreign-minister-helicopter-corruption-trial-international-support>

BBC News. (2018, July 4). *Malawi's President Mutharika and the police food scandal*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-4471422>

BBC News. (2021, July 29). *South Africa unrest: The families searching for missing loved ones* [Video]. BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-africa-57999922>

Budge, I., Robertson, D., & Hearl, D. (Eds.). (1987). *Ideology, strategy, and party change: Spatial analysis of post-war election programmes in 19 democracies*. Cambridge University Press.

Center for Investigative Journalism Malawi. (2025, August 9). *Four years, no verdict: Fuel scandal puts Malawi's justice and politics – on trial*. <https://www.investigative-malawi.org/2315/four-years-no-verdict-fuel-scandal-puts-malawis-justice-and-politics-on-trial/>

Chaile, G. (2025, October 7). *Kingsley Chanda jailed 6 years with hard labour*. Daily Nation. <https://www.dailynationzambia.com/2025/10/kingsley-chanda-jailed-6-years-with-hard-labour/>

Chauwa, A. (2021, May 12). *NEEF disburses K5.6bn to women and youth*. Nyasa Times. <https://www.nyasatimes.com/neef-disburses-k5-6bn-to-women-and-youth/>

Chelwa, G. (2024, February 15). *Thanks to the IMF, Zambia's fuel prices have nearly doubled in two years*. Africa Watch. Substack. <https://gchelwa.substack.com/p/thanks-to-the-imf-zambias-fuel-prices>

Chief Editor. (2022, July 3). *HH appoints brother as Zambia's Deputy Ambassador to Malaysia*. Lusaka Times. <https://www.lusakatimes.com/2022/07/03/hh-appoints-brother-as-as-zambias-deputy-ambassador-to-malaysia/>

Chimbayo, R. (2020, February 27). *Government abolishes quota, reintroduces JCE*. Malawi24. <https://malawi24.com/2020/02/27/government-abolishes-quota-re-introduces-jce/>

Chisalu, P. (2023, March 12). *Police release Lusaka-Ndola road protestors on bond*. News Diggers Media.

<https://diggers.news/local/2023/03/12/police-release-lusaka-ndola-road-protesters-on-bond/>

Daka, P. (2024, November 29). *We don't deem it necessary to conduct lifestyle audits at the moment* – Mwiimbu. News Diggers Media. <https://diggers.news/local/2024/11/29/we-dont-deem-it-necessary-to-conduct-lifestyle-audits-at-the-moment-mwiimbu/>

Dolezal, M., Ennser-Jedenastik, L., Müller, W. C., Schermann, K., & Winkler, A. K. (2016). *Beyond salience and position-taking: How political parties communicate through their manifestos*.

Dzida, R. (2021, February 22). *Malawi President Chakwera is held accountable for campaign promises*. Maravi Post. <https://www.maravipost.com/malawi-president-chakwera-is-held-accountable-for-campaign-promises/>

FEWS NET. (2024, October). *Malawi food security outlook: Humanitarian assistance likely to improve food security conditions in the south, October 2024–May 2025*. ReliefWeb. <https://reliefweb.int/report/malawi/malawi-food-security-outlook-humanitarian-assistance-likely-improve-food-security-conditions-south-october-2024-may-2025>

International Monetary Fund. (2025). *Zambia: Staff report for the 2025 Article IV consultation*.

IMF Staff Country Reports, 2025(225), Article A003. <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/002/2025/225/article-A003-en.xml>

Jegwa, P. (2022, November 25). *Malawi's vice-president Saulos Chilima charged with corruption*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-63754227>

Jobe, F. (2025, July 30). *ADMARC shuts down operations due to lack of government funding*. Malawi24. <https://malawi24.com/2025/07/30/admarc-shuts-down-operations-due-to-lack-of-government-funding/>

Judiciary of Zambia. (2023, March 14). *Remarks by the Hon. Chief Justice at the official opening of the*

two day conference on economic and financial crimes. <https://judiciaryzambia.com/remarks-by-the-hon-chief-justice-at-the-official-opening-of-the-two-day-conference-on-economic-and-financial-crimes/>

Kalikeka, M., Bwalya, M., Adu Ababio, K., Gasior, K., McLennan, D., & Rattenhuber, P. (2021). *Distributional effects of the COVID 19 pandemic in Zambia*. UNU WIDER. <https://www.wider.unu.edu/publication/distributional-effects-covid-19-pandemic-zambia>

Kantchentche-Donga, 2022. (2022, October 14). *Agriculture authorities acknowledge being tricked*. Capital Radio Malawi. <https://www.capitalradiomalawi.com/2022/10/14/agriculture-authorities-acknowledge-being-tricked/>

Kunda, J. (2021, December 31). *Zambia's inflation closes year at record low 16.4%*. Anadolu Agency. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/zambias-inflation-closes-year-at-record-low-164-/2461937>

Malila, M. (2023). *Whither justice? The economic and financial crimes courts in Zambia*. *Zambia Criminal Law Journal*.

Mapenzauswa, S.. (2016, August 9). *Ailing Zambia economy could hurt President Lungu in election*. Business Insider (republished via Latest Nigerian News). <https://www.latestnigeriannews.com/news/3326141/critics-called-out-what-they-said-was-grahams-navet-when-it-came-to-how-the-lang.html>

Maseko, N. (2025, September 25). *Malawi's ex-president wins election in comeback at age*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cvg4n0rrn1no>

Mashinga, K. (2020, May 31). *Government abolishes quota system for university selection*. University World News. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20200531153434780>

Masina, L. (2017, February 22). *Malawi president fires cabinet minister over maize deal scandal*. Voice of America. <https://www.voanews.com/a/malawi-president-fires-cabinet-minister-over-maize-deal-scandal/3735100.html>

Masina, L. (2023, April 11). *Malawi president pardons former minister jailed for corruption*. VOA News. <https://www.voanews.com/a/malawi-president-pardons-former-minister-jailed-for-corruption/7046204.html>

Matafwali, B., & Masaiti, G. (2024). *The impact of COVID 19 on teaching and learning in Zambia: Implications for responsiveness of learning environments to emergency situations*. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 11(2).

Ministry of Finance and National Planning. (2022, June 7). *2022 National Budget (OBB)*. <https://www.mofnp.gov.zm/?wpdmpro=2022-national-budget-obb>

Mofya, M. (2021, August 26). *SACCORD hails UPND govt's commitment to ending caderism*. News Diggers Media. <https://diggers.news/local/2021/08/26/saccord-hails-upnd-govts-commitment-to-ending-caderism/>

Mtemang'ombe, E. (2025, September 11). *Agriculture shapes 2025 campaign, doubts remain*. Nation Online. <https://mwnation.com/agriculture-shapes-2025-campaign-doubts-remain/>

Mwale, W. (2023, February 28). *Malawi President Chakwera answers questions in parliament*. AfricaBrief. Substack. <https://africabrief.substack.com/p/malawi-president-chakwera-answers>

Mwape, S. (2022, October 24). *Lungu law looms dangerously over Zambian digital rights*. Association for Progressive Communications. <https://www.apc.org/en/news/lungu-law-looms-dangerously-over-zambian-digital-rights>

National Prosecution Authority. (2024, May 12). *Former presidential aide Amos Chanda convicted of stealing court record*. <https://www.npa.gov.zm/index.php/2024/05/12/former-presidential-aide-amos-chanda-convicted-of-stealing-court-record/>

News Agencies. (2017, April 11). *Zambian opposition leader Hakainde Hichilema detained*. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/4/11/zambian-opposition-leader-hakainde-hichilema-detained>

News Agencies. (2022, January 24). *Malawi's president dissolves cabinet over corruption allegations*. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/24/malawis-president-dissolves-cabinet-over-corruption>

Ngoma, H., Finn, A., & Kabisa, M. (2023). Climate shocks, vulnerability, resilience and livelihoods in rural Zambia. *Climate and Development*, 16(6), 490–501. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17565529.2023.2246031>

Njenga, M. F. (2022, March 22). *Investigative wings seize 31 vehicles abandoned in Makeni*. News Diggers Media. <https://diggers.news/local/2022/03/22/investigative-wings-seize-31-vehicles-abandoned-in-makeni/>

Our Reporter. (2025, July 17). *Blackout blues: Escom blames load shedding on 40MW power gap, promises relief by year end*. Nyasa Times. <https://www.nyasatimes.com/blackout-blues-escom-blames-load-shedding-on-40mw-power-gap-promises-relief-by-year-end/>

Rahman, K. (2020). *Zambia: Overview of corruption and anti corruption*. U4 Anti Corruption Resource Centre, Chr. Michelsen Institute. <https://www.u4.no/publications/zambia-overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption-2020>

Rais Online. (2020, December 23). *Government changes fiscal year*. Radio Islam Malawi. <https://www.radioislam.org.mw/government-changes-fiscal-year/>

Rickard, C. (2019, May 9). *'Devilish', 'primitive' murder of man with albinism warrants death sentence – Malawi judge*. African Lii. <https://africanlii.org/en/articles/2019-05-09/carmel-rickard/devilish-primitive-murder-of-man-with-albinism-warrants-death-sentence-malawi-judge>

Rickard, C. (2021, May 14). *Tough court sentence could mark shift on albinism murders in Malawi*. African Lii. <https://africanlii.org/en/articles/2021-05-14/carmel-rickard/tough-court-sentence-could-mark-shift-on-albinism-murders-in-malawi>

Savage, R. & Mfula, C. (2020, May 8). *Zambia's kwacha hits record low against U.S. dollar*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/markets/currencies/zambias-kwacha-hits-record-low-against-us-dollar-2024-05-08/>

Sofie Arjon Schütte, S. A. (2024, December 9). *Anti-corruption court legislation for 29 countries*. Anti-corruption resource centre. <https://www.u4.no/anti-corruption-court-legislation-for-23-countries>

Singini, G. (2025, May 14). *Mixed views on wage review*. NationOnline. <https://mwnation.com/mixed-views-on-wage-review/>

Spotlight on Corruption. (2025, May 30). *Press release: NGOs urge further accountability in UK–Malawi bribery case*. <https://www.spotlightcorruption.org/ngos-urge-accountability-sattar-case/>

Stein, H., & Chitonge, H. (2025, January 9). *The Zambian debt default: A structuralist perspective*. Georgetown Journal of International Affairs. <https://gja.georgetown.edu/2025/01/09/the-zambian-debt-default-a-structuralist-perspective/>

Strasser, P. G. (2016). *An Anti-Corruption Bureau's inexorable endeavor: A study of Malawi's Cashgate scandal*. Washington and Lee Law Review Online, 73, 303–324. <https://scholarlycommons.law.wlu.edu/wlur-online/vol73/iss1/11>

Transparency International Zambia. (2023, January 31). *2022 CPI: Zambia's Performance*. <https://tiazambia.org.zm/author/admin/page/26/>

UNFPA Zambia. (2020). *COVID 19 jeopardises progress made towards protecting women and girls from violence and harmful practices*. <https://zambia.unfpa.org/en/news/covid-19-jeopardises-progress-made-towards-protecting-women-and-girls-violence-and-harmful-1>

UNICEF. (2019, April 18). *Cyclone Idai: Education at risk for more than 305,000 children in Mozambique*. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/cyclone-idai-education-risk-more-305000-children-mozambique-unicef>

UNICEF. (2023). *Evaluation of the UNICEF Zambia Country Programme (2016–2022)*. <https://evaluationreports.unicef.org/GetDocument?documentID=19910&fileID=56668>

U.S. Mission Zambia. (2025, May 8). *United States to Cut \$50 Million in Medications and Medical Supplies Support*. U.S. Embassy in Zambia. <https://zm.usembassy.gov/united-states-to-cut-50-million-in-medications-and-medical-supplies-support/>

Woods Nkhutabasa, J. (2025, March 14). *Malawi's broken promise: From hope to crisis*. Pan African Visions. <https://panafricanvisions.com/2025/03/malawis-broken-promise-from-hope-to-crisis/>

World Bank. (2019, June). *Malawi Economic Monitor: Charting a new course*. <https://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/167411561476098950/Malawi-Economic-Monitor-Charting-a-New-Course>

World Life Expectancy. (2024). *Zambia: Life expectancy statistics*. <https://www.worldlifeexpectancy.com/zambia-life-expectancy>



About SIVIO Institute

SIVIO Institute (SI) is an independent organisation focused on ensuring that citizens are at the centre of processes of socio-economic and policy change. It aims to contribute towards Africa's inclusive socio-economic transformation. It is borne out of a desire to enhance agency as a stimulus/catalyst for inclusive political and socio-economic transformation. SIVIO's work entails multi-disciplinary, cutting edge policy research, nurturing citizens' agency to be part of the change that they want to see and working with communities to mobilise their assets to resolve some of the immediate problems they face.

SIVIO Institute has three centres/programs of work focused on; (i) civic engagement (ii) philanthropy and communities and (ii) economic development and livelihoods. In the process SI addresses the following problems:

- » Inadequate performance of existing political and economic system
- » Increasing poverty and inequality
- » Limited coherence of policies across sectors
- » Ineffectual participation in public processes by non-state actors
- » Increased dependence on external resources and limited leveraging of local resources