



Delivering the Mandate?

An Assessment of the Government of
Zambia's Performance 2021-2025

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List of Abbreviations

ACC	Anti-Corruption Commission
ACW	African Citizens Watch
AfDB	African Development Bank
ATI	Access to Information
CDF	Constituency Development Fund
CDFC	Constituency Development Fund Committee
CPI	Corruption Perceptions Index
EFCC	Economic and Financial Crimes Court
ENACT	Enabling Access to Justice, Civil Society Participation and Transparency
FSP	Food Security Pack
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
IMF	International Monetary Fund
SCT	Social Cash Transfer
SI	Statutory Instrument
UNPD	United Party for National Development
UNZA	University of Zambia

Introduction

The 2025 Zambia Barometer report is based on publicly available information gathered during the process of tracking the government of Zambia's conversion of electoral promises into policy actions through a platform known as the [Zambia Citizens Watch Tracker](#). The report is designed to provide a comprehensive and factual assessment of the Government of Zambia's performance in fulfilling its electoral promises. The report tracks 248 promises made by the United Party for National Development (UPND) during its 2021 election campaign, categorising them into five (5) key sectors: Economy, Governance, Corruption, Climate Change, and Social Services. The Barometer provides an objective evaluation of the regime's progress over its five-year

term, by systematically documenting government actions and triangulating data from reliable sources, including ministries, media platforms, and international organisations.

The purpose of the report extends beyond accountability; it seeks to empower citizens, civil society, and policymakers with evidence-based insights ahead of the 2026 elections. The report exposes the gaps between political rhetoric and actual delivery, especially in critical areas like economic reform and poverty alleviation. Ultimately, the Barometer is meant to enhance transparency and accountability on the part of the government to the voting public. These are critical conditions for building democracy.

African Citizens Watch

an independent platform that tracks the performance and effectiveness of African governments based on the pledges made in the manifesto and other important policy pronouncements.



Malawi
MCP
2020-25



Zambia
UPND
2021-26



Zimbabwe
ZANU-PF
2023-28



South Africa
GNU
2024 - 29



Botswana
MCP
2024 - 29

africancitizenswatch.org

The African Citizens Watch (ACW) [platform](#) tracks the extent to which governments convert electoral promises into policy actions. The tracking of governments started with Zimbabwe in 2018 and expanded in 2022 to include Malawi, Zambia, South Africa and Botswana. The tracking process potentially contributes to a better understanding of how governments remain committed to promises made during the season of campaigning for office, even after winning. The main question that we ask is, 'Are elected governments really committed to the promises they make during the election campaigns?' We mostly use the manifesto as the basis of tracking. The core mission of ACW is to promote the essentials of democracy: transparency, accountability, and performance-driven governance. By scrutinising the strategies governments use to implement their campaign

promises, ACW provides insights into whether these commitments align with their actual performance in national development. The platform potentially enables citizens to make voting decisions on the basis of past performance. It allows policymakers and researchers to have a better grasp of the progress made by the government, or lack of it.

In this report, we focus on how the Government of Zambia, led by President Hakainde Hichilema, has been able to convert the promises made in the run-up to the 2021 general elections, which were won by the UPND. There were 248 promises made, and of these, six (6) have been fully implemented, 169 are in progress to be completed, and two (2) have been broken. The report covers the period from August 2021 to August 2025.

The report is divided into five (5) sections. The following sub-section provides a broader contextual analysis of policymaking and implementation in the past four (4) years. Governments do not operate in a vacuum and are not devoid of any legacy or historical issues or challenges that have a bearing on their performance. The methodology behind the tracker and the assessment of performance is discussed immediately after the background and contextual analysis. Then we discuss

the performance of the Government of Zambia using the five (5) themes in the tracker (Economy, Governance, Climate Change, Corruption and Social Services). In this section, we have added case studies about performance in certain areas to enhance the monitoring discussion by highlighting good and bad practices alike. The report concludes by outlining some of the key lessons learnt based on what the Government of Zambia achieved or did not achieve during this period.



Background

The 2021 general election marked one of the most significant political transitions in Zambia's recent history. On August 12, 2021, the UPND, led by Hakainde Hichilema, swept to power on a wave of popular discontent and a powerful message of change, ending the decade-long rule of the Patriotic Front. President Hichilema's victory, secured with over 59% of the vote, reflected a decisive mandate from across the country's ten provinces and signalled a deep public yearning for economic renewal, an end to corruption, and the restoration of democratic norms (Al Jazeera, 2021; Cook, 2021).

The UPND's ascent was underpinned by the promise of a "New Dawn"—a commitment to fixing the economic crisis, re-establishing the rule of law, and creating opportunities for the nation's youth. This vision resonated strongly with the electorate, particularly young people, who make up a majority of Zambia's population and who were eager for structural reforms and a

tangible improvement in living conditions (Al Jazeera, 2021). President Hichilema campaigned on a platform emphasising economic stabilisation, job creation, youth empowerment, and government transparency, appealing to citizens frustrated with the previous administration's perceived failures.

To appreciate the urgency of the UPND's agenda, it is important to understand the context of the challenges they inherited. Before 2021, Zambia faced a multi-dimensional crisis that affected almost every aspect of governance and public life. The economic situation was particularly dire. The country had accumulated unsustainable external debt; considering Zambia's debt stock, which was US\$26.29 billion at the end of 2021, consisting of about US\$14 billion in foreign debt and K78 billion in local debt (National Assembly, 2022). At the same time, the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) stood at US\$21.2 billion. In 2021, Zambia's total public debt to GDP ratio was 124%

(National Assembly, 2022). This led to a historic debt default in late 2020. This fiscal imbalance limited the government's capacity to finance essential social services, infrastructure projects, and economic stimulus programs (World Bank, 2021). The debt situation also negatively affected Zambia's international credit ratings, increased borrowing costs, and constrained foreign investment.

In 2021, Zambia's economy was under severe strain from high debt, currency depreciation, and rising living costs. Real GDP grew by about 4.6%, supported mainly by mining and agriculture, but this was insufficient to ease widespread hardship (World Bank, 2022). Poverty levels remained high, with more than 60% of the population living below the national poverty line, reflecting persistent vulnerabilities (World Bank, 2022). Inflation averaged 22% in 2021, one of the highest in the region, driven by surging food and fuel prices as well as exchange rate pressures (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2022). Unemployment, particularly among the youth, stood at around 12%, with limited opportunities in the formal sector (World Bank, 2022). These challenges highlighted the fragility of Zambia's economy and heightened public demand for leadership capable of restoring stability and fostering inclusive growth.

The governance landscape presented an equally daunting set of challenges. Zambia had witnessed growing concerns over corruption, political

violence, and the weakening of democratic institutions. Reports of misappropriation of public funds were widespread, including the revelation of over 9,800 "ghost workers" on the government payroll costing more than US\$45 million and kickbacks in the Industrial Development Corporation – Marcopolo Tiles deal, where senior officials personally benefited from a US\$44.8 million transaction (Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, 2021; Open Zambia, 2021). The Anti-Corruption Commission's arrest of 14 government officials for illegal fund transfers and false accounting further reinforced perceptions of rampant graft, though law enforcement was often criticised for being selective and politically biased (Vanguard, 2021; United States Department of State, 2021). At the same time, restrictions on political freedoms and media independence created an environment of fear. Journalists were assaulted while covering political clashes, radio stations in rural areas were attacked, and the Cyber Security and Cyber Crimes Act No. 2 of 2021 was condemned for suppressing free expression (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2021; Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Zambia, 2021). Allegations of illicit enrichment against former President Edgar Lungu, including gifts and land received through business allies, further eroded public confidence in state institutions (International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, 2021). Collectively, these developments deepened distrust in governance structures and weakened Zambia's

democratic fabric (Transparency International, 2021).

These intertwined economic and governance crises set the stage for the 2021 election, transforming it from a routine electoral contest into a referendum on Zambia's future trajectory. Citizens were not merely choosing between political parties; they were expressing their collective desire for economic stability, accountable leadership, and the restoration of democratic norms. In this context, the UPND's clear articulation of a reform agenda, combined with Hichilema's personal reputation as a successful businessman and advocate for good governance, resonated strongly with a population eager for change.

The new administration's priorities were immediately apparent following the election. Chief among these were stabilising the macroeconomic environment, restructuring Zambia's external debt, restoring investor confidence, and addressing governance deficits.

Additionally, the [UPND](#) pledged to prioritise the empowerment of youth through education, skills development, and access to economic opportunities, recognising that Zambia's future would depend on the productive engagement of its young population. These commitments were ambitious and underscored the complexity of the tasks the government faced in delivering tangible improvements within a limited timeframe.

In summary, the 2021 transition marked a pivotal moment in Zambia's democratic evolution. The UPND's victory was emblematic of citizens' collective demand for reform, transparency, and socio-economic renewal. The administration assumed office with both an unprecedented mandate and a complex set of inherited challenges. Understanding this background is essential for evaluating the government's subsequent performance and the broader implications for Zambia's political and economic trajectory over its first four years in office.

Context

Since the 2021 elections, Zambia has faced a complex mix of economic recovery and persistent socio-economic challenges. After suffering from high inflation, currency depreciation, and fiscal instability in 2020–2021, the economy began to show some signs of stabilisation. Real GDP growth rebounded to 6.2% in 2021, fell by 1% to 5.2% in 2022, but increased again to 5.8% in 2023. However, in 2024, it is estimated that it will grow by an estimated 4% (World Bank, 2025). However, inflation has remained persistently above the Bank of Zambia’s target range (6–8%), with rates such as 13.5% in February 2024 and continuing high food and fuel price inflation fueling cost-of-living pressures (World Bank, 2024).

Poverty remains widespread and even increasing in certain dimensions. According to the 2022 Living Conditions Monitoring Survey (LCMS), approximately 60% of Zambians live below the national poverty line, with rural poverty substantially higher than

urban poverty (about 78.8% in rural areas vs ~31.9% in urban centres) (African Development Bank [AfDB], 2024). Child poverty is especially severe: over 65% of children experience monetary poverty, and about 70.6% are deprived in two or more dimensions of wellbeing (nutrition, health, education, sanitation, etc.) in 2022 (UNICEF, 2023).

Unemployment remains a serious issue, especially for youth. Young people (aged 15–24) face unemployment rates of about 24.7% in 2021; female unemployment is also higher than for men (roughly 13.6% vs 12%) in recent years (AfDB, 2024). Meanwhile, job growth has often skewed toward low-productivity or informal sectors, like small-scale agriculture and services, which do not always translate into improved incomes or poverty reduction (World Bank, 2025).

The socio-economic landscape has also been increasingly shaped by external shocks, most notably climate-

related ones. From 2023 onward, severe droughts significantly reduced staple crop outputs (maize was down over 50%), hampering food supply, raising food prices, and increasing food insecurity, especially in rural areas (ACAPS, 2024). The drought also impacted hydroelectric power generation, contributing to energy shortages and power cuts, which in turn constrained industrial activity and livelihoods (Chronic Poverty Advisory Network, 2025).

In response, the government has pursued fiscal reforms, debt restructuring (under the G-20 Common Framework), and boosted social spending, especially in health, education, and social protection programs. Yet the debt burden, inflation, and weak infrastructure (including power reliability) continue to hamper inclusive growth (World Bank, 2025). Human development metrics have improved, but with important caveats. Zambia's Human Development Index (HDI) has increased (a value

around 0.569 in recent years), and life expectancy has moved upward, but stark inequalities persist across gender, rural vs urban residence, and age cohorts (UNDP, 2023).

Between 2021 and 2024, Zambia faced persistent corruption challenges despite political promises of reform. Reports highlighted systemic issues such as weak enforcement of anti-corruption laws, financial irregularities in public institutions, and widespread bribery in service delivery, with sectors like policing and procurement being particularly affected. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) shows a mixed picture: Zambia scored 33 in 2022, improving to 37 in 2023 and 39 in 2024, moving from 116th to 92nd globally. These gains were attributed to reforms such as digitised licensing and strengthened beneficial ownership requirements, but the country still lags behind the global average of 43, indicating that corruption remains a significant governance challenge.

Methodology

To track and assess the performance of the Government of Zambia, we utilised a combination of data-driven analysis and independent research to create the [Zambia Citizens Watch Tracker](#). This process entails systematically tracking, verifying, and scoring the Government of Zambia's progress on its policy promises. The approach ensures transparency, objectivity, and sectoral comparability by applying a standardised scoring system to each promise, then aggregating results by sector. To build the tracker, policy promises were extracted from the

official UPND election manifesto. In their term of office, if the Government of Zambia made other key policy pronouncements, these were added to the promises being tracked. This serves as the authoritative source of campaign commitments. The promises are categorised into five (5) key sectors: Economy, Governance, Corruption, Climate Change, and Social Services. Actions taken by the government to fulfil each promise are tracked using a variety of reliable sources, as shown in the figure below.

Government Sources	Local Media
<p>From Government Ministries Departments, and Agencies (MDAs)</p> <p>National Assembly of Zambia</p> <p>National Pensions Scheme Authority</p> <p>National Prosecutions Authority</p> <p>Zambia Revenue Authority</p>	<p>Daily Mail</p> <p>Daily Nation</p> <p>Diggers News</p> <p>Diamond TV</p> <p>Lusaka Times</p> <p>Lusaka Stars</p> <p>MoneyFM Zambia</p> <p>News24.com</p> <p>Zambia Monitor</p> <p>ZNBC</p> <p>Zambia24</p> <p>Zambian Observer</p>
International Media	International Organisations and Think Tanks
<p>Aljazeera</p> <p>Africa Press</p> <p>Reuters</p> <p>SADC News</p> <p>XINHUA Net</p>	<p>African Development Bank</p> <p>Bowmans Law Firm</p> <p>Policy Monitoring Research Center</p> <p>Kubatana.net</p> <p>Institute for Security Studies</p>

FIGURE 1 Overview of Sources Used to Track Government Performance in Zambia

A tangible action that we record on our tracker comprises a set of activities spearheaded by the government, even in partnership with the private sector, multilateral agencies or bilateral partners, but there has to be a direct government contribution. While using the sources mentioned above, we record only published developments;

if the government has done something but unfortunately did not publish it, our tracker will not have knowledge of the action.

We have established the five (5) categories of promise assessment as follows:

1

In Progress

This is where the actions towards fulfilment of the promise have started, but are not comprehensive, and more should be done towards fully implementing the promise.

2

Implemented

This is where the government actions have completely dealt with the promise, and work has been done to full capacity.

3

Not Commenced

This is where there has not been any movement towards fulfilling the

4

Modified

This is when the government, due to other circumstances, has amended the promise to include/remove other things but towards the same goal.

5

Broken

This is where government actions have gone directly opposite to what they initially promised.

All reported actions are triangulated and fact-checked across multiple sources before being recorded on the [Zambia Citizens Watch Tracker](#).

Each promise is assigned a status and corresponding score based on its implementation progress.

TABLE 1 **Overview of Promise Score**

Status	Description	Score
Implemented	Promise fully delivered as stated in the manifesto	14
In Progress	Partial fulfilment: measurable progress but not fully completed	1–13
Broken/ Not Commenced	No action taken or promise explicitly abandoned	0

Promises classified as “In Progress” are evaluated using a set of clearly defined indicators that measure the extent and quality of government action toward fulfilling each commitment. The scoring for “In Progress” promises ranges from 1 to 13 points, reflecting varying degrees of completion.

This assessment considers the following key factors:

- Legal Foundations: Has the necessary legal or regulatory framework been established to support the promise?

- Financial Commitment: Have adequate budgetary allocations or funding mechanisms been put in place?
- Human Resources: Are the required personnel or ministries available and mobilised?
- Time and Implementation Milestones: Has the government set and met clear timelines or achieved significant milestones toward completion?

		MAXIMUM SCORE	
		14	
		points possible	
ACTION			
New Strategy		Yes = 1	No = 0
Policy Reform (+) Incentive	2x weight	Yes = 2	No = 0
Policy Reform (-) Dis-enabler	2x weight	Yes = 2	No = 0
Does it fit in an existing Legal Framework?		Yes = 1	No = 0
Has a new law been established?		Yes = 1	No = 0
Has budget implications: New resources have been allocated		Yes = 1	No = 0
Fits within an existing ministry		Yes = 1	No = 0
Cross ministry/agency collaboration established		Yes = 1	No = 0
Time-frame-fits within current annual planning cycle	2x weight	Yes = 2	No = 0
Is it a fully implemented policy?	5x weight	Yes = 5	No = 0
Barometer Action Score		TOTAL	

FIGURE 2 Promise Assessment Scoring

Each promise is scored based on how comprehensively these resources and actions have been deployed. A higher score within the 7–13 range indicates substantial progress, with most critical resources and steps in place, while a score lower than 7 reflects limited action or partial fulfilment.

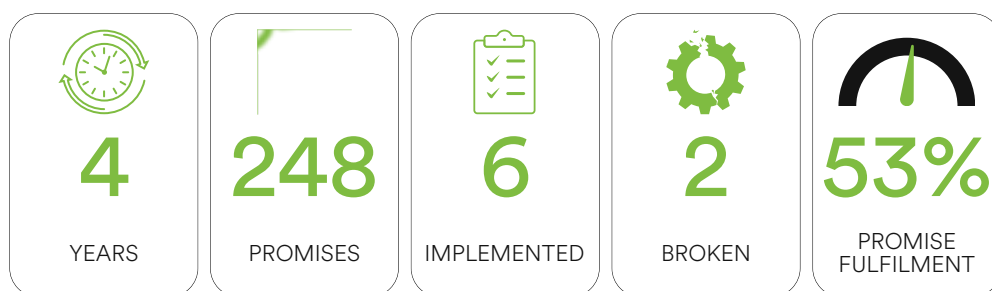
For each sector, the average score is calculated by summing the scores of all

and dividing by the total number of pledges in the sector. This approach enables sector-by-sector comparison and highlights areas of relative strength or weakness in government performance. The overall government performance score is determined by aggregating sectoral averages, providing a comprehensive snapshot of progress across all policy domains.



Findings: What Has Government Achieved?

Tracking Promises: 4 Years of Delivery



Source: African Citizens Watch

FIGURE 3 Overview of Government Performance

The UPND in its manifesto made a total of 248 promises, which were clustered into five (5) categories, i.e., Economy, Governance, Climate Change, Corruption, and Social Service. The assessment of the Government of

Zambia's performance reflects a mixed trajectory marked by notable progress in select areas, implementation gaps in others, and structural challenges that continue to hinder full realisation of the reform agenda.

TABLE 2 **Sector Breakdown of Progress**

Sector	# promises	# actions	% Not Commenced	% Implemented	% Broken	% In Progress	Assessment Score
Economy	143	278	34%	1%	0%	64%	43%
Governance	49	130	33%	2%	4%	61%	42%
Corruption	6	16	17%	0%	0%	83%	59%
Climate Change	12	27	8%	0%	0%	92%	63%
Social Service	38	169	11%	8%	0%	82%	58%
Total	248	620	29%	2%	1%	68%	53%

Economy

Zambia's economy is shaped by an ongoing reliance on copper, foundational weaknesses, particularly in fiscal management and economic diversification, and a pronounced susceptibility to global price swings and adverse climatic conditions. These have long constrained resilience. In response, the government has initiated a suite of reforms aimed at tightening fiscal discipline, enhancing debt transparency, and catalysing private sector growth to stabilise the macroeconomic environment.

The Economy sector dominates the government's agenda, accounting for 58% (143 out of 248) of total promises. Since August 2021, 278 actions have been undertaken, signalling notable momentum. On the other hand, the sector has one of the lowest assessment scores across all five (5) clusters (43%), with only two (2) promises fully implemented.

Work has commenced on 92 promises, while 49 have not commenced.

Some highlights of the economic promises include:

- Ensure fiscal expenditure rationalisation, prudence and discipline.
- Increase budgetary allocations to social protection, including addressing the plight of pensioners.
- Improve economic and fiscal governance through the strengthening of regulations.
- Improve budget credibility through better planning and adherence to expenditure plans.
- Increase international reserves to create a buffer to cushion the economy against external shocks.

TABLE 3 Overview of Economic Sector Performance

Subsector	# Promises	# Actions	Assessment Score
Agriculture and agro processing	28	67	48%
Arts and Culture	3	2	40%
Debt and Expenditure Management	6	5	51%
Economic Management	13	47	52%
Energy	9	29	40%
Financial Services	6	4	23%
Land Policy Planning	7	9	41%
Manufacturing	5	3	57%
Mining	8	20	43%
Private Sector Development	12	26	59%
Procurement	6	1	15%
Science and Technology	7	16	58%
Tax Reforms	7	2	26%
Tourism	13	20	58%
Trade Policy Reforms	5	2	27%
Transport and Logistics	8	25	47%
Total	143	278	43%

One of the advances made by the government is the securing of US\$300 million from the World Bank to develop farming blocks, an intervention designed to expand agricultural output and improve youth and women's access to land. These efforts reflect a strategic pivot toward inclusive growth, though implementation remains uneven.

Despite some movement under the G20 Common Framework for Debt

Treatments launched in 2020 and endorsed by the Paris Club, which was created to offer low-income countries orderly and coordinated debt restructuring involving broad official creditor participation, the debt situation in Zambia remains challenging. Zambia's public debt burden, particularly its external component, continues to be elevated and thereby restricts the country's fiscal space for vital development and social investment. The requirement under the

Framework that debt treatments must align with an IMF-supported programme and that all official bilateral and private creditors receive treatment on comparable terms adds layers of structural complexity, making it harder

to swiftly restore debt sustainability and freeing up resources for development. Some of the actions undertaken by the Government of Zambia include the following:

TABLE 4 Key Actions Taken by Government to Fulfil Economic Promises

Promise	Action	Status
Establish a policy and plan to facilitate local ownership and participation in mining	By October 2023 118 artisanal mining rights had been issued to cooperatives	In Progress
Ensure transparency and accountability in procurement and reporting of public debt	In April 2025, Zambia Public Procurement Authority released second quarter market price index, catalogue	In Progress
Implement programmes to improve youth and women's access to land	By October 2022, the government had secured US \$300 million from the World Bank for the development of farming blocks to grow agricultural production	Implemented
Create a robust tourism marketing strategy	In December 2021, Zambia launched the Tourism Domestic Strategy and Investment Guide to boost domestic tourism	Implemented
Promote the establishment of permanent agro dealer networks		Not Commenced
Establish a robust and independent complaints review mechanism		Not Commenced

The State of the Economy — Budget Battles and Fiscal Fragility

Zambia's tourism sector has historically remained [underdeveloped](#), constrained by limited international visibility, inadequate infrastructure, and relatively modest contributions to both GDP and employment creation. Despite the nation's rich natural and cultural assets, successive administrations struggled to fully harness tourism as a driver of sustainable economic growth, thereby leaving the sector's potential largely untapped. Recognising these persistent shortcomings, President Hakainde Hichilema has positioned tourism revitalisation as a strategic priority under the Eighth National Development Plan ([2022–2026](#)), which identifies the industry as one of the key sectors for economic diversification and inclusive development.

President Hichilema's administration has pledged wide-ranging policy [reforms](#), institutional strengthening, and increased collaboration with domestic and international stakeholders aimed at rebranding Zambia as both a leading regional hub and a competitive global destination. In 2022, the administration rolled out a multi-pronged Tourism Marketing [Strategy](#) aimed at making Zambia more attractive and accessible. Notable early reforms included waivers of visa requirements for select countries, streamlining licensing processes to facilitate easier market entry, and targeted high-level meetings with key players such as Union Gold Zambia and Protea Hotels. These steps reduced procedural hurdles and signalled Zambia's renewed commitment to international investors and travellers alike.

Strategic collaboration was prioritised, bringing together key actors across transportation, hospitality, energy, and infrastructure to coordinate sectoral improvements. Investments were channelled into upgrading roads, airports, and hospitality facilities, supported by government policy that actively encouraged private sector participation through business-friendly regulations, incentives, and targeted engagement of industry associations. International partnerships, notably with bodies such as [UN Tourism](#), were pursued to align Zambia's marketing and operational standards with established global best practices and to more effectively brand the country's distinctive natural and cultural assets on the world stage. These strategic shifts yielded early measurable [progress](#) such as doubled number of tourist between 2023 and 2024, with tourism increasingly seen as a driver of GDP growth and a key source of new jobs for Zambians. The country also reduced tourism visas by [50%](#) for ease of travel requirements and working towards improvement in the sector.

A clear and substantive progress has been made to achieve a fully transformed tourism sector with. Visa and licensing reforms, infrastructure investments, international branding, and public commitment from top officials all reflect dedicated implementation of the new tourism vision which has so far seen an [increase](#) in international arrivals in the country. Continued monitoring, further international outreach, and sustained resourcing will be necessary to ensure continued progress and maximum benefit for Zambia's economy and society.

Governance

Since assuming office in August 2021, President Hakainde Hichilema has led Zambia under the banner of the UPND, promising a “New Dawn” marked by economic reform, institutional renewal, and democratic accountability (Siachiwena, 2021). Zambia’s governance framework remains anchored in a constitutionally enshrined tripartite system, the executive, legislature, and judiciary, designed to safeguard democratic practice through

checks and balances.

The Governance sector accounts for 20% of all government promises (49 out of 248). Since August 2021, a total of 130 actions have been undertaken in this area. The sector’s assessment score currently stands at 42%, with progress distributed as follows: one (1) promise fully implemented, two (2) broken, 30 in progress, and 16 have not yet commenced.

TABLE 5 Overview of Governance Sector Performance

Subsector	# Promises	# Actions	Assessment Score
Decentralisation	4	9	63%
Foreign Policy	3	12	68%
Government	11	25	55%
Law Justice and Security	7	49	31%
Media Reforms	2	11	51%
Public Order	2	2	43%
Public Service	4	13	49%
Separation of Powers	13	9	17%
Electoral Reforms	3	0	0%
Total	49	130	42%

Governance, reforms and commitments include the following

- Improve the capacities of local authorities to make decisions and deliver services.
- Review the role of provincial administrations to ensure local-level participation in governance.
- Develop more effective leadership and management, and ensure sectoral management capacities are strengthened.

- Establish a durable constitutional order to catalyse development.
- Complete the constitutional reform agenda, anchored on national consensus.

A significant milestone has been the effort to strengthen government decision-making capacity at the local level. To advance this, in 2022, the government launched the National Decentralisation [Policy](#), which prioritises community engagement,

citizen-driven development, and inclusiveness as pillars of decentralisation across the country.

Equally important are efforts to expand access to justice for all. In March 2023, the government launched the Enabling Access to Justice, Civil Society Participation and Transparency (ENACT) initiative, aimed at promoting the rule of law, curbing corruption, and improving accountability. This initiative underscores Zambia's renewed commitment to inclusive governance by placing emphasis on civil society engagement, transparency in public service delivery, and expanded access to legal aid.

While these initiatives signal intent and incremental progress, the pace and depth of reform remain uneven, for

instance, where we notice public appointments not being done based on merit. These include an instance where the president appointed his younger brother, Muzoka Hichilema, as Zambia's Deputy Ambassador to Malaysia in July 2022 (Lusaka Times, 2022). His brother is reported to be a Sales and Marketing professional with no background in diplomacy. Stronger institutional safeguards, consistent implementation, and genuine citizen inclusion will be critical if Zambia is to translate stated commitments into sustained institutional improvements and more inclusive democratic outcomes.

Over the years, the following reflects actions undertaken by the government to fulfil promises they have made.

TABLE 6 Key Actions Taken by Government to Fulfil Governance Promises

Give autonomy to the police in the enforcement of the Public Order Act	In November 2023, the government started the review of Public Order Act to protect democracy	In Progress
Widen access to justice to all	The Ministry of Justice launched the enabling access to justice, civil society participation and transparency (ENACT) European Union co-funding initiative in March 2023	In Progress
Improve Government's capacity to make better decisions at the local level	Zambia launched the Decentralisation Policy in 2022 which prioritises community engagement in the implementation of decentralisation in the country	Implemented
Depoliticise the public service and improve leadership, managerial skills and officials' mindsets	President Hichilema appointed his younger brother Muzoka Hichilema as Zambia's Deputy Ambassador to Malaysia in July 2022. His brother is reported to be a Sales and Marketing professional with no background in diplomacy	Broken
Guarantee adequate funding to all institutions mandated to provide security		Not Commenced

Strengthening Decentralisation and Local Decision-Making in Zambia

Strengthening decentralisation and local decision-making remains central to Zambia's pursuit of inclusive governance and sustainable development, particularly in a context where historically centralised systems have contributed to delayed development outcomes and the persistent marginalisation of local communities. In recent years, the Government of Zambia has undertaken several reforms aimed at decentralising decision-making power closer to the grassroots level, enhancing transparency, and accelerating the delivery of essential services. These shifts are especially critical for disadvantaged and marginalised groups who have often been excluded from mainstream national development processes, thereby perpetuating structural inequality and inadequate local representation in governance.

A key development in this trajectory has been the enactment of the 2024 Constituency Development Fund (CDF) Act, which introduced fundamental changes in the management and governance of local development resources. The Act clarified the roles and mandates of Constituency Development Fund Committees (CDFCs), thereby strengthening accountability and delineating responsibilities more sharply than previous frameworks. Of particular note is the creation of Provincial CDF Committees, which serve to decentralise and streamline project approvals at the provincial rather than central level. This restructuring has proven vital for empowering provincial stakeholders, reducing costly bureaucratic delays, and helping ensure that local development initiatives are aligned with the genuine needs and aspirations of communities. As implementation has gathered pace, these changes have already shown promise in enabling more responsive and efficient project delivery, as well as ensuring enhanced fidelity to local priorities and participation.

Alongside these legislative reforms, the launch of Zambia's National Decentralisation Policy has established a clear normative and procedural framework for strengthening citizen-driven development. The policy places community engagement at the centre of local development planning, anchoring its objectives in the principles of participatory governance, equity, and transparency. It also foregrounds the importance of building the institutional and human capacity of local authorities, as well as integrating traditional leadership structures into local governance, which together contribute to more legitimate, embedded, and trusted institutional processes. By placing citizens at the heart of decision-making and fostering co-ownership of development programmes, the decentralisation policy has begun to tackle legitimacy gaps and rebuild trust between local communities and government authorities. These interventions are reinforced by the introduction of revised [guidelines](#) for CDF project approval and implementation, which further simplify bureaucratic processes, clarify roles and timelines for project evaluation and disbursement, and institutionalise transparency measures such as public disclosure of projects and mandatory community feedback mechanisms.

Collectively, Zambia's current wave of decentralisation reforms represents a deliberate and strategic commitment on the part of the government to redefine the locus of governance by empowering previously marginalised actors and increasing responsiveness to local realities. By embedding participation, transparency, and capacity-building at the heart of its decentralisation agenda, Zambia has laid a solid foundation for more equitable governance outcomes. The early evidence from these reforms suggests a positive trajectory in project implementation and civic engagement, although sustained evaluation will be critical to ensure continued inclusivity and resilience in the long term.

Corruption

The corruption sector accounts for 2% (6 out of 248) of all promises made. Since assuming office, six (6) anti-corruption measures have been

undertaken, representing an overall assessment score of 59%, with five (5) commitments currently in progress and one yet to be initiated.

TABLE 7 Overview of Corruption Sector Performance

Subsector	# Promises	# Actions	Assessment Score
Corruption	6	16	59%
Total	6	16	59%

One of the most visible institutional reforms has been the creation of the Economic and Financial Crimes Court (EFCC) in 2022, intended to fast-track prosecutions and strengthen oversight mechanisms. Zambia’s Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) score also improved from 33 in 2022 to 37 in 2023, to 39 in 2024, signalling a meaningful gain in both public trust and international confidence.

Yet, the government’s anti-corruption drive remains the subject of debate. Critics such as Dr O’Brien Kaaba (Former Anti-Corruption Commission [ACC] Board Member and University of Zambia [UNZA] Law Lecturer) underscore structural weaknesses within the ACC, particularly the concentration of appointment powers in the presidency. Such arrangements raise concerns about the commission’s independence and the risk of political influence in high-profile cases.

Moreover, while the CPI score reflects improved perceptions, it does not necessarily capture the lived realities of enforcement, deterrence, or institutional integrity. The limited number of promises (only six) dedicated to corruption despite its systemic impact suggests that anti-corruption may not be a central pillar of the administration’s governance strategy. This is further compounded by the slow pace of implementation and the absence of comprehensive legislative reforms to insulate accountability institutions from executive influence. In addition, the pace and process for the review of the Anti Corruption Act 3 of 2012 has been very slow. In January 2025, government announced that it had initiated a review of the Act. After extensive consultations and a successful validation meeting in March 2025, there has been no movement in pushing for Parliament to pass the Bill to amend the Act.

As Zambia advances its reform agenda, the resilience of anti-corruption efforts will hinge not only on technical progress but also on ensuring that accountability institutions are credible, autonomous, and capable of operating free from political interference.

Some of the key promises made under corruption include:

- Ensure all unclassified public records are available and open to the public.

- Ensure government officials declare any new wealth annually.
- Conduct lifestyle audits, with any civil servant found wanting .being suspended until a court ruling
- Introduce unexplained wealth orders, enforced by seizing property not proven in courts of law.

The table below highlights actions undertaken by the government to fulfil promises made.

TABLE 8 Key Actions Taken by Government to Fulfil Corruption Promises

Promise	Action	Status
Ensure all unclassified public records are available and open to the public	The Access to Information Act, 2023, was signed into law on 22 December 2023. This was a step towards greater transparency and accountability in the nation.	In Progress
Establish fast-track anti-corruption courts	A Statutory Instrument (SI) for creating an Economic and Financial Crimes Court was passed on 22 January 2022.	In Progress
Launch “Operation Recovery”, to ensure public money corruptly obtained is returned to the public	In December 2024, former Defence Minister Geoffrey Bwalya Mwamba was ordered to pay back K44 million proceeds of corruption	In Progress
Ensure government officials declare any new wealth annually		Not Commenced

Social Services

Social Services account for 15% of all promises under this cluster, representing 38 out of 248 commitments. Of these, 31 are currently in progress, three (3) have

been fully implemented, and four (4) remain with no action initiated. The government has undertaken 169 actions in this sector, achieving an assessment score of 58% to date.

TABLE 9 Overview of Social Services Sector Performance

Subsector	# Promises	# Actions	Assessment Score
Education	13	42	59%
Health and Nutrition	7	41	52%
Pension Reforms	6	10	41%
Social Protection	2	21	65%
Sports and Recreation	2	5	50%
Water and Sanitation	3	6	64%
Youth, Women and Persons with Disabilities	5	44	72%
Total	38	169	58%

The Government of Zambia has positioned social protection at the heart of its development agenda, framing it as a driver of inclusive growth and national resilience. Flagship initiatives such as the Social Cash Transfer (SCT), Food Security Pack (FSP), and Supporting Women's Livelihoods have been expanded, with beneficiary households projected to reach 1.3 million by 2025. These programs signal a deliberate shift toward lifecycle-based support, designed to assist citizens from childhood through to old age.

Overall, the social services agenda under the Government of Zambia

reflects both scale and ambition anchored in expanded coverage, strengthened international collaboration, and a deeper emphasis on citizen dignity. The core challenge ahead lies in translating these policy commitments into consistent, equitable delivery across Zambia's diverse communities.

Some of the key promises made in this sector include the following:

- Develop education-industry linkages and foster innovation and entrepreneurship.

- Respect, support, empower and reward our teachers, tutors and lecturers.
- Improve the adequacy of retirement benefits.
- Introduce work and saving incentives.

- Improve the quality and availability of micro community-level care and health services.
- Create centres of specialisation locally through partnerships with the private sector.

Some of the actions undertaken by the government are documented in the following table.

TABLE 10 **Key Actions Taken by Government to Fulfil Social Service Promises**

Promise	Action	Status
Respect, support, empower and reward our teachers, tutors and lecturers	The government is now paying newly hired teachers their first salaries before they start working, a policy announced on the 25th of March 2025 by Information Minister Cornelius Mweetwa as a boost to both education and government efficiency.	In Progress
Ensure training of health personnel meets international standards	In November 2022, six Zambian doctors travel to India to conduct kidney transplants as part of a government exchange program aimed to facilitate the transfer of skills.	In Progress
Improve social cash transfers	Government disbursed K159.5 million in drought emergency cash transfer to 66,000 households in Northern Province by March 2025	Implemented
Introduce policies to improve health financing resources	Minister of Health in October 2022, launched the 2022-2026 digital health strategy to reform digital health governance and develop digital workforce capabilities. to reform digital health governance and develop digital workforce capabilities.	Implemented
Reform diversification of retirement income sources		Not Commenced
Reform investment mandates to avoid white elephant projects		Not Commenced

Progress in Improving Social Cash Transfers in Zambia

For years, Zambia has grappled with persistent poverty and vulnerability among its poorest households, particularly in rural and drought-prone areas. The Social Cash Transfer (SCT) programme has long stood as a cornerstone of the nation's social protection strategy, but under President Hakainde Hichilema's administration (2021–2025), the pledge to improve SCTs evolved into a flagship government priority and a central electoral commitment.

Prior to 2021, SCT coverage was limited, with significant gaps in both reach and efficiency. The programme primarily targeted incapacitated and chronically poor households, but weaknesses in payment systems and inconsistent funding constrained its effectiveness in reducing poverty. The incoming administration pledged to broaden access, raise transfer values, and modernize delivery systems, and initial measures moved in this direction.

The government's responsiveness extended beyond rural hardship. Through the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, the Urban Price Shock Emergency Cash Transfer was introduced in Kabwe to support vulnerable urban communities facing economic pressures. This intervention highlighted growing recognition of urban precarity and the need for adaptive social protection tools. Complementary reforms followed in August 2022 with the launch of the Communications Advocacy Strategy, Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection Programmes, and Single Window Initiative guidelines, intended to strengthen coordination, transparency, and citizen engagement across the system.

Local-level implementation reflected this policy shift. In Ndola District, the number of SCT beneficiaries increased from 12,567 to 15,188 by August 2022, indicating intensified outreach and registration efforts. At the same time, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development disbursed more than K1 billion through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) to all 156 constituencies nationwide by the end of 2022, supporting community-level capacity to respond to locally identified priorities and development needs.

The momentum continued into 2024 and 2025. Under the Drought Emergency Social Cash Transfer programme, K159,484,800 was disbursed to 66,452 vulnerable households in Northern Province between July 2024 and July 2025. This temporary intervention aimed to cushion households facing overlapping shocks of drought and flooding. Alongside this, regular SCTs supported 144,572 households in the province, including 10,814 households with disabled members.

By the close of 2024, the SCT programme had expanded substantially in both reach and structure. Across Zambia, more than 2.2 million households received assistance, spanning regular and emergency categories. Regular recipients grew from 1,027,000 in 2022 to 1,311,000 in 2024. In response to the 2024 drought, emergency cash transfers were extended to over 950,000 households, each receiving K400 per month for 12 months. Regular SCT transfer values were raised to K800, or K1,200 for households with a disabled member, reinforcing inclusivity within the system.

These changes represent a shift in Zambia's social protection framework from relatively fragmented and underfunded mechanisms to more comprehensive and adaptive programmes. While implementation, resource mobilization, and monitoring remain ongoing areas of work, the SCT initiative has demonstrated wider coverage, enhanced responsiveness to shocks, and stronger institutional frameworks, shaping a more consistent safety net for vulnerable populations.

Climate Change

The Climate Change sector reflects Zambia’s growing recognition of environmental threats as critical development multipliers. Though smaller in volume, it carries strategic weight across agriculture, water, energy, and disaster risk reduction. Rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, and increasingly severe droughts and floods now place more than 500,000 people

at risk from extreme weather events. This sector accounts for 5% of total commitments, with 12 promises made. Of these, 11 are In Progress, while one (1) has seen no actions initiated. So far, the government has undertaken 27 actions toward fulfilling these promises, earning an assessment score of 63%, the highest among all five (5) sectors.

TABLE 11 Overview of Climate Change Sector Performance

Subsector	# Promises	# Actions	Assessment Score
Climate Change	12	27	63%
Total	12	27	63%

Some of the commitments made under Climate Change include:

- Promote climate-resilient public infrastructure and disaster risk management frameworks.
- Mobilise private resources to climate action through blended financing and climate finance facilities.
- Strengthen institutions to effectively implement regulation and clean-up efforts from mining activities.
- Investing in schemes such as afforestation, catchment area conservation and improved landscape management, especially at the local level,

- Create income-earning opportunities for rural communities and roll out a national framework to reduce emissions under the REDD+ initiative,

Since 2021, Zambia has moved to institutionalise climate resilience. The Green Economy and Climate Change [Act](#) No. 18 of 2024 established a legal framework to embed adaptation and mitigation into national development strategies. It provides for the regulation of carbon markets, the creation of a Climate Change Fund, and the domestication of international agreements such as the Paris Accord.

Despite this progress, implementation remains uneven. Key challenges persist in mainstreaming climate action across ministries, mobilising adequate

financing, and safeguarding vulnerable communities, especially those in rural areas dependent on rain-fed agriculture.

Actions undertaken in the period under review include the following.

TABLE 12 **Key Actions Taken by Government to Fulfil Climate Change Promises**

Promise	Action	Status
Build resilience to climate change by changing agricultural practices	In April 2025, the Government launched the El Nino Emergency Response for Small Holder Farmers affected by climate shocks	In Progress
Integrate climate action into sector strategies	Zambia signed the Glasgow Leaders declaration on forests in November 2021, to stop deforestation by 2030.	In Progress
Investing in schemes such as afforestation, catchment area conservation and improved landscape management, especially at the local level	Government banned charcoal production in April 2024.	In Progress
Strengthen the Zambia Environment Management Authority		Not Commenced

Lessons Learnt: Key Takeaways

Based on the data from our tracking, the performance of the Government of Zambia shows high reform initiation but low fulfilment of promises and completed outcomes. The key lessons and takeaways include:

1. High Momentum, Low Completion

A prominent observation from the tracking of the Government of Zambia's performance is the marked disparity between the number of promises initiated and those fully implemented. Of the 248 tracked commitments, 169 are marked as "In Progress", indicating that the government has commenced work or is planning on these initiatives. However, only six (6) promises have been fully implemented, reflecting a very low overall completion rate. This highlights a recurring challenge in translating initial momentum into tangible,

completed outcomes over the period under review.

2. Economic Focus with Slow Results

The Government of Zambia has placed considerable emphasis on economic reform, which constitutes 58% of all tracked commitments, making it the most prioritised area in the UPND manifesto and subsequent policy pronouncements. Despite this focus, only 1% of economic-related promises have been implemented, illustrating the slow pace of delivery. This may reflect the complexity and time-intensive nature of structural reforms, such as fiscal consolidation, debt restructuring, and broader macroeconomic adjustments, which remain ongoing but have yet to yield fully realised results.

3. Relative Success in Social Services

Among the various policy areas, Social Services has recorded the highest rate of successful implementation, with 8% of promises completed. This sector, representing 15% of all commitments, includes initiatives such as free education programs and enhanced social cash transfers. The relative success in this area suggests that interventions with clear, measurable outputs and direct social impact tend to achieve higher completion rates compared to broader structural or institutional reforms.

4. Stagnation in Critical Governance Areas

Progress in crucial governance-related areas has been limited. Commitments in Corruption represent 2% of total promises, while Climate Change represents 5% of total promises and has seen 0% completion, signalling that

these sectors remain largely unaddressed in terms of tangible outcomes. Governance-related pledges, which make up 20% of all commitments, have a mere 2% completion rate. These findings underscore the slow progress in institutional and structural reforms aimed at enhancing accountability, transparency, and the effectiveness of public administration.

5. Sustained Commitment Despite Low Output

Finally, the tracking indicates that only two (2) promises have been classified as “Broken”, and none have been formally modified. This suggests that the UPND administration continues to maintain formal commitment to its original pledges, even though many remain in the “In Progress” or “Not Commenced” categories, highlighting a gap between policy intent and actual delivery.



Conclusion

The overall tracking of the Government of Zambia's performance since 2021 provides a nuanced picture of their progress across its policy commitments. While the administration has demonstrated significant initiative, evidenced by the high number of promises "In Progress," the translation of these commitments into tangible outcomes remains limited, with only a small fraction fully implemented. The analysis highlights a strong focus on economic reform and social service delivery, where measurable successes have been most visible, particularly in initiatives such as free education and social cash transfers.

However, critical governance areas, including anti-corruption measures, institutional reforms, and climate change interventions, have experienced minimal progress, indicating persistent challenges in

addressing structural and systemic issues. The low rate of broken or modified promises suggests that the government maintains formal commitment to its manifesto pledges, yet the slow pace of completion underscores the complexity of policy implementation in contexts marked by fiscal constraints, external shocks, and institutional limitations.

This report illustrates that while Zambia's governance under the UPND has shown responsiveness and intent, sustained effort, targeted interventions, and enhanced capacity are essential to convert policy promises into impactful results. The findings emphasize the importance of continuous monitoring, transparency, and accountability mechanisms to ensure that government actions align with citizens' expectations and contribute to inclusive socio-economic development.

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