



LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEWS

"The National voice for Local Government"

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INSIDE

- FROM FRAGMENTATION TO SYSTEMS CHANGE: STAKEHOLDERS UNITE TO TRANSFORM URBAN WASH GOVERNANCE IN ZAMBIA.
- STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS: LOCAL AUTHORITIES FINALIZE PROTECTION AGAINST SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, ABUSE AND HARASSMENT POLICIES.
- LGAZ CONVENES LGGEC MEETING AND NATIONAL NETWORKING EVENT FOR FEMALE CIVIC LEADERS.
- LGAZ CONDUCTS FIELD MONITORING VISIT ON WOMEN-LED WASTE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE.
- CANADA FUND FOR LOCAL INITIATES PROJECT PROMOTES WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN MUMBWA.



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1st Edition 2026

LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEWS

1st Edition 2026



Ag. PS-MWDS, Mr. Felix Musahabati addressing delegates during the seminar

FROM FRAGMENTATION TO SYSTEMS CHANGE: STAKEHOLDERS UNITE TO TRANSFORM URBAN WASH GOVERNANCE IN ZAMBIA

BY LGAZ STAFF

The Local Government Association of Zambia (LGAZ), in collaboration with WaterAid Zambia, recently convened a successful two-day high-level Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Seminar at Mulungushi International Conference Centre under the theme: 'Strengthening Urban WASH Governance through Research, Regulation, and Collaboration.' The seminar brought together over 21 Local Authorities and 14 key sector stakeholders, including government institutions, cooperating partners, financial institutions, water utility companies, and civil society organisations, to advance dialogue and action on sustainable urban WASH service delivery.

The discussions underscored a shared recognition that Zambia's WASH challenges were no longer merely infrastructural, but deeply rooted in governance, financing, coordination, and climate resilience.

The seminar was officially opened by the Acting Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Water Development and Sanitation, Mr. Felix Mushabati, who underscored that Zambia stood at a critical juncture in its pursuit of Sustainable Development Goal 6 on universal access to safe water and sanitation. He noted that while progress had been made, rapid urbanisation, climate variability, and the expansion of informal settlements continued to strain existing systems.

Mr. Mushabati emphasized that Zambia's transition from the Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP) to the Ninth National Development Plan (9NDP) presented a strategic opportunity to reset the sector.

"We must move away from fragmented, project-based approaches and instead embrace integrated, systems-strengthening solutions that place local authorities at the centre of service delivery," he stated.

He further highlighted the need for stronger coordination, improved financing mechanisms, and enhanced accountability across institutions, stressing that collaboration must be intentional, structured, and sustained.

Her Worship the Mayor of Lusaka, Councillor Chilando Chitangala, reaffirmed the importance of WASH governance as a public health, environmental, and economic priority anchored in human dignity. She noted that rapid urbanisation placed immense pressure on service delivery systems, particularly in peri-urban communities.



1st Edition 2026

LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEWS

1st Edition 2026

“Effective WASH governance is not merely a technical issue; it is about human dignity, public health, and sustainable development,” she said.

She further called for stronger collaboration between researchers, policymakers, and communities, urging stakeholders to ensure that research was translated into actionable policy and implementation.

The Mayor highlighted community-driven initiatives supported through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and participatory planning approaches in settlements such as Kanyama and Kalikiliki as evidence that inclusive governance produced sustainable outcomes.

LGAZ Executive Director, Ms. Mpatanji Namumba delivered a candid assessment of Zambia’s WASH sector, describing it as facing a “silent but urgent crisis” driven by underinvestment and governance inefficiencies.

She observed that public investment in the sector currently stood at only 0.71 percent of the national budget, compounded by rising utility debt and constrained local authority capacity.

She noted that this had resulted in recurring cholera outbreaks, poor waste management, and unequal access to services, disproportionately affecting women and girls.

“At the heart of this crisis is not only a technical gap, but a deeper governance challenge,” she stated.

She bemoaned the fragmentation in coordination, misalignment of institutional roles, and underutilisation of data as key barriers to urban wash governance. Importantly, she stressed that local government remains central to transforming the sector.

“WASH challenges are felt, won, or lost at the local level. Strengthening local government capacity is therefore not optional, but essential,” she said.

WaterAid Zambia, represented by Head of Programmes, Mr. Bernard Mosei, reaffirmed the organisation’s commitment to strengthening WASH systems through research, regulation, and collaboration. He noted that Zambia’s WASH sector was increasingly under pressure from urbanisation, climate shocks, and public health risks such as cholera outbreaks.

“Gaps in WASH systems are not just technical issues; they are matters of life, dignity, and national development,” he said.

He emphasized the need to move beyond fragmented interventions toward long-term systems strengthening, with a strong focus on:

- a) WASH for public health
- b) Sustainable financing and accountability systems
- c) Strengthened planning and coordination mechanisms

He further stressed that local authorities played a critical role in service delivery and must therefore be adequately supported to fulfill this mandate.



1st Edition 2026

LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEWS

1st Edition 2026

The Zambia NGO WASH Forum, a consortium of 61 civil society organizations, called for strengthened governance, climate-resilient innovations, and inclusive decision-making to address persistent gaps in urban WASH service delivery. The Forum urged stakeholders to consider constitutional recognition of the Human Right to Water and Sanitation and the Human Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment.

Speaking on behalf of the Forum Coordinator Bubala Muyovwe-Mumba, the Head of Administration and Finance, Ms. Zama Lungu Banda warned that urban systems were increasingly fragile, exposed by the 2024 drought, rapid urban growth, and climate shocks. She noted that while access figures may appear high, safely managed sanitation and reliable water services remained inaccessible to many in informal settlements.

“Access to water and sanitation is not a commodity, but a Human Right,” she stated. She further commended LGAZ and WaterAid Zambia for convening the seminar and highlighted the Water Voices United initiative as a key platform for strengthening civil society participation in WASH governance.

Key Highlights and Outcomes

A key highlight was the plenary session where thematic groups presented actionable recommendations on:

- Institutional collaboration
- Sustainability and eco-sensitive planning
- Capacity strengthening and accountability
- Addressing regulatory and financing barriers

Participants emphasized the urgent need to strengthen financial sustainability in the sector through:

- Investment in digital revenue collection systems by Local Authorities
- Leveraging the Zambia Credit Guarantee Scheme
- Strengthening predictable revenue streams (fees, rates, charges)
- Expanding public-private partnerships
- Promoting ring-fenced revenue systems for efficiency
- Exploring asset financing models, especially in waste management
- Utilisation of bank-supported advance bonds for rural infrastructure
- Capacity building in project preparation by financial institutions
- Regulatory and Planning Priorities

Stakeholders further recommended:

- Strengthening WASH coordination at local level
- Mainstreaming WASH into district plans and budgets
- Expanding inclusive services, including menstrual hygiene and disability inclusion
- Increasing allocation of Constituency Development Fund (CDF) towards WASH
- Developing guidelines for accessing green financing instruments, including green bonds and loans

The seminar concluded on a forward-looking note, with stakeholders committing to move from dialogue to coordinated action.



1st Edition 2026

LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEWS

1st Edition 2026

A Joint Action Note has since been developed to guide implementation of key recommendations and strengthen coordination within Zambia's urban WASH sector.

LGAZ and WaterAid Zambia reaffirmed their commitment to working with partners to advance sustainable, inclusive, and resilient WASH services, ensuring that no one was left behind



Participants pose for a group photo during the PSEAH workshop

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS: LOCAL AUTHORITIES FINALIZE PROTECTION AGAINST SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, ABUSE AND HARASSMENT POLICIES

By LGAZ staff

The Association in collaboration with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) under the Partnerships for Municipal Innovation Women in Local Leadership Project (PMI-WILL) has supported ten local authorities in strengthening institutional Protection against Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH).

The 10 local authorities are Mansa and Kasama Municipal Councils, Sinda, Chifunabuli, Lunte, Luangwa, Pemba, Kafue, Lusangazi, and Nakonde Town Councils. The support involved policy drafting within context-specific PSEAH policy frameworks.

The local authorities have since finalised their draft policies aligned with national legislation, international safeguarding standards, and the operational realities of local authorities.

During the final workshop convened in Lusaka recently, local authorities had the opportunity to discuss how best they could strengthen reporting and response mechanisms, clarify institutional roles and responsibilities, including ensuring that policies were practical, enforceable, and survivor centred.

The Technical support was provided by the project's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Advisor, Ms. Elsie Odonkor, while facilitation was led by a local Consultant, Mr. Festus Zulu, who underscored the importance of institutionalizing PSEAH frameworks as part of broader efforts to promote safe, inclusive, and accountable service delivery.

Participants also shared experiences and lessons from the drafting phase, highlighting both progress achieved and challenges encountered in advancing safeguarding commitments within their respective councils.



PMI-WILL Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Advisor, Ms. Elsie Odonkor facilitating a session



1st Edition 2026

LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEWS

1st Edition 2026

The policies are expected to be formally adopted and operationalized through staff sensitization, targeted capacity-building initiatives, and integration into council processes. This milestone marks a significant step toward strengthening ethical standards, accountability, and protection for both communities and local government personnel. The PMI-WILL Project is funded by the Canadian Government and FCM.



Front row (L-R): Zambia Centre for Interparty Dialogue Executive Director, Ms. Doreen Kabwe, former LGGEC Chairperson, Ms. Annie Kalamatila and former LGAZ Vice President for Muchinga Province, Ms. Chota Kanungwe during the event

LGAZ CONVENES LGGEC MEETING AND NATIONAL NETWORKING EVENT FOR FEMALE CIVIC LEADERS

By LGAZ staff

The Local Government Association of Zambia (LGAZ) convened the Local Government Gender Equality Committee (LGGEC) meeting recently whose objective was to update the committee on the progress made in advancing Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI).

Notable under progress made is the LGAZ's constitutional amendments guaranteeing 30% women's representation across all organs of the Association. The amendments were informed by yet another key milestone following the adoption of the Strategy to provide a roadmap on the institutionalisation of GESI in the operations of the Association.

Further, as a way of sustaining the interventions in this regard, GESI is one of the priority areas under the 2026–2030 Strategic Plan.

Following the LGGEC meeting, a National Networking Event was convened, bringing together women mayors, council chairpersons, and councillors from across the country.

The event also attracted Civil Society Organisations such as the Non-governmental Gender Organisations' Coordinating Council (NGOCC), Zambia National Women's Lobby (ZNWL), Girls Gone Political, Transparency International Zambia (TIZ) representatives from the Canadian High Commission, LGAZ leadership, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and the Zambia Centre for Interparty Dialogue (ZCIP) among others.

Delivering the keynote address, the Head of Office at the Canadian High Commission, Ms. Corry Van Gaal, urged women leaders to take bold steps toward leadership, stating that, "women must not only participate but actively contest and support one another across party lines to strengthen inclusive governance." She further reaffirmed Canada's commitment, noting that the PMI-WILL Project remains a key vehicle for advancing women's leadership at the local level.

In her remarks, Lusaka Mayor Cllr. Chilando Chitangala described the networking event as a moment of reflection and purpose, encouraging participants to focus on impact, **"Leadership is not just about holding office, it is about the legacy we leave in our communities,"** she stated.



1st Edition 2026

LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEWS

1st Edition 2026

LGGECC Chairperson, Cllr. Annie Kapandula, called for active engagement and solidarity among delegates, emphasising that, “the strength of this platform lies in our ability to learn from each other and stand together as women leaders, especially as we approach the 2026 elections.”

She also encouraged all those recontesting and new aspirants to utilise the electoral guide provided under the PMI-WILL project, for potential women leaders, as they prepared to contest the upcoming and future elections.

The programme featured presentations on women's leadership and cross-party collaboration, as well as a panel discussion on navigating electoral challenges. These sessions provided a valuable platform for knowledge sharing, peer learning, and strengthening networks among female civic leaders.

The event forms part of ongoing efforts by LGAZ and its partners to promote inclusive leadership and enhance women's participation in local governance.

LGAZ CONDUCTS FIELD MONITORING VISIT ON WOMEN-LED WASTE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE

By LGAZ Staff



Epotwali women's club in readiness to carry out their work

Under the Partnerships for Municipal Innovation–Women in Local Leadership (PMI-WILL), a field monitoring visit was conducted in Kasama to engage with the Epotwali Women's Club with the view to assessing progress in the implementation of a women-led solid waste management initiative.

Leading the field visit was Senior Project Officer, Mr. Emmanuel Arthur. The visit followed the successful handover of key waste management equipment, including six motorised tricycles, a skip bin, and protective clothing, provided under the Service Delivery Initiative.

In addition, 50 women from the community were trained in the operation and maintenance of the equipment thereby, equipping them with practical skills to ensure sustainable waste management and improve service delivery at the local level.

During the engagement, the team interacted with members of the Epotwali Women's Club to assess utilisation of the equipment, operational challenges, and overall impact of the initiative.

The project has contributed to improved waste collection services within the community, while simultaneously creating livelihood opportunities for women and enhancing their participation in local service delivery.

The visit also provided an opportunity to reinforce the importance of proper equipment management, safety practices, and continued coordination with the local authority to ensure sustainability of the initiative.



1st Edition 2026

LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEWS

1st Edition 2026

This activity forms part of the broader PMI-WILL Project implemented by LGAZ in partnership with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), with support from the Government of Canada. The project aims to enhance the rights of women and girls, particularly those from marginalised groups, by promoting women's participation in governance and strengthening the capacity of local authorities to deliver inclusive, gender-responsive services.



PAC members pose for a photo after the meeting

ADVANCING WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE

In furtherance of the objectives of the Partnerships for Municipal Innovation-Women In Local Leadership (PMI-WILL) Project to advance women's leadership in local governance, the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) convened a high-level meeting bringing together participating local authorities; Chifunabuli, Kafue, Kasama, Lunte, and Nakonde, alongside cooperating partners and key development stakeholders to review progress and strengthen coordination in project implementation.

The primary purpose of the meeting was to review progress made towards the project's objectives during the current implementation period and to consider proposed activities and budgets for the final phase of the project.

The session provided a platform for the five local authorities to present key achievements, including outcomes from service delivery initiatives, capacity-building interventions, and emerging strategies aimed at sustaining gains within their respective communities.

In his opening remarks, LGAZ President, Councillor Vincent Lilanda, commended the progress achieved, noting that under the PMI-WILL Project "over 950 potential women leaders have been identified, with more than 700 already trained to actively participate in the upcoming elections." He further stated that ongoing reforms and targeted capacity-building efforts were beginning to transform women's participation in local governance, embedding inclusive representation in both policy and practice.

The meeting also appreciated the adoption of the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Strategy, which has resulted in amending the Association's constitution to guarantee a minimum of 30 percent representation in its governing structures.

This milestone was recognised as a critical step towards institutionalising inclusive governance and strengthening accountability within the Association and its member local authorities.

Participants further reflected on the progress made by partner local authorities in delivering inclusive, gender-responsive municipal services, with several councils showcasing innovative approaches to service delivery that promote women's empowerment and community participation.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEWS

1st Edition 2026



Cllr. Will Cole-Hamilton giving his remarks during the PAC meeting

Also in attendance were Councillor Will Cole-Hamilton from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities; Ms. Mary Heather-White, PMI-WILL Project Director; and Mr. Emmanuel Arthur, PMI-WILL Senior Project Officer. Ms. Miyanda Kwambwa from the Embassy of Ireland; Mr. Golden Nachibinga, representing the Executive Director of the Zambia National Women's Lobby; and a representative from the Zambia Federation of Disability Organisations.

Their participation underscored the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration in advancing gender equality and strengthening local governance systems.

In his remarks, Councillor Will Cole-Hamilton of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities commended the progress being recorded under the PMI-WILL Project, particularly in advancing women's participation and leadership in local governance. He noted that the achievements realised so far reflect the strength of collaboration among local authorities, development partners, and communities working towards inclusive governance systems.

"Meaningful and sustainable development can only be achieved when women are fully represented and empowered to participate in leadership and decision-making processes," he stated.

Councillor Cole-Hamilton further reaffirmed Canada's continued commitment to supporting initiatives that empower women leaders and strengthen local governance institutions, adding that partnerships such as PMI-WILL continue to demonstrate the transformative impact of inclusive local governance.

As discussions progressed, particular emphasis was placed on sustainability strategies to ensure that project gains are maintained beyond the implementation period.

The PAC meeting thus served as a critical platform for knowledge sharing, reflection, and strategic alignment, while reinforcing a shared commitment to advancing women's leadership and inclusive governance at the local level.



PMI-WILL Programme Director Ms. Mary Heather-White making a submission during the PAC meeting



LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEWS

1st Edition 2026



Participants pose for a group photo during a CFLI sensitization meeting in Mumbwa

CANADA FUND FOR LOCAL INITIATES PROJECT PROMOTES WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN MUMBWA.

BY LGAZ Staff

In pursuit of the efforts to strengthen disability inclusion and social protection access, a community, sensitisation meeting was conducted under the Canada Fund for Local Initiative (CFLI)-Strengthening Women's Leadership in Local Governance Project.

LGAZ is implementing the CFLI in Zambia which supports small-scale, high-impact projects primarily focusing on empowering women, enhancing governance, and promoting sustainable community development

The engagement was held in Chibolyo Ward, Mumbwa District, and led by women potential leaders under the project. The engagement brought together community members in an interactive dialogue aimed at enhancing understanding of the importance of women's participation in leadership and decision-making processes, while also identifying key development challenges affecting the local community.

The activity formed part of a broader sensitisation programme being implemented across Makebo, Shimbizhi, and Chibolyo wards to promote inclusive and participatory local governance. During the discussions, women leaders facilitated open dialogue sessions where community members were encouraged to reflect on prevailing social norms and their influence on women's leadership participation.

They further advocated for increased community support for women aspiring to leadership positions, emphasising that inclusive governance strengthens accountability, responsiveness, and service delivery at the local level.

The engagement also underscored the importance of collective responsibility in fostering transparent and inclusive governance systems, with community members actively contributing ideas and proposing practical solutions to strengthen collaboration between leaders and residents.

Overall, the initiative continues to contribute to shifting perceptions around women's leadership while promoting civic participation, social inclusion, and community-driven governance.



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