



NON-GOVERNMENTAL GENDER ORGANISATIONS' COORDINATING COUNCIL

"Building Solidarity For Women's Empowerment"

Plot No. 5168
Nchoncho Road
P.O. Box 37879
Lusaka, Zambia

Tel: +260 211 224 727 / 227 529
E-mail: info@ngocc.org.zm
Website: www.ngocc.org.zm

PRESS STATEMENT

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ZAMBIA'S 61ST ANNIVERSARY: A CALL FOR A MORE INCLUSIVE ZAMBIA

On 24th October 2025, the Non-governmental Gender Organisations' Coordinating Council (NGOCC) proudly joins the people of Zambia in commemorating the country's 61st Independence Anniversary. This day serves not only as a celebration of freedom but also as a moment of deep reflection on the remarkable progress the nation has made towards stability, democracy, and development.

We commend successive governments, and particularly the United Party for National Development (UPND)-led Government, for their continued commitment to advancing Zambia's development agenda and promoting unity and peace among its citizens. Sixty-one years after independence, Zambia stands as a beacon of resilience and cultural richness in the region. As a nation, we celebrate our unity, peace, and the strides made toward building an equitable society where every citizen has the opportunity to thrive.

However, while we take pride in these achievements, NGOCC recognizes that the journey towards true equality and inclusive development remains unfinished. The persistent inequalities that hinder women and girls from fully participating in the nation's development must be urgently addressed if Zambia is to achieve its full potential. Our nation's diversity across gender, ethnicity, and generations remains its greatest strength, and it is through inclusion that Zambia will continue to rise.

As we commemorate this milestone, NGOCC highlights three critical areas that continue to undermine gender equality and social justice: Poverty, Gender-Based Violence (GBV), and Women's Low Political Participation.

1. Poverty

Throughout Zambia's 61-year journey, poverty has remained a stubborn challenge, disproportionately affecting women and girls. While strides have been made in economic growth and empowerment initiatives, these have not translated into meaningful economic transformation for the majority of women.

As of 2022, the national poverty rate stood at 60 percent, with women comprising the majority of those affected underscoring the feminization of poverty in Zambia. This persistent inequality

has constrained women's ability to engage fully in economic life, reinforcing dependency and limiting access to opportunities.

The prolonged effects of poverty have increased the vulnerability of women and girls to abuse, early marriage, and exploitation. As we mark 61 years of independence, NGOCC calls for bold, gender-responsive economic policies that prioritize women's access to resources, land, finance, and decent work. True independence must translate into economic freedom for all, especially for women who form the backbone of Zambia's informal economy.

2. Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Against Women and Girls

At 61, Zambia continues to grapple with the devastating reality of Gender-Based Violence (GBV). GBV manifests in numerous forms from domestic violence, child marriage, and teenage pregnancy to sexual abuse and femicide leaving lasting scars on survivors, families, and communities.

Statistics remain alarming: approximately 80 percent of GBV victims are women, reflecting the deeply entrenched inequalities and harmful social norms that perpetuate violence. Each year, even as the nation celebrates its independence, countless women and girls are subjected to violence by those who should protect them family members, partners, or community leaders.

NGOCC urges the Government and all stakeholders to intensify efforts to prevent, respond to, and eliminate GBV through stronger enforcement of existing laws, increased funding for shelters and survivor support, and nationwide campaigns to challenge cultural practices that condone violence. Zambia cannot truly be free while women and girls live in fear within their own homes and communities.

3. Women's Political Participation

While Zambia has made strides in democratic governance, women's representation in political and decision-making spaces remains disappointingly low. Sixty-one years after independence, women, youth, and persons with disabilities continue to be marginalized in leadership.

Currently, fewer than 25 women hold parliamentary seats out of 167, and fewer than 150 women serve as councillors out of more than 1,800 positions. This imbalance undermines inclusive governance and denies the nation the benefits of diverse leadership.

NGOCC strongly advocates for the implementation of affirmative action measures to correct this systemic imbalance. In particular, the enactment of the Political Parties Law is critical to ensuring that political parties adopt internal quotas for women, youth, and persons with disabilities as candidates. With strong political will, Zambia can achieve a more representative leadership before the 2026 General Elections.

Conclusion

As Zambia marks 61 years of independence, NGOCC salutes the resilience, courage, and contribution of Zambian women and men who have worked tirelessly to build the nation we

celebrate today. Yet, the dream of independence remains incomplete as long as women, girls, youth, and persons with disabilities continue to face exclusion, poverty, and violence.

To achieve the Vision 2030 goal of becoming a prosperous and equitable nation, Zambia must accelerate reforms that promote inclusive governance, gender equality, and economic justice. This requires:

- Strengthening and adequately resourcing national mechanisms to combat GBV;
- Scaling up economic empowerment programs targeting women and girls;
- Enacting the Political Parties Law to promote inclusivity in leadership; and
- Investing in education and skills development to break cycles of poverty.

NGOCC reaffirms its commitment to partnering with government, civil society, and development partners to advance women's rights and social justice. Together, we can build a Zambia where independence truly means freedom, equality, and opportunity for all.

Happy 61st Independence Anniversary, Zambia!

ISSUED

For/ NGOCC

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Faides Temba Temba', written over the text 'For/ NGOCC'.

MS. Faides Temba Temba

NGOCC ACTING BOARD CHAIRPERSON