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CITY PROFILING REPORT 2025

Lusaka

AFRICAN CITIES REPORT

Lusaka

City Profiling Report 2025

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COVER PHOTO: Kafue roundabout in Lusaka, Zambia

Photo: instagram.com/bwana_jimmy_productions

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Lusaka City Profiling Report is part of the African Cities Profiling project, which aims to enhance understanding of individual cities across the continent with a view to improving government effectiveness and empowering citizens to hold their governments to account at the local level. With Africa's rapid urbanisation, cities face significant challenges, including the growth of informal settlements and deficiencies in service delivery. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive understanding of city dynamics and the factors influencing them.

The report supports local authorities by providing comparative data that facilitates learning from peers and incentivises improvements in underperforming areas. It also assists national governments in regulating and supporting local authorities. For citizens, the report offers accessible information on the developmental context of their cities, fostering transparency and engagement.

By profiling multiple cities using standardised measures, the project enables stakeholders – local authorities, national governments, and citizens – to compare cities, identify best practices, and foster mutual learning. This comparative approach supports evidence-based decision-making and promotes improved governance, ultimately addressing urban challenges such as informal settlement growth and service delivery deficiencies.

This report for Lusaka is one of ten cities in the SADC region for which GGA is preparing city profiles, the others being: Bulawayo, Cape Town, Dar es Salaam, Harare, Johannesburg, Luanda, Lilongwe, Maputo and Ndola. These cities have been selected as a blend of primary and secondary cities in the region. Where relevant in this report, comparisons are drawn with these other cities. The report utilises available data to provide insights into key challenges and opportunities that shape the city's development.

2. URBAN GEOGRAPHY AND HUMAN SETTLEMENT

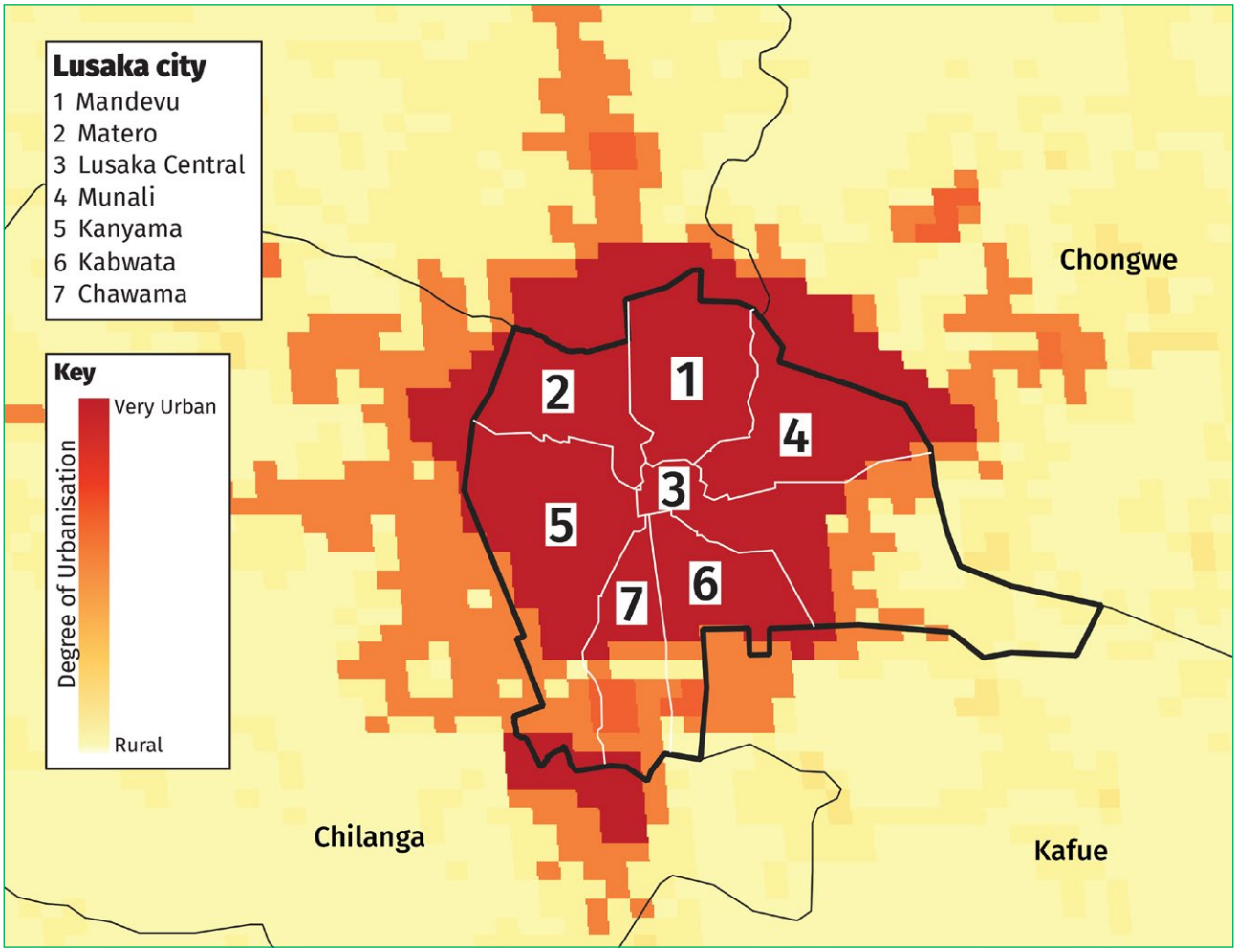
The Soli people were the original inhabitants of the land surrounding what is now Lusaka City, and the name "Lusaka" was in honour of the ancient Soli state. By the 1890s, the British South African company occupied the area and, in 1913, established Lusaka as an outpost for British administrations and ranchers.[1] In 1935, Lusaka became the capital of what was then known as the Northern Rhodesia Colony. This capital status brought developments such as the construction of the city's Government House and other major administrative buildings, with housing built primarily to accommodate new white settlers.

Lusaka benefited from its location as a transport hub, with a railway stretching from South Africa and connecting to Lusaka in 1909 and on to the copper mining cities and towns to the North of Zambia[2] and Katanga province in the Congo.[3] The demand for labour brought migrant workers into the Copperbelt and Lusaka Provinces. By the early 1990s, Zambia's 10 largest towns were located along the rail line[4], including Livingstone to the South, Lusaka, Kabwe and seven Copperbelt mining towns.

Zambia gained independence in 1964, with Lusaka remaining the national capital and largest city in the country, located in what became Lusaka province, one of the 10 provinces of Zambia. The city's population grew rapidly (See Section 3), matched with the rapid growth of the city's urban extent, which doubled between 2000 and 2020.[5] Much of this growth has been in informal settlements. According to UN-Habitat, the number of Lusaka's residents living in overcrowded informal settlements nearly tripled to 1.4 million by 2020, representing about 62% of the city's population[6], with around 38% of Lusaka's residential land used informally.

1 Lusaka Provincial Administration. "*About The Province – History of Lusaka*," accessed June 5, 2025. https://www.lsk.gov.zm/?page_id=25.
2 The Heritage Portal, "The Tanzania – Zambia Railway," The Heritage Portal, accessed August 28, 2024. https://www.theheritageportal.co.za/article/tanzania-zambia-railway.
3 Mitsuo, "Rural-Urban migration in Zambia and migrant ties to home villages," 147.
4 Ogura, Mitsuo, "Rural-Urban migration in Zambia and migrant ties to home villages," The Developing Economies 1991: 145 – 165.
5 Dennis Chiwele, Patrick Lamson-Hall and, Shahrukh Wani, "Policy Brief: Informal settlements in Lusaka," UN Habitat, August 30, 2024. https://www.theigc.org/sites/default/files/2022/02/Informal-settlements-in-Lusaka-web.pdf.
6 Chiwele, Dennit, Lamson-Hall, and Wani, Shahrukh. 2022. "Policy Brief: Informal settlements in Lusaka," *UN Habitat*, https://www.theigc.org/sites/default/files/2022/02/Informal-settlements-in-Lusaka-web.pdf

Figure 1: Map of Lusaka City



Graphic: Prepared by author based on Global Human Settlements data

The city of Lusaka has expanded to cover an area of 360 km². [i] Proposals to extend the boundaries of Greater Lusaka have been introduced to include Lusaka International Airport and adjacent rural areas.[7] These proposals are part of the Regional Development. In terms of expansion of the city, this is related to what happens in neighbouring districts with the Masterplan (RDP)[8] used to address the substantial population growth in these surrounding districts of Chibombo, Chongwe, Kafue, and Chilanga, which are experiencing high population growth rates of above 6% a year in comparison to Lusaka's relatively stable population.[9]

3. DEMOGRAPHICS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

3.1 POPULATION

Lusaka has been one of the fastest-growing cities in Southern Africa. Its population increased from 1 million in 2000 to 1.7 million in 2010, then grew at an annual rate of 4.9% between 2000 and 2010.[10] The city has a population of more than 3 million[11], and with Zambia's population being 19.6 million in 2022, Lusaka city houses 10.7% of the country's people. Although Lusaka city's population growth

7 Ministry of local government and rural development, "Upgrading of Lusaka City, surrounding districts gains momentum", accessed October 22, 2025, https://www.mlgrd.gov.zm/?p=5237.
8 Ministry of local government and rural development, "Upgrading of Lusaka City, surrounding districts gains momentum."
9 Zambia Statistics Agency, "2022 census," accessed October 22, 2024. https://www.zamstats.gov.zm/2022-census/.
10 Lusaka City Council, "About Lusaka," accessed August 30,2024, https://www.lcc.gov.zm/about-lusaka-2/.
11 *Lusaka City Council*, "Welcome to Lusaka City," accessed January 21, 2026, https://www.lcc.gov.zm.

i The 360 km² figure refers to the administrative area under the Lusaka City Council (city proper). Lusaka District is reported in some administrative databases as approximately 418 km², indicating a broader district boundary that extends beyond the city's urban core.

rate increased by 4.9%[12] between 2010 and 2022, its annual growth rate slowed to 2%[13], likely reflecting constraints associated with fixed administrative boundaries. It can be speculated that boundary limitations exist.[14]

3.2 POVERTY

At independence, Zambia was a prosperous country with one of the highest incomes per capita in Sub-Saharan Africa. Since the mid-1970s, a decline in copper prices triggered a prolonged drop in per capita income.[15] Despite having a fast-growing economy with an average annual growth of 5.7% over the past three years, Zambia remains one of the poorest countries globally. Nearly 64% of its population lives on less than $2 a day[16], and about 73% of households are in poverty, with rural areas being the hardest hit.

Turning to Lusaka City, a useful indicator of broad-based poverty is the International Wealth Index (IWI), which measures the position of households regarding assets, access to services and housing.[ii] The value for Lusaka was 55.1 in 2021, compared to the average for the 10 SADC cities in the GGA sample of 64.4, with the range from 28.7 for Lilongwe to 89.4 for Cape Town.

Looking at income poverty for Lusaka City, the poverty rate is estimated at 18%, which OECD reports as being 'extremely low'.[17] Others report one in every 10 households being 'poor and vulnerable'.[18] The 2022 data from the Zambia Statistics Agency indicates 27% of people in Lusaka Province live below the food poverty line, with levels of poverty far lower than the national average of 60%.[19] Lusaka has a human development index of 0.64, which is close to the average for the 10 SADC cities in the GGA sample, with the range being from 0.52 for Lilongwe to 0.76 for Cape Town. Looking internationally, London has an index of 0.98, Sao Paula 0.83, Mumbai 0.84 and Mexico City 0.83.

3.3 EDUCATION

The level of education in Lusaka is typical in relation to other SADC cities in the GGA sample, with an average of 9.2 years of schooling received by adults compared to the average of 9.6 for eight cities in the sample, with citizens of South African and Zimbabwe cities faring best.[20]

Additional education statistics for Lusaka are not readily available, and reliance needs to be made on statistics for Zambia as a whole. A UNESCO report on education for the country states: "indications are that the country achieved near-universal primary school completion levels with a completion rate of 97% at Grade 7 in 2019. However, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted these gains, causing a drop to 86.4% in 2020. Despite the progress made, the completion rate for Grades 9 and 12 remains low. Average examination pass rate in Grade 9 was at 53%, while the pass rate at Grade 12 recorded an average of 64% at the national level".

3.4 HEALTH

From a statistical point of view, the health situation in Lusaka is comparable to that in other SADC cities in the GGA sample, with an under-five mortality rate of 64 deaths per thousand live births in 2018 (compared to an average of 66 for eight non-South African cities)[21] and a life expectancy of 58 years in 2015.[22] That said, the health situation is not good. The under-five mortality rate can be compared to Cape Town (9) or Mexico City (13). Life expectancy in Mexico City and Mumbai in 2015 was 70 years, for comparison.

12 Lusaka City Council, "About Lusaka"
13 City population, "Lusaka: Province in Zambia," accessed August 31, 2024, https://www.citypopulation.de/en/zambia/admin/05__lusaka/.
14 *Lusaka – AMALI City Profile*, "Population Trends: Lusaka District – Annual Growth Rate (2010–2022): 1.99% (calculated)," accessed January 21, 2026, https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/6501633490eb0f80ffc80116/678e533a1219dc5882a76ffc_LUSAKA_AMALI%20City%20Profile.docx.pdf.
15 Southern African Regional Poverty Network, "Poverty in Zambia: measurement, levels and trends," accessed August 31, 2024, https://sarpn.org/documents/d0001457/PVA_Zambia_June2005_Chapter2.pdf.
16 Habitat for humanity, "Housing poverty in Zambia," accessed September 3, 2024, https://www.habitatforhumanity.org.uk/country/zambia/.
17 ICED, "Lusaka: Inclusive Urban Economic Development Diagnostic," accessed September 3, 2024, https://icedfacility.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Urban-growth-diagnostic_Lusaka-Zambia.pdf.
18 18 Chapula, Simmy; and Mwape, Beatrice M. *Policy Brief to the mayor of Lusaka City Council* (Kansas: Global Network for health in all Policies), https://actionsdg.ctb.ku.edu/wp-content/uploads/Zambia-National-SocialProtection-Policy.pptx.
19 Zambia Statistics Agency. 2023. "Highlights of the 2022 Poverty Assessment in Zambia".
20 Data primarily from Global Data Lab.
21 Global Data Lab.
22 UN-Habitat's City Prosperity Index. Data for 2015 is latest for comparable cities.

ii Global Data Lab. These assets include seven consumer durables (possession of a TV, fridge, phone, bike, car, a cheap utensil and an expensive utensil), access to two public services (water and electricity) and three housing characteristics (number of sleeping rooms, quality of floor material and of toilet facility).

3.5 HOUSING

Informal settlements indicate a city's inability to accommodate growing urban populations within the formal housing market. This issue arises from rapid urban growth, unrealistic building standards, weak land rights, and ineffective land-use planning. Lusaka is no exception: over the past 20 years, the number of residents living in informal setlements has nearly tripled to about 1.4 million by 2020, with some 62% of people in the city living informally.[23] In response, the Ministry of Local Government has launched initiatives to upgrade existing settlements by enhancing public services and implementing proactive planning measures to prevent further growth of informal settlements. This effort is part of the broader "Know Your City: Lusaka 2030 – A City Without Slums" initiative.[24]

Most city officials, other than the councillors who have authorised or improved settlements within their wards, have negative attitudes towards initiating upgrading activities in the city. This is primarily because the property owners in these areas do not contribute to the city's revenue base, as their properties are not included on the valuation roll, which exempts them from paying any direct taxes, such as rates.[25]

4. ECONOMY

A joint report by the Zambian Statistics Agency (ZamStats) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) reveals that between 2016 and 2020, Lusaka City accounted for approximately 24.2% of Zambia's GDP.[26] During this period, the city maintained an annual economic growth rate of 3.1%. In addition, Lusaka's GDP per capita is significantly higher than the national average. In 2020, the average economic output per person in Zambia stood at US$1,400, while Lusaka's per capita GDP averaged US$2,200.

In relation to other SADC cities in the GGA sample, Lusaka's GDP per capita is low, with the range being US$1,900 per capita for Lilongwe to US$16,400 for Johannesburg.

Based on the 2021 labour force survey, the unemployment ratio for Lusaka Province was 12%[27], a very low figure compared to other SADC cities, where the average is 25%[28].

Employment by sector from the Labour Force Survey is shown in Table 1. These figures are for Lusaka Province but are representative of Lusaka City.

Table 1: Employment split by sector for Lusaka Province (2023)[29]

SECTOR	% SPLIT
Primary sector	**4.8**
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	4.2
Mining & quarrying	0.6
Secondary Sector	**26.3**
Manufacturing	11.3
Electricity, gas, water, sanitation & waste management	0.8
Construction	6.6
Transportation and storage	7.6
Tertiary (service) sector	**68.9**
Wholesale and retail trade, incl. accommodation	25.0
Accommodation and food services	4.0
Information and communication	0.9
Finance, insurance & real estate	4.5
Professional, Scientific and technical activities	1.5
Administrative and support services	7.3
Public Administration and Defence	2.1
Education	5.3
Human Health and Social Work	3.9
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	0.9
Other service activities	4.3
Activities of household as Employers	9.2

23 Collier, P., Glaeser, E., Venables, T., Haas, A. and Wani, S. (2020). Designed to succeed: building authorising environments for fast-growing cities.
24 Urban Sustainability Exchange, Lusaka 2030 – city without slums
25 Mulenga, Chileshe, *The case of Lusaka, Zambia* (Lusaka: Institute of Economic and Social Research).
26 United Nations. Economic Commission for Africa; United Nations. Economic Commission for Africa, *A new study for the first time reveals Lusaka's contribution to the Zambian economy* (Addis Ababa: UN ECA, 2022).
27 Figures for Lusaka Province are an approximation to Lusaka City.
28 It is notable that differences across cities will relate partly to the way employment is categorised by national statistics agencies.
29 29 Republic of Zambia, 2023 Labour Force Survey Report, Zambia Ministry of Labour and Social Security, accessed February 6, 2026, https://www.mlss.gov.zm/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2023-Labour-ForceSurvey-Report-03112024-1.pdf.

It indicates low levels of employment in manufacturing (11%) consistent with other cities in the SADC sample, with the economy dominated by the services sector (69%). The figures for agriculture and mining are probably related to activity in Lusaka Province outside the City of Lusaka.

Notably, the informal sector contributed the largest portion to the GDP, averaging 40% of Lusaka's total GDP since 2016. Compared to the national average of 15%, Lusaka has the highest formal employment (31%).[30]

5. LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

5.1 LEGISLATION

The structure of Zambia's local government is outlined in several acts which include:

- The Constitution of Zambia (Amendment) Act No. 2 of 2016
- The Local Government Act No. 2 of 2019
- The Public Finance Management Act of 2018
- The urban and regional planning Act No. 3 of 2015
- The Health Services Act No. 36 of 2018
- The decentralisation policy – although it is not a legislative act, the policy outlines the government's commitment to transferring powers and responsibilities to local authorities to enhance local governance and service delivery.

While reference is made to 'districts' in policies and legislation, in effect the term re***lates*** to geographic areas. The administrative responsibilities for functions within these districts fall to city councils, municipal councils and local councils, with Lusaka being a city council, the highest order of local authority.

5.2 FUNCTIONS OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Lusaka, the largest of the five local authorities in Zambia designated as 'cities', is legally responsible for a wide range of exclusive local authority functions, which can be grouped as follows:[31]

- Electricity including street lighting**.**
- Water and sanitation services**.**
- Local roads and local public transport, including associated functions: stormwater management; traffic management and parking; traffic automation and maintenance; and district airports.
- Refuse removal, including waste disposal and local cleansing.
- Economic and business development, including tourism and abattoirs.
- Public health and environmental protection.
- Community amenities, including parks and gardens; libraries; museums; markets and bus stations; community centres; sporting facilities; child-care facilities; cemeteries and crematoria; and the promotion of sport, culture and religion.
- Public order and safety, including firefighting services.
- District health services, including ambulance services.
- A range of regulatory functions, including pollution control, trading, street trading, liquor licensing, vehicle licensing, and noise pollution.

However, while the City may have the 'authority' relating to these functions, they are not the provider of the higher value services. Electricity, water supply and sanitation services are provided by national or regional entities: the Zambian Electricity Supply Company (ZESCO) and Lusaka Water and Sewerage Company (LWSC), with roads within the city largely under national control.

There is also a set of concurrent national and provincial functions which are intended for devolution to local authorities, the most significant of these being: agriculture; education at all levels, including tertiary; and housing. However, although covered in the 2023 national decentralisation policy, this process of devolution has not advanced currently.

30 "Lusaka: Inclusive Urban Economic Development Diagnostic." Accessed October 9, 2024. https://www.fao.org/in-action/food-for-cities-programme/pilotcities/lusaka/en/
31 Republic of Zambia. 2023. The national decentralisation policy. Office of the President – Cabinet Office.

5.3 INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Table 2: List of functions and associated institutional responsibility for Lusaka

FUNCTION	INSTITUTION PROVIDING	NOTES
Water supply	Lusaka Water and Sewerage Company	Provincial scale utility, owned by local authorities.
Sanitation	Lusaka Water and Sewerage Company	
Electricity	ZESCO	National utility
Roads - collector and distributor	Roads Development Agency (RDA)	With some sharing of responsibility with LCC
Roads – local (streets)	Lusaka City Council	With some sharing of responsibility with Ministry of Local Government.
Public transport	Private operators	LCC regulates public transport within its jurisdiction.
Solid Waste Management	Lusaka Integrated Solid Waste Management Company (LISWMC)	LISWMC is owned by LCC but contract out most of the waste collection to private companies.
Community services	Lusaka City Council	
Emergency and security services (fire, police etc)	Lusaka City Council Fire Brigade, Zambia Police Service (ZPS),	ZPS is responsible for law enforcement, crime prevention, and public security across Lusaka.
Primary health care	Ministry of Health, Lusaka District Health Office	Ministry of Health provides and manages medical staff while LCC is responsible for managing the facilities (clinic buildings mainly)
Education	Ministry of Education, Lusaka City Council	LCC activity limited to managing local public pre-schools or early childhood development centres

6. ACCESS TO SERVICES

6.1 WATER SUPPLY

Water supply is the responsibility of the Lusaka Water and Sewerage Company (LWSC)[32], which is responsible for water supply to the whole of Lusaka Province. LWSC is owned by the local authorities in the province, but its activities are strongly influenced by the Ministry of Water Development and Sanitation, who have a member sitting on the LWSC board. All eleven water companies in Zambia are regulated by the National Water Supply and Sanitation Council (NWASCO), which approves three-year service provision agreements and sets tariffs. However, tariff-setting recommendations have recently been overridden by the Zambian Cabinet.

Lusaka's water demand currently exceeds the supply capabilities of LWSC with available resources, primarily due to inadequate water treatment and distribution infrastructure. The formal supply relies on the Kafue River and the Lusaka groundwater aquifer, treated at the Lolanda Water Treatment Works. However, ageing facilities reduce the plant's efficiency[33].

A lack of capital hampers infrastructure expansion, limiting service hours and threatening groundwater resources. The existing sewerage infrastructure is insufficient for Lusaka's growing population. These structural constraints were further exposed by the 2024 El Niño-induced drought[34], which significantly reduced national agricultural output and placed additional pressure on water and energy systems. Reduced rainfall lowered dam levels, affecting hydropower generation and compounding service delivery challenges in urban centres. Poorly managed wastewater and solid waste exacerbate pollution of waterways, further jeopardising sustainability and harming the ecosystem.

32 "Lusaka Water Supply and Sanitation," Accessed October 1, 2024, https://www.lwsc.com.zm.
33 "Lusaka sanitation program – climate resilient sustainable infrastructure".
34 Republic of Zambia. 2023 *Labour Force Survey Report*. Zambia Ministry of Labour and Social Security. Accessed February 6, 2026. https://www.mlss.gov.zm/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2023-Labour-Force-Survey-Report-03112024-1.pdf

Table 3: Performance statistics for Lusaka Water and Sanitation Company

INDICATOR	VALUE	SOURCE
a) Improved water coverage access - % of city residents with access to improved water supply	95%[35]	
b) City population served by utility - Number of residents served by utility	2.17 million	Calculated
c) Residential water consumption in city or utility coverage area – l/cap/day	111 l/cap/day. But this includes supply to public standpipes and water kiosks	NWASCO annual rep[36]
d) Water sold by utility that is metered - % of water sold by utility	57%	NWASCO annual rep
e) Collection rate - % of collection rate from population billed	>100%	LWSC Strat Plan
f) Non-revenue water - % of non-revenue water from total water supplied into the system	57%	NWASCO annual rep
g) Average hours of supply per day	17	NWASCO annual rep

The city's Water Supply Investment *Master Plan* [37] outlines a strategy to expand the Lolanda Water Treatment Plant's capacity by 2030 to meet rising demand. However, population growth and urban migration continue to challenge LWSC's ability to supply adequate services.

The above statistics indicate generally inadequate performance by LWSC, with a low level of metered connections, high non-revenue water and below-acceptable hours of supply. While not specifically stated, the hours of supply are likely influenced by the poor power supply situation in Lusaka in 2024.

Financially, the LWSC is under stress. In 2023, only 71% of operating and maintenance costs were covered by revenue collections. This is a dramatic decline from the 2022 situation, when the figure was over 100%. The biggest influencing factor is the cap on tariff increases imposed by the cabinet for the past five years. LWSC has been facing rapidly rising input costs without being able to increase revenue per customer.

6.2 SANITATION SERVICES

Sanitation in Lusaka City has improved significantly, but faces several challenges primarily due to a lack of human and financial resources available to the LWSC, which has recently been made responsible for water and sanitation in both urban and rural areas in its supply area, which covers the whole of Lusaka Province. In peri-urban areas, the company is working through delegated service management contracts to nine small-scale stand-alone providers, the Water Trusts[38], but it is evident that the areas served by these trusts are limited.

In Lusaka City, the sewered sanitation is limited, with 18% of the population connected to sewer networks. The majority, particularly in peri-urban areas, rely on pit latrines, with septic systems rare.[39] Based on reporting by the water company, using the Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) [40] standards, about 85% of households in Lusaka have a 'safely managed' sanitation service.[41] Based on other independent assessments, this is questionable as the standard of faecal sludge management is poor: some 75%

35 Lusaka sanitation program – climate resilient sustainable infrastructure.
36 National Water Supply and Sanitation Council (NWASCO), Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Report 2024, (Lusaka: NWASCO, 2025), accessed January 22, 2026, https://www.esawas.org/publication/nwasco-water-supply-and-sanitation-sector-report-2024.
37 "Lusaka City Council 2023 About Lusaka – Lusaka City Council." Accessed October 3, 2024, https://www.lcc.gov.zm/full-width/.
38 2ML Consulting Limited and Losai Management Limited. 2023. *Final Case Study Report for Lusaka Water and Sanitation Company, Zambia*. Unpublished report prepared for AfDB and African Water and Sanitation Association.
39 Although it is notable that NWASCO reporting does not refer to pit latrines, only septic tanks.
40 The 'acceptable' standard is set by the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP) is responsible for global monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets related to WASH.
41 NWASCO, *Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Report 2024*.

of the faecal waste generated in the city of Lusaka is not adequately collected, treated and disposed of and ends up polluting either surface or groundwater sources. About 60% of the sludge generated on-site is not contained, and 35% of it gets directly discharged into the environment.[42] In addition to environmental concerns, these conditions, where on-site sanitation systems are improperly managed, contribute to high rates of diarrheal diseases.[43]

Based on a 2020 World Bank study, the current sewerage system comprises: "approximately 480 km of pipes, eight sewage pumping stations, two Wastewater Treatment Plants (WWTPs) (trickling filters) and five stabilisation ponds. Most of the networks are in poor condition and are inadequate in accommodating future population growth". The sewered sanitation system has insufficient capacity to handle the current flows, with a capacity of 40% of what is required, and only 4% of the total volume of wastewater generated in Lusaka can be estimated to be safely managed.[44]

The sanitation service is getting considerable attention, given the importance of sanitation in promoting health and liveable conditions in the city. Several projects and initiatives have been implemented to address this, including the Lusaka Sanitation Programme (LSP), which is part of the National Water Supply and Sanitation Program, which the government is implementing to provide adequate sanitation facilities to all urban citizens in the Lusaka province.[45] This programme includes support to households to improve on-site sanitation facilities and involves improving the faecal sludge management system. It has a strong emphasis on improving the lives and opportunities for women.

6.3 SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Lusaka City Council has recently established a separate waste management company, which is wholly owned by the City: the Lusaka Integrated Solid Waste Management Company (LISWMC). LISWMC is responsible for planning, organising, executing and supervising waste management services in the city. It manages the service through some of its own activities (landfill site management and CBD waste collection), private contractors and community-based enterprises (CBEs) (both undertaking waste collection).[46]

The city is divided into 25 Waste Management Districts, with the one covering the central business district (CBD) being serviced by the LISWMC, while the remaining 24 have been outsourced to private service providers. However, these contracts cover only formal areas (planned housing areas), while community-based enterprises provide solid waste collection in informal (peri-urban) areas. In both formal and informal areas, the service is partial: about 50% of properties have their solid waste collected in formal areas, while in informal areas, service coverage is estimated at 20%.

According to UN-Habitat, the city generates about 1,200 tons a day at a rate of 0.5kg/person/day.[47] About 660 tonnes of solid waste are disposed of at the Chunga landfill daily.[48] The balance is dumped in illegal dump sites or the stormwater system, leading to environmental hazards and health risks. This worsens flooding during the rainy season. Lack of infrastructure also hampers the public and private operators' ability to provide regular services in these areas. The Chunga Landfill is the only legal landfill site. It is over-capacity, with no remaining airspace and therefore no longer meets the standards of a proper landfill site and has become a 'dump site'. There is space on the site for another landfill cell, but the financial resources have not been available to construct this.

42 https://www.susana.org/_resources/documents/default/3-3468-7-1541604933.pdf
43 "Lusaka sanitation program – climate resilient sustainable infrastructure."
44 Kappauf, Leonie., Heyer, Antje., Makuwa, Tumba., and Titova, Yulia. 2018. *SDF Report: Lusaka Zambia*. (Lusaka GFA Consulting). 3-3468-7-1541604933.pdf (susana.org).
45 African Development Bank Group, "Zambia: Lusaka sanitation program – climate resilient sustainable infrastructure project," Map Africa, accessed October 28, 2024, https://mapafrica.afdb.org/en/projects/46002-P-ZM-E00-010.
46 Much of the information on solid waste is provided by the CEO of LISWMC in response to questions set by the AfDB consulting team working on the long term financial plan for Lusaka.
47 UN HABITAT, "Zambia, Lusaka." Accessed October 18, 2024. https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2022/07/lusaka_en.pdf.
48 Japan International Cooperation Agency, *Project for Formulation of Comprehensive Regional Development Plan for Greater Lusaka* (Tokyo: JICA, 2024), https://openjicareport.jica.go.jp/pdf/12391157.pdf.

It is estimated that about 15% of waste is recycled, with the low percentage influenced by limited separation at source. The service is financed through revenue collected by waste collection contractors, with tariffs regulated by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. There is a three-tier tariff structure based on household income, with the highest rate set for the highest income groups. Waste contractors collect their own revenue, and this is not reflected on LISWMC books.

6.4 ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY

In 2024, Zambia had an installed electricity generation capacity of 3.87 GWh, 82% hydro, 9% from coal-fired plants, and 5% from solar.[49] [50] Power is supplied by Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation (ZESCO) Limited, a state-owned company that is responsible for generating, transmitting, and distributing electricity across the country.[51] This dependence on hydropower makes Lusaka vulnerable to fluctuations in water flows and dam levels, with the supply of power vulnerable in times of droughts, as has been the case in the 2024 dry season, when Lusaka residents and businesses have been subject to severe power outages, sometimes having power for less than half the day.

Global Data Lab gives household access to electricity in Lusaka at 76% in 2019. While current data for Lusaka City is not available, figures for Lusaka Province suggest that access is increasing to 85% in 2023.[52] Based on these figures, access (number of households with connections) has increased by 9%. At the same time, consumption (amount of electricity used) has increased by 6% in in Lusaka. However, even if the 2024 drought conditions are excluded, ZESCO does not have sufficient capacity to meet demand in the city, with the result that long periods with electricity outages are likely to remain for the present.

Lusaka's electricity grid infrastructure is ageing, which leads to transmission losses, frequent breakdowns, and inefficiencies. There is a need for considerable reinforcement of the system, which will require financing, with current projects to improve the grid being funded by the World Bank.

The city is obviously dependent on the success of ZESCO, and it is thus a concern that ZESCO's financial position is in decline: while revenue from sales is increasing due to an expanding customer base, figures in their 2020 integrated report[53] show declining profit margins and increasing debt. This situation remains in 2024, with the utility facing a cash crunch.[54]

Lusaka households use electricity primarily for lighting and other small power applications such as refrigeration and TV. They are heavily reliant on other sources of energy, specifically charcoal, which is used primarily for cooking but also for water and space heating. An estimated 37% of households in Lusaka Province use charcoal, with 11% using wood, the demand for both these fuels causing substantial deforestation in the country.[55]

6.5 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Zambia's technology sector is still in its early stages with emerging strengths in fintech, healthcare, and education. However, as the capital city, Lusaka has been the focal point for Zambia's National Smart Zambia Initiative[56] aimed at expanding access to ICT services. According to Freedom House's "Freedom on the Net" 2025 report, Zambia scored 62 out of 100, classifying it as "Partly Free. Within the "Violations of User Rights" category (maximum score of 40), it scored 19, indicating significant constraints in this area.[57]

49 Ministry of Energy, Zambia, *Energy Sector*, accessed July 6, 2025, https://www.moe.gov.zm/?page_id=2198.
50 The energy source for the balance of 4% is not stated.
51 "Lusaka Renewable Energy Project-Chongwe Smart City." Accessed October 18, 2024. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/IFE_PI-1_0.PDF.
52 ZamStats. Lusaka-province-records-the-highest-percentage-share-of-households-with-access-to-electricity.
53 ZESCO. 2020. "7th Integrated report – Journey towards turnaround strategy".
54 Interview with senior officials as reported by AfDB consulting team working on Integrated Investment Framework for Zambia.
55 Aaron Atteridge, Marcus Heneen and Jacqueline Senyagwa. 2013. Transforming Household Energy Practices Among Charcoal Users in Lusaka, Zambia: a User-Centred Approach. Stockholm Environmental Institute.
56 Lusaka City Council, "LCC goes digital," Accessed October 24, 2024, https://www.lcc.gov.zm/#.
57 Freedom House, *Freedom on the Net 2025: Zambia*, accessed February 6, 2026, https://freedomhouse.org/country/zambia/freedom-net/2025.

While this reflects the broader national environment for digital rights and online expression, municipal-level digital capacity presents a related but distinct dimension of digital governance. According to the UN City Data's Local Online Service Index[58], Lusaka City ranked 129th out of 194 cities in 2024, with a score of 0.21. This places the city broadly in line with five of seven SADC cities for which data are available, which record scores ranging between 0.18 and 0.23. By contrast, Dar es Salaam scores notably higher at 0.34. while Johannesburg substantially outperforms its regional peers with a score of 0.60.[59] Lusaka's position represents a decline from 116th in 2022.

According to Global Data Lab figures, 16% of Lusaka households had access to the internet in 2018, the lowest figure of the 10 SADC cities in the GGA sample, with the 10 cities having an average of 47% access and a range from 16% for Lusaka to 89% for Cape Town. About 18% of Lusaka households had a computer (range 6% for Lilongwe to 38% for Cape Town), and 90% had a phone.

6.6 ROADS

Roads are the backbone of a city and represent the largest asset public investment within a city compared to other networked services. Based on data from OpenStreetMap[iii], road lengths in Lusaka are given in Table 4.

The road classification system on Openstreetmap does not align with the classification used by the Roads Development Agency, which uses trunk, main, district, primary feeder, urban and 'non-core' roads. But the first three categories likely match the first three in the OpenStreetMap system.

The core internal road network within Lusaka comprises approximately 1,600 km of roadway.[60] The Openstreetmap data shows 641 km of Lusaka's roads are paved, 14.0% of the total, which is a relatively high figure compared to SADC sample cities excluding Johannesburg and Cape Town.

Table 4: Road lengths for Lusaka City

CATEGORY	KM	% SPLIT
Trunk	10	0.2%
Primary	100	2.2%
Secondary	193	4.2%
Tertiary	144	3.1%
Residential & service	3,296	71.9%
Paths, tracks etc	250	5.5%
Unclassified	591	12.9%
Total	**4,584**	**100.0%**

Paved roads in Zambia, including Lusaka, are generally in good condition (Roads Development Agency estimates 80% are good), but unpaved roads are generally in poor condition.

The trunk and main roads which pass through Lusaka carry the greatest traffic and have been the focus of road improvement recently, with three grade separations at key intersections of roads and railways.[61]

Institutionally, primary feeder, urban and non-core roads are nominally LCC responsibility. But their role in managing these roads is small, primarily one of project management. The Roads Development Agency manages some of the primary feeder roads, and the MLGRD has set up management contracts for road maintenance of core roads (urban and primary feeders).

58 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), *UN E-Government Knowledgebase: City Data for Lusaka*, 2020, accessed October 24, 2025, https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data/City/id/85-Lusaka/dataYear/2020

59 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), *"UN E-Government Knowledgebase: City Data for Lusaka, 2020"*

60 World Bank. *Lusaka Decongestion Project*. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2021. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/980681616145130766/pdf/Lusaka-Decongestion-Project.pdf.

61 Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), *Data collection survey on urban development and urban transport in Lusaka City* (Lusaka: JICA, 2022)

iii OpenStreetMap is a crowd-sourced geographic database where volunteers map points, lines, and polygons, tagged with flexible key=value pairs to indicate feature type and attributes. Administrative boundaries are mapped hierarchically (country → city), and features include land use, infrastructure, buildings, and amenities. Road lengths are calculated from the geometric coordinates of the mapped nodes forming each way, and the data are continuously updated and validated by the community.

6.7 PUBLIC TRANSPORT

There are key challenges faced by the city's transport network. This includes but is not limited to severe congestion, poor quality of public transport provision, poor quality of pedestrian infrastructure, poor quality of unpaved roads, high rate of fatalities and weak resilience to climate change.[62] These challenges limit the economic success of the city.

Lusaka serves as a major transportation hub, linked to international economic corridors. Its road network includes the North-South Corridor, the Nacala Corridor, which connects to Mozambique's port of Nacala, and the Western Corridor, leading to Angola. Additionally, a railway along the North-South Corridor connects Lusaka to Dar es Salaam Port in Tanzania and Durban Port in South Africa.

With 4,850 passengers per hour inbound in the morning peak hour, a total of 253 vehicles at an average occupancy of 19 passengers each, the Great North Road is observed as the highest flow. However, on average, typical volumes are about 2,000 to 3,000 passengers per hour on the main arterial routes.[63] Regarding private vehicle use, in 2018, Zambia had about 800,000 cars, and the Lusaka Province accounted for about 50% of these. According to the OECD, in 2014, less than 5% of the city's residents owned motorcycles while about 15% owned cars.[64]

Urban transportation networks tend to have a gendered aspect, and Lusaka city is no exception. For example, women are likely to have less money than their male counterparts, they are more likely to be hindered with a pram, young children or heavy shopping, particularly as they are largely dependent on informal transport or paratransit.[65] Women are also less likely to cycle than men and are likely to limit their walking options in terms of where or when they walk.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT

With climate change considerations being vital, the efforts made by stakeholders in the city regarding carbon emissions and adaptation initiatives are most important. Based on Global Human Settlements Layer data, carbon dioxide emissions from the city are estimated at 0.3 tons of CO_2 per capita in 2022[66], the lowest of the 10 cities in the SADC sample, which have an average of 1.2 tons of CO_2 per capita, with Johannesburg the highest at 4.0. The low carbon footprint for Lusaka is consistent with its low level of industrial and development, low levels of private car ownership, and all aligned with low levels of energy use. That said, the high incidence of charcoal burning results in substantial carbon emissions and greening the charcoal value chain is a high priority.[67]

Considering air pollution, the PM2.5 concentration of particulates in the air in Lusaka was estimated at 16 µg/m^3, a figure very typical of non-South African cities in the GGA sample of SADC cities, where the range is from 12 µg/m^3 for Lilongwe to 42 for Johannesburg. While a figure of 16 µg/m^3 may be typical of SADC cities, it is not good in relation to the international guidelines.[68] Again, charcoal and wood burning have a substantially negative impact on air quality and thus health.

Lusaka is not located on a major river but faces adverse water quality in smaller rivers within the city, notably the Ngwerere and Chunga rivers. This is caused by poor solid waste management practices in the city, with about 70% of waste ending up in the stormwater system (See Section 6) and under-treated wastewater, including raw sewage, entering the rivers. The extensive reliance on groundwater sources for the city's supply is also a concern as groundwater levels are declining.[69]

62 The World Bank, *Study of public transport in Lusaka: Final report* (Nottingham: WB, 2022).
63 Japan International Cooperation Agency, *Data collection survey on urban development and urban transport in Lusaka City*
64 OECD/UN ECA/AfDB, Africa's urbanization dynamics 2022: The economic power of Africa's cities, West Africa Studies, (Paris: OECD publishing, 2022), https://doi.org/10.1787/3834ed5b-en.
65 The World Bank, *Study of public transport in Lusaka: Final report*
66 Global Human Setlement Lab, Urban Centre Database, accessed August 24, 2025, https://human-settlement.emergency.copernicus.eu/ucdb2024visual.php
67 UN FOA. 2017. The Charcoal Transition - Greening the charcoal value chain to mitigate climate change and improve local livelihoods.
68 WHO recommends that annual average concentrations of PM2.5 particulates should not exceed 5 micrograms per cubic meter and that 24-hour average exposures should not exceed 15 µg/m3 more than 3–4 days per year.
69 Fractal. 2018. Policy brief | Lusaka city faced with severe consequences of declining groundwater levels.

8. ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

The Lusaka district comprises seven constituencies and 33 wards. Each ward is represented by a Ward Development Committee, which is entrusted with crucial responsibilities. Funds from the Constituency Development Fund – accounting for 29% of City revenue and representing the largest transfer from the national budget to local government – must be allocated according to the priorities set by these Committees.

The Republican Constitution (Amendment) Act no. 2 of 2016[70] holds that a local authority shall administer the district, oversee programmes and projects, make by-laws and perform other prescribed functions in the district. However, the LCC faces challenges that hinder its ability to deliver on this mandate, including a lack of organisational capacity and inadequate financial resource mobilisation. The centralisation of funds by the national government severely limits the council's capacity to deliver essential services.[71]

While coping with insufficient financial support from national government, LCC faces increases in expenditure responsibilities and a free rider problem for most council services[72], with most of the services provided by local authorities in the country not paid for. 'Own source' revenue sources are limited without access to lucrative sources of revenue such as income tax, personal levies, road tax and water and electricity charges.[73] This has resulted in fiscal imbalances owing to the differences between the local tax base and the assigned expenditure responsibilities. This has widespread public dissatisfaction, with many residents reluctant to pay levies or rates due to the perceived lack of benefits and accountability.[74]

Looking at the city comparatively, the institutional quality index from Afrobarometer Round 9 provides insights into the perceived transparency and responsiveness of Lusaka's City Council. Lusaka's institutional quality index score of 1.0 (Table 5) reflects moderate perceptions of effectiveness, suggesting that while residents may have some confidence in accessing information or requesting action, there are significant limitations in responsiveness and accountability.

This aligns with broader challenges faced by the LCC, including inadequate resource mobilisation, which hinders its ability to meet citizen demands effectively. For example, the index measures the likelihood of obtaining information about local development plans, budgets, or contracts and the ability to report corruption or request community project assistance. A score of 1.0 implies that citizens encounter barriers when engaging with the council on these issues, reflecting the same free-rider problem and dissatisfaction noted in Lusaka's service delivery and fiscal management challenges.

Table 5: Afrobarometer Institutional Responsiveness Survey, 2024

CITIES	COUNTRY	INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY INDEX (0-3, HIGHER IS BETTER)
Bulawayo	Zimbabwe	1.1
Harare	Zimbabwe	0.9
Johannesburg	South Africa	0.9
Cape Town	South Africa	1.1
Da es Salaam	Tanzania	1.3
Lilongwe	Malawi	1.0
Luanda	Angola	0.8
Lusaka	Zambia	1.0
Maputo	Mozambique	1.1
Matola	Mozambique	1.0

70 Government of Zambia Act no. 2 of 2016. Constitution of Zambia (Lusaka, 2016). https://www.parliament.gov.zm/sites/default/files/documents/amendment_act/Constitution%20of%20Zambia%20%20(Amendment),%202016-Act%20No.%202_0.pdf.
71 UN Habitat. *Zambia: Lusaka Urban profile*. Nairobi: UN Habitat, 2007. https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/Fiscal%20Decentralisation%20in%20Zambia.pdf
72 Ibid
73 Chishimba, Kazonga, and Kazonga, "An analysis of the effects of equalisation funds on service delivery in selected local authorities in Zambia,"
74 Ibid

9. FINANCING ARRANGEMENTS

Lusaka's financial position needs to be seen in the context of a city that does not have any significant trading services (electricity, water, sanitation and solid waste management) on its books. Neither is it mandated to provide major social services: primary health care and education at primary and secondary level. From an infrastructure point of view – assuming infrastructure as separate from buildings – it only has responsibility for roads and street lighting and even for roads, the City is not fully responsible for local road maintenance. Further, the City has little responsibility for the construction and financing of infrastructure with this undertaken by GRZ or international partners.

A summarised revenue budget for the city is given as Table 6:

Own source revenue is 54% of the total, with the following key features:

- Property tax is raised from residential (9.4% of revenue) and commercial (8.8% of revenue) properties. In addition, the grant in lieu of rates, included with grants, is intended to cover property rates due on government properties (6.7% of revenue). In total, these three revenue sources amount to 24.8% of revenue ($2,86 per capita per annum). Further details on property rates are given later in this section.
- 'Fees and charges' – a wide range of items - generate substantial revenue (12.9%), with charges for billboards being the biggest item (3.9% of revenue). Rentals of properties are included here (2.0% of revenue).
- 'Permits' is the next largest revenue stream (11.4% of revenue), with a range of items, of which fire certificates (7.7%) and health permits (3.4%) are the largest items.
- 'Levies' – 7.2% of revenue - is the remaining revenue item larger than 2%.

Table 6: Lusaka City Council budget – Revenue - 2024

CATEGORY	KWACHA '000s	USD '000s	SPLIT	PER CAPITA ($/CAP)
Property taxes	132,667	5,006	18.1%	2.09
Personal levy	2,625	99	0.4%	0.04
Fees and charges	94,283	3,558	12.9%	1.48
Licenses	7,009	264	1.0%	0.11
Levies	52,364	1,976	7.2%	0.82
Permits	83,326	3,144	11.4%	1.31
Charges	12,965	489	1.8%	0.20
Interest on Investments	11,160	421	1.5%	0.18
Other Income	900	34	0.1%	0.01
Constituency Development Fund	214,449	8,092	29.3%	3.37
Roads grant	3,743	141	0.5%	0.06
Health grant	26,389	996	3.6%	0.41
Equalisation fund	41,307	1,559	5.6%	0.65
Grants in lieu of rates	48,903	1,845	6.7%	0.77
Total	**732,090**	**27,626**	**100.0%**	**11.51**

Table 7: Lusaka City Council budget – Expenditure - 2024

CATEGORY	KWACHA '000s	USD '000s	SPLIT	PER CAPITA ($/CAP)
Governance and administration	248,671	9,384	34.0%	3.91
Planning, regulation and development facilitation	17,564	663	2.4%	0.28
Economic and business development	45,520	1,718	6.2%	0.72
Public health and environmental protection	44,362	1,674	6.1%	0.70
Public order and safety	49,129	1,854	6.7%	0.77
Community services	226,719	8,555	31.0%	3.56
District health services	26,031	982	3.6%	0.41
Roads and drainage	49,208	1,857	6.7%	0.77
Street lighting	23,885	901	3.3%	0.38
Solid waste management	1,001	38	0.1%	0.02
Total	**732,090**	**27,626**	**100.0%**	**11.51**

The grants received from the national fiscus – amounting to 46% of revenue – comprise:

- Constituency Development Fund, allocated for community development initiatives identified by individual ward committees and including scholarships. This is used largely for community facilities, with some allocated to road maintenance. There is also a provision for administration costs.
- The Equalisation Fund is a formula-based allocation to local authorities, which is unconditional.
- The roads grant is a new grant intended for the maintenance of local roads.
- The health grant allocated specifically for the operational and maintenance cost of primary health care facilities, excluding heath care staff.
- The grant in lieu of rates is paid by GRZ to cover the property rates due on government properties.

Operating expenditure figures for Lusaka City are given as Table 7.

The largely facilitatory role of LCC is evident from this expenditure pattern. 34% of spending is on governance and administration and 14.7% on: planning, regulation, development facilitation; economic and business development; and public health and environmental protection. None of these functions require infrastructure or facilities other than offices and IT systems. The balance of 48.3% can be considered 'services' including:

- Public order and safety (6.7%) which is mainly fire services.[75]
- Community services (31%) which includes a broad range of services itemised under 'community amenities' in Section 5.
- District health services (3.6%), which are limited to the management of primary health clinics including building maintenance, water and electricity supply but excluding the salaries and benefits paid to health staff. The expenditure is limited to the amount of health grants received.
- Roads and drainage, at 6.7% of expenditure covers mainly maintenance activity, as described in Section 6.
- Street lighting (3.3%).
- Solid waste management (0.1%) with only facilitatory expenditure as the function is contracted out to Lusaka Integrated Solid Waste Management Company.

75 Some cities in Zambia also have 'municipal' police services – mainly for traffic control.

Turning to the actual revenue and expenditure figures as stated in annual financial statements, it is notable that Lusaka, along with all other local authorities in Zambia apply a cash accounting system. GRZ is planning for them all to shift to accrual accounting in the coming years. Looking at the 2022 statements, the latest available, it is evident that LCC only received 87% of the budgeted revenue with receipt from property rates, licenses and levies well under budget. Expenditure was only 54% of the budgeted amount with only salaries (personal emoluments) close to budget. This implies that maintenance was well under budget and that some service providers were not being paid. With a low recovery of revenue, the 'receivables' amount on LCC financial statements is increasing. Similarly, amounts payable have been increasing.

LCC is in financial difficulties caused, significantly, by the requirement of Zambian local authorities set by the national Cabinet that they have not been permitted to increase the property rate (amount per unit of property value) for the past five years. Thus, increases in property rates revenue are limited to increases in the number of ratepayers.

10. CLOSURE

Lusaka serves as Zambia's political, economic, and transportation hub, with a strong economy in relation to the country as a whole which has brought high levels of in-migration from rural areas. However, seen in relation to peer countries in the SADC region Lusaka's economy is relatively weak, aligned with that of Maputo and Dar es Salaam. While access to water is relatively good, electricity supply remains inconsistent, particularly in drought years, Large portions of the population live in informal settlements with inadequate sanitation, waste management, and road infrastructure. Service provision is primarily managed by public utilities and other government entities, with the Lusaka City Council having minimal service provision responsibilities compared to peer countries. This is reflected in the City's budget with low levels of revenue constraining the city's ability to improve services.

Photo: Zinyange Auntony/Bloomberg via Getty Images

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