



•COLLINS Musonda a village chicken trader is among those who have made the Wednesday market at Zambia Railways Limited premises in Ndola their fortress. Pictures by JOWIT SALUSEKI



•ESTHER Mishili displays her groundnuts and other farm produce as she waits for customers at Zambia Railways premises in Ndola.

# Promoting, preserving indigenous foods

**Off the beat**

With Jowit Saluseki

**Z**AMBIA is endowed with various edibles like mushrooms, groundnuts, sweet potatoes, mangoes, pumpkins, yams and wild fruits known as masuku and intungulu, among other products.

But, sometimes, owing to the lack of preservation of such foods, most of them just go to waste.

Yet, in the past, smoking, drying, salting, kilning and canning were some of the notable ways of preserving

restaurant from local and small-scale farmers.

Ms Banda started her own business, Sylvia Professional, in 1986 and, over the years, she has even managed to open a university.

Today's column is, therefore, focusing on the importance of food preservation.

Some farmers from rural parts of Copperbelt and Central provinces have taken advantage of the ready market that has over the years presented itself at the Zambia Railways Limited premises in Ndola to rekindle the art of preserving various indigenous foods.

Most of the farmers come from rural places like Kafulafuta, Masangano, Masaiti and Chikonkomene, among other areas located along the line of rail.

When boarding the train from their various homes, each of the farmers carry with them various merchandise.

Among them are dried egg plants, dried mushrooms, village chickens, an assortment of both fresh and dried vegetables, as well as millet and sorghum flour for onward sale at the Ndola premises of Zambia Railways.

The traders usually arrive in Ndola around 07:00 hours every Tuesday aboard the Zambia Railways train, armed with an assortment of edibles.

In the past, goats also formed parts of the commodities that would be displayed for sale at the popular Wednesday weekly market.

Goats would cost between K300 and K500.

However, owing to high demand, livestock like goats are now a rare commodity and, if they are available at the weekly Ndola market, they fetch more than K1,000.

The demand from traders who prefer taking such animals to Kasumbalesa border en-route to Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has added to the conundrum in the scarcity

of goats.

In addition, the influx of East African communities in townships, such as Ndeke in Ndola, and whose appetite for goats is sky scraping, has made it near impossible to secure the said livestock for home consumption.

Nonetheless, apart from the aforementioned agricultural products, Ndola residents are also able to buy in bulk pumpkins, fresh cassava tubers, white maize and fresh vegetables, which are all sold at a much cheaper price as compared to most markets dotted across the town.

In the past, Masala Market in Ndola acted as the sole destination for Ndola residents to buy farm produce at wholesale prices.

Now not anymore, as some residents of townships nearer the central business district, such as Chipulukusu, Minsundu, Northrise, Itawa and Kansenshi are opting to purchase farm produce from the rural farmers who ferry their

merchandise to the Zambia Railways station.

For instance, a heap of sweet potatoes is pegged at K20 while a gallon of maize fetches at between K20 and K30, with a bucket of fresh groundnuts selling at K30.

But some unscrupulous traders within Ndola have also taken advantage of the situation by invading the weekly market to buy some products in bulk, which they later repackage for resale in various townships.

For hosting the traders and providing them with bathrooms and lavatory services at its premises in Ndola, the Zambia Railways charges each trader K10 per day.

Owing to a huge demand in village chickens, the traders have of late decided to take advantage of the situation by hiking the prices.

For instance, a full grown village chicken that would ordinarily go under the hammer at around K120 is now fetching at between K200 and K250.

"The prices are normally

determined by the laws of supply and demand. The more the demand there is for village chickens, the higher the prices they will fetch," explains Collins Musonda, a livestock trader who usually travels from Chikonkomene in Central Province to trade in Ndola.

Apart from village chickens, the trader also sells some guinea fowls, including eggs.

Mr Musonda said that weekends and public holidays that keep families at home usually trigger a high demand in the village chickens, thereby pushing the prices up.

Even so, some canny customers, who have mastered the art of negotiating for a fair price, sometimes manage to convince sellers to lower the price a little bit.

Esther Mishili, a trader from Masangano, says business has been booming in the first quarter of this year.

"I have been coming to sell here for the past four years. Compared to selling at Masangano-Luanshya Road

where the business can be slow sometimes, the good part here is that we just spend one day and everything will be sold. Yes, there are some losses here and there just like in any other business, but so far, so good," Ms Mishili said.

She was quick to analyse that business might slow down during the pre-harvest season as the traders will be preoccupied with securing their land in anticipation of the 2025-26 farming season.

"Every week, I come here to buy a different variety of farm produce which these brothers and sisters of ours supply us at this weekly market. It is amazing to see that the traders are able to stock various indigenous foods like dried mushrooms, millet flour and pumpkins which we grew up eating back in the days," says Amos Zulu.

It suffices to state that, despite the availability of various indigenous foods, Zambia's malnutrition rates remain among the highest in the world.

Before the declaration of the national disaster caused by drought in the 2023-24 rainy seasons, 48 per cent of people or 17.4 million in Zambia were unable to meet their minimum calorie requirements, and 35 per cent of children were stunted.

Civil Society Scaling Up Nutrition field officer Shadreck Kaluba is, therefore, urging members of the public to take advantage of various preservation methods to safeguard indigenous foods, which he says can help alleviate malnutrition and food insecurity at household levels.

"It is worrying that despite rural places being blessed with seasonal mushrooms, edible wild fruits and arable land for cultivation of farm produce, local people have not taken keen interest to preserve these products, leading to the country witnessing cases of malnutrition and stunted growth," Mr Kaluba said.

He said communities should, therefore, embrace food preservation methods which their forefathers treasured and passed on to them.

"By preserving food, human communities are able to increase their food security through storage, and reduce waste, thus increasing the resilience of local food systems and reducing household poverty," he said.

According to a report by the Food and Agriculture Organisation, (FAO) many people lack adequate knowledge of preserving indigenous foods that are rich in the nutrients and needed for health and a productive life.

This has resulted in chronic under nutrition, which affects millions of people in sub-Saharan Africa.

Looking ahead, access to stable and embracing various indigenous foods, should be seen as a precondition for the establishment of food security at both household and national level.

The onus is on various individual households to take the mantle of promoting the preservation of indigenous foods.

By doing so, malnutrition and food wastage can be curtailed in communities.

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# Rotary International changes pupils' lives

**By EMILY KUWEMA**

"THE best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

This profound quote by Mahatma Gandhi, a political ethicist who played a pivotal role in India's struggle for independence from British rule, resonates deeply with the Rotary International, a global network of visionary leaders dedicated to addressing pressing issues and fostering positive change.

With a mission to provide selfless service, promote integrity, and advance goodwill and peace, the Rotary International embodies the spirit of compassion and unselfishness.

The Rotary Club's vision is to be a global network of leaders who inspire and empower others to make a meaningful difference.

To achieve this noble goal, Rotarians worldwide contribute to local and global projects, touching lives in countless ways.

Zambia has been a beneficiary of these efforts, experiencing first-hand the transformative power of Rotary's service.

In a heart-warming display of solidarity, visiting Rotarians from the Rotary Club of Bellevue Eastside District 5030 Seattle, Washington, USA, collaborated with the Rotary Club of Lusaka Metro, District 9210 to make a profound impact on six community schools in Zambia.

Under Rotary International's support for education, one of the organisation's seven areas of focus, the two clubs joined forces to support vulnerable children in Lusaka and Livingstone.

The beneficiary schools received support include Other Side Foundation Community School in Lusaka's George Township, where 35 pupils received school uniforms, a dream come true for some of these young learners as it was the first time they were putting on a school uniform.

Also, Positive Lives Specialised School in Lusaka West, a haven for children with autism, blindness, deafness and Down syndrome, received a donation of school building materials and uniforms.

Meanwhile, Charity Education Centre received text books for grade ones to seven, empowering the children's

minds with knowledge.

The center does not only offer lessons, but also a feeding programme which encourages children to report to school as most of them come from homes where their parents and guardians cannot afford three meals a day.

A Grade seven pupil at Charity Education Centre, Charles Banda, could not hide his delight after getting hold of a mathematics book he had wanted.

"As a grade seven pupil, it is important that I have all the learning materials that I need because I will be sitting for exams soon. This mathematics book and the others will help me prepare for the exams adequately," he said.

Charles goes to the Charity Education Center with two of his young siblings.

In Livingstone, Olive Tree Learning in Ngenwenya Township, was given some sewing machines to empower the staff and some parents to pupils with practical skills.

Meanwhile, Rare Rose Academy School received uniforms for the entire school, bringing joy to students and teachers alike.

Lovely Open School

in Ngenwenya Township Livingstone was helped to build a classroom block, providing a safe and conducive learning environment for the children.

At the donation ceremony, parents and children gathered to express their heartfelt gratitude.

Tears of joy streamed down faces as learners donned their new uniforms for the first time at Other Side Foundation Community School in Lusaka.

The Rotarians' kindness had brought hope and happiness to these young hearts, reminding them that they are seen, heard and valued.

Rotary Club of Bellevue Eastside District 5030 delegation leader, Curtis Cummings, said he became aware of the needs in the community schools after his interaction with the Lusaka Metro, District 9210.

Mr Cumming said in an interview he had conducted rotary service projects for over 20 years, mostly in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

"And when I saw the opportunity to come to Zambia, I spoke to my fellow Rotarian, Rachael from Lusaka, it sounded like the

needs were very similar to what the club stands for which are water, sanitation, food and education," he said.

He observed that a lot of the children in the community schools they visited did not have school uniforms and their clothing was not very good.

"And they seem to really appreciate the donation and we are happy to help them," he said.

District Governor Rotary International District 9210 in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Northern Mozambique, Tom Kamwendo, said Rotarian work was important as any community had people who needed help including Zambia.

"In Zambia, the most common needs are in education, health and environment," he said.

Mr Kamwendo said he had spent the last six months traveling in his district which covers four countries and he observed that there was no shortage of need, especially in rural areas.

Rotary International focuses on four areas, namely education, health, environment and maintaining peace and preventing conflicts.

The governor also

encouraged young people to join the club under Rotaract designed for young adults between the ages of 18 and 30 years with the objective of developing leadership skills, fostering friendship, networking and promoting community service.

He said the clubs are dotted in major cities across the country.

Rotary Clubs engage in various community service projects, such as volunteer work as members participate in local projects, such as food drives, disaster relief, and environmental conservation.

Clubs raise funds for local and global projects, often through events like charity runs or auctions.

Members mentor students, entrepreneurs, or others in need of guidance.

The Rotary Club has a significant global impact, with over 140,000 clubs existing in more than 200 countries and it has been instrumental in global efforts to eradicate polio.

Rotary International has undertaken several significant projects in Zambia, focusing on healthcare, education and community development.

Some of the notable initiatives are the Malaria Prevention and Treatment programme supported by a US\$2 million grant from the Rotary Foundation and additional funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and World Vision USA, aims to reduce malaria cases by 90 per cent in 10 target districts.

The programme trains community health workers to diagnose and treat malaria, strengthening Zambia's health system.

Another initiative is the Rotary Healthy Communities Challenge; a US\$5 million initiative launched in 2024 to improve childhood health in Northern and Central Zambia.

The programme focuses on malaria, pneumonia and diarrheal diseases, training



•CHILDREN from Charity Education Centre with members of the Rotary Club of Bellevue Eastside District 5030 Seattle, Washington, in the United States. Picture by EMILY KUWEMA

over 2,000 community health workers to diagnose, treat, and manage these conditions.

Under water and sanitation projects, Rotary Club of Lusaka has completed several water and sanitation projects, including: Kalikiliki Health Post where a submersible pump and water pipe was installed to improve access to clean water.

Mtendere Primary School was provided with a water tank with a solar pump to benefit over 2,500 students and the surrounding community.

Meanwhile, Kasisi Ng'ombe Health Post was connected to Lusaka City water, erecting an overhead tank and constructing modern flush toilets.

Under education and technology, the Rotary Club of Lusaka donated 24 laptops to schools in Nkeyema District in Western Province to enhance education.

Meanwhile, the Rotary Club of Lusaka in partnership with five Rotary Clubs of Japan, handed over a reconstructive surgery training centre to the University of Zambia School of Medicine.

During the COVID -19 outbreak, Rotary Club of Lusaka delivered Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) worth close to £5,000 to three COVID-19 centres in Lusaka, supporting frontline healthcare workers.

The Rotary Club's selfless acts of service inspire people to make a difference in the lives of others.

As Mahatma Gandhi's words echo through the ages, they are a reminder that true fulfillment lies in losing oneself in the service of others.

The Rotary Club's legacy of compassion, empathy and kindness will continue to touch lives, inspiring a brighter future for generations to come.