

# Zambia fees threaten truckers' livelihood

■ Albertina Nakale

**K**ATIMA MULILO – Cross-border truck drivers operating between Walvis Bay and Zambia say escalating transit permit fees are threatening their livelihoods and undermining regional trade.

Speaking to *New Era* recently, on behalf of fellow drivers at Katima Mulilo before crossing the border en route to DRC, cross-border trucker Nyathi Dingani said the cost of Zambia's transit permit has risen sharply over the years.

"The idea is not really a bad idea, but the cost of it became really a concern," he stated. The driver said the permit – a plastic identification card issued by Zambia's Department of Immigration – was introduced several years ago to address the 90-day visitor limit applied to foreign nationals. Drivers, who frequently enter and exit Zambia, often exhaust those 90 days within months due to long turnaround times.

"To go into Zambia alone, it can take between 10 and 17 days, sometimes 21 days. Within six months, you find the 90 days are finished," narrated Dingani.

While the permit was meant to cushion drivers, he said the

cost had escalated dramatically to around K1 500 (approximately N\$1 274.49) before 2021. From there, the fees increased to about K2 500-K2 700 in 2021. Thereafter, the cost rose to roughly K3 700-K3 900 in 2022 before it spiked to K11 250 (approximately N\$9 558.68) in 2023. "We noted that the cost of that simple plastic is beyond the cost of an ordinary passport. An ordinary passport is valid for 10 years. But this plastic is only valid for 12 months," the trucker lamented.

Dingani added that drivers who cannot afford the permit are denied entry at the border.

"Unless you pay for that permit, you are denied entry. You must go back to where you are coming from," he said.

In cases where trucks are loaded with goods, including perishables, companies are forced to find Zambian drivers to take over.

"If that happens, the incumbent driver loses the job, and the other driver wins the job immediately. That is why we say it is unfair," said Dingani.

## Call for harmonisation

Dingani argued that Zambian truck drivers are not subjected to similar restrictions in neighbouring countries such as Namibia.

"In Namibia, they are not subjected to the 90-day story as long as they are drivers," he said.

Truckers are calling for harmonised regional regulations in line with Africa's free trade ambitions.

"We are talking about free trade and free movement of goods. With such restrictions, how are we going to achieve that?" asked Dingani.

The driver further said truckers have approached corridor authorities and the Namibian High Commission in Lusaka and written letters to relevant offices in Zambia, including the Department of Immigration.

A planned peaceful boycott on 23 February – where trucks would have been parked in protest – did not materialise due to fears of arrests and possible blacklisting. "We did not want to be violent or political. We only wanted our plea to be heard," he said.

Despite frustrations, Dingani urged fellow drivers to remain respectful. "The Zambians are good people. The immigration officers are just enforcing what they are mandated to do. We are appealing to the leaders at the top to review this regulation," said Dingani.

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# Ndoro school hostel brings relief

... but fencing remains a concern

■ Albertina Nakale

**KATIMA MULILO** – Officially inaugurated on 27 August 2025 by President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, the 320-bed Ndoro Memorial Combined School hostel accommodates 160 girls and 160 boys.

Hope is now rising following the opening of its new hostel facility, a development described by school principal Linus Sipopo as a "huge relief" for learners who once endured long and dangerous journeys to class.

It was built to address years of hardship faced by learners from surrounding villages inside Bwabwata National Park, where wildlife and vast distances made daily school attendance both difficult and risky.

Sipopo said the hostel has already made a measurable difference.

"This has been a very good initiative. It is helping learners who used to commute long distances. They no longer must walk to and from school every day," he said.

The school currently has 436 learners enrolled, with 288 staying in the hostel.

Before its construction, absenteeism was high, as many learners struggled with unsafe routes and harsh weather conditions.

"We experienced high absenteeism in the past because learners had to cross areas with wild animals. Our school is situated in the heart of the park, and that discouraged many of them from attending classes regularly," Sipopo said.

He added that many families served by the school belong to marginalised communities, including the Khwe, who face socio-economic challenges.

"Most of our parents are unemployed and come from disadvantaged backgrounds. The conditions were really affecting academic performance," he said.

The improved living conditions – including access to clean water, electricity and safe accommodation – are expected to boost academic outcomes after a difficult previous year.

"Last year, we did not perform

very well academically because of the harsh conditions learners endured. Now, they are provided with everything in the hostel. We are hopeful that their academic performance will improve," Sipopo said.

Enrolment has already increased due to the availability of boarding facilities.

The school, which serves learners from pre-primary to Grade 11, has also expanded its curriculum and now offers Afrikaans from Grade 1 to Grade 9, with plans to extend to higher grades next year.

Sipopo said the school is offering Advanced Subsidiary (AS) level as of the beginning of this year.

The education ministry has further pledged additional classrooms and science laboratories to strengthen learning infrastructure for AS level.

Despite the progress, Sipopo stressed that a major safety concern remains: the school has no perimeter fence.

While the hostel is fenced, the broader school grounds remain exposed to roaming wildlife.

"We are calling on good Samaritans to assist us with a school fence. Learners are still exposed to wild animals while studying," he appealed.

Efforts to raise funds locally proved unsuccessful due to widespread poverty in the community.

"We tried to mobilise the community, but it is not working because most parents are unemployed. We urgently need support to secure the school," Sipopo said.

The new hostel and 400-seat multipurpose hall mark a turning point for education in Omega 3.

Built with modern solar, water and waste treatment systems, the facility represents a long-term investment in the future of children living inside Bwabwata National Park.

For Sipopo and staff, the goal is clear: safer learning conditions, improved academic performance and expanded opportunities for marginalised learners.

"We are really pushing so that our learners can excel academically," he said.

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REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

## MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES, WATER AND LAND REFORM

### CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

#### APPOINTMENT TO THE BOARD OF NAMIBIA WATER CORPORATION LTD

In terms of Section 17 of the Namibia Water Corporation Act, 1997 (Act No. 12 of 1997), the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Land Reform hereby invites suitably qualified Namibian citizens to submit applications for consideration for appointment to the Board of Directors of the Namibia Water Corporation Limited (NamWater), for the term of 3 years.

Persons appointed to the Board must have over 5 year management experience and possess, academic qualification, proven knowledge and experience in fields relevant to the Corporation's mandate, including water engineering, infrastructure development, finance, corporate governance, law, water and environmental management, or business leadership.

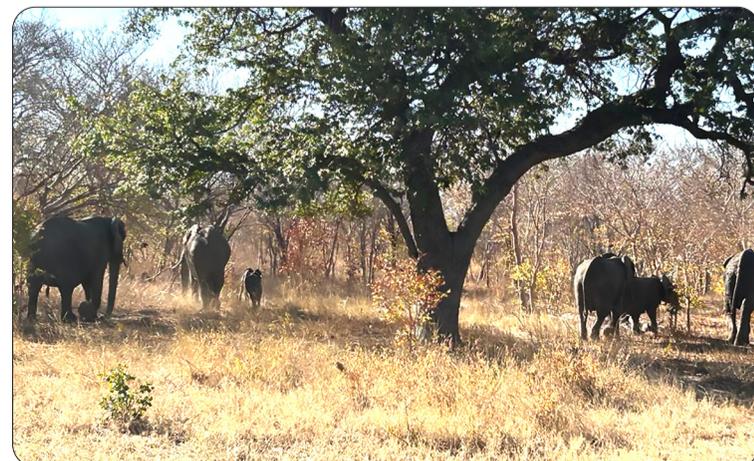
Applicants must be Namibian citizens of sound integrity and must not be disqualified in terms of the Namibia Water Corporation Act, 1997, the Companies Act, or any other applicable law.

Applications must include a cover letter, detailed Curriculum Vitae, certified copies of qualifications and identity document, declaration of interests, and at least two contactable references.

Applications must be submitted on or before 17h00, on the **13 March 2026** to:

Office of the Deputy Executive Director  
Government Office Park – 4<sup>th</sup> floor West Wing  
Windhoek  
C/o Ms Reta Dick  
+264612087696

Only shortlisted candidates will be informed.



**Protection...** Ndoro Memorial Combined School needs a school fence, as learners remain exposed to wild animals roaming the park. Photo: Albertina Nakale