

# opinion

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## **Intensifying efforts to empower our youths with financial skills**

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As part of my business scoping trip to Chipata last week, I was privileged to lead a financial education session for pupils at Hillside School – my alma mater. There I discovered raw ambition, talent and the sheer determination by a group of young girls eager to learn, eager to acquire new skills, eager to benefit from the experiences of bankers like myself.

Accompanied by the Minister of Youth and Sport – also an alumni of Hillside School – we sought to give back to our school, the place where our formative years were spent. Indeed, Hillside School shaped our career paths and embedded the principles of hard work and ambition.

However, what struck me most, was how pertinent it is for our youths to have the knowledge and skills to manage their income. Once our youths leave secondary school, they will take diverse career paths. Some will go on to higher education institutions, and ultimately into formal employment; whilst others will opt to become entrepreneurs. Wherever they end up, one thing is certain, they will need the knowledge and skills to manage their incomes effectively and responsibly.

The recently-launched National Youth Policy aspires to create half a million jobs for Zambia's youth – we must all support this commendable aspiration through partnering with government and educational institutions. The private sector must not only support job creation, but also ensure that once the youths take up these jobs, they are better able to spend and invest wisely so as to make a meaningful contribution to our economy. For a nation's wealth is predominantly determined by the wealth of its citizens – essentially what they save and invest.

The onus on bankers like myself is to give freely the financial knowledge we have – from lessons on budgeting and saving, to investing and starting a business. That is why I found it particularly rewarding to impart my own financial skills at Hillside School last week. Even more important is that it was young girls that benefitted from this training – we are all aware of the African proverb ‘when you educate a woman, you educate the whole village.’

My challenge, therefore, to my colleagues in the financial sector is to play their part in supporting the National Youth Policy by imparting freely their financial know-how. On my part, I remain committed to intensify my efforts to empower the youths with financial education.

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**Note to Editors:**

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