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POWER DIGEST

A CURATION OF TOP ENERGY SECTOR STORIES

16MW BY DECEMBER FROM NORTHRISE NDOLA

By Cleopatra Amachi



Zambia's goal of achieving **1,000MW of solar-generated electricity** within the next 12 months is taking shape, highlighted by the development of the **16MW Northrise Solar Power Plant Phase One**, being constructed by Lifesong in Ndola District, Copperbelt Province.

The private-sector-led project is expected to feed much-needed power into the national grid, helping to bridge the electricity gap and support economic growth. On **10th October 2025**, ZESCO Limited hosted a media tour of the site, showcasing the growing collaboration between the utility and independent power producers.

ZESCO Board Chairperson, Vickson Ncube, underlined the importance of private sector participation in enhancing energy reliability. "People are building houses in Zambia. From 2022 to date, ZESCO has connected over **400,000 homes**, adding about **350MW** to the grid. Mines are opening and require electricity to operate," he said.

"Without growth on the supply side, simply increasing demand will cripple the system. I sincerely thank Lifesong and their team for contributing to our efforts to address energy insufficiency," Ncube added.

The project is scheduled for completion in **December 2025**, with commissioning expected in **early 2026. Dirk Fourie**, the project contractor, confirmed: "The plant will be completed by the end of December, and evacuation of power will start early next year."

Lifesong is among **19 independent power producers** awarded contracts under ZESCO's **2024 tender for 300MW of grid-tied solar power**, following the president's call earlier in the year for smaller companies to take advantage of the **new electricity reforms**.

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THREE HUNDRED RURAL HOMES LIGHT UP

By Digest Reporter



Over 300 households in Zambezi District, North-Western Province, are now connected to electricity for the first time ever. The 300 homes of Chief Ishima's chiefdom have described this as a milestone and have since thanked government for not forgetting about them.

Officiating at the lighting ceremony, Vice President Mutale Nalumango highlighted the government's focus on expanding the energy sector and reducing reliance on hydro power. She emphasized President Hichilema's national agenda to diversify power sources, including solar and thermal energy, to ensure all regions benefit equally.

This project was initiated in 2016 but stalled and was only revived by the New Dawn government in 2024 at a cost of K7 million.

North-Western Province Minister Robert Lihefu pledged that the government will complete all stalled projects in the province, reinforcing its commitment to inclusive development.

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MAAMBA TO PRODUCE 700MW BY JULY, 2026

By San Musuma



Zambia's energy landscape is on the brink of transformation as the government pushes forward with the Maamba Energy Expansion Project, expected to deliver a combined 700 megawatts of electricity to the national grid by mid-2026.

The project involves the expansion of the existing 300MW coal-fired power plant and the construction of a 100MW solar power facility, both in Maamba, Sinazongwe District. Together, they will significantly boost generation capacity and ease the power shortages that have affected homes and industries in recent years.

The Maamba Thermal Power Station, currently producing 300MW, is the country's only coal-fired plant and a key source of base-load energy. Its expansion, now underway, will double output to 600MW once completed. Maamba Energy Limited, which operates the plant, says engineering and procurement works are already in advanced stages, with completion targeted for June 2026.

"This expansion reflects Zambia's determination to secure reliable energy," a company spokesperson said. "It will help balance the grid, especially when hydropower generation drops during dry seasons."

Backed by the Zambian government through ZCCM-Investment Holdings and India's Nava Bharat, the project is being financed through a mix of equity and long-term loans.

In addition to the coal plant, Maamba Energy is also constructing a 100MW solar power station in the same district. The project was officially launched in September by Hon. Makozo Chikote, Minister of Energy, who said the initiative complements government's goal of diversifying energy sources and ensuring round-the-clock supply. "This investment shows Zambia's commitment to a balanced energy mix," Hon. Chikote said. "We are combining dependable base-load power with modern renewables to ensure the lights stay on." The solar project is expected to be commissioned by July 2026, operating alongside the thermal plant to feed electricity into the national grid and support industries in Southern Province.

Officials say the Maamba developments will play a major role in reducing the country's current power deficit, which has exceeded 1,400MW during drought years. With the two plants combined, Maamba alone will soon contribute 700MW — more than any single power site in the country.

A senior Zesco engineer said the benefits will be felt soon. "Once these new units come online, the frequency of power cuts will reduce sharply," he said. "Zambia is entering a new era of energy stability."

With both solar and coal power now driving the country's energy expansion, the Maamba project stands as a symbol of Zambia's renewed determination to end load-shedding and power its economic growth with a stronger, more diverse energy mix.

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HISTORY OF LOADSHEDDING



Pre-1990s: Asset Development and Power Surpluses

The 1960s and –70s were Zambia's golden years in electricity asset development. Between 1961 and 1976, Zambia built and/or commissioned five hydropower stations, including Kafue Gorge Upper, Victoria Falls Stations B and C, and Kariba North Bank. This allowed the 80s and 90s to enjoy power surpluses, even as economic decline began to set in, with little investment in new generation or transmission infrastructure, laying the foundation for future shortages and load shedding.

2008: First Major Power Deficit

Rapid economic growth, especially driven by copper mining, sharply increased electricity demand.

Problem: Installed capacity lagged, as no new significant power plants had been built in decades.

Government Response:

- Declared a power deficit and announced new projects (Kariba North Bank Extension, Itezhi-Tezhi).
- Introduced scheduled loadshedding (4–6 hours).
- Began discussions with private investors (IPPs) for future projects.

2015–2016: Severe Electricity Crisis

Cause: A prolonged drought reduced water for power generation, cutting ZESCO's main supply by almost half.

Impact: Load shedding of 8–14 hours daily, crippling homes and industry.

Government Response:

- President Edgar Lungu's government imported emergency power from Mozambique and South Africa.
- Rushed completion of Itezhi-Tezhi hydropower plant (120MW).
- Announced scaling up of renewable energy through the GET FiT solar programme with donor support.
- Adjusted electricity tariffs upward to attract Independent Power Producers.

2019: Return of Power Cuts

Another drought hit the Kafue and Kariba water basins. Loadshedding returned to 15+ hours daily, affecting mines and households.

Government Response:

- Signed emergency power import deals with Eskom (South Africa).
- Announced new projects, notably Kafue Gorge Lower (750MW) to increase supply.
- However, high debt constrained the speed of effecting solutions.

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HISTORY OF LOADSHEDDING



2020–2021: Recovery Period

- Good rains replenished the water reservoirs, enabling increased generation and easing shortages.
- Partial completion of Kafue Gorge Lower (150MW out of 750MW) added significant capacity.
- Load shedding temporarily ended in 2021.

Government Response:

- PF government declared Zambia a “net exporter of power.”

2024: Another Electricity Shortage

IN 2023, another severe drought hit, caused by El Nino.
In March 2024, ZESCO introduced 8 hours of daily load shedding, which soon increased to 12 hours.

Government Response:

- Renewable energy acceleration, targeting 2,000MW solar and wind.
- Introduced light-handed regulation to hasten developments and solar systems importation.
- Fast-tracked transmission upgrades to unlock new hydro from the north.
- Operationalized open access regulations, opening the sector to increased private sector interest and participation, including power trading and microgeneration.

2025: Ongoing Challenge

As of 2025, Zambia’s power situation remains climate-dependent: good rains bring stability, droughts trigger load shedding.
Government continues to push for energy diversification (solar, wind, thermal, small hydro power stations) and regional interconnections.

In summary:

Zambia’s load shedding cycles are drought-driven because of heavy dependence on hydropower (over 80% of supply).

Government’s previous response has been reactive: emergency imports during droughts, tariff hikes, and fast-tracking delayed projects. President Hichilema’s administration has however, not only been reactive but is also pro-actively implementing long term solutions which will make the next drought induced electricity challenge manageable. It is projected that by the end of 2026, due to policy enactments by President Hakainde Hichilema, Zambia will be generating not less than 2,000MW of electricity from alternative sources such as coal and solar making it ready to withstand the next effects of drought on electricity.