



# SUCCESS STORIES



Zambia | Story 9 – 2020

## One region 16 nations Towards a common future

From the beginning of time, the principles of Ubuntu have guided African societies. Best described as an African philosophy rooted in a deep awareness of: “I am because of who we all are”; the spirit of Ubuntu resonates in every fibre of SADCs existence – past and present. The 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of SADC in 2020 commemorates a journey of progress on the complex road to achieving peace and security, development and economic growth.

This “SADC Success Stories 2020” series shines a spotlight on the positive impacts achieved through regional integration in communities and in the lives of the people of the SADC region.

*This story ‘Three countries, one ceremony, one people’ is based on the SADC Protocol on Culture, Information and Sport, adopted in 2001.*

## Three countries, one ceremony, one people

**“The importance of Kulamba cannot be over-emphasised, as it unites the people of Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique. In the past we used to segregate each other based on our country but we are now speaking the same language,” says Lucas Phiri, spokesperson for Paramount Chief Kalonga Gawa Undi XI. The Kulamba ceremony has also resulted in the people of Tanzania and Zimbabwe being recognised by the Chewa-speaking people as brothers and sisters.**

Every year, on the last Saturday of August, the Chewa-speaking people from Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique, all Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) member states, gather at the foot of the Mpangwe and Kangarema hills in Katete District to celebrate the Kulamba ceremony – which attracts traditional rulers from 42 chiefdoms in Zambia, 137 in Malawi and 33 in Mozambique, and in the region of 1.7 million devotees.

During the ceremony, the Paramount Chief – a position now held by Kalonga Gawa Undi XI – will ask his subordinates from Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique to give an account of how they have managed the affairs of his chiefdom over the past year. Lucas Phiri, spokesperson for Gawa Undi, says that the Kulamba ceremony helps to preserve and promote culture in Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique.



*“The Kulamba traditional ceremony brings together the Chewa-speaking people from Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique.”*

He also says that the ceremony helps to empower small businesses owned by local people, and is an important source of revenue arising from accommodation, restaurants, transport and agriculture in Katete District.

The ceremony is important for many reasons. Zambia’s Eastern Province Chamber of Commerce and Industry (EPPCI) Chairperson Thomas Mtonga says that the ceremony is important in the national calendar as it attracts both local and international tourists. Through the Zambia Tourism Agency, the Zambian government is promoting cultural ceremonies like Kulamba to help preserve its people’s cultural heritage. Such ceremonies also showcase the sharing of information and communication among the people of the SADC member states. Despite countries having multilingual settings, with Zambia alone having 73 ethnic groupings, the Chewa culture has helped to cement relations.

Realising the power of culture in the integration process, the Zambian government is actively involved in the promotion and organisation of national and regional festivals. These include the Livingstone International Cultural and Arts Festival, which invites participants from the SADC region to showcase cultural activities, and the Pamodzi Carnival at which the Zambian culture is on display.

These, and others, have helped Zambia to preserve cultural festivals in fulfillment of the SADC protocol on Culture, Information and Sport.

The Kulamba ceremony attracts tourists, both local and foreign, thus proving to be a money spinner for Zambia. With the tourism being one of Zambia’s priority economic sectors, Kulamba is among the many ceremonies putting Zambia on the world map and drawing tourists from SADC and other regions.

The highlight of the ceremony is the Gule Wamkulu (Great Dance). Oral and written history states that Gule Wamkulu dates back to the great Chewa Empire of the 17th Century. Despite efforts by Christian missionaries to ban it, Gule Wamkulu survived British colonial rule by adopting some aspects of Christianity.

Gule Wamkulu (also known as Vilombo, meaning world of beasts) is a ritual dance performed by members of the Nyau

brotherhood. Within the Chewa’s traditional matrilineal society, where married men play a rather marginal role, the Nyau offers a means to establish a counterweight and enhance solidarity among men. Young men are initiated into adulthood in readiness for them to perform Gule Wamkulu at a secret place, which is a no-go area for women and children. Gule Wamkulu is also performed following the July crop harvest, and features at some weddings and funerals, and during the installation or death of a chief.

In recognition of its importance, the United Nations Education and Scientific Council (UNESCO) declared the Gule Wamkulu an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2005.

The Kulamba ceremony showcases the objectives of the SADC Protocol on Culture, Information and Sport, which include preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of the region, creating cultural industries, and sharing information among the multicultural SADC member states.

Kulamba erases the artificial borders created by man and plays a role in enhancing social and economic integration among the three countries that participate. Emphasising this point, Zambia’s Finance Minister Dr Bwalya Ng’andu says that the ceremony is important in that it symbolises the oneness of the Chewa-speaking people in the three countries.

“But this ceremony does more than that. By drawing to this place so many of us who are Chewas from other parts of Zambia and indeed even from Malawi and Mozambique, this ceremony helps us,” Dr Ng’andu asserts.

Phiri, who is also the Kulamba ceremony invitation and publicity chairperson, says that the ceremony has united the Chewas of Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique: “Initially, the Chewas of the three countries used to segregate each other but now, through this annual showpiece, consider each other as brothers and sisters.

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