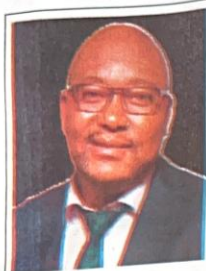


we announce the passing of His Excellency Dr Edgar Chagwa Lungu, sixth President of the Republic of Zambia,

of a man who once held the highest office in our land," the Head of State said.

In accordance with the provisions of the constitution, Mr Lungu underwent

# Public relations: A look inside NRFA



PATRICK NZIMA

**I**N an age where public trust and institutional transparency are vital, public relations (PR) has become one of the most strategic functions within any organisation. PR professionals are the invisible bridge between institutions and the people they serve, from managing public perception to shaping policy narratives and facilitating stakeholder engagement.

At the National Road Fund agency (NRFA), the Public Relations Unit is more than just a communication area; it is the voice and face of the Agency. As the institution responsible for financing Zambia's road infrastructure through toll revenue, NRFA depends significantly on the general public's understanding, cooperation, and confidence. This relationship is nurtured and maintained by a team of dedicated PR practitioners working behind the scenes. Central to the function of

PR is the responsibility to inform. At NRFA, this involves educating the public on the role and importance of road tolls in sustaining the country's road network. Through clear and consistent communication, the agency ensures that road users understand how their contributions support road maintenance, development, and safety improvements across the country. PR makes complex institutional matters relatable to citizens, helping them see how national development directly affects their lives.

A recent example of this effort is the promotion of the E-Toll Card, a cashless payment system designed to reduce congestion and improve efficiency at toll gates. With over 120,000 cards already in circulation, this innovation has seen increased public uptake thanks to widespread awareness campaigns championed by the PR team. These campaigns have utilised multiple platforms: radio, social media, public service announcements, and toll gate activation to reach drivers and encourage adoption of the technology. Through messaging that emphasises convenience, safety, and transparency, the PR Unit has helped position the E-Toll Card not just as a tool but as a service improvement.

Beyond public education, reputation management is one of PR's most critical functions. In today's fast-moving media landscape, an institution's image can be built over the years and undone in a single news cycle.

The NRFA PR Unit ensures the Agency maintains a credible and professional image by proactively communicating achievements, responding promptly to concerns, and correcting misinformation.

commitment to accountability and responsiveness.

Effective PR also includes stakeholder engagement. NRFA interacts with a wide range of stakeholders from government ministries and

are kept informed and involved. Whether it's collaborating with the Road Transport and Safety Agency (RTSA) on road safety education or partnering with mobile network providers to enhance toll payment systems, the PR team helps align efforts and amplify outcomes.

The presence of PR is also felt strongly during public events, exhibitions, national trade fairs, and corporate functions. The PR Unit is responsible for organising and managing the agency's participation at such events, from designing branding materials and preparing speeches to arranging media coverage and engaging with the public. These platforms offer a chance to humanise the institution and showcase its work in ways that resonate with everyday citizens.

Media relations is another crucial aspect of the PR mandate. The team maintains close working relationships with journalists, editors and media houses to ensure that NRFA's

activities are reported fairly and accurately. Regular media briefings and feature stories, are all part of the effort to keep the public informed and the media engaged. In addition to this, the PR Unit develops a broad range of content, including brochures, documentaries, social media updates, and the annual report. Each of these tools plays a role in shaping the narrative and maintaining visibility.

Internal communication is not overlooked. The PR Unit ensures that employees across all toll stations and our regional offices are connected to the agency's mission, campaigns, and organisational values.

Managing corporate identity is another area where PR plays a critical role. From vehicle branding and toll-gate signage to corporate stationery and promotional items, the PR Unit ensures consistency in how NRFA presents itself. This not only strengthens the brand but also helps build trust

and recognition across diverse audiences.

Ultimately, PR is not just a support service, it is a strategic enabler. At NRFA, the work of the PR Unit has helped transform how the public interacts with tolling systems and infrastructure development. Through effective communication, the agency has enhanced transparency, deepened public trust, and made its services more accessible. In a country focused on sustainable development and accountable governance, PR ensures that institutions like NRFA are not only seen but also understood and supported.

**To learn more about the operations of NRFA, please visit the official agency website: [www.nrfa.org.zm](http://www.nrfa.org.zm) or contact the NRFA Customer Care Centre by dialling 700.**

**The author is public relations technical assistant at NRFA.**



before it spreads. The team crafts press releases, organises interviews, manages media inquiries, and ensures that the public has access to accurate, timely information.

Handling crises is another significant area where PR demonstrates its value. Whether it's a toll gate accident, a service disruption, or a controversial public policy decision, how an institution communicates during a crisis can shape public perception long after the event. At NRFA, the PR team acts swiftly during such moments, preparing statements, advising leadership, and ensuring that the public receives honest, empathetic communication. This approach not only preserves trust but also showcases the institution's

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By James Guyo

