M&J

QUARTERLY EDITION
Q3 2026 · JULY–SEPTEMBER



M&J AFRICA PRESENTS

The Africa Business Review

An uneven recovery. How to protect cash flow and grow selectively across southern Africa.

Six country spotlights
Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, South Africa, Mozambique and Botswana

Feature: system vs software
Why ERP projects succeed or fail before the first licence is bought

Q4 compliance calendar
Tax and payroll deadlines for October to December 2026

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Contents

01 **A letter from our Group Chief Servant** 03
Jerry More Nyazungu on the quarter and the year ahead

02 **Q3 2026 at a glance** 05
Inflation, interest rates, growth and exchange rates across six economies

03 **Country spotlights** 07
Zambia · Zimbabwe · Malawi · South Africa · Mozambique · Botswana

04 **Pan-African trends** 20
Commodities, trade, payments, digital adoption and the changing workforce

05 **What we're seeing in the market** 27
Five pressures on businesses, and the first step for each

06 **Feature: a system is not a software** 30
What every business should understand before an ERP project

07 **Feature: before you build a strategy** 33
What leaders need to know before they put a plan on paper

08 **M&J Africa solutions** 36
How our business units help, and our focus on Malawi

09 **Q4 2026 compliance calendar** 40
Key tax and payroll dates by country

10 **Q4 outlook and how to reach us** 42
Three scenarios to plan against, and our offices

ABOUT THIS REVIEW

The Africa Business Review is M&J Africa's quarterly briefing for clients, partners and business leaders across the region. This edition covers 1 July to 30 September 2026. Figures were checked on 3 October 2026 and are drawn from central banks, national statistics offices, international institutions and reputable news sources, listed at the back. Forecasts belong to the institutions named.

JMN

JERRY MORE NYAZUNGU
Founder and Group Chief Servant, M&J Group

OUR VISION
A transformed Africa, driven by timeless businesses.

OUR PURPOSE
Empowering African businesses through systems, strategy and innovation.

OUR VALUES
Hard work · Efficiency · Collaboration · Integrity · Impact · Innovation

A LETTER FROM OUR GROUP CHIEF SERVANT

Plan country by country. Build for the long term.

Dear clients, partners and friends,

Welcome to the Q3 2026 edition of The Africa Business Review. The quarter just ended taught us that there is no single southern African story. In Zambia, a peaceful election delivered continuity and the central bank cut interest rates. In Zimbabwe, the ZiG held steady and rates came down again. South Africa moved the other way and raised rates, while Malawi and Botswana still face real pressure on costs, foreign currency and credit.

For the businesses we serve, this means one thing above all: a regional plan is no longer enough. You need a plan for each country and each currency you operate in. You need to know your cash position every week, not every quarter. And you need systems that tell you the truth about your business in time to act on it.

At M&J, we have always believed that the businesses that last are not the ones that grow fastest in good years. They are the ones that build strong foundations: sound strategy, disciplined finance, reliable systems and committed people. That is what we mean by building timeless businesses.

In this edition you will find our view of six economies, the trends reshaping trade, technology and work, and two features close to my heart. The first explains why a *system* and a *software* are not the same thing, and why that difference decides whether an ERP investment pays off. The second sets out what leaders need to understand before they write a strategy.

We are also widening our horizons. Malawi, in particular, is a market we are watching closely and supporting with growing interest, from investment guidance to business setup. Our ambition remains to grow alongside our clients, wherever their next opportunity lies.

Thank you for your trust. As Q4 begins, our teams are ready to sit down with you, review your numbers and help you plan with confidence.

Jerry More Nyazungu

Founder and Group Chief Servant, M&J Group

THE QUARTER IN NUMBERS

Q3 2026 in 12 figures

The numbers that defined business conditions across our six focus markets between July and September.

10.75%
Zambia's policy rate after a 2.5-point cut on 30 September
Bank of Zambia

60%+
President Hichilema's share of the vote as he won a second term on 13 August
Reported results

US$782m
Zimbabwe lithium exports in H1 2026, up 230%
Mid-term budget review

26.05 t
Gold delivered to Fidelity Gold Refinery, Jan–Jul, 70.6% from small-scale miners
Zimbabwe

20.0%
Malawi's annual inflation in August, with non-food inflation at 31.8%
NSO Malawi

−43.5%
Fall in Malawi's tobacco earnings at the comparable stage of the season
Tobacco Commission

7.25%
South Africa's repo rate after a 0.25-point rise effective 25 September
SARB

33.6%
South Africa's unemployment rate in Q2 2026; youth rate 47.4%
Stats SA

0.6%
World Bank 2026 growth projection for Mozambique
World Bank

Baa2
Botswana's Moody's rating after a downgrade on 28 September
Moody's

US$14,326
Average copper price per tonne in August, up about 5.8% on July
World Bank Pink Sheet

US$2trn
Value moved through mobile money worldwide in 2025, led by African growth
GSMA

02 · Q3 2026 AT A GLANCE

One region, three directions

Zambia and Zimbabwe cut rates. South Africa raised its rate. Malawi, Mozambique and Botswana held. Inflation ranges from under 4% to 20%.

For most of the past three years, businesses across southern Africa could talk about "the region" as if it moved together. Q3 2026 broke that habit.

Falling inflation gave the Bank of Zambia room for a large 2.5-point cut to 10.75% on 30 September. In Zimbabwe, the Reserve Bank cut again as the ZiG held its value. Across the border, the South African Reserve Bank went the other way, raising its rate by a quarter point to 7.25% and warning that fuel prices could push inflation above 5% later in 2026.

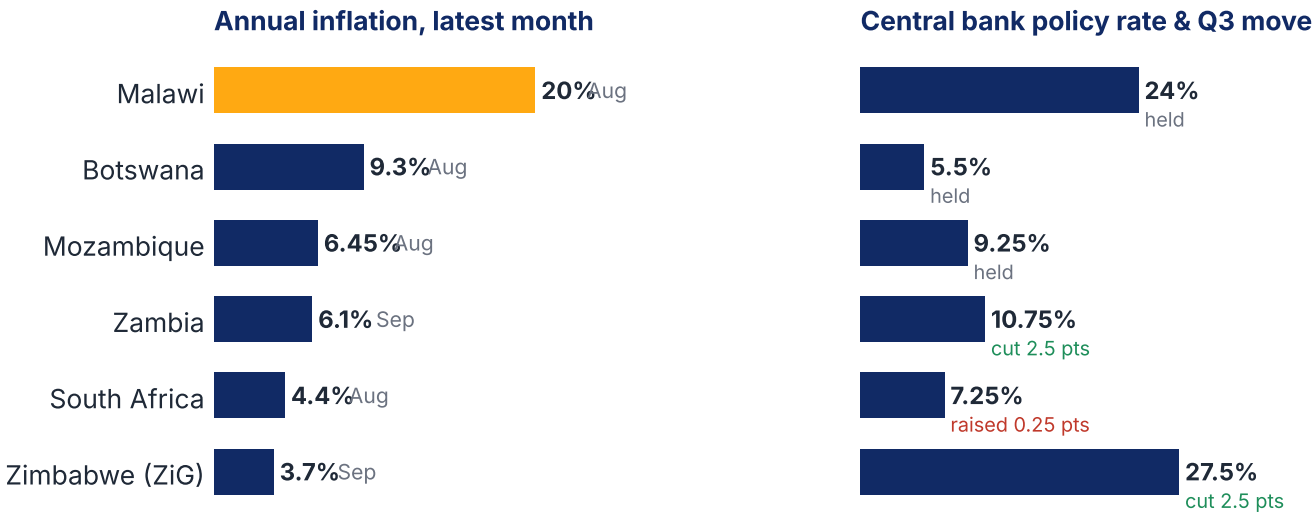
In Malawi, headline inflation is easing but remains at 20%, and the policy rate stays at 24%. Botswana's inflation, at 9.3%, is above its 3–6% target range even though its policy rate is the lowest in the group. Mozambique held its rate at 9.25% while changing the rules on bank reserves.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

- Price and budget by country, not by region.
- Where rates fell, ask your bank for revised loan terms.
- Where rates rose, recheck interest costs and customer affordability.
- Treat central bank rates as a signal; your bank's offer is what counts.

Malawi's inflation stands apart, and interest rates moved in both directions

Annual headline inflation (latest month available) and central bank policy rate at end of Q3 2026



Sources: ZamStats; Bank of Zambia; NSO Malawi; Reserve Bank of Malawi; South African Reserve Bank; Banco de Moçambique; Bank of Botswana. Zimbabwe figures (ZiG CPI) as reported by BusinessDay and ZBC on 28–29 September 2026. Botswana and Malawi rates were last reviewed in August.

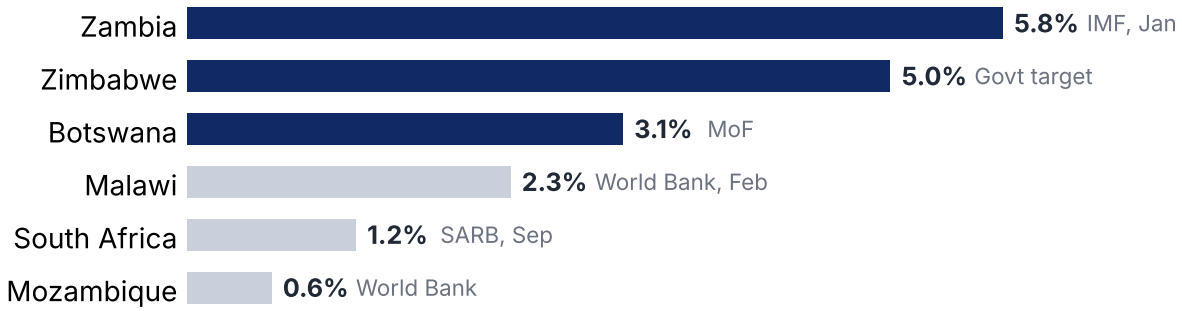
02 · Q3 2026 AT A GLANCE

Growth: Zambia leads, South Africa and Mozambique lag

Forecasts for 2026 point to strong growth in Zambia and Zimbabwe, steady growth in Botswana, and weak growth in South Africa and Mozambique. These numbers come from different institutions and dates, so read them as a guide to direction rather than a precise ranking.

2026 real GDP growth outlook

Latest available forecast or target, by source



Sources: IMF Zambia sixth ECF review (Jan 2026); Government of Zimbabwe target as reported by ZBC (29 Sep 2026) and the mid-term budget review; Botswana Ministry of Finance via Bank of Botswana MPR (Aug 2026); World Bank Malawi Economic Monitor (Feb 2026); SARB MPC statement (Sep 2026); World Bank Mozambique overview.

Exchange rates on 30 September 2026

Currency	Units per US$1
Zambian kwacha (ZMW)	19.71
Zimbabwe Gold (ZWG)	26.80
Malawian kwacha (MWK)	1,733.67
South African rand (ZAR)	16.39
Mozambican metical (MZN)	63.60
Botswana pula (BWP)	14.04

Source: Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe reference rates, 30 September 2026. One source and one date are used for consistency; these are reference quotes, not the price or availability of currency at your bank.

Reading the currency picture

Zimbabwe. The ZiG has traded in a ZiG25–27 band against the dollar, and the parallel market premium has narrowed to about 15%, according to analysis of the RBZ's mid-term monetary policy statement.

Malawi. The official rate of around K1,750 has not moved since November 2023, while the parallel market was quoted near K4,400 in July. That gap is the single biggest planning risk for importers.

South Africa. The rand weakened over September, ending near R16.4 on the RBZ sheet, as oil prices and global tensions weighed on emerging markets.

Zambia. Gross reserves above US$5.5 billion, cited in the government's 2027–29 medium-term plan, give the kwacha a stronger cushion than in past election years.



03

Country spotlights

Six economies, one quarter, very different stories. What happened, what it means for business, and what to watch in Q4.

08 Zambia

10 Zimbabwe

12 Malawi

14 South Africa

16 Mozambique

18 Botswana

COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT

Zambia

Continuity at the ballot box, cheaper money at the bank

Zambia ended Q3 with a re-elected government, falling inflation and a sharp interest rate cut. For businesses, the question now is whether that stability turns into faster growth.

A second term for Hichilema

Zambians voted on 13 August in the first general election under the mixed electoral system introduced by the 2025 constitutional amendment. President Hakainde Hichilema won a second term with a little over 60% of the vote, according to reported results, and his UPND secured a clear parliamentary majority. The main challenger, Brian Mundubile, rejected the result but did not file a petition before the 24 August deadline.

Markets read the outcome as continuity. Zambia's 2033 dollar bond held steady at around 97.7 cents in the days after the result, and analysts at Tellimer noted that investors now want to see faster growth, not just stability.

Inflation down, rates down

Annual inflation fell from 6.5% in July to 6.2% in August and 6.1% in September. On 30 September, the Bank of Zambia cut its policy rate by 2.5 percentage points to 10.75%, one of the largest moves in the region this year.

Lower inflation makes budgets more reliable, and the cut is a good moment to revisit loan terms. How much businesses actually save depends on how quickly commercial banks pass the cut on.



KEY FACTS

Inflation (Sep)	**6.1%**
Policy rate	**10.75%**
Q3 rate move	**−2.5 pts**
2026 growth (IMF)	**5.8%**
Copper output H1	**447,182 t**
ZMW per US$ (30 Sep)	**19.71**
Next big date	**2027 Budget**

"Hichilema offers continuity. Investors now want growth."

TELLIMER ANALYSIS, REPORTED BY CNBC AFRICA, AUGUST 2026

Planning the 2027 budget around growth

At its first meeting of the new term on 17 September, Cabinet approved the 2027 budget framework and the 2027–2029 medium-term plan under a "Grow Zambia" agenda. The plan targets growth of 6.0% in 2027, 7.5% in 2028 and 7.1% in 2029. It sets ambitious production goals: 3 million tonnes of copper, 10,000 MW of power and 10 million tonnes of maize. Stakeholder submissions close on 9 October.

A new IMF programme in view

Zambia's US$1.7 billion Extended Credit Facility, which supported its debt restructuring from 2022, ended in January 2026. An IMF mission arrived in Lusaka at the end of September to discuss a successor programme, with talks running to 10 October. The government wants a deal before year-end. A new programme would anchor fiscal policy and reassure lenders.

Copper: steady, not yet surging

Copper output reached 447,182 tonnes in the first half of 2026, only slightly above 445,177 tonnes a year earlier, with gains at Kansanshi, Lumwana, Lubambe and KCM. With prices near record highs (see Pan-African trends), every extra tonne matters, but the 3-million-tonne target remains a long way off.

The Lobito Corridor moves forward

On 6 August, the African Development Bank approved a US$255 million loan and a US$10 million grant for Zambia's part of the Lobito Corridor, covering about 550 km of rail links to the Atlantic route. Later phases could bring up to US$500 million. Better rail access to Angola's port lowers export costs for miners and opens routes for agricultural trade.

Power: more stable, but weather risk remains

ZESCO said in June that it does not expect nationwide load-shedding to return, and by July reported more than 300 MW of new solar towards a 1,000 MW target. Analysts still flag the risk of a strong El Niño, which could cut hydropower at Kariba and, in turn, copper output.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR BUSINESS

Lower inflation and rates support borrowing and investment. Exporters and mining suppliers stand to benefit from the corridor and high copper prices. Review pricing, borrowing and foreign-currency commitments together.

WATCH IN Q4

- Whether banks pass on the rate cut
- The 2027 Budget speech and tax measures
- A staff-level deal with the IMF
- Rainfall outlook and hydropower

Sources: ZamStats; Bank of Zambia; Wikipedia summary of ECZ results and Al Jazeera (Aug 2026); CNBC Africa; Rio Times; Zambia Monitor; Diggers News; Railway Gazette; ZESCO statements via Zambia Monitor and Lusaka Times.

COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT

Zimbabwe

Stability is paying a dividend, but run two currencies separately

Zimbabwe's economy is calmer than it has been in years. The ZiG has held its value, inflation is low, and foreign-currency earnings jumped in the first half. Businesses now have a window to plan with more confidence.

A budget that didn't need topping up

Presenting the mid-term budget review on 30 July, Finance Minister Mthuli Ncube kept the 2026 growth target at 5%, after 8.3% growth in 2025, and asked for no supplementary budget. First-half revenue of ZiG137.8 billion exceeded spending of ZiG123.6 billion.

Foreign-currency receipts rose 47.8% to US$10.7 billion, and the current account recorded a US$616.3 million surplus. Public debt stood at ZiG580.9 billion, about US$21.7 billion, at the end of June. Government also arranged a US$400 million infrastructure facility with local institutions.

The ZiG holds, rates come down

ZiG annual inflation was reported at 3.7% in September, up slightly from 2.9% in August. On 28 September, the Reserve Bank cut its policy rate again, to 27.5%. Analysis of the RBZ's mid-term monetary policy statement puts the ZiG in a ZiG25–27 band, the parallel market premium at about 15%, and usable reserves at US$1.7 billion. The ZiG now accounts for more than 40% of transactions.

The World Bank's September report said Zimbabwe should use this stability to speed up reform and formal job creation.



KEY FACTS

ZiG inflation (Sep)	**3.7%**
Policy rate	**27.5%**
2026 growth target	**5.0%**
FX receipts H1	**US$10.7bn**
Current account H1	**+US$616m**
ZWG per US$ (30 Sep)	**26.80**
Usable reserves	**US$1.7bn**

+230%
Lithium exports in H1 2026, to US$782.2m

26.05 t
Gold delivered Jan–Jul, against a 55 t target for 2026

357m kg
Tobacco sold in the 2026 season, slightly up on 2025

US$270
New minimum wage for uncovered workers, up 80%

Lithium: from raw ore to processing

Lithium exports rose 230% in the first half. Government halted raw concentrate exports in February, introduced a quota system in April, and will ban concentrate exports entirely from January 2027 to push processing onshore. Sinomine, at Bikita, is building a 100,000-tonne-a-year lithium sulphate plant due in mid-2027. Chinese firms have invested about US$2 billion in the sector since 2021.

Gold: small miners lead

Deliveries to Fidelity Gold Refinery reached 26.05 tonnes between January and July, with small-scale miners supplying 70.6%. June was the strongest month at 4.81 tonnes. High gold prices are a major source of foreign currency.

Tobacco: more volume, lower prices

The season closed on 6 August with more than 357 million kg sold, against 354.8 million kg in 2025. But the average price fell from US$3.30 to US$2.49 a kilogram, squeezing farmer incomes and rural spending. China took 34% of export volume.

Power and pay

ZESA has said it aims to end load-shedding by December 2026, supported by a US$210 million Afreximbank facility. In June, the minimum wage for workers not covered by a sector agreement rose 80%, from US$150 to US$270 a month, payable in ZiG. Employers should check payroll budgets for 2027.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR BUSINESS

Better stability makes planning easier, but model ZiG and US-dollar income, costs and debts separately. A low ZiG inflation figure is not a measure of US-dollar price changes. Mining suppliers and processors are well placed as beneficiation policy bites.

WATCH IN Q4

- ZiG liquidity and the parallel premium
- Loan pricing after the rate cut
- Currency rules for tax payments
- The 2027 National Budget in November

Sources: Ministry of Finance mid-term review via Zimbabwe Situation; BusinessDay and ZBC (Sep 2026); Lucent analysis of RBZ MTMPS; World Bank; Kitco; Xinhua; Energy News Africa; BusinessDay Nigeria; Equity Axis.

COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT

Malawi

Prices are easing, but foreign currency is the binding constraint

Malawi is a market of real potential and real pressure. Headline inflation is falling, the government is tightening its finances, and new mining projects are coming. But foreign currency shortages still shape almost every business decision.

Inflation is easing from a high base

Annual inflation eased to 20.0% in August. Non-food inflation, which drives many business costs, stayed much higher at 31.8%. The Reserve Bank of Malawi held its policy rate at 24% at its August meeting.

The exchange rate gap

The official exchange rate of about K1,750 to the dollar has not moved since November 2023. In July, the parallel market rate was quoted near K4,400. The World Bank's September Economic Monitor names foreign exchange shortages, unreliable electricity and weak supply chains as the main constraints on business.

Talks with the IMF

Malawi's previous IMF programme lapsed in May 2025. An IMF mission visited in late September. On 25 September, Finance Minister Joseph Mwanamvekha ruled out a devaluation, saying reforms must be "properly sequenced". He pointed to a cut in the primary deficit from 3.7% to 0.4% of GDP as evidence of discipline.

Donor support is shrinking at the same time. The UK plans a 60% cut in aid for 2026/27, and US contracts worth about US$230 million have been terminated.



KEY FACTS

Inflation (Aug)	**20.0%**
Non-food inflation	**31.8%**
Policy rate	**24.0%**
2026 growth (WB)	**2.3%**
Official MWK/US$	**~1,734**
Parallel (Jul)	**~4,400**
Tobacco earnings	**−43.5%**

A difficult tobacco season

Tobacco is Malawi's largest export earner, and this season hurt. After 19 weeks, sales stood at 142.4 million kg worth US$282.5 million, against 197.2 million kg worth US$500.4 million at the same stage of 2025. That is roughly 28% less volume and 44% less value. The average price fell 22% to US$1.98 a kilogram, and about half of auction bales were rejected. Fewer dollars from tobacco mean tighter foreign currency for everyone.

Energy and imports under strain

On 1 October, the energy minister said foreign currency shortages are "stifling" imports of fuel, spare parts and equipment. Installed power capacity of roughly 560–580 MW is far below the 1,000 MW-plus target for 2030, and outages continue.

New tax rules for 2026

The mid-year budget raised VAT from 16.5% to 17.5% and lifted the PAYE tax-free threshold from K150,000 to K170,000 a month, with new bands of 30%, 35% and 40%. Since 1 May 2026, VAT-registered businesses must issue invoices through the MRA's Electronic Invoicing System; about 7,500 of 9,000 VAT operators had registered by launch.

Minimum wage up about 15%

New minimum wages took effect on 1 June 2026: K157,500 a month for commercial workers, up from K126,000, and K83,720 for domestic workers.

A new mining story

Lindian Resources is targeting first production at its Kangankunde rare earths project in Q4 2026, with stage one designed to produce 20,000 tonnes of concentrate a year. Rare earths could become a new source of exports and foreign currency.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR BUSINESS

Slower headline inflation does not mean lower operating costs or easier imports. Base procurement budgets on confirmed FX access and realistic lead times, and make sure invoicing runs through the EIS.

WATCH IN Q4

- Outcome of IMF talks and exchange rate policy
- FX supply after the tobacco season
- Fuel and electricity availability
- First rare earth exports

M&J and Malawi. Malawi is a market we follow closely. Our guides on investing in Malawi and setting up a business there are available at mjconsultants.africa/insights. See page 39.

Sources: NSO Malawi; RBM; World Bank Malawi Economic Monitor (Sep 2026); Nyasa Times; The Nation; African Arguments; Malawi24; Tobacco Commission; MRA; Malawi Voice; TipRanks (Lindian statement).

COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT

South Africa

Rates up, growth down, but reform momentum holds

The region's largest economy had a mixed quarter. A credit rating upgrade and long stretches without load-shedding show reform is working. But a rate hike, a weaker growth forecast and stubborn unemployment show how far there is to go.

The Reserve Bank raises rates

The South African Reserve Bank raised its repo rate by 0.25 percentage points to 7.25%, effective 25 September. It cut its 2026 growth forecast to 1.2% and warned that fuel prices could push headline inflation above 5% in late 2026 and early 2027. Inflation was 4.4% in August.

A first upgrade in years

On 8 June, Fitch upgraded South Africa from BB- to BB with a stable outlook, its first upgrade of the country in about two decades. Fitch pointed to consistent primary budget surpluses and progress on energy and logistics reform. A better rating lowers borrowing costs over time for government and, indirectly, for business.

Jobs remain the biggest challenge

Unemployment rose to 33.6% in the second quarter, with 8.5 million people out of work. Youth unemployment (ages 15–34) reached 47.4%. Weak job creation limits consumer spending and keeps pressure on government finances.

Politics and the rand

Local government elections on 4 November will be the first big test for the Government of National Unity. The rand weakened through September as oil prices rose and global tensions weighed on emerging markets.



KEY FACTS

Inflation (Aug)	**4.4%**
Repo rate	**7.25%**
Q3 rate move	**+0.25 pts**
2026 growth (SARB)	**1.2%**
Unemployment Q2	**33.6%**
Fitch rating	**BB (stable)**
ZAR per US$ (30 Sep)	**16.39**

441
Consecutive days without load-shedding, as of 4 August

−7.5%
Mining output in July, year on year

−83%
Vehicle exports to the US, 2025 vs 2024

R30.23
National minimum wage per hour from 1 March 2026

Mining under pressure

Mining output fell 7.5% year on year in July. Platinum group metals dropped 13.5%, coal 7.5% and iron ore 8.1%, while gold sales fell by a third. Chrome ore was a bright spot. Weaker volumes offset some of the benefit of higher metal prices.

Autos: AGOA helps, tariffs still bite

On 8 August, the US Senate approved extending the African Growth and Opportunity Act to the end of 2028, pending presidential signature. But the motor industry body naamsa says the 25% US Section 232 tariff on vehicles remains a major barrier. Vehicle exports to the US fell from 24,682 units in 2024 to 4,136 in 2025.

Energy and logistics

Eskom tariffs rose 8.76% for direct customers from 1 April and 9.01% for municipal customers from 1 July. Supply has been far more reliable, with 441 days without load-shedding by early August. Transnet reported revenue of R88.6 billion for the year to March 2026, up 7.1%, and sold a 49.999% stake in Durban Container Terminal Pier 2 to ICTSI for R10.5 billion, a milestone for private participation in ports.

E-invoicing is coming

In August, SARS published a consultation paper on VAT modernisation proposing a "five-corner" e-invoicing model, with phased rollout from 2030 starting with large businesses. Comments close on 16 October 2026. Businesses should start preparing their systems now.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR BUSINESS

Recalculate interest costs, transport budgets and what customers can afford. Firms buying from South Africa should factor in rand movements alongside supplier price rises. Reliable power is an opportunity to invest in capacity.

WATCH IN Q4

- Fuel price adjustments and the November MPC
- Local government elections on 4 November
- The Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement
- AGOA signature and US tariff talks

Sources: SARB MPC statement (Sep 2026); Government of SA on Fitch upgrade; Stats SA QLFS Q2 2026; Engineering News; IndexBox (Stats SA mining data); Eskom; Rio Times; Mining Weekly; SARS VAT Modernisation Consultation Paper (Aug 2026); Global Business.

COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT

Mozambique

Gas giants advance while public finances strain

Mozambique sits on one of the world's great gas resources, and Q3 brought fresh momentum for its LNG projects. But near-term growth is weak, public debt is under stress, and businesses face tight financing.

Rates on hold, bank rules tightened

Annual inflation slowed to 6.45% in August. On 30 September, Banco de Moçambique held its MIMO policy rate at 9.25% and announced changes to the reserve requirements banks must hold, citing climate and geopolitical risks and a slow recovery. The local-currency reserve requirement has been raised from 29% to 39%, which reduces the money banks have available to lend.

Debt under pressure

Fitch cut Mozambique's rating to CC in April and said renegotiation of its roughly US$900 million Eurobond is likely. Further downgrades by other agencies were reported in September. An IMF mission visited in September, with a new agreement reportedly targeted by the end of 2026. Domestic borrowing has risen sharply, now making up about half of central government debt.

Growth forecast at 0.6%

The World Bank projects growth of just 0.6% in 2026, reflecting the after-effects of unrest, climate shocks and tight public finances. For businesses that sell to government or rely on public contracts, payment delays are a real risk.



KEY FACTS

Inflation (Aug)	**6.45%**
MIMO rate	**9.25%**
Q3 rate move	**Held**
2026 growth (WB)	**0.6%**
Reserve req. (MZN)	**39%**
Fitch rating	**CC**
MZN per US$ (30 Sep)	**63.60**

US$20bn
Mozambique LNG (TotalEnergies), fully resumed in January 2026; first exports expected 2029

18.6 Mtpa
Rovuma LNG (ExxonMobil) capacity; final investment decision promised before year-end

1,500 MW
Mphanda Nkuwa hydro project, now targeting operation in 2034

LNG: the long game

TotalEnergies fully resumed its US$20 billion, 13-million-tonne-a-year Mozambique LNG project on 29 January 2026, five years after it was suspended for security reasons. More than 4,000 workers are on site. In August, ExxonMobil reaffirmed it will take the final investment decision on the larger Rovuma LNG project before the end of the year, and awarded McDermott a letter of intent for engineering work.

These projects will not lift growth much before the end of the decade, but they already create demand for local suppliers in construction, logistics, catering, security and professional services in Cabo Delgado and beyond.

Hydropower delayed

The 1,500 MW Mphanda Nkuwa hydropower project, developed with EDF and TotalEnergies, has slipped to commercial operation in 2034, with construction from 2029. It includes about 1,300 km of transmission lines to Maputo.

Banks stay profitable

Mozambique's five largest banks earned MZN12.4 billion in the first half of 2026, up 9.5%. With tighter reserve rules, credit to the private sector is likely to stay scarce and expensive.

Wage increases by sector

2026 minimum wage increases ranged from 3% in construction to 9.28% in hotels and tourism, with public service wages frozen.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR BUSINESS

A steady policy rate does not remove financing, payment or logistics risks. Check customers' ability to pay and your import costs before expanding. LNG supply chains offer opportunities for well-prepared local firms.

WATCH IN Q4

- Effects of the new reserve rules on lending
- Rovuma LNG investment decision
- IMF agreement and Eurobond talks
- Cyclone season and supply disruption

Sources: Banco de Moçambique; World Bank; Fitch via African Markets; Discovery Alert (reported ratings and IMF items); Rio Times; Club of Mozambique; AMAN Alliance; PR Newswire; Miramar.

COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT

Botswana

Diamonds down, ratings down, diversification up the agenda

Botswana's long reliance on diamonds is being tested. Weak global demand has cut revenue, the credit rating has slipped again, and the country is weighing its future role in De Beers itself.

Inflation above target

Inflation was 9.3% in August, well above the Bank of Botswana's 3–6% objective range, while the policy rate stood at 5.50% after the August meeting. Commercial bank credit fell 1.6% in the year to June, a sign of tight lending conditions.

The De Beers question

On 17 July, the government confirmed that Anglo American had chosen a consortium led by Gareth Penny as preferred bidder for De Beers. Botswana, which owns 15% of the company, can partner with the buyer or use its right of pre-emption. By the end of September it was finishing due diligence and considering a larger stake, with completion targeted for Q4.

More carats, less money

De Beers' Botswana operations produced 5.49 million carats in the second quarter, more than double a year earlier. But rough diamond sales revenue fell 44% to US$665 million, and the price index fell 17%. Debswana plans 18 million carats for 2026 and wants to cut annual costs to P6 billion by 2028.



KEY FACTS

Inflation (Aug)	**9.3%**
Target range	**3–6%**
Policy rate (MoPR)	**5.50%**
2026 growth (MoF)	**3.1%**
Moody's rating	**Baa2**
Deficit forecast	**3.1% of GDP**
BWP per US$ (30 Sep)	**14.04**

−44%
De Beers rough diamond sales revenue in Q2 2026

P9.26bn
Revised 2026/27 budget deficit, down from P26.35bn

+72.8%
Domestic power generation in Q1 2026, as imports fell 61.8%

3.5%
Year-on-year GDP growth in Q1 2026

A second downgrade

On 28 September, Moody's cut Botswana's rating from Baa1 to Baa2, its second downgrade in under a year, citing weaker diamond and customs union receipts. It moved the outlook to stable but warned that a debt-financed larger stake in De Beers could lead to a further cut. S&P also downgraded Botswana in March.

A smaller deficit, for now

On 22 September, Finance Minister Ndaba Gaolathe cut the 2026/27 deficit forecast from P26.35 billion (8.9% of GDP) to P9.26 billion (3.1%), mainly thanks to a larger transfer from the Bank of Botswana. Growth was 3.5% year on year in the first quarter, and the Ministry of Finance forecasts 3.1% for the year.

Generating its own power

Botswana generated 72.8% more electricity at home in Q1 2026 and cut imports by 61.8%. Morupule A and B supplied about 91% of generation and four solar plants about 9%. More reliable local supply supports manufacturing and services.

Diversification is the theme

With diamond revenue under pressure, government is prioritising new sectors and private investment. For businesses, opportunities lie in services, agriculture, energy and regional logistics, but demand varies sharply by sector.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR BUSINESS

Test demand and access to credit before expanding. Diversification is a sound strategy, but projected growth will not reach every sector equally. Watch government payment cycles closely.

WATCH IN Q4

- The De Beers deal and Botswana's stake
- Diamond demand into the holiday season
- Utility costs
- Bank of Botswana MPC on 29 October and 3 December

Sources: Bank of Botswana indicators and Monetary Policy Report (Aug 2026); CNBC Africa; bne IntelliNews; De Beers Q2 2026 production report; Kitco; Polity (Moody's, budget); The Gazette Botswana.



04

Pan-African trends

The forces shaping business across borders: commodity prices, trade and payments, the digital shift, and a changing workforce.

- Commodities: metals up, tobacco down
- Trade and payments
- Digital Africa in numbers
- Cybersecurity and e-invoicing
- The workforce
- Wages and payroll rules

COMMODITIES

Metals shine, tobacco disappoints

High copper and gold prices are a windfall for Zambia and Zimbabwe. Tobacco growers in both Malawi and Zimbabwe earned less per kilogram.

US$14,326
Copper, average per tonne, August 2026
+5.8% on July

US$4,411
Gold, average per troy ounce, August 2026
+8.3% on July

US$782m
Zimbabwe lithium exports, H1 2026
+230% year on year

5.49m ct
De Beers Botswana production, Q2 2026
But sales revenue −44%

Copper and gold

World Bank data show copper averaging US$14,326 a tonne in August, up from US$13,543 in July, and gold averaging US$4,411 an ounce, up from US$4,073. For Zambia, every month of high copper prices supports export earnings, tax revenue and the kwacha. For Zimbabwe, gold is the leading source of foreign currency, with small-scale miners supplying most deliveries.

Higher prices do not automatically mean higher profits. Energy, fuel, equipment and financing costs have also risen, and output in Zambia has grown only slightly.

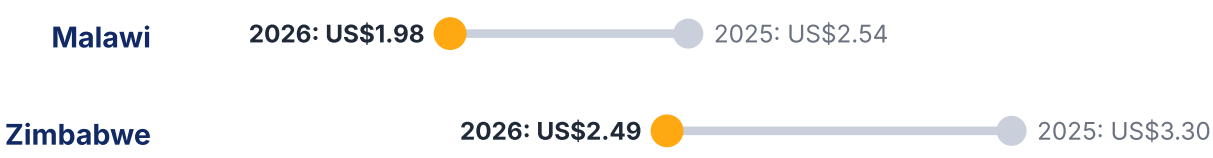
Battery metals and diamonds

Zimbabwe's lithium exports more than tripled in value in the first half, while the government is forcing more processing onshore by banning concentrate exports from 2027. Malawi's first rare earth production is due in Q4.

Diamonds tell the opposite story. Botswana mined more carats, but weak global demand cut prices and revenue sharply, hitting government finances and the credit rating.

Tobacco prices fell in both major growing countries

Average price per kg, 2025 vs 2026. Zimbabwe: −25% on slightly higher volume. Malawi: −22% on 28% lower volume (19-week stage).



Sources: World Bank Pink Sheet (Sep 2026, August averages); Zimbabwe mid-term budget review; De Beers Q2 2026 production report; Tobacco Commission Malawi; Xinhua (Zimbabwe tobacco season close).

TRADE AND PAYMENTS

Moving goods and money across borders

Africa's trade and payments systems are being rebuilt. The opportunity is real, but businesses should check the details before relying on them.

US$2trn
Value moved through mobile money worldwide in 2025, up 23% on 2024
GSMA, 2026

593m
Active monthly mobile money accounts, up 15%; Sub-Saharan Africa added the most
GSMA, 2026

28
African countries connected to the PAPSS payment system, with 190+ banks and fintechs
PAPSS, July 2026

AfCFTA: check eligibility product by product

The African Continental Free Trade Area offers lower tariffs between member countries, but only where a product meets the rules of origin and appears in the relevant tariff schedule, and where customs on that route applies the concessions. Before pricing a cross-border deal on AfCFTA terms, check that your product and route qualify. A product-and-route eligibility review is a small cost compared with an unexpected duty bill.

PAPSS: faster cross-border payments

The Pan-African Payment and Settlement System lets businesses pay suppliers in other African countries in local currencies, without routing through the US dollar. In July, the central bank of the six CEMAC countries joined, taking PAPSS to 28 connected countries, more than 190 banks and fintechs, and 16 payment switches. Integration continues through the end of 2026, so not every bank or corridor is live yet.

Mobile money goes mainstream

GSMA's 2026 State of the Industry report found that mobile money accounts handled US$2 trillion in 2025. It took 20 years to reach the first trillion and just four more to double it. There are now 2.3 billion registered accounts worldwide, and Sub-Saharan Africa accounted for most of last year's growth. Mobile money is no longer just for individuals: suppliers, wholesalers and employers increasingly use it for collections and payroll.

BEFORE YOU SWITCH PAYMENT METHODS

- Confirm which corridors are actually live
- Compare fees, FX margins and settlement times
- Check that your accounting system can reconcile the payments automatically
- Review the tax and exchange control treatment in each country

Sources: GSMA State of the Industry Report on Mobile Money 2026 and press release (24 Mar 2026); PAPSS announcement on BEAC membership (Jul 2026); African Union AfCFTA overview.

DIGITAL AFRICA IN NUMBERS

The digital gap is a business opportunity

Mobile technology is now a major part of Africa's economy. Yet most people who could be online are not, and most businesses use only basic digital tools.

US$240bn
Mobile's contribution to Africa's economy in 2025, 7.8% of GDP
GSMA, Jun 2026

63%
Of Africans covered by mobile broadband who don't use mobile internet
GSMA, Jun 2026

11%
Of digitally enabled African firms make intensive use of advanced tools like ERP
IFC / World Bank via Vodacom

57%
Of SMEs use the internet, against 92% of large firms
IFC / World Bank via Vodacom

Online, country by country

Country	Internet users	Share	Mobile connections
Zimbabwe	6.54m	38.4%	95%
Zambia	7.29m	33.0%	106%
Malawi	4.02m	18.0%	63%

Source: DataReportal Digital 2026 (data as of late 2025). Mobile connections as a share of population can exceed 100% because many people hold more than one SIM.

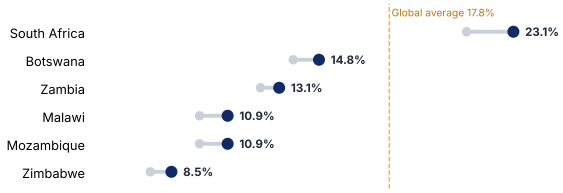
Most adults in these markets have a mobile phone, but far fewer use the internet. For businesses, that means digital sales and service channels must still work on basic phones and low data, and that the customers who are online are growing fast. Social media users in Malawi rose 50% in a year.

AI adoption is rising

Microsoft's AI Diffusion Report tracks the share of working-age people using generative AI tools. South Africa leads the region at 23.1%, above the global average. Zimbabwe, at 8.5%, has the most room to grow.

Share of people aged 15–64 using generative AI

H2 2025 (grey) to Q1 2026 (navy)



Source: Microsoft AI Diffusion Report, Q1 2026.

CYBERSECURITY AND E-INVOICING

Two digital shifts no business can ignore

Cybercrime is now a mainstream business risk

INTERPOL's 2025 Africa Cyberthreat Assessment found that in two-thirds of African member countries, cybercrime makes up a medium-to-high share of all crime. Scam notifications rose by up to 3,000% in some countries, and South Africa recorded nearly 18,000 ransomware detections in 2024, the most on the continent.

Attacks keep rising. Kaspersky blocked 5.7 million attacks in South Africa in the first half of 2026. Check Point reported that African organisations faced just under 3,000 attacks a week in May 2026, well above the global average of 2,055, with Zimbabwe and Mozambique among the five most-attacked countries in Africa.

FIVE BASICS FOR EVERY BUSINESS

- Multi-factor authentication on email and banking
- Regular, tested, offline backups
- Two-person approval for supplier bank detail changes
- Staff training on phishing and payment fraud
- Patched systems and controlled admin access

The e-invoicing wave

Tax authorities across the region now want to see transactions in real time. Your invoicing system is becoming part of your tax compliance.

Country	System	Status
Zambia	ZRA Smart Invoice	Mandatory for VAT-registered businesses since July 2024; 44,000+ onboarded.
Malawi	MRA Electronic Invoicing System	Live since 1 May 2026; about 7,500 of 9,000 VAT operators registered.
Zimbabwe	ZIMRA Fiscalisation Data Management System	All VAT operators must connect via fiscal or virtual devices.
South Africa	SARS VAT modernisation	Consulting on a "five-corner" model; rollout from 2030.

The direction is clear. Businesses whose accounting and sales systems connect directly to the tax authority will spend less time on compliance and face fewer penalties. In Zambia, failing to issue invoices from an approved system can attract a penalty of up to ZMW 90,000.

Sources: INTERPOL Africa Cyberthreat Assessment 2025 and Operation Serengeti 2.0; Kaspersky H1 2026 (via Zawya); Check Point May 2026 (via PM Express); VAT Update Zambia booklet (Aug 2026); Malawi Voice; ZIMRA FDMS notice; SARS VAT Modernisation Consultation Paper (Aug 2026).

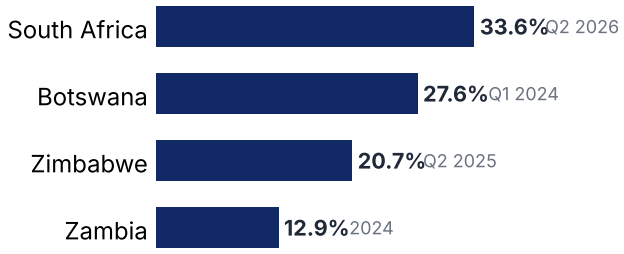
THE WORKFORCE

Too few formal jobs, too few of the right skills

The region has a young, growing workforce, but most work is informal and unemployment is high. Employers, meanwhile, struggle to find and keep skilled people.

Unemployment rate

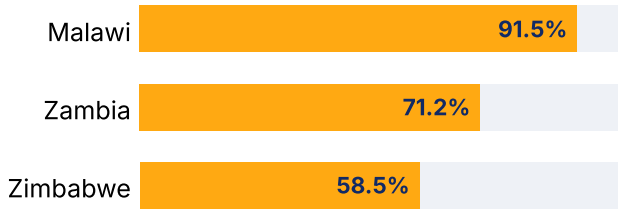
Latest official figure, by survey period



Sources: Stats SA QLFS Q2 2026; Statistics Botswana; ZIMSTAT QLFS Q2 2025; ZamStats Labour Force Survey 2024.

Share of employment that is informal

Latest labour force surveys



Sources: Malawi LFS 2024 (via The Nation); ZamStats LFS 2024; ZIMSTAT QLFS Q2 2025.

Youth unemployment is the pressure point

In South Africa, 47.4% of people aged 15–34 who want work cannot find it. In Zimbabwe, youth unemployment (15–24) is 39.3%, and in Zambia 29.1% for the same age group. The ILO reports that one in five young people worldwide is not in work, education or training.

Informality shapes payroll

In Malawi, 91.5% of workers are in informal jobs; in Zambia, 71.2%; in Zimbabwe, 58.5%. That means formal employers compete for a small pool of experienced staff, while governments push to widen the tax and social security base.

Skills are scarce and mobile

South African job vacancies rose 4.5% year on year, with severe shortages in mining and management roles. Skilled workers continue to leave the region: close to 36,000 Zimbabweans received UK work visas in a single year to mid-2024, most in health care.

Pay expectations

South African employers expect average increases of around 5.2% in 2026, and retaining skills now carries more weight in salary decisions. Across the region, pay must be balanced against inflation and affordability.

Sources: Stats SA; ZIMSTAT; ZamStats; ILO (Aug 2026); BusinessTech (CareerJunction, PayInc, SARA); NewZimbabwe (UK visa data, Dec 2024).

WAGES AND PAYROLL RULES

What changed for employers in 2026

Minimum wages rose sharply in several markets this year, and tax bands and contribution rules moved too.

Minimum wage changes

Country	Change	Effective	Increase
Zimbabwe	Workers not covered by a sector agreement: US$150 to US$270 a month (payable in ZiG)	June 2026	+80%
Zimbabwe	Mining, lowest grade: US$391.39 to US$418 a month	1 Jan 2026	+6.8%
Malawi	Commercial workers: K126,000 to K157,500 a month; domestic K72,800 to K83,720	1 Jun 2026	+15–25%
South Africa	National minimum wage: R28.79 to R30.23 an hour	1 Mar 2026	+5.0%
Mozambique	Sector increases, e.g. hotels and tourism to MZN 10,600; construction to MZN 8,652	2026	+3–9.28%
Zambia	Bus drivers K2,200 to K3,000; truck drivers K3,000 to K4,000	Apr 2025	+33–36%

Tax and social security

Country	What applies in 2026
Zambia	PAYE tax-free band up to K5,100 a month, then 25%, 30% and 37.5%. NAPSA 5% employer + 5% employee, capped at K1,861.80 a month; NHIMA 1% + 1%; Skills Development Levy 0.5%.
Malawi	PAYE tax-free threshold raised to K170,000 a month; 25% band removed, new bands of 30%, 35% and 40%. VAT up from 16.5% to 17.5%.
South Africa	Tax brackets and rebates raised by 3.4% for inflation; tax-free threshold for under-65s up to R99,000 a year; medical tax credit R376 a month.
Zimbabwe	NSSA 4.5% employer + 4.5% employee on earnings up to US$700 a month.

PAYROLL HEALTH CHECK

Most payroll errors come from changes applied late or not at all. A short review now avoids penalties and back-pay claims in 2027.

Sources: BusinessDay Nigeria / Equity Axis (Zimbabwe); AllAfrica (Zimbabwe mining); The Nation (Malawi); Global Business (SA); Miramar (Mozambique); Zambia Monitor; M&J Consultants Zambia PAYE guide 2026; MRA new tax measures; National Treasury Budget Review 2026; NSSA.

05–07

Insight

What we're seeing in the market, and two features on the foundations every growing business needs: the right systems and a strategy built on facts.

28 What we're seeing in the market

30 A system is not a software

33 Before you build a strategy

05 · WHAT WE'RE SEEING IN THE MARKET

Five pressures on businesses this quarter

Across our markets, the same five pressures keep coming up. Each one has a practical first step.

01
Cash flow and late payments

Slower growth in South Africa, Mozambique and Botswana squeezes customers' ability to pay on time, and government arrears are a risk where public finances are tight. In high-inflation markets such as Malawi, every week a payment is late erodes its real value.

First step: a rolling 13-week cash forecast, updated weekly, with clear credit terms and an active collections routine.

02
Currency and import exposure

Malawi's official and parallel exchange rates are far apart, Zimbabwe runs on two currencies, and the rand weakened in September. Mismatches between the currency you earn and the currency you owe can wipe out a year's margin.

First step: map income, costs and debts by currency, then test what a 10–20% move would do to cash and profit.

03
Cost of finance and access to credit

Rates fell in Zambia and Zimbabwe but rose in South Africa. Bank credit is shrinking in Botswana and Mozambique has tightened reserve rules. Lenders are selective, and they want clean numbers.

First step: compare the full cost of each funding offer and get your management accounts lender-ready.

Where each pressure bites hardest

Pressure	Zambia	Zimbabwe	Malawi	S. Africa	Mozambique	Botswana
Cash flow	○	◐	●	◐	●	◐
Currency	◐	●	●	◐	◐	○
Finance	○	◐	●	◐	●	◐
Compliance	●	●	●	◐	◐	◐
Staff costs	◐	●	●	◐	◐	◐

● high ◐ moderate ○ easing. M&J editorial assessment based on the data in this issue.

04
Tax and payroll compliance

E-invoicing is now live in Zambia and Malawi, Zimbabwe requires fiscalisation, and South Africa has started consulting on its model. Tax bands, contribution caps and minimum wages all changed in 2026. Multiple deadlines, currencies and filing systems create room for costly errors.

First step: monthly reconciliations, a compliance calendar (see page 40) and a named owner for every filing.

05
Staff costs and retention

Zimbabwe's minimum wage rose 80% and Malawi's by up to 25%. Inflation in Malawi and Botswana erodes real pay, while skilled staff have options abroad. Employers must protect margins without losing the people who run the business.

First step: check payroll accuracy, model which pay increases you can afford, and build a retention plan for key roles.

The businesses that come through an uneven year best are not the ones with the most optimistic forecasts. They are the ones that know their numbers every week.

A common thread: visibility

Every one of these pressures is easier to manage when leaders can see what is happening in the business in time to act. Cash, currency, credit, compliance and payroll all depend on accurate, timely data, and that depends on having the right systems. That is the subject of our first feature.

QUICK SELF-CHECK

- [ ] Can you produce a cash forecast for the next 13 weeks today?
- [ ] Do you know your net exposure in each currency?
- [ ] Could you give a lender last month's management accounts within a week?
- [ ] Is every 2026 tax and payroll change reflected in your systems?
- [ ] Do you know which five people the business could not afford to lose?

06 · FEATURE

A system is not a software

Why so many ERP investments disappoint, and what every business should understand before buying one.

"We need a new system." It is one of the most common things business owners tell us. Usually, what they mean is that they want new software. The difference between the two decides whether the investment pays off.

Software is a product. It is something you license or buy: Odoo, Sage, QuickBooks, Zoho or any of hundreds of others. It stores data, runs calculations and produces reports.

A system is how your business actually works. It is the combination of your people, your processes, your data, your controls and, yes, your software, all working together to produce a result, such as an accurate invoice, a paid supplier or a monthly set of accounts.

You can have excellent software and a poor system. Many businesses do. They buy a powerful ERP, load it with inconsistent data, keep their old habits and spreadsheets running alongside it, and wonder why the reports still can't be trusted.

The lesson: software amplifies whatever system you already have. If your processes are clear, software makes them faster. If they are chaotic, software makes the chaos faster and more expensive.

Software

- A product you buy or license
- Stores and processes data
- Owned by the IT team or vendor
- Success = it is installed and running
- Can be bought in a day

System

- How the business actually works
- People + process + data + controls + technology
- Owned by leadership and every department
- Success = better decisions and results
- Has to be designed and built

11%

Of digitally enabled African firms make intensive use of advanced tools such as ERP

IFC / World Bank

3 of 6

Of our focus markets already require invoices or fiscal data to flow through approved systems

Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe

2030

Planned start of South Africa's phased e-invoicing rollout, beginning with large businesses

SARS, Aug 2026

The five layers of a business system

Think of a system as layers. Software sits at the top, but it depends on everything beneath it. When an ERP project struggles, the cause is almost always in a lower layer.

5. Software	The tools that automate and record the work: ERP, payroll, CRM, e-invoicing connections.
4. Controls	Approvals, segregation of duties, reconciliations and audit trails that keep the numbers honest.
3. Data	Clean, consistent master data: one customer list, one product list, one chart of accounts across all countries.
2. Processes	Agreed, documented ways of doing the core work: order to cash, procure to pay, record to report, hire to retire.
1. People	Clear roles, ownership and skills. Someone accountable for each process and each set of data.

Signs you have software but not a system

- Month-end still depends on spreadsheets and one key person
- Different departments report different numbers for the same thing
- Stock in the system rarely matches stock on the shelf
- Staff enter the same data in two or three places
- Nobody can say who owns the customer or product master
- Tax returns need manual adjustments every time
- The ERP was "implemented", but most modules are unused

Why it matters more now

The case for real systems has never been stronger in our region. Tax authorities in Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe now require invoices to flow directly through approved systems, and South Africa is heading the same way. Businesses operating across borders need to consolidate several currencies and tax regimes.

Yet according to IFC and World Bank research, only 11% of digitally enabled African firms make intensive use of advanced tools such as ERP. That gap is both a risk and an opportunity: businesses that build proper systems now will be faster, better controlled and easier to finance than their competitors.

Software amplifies whatever system you already have. Fix the system first, and the software pays for itself.

Before you buy: ten questions to answer

Answer these honestly before you request a single software demo. If you can't, that is where the work should start.

1. **What business problem are we solving?** Name it in terms of results, such as faster month-end or fewer stock losses, not features.
2. **How do our core processes work today?** Map them, including the workarounds.
3. **How should they work?** Agree the target process before choosing software.
4. **Who owns each process and each set of data?**
5. **How clean is our data?** Customers, suppliers, products and opening balances.
6. **What do the tax authorities require?** E-invoicing, fiscalisation and reporting in each country.
7. **What must connect?** Banks, mobile money, payroll, e-commerce, the tax authority.
8. **Who will lead the change internally?** A senior sponsor, not just IT.
9. **What is the full cost?** Licences, implementation, training, support and staff time.
10. **How will we measure success after go-live?**

How M&J SERPA builds systems, not just installations

1
Ecosystem modernisation
Assess the whole technology landscape, not just one tool

2
Process harmonisation
Agree and document how core processes should run

3
Technology governance
Set ownership, controls and decision rights

4
Adaptive IT architecture
Design a platform that grows with the business

5
Departmental alignment
Bring every team onto one version of the truth

As an official Odoo Silver Partner, M&J SERPA implements, customises, integrates and supports Odoo in Zimbabwe and Zambia, and works with Sage Pastel, Zoho, QuickBooks and other platforms. But the software is always the last decision, not the first.

What a working system looks like

FINANCE
Month-end closes on a fixed timetable; bank, mobile money and tax accounts reconcile automatically.

OPERATIONS
Stock, orders and deliveries match reality; every transaction is captured once, at source.

LEADERSHIP
Dashboards by country and currency that leaders trust enough to act on.

Thinking about an ERP? Start with a systems assessment. We will map your processes, data and controls, and tell you honestly what software you need, and what you don't.

07 · FEATURE

Before you build a strategy

A strategy is only as good as what you know when you write it. Here is what leaders need to understand first.

Every year, leadership teams across the region gather for strategy sessions. Many produce ambitious plans that are quietly abandoned within months. The problem is rarely a lack of ambition. It is that the strategy was built on assumptions, not facts.

A good strategy answers three questions: where are we now, where do we want to be, and how will we get there? Most teams rush to the second and third. The first, an honest picture of the business today, is where strategy is won or lost.

In a year like 2026, the stakes are higher. Interest rates are moving in opposite directions across the region, currencies behave differently, and tax and payroll rules keep changing. A strategy that treats "southern Africa" as one market, or that assumes last year's conditions will continue, is likely to fail.

Before you put a plan on paper, make sure you know the seven things on the next page. If you don't, your first strategic priority is to find out.

Strategy is choice

Strategy is as much about what you will not do as what you will. With limited cash and management time, every new market, product or project competes with every other. Good information makes those trade-offs visible.

Strategy needs systems

A strategy you cannot measure is a wish. Before you set targets, check that your systems can actually report on them, monthly and by country. This is where our two features meet: strategy decides what matters, and systems tell you whether it is happening.

From insight to results

1	2	3	4	5
Diagnose	**Decide**	**Design**	**Deliver**	**Review**
Know your numbers, market and capabilities	Choose where to play and how to win, and what to stop	Set targets, owners, budgets and measures	Put systems and people behind each priority	Check progress monthly and adjust quarterly

Seven things to know before you plan

1. Where you really make money

Profit by product, customer, channel and country, after all costs. Many businesses discover that a large share of revenue earns little or nothing.

2. Your true cash position

Not just the bank balance: the cash cycle, debtor and stock days, debt repayments and the currency of every obligation. Cash decides how fast you can move.

3. The market, country by country

Demand, competitors, pricing power, regulation, currency and interest rates in each market you serve or want to enter. This issue's country spotlights are a starting point.

4. What your customers value

Why customers buy from you, why they leave, and what they would pay more for. Ask them; don't assume.

5. Your capabilities and systems

What your people, processes and technology can deliver today. Can your systems support the growth you plan, and report on it?

6. Your risks and obligations

Tax, regulatory, contractual and governance exposure. A strategy that triggers a compliance problem in a new country can cost more than it earns.

7. What the owners want

Growth, income, independence or an eventual exit? Shareholders, boards and family owners must agree on the destination before management plans the route.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Starting with targets instead of facts
- Treating the region as one market
- Too many priorities, no trade-offs
- No owners, budgets or measures
- Never reviewing the plan once it is written

BRING THESE TO YOUR NEXT STRATEGY SESSION

- Profit by product, customer and country for the last 12 months
- A 13-week cash forecast and debt schedule
- Exposure by currency
- A one-page view of each market you serve
- Customer feedback and lost-deal reasons
- A list of the systems you rely on, and their gaps

Turning a strategy into results

Once you have the facts and have made your choices, keep the plan simple enough that everyone in the business can understand it. We recommend a one-page strategy that links each priority to an owner, a measure and the system that will track it.

A one-page strategy

Element	Question it answers	Example
Ambition	Where do we want to be in three to five years?	Leading supplier in Zambia and Zimbabwe, entering Malawi
Where we play	Which customers, products and countries will we focus on?	Mid-sized manufacturers and distributors
How we win	Why will customers choose us?	Reliability, local presence, integrated service
Priorities	What three to five things must go right this year?	Cut debtor days by 15; launch in Lilongwe
What we stop	What will we no longer do?	Exit loss-making low-margin product lines
Measures	How will we know it is working?	Monthly margin by country; cash conversion
Owners	Who is accountable for each priority?	A named executive per priority
Systems	Where will the data come from?	ERP dashboards, payroll, CRM

Review rhythm

- **Weekly:** cash and key operating numbers
- **Monthly:** management accounts and priority progress
- **Quarterly:** market review and plan adjustments
- **Annually:** full strategy refresh

HOW M&J HELPS

Our management consultants run business assessments and strategy sessions grounded in your numbers. We help you diagnose, decide and design, then put the systems in place to deliver and measure. Ask about a strategy readiness review.



08

M&J Africa solutions

An integrated group of specialised business units, building timeless businesses through systems, strategy and innovation.

- Three business units
- Solutions mapped to this quarter's trends
- Our focus on Malawi

08 · M&J AFRICA SOLUTIONS

One group, three specialist business units

For more than ten years, M&J has helped African enterprises grow with sound strategy, disciplined finance and reliable systems. Today our work is organised around three business units.

M&J Consultants

BUSINESS ADVISORY & TRANSFORMATION

- Management consultancy
- Mergers and acquisitions
- Tax consultancy and advisory
- Internal audits
- Market expansion and investor services
- Accounting and bookkeeping
- HR consulting and talent acquisition

M&J SERPA

ENTERPRISE TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

- Ecosystem modernisation
- Process harmonisation
- Technology governance
- Adaptive IT architecture
- Departmental alignment
- Odoo implementation, payroll and support (Official Silver Partner)
- Sage Pastel, Zoho, QuickBooks

The Chartered Vendor

REVENUE GROWTH & MARKET IMPACT

- Go-to-market execution
- Sales enablement
- Account development
- Market intelligence
- Brand elevation

Empowering African businesses through systems, strategy and innovation.

THE M&J PURPOSE

10+
Years building businesses across the region

3
Offices: Harare, Lusaka and Cape Town

Silver
Official Odoo partner status for Zimbabwe and Zambia

Our model is integrated by design. A client who comes to us for a tax question often discovers that the root cause is a process or system issue; a client implementing an ERP often needs help with the strategy and controls behind it. Because our advisory, technology and revenue teams work together, we solve the whole problem, not just one piece of it.

Our values

Hard work | **Efficiency** | **Collaboration** | **Integrity** | **Impact** | **Innovation**

08 · M&J AFRICA SOLUTIONS

Our solutions, mapped to the trends

Each solution below responds to a trend in this issue. The numbers show why it matters now.

Solution	The trend in numbers	How we help
Business advisory and strategy	Policy rates range from 5.5% to 27.5% across our six markets; 2026 growth forecasts range from 0.6% to 5.8%	Business assessments, country-by-country plans, scenario models, cash-flow forecasting, M&A support and strategy readiness reviews.
Market expansion and investor services	Zambia's AfDB-backed Lobito Corridor rail links; Mozambique's LNG pipeline; PAPSS now in 28 countries	Market entry research, company formation, investor permits, structuring and setup across southern Africa, including Malawi.
Tax, accounting and internal audit	E-invoicing live in Zambia (44,000+ businesses) and Malawi (since 1 May 2026); Malawi VAT up to 17.5%; ZMW 90,000 Smart Invoice penalties	Tax planning and compliance, multi-currency reporting, bookkeeping, internal audits, controls testing and lender-ready accounts.
Digital and technology (M&J SERPA)	Only 11% of digitally enabled African firms make intensive use of ERP; ~3,000 cyberattacks a week on African organisations	Systems assessments, Odoo and ERP implementation, integration with banks and tax authorities, data and analytics, cybersecurity and technology governance.
HR, payroll and talent	Minimum wages up 80% in Zimbabwe and up to 25% in Malawi; youth unemployment 47.4% in South Africa; informal work 58–92% of jobs	HR consulting, payroll set-up on Odoo Payroll, statutory compliance reviews, pay affordability modelling and talent acquisition.
Revenue growth (The Chartered Vendor)	Mobile money handled US$2 trillion in 2025; 63% of Africans with mobile broadband coverage are not yet online	Go-to-market plans, sales team enablement, account development, market intelligence and brand building.

OUR Q4 OFFER: THE CASH, CURRENCY AND COMPLIANCE REVIEW

In one working session, our team will review your 13-week cash forecast, your exposure by currency, and your upcoming tax and payroll deadlines. You leave with a short list of actions for Q4. Book through **mjconsultants.africa/contact** or call your nearest office (page 43).



MALAWI AT A GLANCE

Labour force	**5.3m**
Formal workers	**~364,000**
Internet users	**4.02m (18%)**
Social media growth	**+50%**
VAT rate	**17.5%**
E-invoicing (EIS)	**Live 1 May 2026**
Rare earths	**First output Q4 2026**

OUR FOCUS ON MALAWI

Why we are watching Malawi closely

Malawi is one of the region's most challenging markets today, and one of its most interesting for the years ahead. M&J has a strong and growing interest in supporting businesses there.

The short-term picture is tough: 20% inflation, a wide gap between official and parallel exchange rates, a weak tobacco season and reduced donor funding. But the government has cut its primary deficit sharply, is negotiating a new IMF programme, and has modernised tax administration with a new electronic invoicing system. A first rare earths mine is due to start production this quarter.

For investors and regional businesses, that combination creates opportunities in agriculture and agro-processing, mining services, energy, and digital services for a young, fast-growing online population.

How M&J supports Malawi businesses and investors

- **Investment guidance:** sectors, incentives and legal requirements, set out in our guide "How to Invest in Malawi".
- **Business setup:** registration, tax registration and compliance essentials, covered in "Malawi Business Setup Essentials".
- **Tax and compliance:** VAT, the new PAYE bands and EIS e-invoicing readiness.
- **Systems:** ERP and payroll configured for Malawi's tax rules and currency realities.
- **Regional structuring:** linking Malawi operations with Zambia, Zimbabwe and beyond.

Planning a move into Malawi? Read our guides at mjconsultants.africa/insights and talk to our team on WhatsApp at +263 78 098 2877.

09 · Q4 2026 COMPLIANCE CALENDAR

Key tax and payroll deadlines, October to December

Standing deadlines for our main markets. Exact obligations depend on your taxpayer category, financial year-end and filing method, so confirm with your adviser. Obligations for December usually fall due in January 2027. Where a date falls on a weekend or public holiday, check the authority's rule for the adjusted date.

Country	Obligation	Q4 2026 due dates	Notes
Zambia	PAYE and Skills Development Levy	10th of following month: 10 Oct, 10 Nov, 10 Dec	10 Oct is a Saturday
Zambia	Turnover tax and withholding tax	14th of following month: 14 Oct, 14 Nov, 14 Dec	14 Nov is a Saturday
Zambia	VAT (electronic)	18th of following month: 18 Oct, 18 Nov, 18 Dec	18 Oct is a Sunday
Zambia	Provisional income tax	3rd instalment 10 Oct; 4th instalment 10 Jan 2027	ZRA
Zimbabwe	Quarterly payment date (QPD 4)	15 December: 35% of annual estimated tax	Per M&J's 2026 ZIMRA compliance calendar
Malawi	PAYE	14th of following month: 14 Oct, 14 Nov, 14 Dec	14 Nov is a Saturday
Malawi	VAT	25th of following month	Invoices via MRA EIS
South Africa	Non-provisional individual returns	23 October	SARS filing season
South Africa	Employer interim reconciliation (EMP501) and biannual third-party data	31 October	31 Oct is a Saturday
South Africa	Provisional taxpayers and trusts	Filing runs to 22 January 2027	
South Africa	VAT modernisation comments	16 October	Optional consultation
Botswana	PAYE and withholding taxes	Within 15 days of month-end: 15 Oct, 15 Nov, 15 Dec	15 Nov is a Sunday
Botswana	VAT	Within 25 days of tax period end	Depends on your VAT period
Botswana	Company income tax returns	Four months after financial year-end	BURS
Mozambique	PAYE, VAT, social security, corporate instalments	Monthly	Contact us for a calendar tailored to your business

Sources: ZRA payment due dates; M&J Consultants 2026 ZIMRA compliance calendar; MRA PAYE guidance and VAT reminders; SARS filing season and Government Connect (Sep 2026); BURS payments and returns guidance; Mozambique Autoridade Tributária.

09 · Q4 2026 COMPLIANCE CALENDAR

Month by month

The same deadlines, in date order. Pin this page up next to your finance team.

OCTOBER

- [ ] **9 Oct** Zambia 2027 Budget submissions close
- [ ] **10 Oct** Zambia PAYE, SDL; provisional tax (3rd)
- [ ] **14 Oct** Zambia turnover & WHT; Malawi PAYE
- [ ] **15 Oct** Botswana PAYE & WHT
- [ ] **16 Oct** SARS e-invoicing comments close
- [ ] **18 Oct** Zambia VAT
- [ ] **23 Oct** SA non-provisional returns
- [ ] **25 Oct** Malawi VAT
- [ ] **29 Oct** Bank of Botswana MPC
- [ ] **31 Oct** SA EMP501 interim reconciliation

NOVEMBER

- [ ] **4 Nov** SA local government elections
- [ ] **10 Nov** Zambia PAYE, SDL
- [ ] **14 Nov** Zambia turnover & WHT; Malawi PAYE
- [ ] **15 Nov** Botswana PAYE & WHT
- [ ] **18 Nov** Zambia VAT
- [ ] **25 Nov** Malawi VAT

DECEMBER

- [ ] **3 Dec** Bank of Botswana MPC
- [ ] **10 Dec** Zambia PAYE, SDL
- [ ] **14 Dec** Zambia turnover & WHT; Malawi PAYE
- [ ] **15 Dec** Zimbabwe QPD 4 (35%); Botswana PAYE & WHT
- [ ] **18 Dec** Zambia VAT
- [ ] **25 Dec** Malawi VAT

LOOKING AHEAD

10 Jan 2027: Zambia provisional tax (4th). 22 Jan 2027: SA provisional and trust returns close.

NEVER MISS A DEADLINE

M&J's tax team can take filing off your hands or set up automated reminders and reconciliations in your ERP. Ask us about a compliance calendar built for your business and every country you operate in.

Weekend dates are shown as statutory dates; confirm adjusted dates with the relevant authority. 25 December is a public holiday in all six countries.

10 · Q4 OUTLOOK

Plan against three scenarios, not one forecast

No single forecast fits the whole region. Instead, we suggest testing your plans against three cases and knowing in advance what you would do in each.

Base case

UNEVEN, STEADY

Demand and finance stay uneven. Zambia and Zimbabwe benefit from lower rates and strong metal prices; South Africa grows slowly; Malawi and Mozambique stay constrained.

Do: run separate cash and procurement budgets for each country, and review them monthly.

Cost pressure

FUEL, FREIGHT, FX

Oil prices rise, the rand and other currencies weaken, and a strong El Niño hits hydropower and harvests. Borrowing and import costs climb.

Do: know the point at which you must change prices or purchasing, and agree those triggers now.

Opportunity

CHEAPER MONEY, NEW PROJECTS

Banks pass on rate cuts, IMF deals land in Zambia and Malawi, and LNG and corridor investment gathers pace.

Do: expand selectively, backed by confirmed customer demand and funding, and with systems that can scale.

Dates that could change the picture

When	Event	Why it matters
October	IMF talks in Zambia (to 10 Oct) and Malawi	Funding, fiscal policy and currency outlook
29 Oct	Bank of Botswana MPC	Rate response to above-target inflation
4 Nov	South Africa local government elections	First test for the Government of National Unity
November	SARB MPC; SA Medium-Term Budget; Zimbabwe 2027 Budget	Rates, taxes and spending for 2027
By year-end	Rovuma LNG investment decision; De Beers sale completion	Investment flows into Mozambique and Botswana
Oct–Dec	Zambia 2027 Budget speech	Tax measures under the "Grow Zambia" agenda

OUR BOTTOM LINE

Q4 rewards preparation. Know your cash every week, match your currencies, keep compliance current, and put systems in place that let you act quickly when the scenario changes.

TALK TO US

Let's build your plan for Q4

Book a cash, currency and compliance review, a systems assessment or a strategy readiness session with our team.

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SOURCES AND NOTES

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M&J. mjconsultants.africa (What We Do, Purpose, Vision, Contact, Odoo, Insights); mjconsultants.co.zw; mjconsultants.co.zm; mjconsultants.co.za.

Notes

Inflation is annual headline CPI for the latest month available. Growth figures are forecasts or targets for 2026 from the institutions named and are not directly comparable. Exchange rates are RBZ reference quotes for 30 September 2026. Zimbabwe inflation refers to ZiG CPI. Some items are drawn from news reports and secondary analysis, as listed above; figures may be revised by the original publishers.

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