

Zambia's Gateway To Global Markets

An Interview with Dr. Clever Mpoba, Chief Executive Officer, SAVENDA Group

EDITORS' NOTE Dr. Clever Mpoba, one of Zambia's leading businessmen and philanthropists, is the Founder and Group Managing Director of SAVENDA. What began as a supply management and logistics firm in 1997 has expanded into agricultural, construction, energy, and transportation sectors throughout Zambia and its neighboring countries. Through Mpoba's humble upbringing in a small village, it was there where he learned the principles of social responsibility.



Dr. Clever Mpoba

His company actively participates in several initiatives concerning art and culture, health-care funding, education, and women and youth empowerment to support the socio-economic growth of his country and give back to his fellow Zambians. Over 20 years later, SAVENDA (savendagroup.com) is one of Zambia's leading companies, with an annual revenue of more than \$500 million, and has achieved lucrative partnerships with other enterprises from Asia, Europe, and North America.

What was your vision for founding SAVENDA and how do you define its mission?

Shortly before I founded SAVENDA, I had traveled to Johannesburg, South Africa, to participate in a business leadership conference headlined by Dr. Myles Munroe, where

his influential talks installed an intense air of determination to stop working for others and build something for myself. SAVENDA was born when I realized I could be my own boss and create something valuable while turning daily challenges into opportunities.

SAVENDA stands for SAVE Nations, Develop Africa, because it's my hope and mission that my company can make a difference not just in the lives of Zambians, but contribute to the growth of Africa as a conti-

nent. I founded my company when our local currency, the Kwacha, was down and brought a lack of foreign currency to the local economy. I wanted to stand up to the challenge and leverage my network and international business opportunities to support the recovery of the Zambian economy. When most businesses in Zambia suffered economic difficulties, we were eager to concentrate on building sustainable platforms to generate revenues for the country's future and needs that may arise. For me, it has always been about doing good for the people while building a profitable global business where I can proudly say our mission is to be the preferred leaders in our chosen markets, with a vision towards providing our clients with value for money for our array of products and services.

Will you discuss SAVENDA's business activities and areas of focus?

We are a Zambian-born logistics and global supply chain management company that offers end-to-end solutions. At the same time, over the years, we have expanded operations across the agro, telecom, energy, financial, and construction industries.

Recently, we launched SAVENDA transport, such as aviation and bus services, to revolutionize passenger transport throughout the country. We also expanded into telecom and cybersecurity to connect our homes and industries while ensuring companies have access to the best cybersecurity systems. In light of the global energy transformations and to secure its future in Zambia, we launched our energy branch, Gojestic Energy Corporation, which distributes white petroleum products nationwide and constantly invests in expanding energy infrastructure. Concerning agriculture, SAVENDA Farms runs three leading farms, and we are expanding into new plantations and facilities. Continuing our trajectory of sustainability, we also have SAVENDA Electric and Electronics that help save energy and water while boosting local manufacturing capabilities thanks to two state-of-the-art factories in Lusaka. SAVENDA General Insurance has proudly become Zambia's fastest-growing insurance company.

Among all our industries, I would say our main focus lies within logistics because we've

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For example, in Zambia, we've been experiencing record drought levels, leading to food and crop shortages. However, we have 60 percent of the region's fresh water resources, allowing us to gain clean energy by tapping into hydroelectric power generation. In addition, we've been investing in green technologies such as selling energy-efficient LED light bulbs.”

seen first-hand how our ability to facilitate goods and services into the country has allowed Zambia to become a gateway for African nations as a first point of contact with global markets.

What have been the keys to SAVENDA's strength and leadership in the industries where it operates?

Some of our strengths lie in our ability to see a global point of view towards the future and what matters for the development of not just SAVENDA, but Zambia and Africa as a whole. We are also a product of fantastic risk management, blended with careful risk-taking, a solid plan to manage threats, and a stern determination to succeed no matter what. I've never been afraid of taking risks; it's the only way to build a prosperous enterprise like I have created today.

Concerning logistics, I credit our success to our sensitivity to understanding the commodity supply market, how it plays a central role for millions of Zambians, and the need for a more functional commercial flow among central African nations. We've been able to create and put to the test concrete solutions and work with reliable partners concerning, for example, our mining industry and moving copper; we have a procurement process to offer unbeatable solutions that are attractive for international businesses operating in Zambia.

Where do you see the greatest opportunities for growth for SAVENDA as you look to the future?

Nowadays, every global player is investing more and more in sustainability to meet the challenges brought on by climate change – no country is immune. For example, in Zambia, we've been experiencing record drought levels, leading to food and crop shortages. However, we have 60 percent of the region's fresh water resources, allowing us to gain clean energy by tapping into hydroelectric power generation. In addition, we've been investing in green technologies such as selling energy-efficient LED light bulbs.

We've also been making significant strides concerning information and communications technology (ICT). Recently, SAVENDA has been working with international partners to build cables and fiber optic infrastructure platforms in Lusaka. Our country is a well-positioned logistics hub, and we are also well-suited to be the African leader in the ICT and telecom industries because most networks must pass through Zambia to connect the surrounding region.

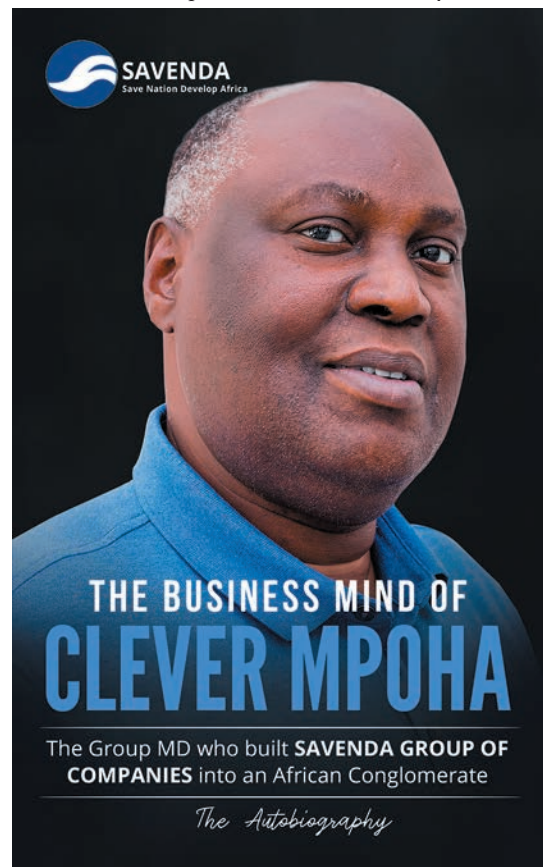
Will you highlight the strength and expertise of SAVENDA's management team and workforce?

SAVENDA employs over 1,000 talented, hardworking employees who work every day to integrate Africa and allow our company and Zambia to serve as an entry to the continent's booming economy. Our management team has extensive experience working with global companies and specializing in their respective fields; their passion and motivation are trickled down throughout the company. For me, it comes down to relaying the sense of purpose to our employees and reminding them why their job is crucial to keep them satisfied.

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What do you see as SAVENDA's responsibility to be engaged in the communities it serves and to be a force for good in society?

I come from a rural village, and I know the struggles that communities and people can face. I founded SAVENDA to strongly support empowering Africa and our entrepreneurs to realize the potential of growth for businesses in Zambia and beyond. It's all in our name – SAVE Nations, Develop Africa. We've developed a pan-African approach to nature, a culture of pushing to make a positive impact for ourselves, our country, and our continent. I'm proud to have a company with strong corporate social responsibility values across various sectors, including women and youth empowerment, disaster relief, community infrastructure development, and biodiversity welfare.



Did you always know that you had an entrepreneurial spirit and desire to build your own business?

I come from the Nyika Tribe, where we are known for our "merchandizing culture." I took lessons from herding cattle and worked in my family's small shop to learn business practices

and management. My parents instilled in me an entrepreneurial work ethic ever since I can remember, and I have always been eager to be a man of my own destiny. Before SAVENDA, I had a decent job in the financial department of a major industrial supply firm, but it bothered me how someone else decided how much I could earn monthly. I decided to take the plunge, and with just \$1,000, I traded Korean-made cell phones and was miraculously able to make a profit. From there, I carefully reinvested my small gains into creating more opportunities.

What interested you in writing a book and what are the keys message you wanted to convey in the book?

I wrote my book to share my story so that others, whether in a small village or metropolis city, can see that with the right mindset, determination, and a bit of business-know-how, you can decide your own future and begin your own company. The book explores the fundamental values necessary to turn a small business into a great success story that I hope will mentor other entrepreneurs or future business owners.

You serve as an advisory board member of the Thembekile Mandela Foundation. What interested you in becoming involved with the Foundation?

I found myself aligned with their work, as we share a communal vision of developing Africa as one large community. I am very honored to be a member of the Advisory Board. With my experience, I can help guide the Foundation to achieve our goals and extend our reach to the most remote places to ensure all access to education, proper infrastructure, and good quality of life.

You also support many other foundations and charities. What has made philanthropy and giving back so important to you?

I can relate to many of the struggles numerous Africans face today, and now that I am in a position where I can make a concrete difference, I think it's my duty as a citizen of Zambia and Africa to give back to support access to healthcare, clean water, education, and basic necessities that can make a world of difference. I firmly believe that heavily investing in improving our communities around us and youth initiatives will lead to a more prosperous future.

What advice do you offer to young people beginning their careers?

My mother said to me that in this world, "one must be brave, strong, and resilient." ●