

Donors want value for money, says Nolan

By Edwin Mbulo in Livingstone

IRISH Ambassador to Zambia Bill Nolan has said the donor community works more like a business consortium and wants to see value for its tax payers' money being given to Zambia.

And health deputy minister Mwendoi Akakandelwa said thieves do not deserve leniency.

Speaking in Livingstone on Thursday when he handed over Toyota Land Cruisers and an eye unit donated by Sight Savers International and Standard

Chartered Bank to Akakandelwa for the phase four of the Livingstone-Lusaka Urban Eye clinic Care programme. Ambassador Nolan said the donor community last week met President Rupiah Banda over media reports of misuse of donor funded money.

"Our cooperation goes far way back even before independence when Dr Kenneth Kaunda made friends with the Irish before he become president. We have been helping the Zambian government through the Irish Airline, who assisted Zambia Airways. The Irish Cement helped set up the Chilanga cement factory and also the Irish Daily board assisted the Zambia Daily board. We were the first cooperating partner to come here to Southern Province at St Canisuis. We were in bio chemical services in Ndola. We had to make a difficult decision to change to other sectors and we decided to choose between health and education and we went for education," he said.

Ambassador Nolan said when he first came into Africa on his first posting in Tanzania about 20 years ago, African government's responsibilities were not good.

"Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia lacked the knowledge and skills, but now we have a challenge to change. Of course there is resource deficit being felt by all donors due to the global

economic downturn and we need to be careful with money getting value for money is the priority. We now know of the Auditor General and how she has to deal with control of funds, we need to get value for the money. All the indicators of the economic crunch are that the damaging effects are yet to come," he said.

He further said the challenges of the climate change would increase the burden of all governments.

"As donor community, we work much closely together as a kind of business consortium. The value for money is a priority. Donor representatives want value for money because without this, the damaging consequences for Africa and other countries increase. Now we read in the tabloids of money being misused. We had a meeting with the President last week and we will make sure that all ministers and permanent secretaries take this seriously. When I first came here, senior officials when called to appear before the Public Accounts Committee did not take it seriously, but now they do. We said to the President and the Minister of Finance that we are willing to assist," Ambassador Nolan said.

He said people who stole public funds should not think that it was their money.

"It is not your money. If you want to set up a business, borrow from the bank. It is not your money. If I take money from a bank. I would work hard to make sure that the business works. Zambia is losing twice," he said.

Ambassador Nolan said the Irish and Belgian governments were the biggest donors to Zambia's education sector.