



CRIDF

Collaborating with communities to deliver a basin-wide approach to resilience

The Climate Resilient Infrastructure Development Facility (CRIDF) adopts a basin-wide approach to supporting sustainable livelihoods through water interventions in Southern Africa. A key element is working with river basin organisations to engage with national and local partners, including conducting meaningful consultations with the communities who live and work in the basins.

Most river basins comprise complex, transboundary ecosystems that poor communities depend on for their livelihoods. The Cubango-Okavango River Basin (CORB), which straddles Angola, Namibia and Botswana and hosts a rapidly growing population of almost 1.7 million, is no exception. The Permanent Okavango River Basin Commission (OKACOM) was set up in 1994 to provide technical advice to its three riparian states. Over the past 25 years, OKACOM and its partners have sought to address the socioeconomic, environmental, climatic and political challenges in the river basin.



This requires a nuanced, dynamic and collaborative approach that brings together all stakeholders invested in the river basin, which is threatened by population pressure, climate change and unsustainable agricultural practices. CRIDF, which places a strong emphasis on collaboration with local partners, is uniquely placed to support OKACOM in its work with the three riparian states and the communities that live in the basin.

A basin-wide approach

Community consultations are a key element of CRIDF's basin-wide approach to building resilient livelihoods, reflecting the complexity of the challenges affecting people living in river basins. CRIDF supports the implementation of river basin organisations' strategic action plans through jointly developed engagement plans.

A desk-based analysis, based on a joint methodology, allows for an initial vulnerability hotspot assessment. This is verified and enhanced by a participatory approach that identifies potential livelihoods responses to address hotspot challenges.

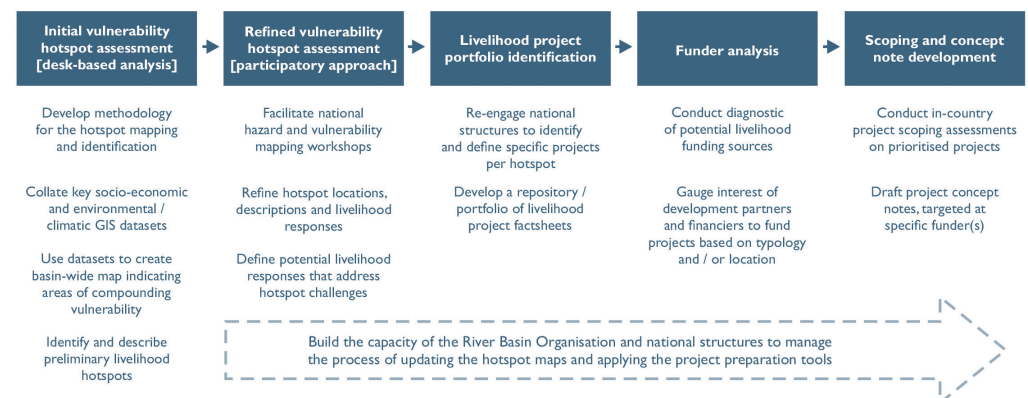
National structures are then engaged to select projects, represented by a portfolio of project factsheets. A funder analysis is carried out to assess the interest in funding these projects, following which in-country scoping takes place. The concept notes that result target funders to mobilise finance for project interventions that will help communities build resilient livelihoods.



A basin-wide approach to building resilient livelihoods



Transboundary river basins in Southern Africa face a range of social, environmental, climatic and political challenges, all of which impact the resilience of people, ecosystems and economies. A significant proportion of the population's livelihoods are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, which drives the unsustainable use of natural resources and threatens the integrity of river basin systems. In response to this challenge, CRIDF has worked with River Basin Organisations to apply a scientifically robust, stakeholder-driven process to identifying, prioritising and mobilising finance for portfolios of livelihood projects.



In 2019, OKACOM, supported by CRIDF and the Resilient Waters Program, carried out a series of workshops in Maun, Botswana (16-17 September), Rundu, Namibia (19-20 September) and Menongue, Angola (5-6 November), with participation from government, local authorities, community-based organisations and community representatives. In each workshop, participants were first invited to discuss what they understood by the key concepts of 'livelihoods', 'hazards', 'vulnerability' and 'adaptive capacity' in relation to their own lives. Brainstorming these concepts helped to create common ground for the stakeholders convened by OKACOM.

This understanding was critical to facilitating the second part of CRIDF's collaborative approach, with workshop participants carrying out mapping exercises in groups. Participants used maps of the river basin to locate factors that influenced different aspects of their livelihoods. These factors were categorised in terms of hazards (such as deforestation, drought, flood or human-wildlife conflict) and vulnerabilities (such as poverty, lack of infrastructure or services, or gender inequality). Those areas where hazards and vulnerabilities were clustered together were identified as livelihoods hotspots. The approach is thus termed 'livelihood vulnerability hotspot mapping'.

This interactive 'ground-truthing' then moved on to identification and prioritisation of strategic responses (i.e. projects/interventions) designed to address the specific, compounded livelihood challenges faced by communities in these areas. This process was underpinned by discussions of past and present livelihood projects to understand what worked well, which factors were key to a project's sustainability, and the barriers to project success that needed to be overcome.

CRIDF promoting a collaborative approach to community consultation

CRIDF has worked with river basin organisations to develop a collaborative approach to engage stakeholders and inform the identification of livelihood vulnerabilities so that resources (technical assistance and finance) can be mobilised for the right combination of project interventions. This involves several key steps:

- **Identifying and convening with the river basin organisation stakeholders to community consultation workshops**, with a focus on community-based organisations and local representatives that will be able to 'ground-truth' desk-based literature, data and mapping analyses.
- **Defining key concepts of 'livelihoods', 'hazards', 'vulnerability' and 'adaptive capacity'** as they apply to local contexts.
- **Visual mapwork in groups to identify livelihoods hotspots** where hazards and vulnerabilities intersect.
- **Assessment of the impact and sustainability of past and present interventions that best respond to, and address, local livelihood challenges.** This aids the conceptualisation and prioritisation of future efforts to be taken forward by CRIDF with regional and national structures and potential funders.



IMPLEMENTING THE CRIDF APPROACH

The community consultations helped to verify and enhance OKACOM's desk-based CORB hotspot analysis, supported by CRIDF in 2018. In Menongue, Angola, other than the identified issues of deforestation, unsustainable land use practices, and communities' lack of access to public goods and services, workshop discussions revealed serious societal and governance-related challenges that compounded vulnerability, particularly of women. Recommendations included boosting connectivity and education, improving water and sanitation services, and introducing small-scale interventions focused on sustainability.

In parts of Angola and Namibia, droughts exacerbated by climate change were expected to take a toll on livelihoods, along with population pressures and rapid urbanisation. The workshop in Rundu confirmed the existence of multiple challenges associated with urbanisation, as well as social inequity. Stakeholders strongly recommended community-based, environmentally orientated interventions.

Despite the relatively lower population densities in the Botswanan portion of the CORB and the high potential of wildlife tourism, communities are socioeconomically deprived in the Maun region and highly dependent on subsistence farming. The consultations put forward interventions specific to livestock, crops and broader food value chain initiatives, as well as water and sanitation projects to be implemented by communities.

This bottom-up process of mapping vulnerability hotspots goes beyond confirming the desk analysis. Endorsed by stakeholders who are also in many cases direct beneficiaries of the projects that will be implemented, hotspot maps are a living tool. They incorporate vital, ground-level detail that will form the basis of decisions made by river basin organisations, governments and funders to support more strategic, inclusive and impactful investments in the CORB. The validity and credibility of this approach has the potential to be applied in river basins across Southern Africa and further afield, and a similar approach is underway in the Zambezi watercourse in collaboration with the Zambezi Watercourse Commission (ZAMCOM).

Selected CRIDF resources:

- 'A basin-wide approach to building resilient livelihoods', CRIDF, available at <http://cridf.net/RC/publications/a-basin-wide-approach-to-building-resilient-livelihoods>
- 'OKACOM community consultation 2019', available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=DuLgXNKIw
- 'OKACOM livelihood vulnerability hotspot mapping: methodology', available at <http://cridf.net/RC/publications/okacom-livelihood-vulnerability-hotspot-mapping-methodology>
- 'CRIDF's livelihoods project', available at <http://cridf.net/livelihoods-projects>

CRIDF Approaches

CRIDF Approaches provide an outline of CRIDF strategies that address specific challenges relevant to water infrastructure initiatives working with key national and regional institutions in Southern Africa. They are designed as a guide to inform the practices and strategies of development organisations in the region and beyond.