



CRIDF

Adapting to climate change in the Zambezi River Basin

The Zambezi River is a major watercourse in Southern Africa. Its transboundary basin covers eight countries within the Southern African Development Community (SADC): Angola, Botswana, Tanzania, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique. Working together through the Zambezi Watercourse Commission (ZAMCOM), these countries have developed a strategic plan to cooperatively manage and develop the Zambezi River and its tributaries over 22 years (2018 to 2040).

BUILDING CLIMATE RESILIENCE THROUGH ZAMBESI PIDACC

A key part of the strategic management plan for the Zambezi River is the Programme for Integrated Development and Adaptation to Climate Change (PIDACC). This programme is a major investment plan for building the capacity of communities living in the Zambezi River Basin – so that they can adapt to the ever-increasing impacts of climate change.

Adapting to climate change is critical in the Zambezi River Basin. Poverty levels in the region are extremely high, and

land degradation affects more than half the basin area, often with severe consequences. PIDAAC is designed to tackle these challenges, focussing on 16 vulnerability hotspots across the region. Some of these hotspots are located within a specific country; others are transboundary.

Through PIDAAC, ZAMCOM first identifies specific vulnerabilities. It then designs projects and activities to increase the resilience of communities living and working in these hotspots. The programme takes a bottom-up approach, consulting extensively with those who are at the sharp end of environmental degradation caused by climate change.

SUPPORT FROM CRIDF AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

The Climate Resilient Infrastructure Development Facility (CRIDF) has provided substantial support to ZAMCOM in the development of the Zambesi strategic plan and PIDACC. In particular, it carried out a mapping exercise in order to identify vulnerability hotspots. It also shared, for example, relevant methodologies, environmental and risk assessment techniques, and gender and social inclusion analyses.

CRIDF has operated in the SADC region, including in the Zambesi River Basin, since 2013. As such, it has accumulated a wealth of experience in supporting communities and rural livelihoods, and is able to capitalise on this expertise when working with ZAMCOM. It has also brought to the programme a strong partnership with the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

The UNCCD Secretariat focusses on land degradation, thereby complementing CRIDF's expertise on water and rural livelihoods. CRIDF enabled UNCCD to get involved in the Zambesi strategic plan and PIDACC – one of the first instances of the Secretariat providing support at a transboundary rather than country level.

Another key partner is the African Development Bank (AfDB). This bank provides an investment anchor to the Zambesi investment plan and PIDACC, enabling the programme to move beyond the planning stage. The prior involvement of CRIDF and the UNCCD Secretariat helped attract AfDB into PIDACC, which in turn will help attract finance from other sources such as crowdfunding.

KEY LESSONS FROM THE PREPARATION OF PIDACC

CRIDF has identified a number of key lessons learnt in the process of preparing PIDACC. The first is the importance of engagement: as investment programmes are multi-sectoral, CRIDF and partners must reach out beyond the water sector to other sectors involved in rural and land management.

Secondly, in mobilising resources, it is important to work closely with national finance ministries. This can ensure that government funds contribute towards development in each country, and facilitate regional investment from finance institutions overall.

Thirdly, pinpointing a key funding partner can help kickstart the funding process. In the case of PIDACC, ZAMCOM identified the African Development Bank early on, and



worked closely with the institution to understand how best to present the programme in order to attract finance from multiple sources.

Finally, CRIDF recognises that partnerships are crucial to building momentum – ZAMCOM as a broad management body lacks specialist knowledge and needs to outsource specific expertise. In particular, the partnership between CRIDF (specialists in the water sector) and the UNCCD Secretariat (specialists in land degradation) has been instrumental in enabling a wide range of partners and stakeholders to be involved in PIDACC.

NEXT STEPS FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS

As PIDACC is a regional programme, its future depends on strong political leadership that can facilitate effective cooperation and integration across all countries in the Zambesi River Basin. In addition, forming a platform that brings together finance ministries from the countries involved can help secure the funds necessary for future implementation.

Capacity building is another priority. This applies to both ZAMCOM and its member states. Currently, funding proposed through the AfDB will support capacity building through a project implementation unit. CRIDF will support this development by recommending tried and tested techniques and approaches. And, the Facility will transfer lessons learned from the PIDACC experience to similar programmes addressing poverty and environmental degradation in other African river basins.