

# STRENGTHENING CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN ZAMBIA

Supporting national institutional framework and participatory adaptation processes and sub-projects in the Barotse sub-basin



## STRENGTHENING CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN THE BAROTSE SUB-BASIN PROJECT OVERVIEW:

- **PROJECT COST:**  
(PPCR) USD 36 MILLION  
(WORLD BANK IDA) USD 14.6 MILLION
- **FUNDERS:**  
PPCR, WORLD BANK
- **IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES:**  
GOVERNMENT OF ZAMBIA'S  
MINISTRY OF NATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT PLANNING
- **PROJECT DURATION:**  
2013 TO 2022
- **COUNTRY SERVED:**  
ZAMBIA

## STRENGTHENING CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN THE BAROTSE SUB-BASIN PROJECT:

This project aims to strengthen Zambia's institutional framework for climate resilience and improve the adaptive capacity of vulnerable communities in the Barotse sub-basin of the Zambezi floodplain. The project has two main focuses: The first is strategic national-level program support designed to strengthen the national institutional and financial framework for climate resilience in Zambia. It does this by providing institutional support to the national climate change programs and by strengthening climate information. The second focus is geographic in nature, centered on the Barotse sub-basin in western Zambia. The project seeks to improve the adaptive

## Development context:

Zambia's climate is highly variable, with frequent droughts, seasonal and flash floods, extreme temperatures, and dry spells. Floods and droughts have increased in frequency over the last three decades, with expectations for these trends to intensify in the future. These changes in climate pose serious challenges to Zambia's efforts to combat poverty, reduce food insecurity, and sustainably manage natural resources.

capacity of vulnerable rural communities in this area, through facilitation and technical support for mainstreaming climate change into local-level development plans and community decision-making and through direct sub-project grants to communities, wards, and districts, including women-headed and highly vulnerable households. The project also seeks to increase the flow velocity of water in targeted canals in the Barotse sub-basin through clearing and dredging of the historic canals.

### DELIVERY CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS:

The project encountered five major delivery challenges. The **first delivery challenge** was a *lack of consensus at the highest levels in Zambia on the best national multi-sectoral structure to provide leadership and coordination of climate action*. This lack of consensus impeded national program coordination required to address PPCR project implementation challenges sufficiently and quickly. The solution that helped achieve significant progress during the period of uncertainty around national institutional structures was the presence and continuity of a strong national champion for climate change and for the project.

The **second delivery challenge** that the project faced was a *lack of clear and consistent direction from the national Government on which district planning process should be used*.

The problem endured for some time as various approaches were sought to integrate climate change into district planning. A resolution emerged when national guidance clarified that all provinces and districts must align their efforts with the 7th National Development Plan (2017-2021), which requires all districts to mainstream climate change and make plans to reduce climate change risks.

The **third delivery challenge** concerned a recurring human resources problem, specifically, *how to deal with high staff turnover*

*and low capacity of staff, mostly at the district level*. In order to ease this challenge, capacity building became a continuous process. The project hired Participatory Adaptation Trainees to build a pool of adaptation specialists and hired local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as Climate Resilience and Adaptation Facilitators (CRAFs) to strengthen community adaptation planning processes and support project implementation.

The **fourth delivery challenge** was the *cumbersome and lengthy system, which resulted in long delays in final approval*. The project's coordination unit in Lusaka intervened frequently to address this challenge and to push for solutions. It convened both formal and informal mechanisms and applied clearly initiated leverage, in some cases, to ensure that decisions were taken, payments to communities were made, and plans were put into action at the local level.

The **fifth delivery challenge** concerned local communities *effectively implementing their approved sub-projects*, especially those related to economic development and livelihoods. As wards are the closest level of government to local communities, the project sought to bring provincial and district-level staff into direct contact with wards. This interaction and collaboration have strengthened the wards. District staff also learned from communities better ways to carry out their roles and responsibilities.

### CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED:

- 1. Focus on benefits to local communities.** Building resilience at the local level means putting communities and their needs at the top of the priority list. The participatory and local needs-driven approach was new for district officers involved in the PPCR project and required significant time for sensitization and training.
- 2. Importance of leadership.** In this project, key individuals did vital work to motivate

others, seek solutions, and drive forward the agenda for climate resilience and strengthened adaptive capacity.

- 3. Consistent messaging ensured effective awareness raising.** The use of clear, consistent messages by project implementers is crucial to aid delivery effectiveness, identify delivery gaps, reduce overlapping activities, and promote effective coordination at both the national and decentralized levels.
- 4. Being adaptive when implementing solutions.** The Zambia PPCR project was proactive in recognizing challenges, finding solutions, and adapting them as needed. One example is the engagement of effective NGOs as CRAFs.
- 5. Multi-sector and multi-stakeholder approach.** The PPCR project's approach to strengthening climate resilience at the local level required effective engagement of a range of actors, including district-level technical experts in a range of relevant sectors, communities, wards, provincial staff, and CRAFs.

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