



FACTSHEET

NATURE, PEOPLE AND CLIMATE (NPC) INVESTMENT PLAN FOR AFRICA'S ZAMBEZI RIVER BASIN REGION

BACKGROUND

Deploying the power of nature is essential to addressing climate change, with natural ecosystems sequestering around 30% of man-made emissions. Rural peoples' resilience to the effects of climate change can also be strengthened when the vital services that nature provides are maintained and bolstered.

CIF's \$400 million Nature, People, and Climate investment program supports the development of Nature-based Solutions to climate change in low and middle-income countries, ranging from small island states to highly vulnerable sub-Saharan African nations and large Latin American countries. The program funds initiatives that recognize the interdependence among land use, climate change, and the livelihoods of rural communities and Indigenous Peoples.

By bridging the gap between mitigation and adaptation funding, CIF's programmatic approach incentivizes countries to manage these complex relationships and understand the trade-offs between them, contributing to lasting change. It will target additional benefits, such as improved biodiversity and livelihoods.

A unique feature is the programs' Dedicated Grant Mechanism (DGM), a direct financing window for Indigenous Peoples and local communities. With DGM, they are empowered to contribute traditional knowledge to climate solutions, with the autonomy to decide how to allocate funding.

CIF NPC partners with Africa's Zambezi River Basin Region (Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, and Tanzania), Brazil, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, Fiji, Kenya, Namibia, Rwanda and Zambia to generate Nature-based Solutions as a contribution to achieving global climate goals.

THE CHALLENGE

This investment plan lays out the joint vision of five riparian countries in the Zambezi River Basin - Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania and Zambia. Home to approximately 51 million people, the river basin provides critical services such as potable water, forest products, fisheries, energy generation, and biodiversity. However, many challenges threaten these vital resources:

- **Climate and Environmental Threats:** Rising temperatures, and increasingly prevalent droughts are disrupting ecosystems and livelihoods. For example, mangrove ecosystems have been impacted by drought, threatening shrimp and prawn production and posing a significant regional environmental threat.
- **Forest Degradation:** Soil erosion and habitat loss is made worse by unsustainable farming practices, deforestation, preferences for exotic tree species over indigenous varieties, and an overreliance on firewood for energy.
- **Water Scarcity:** Rainfall reduction at the headwaters of the basin has been observed since 1983. The subsequent decline in water availability and quality threatens agriculture, hydropower, and community well-being.
- **Social Vulnerability:** Marginalized groups, such as women and youth, have limited access to decision-making opportunities and resources. The 2024 drought, the most severe in a century, affected over 40 million people in the southern African region, with notable impacts on these groups.

INVESTMENT PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

Anchored in the Zambezi Watercourse Strategic Plan (2018–2040), the NPC Investment Plan, with \$60.35 million in CIF funding expected to generate \$643 million in co-financing, adopts a transboundary approach to address challenges across eight priority hotspots, with six main components.

1 Promoting **sustainable forest restoration and management** to enhance local communities' livelihoods and ecosystem resilience by:

- Reforesting highly degraded headwater and high-carbon forest areas
- Developing alternative livelihoods for communities living adjacent to the forests, and promoting voluntary carbon markets to involve the private sector

2 Strengthening management capacity for **protection of high-carbon stocks** that enhance mitigation of climate change, including:

- Implementing forest carbon projects in high carbon forests
- Supporting soil carbon initiatives in peatlands and wetland ecosystems

3 Building up **integrated management and restoration of freshwater and coastal ecosystems** for enhanced biodiversity and improved local livelihoods, with a focus on:

- Restoring degraded wetlands and peatlands ecosystems, and supporting freshwater spatial mapping of water sources and recharge zones



- Strengthening private-community partnerships to enhance community ecotourism and enterprise
- Strengthening fisheries with co-management and value chains development

4 Improving the management of wildlife protected areas to **enhance landscape connectivity** across wildlife habitats and to boost eco-tourism by:

- Strengthening wildlife connectivity and reducing human-wildlife conflict through land use planning and zonation
- Expanding and strengthening community-led natural resource protection via models such as community game ranches, conservancies and heritage and cultural villages, especially on customary and communal lands

5 Strengthening the resilience of local communities and **agricultural productive systems** to climate variability in arid and semi-arid areas through:

- Promoting agroforestry and conservation agriculture practices
- Supporting the adoption of water-efficient community-based irrigation systems among medium and large-scale commercial farmers

6 Strengthening the **enabling environment** for sustainable uses of land, water and other natural resources

FUTURE IMPACT

The NPC investment plan for Africa's Zambezi River Basin Region aims to create transformational change upstream by enhancing headwater spring sources in the Upper Zambezi, and downstream by increasing community resilience to climate change. Expected large scale impacts include:

- **Increased forest canopy and forest cover,** leading to enhanced carbon sequestration by forests
- **Reduced GHG emissions**
- **Improved habitats and biodiversity on land and in water**
- **Enhanced river flows, river health, and water quality,** including increased surface river flows and groundwater recharge (base flows)



THE CLIMATE INVESTMENT FUNDS

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