



Zambia

Agriculture is a cornerstone of Zambia's economy. Consisting largely of subsistence farms, it [employs](#) about 70% of the population and generates 20–25% of GDP. The country has abundant freshwater resources, with major rivers such as the Zambezi, Luangwa, and Kafue vital for agriculture, domestic use, industry, and energy.

However, with approximately 84% of the country's electricity generation driven by [hydropower](#), Zambia's energy is increasingly vulnerable to erratic rainfall and droughts, caused by climate change. This climate variability has a direct impact on energy supplies, causing frequent power shortages and load shedding and affecting every aspect of daily life, including food production, schools, businesses, and hospitals. There is limited development of other renewable sources or fossil fuels.

Since 1965, SNV has supported Zambian smallholder farmers in increasing their productivity, market linkages, food security and incomes. In the energy sector, SNV has facilitated access to renewable sources for communities, as well as to safe water and sanitation facilities, resulting in improved livelihoods and health outcomes.

As Zambia makes progress towards its Agenda 2030 commitments, SNV remains steadfast in its efforts to work closely with government institutions and other partners, contributing to a lasting impact on the lives of the country's people and their communities.



Over 4M smallholder farmers

trained in climate-smart practices, including 50% women



2.2M people

with improved sanitation across seven districts and five towns



7.5K biogas digesters

installed in partnership with biogas construction companies



15K households

gained access to improved nutritional foods

** 2015-2024 achievements



Responding to the climate crisis

Rapid urbanisation and industrialisation—rising 3.2% annually—are [damaging](#) Zambia's ecosystems, watersheds, and forests, with 79,000–270,000 hectares of forest cover lost annually.

In May 2024, the Government launched the Scaling Solutions for Food Loss in Africa project, REGAIN, backed by a [financial injection](#) of US\$15.37 million (€13.17M) to reduce food production losses. This aligns with the Green Economy and Climate Change Bill No. 18 of 2024, which the National Assembly of Zambia is considering. Alongside these, the Water Resources Management Act is also currently under review.

SNV catalyses private sector expertise, innovation capacity, and financial resources. Together with its partners, it adopts agroecological practices and integrated landscape management and focuses on enhancing water resource management to promote community resilience.

DFCD Phases 1 and 2 | Multi-country | 2022-27 | €440M

The multi-country financing programme, the Dutch Fund for Climate and Development (DFCD), has provided grants and technical assistance for climate-resilient agriculture since 2020. In Zambia, Phase 1 of the DFCD project awarded a grant facility of €308,862 to the Zambian seed company, Stewards Globe Limited (Afriseed). The programme trained 700 smallholder farmers in legume seed production and multiplication, with the goal of integrating them into Afriseed's climate-smart seed outgrower scheme. By the end of Phase 1, a total of 898 smallholder farmers had been trained, of whom 19% were young people, 30% women, and 51% men.

Partners: The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance of the Government of Zambia, FMO, SNV, and WWF

ELSAM | Southern, Central, Eastern and Lusaka provinces | 2025 | €185K

The Enhancing Livelihoods and Smallholder Agricultural Markets (ELSAM) project promotes agroecological practices, empowers women and youth, and harnesses new technologies to strengthen agricultural resilience and market access. ELSAM has helped to establish 672 farmer groups and trained nearly 700 lead farmers to adopt climate-smart agriculture and renewable energy. SNV has built private sector networks by recruiting 350 aggregators, identifying 14 sites for commodity hubs, and training 5,960 farmers in post-harvest loss management. Over 100 district-level savings groups, largely comprising women and youth, have been formed, improving access to financial and agribusiness services. Additionally, 750 mothers were trained in maternal, infant, and young child nutrition through nutrition care groups, fostering inclusive gender- and nutrition-focused social behaviour change.

Partners: European Union, SNV, and World Food Programme

MWRS4MC, Lot 4 | Southern province | 2025-29 | €2M

Through the Management of Water Resources and Sanitation in Medium-Sized Cities (MWRS4MC lot 4) project, SNV supports efforts to strengthen technical solutions and regulatory frameworks for containment-based sanitation and faecal sludge management in two flood-prone areas of Choma Town: Overspill and Zambia Compounds. MWRS4MC lot 4 builds on the success of the Chambeshi-Lukanga sanitation programme, which pioneered scheduled desludging in Zambia and contributed to the development of the statutory instruments for on-site sanitation and the climate change risk screening guidelines. MWRS4MC lot 4 aims to improve enforcement and service delivery to strengthen urban sanitation systems and protect public health. Climate resilient sanitation solutions, such as CBS, are particularly important for the 31,705 residents that experience increased flood risks due to local conditions and increasingly erratic weather events.

Partners: BMZ through KfW, Posch & Partners, SNV, Niras and MACs

Accelerating inclusive development

Zambia is diversifying its economy, investing in infrastructure, and promoting technological advancements to drive economic growth and address poverty and unemployment. In the fourth quarter of 2024, it achieved an 8.6% [GDP growth](#), compared with 7.8% in the same period of 2023. The government has been seeking foreign investment and strengthening partnerships with international organisations to create a more prosperous and equitable society.

Together with the UNDP, the country launched the National Policy on Persons with Disabilities and the National Disability Mainstreaming Guidelines, marking a milestone in promoting disability inclusion and equal rights and opportunities.

SNV contributes to expanding opportunities for youth, people with disabilities, and young women by promoting green employment, entrepreneurial initiatives, and access to rights and avenues for meaningful participation in co-creating inclusive and resilient communities.

IAP III | Nationwide | 2025-27 | €1M

The Innovations Against Poverty (IAP) initiative is a challenge fund programme active across 10 provinces in Zambia. The programme supports SMEs in scaling innovative products, services, and business models, and creates employment opportunities for communities as suppliers, distributors, or retailers along the agri-food, water, and energy value chains. To date, IAP has engaged 567 businesses through marketing efforts and has trained staff from 313 enterprises in business planning. Through these efforts, IAP III is helping strengthen the role of inclusive businesses, generating sustainable livelihoods and expanding access to critical goods and services to create pathways out of poverty for underserved communities.

Partners: Sida, Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprise of the Government of Zambia, SNV, and local business development service providers

YEE | Central, Northern, Southern, Eastern, and Northwestern provinces | 2024-28 | €7.4M

With Zambia's [unemployment rate](#) reaching 12.9% in 2024, the country's youth, who account for a large share of the population, are particularly vulnerable. Through the application of the Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship's (YEE) pull, match, push, enable framework, 6,000 jobs were created for young people through partnerships, half of them for women. Private sector firms involved in YEE and value chain partners have engaged over 1,200 young men and women as suppliers, service providers, and employees. Together, private and public sectors and communities have contributed to a shift in gender norms, with 50% of participating women reporting improved perceptions of their role in the economy.

This project is a continuation of phase 1, Opportunities for Youth Employment (OYE), which ran from 2019 to 2023, with a total funding of US\$5M (€4.17M).

Partners: SDC, Sida, Government of Ireland, Ministry of Youth and Sports and Ministry of Agriculture of the Government of Zambia, and SNV

"With the right skills and mindset, anyone can improve their livelihood and create a better future for themselves and their families." -

Florence Gandize Dumo
Opportunities for Youth
Entrepreneur (OYE)



Strengthening governance and institutions

In 2023-2024, Zambia experienced the worst cholera outbreak in the past five decades and the most severe regional drought of the last 40 years, both exacerbating the country's economic challenges. These inter-related crises speak to the country's challenges in managing its water, sanitation and hygiene conditions.

SNV is working alongside CSOs to engage and influence the Zambian Parliament and relevant government ministries to implement existing policies and programmes in view of climate change, address the needs of women, girls and other vulnerable groups, and to increase budget allocations in the water sector, in line with Zambia's Water Investment programme, Vision 2030, and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 (Clean water and sanitation for all).

WVU | Nationwide | 2024-28 | €3.6M

Launched in 2024, the Water Voices United (WVU) partnership is working to strengthen the advocacy capacity of WASH CSOs in support of Zambia's realisation of the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation (HRWS). The partnership focuses on enabling more effective engagement between the government, service providers and communities, while promoting increased public investment and attention to inclusion and climate resilience.

WVU has played a key role in developing a national roadmap to accelerate the realisation of HRWS and establish a Parliamentary WASH Caucus in Zambia. The partnership developed a position paper outlining the benefits of Zambia acceding to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's [Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes](#). In September 2024, the Government of Zambia formally acceded to the Convention.

Partners: European Union, Danish People's Aid, SNV, and NGO WASH Forum

Chambeshi-Lukanga sanitation programme, 2017-24



53,655 people directly reached by sanitation efforts

67% increase in access to safely managed sanitation across five towns

44% decrease in the presence of unimproved facilities across five towns

Two water and sanitation companies strengthened to implement inclusive WASH programming

WASH SDG | Multi-country | 2017-24 | €60M

The Dutch-funded WASH SDG Programme worked to address structural barriers limiting equitable access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services. Through partnerships with CSOs, local authorities, utilities and communities, in Mbala, for example, the programme increased people with disabilities' access to sanitation facilities by 13 percentage points—from 71% to 84%—during the first half of the programme.

In Nakonde, a sanitation and hygiene task force for people with disabilities was formed to advance inclusive WASH planning and facility design. As a result, 3% more health care facilities gained disability-inclusive sanitation systems by programme end—strengthening dignity, equity, and the integration of inclusion within WASH governance. In Zambia, WASH SDG is called the Chambeshi-Lukanga sanitation programme.

Partners: The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, WAI, SNV and Plan International

SNV is a global development partner deeply rooted in the African and Asian countries where we operate. With 60 years of experience and a team of approximately 1,600 people, we strengthen capacities and catalyse partnerships that transform agri-food, energy and water systems. Working on the core themes of gender equality and social inclusion, climate adaptation and mitigation, and strong institutions and effective governance, we tailor our approaches to different contexts to achieve large-scale impact and create sustainable and more equitable lives for all.

Contact SNV in Zambia

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