

Resilient Waters Project

The Matobo Hills High Altitude Catchment





Summary of the USAID project: Towards resilience in the Matobo Hills High-Altitude Catchment in Zimbabwe through participatory assessments, rehabilitation and capacity development.

This project will be implemented by the Matobo Hills consortium, comprising three organizations: **Dambari Wildlife Trust (DWT)**, **Zimbabwe Humanitarian and Livelihoods Development Trust (ZHLDT)**, and **Inkanyezi Development Trust (IDT)**.

Objectives

The overarching objective will be to enhance human and environmental resilience in the Matobo Hills High-Altitude Catchment through education about and implementation of improved water-use practices, responsible management of the landscape, biodiversity conservation, and rehabilitation of wetlands to include grazing management and land rehabilitation.

Major objectives are to:

- gather baseline data on water provision and use, socio-economic data, and the threats to resiliency;
- explore future scenarios with communities and improve water-related knowledge and management skills through education and outreach activities in order to move towards a sustainable future;
- implement improved land- and water-use practices in the Matobo Hills, through rights-based and adaptive approaches, and monitor improvements to the functioning of the ecosystem;
- improve and protect degraded wetlands through fencing and land rehabilitation techniques;
- adapt grazing methodologies to improve land-use practices and reduce land degradation and siltation of sub-catchment water sources in the Limpopo River Basin.

Description of the project activity

This work will engage a range of stakeholders, including environmental, research and humanitarian NGOs, local government, appropriate authorities and local communities across two administrative districts (Matobo and Umzingwane Districts) of the Matobo Hills. A phased approach will be used over two years, with initial data collection across the entire Matobo Hills World Heritage Site area conducted for needs analysis and to provide a baseline for impact monitoring, and an implementation (rehabilitation and education) phase launched in two Wards per District thereafter. Community engagement and skills development will be conducted throughout the project.

Phase 1: Baseline data collection will cover environmental, biological, socio-economic and policy aspects of the Matobo Hills high-altitude catchment (MHHAC) area. Specific activities include

environmental and biodiversity assessments of wetlands as well as socio-economic and water-use assessments which will include focus group sessions with community members. Data generated in this phase will be used to identify intervention sites, and will form the basis for monitoring and evaluating subsequent interventions.

Phase 2: Based on information gleaned during the first phase and building on relationships developed with communities in that time, activities that build resilience and improve water and land management will be implemented in two Wards per District and include land management practices and fencing of a natural wetland. Selection of Wards will be based on a number of criteria, including greatest need, potential impact both locally and downstream, and feasibility.

Key outputs: The following outputs are expected, all of which will have both short- and long-term impacts:

- Spatially-explicit data on a suite of variables. These data will encompass wetland distribution, status and threats; land use; livelihoods and income streams; natural resource use (including economic valuations); biodiversity; and resilience audits in ten administrative Wards of the MHWHS.
- Community-developed natural resource management plans produced in ten Wards;
- Improved function (partial rehabilitation) of at least one key wetland area (each 5 ha in size) in each of two Districts;
- Partial rehabilitation of at least one key rangeland (20 – 50 ha in size) close to a sensitive location (e.g. wetland) in each of two Districts.
- Education-related outputs, including training manuals for ToT workshops, brochures, and flyers. Topics will include advocacy (around water and natural resource rights and management; roles of communities and leaders); biodiversity conservation and value; resilience guidance (related to community-based natural resource management and climate change); alternative livelihoods and skills;
- A standardized assessment tool for capturing information on the status of wetlands/water bodies and their surrounding areas;
- A standardized assessment tool for capturing information on community water use, attitudes and aspirations for livelihood development involving water use, and gauging community resilience to climatic and socio-economic shocks;
- A feasibility report for implementing improved water-use (e.g. drip irrigation) and water-harvesting methods.

Key outcomes:

- Improved knowledge and skills among inhabitants of the Hills in key aspects of adaptive water and land management, biodiversity, and resilience. These will be measured through the MEL framework.
- Increase in water-wise and environmentally sustainable livelihood-enhancing and income-generating strategies practiced in the Matobo Hills, arising from advice and education received during this project. These may include managing water abstraction for nutrition or market gardens, communities identifying diversified income streams to pursue, and improved livestock production through enhanced herd and rangeland management.
- Improved water flows from the MHHAC to the Limpopo River, via reduced wasteful abstraction within the Hills, along with reduced silt levels.

- Strengthened policy (following on from the policy audits relating to natural resource use) and established ward-level natural resource management plans, both at local community level and potentially at higher government level (District level), to safeguard human rights, wetlands and sustainable livelihoods.