

WHAT PROGRESS LOOKS LIKE

MOZAMBIQUE AND ZIMBABWE (PUNGWE, BUZI AND SAVE RIVER BASINS) – TRANSBOUNDARY COOPERATION (SDG TARGET 6.5)

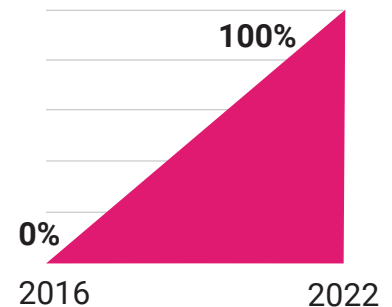


Progress indicator: SDG 6.5.2 Proportion of transboundary river and lake basin area with an operational arrangement for water cooperation

Level of impact: Three transboundary river and lake basins, Pungwe, Buzi and Save (31,000 km² land area), shared by Mozambique and Zimbabwe

Result: Agreement to establish the Pungwe, Buzi and Save Tri-basin Institution, a joint body for implementing existing cooperation agreements for all three basins, and ongoing work to harmonize national water laws, policies and strategies in both countries.

Progress 2016–2022:



SITUATION

Cooperation on rivers, lakes and aquifers shared between countries is essential to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. Mozambique and Zimbabwe share at least five river basins, with three of them shared by the two countries alone: Buzi, Pungwe and Save (BuPuSa). These three basins, located along the economically important Beira corridor that connects the Beira harbour to the hinterland, originate in Zimbabwe and drain into the Indian Ocean in Mozambique.

Challenges in these basins include water quality degradation due to gold panning, increased siltation due to unsustainable land management practices such as riverbank farming, intensive agriculture and deforestation. The basins are also prone to climate hazards such as floods, droughts and cyclones, which in turn take a large toll on the people living there. For example, Cyclones Idai and Kenneth in March and April 2019 caused almost 2.2 million people to need urgent assistance in Mozambique alone.

Zimbabwe, as a mostly semi-arid country with high rainfall variability, is heavily reliant on water storage. While maintaining environmental flows is critical to reconciling upstream-downstream interests within the basins, there is limited implementation of water allocation due to a lack of capacity and required skills.

The governments of Mozambique and Zimbabwe recognized that a legal and institutional framework was needed to build resilience to future catastrophes in these transboundary basins.

PROGRESS MADE

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Revised Protocol on Shared Watercourses provides the basis for transboundary cooperation on the Buzi, Pungwe and Save basins. The protocol, which was signed in 2000 and entered into force in 2003, calls for SADC countries to establish cooperative arrangements and joint institutions for all their shared watercourses.



There is an ongoing programme to develop and support the implementation of bilateral agreements for each river basin, and establish a tri-basin institution covering all three rivers, supported by several international partners (International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Global Water Partnership Southern Africa (GWP), WaterNet, Climate Resilient Infrastructure Development Facility, UNESCO, SADC and the governments of Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States).

Mozambique and Zimbabwe signed the Pungwe Basin Bilateral Agreement in 2016 and the Agreement on Co-operation on the Development, Management and Sustainable Utilization of the Water Resources of the Buzi Watercourse in 2019. Capacity-building was central to progressing negotiations of these bilateral agreements. For example, a training programme on environmental flows was developed by IUCN and WaterNet, bringing together a wide range of experts, including high-level officials (directors and senior scientists from Mozambique's Water Administration and Zimbabwe's National Water Authority) and technical members with different backgrounds (law, economics, engineering, biophysics and social sciences). Another example is IUCN's Building River Dialogue and Governance programme.

Through the BuPuSa Tri-basin Project, implemented by GWP on behalf of the SADC Secretariat, the countries have also sought to develop a water sharing agreement for the Save basin, and to establish a joint institution to support the implementation of the agreements for all three basins.

A road map and plan have been developed by the countries with partner support to operationalize the BuPuSa Tri-basin Institution, covering three tracks: 1) the enabling environment; 2) stakeholder engagement; and 3) institutional development. The first track focused on the negotiation of the BuPuSa Institution Agreement and Hosting Agreement themselves. The second track focused on carrying out a stakeholder baseline survey, developing a stakeholder participation strategy, and establishing a stakeholder forum. The third track involved appointing an interim secretariat, developing a BuPuSa capacity-building strategy, and drawing up BuPuSa policies and regulations.

Despite the COVID-19 crisis, two agreements concerning the joint institution have been finalized in 2021: an Establishing Agreement for the BuPuSa River Basin Organization, and a Hosting Agreement to rotate leadership between the two countries every 10 years. Both countries are reviewing and harmonizing their water laws, policies and strategies to support the implementation of the agreements.

Recently, funding from the Global Environment Facility has been secured for local solutions to manage competing water uses and associated ecosystems in the three basins. The project, running from January 2021 to December 2024, focuses on flood and drought warning and mitigation, ecosystem conservation and restoration for sustainable livelihoods, and integral basin planning.

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

- Existing protocol calling for establishment of cooperative arrangements and joint institutions for shared watercourses
- Collaboration between national governments and international and regional partners, assistance from external support agencies
- Capacity-building to progress negotiations

LEARN MORE

- [Brief about BuPuSa Tri-basin Project from GWP](#)
- [News item on the vision for BuPuSa from IUCN \(2021\)](#)
- [National country reports on SDG indicator 6.5.2](#)
- [Overall progress on SDG 6 in Mozambique](#)
- [Overall progress on SDG 6 in Zimbabwe](#)