

Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection



Promoting Faith and Justice

# ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY UNDER THE EIGHTH NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (8NDP)

An Assessment of the Zambian Government's Progress &  
Challenges in Implementing Strategic Area Three

**REPORT**

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**Acronyms**

8NDP Eighth National Development Plan

EIA Environmental Impact Assessment

JCTR Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection

NAP National Adaptation Plan

NDCs Nationally Determined Contributions

NGGS National Green Growth Strategy

SDA Strategic Development Area

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Zambia faces significant environmental challenges, including deforestation, soil erosion, and land degradation which threaten the country's biodiversity and agricultural productivity, exacerbating food insecurity and poverty in rural communities. Climate change impacts, such as prolonged droughts and erratic rainfall, further amplify these challenges. With growing appreciation of the top priority need to eradicate poverty it was also recognised that sustainable development must embrace natural resource conservation as an equal partner. It is also widely realised that successful campaigns to achieve lasting and effective economic and social development require a strong sense of ownership rooted in a firm community base built around effective local institutions. Continued unsustainable human activities have ushered in a new climate regime where storms have become more intense, droughts periods are now longer, floods are incessant and the occurrence of wild fires is more frequent. Adapting to this new climate era is important for the continued existence of life on the planet. Moreover, mitigating the effects of climate change is crucial for sustainable development.



*Figure 1: Image of a bridge washed away in Chipekete, Rufunsa District.  
Credit: Bernard Mwaba - JCTR*

With support from Misereor, the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) is implementing a three-year project titled “Community Action on Climate Change Adaptation and Environmental Management”. The project is aimed at empowering community members in Southern Province (Sinazongwe and Monze districts), Western Province (Mongu and Nalolo districts) and Luapula Province (Mansa and Samfya) with knowledge and skills to engage with duty bearers and policy makers to advocate for enhanced climate change adaptation and environmental management policies. Furthermore, the project aims to promote the use of indigenous methods and best practices in communities, after sensitisation, so that they may

better adapt to climate change effects. JCTR therefore conducted an analysis of The Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP). The desk review scrutinizes Zambia's progress and challenges in implementing Part IV of the 8NDP, focusing on Strategic Area Three – Environmental Sustainability. Our analysis aims to elucidate the strategies, achievements, and hurdles encountered in advancing Zambia's environmental agenda.

The report provides a comprehensive analytical overview of the progress and challenges faced by the Republic of Zambia in implementing Part IV, Strategic Development Area Three (Environmental Sustainability) of the Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP) 2022–2026. Environmental sustainability under the 8NDP is positioned as a central pillar for achieving inclusive, resilient, and green economic growth, recognising that Zambia's socio-economic development is inextricably linked to the sustainable management of its natural resource base. The strategic area prioritises strengthening climate change mitigation and adaptation, promoting sustainable natural resource management, enhancing environmental governance systems, and building resilience among vulnerable communities whose livelihoods depend heavily on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, forestry, and fisheries.

The importance of this assessment is underscored by the increasing environmental and climate-related risks facing Zambia, including recurrent droughts, floods, land degradation, and deforestation, all of which threaten food security, livelihoods, and long-term development gains. While the 8NDP provides a robust policy framework aligned with global commitments such as the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals, there remains a critical need to evaluate the extent to which these commitments are being translated into tangible outcomes on the ground. This report therefore seeks to bridge that gap by examining both the progress made and the systemic challenges that continue to hinder effective implementation, with a view to informing evidence-based decision-making by government, cooperating partners, and other stakeholders.

For the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR), this analysis is particularly important as it directly aligns with its mandate of promoting social and economic justice, especially for poor and vulnerable communities. Environmental sustainability and climate justice are increasingly central to JCTR's programming, given that environmental degradation and climate change disproportionately affect the livelihoods, food systems, and rights of marginalised populations. By critically assessing the implementation of SDA 3, the report provides JCTR with an evidence base to strengthen its policy advocacy, enhance its

engagement with government and other stakeholders, and support communities in demanding accountability and inclusive environmental governance.

Furthermore, the findings of this report will support JCTR's work in advancing faith-based advocacy on environmental rights, promoting sustainable food systems such as agroecology, and influencing national and local policy processes to ensure that development pathways are both people-centred and environmentally sustainable. It also enables JCTR to contribute more effectively to national dialogue platforms, donor engagements, and multi-stakeholder processes aimed at strengthening climate resilience and environmental stewardship in Zambia. Ultimately, this assessment is intended not only to inform donor programming and strategic investment, but also to reinforce JCTR's role as a credible voice in advocating for equitable, sustainable, and accountable development in Zambia.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

The Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP) charts Zambia's developmental path from 2022 to 2026, building upon the preceding Seventh National Development Plan (7NDP) in pursuit of Zambia's Vision 2030. Framed within global agendas like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Africa's Agenda 2063, the 8NDP signifies Zambia's commitment to international development objectives. Acknowledging the economic strain exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic at the time of its inception, the 8NDP targets longstanding socio-economic issues such as low diversification, youth unemployment, and poverty. Its strategic interventions span Economic Transformation, Human and Social Development, Environmental Sustainability, and Good Governance Environment. Formulated through extensive review and stakeholder consultations, the 8NDP aims to tackle developmental hurdles by executing targeted actions. Emphasising economic transformation, it prioritises sectors like agriculture, mining, tourism, and manufacturing, supported by investments in infrastructure and skills development. Environmental sustainability is underscored, advocating for green initiatives and climate resilience. Under the theme of "Socio-Economic Transformation for Improved Livelihoods," the 8NDP aims to enhance economic efficiency and social sector interventions, facilitated by decentralisation. Development Outcome 1 focuses on climate change adaptation and mitigation, promoting sustainable practices and resilient infrastructure. Outcome 2 aims at ecosystem protection, conservation, and sustainable resource management. The 8NDP underscores Zambia's commitment to environmental sustainability amidst socio-economic transformation. By

addressing challenges and implementing strategic interventions, Zambia aims for a balanced approach to economic development and environmental preservation, securing a sustainable future.

Zambia's development trajectory remains highly dependent on its rich natural resource base, including forests, water systems, arable land, and mineral resources, making environmental sustainability a critical foundation for socio-economic transformation. The majority of the population particularly in rural areas relies directly on natural resources for livelihoods through agriculture, fisheries, and forest-based activities. The agricultural sector alone employs a significant proportion of the population and is predominantly rain-fed, making it highly vulnerable to climate variability. At the same time, the country's heavy reliance on hydropower for energy generation further exposes it to climate shocks, particularly droughts that reduce water levels in key reservoirs. This structural dependence underscores the importance of sustainable environmental management as both an economic and social priority.



*Figure 2: Image of Kariba Dam undergoing rehabilitation works. Credit: Shutterstock*

However, Zambia continues to face mounting environmental pressures that threaten long-term development gains. Deforestation rates remain among the highest in sub-Saharan Africa, largely driven by charcoal production, agricultural expansion, and unsustainable land-use practices. Land degradation and soil erosion are increasingly affecting agricultural productivity, while biodiversity loss is accelerating due to habitat destruction and weak conservation enforcement. Pollution—particularly from mining activities—has also emerged as a significant concern, affecting water quality and public health in several parts of the country.

These environmental challenges are compounded by rapid population growth, urbanisation, and persistent poverty, which increase pressure on already strained natural resources.

Climate change has further intensified these vulnerabilities, with Zambia experiencing more frequent and severe droughts, floods, and erratic rainfall patterns in recent years. These climate shocks have had direct implications for food security, water availability, and energy production, often reversing development gains and disproportionately affecting poor and marginalised communities. For instance, prolonged dry spells have led to reduced crop yields and increased food insecurity, while flooding has displaced communities and damaged infrastructure. The economic cost of climate-related disasters continues to rise, placing additional strain on public resources and highlighting the urgency of building resilience.

In response to these challenges, the Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP) 2022–2026 integrates environmental sustainability as a cross-cutting priority and aligns national development objectives with global commitments such as the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals<sup>1</sup>. The plan emphasises climate change mitigation and adaptation, sustainable natural resource management, and strengthened environmental governance systems. Institutional reforms, including the establishment of the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, were aimed at improving coordination of climate and environmental programmes, while regulatory oversight by the Zambia Environmental Management Agency has been reinforced to enhance compliance and accountability.

Despite these policy and institutional advancements, significant gaps remain in translating commitments into effective action. Implementation is often constrained by limited financial resources, weak institutional capacity, and fragmented coordination across sectors and levels of government. Budget allocations to environmental sectors remain relatively low compared to the scale of the challenges, resulting in heavy reliance on donor funding for programme implementation. Additionally, enforcement of environmental regulations is inconsistent, particularly in high-risk sectors such as mining and forestry, where economic interests sometimes override environmental considerations.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-11/Zambia%20UN%20Sustainable%20Development%20Cooperation%20Framework%202023-2027.pdf>

Furthermore, decentralisation identified as a key mechanism for improving service delivery and community participation has progressed slowly, limiting the ability of local authorities to effectively manage environmental resources and respond to climate-related challenges. Data gaps and limited access to reliable environmental information also hinder evidence-based planning and monitoring of progress. These structural, financial, and governance constraints continue to affect the overall effectiveness of Strategic Development Area (SDA)<sup>3</sup> implementation, highlighting the need for sustained reforms and targeted investments to achieve environmental sustainability outcomes in Zambia.

### **3. PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

The Government of the Republic of Zambia has made notable progress in advancing the environmental sustainability agenda under Strategic Development Area Three (SDA 3) of the Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP) 2022–2026. This progress reflects a gradual but important shift towards integrating environmental governance into national development planning, with increasing recognition that sustainable natural resource management is central to long-term economic resilience, poverty reduction, and climate stability.

A major institutional milestone has been the establishment and operationalisation of the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment. The Ministry has strengthened leadership and coordination of environmental and climate-related functions across government, elevating environmental sustainability within the national policy agenda. Furthermore, it has improved inter-sectoral coordination, particularly across agriculture, energy, water, forestry and mining sectors while enhancing Zambia’s engagement in regional and global climate governance platforms. This institutional strengthening has provided a clearer framework for environmental decision-making and policy coherence.

In parallel, Zambia has made progress in aligning national development planning with international climate and environmental commitments, particularly the Nationally Determined

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<sup>2</sup> <https://aipwater.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Zambia-Water-Investment-Programme-Full-Documents.pdf#:~:text=SDA%203:%20Environmental%20sustainability.%20A%20number%20of,and%20adaptation;%20sustainable%20environment%20and%20natural%20resources.>

Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement<sup>3</sup>. This alignment has supported the mainstreaming of climate change considerations into key sectors such as agriculture, energy, infrastructure development, land use planning and water resource management. Increasingly, ministries and implementing agencies are incorporating climate risk screening, environmental safeguards and resilience considerations into planning and budgeting processes signalling a gradual shift towards climate-responsive development planning.

Additionally, Regulatory strengthening has also been observed through the work of the Zambia Environmental Management Agency which has improved environmental monitoring, inspection and compliance enforcement systems. Enhancements in Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) processes, licensing procedures and field inspections have contributed to improved accountability among developers and greater awareness of environmental obligations across both public and private sectors. In addition, inter-agency collaboration in enforcement such as coordination with security and forestry institutions in addressing illegal logging has further strengthened environmental governance, although enforcement gaps still remain in some sectors.



Figure 3: The National Assembly of Zambia. Credit: State House

At the programme level, Zambia has scaled up climate change adaptation and resilience-building interventions, particularly in agriculture and natural resource management. The promotion of climate-smart agriculture practices including conservation farming, crop

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<sup>3</sup> <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/2025-10/NDC%203.0%20COPY%20OF%20ZAMBIA%27S%20ICTU%20FOR%20SUBMISSION%20.pdf>

diversification, and improved extension services has contributed to increased resilience among smallholder farmers facing erratic rainfall and prolonged dry spells. Efforts in ecosystem restoration, including reforestation, watershed protection, and land rehabilitation, have also been expanded in several regions, contributing to gradual recovery of degraded landscapes and improved environmental sustainability outcomes.

A flagship intervention under SDA 3 has been the implementation of the Great Green Wall Initiative, coordinated by the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment. This initiative aims to restore degraded ecosystems through large-scale afforestation and reforestation from northern to southern Zambia. It promotes agroforestry, particularly the planting of drought-resistant tree species, to combat land degradation, reduce soil erosion, and enhance biodiversity conservation. The initiative also emphasises strong community participation, recognising local communities as key custodians of natural resources. Through tree planting activities, sustainable land management practices and local ownership structures the programme seeks to ensure long-term environmental and livelihood benefits<sup>4</sup>. The Great Green Wall Initiative is further strengthened by investments in research, innovation, and capacity building. Partnerships with research institutions support the development of climate-smart technologies, seed banks, and sustainable water management systems. In addition, training programmes for farmers, extension workers, and policymakers are helping to improve technical capacity for environmental restoration and sustainable land use planning. Complementary public awareness campaigns are also contributing to increased environmental consciousness and behavioural change at community level.

In addition to restoration initiatives, Zambia has developed the National Green Growth Strategy (NGGS) 2024–2030, which provides a long-term framework for transitioning towards a low-carbon, resource-efficient and inclusive green economy. The strategy envisions sustainable economic transformation that balances economic growth with environmental protection and aligns closely with the objectives of the 8NDP. It promotes investments in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, green infrastructure, and circular economy approaches<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.mgee.gov.zm/?page\\_id=322](https://www.mgee.gov.zm/?page_id=322)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cabinet.gov.zm/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/2NATIONAL-GREEN-GROWTH-STRATEGY-2024-2030-6.pdf>

Further progress is evident in climate policy and planning frameworks, including the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), which provides a structured approach to strengthening resilience against climate hazards such as droughts and floods. The NAP integrates disaster risk reduction, gender-responsive budgeting and sectoral adaptation planning ensuring that climate resilience is embedded across national development processes<sup>6</sup>. Similarly, the NDC Implementation Framework provides a coordinated roadmap for both mitigation and adaptation actions across sectors, strengthening institutional coordination and supporting measurable progress towards climate commitments.

Zambia has also engaged in emerging climate finance and carbon market initiatives. The development of guidelines under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement and the Carbon Market Framework reflects efforts to position the country to benefit from international carbon financing while safeguarding environmental integrity and ensuring sustainable development outcomes. Additionally, partnerships such as the Memorandum of Understanding with Blue Carbon for large-scale reforestation and forest restoration initiatives highlight increasing interest in leveraging private sector investment for environmental restoration, though these require strong safeguards to ensure transparency and community benefit sharing.

Overall, these combined efforts demonstrate a steady and multi-layered transition towards more coordinated, inclusive and climate-responsive environmental governance in Zambia. While implementation challenges remain, particularly in enforcement capacity and financing, the progress achieved under SDA 3 reflects growing institutional maturity and an increasing recognition of environmental sustainability as a cornerstone of national development and poverty reduction.

#### **4. CHALLENGES**

Despite the progress recorded under Strategic Development Area Three (SDA 3), the implementation of environmental sustainability under the Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP) 2022–2026 in the Republic of Zambia continues to face deep-seated, interrelated challenges that cut across financing, institutional capacity, governance, and socio-economic

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<sup>6</sup> <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/NAP-Zambia-2023.pdf>

behaviour. These constraints collectively undermine policy effectiveness, weaken enforcement systems, and limit the country's ability to build resilience against escalating climate and environmental risks.

A fundamental challenge remains inadequate and unpredictable resource allocation for environmental management. Environmental programmes continue to receive a relatively small share of the national budget, resulting in heavy reliance on external partners and project-based financing. This fragmented funding model limits long-term planning, scalability, and sustainability of interventions. In some cases, government responses to environmental threats such as special enforcement or recovery operations targeting illegal logging reflect a reactive rather than proactive financing approach. This underscores the absence of a stable, dedicated, and adequately resourced environmental financing framework to support the full implementation of SDA 3 priorities<sup>7</sup>.

Closely linked to the financing gap is the limited engagement of the private sector in green growth investments. Although the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment has emphasised the private sector as a key driver of Zambia's transition to a green economy, actual participation remains below potential. Investment in green technology, renewable energy, and environmental innovation particularly digital monitoring and climate-smart solutions remains limited. The lack of structured incentives, weak public-private collaboration frameworks, and perceived investment risks continue to constrain private sector involvement, despite its critical role in driving sustainable economic transformation.

Institutional capacity constraints further compound implementation challenges. Key institutions such as the Zambia Environmental Management Agency and related line ministries continue to face shortages in skilled personnel, operational resources, and logistical support. This results in weak environmental monitoring systems, delayed compliance inspections, and limited follow-up on Environmental Impact Assessments. In many districts, environmental officers lack adequate transport, laboratory facilities, and technical tools to effectively monitor

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<https://www.unicef.org/zambia/media/7651/file/Climate%20finance%20Budget%20Brief%202025.pdf.pdf>

pollution, land degradation, or industrial compliance, particularly in remote and high-growth areas. These limitations significantly reduce the effectiveness of enforcement mechanisms.

Environmental degradation continues to intensify despite ongoing interventions. Deforestation remains a major concern, with estimates indicating annual forest loss of approximately 250,000 to 300,000 hectares, largely driven by charcoal production, agricultural expansion, and illegal timber harvesting<sup>8</sup>. Over 70% of urban households rely on biomass energy, sustaining high demand for charcoal and placing continued pressure on forest ecosystems. Unsustainable agricultural practices, including shifting cultivation and slash-and-burn methods, further contribute to soil degradation and declining agricultural productivity, increasing vulnerability to food insecurity.



*Figure 4: Bags of charcoal displayed for sale in Sinazongwe, Southern Province. Credit: Bernard Mwaba - JCTR*

At the same time, climate change impacts are becoming more frequent and severe, reversing development gains across multiple sectors. Zambia has experienced recurrent droughts and floods, with recent drought episodes in 2019/2020 and 2023/2024 significantly reducing maize yields in key agricultural regions. Flooding in low-lying and urban areas, particularly in Lusaka Province, has disrupted domestic supply chains, damaged infrastructure, and displaced communities. Hydropower generation accounting for over 80% of national electricity supply has also been severely affected by declining water levels in major reservoirs such as Lake Kariba, contributing to electricity shortages and increased reliance on environmentally harmful

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<sup>8</sup> [https://www.cifor-icraf.org/publications/pdf\\_files/OccPapers/OP-113.pdf](https://www.cifor-icraf.org/publications/pdf_files/OccPapers/OP-113.pdf)

alternative energy sources such as diesel generators and charcoal. These dynamics undermine both economic productivity and environmental sustainability objectives.

Financing constraints are further exacerbated by limited access to predictable climate finance. Although Zambia has begun exploring carbon markets and green investment frameworks, most environmental and climate programmes remain dependent on donor funding. As a result, many interventions are implemented at pilot scale without sufficient resources for national expansion or long-term sustainability. This financial uncertainty limits the ability of government and partners to respond effectively to escalating environmental risks. Additionally, Governance and accountability gaps remain particularly pronounced in the extractive sector. Weak enforcement of environmental regulations and limited monitoring capacity have resulted in compliance failures and environmental disasters, including incidents such as the Sino-Metals Leach Zambia dam disaster<sup>9</sup>. Such events highlight deficiencies in environmental risk assessment, tailings dam monitoring, emergency preparedness, and inter-agency coordination. They also point to broader governance weaknesses in ensuring corporate accountability and enforcing environmental safeguards in high-risk industries.

| Function                | 2026 (K'bn) | % of Budget | 2025 (K'bn) | % of Budget | Change          |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| General Public Services | 92.6        | 36.60%      | 73.8        | 34.00%      | ▲ +25%          |
| Economic Affairs        | 58.6        | 23.20%      | 48.7        | 22.40%      | ▲ +20%          |
| Education               | 33          | 13.00%      | 31.5        | 14.50%      | ▲ +5% (share ↓) |
| Health                  | 26.2        | 10.30%      | 23.2        | 10.70%      | ▲ +13%          |
| Social Protection       | 15.7        | 6.20%       | 16.2        | 7.40%       | ▼ -3% (share ↓) |
| Defence                 | 11.9        | 4.70%       | 10.3        | 4.70%       | ▲ +16%          |
| Public Order & Safety   | 9.6         | 3.80%       | 8.4         | 3.90%       | ▲ +14%          |
| Housing & Amenities     | 3.2         | 1.30%       | 3           | 1.40%       | ▲ +7%           |
| Environment             | 1.6         | 0.60%       | 1.5         | 0.70%       | ▲ +7%           |

2026 National Budget Bulletin | RSM Zambia

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/09/11/zambia-acid-spill-jeopardizes-residents-health>

Decentralisation of environmental governance, though recognised as a key pillar under the 8NDP, has progressed slowly. Local authorities often lack adequate financial and technical capacity to implement environmental programmes effectively. This limits community participation in decision-making processes and weakens local responses to challenges such as waste management, deforestation, and land degradation. In many cases, decentralised structures remain heavily dependent on central government support, reducing responsiveness and accountability at the local level. Waste management is another emerging environmental concern, particularly in urban areas. Inadequate waste collection systems, limited recycling infrastructure, and weak enforcement of sanitation regulations have contributed to increasing plastic pollution and unmanaged solid waste. This not only poses environmental risks but also public health challenges, especially in densely populated urban settlements.

Coordination challenges across government institutions further undermine implementation efficiency. Although environmental sustainability is a cross-cutting priority, sectoral silos persist among ministries responsible for agriculture, energy, mining, water, and land management. This fragmentation leads to overlapping mandates, inconsistent policy implementation, and weak integration of environmental considerations into sectoral planning. Weak environmental data systems and limited access to reliable climate information further constrain evidence-based decision-making and effective monitoring of progress. In addition, socio-economic pressures continue to drive unsustainable natural resource use. High levels of poverty, limited livelihood diversification, and energy insecurity compel many households to rely on environmentally destructive practices such as charcoal production, illegal logging, and encroachment into protected areas. These pressures are further intensified during periods of drought and electricity shortages, when households have few viable alternatives for energy and income generation.

Overall, these interlinked challenges highlight a significant and persistent implementation gap between policy intentions under SDA 3 and outcomes on the ground. Addressing them will require not only increased and predictable financing, but also strengthened institutional capacity, accelerated decentralisation, enhanced private sector participation, and improved cross-sectoral coordination. Without these reforms, Zambia's environmental sustainability agenda risks remaining constrained despite its strong policy foundations.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The implementation of Strategic Development Area Three (Environmental Sustainability) under the Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP) 2022–2026 reflects a strong and consistent policy commitment to advancing environmental sustainability and climate resilience. The review shows clear progress in strengthening institutional frameworks, improving the integration of climate change into national and sectoral planning, and expanding initiatives aimed at ecosystem restoration, climate adaptation, and stakeholder engagement.

Key achievements, including programmes such as landscape restoration efforts and the development of national frameworks like the National Adaptation Plan and the NDC Implementation Framework, demonstrate Zambia’s growing alignment with global climate commitments and its efforts to build resilience against environmental risks.

However, despite these gains, implementation remains constrained by persistent structural challenges. These include limited institutional capacity, inadequate and unpredictable financing, weak coordination across sectors, and inconsistent enforcement of environmental regulations. In addition, increasing climate variability, environmental degradation, and socio-economic pressures on natural resources continue to undermine progress and expose communities to heightened vulnerability.

Overall, while Zambia has established a solid policy and institutional foundation for environmental sustainability under the 8NDP, the translation of these frameworks into sustained, large-scale, and measurable outcomes remains uneven. Strengthening implementation capacity, improving financing mechanisms, and enhancing coordination across stakeholders will be critical to closing the gap between policy intent and practical impact, and to ensuring a more resilient and sustainable development pathway.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this review on the implementation of Strategic Development Area Three (Environmental Sustainability) under the Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP) 2022–2026, a set of targeted and mutually reinforcing recommendations is proposed to

strengthen Zambia's progress towards sustainable and climate-resilient development as follows;

- ***Strengthening institutional capacity for environmental governance:*** Government, through the Zambia Environmental Management Agency and relevant line ministries, should prioritise recruitment, training, and retention of qualified environmental professionals, while also improving operational resources such as transport, laboratories, and digital monitoring systems. This will enhance compliance monitoring, enforcement of environmental regulations, and timely response to environmental risks, particularly in high-pressure sectors such as mining, forestry, agriculture, and urban development.
- ***Improving and stabilising financing for environmental sustainability:*** The government should establish dedicated and ring-fenced budget lines for climate change and environmental management within national and sectoral budgets. In addition, there is need to strengthen climate finance mobilisation strategies through public-private partnerships, carbon markets, and access to international climate funds. This would reduce over-reliance on donor funding and ensure more predictable and sustainable financing for long-term environmental programmes.
- ***Strengthening policy and legal frameworks for effective implementation:*** The government, through the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, should accelerate the enactment and operationalisation of comprehensive climate change legislation. Such a framework should clearly define institutional mandates, strengthen accountability mechanisms, and enhance coordination across sectors including agriculture, energy, mining, water, and land management. Policy coherence will be key to ensuring integrated and efficient implementation of SDA 3 priorities.
- ***Decentralisation of environmental governance should be accelerated:*** Local authorities should be empowered with adequate financial resources, technical capacity, and decision-making authority to implement environmental programmes at community level. Strengthening the role of traditional leaders, civil society organisations, and faith-based institutions will further enhance community ownership, participation, and accountability in environmental management.
- ***Scaling up sustainable livelihoods and climate adaptation interventions:*** The government should expand investment in climate-smart agriculture, agroecology,

drought-resistant crop varieties, and sustainable water management systems to enhance food security and resilience. In addition, promoting alternative energy sources such as renewable energy and improved energy efficiency is critical to reducing dependence on charcoal and mitigating deforestation and land degradation.

- ***Strengthening environmental regulation and accountability in the extractive sector:*** This includes improving Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) systems, enhancing inspection and compliance enforcement, and establishing robust emergency preparedness and response mechanisms. Lessons from environmental incidents such as the Sino-Metals Leach Zambia dam disaster highlight the importance of stronger oversight, risk management, and corporate accountability in high-risk industries.
- ***Improving data systems, research, and knowledge generation for evidence-based decision-making:*** Investment in environmental information systems, climate monitoring tools, and early warning systems will enhance planning, tracking of progress, and disaster preparedness. Development partners and research institutions should be actively engaged in supporting technical assistance, innovation, and knowledge sharing.
- ***Strengthening coordination and private-sector engagement for resource mobilisation and innovation:*** Structured collaboration frameworks should be developed to enhance private sector investment in green technologies, renewable energy, and sustainable production systems, while ensuring environmental safeguards are maintained.

Overall, these recommendations are mutually reinforcing and aim to bridge the gap between policy intent and implementation. If effectively implemented, they will significantly enhance Zambia's ability to achieve the objectives of SDA 3, contributing to inclusive, resilient, and environmentally sustainable development.

### **About the Author**

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### **About the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR)**

The Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) is a faith-based social justice organisation established in 1988 and inspired by Catholic Social Teaching. JCTR promotes a just and equitable society through research, policy analysis, civic engagement, advocacy, and community action. The Centre works across thematic areas including social and economic justice, governance, climate justice, human rights, and value transformation to contribute to the well-being and dignity of all people in Zambia.



### **Disclaimer:**

The views expressed in this report are those of the JCTR and do not necessarily reflect the official position of its partners.

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