



Access to water is a basic human right which is often threatened when the resource is not properly managed and not available in sufficient quantities and/or quality. Water is also an economic good in that it contributes to the prosperity of a nation. However, in Zambia conflicts are already evident between the competing water uses; households, commercial agriculture, hydropower and mining. Therefore, water must be managed by an independent authority to ensure equitable access for all user groups and prevent further conflicts.

Water management as part of a sustainable future

According to the Seventh National Development Plan 2017-2021 there is strong correlation between economic growth, industrial growth and water consumption. According to SADC, 14 percent of the total annual renewable water resources in the SADC region are stored, compared to 70-90 percent in most industrialised regions.

In addition effects of climate change already have had a serious negative impact on Zambia’s water resources availability, mainly due to inadequate water resources infrastructure and management. As a result, the country continues to experience low water levels causing load shedding of electricity, consequently adversely affecting production. According to a report by the Indaba Agricultural Policy Research Institute, economy-wide annual losses due to load shedding in Zambia amount to K32.5 billion (representing 18.8 % of GDP) while losses to the agriculture sector are estimated at K2.83 billion (representing 1.6 % of GDP).

Paying for water illustrates the value of the resources and connects measurements to protect future access. Of course, the community right for drinking water and ensuring sufficient flow to maintain the environmental values needs to be sacrosanct.



How WARMA helps to manage water

WARMA is part of a wider structure established by the Water Resources Management Act No. 21 of 2011. Over the years, Zambia’s water sector has undergone reforms. The two phases of water sector reforms in Zambia commenced in late 1980s and early 1990s respectively. This led to the development of the National Water Policy of 1994, which provided guidelines for reorganising the sector into two sub-sectors, namely;

- > The Water Supply and Sanitation Sub-sector;
- > The Water Resources Development and Management Sub-sector.

The National Water Policy was later revised in 2010. This was then followed by the second phase which was the enactment of a new Water Resources Management Act No. 21 of 2011 which replaced and repealed the Water Act of 1949 which offered a very limited approach towards water resources management. The emerging focus in WRM has prioritized decentralization using the catchment as a management unit in recognition of the unity of the hydrological cycle. This approach will also help to manage water directly where it is needed.