

Call for Expression of Interest

Strengthening Operation and Maintenance (O&M;) Systems to Ensure Sustainable Rural WASH Services in Luapula Province, Zambia

CEF/ZMB/2026/001

1 Timeline

Posted	Jan 2, 2026
Clarification Request Deadline	Jan 7, 2026
Application Deadline	Jan 19, 2026
Notification of Results	Feb 27, 2026
Start Date	Mar 2, 2026
End Date	Feb 29, 2028

2 Locations

- A Zambia
 - a Luapula

3 Sector(s) and area(s) of specialization

- A WASH and Environment
 - a Water

4 Issuing Agency

UNICEF

5 Project Background

Since 2018, UNICEF Zambia has partnered with the Ministry of Water Development and Sanitation (MWDS) with financial support from the German Financial Cooperation via KfW, to improve WASH services in Luapula Province, across six districts, including the Mantapala Refugee Settlement in Nchelenge district. This collaboration has led to extensive infrastructure development, such as construction and rehabilitation of boreholes, small-piped water schemes, and institutional sanitation facilities across multiple districts. Despite these improvements in access to safe water and sanitation, long-term sustainability remains a challenge due to inadequate Operation and Maintenance (O&M;) structures, limited technical capacity, and weak coordination among service delivery actors. The Commercial Utility (CU), mandated to oversee rural water supply, faces staffing and resource constraints that limit effective oversight. At the community level, Village Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Education (V-WASHE) committees and Area Pump Mechanics (APMs) manage day-to-day operations but often lack tools, incentives, oversight, and access to reliable spare parts. Supply chains for handpump and piped-water components are weak; replacement parts are often delayed;

and there is limited understanding of insurance-based risk mitigation for asset protection. Under KfW Phase 7, several approaches are being tested to strengthen rural O&M; systems in Luapula. One of these is the “Community Management Plus” model, which the organization selected through this Expression of Interest (EOI) will support. This model seeks to professionalize local maintenance by combining community ownership with structured external support from Local Authorities (LAs), the CU, and certified local technicians. It also emphasizes reliable spare-parts supply chains, improved access to technical information, and risk mitigation measures such as insurance for high-value water system components. Strengthening institutional linkages among the CU, LAs, and community-based management structures is central to accountability, technical backstopping, and coordinated rural O&M; across Luapula. UNICEF now invites EOIs from eligible Local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) registered and operating in Zambia to partner on a capacity-strengthening initiative aimed at enhancing the functionality and sustainability of rural water systems in Luapula Province. The selected partner(s) will strengthen the capacity of 320 V-WASHE committees and APMs, support improved coordination of spare-parts supply chains, and reinforce institutional linkages among LAs, the CU, and communities to ensure sustainable O&M; and reliable service delivery. They will also collaborate with firms leading behaviour-change campaigns to co-create messages and promote stronger payment compliance.

6 Expected Results

The expected project outcome is enhanced and sustainable Operation and Maintenance (O&M;) of rural water systems, achieved through strengthened community structures, improved technical capacity, and more coordinated institutional support in six districts of Luapula Province. Outcome 1: Strengthened Financial Management and Governance Capacity of WASH Management Committees Expected results - At least 320 WASH management committees, including those piloting Community Based Model (CBM), complete training and mentorship in financial management, transparent record-keeping, and innovative community financing strategies. See Table 1 in Annex 2. - Tools and templates for fee collection, budgeting, and financial reporting are standardized and fully implemented. - Community contributions for major repairs and rehabilitation are secured prior to new installations, promoting ownership. - Development and enforcement of by-laws on user fee collection, non-payment penalties, and governance for financial integrity. - Facilitate rolling out insurance-based risk mitigation systems to safeguard high-value components. - Facilitate trial of new behavior change tools developed by a UNICEF contractor on need for payment if appropriate. Outcome 2: Enhanced Technical Capacity and Institutional Support for Area Pump Minders and other WASH Technicians Expected results - Capacity strengthening for APMs through formalized training on preventive maintenance, troubleshooting, and repair of handpumps and small piped systems. - Certification and mentorship for APMs in collaboration with CU and D-WASHE offices. - District-level networks of APMs linked to certified suppliers to improve spare-parts access and reduce repair turnaround time. - Regular mentorship and monitoring visits by district/sub-district WASH teams, LAs, and CU to reinforce V-WASHE and APM functionality, as well as other community-based management models to be piloted. Outcome 3: Improved Functionality and Sustainability of Rural WASH Services by LA Expected Results - Enhanced coordination among LAs, CU, VWASHes, and artisans to improve supervision, reporting, and knowledge sharing. - Joint O&M; workplans are developed and implemented by the CU and LAs in all target districts and are regularly monitored by P-WASHE Committee. - Baseline and sustainability assessments for O&M; practices and functionality are completed at district and facility levels. - Document learning on sustainable O&M; systems and disseminate key findings, lessons, and insights. (For example, by presenting at Zambia Water Forum and Exhibition (ZAWAFE). Outcome 4: Formalize the operational responsibilities for the management of small-piped water supply schemes through Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with the CU. Expected results - Operational roles and responsibilities become clearly defined among the CU, Local Authorities, and community structures. - Improved coordination and accountability in the management and maintenance of small-piped water schemes. - Strengthened management systems that enhance the reliability of water service delivery. - Fewer operational overlaps or conflicts due to formalized agreements. - Greater sustainability of small-piped schemes through structured support from the CU and LAs

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

All programme performance indicators outlined below are to be achieved 24 months after signing the contract. - Number of basic water supply facilities benefitting from new or optimized operation and maintenance models - Number of people reached with behaviour change campaigns - Number of districts that have taken actions to strengthen WASH service operation and maintenance in cooperation with the commercial utility - Percentage of infrastructure facilities (water points) in use at the time of the ex-post evaluation, and applying O&M; Concepts

7 Indicative Budget

500000.00000

8 Other Information

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9 Selection Criteria

Name	Description	Weight
Sector expertise and experience	Technical Expertise and Relevant Experience: WASH sector experience with community-level interventions and sustainability (15%) Behavior-change expertise, especially in social norms and payment-related behavior (15%) Capacity strengthening of community-based organizations (10%)	40
Clarity of activities and expected results	Proposed approach/implementation modality: Proposed methodology, logical work plan, and strategy for achieving results (15%) Innovation and added value in sustainable operation and maintenance via community engagement, accountability, or private sector participation (10%)	25
Local experience and presence	Institutional and Operational Capacity: Local presence and knowledge of Zambia relationships with communities, gatekeepers, and government stakeholder. Presence in Luapula Provinces is an asset. (15%) Program management experience, including monitoring and evaluation; UNICEF/UN agency partnership experience is an asset (10%) Financial management systems and track record of transparent fund use (10%)	35

10 Attachments

Description	URL
Annex 2_Table 1_Detailed Project Sites for 6 District in Luapula Province	Download the document here
Annex 1_UNICEF_Concept_Note_Template_with_Guideline	Download the document here
EOI Strengthening O&M; WASH Systems	Download the document here

11 Concept Note Template

[Download the document here](#)

12 For more information on this partnership opportunity, and to apply, please visit

[UN Partner Portal](#)