



CASE STUDY

Zimbabwe Power Company

› ZIMBABWE'S NATIONAL GRID FEELS THE POWER OF PRINCE2 PROJECT MANAGEMENT



BACKGROUND

The Zimbabwe Power Company (ZPC) was established in 1996 and started operations in 1999. Legislation in 2002 designated the company as responsible for power generation in the country, which includes authorization to build, own, operate and maintain power generation stations.

Generating electricity in Zimbabwe relies mostly on hydro and coal-based power, with one hydropower plant – the Kariba South Power Station – and five coal-powered stations.

The largest coal power plants ZPC operates are the Hwange Thermal Power Station and its expansion project the Hwange Electricity Supply Company (HESCO). With a previous capacity of 920MW, it was the 14th largest thermal power station in the southern African region.

In August 2018, an expansion project began at Hwange Power Station to improve the country's power supply, with two new 300MW units commissioned in August 2023. The project was mainly financed through an export-import credit finance scheme funded by the China Eximbank to the tune of USD 998 million and with the counterparty funding of 15% financed by the project company HESCO.

SinoHydro Corporation was the Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) contractor and the project had an earmarked project completion of 42 months. The scope of work entailed construction of 2 x 300 MW net and associated auxiliaries and significant transmission infrastructure which includes two new 400/330 kV substations and two new transmission lines (310 kilometers @ 400 kV and 40 kilometers @ 330 kV).

Overall, this scope of work meant increased generation capacity and reinforcement of the power grid. The initiative to improve this power generation source prompted ZPC to adopt and invest in training for PRINCE2 Project Management with training company, Adept Solutions.

CHALLENGES

- 1 **Requirement for a formal and globally recognized project management approach** for the Hwange Power Station expansion project, created in conjunction with Chinese funders and construction company, SinoHydro.
- 2 **Compliance with project management best practice** as part of obtaining institutional funding.
- 3 The deployment of **advanced technologies** in the project.
- 4 The need for a **common project management method** to support the involvement of multinational organizations and professionals in the project.
- 5 Addressing a **skills gap** in the organization and the traditional lack of a structured project management method - an issue that was believed to cause failure in previous projects.



SOLUTIONS

MEETING THE REQUIREMENT FOR CREDIBLE PROJECT AND RISK CONTROL

With the importance of external finance to the Hwange Power Station expansion project, it was necessary for ZPC to adopt a structured project management approach that demonstrated the company's credibility in implementing projects.

Financial institutions considered governance a vital element within such a major project and this would require a standardized and auditable method which aligned with global best practice and positioned ZPC favourably with institutional funders.

Forbes Chanakira, Project Manager, explained: "The Chinese bank providing finance to the project, while not recommending a specific project management approach, was strict about the need for credible governance, risk management reporting and project controls.

"Therefore, adopting PRINCE2 Project Management was a strategic compliance decision to meet their expectations and secure project financing."

ROLLING OUT PRINCE2 PROJECT MANAGEMENT: FROM ENGINEERS TO PROJECT PROFESSIONALS

For the Hwange Power Station Expansion Project, both newly-recruited and existing engineers underwent PRINCE2 Project Management training, serving as capacity building for new personnel and as a refresher for previously-certified staff, to ensure a consistent and aligned project management approach across the project team.

Consequently, PRINCE2 Project Management training was delivered by Adept Solutions, which has provided recurring training in the method for ZPC's engineers and other employees.

The initial training roll-out focused on 20 key people in vital roles who would be instrumental in applying the method's principles in the live project environment. Essential elements of the method that would prove important to the project included:

- › **Defined roles and responsibilities** - establishing clear governance structures, accountabilities, and decision-making authority.
- › **Management by stages** - enabling the project to be planned, monitored, and controlled through defined stages with formal review and approval gates.
- › **Management by exception** - allowing efficient escalation and control through agreed tolerances for cost, time, quality, scope, risk, and benefits.
- › **Focus on products** - ensuring that project deliverables were clearly defined, quality assured, and aligned with stakeholder requirements.
- › **Learning from experience** - capturing lessons learned from previously completed Kariba South Hydro Power Station and ongoing activities to support continuous improvement.
- › **Risk and issues management** - providing a structured approach for identifying, assessing, mitigating, and controlling project risks and issues.
- › **Progress monitoring and reporting** - facilitating effective oversight through regular reporting, performance measurement, and stage assessments.
- › **Quality management** - ensuring that project outputs met the required technical, operational, and stakeholder standards.

DEPLOYING THE METHOD IN AN EPC ENVIRONMENT

Major infrastructure projects such as the Hwange Power Station expansion project tend to be led by Engineering Procurement and Construction (EPC) contractors, with principal responsibility for design, engineering, procurement, construction and commissioning.

In this environment, contractors adopt their own approaches - something which presented challenges for ZPC engineers tasked with employing PRINCE2 Project Management to supervise the project and ensure structured governance and auditability.

However, despite initial resistance from the chosen contractor, ZPC's requirement for the method to provide an overarching project management approach was accepted. Ultimately, the contractor acknowledged the value provided by the method's structure and the creation of an engineering culture which incorporated project governance.

KEY PRINCE2 PROJECT MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES, PRACTICES AND MANAGEMENT PRODUCTS

ZPC's project teams were focused primarily on using core principles and practices of PRINCE2 Project Management, including the business case, defined roles and responsibilities, risk management and quality management.

Specific elements of the method that were key during the project included:

- › **Risk management**
With risk presenting a significant factor on such a major project, it was important to ensure risk management processes were in place to obtain both visibility and management of risk.
- › **Governance**
Maintaining clarity of governance, especially between ZPC and the contractor, was essential to know who was making decisions, when and the basis for those decisions.
- › **Quality management**
Despite the EPC contractor having overall responsibility for quality, ZPC needed to manage quality through the PRINCE2 Project Management approach. This improved the management of design, manufacturing and construction.
- › **Stakeholder management**
Working with multinational teams, including different cultures, required a structured approach to stakeholder management to help alignment between local and international organizations.
- › **Reporting**
The method's structured and documented reports and registers - though tailored for use with an EPC contractor - ensured that funders, the project board and senior users remained informed about project progress, governance and how it would meet their expectations.

TECHNICAL PROJECT ELEMENTS AND THE USE OF PRINCE2 PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The implementation of the PRINCE2 Project Management methodology played a critical role in the successful delivery of the Hwange Power Station Expansion Project, providing a structured and disciplined approach to managing the project's complex technical and operational interfaces. Key project elements that benefited from the application of PRINCE2 Project Management included:

- › **cooling tower construction:** incorporating advanced technologies to optimize cooling efficiency and operational performance
- › **flue gas cleaning technology and limestone supply chains:** ensuring effective emissions control and reliable operational support
- › **coal handling infrastructure, including stacker-reclaimer systems:** improving operational efficiency and fuel management.

- › **transmission infrastructure:** enhancing the capacity, resilience and reliability of the national electricity power grid.

The cooling tower component, in particular, represented one of the most technically demanding aspects of the project. As the largest cooling tower in Southern Africa and part of the largest project ever undertaken by the Zimbabwe Power Company, its successful delivery required rigorous planning, effective stakeholder and interface management, robust progress monitoring, proactive risk management, and comprehensive project oversight across multiple contractors and disciplines.

“Ingraining PRINCE2 Project Management ensured overall engineering oversight, quality assurance and led to better risk management, fewer quality issues and the cooling tower performing above expectations.”

Forbes Chanakira , Project Manager

RESULTS AND METRICS

- › ZPC increased the installed generation capacity of the Hwange Thermal Power Station complex from **920MW to 1,520MW**.
- › Improvements in **efficiency and predictability of decision making** through the use of PRINCE2 Project Management’s “management by exception” principle and defined roles and responsibilities; helping teams understand tolerances and when to escalate issues, supported by issues registers and escalation reports.
- › **Contractor quality execution improved** with the fundamentals of PRINCE2 Project Management combined within their systems.
- › **Improved project documentation** and reporting standards, enabling all stakeholders to review reports and registers at any stage of the project.
- › **Stronger governance culture**, accountability and role clarity.
- › **Engineers evolving their skills and capabilities** to become professional project management practitioners with the risk-based and quality management thinking fundamental to project management.
- › **Retaining project professionals following project completion** to enable a foundation for institutional project governance.

“We are now moving to fully unlock the value of PRINCE2 Project Management as an institution. Therefore, we have just completed a tailored project management approach which reflects our environment, while integrating PRINCE2 Project Management with EPC contract management and our organization’s finance and procurement systems. And we are building a project management office (PMO) to standardize the application of the method across the organization and improve project management practices and processes.”

Forbes Chanakira , Project Manager

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