



OKACOM makes a “big splash” at the 2006 World Water Week in Stockholm!

An entourage comprising high-level government officials, NGO and grass roots community representatives from all three Okavango River Basin states attended this year’s World Water Week in Stockholm, Sweden.

Their mission was singular: to raise the profile of the Okavango River Basin Water Commission (OKACOM) internationally.

Using OKACOM as a case in point, the delegation successfully hosted a half day seminar on the power of collaborative initiatives for trust building and conflict resolution in trans-boundary water management.

Opening the seminar, Namibia’s Minister of Water Resources Honor-

able Dr Nickey Iyambo spoke passionately about the importance of the Okavango river to his people.

He said that the river is an integral part of the basin states’ water resources management plans and as such a pillar in the nation building process.

This he said, was the reason all three Okavango basin states have expressed commitment to work together to minimize all ill effects of developments within the basin.

His counterpart from Botswana, Honorable Charles Tibone, concurred adding that OKACOM presented an opportunity for the basin states to operationalise such commitment through trust building and development of working

relationships that ultimately transcend basin level cooperation.

Running parallel to the seminar, OKACOM met to share experiences and discuss opportunities for future collaboration with representatives of the Congo and Lake Victoria Commissions.

Later on, high-level discussions between the Swedish Government and OKACOM culminated with assurances to continue support for OKACOM and sustainable development of the Okavango Basin by Sweden.

Both Ministers expressed their appreciation for Sida and USAID for making OKACOM’s participation at the World Water Week event a success.

Dubbed “highly stimulating” by many a participant, the seminar was described by one US government official in particular as “the highlight of my experience at the World Water Week”. ■



Okavango Basin community leaders acquainted with TBNRM theory and practice

ERP officially hands over OKACOM website before end of workshop



OKACOM Commissioner Mr Isidro Pinhiero and OBSC member Ms Laura Namene (insert) joined traditional and Community Based Organizations leaders, key government and NGO representatives from Angola, Botswana and Namibia for a two-day workshop on Trans-boundary Natural Resources Management (TBNRM) in Maun.

The two OKACOM representatives presented a case shedding light on how OKACOM

facilitates equitable distribution of benefits emanating from co-management and development of waters and other natural resources of the Okavango River.

Hailed as the first of its kind in the SADC region, the Every River Has Its people Project (ERP) organized workshop sought mainly to raise awareness on TBNRM to basin wide communities and determine the role and level of community intervention in TBNRM decision making processes.



Mr Pinhiero & Ms Namene speaking at the workshop

Upon welcoming guests at the workshop, Paramount Chief of the Ngamiland district, Kgosi Kealetile Moremi observed that

many local communities were ignorant of TBNRM initiatives presently ongoing in the Okavango River Basin (ORB).

She emphasized the need to assist communities understand the general concept, particularly the legal basis, of TBNRM.

This, she said, could only serve to enhance realization of key outputs of the initiatives.

The Honorable MP for Maun East and Assistant Minister of Works and Transport Mr. Frank Jack Ramsden Officially opened the workshop.

He said the TBNRM workshop rightly came at a time when “cross-border” and “trans-boundary” approaches are dominating debates in the natural resources management arena.

In Brief

KAPERE APPOINTED OKACOM COMMISSIONER

OKACOM Namibia has recently appointed Ms. Maria Kapere OKACOM Commissioner.

Ms. Kapere replaces Mr. Ndeutapu Amagulu who has been promoted from Deputy Permanent Secretary within the Ministry of Environment and Tourism to Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Veteran Affairs.

Ms. Kapere is Acting Deputy Permanent Secretary within the Ministry of Environment and Tourism.

She joins Commissioners Mr. Kahijoro Kahuure and Mr. Piet Heyns and OBSC members Dr Stefan De Wet and Ms. Laura Namene in OKACOM Namibia. ■



► A veteran advocate for sustainable development of the ORB's natural resources, Hon. Ramsden went on to speak about the profound impact Trans-frontier conservation parks are having on the TBNRM landscape.

He sighted, amongst others, the Kalahari trans – frontier park between Botswana and South Africa and the upcoming Kavango-Zambezi Trans-frontier Conservation Area as evidence that SADC governments are committed to TBNRM.

TBNRM is an ecosystem based approach that involves multi-stakeholder



Hon. Ramsden (L) and Kgosi Kealetile Moremi (R) during the workshop

cooperation to optimize management of natural resources, which cut across borders or state boundaries, for the benefit of both man and environment.

On the evening of 27th November 2006, Mr Monty Montshiwa, ERP's Regional Project Manager, took occasion to formally hand over the official OKACOM website – www.okacom.org – to OKACOM.

Representing OKACOM, Commissioner Isidro Piniero thanked ERP for their generosity and diligence. The website was developed by a Namibian based consultant hired through the ERP. The ERP is funded by Sida. ■



OKAVANGO DELTA MANAGEMENT PLAN – A STEP TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE ENTIRE OKAVANGO BASIN?

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step” and one might add ‘in the right direction’ to qualify the old Chinese saying.

If OKACOM is the traveler and sustainable management of the Okavango River Basin the proverbial destination, then surely the Okavango Delta Management Plan (ODMP) comprises a part of that indispensable small ‘step’ in the right direction.

OBSC member and ODMP Coordinator, Portia Segomelo, presented progress on the ODMP to OKACOM at its last meeting in Mussulo Island, Angola.

The response from some of the Commission members: “we need an ODMP for the rest of the basin”!

Clearly, OKACOM views the ODMP as preempting the process of developing an integrated management plan for the whole Basin.

In the words of one OKACOM Commissioner, “...OKACOM and basin residents should adopt a basin wide perspective culminating in integrated

management of the basin as a single entity with benefits accruing equitably to all three riparian states”.

However, the three riparian states are at different stages towards the attainment of this grand vision for the Okavango River Basin.

Botswana, for one, is after four years of rigorous study and consultation putting the final touches on the ODMP—a comprehensive management plan for the down stream end of the basin.

Implementation of the management plan is expected to commence in April 2007, however some critical elements of the plan are already being implemented.

These include provisions for sector specific action plans and “upstream” communication with other riparian states on the implications of the ODMP to the rest of the basin.

The development of the ODMP was a unique and challenging initiative which has yielded valuable lessons and experiences that can benefit the upstream riparian states of Angola and Namibia, said Sekgowa Motsumi, the DEA officer responsible for coordinating implementation of the ODMP.



Sekgowa Motsumi of the ODMP

Mr Motsumi added that the government of Botswana is keen to share these lessons with the other riparian states.

Some of the key lessons that might benefit the basin states include: effective and meaningful stakeholder participation in management; preparation of communication strategies; balancing the interests of diverse stakeholder groups; practical implementation of the ecosystem approach in natural resources management and data management aspects. ■



In Brief

PAYA TO CHAIR BOTSWANA OBSC DELEGATION

The leader of the OKACOM delegation in Botswana, Dr Akolang Tombale, recently announced names of civil servants appointed to serve within the Botswana OKACOM structure.

The Director of the Department of Water Affairs within the Ministry of Minerals, Energy and Water Resources, Mr. Boikobo Paya was, as of December 2006, appointed

Chairperson of the Okavango Basin Steering Committee (OBSC) in Botswana. ■



2nd ANNUAL ZAMBEZI RIVER BASIN STAKEHOLDERS' CONFERENCE RESOLVES TO EXPEDITE ESTABLISHMENT OF ZAMCOM

WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

The just ended Zambezi basin-wide stakeholders' conference saw representatives of government; donor agencies; academic institutions; civil society; community-based organizations and traditional leaders from the SADC region come together for two days to develop an Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) strategy for the Zambezi basin which will be implemented by the Zambezi River Basin Commission (ZAMCOM) once it is established.

The conference provided a rare opportunity where the 'small' and the 'big' merged to discuss and reach consensus on the best interventions that can help achieve equitable and reasonable use and efficient management of the shared water resources, for poverty alleviation, in the Zambezi basin.

Tourism, irrigation, fishing and hydro electricity generation are among a plethora of livelihood opportunities offered by the Zambezi River.

Officially opening the conference, Namibian Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Water and Forestry and OKACOM Commissioner, Honorable Paul Smit urged countries that have not ratified the ZAMCOM Agreement to do so saying "it is a long time since the agreement was signed in July 2004".

Anxious for real progress, the Minister said that "Namibia is willing to host the ZAMCOM secretariat should it have the honor to do so".

Delivering the keynote address, Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Irrigation and Water Development of Malawi, Grain Malunga suggested that one of the ways of advancing MDGs in the basin is by identifying and developing relevant practical models, tools and guidelines for providing and up-scaling improved water services that better meet poor people's multiple water needs.



Some participants at the conference

Ms Mercy Butao, a representative of Ngolowindo Horticultural Irrigation scheme—a grass roots initiative in Malawi—presented on the run-away success enjoyed by the 168-member scheme.

Dr Jeffer Sakupwanya, Zambezi Action Plan Project 6, Phase II (ZACPRO6.2)'s Water Resources Expert said two main issues emerged from the conference: the need to urgently operationalise the ZAMCOM agreement and the need for enhanced local community participation.

The November 22nd to 23rd conference was organized by ZACPRO 6.2 with support from IUCN, SARD-SA, IWSD and SADC/

DANIDA IWRM Awareness Programme.

ZACPRO 6.2 is a SADC initiative, whose major mandate is to assist the SADC Water Division operationalise ZAMCOM agreement through integrating the diverse interests of different communities and countries in the Zambezi River Basin.

This year's conference follows the successful launch of the stakeholders' conference, as an annual event, in December 2005 in Gaborone, Botswana. ■

SADC WATER SECTOR WORKSHOP BRINGS TOGETHER ALL RIVER BASIN ORGANISATIONS FOR THE FIRST TIME

GABORONE, BOTSWANA

“Strengthening River Basin Organizations for TBNRM in SADC”. So read the theme of a pioneering regional workshop convened, on the 11th to the 12th September 2006, by the SADC Secretariat with support from USAID, InWENT and the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ).

River Basin Organizations (RBOs) are shared watercourse institutions that have the responsibility, with other institutional mechanisms, for implementing the SADC Protocol on Shared Watercourses. In the SADC region RBOs include Commissions like OKACOM, Institutions with an executive organization like Zambezi River Authority and certain Committees.

Since lack of reliable and adequate water has been established as the single most important factor limiting im-

proved livelihoods in the developing world, SADC RBOs clearly have a significant role to play in alleviating poverty, in its multiple dimensions, from the region.

As such, strengthening RBOs in the SADC region has been identified as a specific capacity building intervention under SADC's Regional Strategic Action Plan on Integrated Water Resources Management (RSAP-2).

Attended by over 90 delegates from all 12 countries in main land SADC, the aim of the workshop was to build consensus on how SADC can support and strengthen RBOs and other joint trans-boundary water resources management mechanisms in the region.

Opening the event, Honorable Minister of Minerals, Energy and Water Resources in Botswana Mr Charles Tibone underscored the importance of building capacity within RBOs saying that ▶▶

In Brief

SEGOMELO APPOINTED DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Ms. Portia Segomelo, the erstwhile Coordinator of the ODMP project and member of the OBSC has of 1st November 2006 been appointed Deputy Director at the Dept. of Environmental Affairs (DEA) in the Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism in Gaborone.

Her promotion comes just days after the successful completion of the ODMP.

Segomelo takes up the position as the dept.'s first Deputy Director following the creation of the DEA from the National Conservation Strategy Coordinating Agency in 2005.

She rejoins with OKACOM Commissioner Mr Stevie Monna who is Director of the DEA. ■



- “RBOs can only deliver on their mandate if they are strong enough to do so”.

Interestingly, this mandate according to Dr Thomas Chiramba, former head of SADC Water sector, is not entirely clear however.

In his key note remarks, Dr Chiramba said further clarity is required on the

role RBOs should play and how they should complement one another. Moreover, he said that consensus is also needed on what role SADC should play and the support it could lend to these institutions.

The workshop identified significant challenges and opportunities for regional RBOs. Some of these include: harmonization of political and technical approaches, policy and legislation across borders; stakeholder participation; equitable water allocation; benefit sharing etc.



Hon. Tibone opening the workshop

For his part, Senior SADC Water Division Manager Mr Phera Ramoeli labelled the workshop “the first in a chain of workshops/ meetings on strengthening of RBOs”. He pledged SADC’s continued support for IWRM through among others: advocacy to governments and donors on behalf of RBOs; strategic guidance; resource mobilization and acting as an implementing partner in RBO programme activities.

He encouraged RBOs to regularly liaise with SADC, advancing and becoming an ensign for joint water resources management.

“The discussions have been meaningful; the language barrier has been overcome. Clearly, SADC has no upstream or downstream water courses but [shared] water-courses as this workshop has shown us”, said OKACOM Commissioner from Angola, Mr A.M. Gomes da Silva in his closing remarks.

He identified lack of adequate data as the primary constraint to full and effective participation of all SADC countries in TBNRM. ■

BIOKAVANGO PROJECT HOLDS INCEPTION WORKSHOP



Recently launched in Maun by the Hon. Minister of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism Mr O.K. Mokaila, the BIOKAVANGO project was at it again!

On the 21st November 2006, the GEF funded and Okavango Delta bound project held its inception workshop at Maun lodge for all its national stakeholders.

The workshop served to accomplish the following objectives: present the project’s logical framework, work plan and management structures as well as solicit buy in and input from stakeholders with respect to modalities for effective stakeholder participation.

Elucidating particulars of the project, Dr Nkobi Moleele, the National Project Coordinator said that the main objective of the project is to remove barriers that presently handicap efforts to integrate biodiversity conservation objectives into plans, strategies and operations of major production sectors of the Okavango delta.

As such, the project is designed to support the elaboration and implementation of the ODMP by strengthening institutional development for wetlands management.

Moreover, the project intends to put in place conflict resolution mechanisms; fa-

cilitate meaningful public-private partnerships for wetlands management as well as build the knowledge base necessary for informed decision making.

The project will place strong emphasis on participation and engagement between the various stakeholders, and on building partnerships between government, private sector and rural communities.

While focused on the Okavango wetland system, it is anticipated that the conservation methods that will be piloted will have application in other wetlands within Botswana and the region.

At the 12th OKACOM meeting in Mussulo Island, Angola, in May 2006, Dr Moleele presented the BIOKAVANGO project to OKACOM.

At this meeting, the Co-Chair of Angola to the Commission, Mr Armindo Gomes da Silva highlighted that Angola had completed its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP).

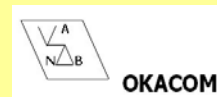
He went on to say that it was therefore expedient for basin states to synergize their NBSAPs’ thus creating opportunity for the ODMP to take part.

Namibia has also recently completed its NBSAP. ■



OKAFLOW

Issue 4



Publisher

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Design

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This newsletter was printed with support from the Okavango Integrated River Basin Management Project, Contract Number LAG-811-99-00018-00, a USAID Southern Africa funded initiative.