



FACTS ABOUT EVERY RIVER HAS ITS PEOPLE PROJECT

What is ERP?

The Every River Has Its People Project (ERP) is a unique initiative on shared river basin management approach implemented in the Okavango River Basin, which transcends three countries (Angola, Botswana & Namibia) funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). The project facilitates community participation in the Permanent Okavango Commission (OKACOM), a tripartite agreement between Angola, Botswana and Namibia and has been running since 1999, with the second Phase having started in August 2004 and ends in February 2007. There will be a five-year strategy implementation starting 2007 to 2012.

The Association for Environmental Conservation and Rural Development (ACADIR), Kalahari Conservation Society (KCS) and Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF), therefore, is respectively implementing the project.

PHASE I: February 2000 – March 2004

The first phase of the Every River Has Its People Project (ERP) started in 2000. It focused on introducing the project to communities, exchanging information and establishing links with relevant bodies, and promoting understanding between Okavango riparian communities and project staff. The overall stage one goal was to:

Goal:

“Promote the sustainable management of natural resources in the Okavango River Basin for the benefit of basin residents and states by promoting and facilitating the effective participation of stakeholders in natural resource decision-making and management, particularly related to water resources”

PHASE II: May 2004 – February 2007

The second phase of the project took into account the first assessment by building on the lessons learnt and responding to the challenges presented, particularly in the area of capacity building and information sharing. The phase two overall goal reflected the new maturity and growth in the project. The stated goal was and will continue to be:

GOAL:

“To build the capacity of the Kubango/Okavango basin residents to effectively participate in the planning, management & utilisation of their natural resources & to share experiences & lessons learned with other river basin communities and authorities”

VISION:

“The vision of ERP is to promote co-management of the Okavango River Basin in its entirety through sharing relevant information of the basin to ensure germane participation of all stakeholders for the wise use of the basin resources, with special focus on socio-economic empowerment of basin communities as the custodians of the resources”

PREMISES OF THE VISION

- The Okavango ecosystem as a resource base does not follow administrative boundaries and so should its management
- Fully informed stakeholders can understand each other’s specific opportunities, challenges, roles and responsibilities
- Feelings of mistrust arising from misinformation, misconceptions and outright ignorance can be dispelled, hence a politically sound management approach to the ecosystem
- Mutual benefit sharing mechanisms will ultimately form between the riparian states and their communities only if there is a common understanding.

THE FOUR OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

1. Consolidate and further strengthen the basin stakeholders existing representative institutions to facilitate effective communication and representation.
2. Promote sustainable linkages and networking between relevant basin stakeholder institutions and other national, and basin authorities, with particular emphasis between the Basin Forums and OKACOM.
3. Build linkages and information-sharing networks between the ERP and other river basin initiatives, including the SADC Water Unit
4. Increase the capacity and facilitate the implementation by local residents of CBNRM and TBNRM in selected areas, through the creation of appropriate sustainable projects and institutions.

PHASE III: 2007 – 2012 ERP 5 YEAR STRATEGY**Goal:**

“To build the capacity of the Okavango River Basin residents to effectively participate in the planning and to manage their natural resources, and to share experiences and lessons learned with other river basin communities and authorities”

The next stage of the Every River Has Its People Project will continue promoting the sustainable co-management of the Okavango River Basin through facilitating effective stakeholder participation in basin planning and management processes. This next stage will look:

- ✓ Develop a Vision for each country in the basin from the perspective of local stakeholders, bring these together for basin stakeholders across the basin, and then broaden this to include OKACOM and a full basin-wide Vision
- ✓ Develop land-use plans and zonations across the basin, starting on a country-by-country basis, and then trying to harmonize them into a basin-wide land-use management and development plan.

VISION: *“Enhance Okavango River Basin ecosystems and livelihoods*

ERP MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

Some of ERP’s major achievements

- . Built the capacity of communities to participate effectively in the Okavango Basin Management and established an appropriate institutional mechanism in the form of the Basin Forum
- . Developed a range of education materials, tools and programs
- . Increased stakeholder understanding of the river basin leading to quality, informed decision making and planning
- . Built and strengthened relationships with partner organisations
- . Created mechanisms for community participation and community led action in natural resource decision-making and management
- . Developed an enterprise and economic empowerment approach to natural resource management through craft, wildlife, community-based tourism, conservation (minimum tillage) farming and forest products;
- . Integrated HIV/Aids and other health management issues into the ERP
- . Produced good quality and highly accessible information on biophysical and socio-economic aspects of the basin, in various formats (books, posters, database, newsletters, radio programmes, pamphlets and brochures) including a website.

Where are we now

The primary focus of the Every River has its People project has been, and continues to be, the Okavango River basin communities. Within this context, the project provides:

- ✓ Pertinent and accessible information
- ✓ Builds local capacity
- ✓ Supports relevant local and basin-wide institutions

- ✓ Facilitates community participation and empowerment
- ✓ Creates horizontal and vertical linkages e.g. by supporting community consultation work by OKACOM (the Okavango River Basin Water Commission)
- ✓ Promotes the development of enterprises and business opportunities based on natural resources
- ✓ Strives to ensure that the link between poverty reduction, improved livelihoods and sustainable natural resource management is understood and exploited.

The ERP is now well placed to capitalise on years of relationship and reputation building. It is highly acclaimed because of its achievements and innovative approach in many areas but specifically, community participation in decision-making and the establishment of the Basin-wide Forum (BWF). All this combined will assist ERP achieve its development targets which fall broadly under the following categories:

- ✓ *Economic well-being*
- ✓ *Social and human development*
- ✓ *Education and training*
- ✓ *Sustainable ecosystem and natural resource management.*

LONG TERM VISION

The long-term vision of the ERP project is to:

“Enhance Okavango River Basin ecosystems and livelihoods”

This vision is based on the fact that:

- ✓ The Okavango River basin ecosystem has both an exceptionally high biodiversity and livelihoods value for its resident communities. These values are interlinked. A major challenge of this project is to optimise the ecosystem-based livelihoods values while maintaining and, in some cases rebuilding, the biodiversity values.
- ✓ The Okavango Ecosystem does not follow national or administrative boundaries. To realise optimal socio-economic and ecological values from the system requires an ecosystem-wide (and thus basin-wide) approach. This in turn calls for a co-management and collaborative approach to the basin to achieve both sustainable resource use and economic development objectives.
- ✓ Fully informed and empowered stakeholders can understand each other’s specific needs, opportunities, challenges, roles and responsibilities within the basin. This in turn helps create a stable platform from which to achieve a common vision,

objectives and action within the basin, but also to accommodate diversity and differences, based on the specific requirements and specificities across the basin.

- ✓ Well-informed and empowered stakeholders, both individuals and communities, need ready access to good information and to the evolving sustainable development dialogue-taking place within and around the basin. This means that information needs to be provided in a range of different formats to reach people at different levels of literacy and remoteness (i.e. different access to the media), and to facilitate their active and effective participation in matters pertaining to the management and development of the basin at all levels.
- ✓ Poverty is one of the most fundamental causes of ecosystem degradation, declining productivity of natural resources and biodiversity loss. This leads to a further increase in the levels of poverty. It is thus fundamentally important that the ecological wealth of the basin be captured, in sustainable ways, for socio-economic development of the people who live there. The development of initiatives that devolve rights over natural resources to local communities, that build enterprises based on the sustainable use of these rights, that bring investments, that create jobs and wealth, is central to the long-term health of the Okavango basin, the maintenance of its ecosystem functioning and the protection of its globally important biodiversity.
- ✓ Ultimately, mutual benefit sharing mechanisms will need to be explored between the riparian states and their communities.