OKACOM
The Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission

The Permanent Okavango River Basin Water
Commission

Lessons Learnt in 20 Plus Years of Existence

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ABBREVIATIONS

BTF	Biodiversity Task Force
CORB	Cubango – Okavango River Basin
CORBWA	Cubango – Okavango River Basin Water Audit
CRIDF	Climate Resilient Infrastructure Development Facility
EPSMO	Environmental Protection and Sustainable Management of the Okavango
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German International Cooperation)
GWP SA	Global Water Partnership for Southern Africa
HTF	Hydrology Task Force
IBRM	Integrated River Basin Management Project
ICP	International Cooperating Partners
ITF	Institutional Task Force
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
JPWC	Joint Permanent Water Commission
MSIOA	Multi-Sectoral Investment Opportunity Analysis
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NAP	National Action Programme
NSS	National Seconded Staff
OBSC	Okavango Basin Steering Committee
OKACOM	Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission
OKASEC	OKACOM Secretariat
PJTC	Permanent Joint Technical Commission
RBO	River Basin Organisation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAP	Strategic Action Programme for the Sustainable Development and Management of the Cubango-Okavango Basin
SAREP	Southern Africa Regional Environment Programme
Sida	Swedish International Development (Cooperation) Agency
SWAPO	South-West Africa People's Organisation
TDA	Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis
TWM	Transboundary Water Management
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNITA	União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola)
WB	Worldbank

FOREWORD

The 15th September 1994 marked a very important the history of the Southern African region – the signing of the agreement between the Governments of the Republics of Angola, Botswana and Namibia to establish the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission in Windhoek, Namibia.

The distant background to (OKACOM) the creation of the OKACOM started on the 24th April 1993 at a meeting in Livingstone, Zambia to discuss a draft Protocol on the management of the water resources of the Zambezi River basin. This meeting was organized by the SADC Environment and Land Management (ELMs) Sector Unit, based in Lesotho. SADC ELMS was responsible for the implementation of the Zambezi Action Plan and one of the so-called Zambezi Action Programmes, ZACPRO 2, dealt with legal issues and had to develop a draft Protocol for the Zambezi River. In terms of the SADC Treaty, the meeting proposed that the Protocol should not be developed for the Zambezi River basin only, but become a Protocol for all shared watercourse systems in the SADC region. This proposal was adopted and eventually led to the Protocol on Shared Watercourse Systems in the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The Protocol inter alia called upon the Member States to establish appropriate institutions necessary for the effective implementation of the provisions of the Protocol and in Article 3.2(b) the need for the establishment of Transboundary river basin commissions between basin States in respect of each basin. Through this process OKACOM was conceived and born.

Shortly after the independence of Namibia in 1990, the new government moved to establish a number of river basin institutions with other riparian states with the objective of providing technical advice on matters relating to sustainable use, conservation and integrated management of the shared river basins. Botswana and Namibia as well as Angola and Namibia at that time had an arrangement of the Joint Technical Committees (JTC) in some of the river systems such as the Orange, Zambezi and Okavango between Botswana and Namibia and the Cunene between Angola and Namibia. The creation of OKACOM had to benefit from experiences and lessons learnt from the work of JTCs. During this period in time OKACOM has as the main principal function to secure the development and safe utilization of the basin in a long-term perspective. In order to achieve its objectives, OKACOM has undertaken several actions at a transboundary level with particular reference to the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) and the development of the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) for the basin with the objective of promoting the management and sustainable integrated development of the Cubango-Okavango river basin.

Besides the joint actions, our three countries have been developing other activities of national context such as tourism development, irrigated agriculture, water supply and sanitation through specific projects in different levels that promote the sustainable development and improved livelihoods of the population in the Cubango-Okavango basin. Over the period, the three riparian countries of the basin have been investigating various solutions to address OKACOM's mandate both nationally and collectively and have put in place mechanisms and policies aimed at protecting the sensitive eco-systems, while also exploring options for uplifting the livelihood conditions of the basin population.

Abraham Nehemia
Standing Co-Chairperson of the OKACOM Council of Commissioners
Deputy Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry
Republic of Namibia

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The Okavango River Basin

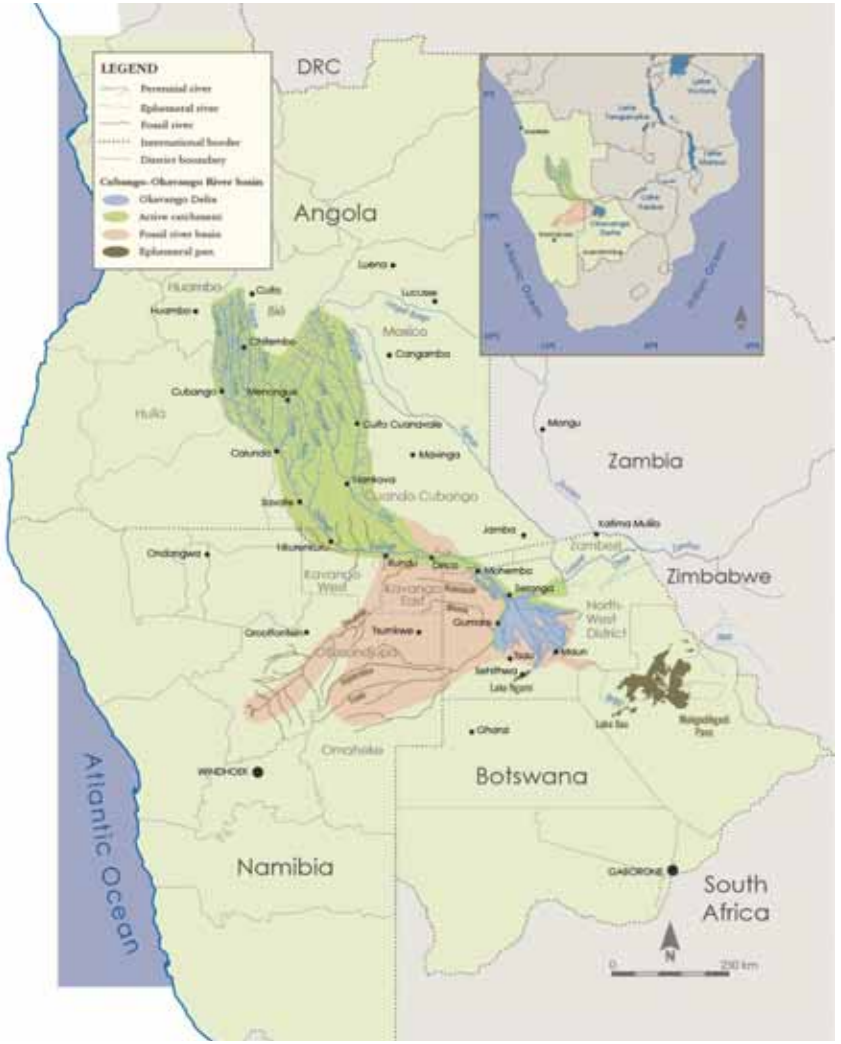
The River goes by different names, is used by different people, and for different purposes, but under OKACOM, the river and its basin is home to one community and one vision.

The Cubango - Okavango River flows from the highlands of Angola, through Namibia and into Botswana, where it forms the Okavango Delta. The map shows the location of the Cubango - Okavango River Basin within southern Africa. The whole basin includes the inactive parts, with a number of ephemeral tributaries and tributaries such as the Omatako that have active headwaters but which do not contribute to flows in the Cubango - Okavango River.

The basin consists of the areas drained by the Cubango, Cutato, Cuchi, Cuvelei, Cuebe, Cueio, Cuatir, Luassinga, Longa, Cuiriri and Cuito Rivers in Angola, the Kavango River in Namibia and the Okavango Delta in Botswana.

The Cubango-Okavango River basin is internationally important for its biodiversity and biological productivity. The Okavango Delta is the best-known feature of the river basin and is one of the largest Ramsar Sites in the world.

Namibia and Botswana are two of the driest countries in southern Africa, and the Okavango River plays an important role not only in the lives of local populations residing along the river, but also at national level. Water-based tourism is the second largest foreign currency earner for Botswana, and most tourism activities are centred on the delta system, which forms part of the larger Cubango - Okavango River system. The river sustains over half a million people who use the plant and animal resources found in the river to support their livelihoods.



Geography of the Cubango - Okavango River basin (adapted from Mendelsonn and el Obeid, (2004), Okavango River: the flow of a lifeline, Capetown: Struik

1. BACKGROUND

1.2 The Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission

Vision for the Basin: Economically prosperous, socially just and environmentally healthy development of the Cubango-Okavango River Basin.

The Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission (OKACOM) was established by the Republics of Angola, Botswana and Namibia under the 1994 Agreement, underpinned by the spirit of regional cooperation with the mandate to advise Member States on matters of common concern in the river basin; the conservation, development and sustainable utilisation of water resources in the Cubango-Okavango.

OKACOM exists to promote and support the opening of pathways to improved livelihoods while conserving the natural resources in the Cubango-Okavango River Basin through revealing opportunities offered by joint transboundary management and development.

OKACOM advises its Member States and basin stakeholders so they can plan and deliver equitable, just, sustainable and environmentally sound development and growth. It achieves this through:

- Identifying best practices that build water and food security for poverty reduction and growth;
- Recommending the establishment of harmonized environmental policies and approaches;
- Working with Member States to identify climate resilient investments that align with both the basin vision and the national development trajectories to create employment opportunities and support growing economies;
- Advise Member States on measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate potential transboundary impacts;
- Prompting gender equity that actively involves women and men in both the Commission's activities and in development initiatives and their implementation strategies.

Structure

Building from the revised organisational structure of OKACOM approved on 29th May 2015 in Luanda/ Angola the principal organs of OKACOM are:

- The Ministers Forum
- The Council of Commissioners
- The Okavango Basin Steering Committee (OBSC)
- The Technical Committees (Institutional and Policy Development; Socio-economic and Livelihoods; Water Resources Management;
  Land Management and Environment and Biodiversity)
- The Secretariat

The OKACOM Ministers Forum is the highest executive organ of OKACOM tasked with the approval of policy and political issues associated with the implementation of the OKACOM mandate.

Kavango River entering Rundu

2. OKACOM'S DEVELOPMENT IN BRIEF

The 1994 founding Agreement makes OKACOM the oldest formally established River Basin Commission in the SADC region. In the Agreement the Member States commit to the principles of good neighbourliness, cooperation, and the reasonable and equitable use of the basin's resources. The Member States have upheld these principles in the 21 years of cooperation since OKACOM's inception. This chapter gives a brief overview of OKACOM's development, as it grew as an organisation in an ever-changing environment.

1990
1990: Reinstatement of PJTC(Angola & Namibia) establishment of JPWC (Botswana & Namibia)

1991
1991: First discussions between the PJTC and the JPTC on possibility to establish a commission for the Okavango Basin

1990
Independence of Namibia

1992
'Dublin Principles' are developed - the founding pillars of IWRM.
'Earth Summit' - UN Conference on Environment and Development - held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil/publication of Agenda 21
Elections in Angola - the results are disputed and the country goes back to civil war, which lasted another 10 years.

Major developments in the years before 1994

After independence of the Republic of Namibia in 1990, the new Government reassessed the validity of the Namibian Water Master Plan. The Plan of 1973 considered the importation of water from the perennial rivers on the northern and southern borders of Namibia into the arid interior of Namibia. Although the need to bring water into these parts

Mushroom Harvesting along the Cuito Sub-basin

of the country were confirmed, the new government realized that the plans made under the South African Administration to abstract water from the Cunene, the Okavango, and the Zambezi in the north of Namibia and the Orange in the south, had to be discussed and negotiated with the other sovereign riparian states whose territories covered parts of those river basins.
In the meantime, Angola had heard rumours about Namibia's plans to construct a dam in the Cunene River – on Angolan territory. After Namibia had officially informed Angola about its plans, the two countries decided to jointly look into the matter and to carry out a pre-feasibility study.

Suspended Bridge in One of the Cubango Tributaries in Angola in a temporary replacement of a previously destroyed one.

2. OKACOM'S DEVELOPMENT IN BRIEF

Destroied Bridge in One of the Cubango Tributaries in Angola

Technical water commissions were considered as most appropriate platforms to start a dialogue between countries, coordinate technical studies, and advise the respective governments about the most appropriate course of action in the management of the shared water resources. Hence in 1990, the Permanent Joint Technical Commission (PJTC) was re-instated between Angola and Namibia on the Cunene River, and in 1991, Botswana and Namibia established the Joint Permanent Water Commission (JPWC).
When in 1991 both, the PJTC and the JPWC meetings coincided to take place in Windhoek, Namibia in the same week, an opportunity arose to jointly discuss the possibility of establishing a commission for the Okavango Basin. The principle to establish a water commission was agreed upon and the draft agreement was accepted as a basis for further negotiation.

Road to Huila Province

1994 Signing of OKACOM Agreement	**1990** Independence of Namibia
1995/1996 1st OKACOM meeting and establishment of OBSC.	1995 Protocol on Shared Watercourses in Southren Africa Development Community passed
	1997 Okavango Delta listed as Ramasar wetland of international importance ("Ramasar Site").
1st TDA (GEF Funding) - report not adopted.	1999 Long - running dispute over the northern border of Botswana and Namibia's Caprivi Strip is subject of a ruling by the International Court of Justice.
2001-2004 WERRD Project (EU funding) - analysing basin	**2000** Revised Protocol on Shared Watercourses in the Southern Afican Development Community signed.
	2001 Botswana installs Inter-sectoral comprehensive Okavango Delta Management Plan (ODMP).
2002 Workshop on for collaborative Planning, Problem Sharing and Conflict Management	2002 End of long lasting civil war in Angola and signing of peace accord.
2003 Study on OKACOM's institutional development adopted - recommending establishment of Secretariat	

Baobao Tree at Mahango National Park

The years from 1994 to 2003 covered the time of the military conflict in Angola. Although OKACOM did not implement many activities in this period, it was an important time for the establishment of processes and growing of relationships and trust. Under the tense geopolitical landscape governed by military conflict that prevailed in the late 1990s, the sense of trust at the negotiating table among the contracting parties to the OKACOM Agreement could have been easily shaken. But although the conflict in Angola restricted activities in the Cubango-Okavango Basin, OKACOM's members never wavered in their determination to work together to plan for the joint use of the basin's resources, and continued to meet, rotating the responsibility for organizing meetings among the three countries, and were supported administratively by the countries' water ministries.

2. OKACOM'S DEVELOPMENT IN BRIEF

After the failed peace process in Angola, basically the whole of southern Angola – and the Okavango basin in particular – was turned into a war zone. Most of the stronghold military bases of UNITA (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola) were located within the basin, and places like CuitoCuanavale, at the heart of the basin, are known for the most ferocious battles ever experienced in the sub-continent. In the 1990s and the first years of the 2000s, conditions for the assessment of the status of land and water resources of the basin, a pre-condition for developing planning and management scenarios, were impossible in that region. The Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) carried out in the years 1997 to 1999 was not able to collect the required data in the Angolan part of the basin. Also Botswana felt that the TDA findings concerning their territory were not comprehensive. Thus, the report was not adopted, creating tensions between the parties and leading to a time of stillness.

An exchange visit to the Colorado River and conflict management training helped OKACOM to (re-)focus on common goals and shared values. But the most fundamental change was certainly the signing of the peace agreement in Angola. The basin-region, which had been nicknamed "As Terras do Fim do Mundo"" (The Lands of the End of World), became a priority in Angola's development plans.

On the technical side, peace in Angola meant that OKACOM could move forward with its work in the basin. In Angola, hydrological gauging stations were rehabilitated and upgraded, which provided essential data from then on.

2. OKACOM'S DEVELOPMENT IN BRIEF

2.2 2004 – 2007: Knowing the basin

The period from 2004 to 2007 saw the development of the preliminary TDA, which started building a common understanding of the challenges of the basin. The phase was marked by the need to fill information gaps and to better understand the basin.

2004-2006
EPSMO Project (UNDP funding) incl. preliminary TDA (interrupted) and SAP.

2005
Formal establishment of Permanent Secretariat with interim phase (operational in 2007).

2006
Rehabilitation of hydro-met stations in the Cuando-Cubango province, Angola.

Official hand over of website from ERP Project to OAKCOM

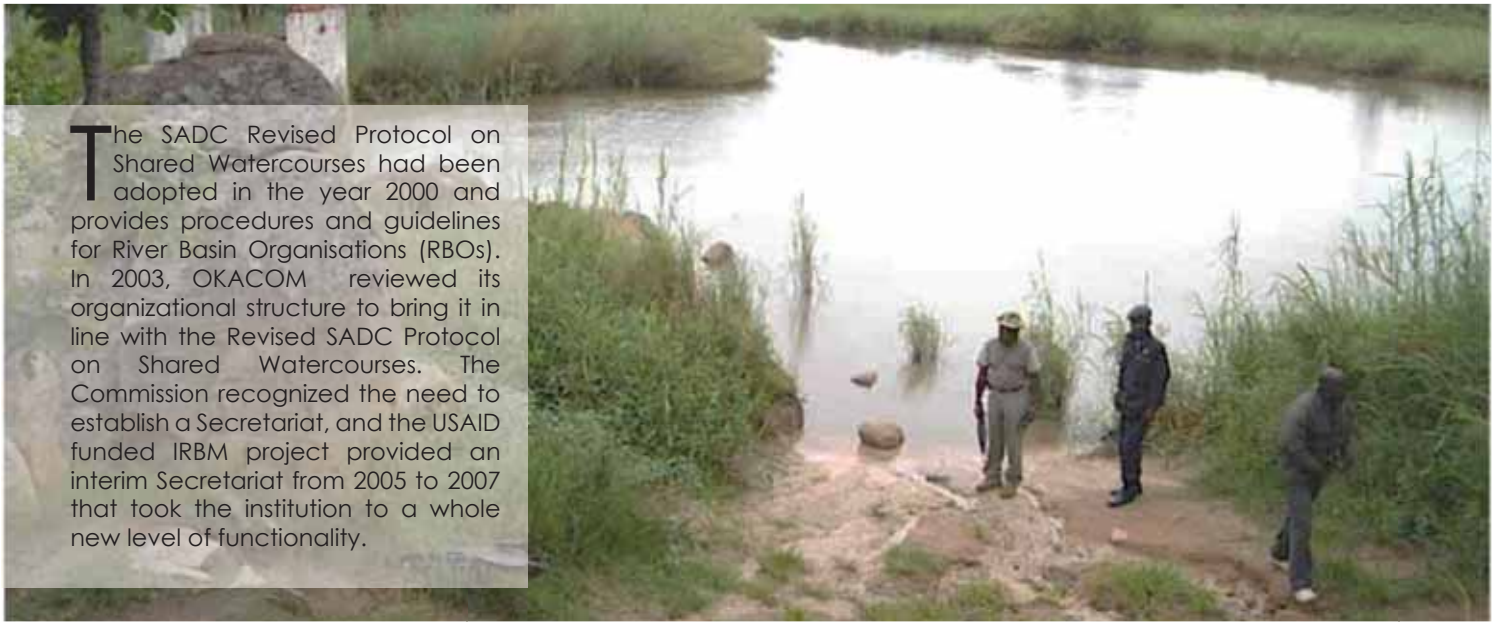
2004 - 2007
ERH Project raises awareness of basin wide issues at the community level (Sida funding).

2004-2009
Okavango Integrated River Basin Management Project (IBRM) - pro - vides interim secretariat from 2005-2007 (USAID funding).

2005
Namibia forms national Intersectoral Committee (NIC) for Okavango basin.

2006
1st SADC RBO Workshop.

The SADC Revised Protocol on Shared Watercourses had been adopted in the year 2000 and provides procedures and guidelines for River Basin Organisations (RBOs). In 2003, OKACOM reviewed its organizational structure to bring it in line with the Revised SADC Protocol on Shared Watercourses. The Commission recognized the need to establish a Secretariat, and the USAID funded IRBM project provided an interim Secretariat from 2005 to 2007 that took the institution to a whole new level of functionality.



Hydrometic Gauging Stations Inspection in Angola

2. OKACOM'S DEVELOPMENT IN BRIEF

2.4 2007 – 2011: Planning interventions

Major developments 2007 - 2011

2007 Signing of Organizational Framework Agreement - aligned to revised SADC Protocol on Shared Watercourses - incl. establishment of Secretariat as internal organ of OKACOM. Signing of Hosting Agreement for operations of a Permantent Secretariat. Executive Secretary assumes duty.		**2007** Angola establishes Water for All Programme, incl. provision of new water supply infrastructure to settlements in Cuando-Cubango.
2008-2010 Development of SAP and Naps with high-level stakeholder consultation, high level political commitment and endorsement of SAP at Ministerial and Cabinet Levels.	**2008-2010** 2008: Inauguration of Secretariat Office in Maun; Administration Officer and Office Clerk assume duty. Development of Policy and Operational Procedures Manual, Finance and Administration Manual, and Procurement Manual.	**2008** Namibia revises it's water laws towards decentralised Management Committee
2009/2010 Introduction of records management systems, networking database and launching of public Resource Centre.	**2009** Finance Officer Communication and information Specialist assume duty.	**2009** Botswana Water Resources Council, with key decision-making functions in water resources management and allocation.
2010/2011 MTR of 3-Year Plan for the Consolidation and Operation of Secretariat. **2010-2012** CORBWA project: linking data with decision and policy making. **2010-2015** USAID supported SAREP programme focusing on biodiversity, livelihoods and water supply and sanitation.	**2010** Updating of 2005 IR	**2010** Angola establishes Ministry of Energy and Water, an inter-ministrial committee for the coordination of international waters, and river basin authority for Okavango. Okavango Delta wins World Travel & Tourism Council's Destination Stewardship Award. Regional land-use plan for the Kavango Region in Namibia; Master Plan for the Angolan part of the Okavango River Basin.
2011 Approval of SAP.	**2011** Launch of new OKACOM Website	**2011** Record rainfall in Namibia with significant flooding, displacement of people and deteriotion of roads and other infrastructure.

2. OKACOM'S DEVELOPMENT IN BRIEF

In the period from 2007 to 2011, OKACOM approved its revised institutional structures, completed the TDA and developed its Strategic Action Programme (SAP) and National Action Plans (NAP).

In April 2007, the three Member States signed a new agreement for the organizational structure for OKACOM, including the Secretariat as an internal organ of OKACOM. The establishment of a Permanent Secretariat responsible for day-to-day management of OKACOM decisions can be viewed as a critical defining moment in the institutional development of the organisation. The Secretariat is responsible for providing administrative, financial and general secretarial services to OKACOM as well as leading information sharing and communication. Botswana became the first host for the Secretariat, which was inaugurated on 2 February 2008 in an official ceremony coinciding with World Wetlands Day.

Shortly after the Executive Secretary assumed duty in 2007, OKACOM started developing the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) and National Action Plans (NAP) with high-level stakeholder consultation and endorsement of the SAP at Ministerial and Cabinet Levels in 2011.

In the region, new transboundary river basin commissions were formally established and associated interim Secretariats put in place. At the same time, ICPs showed increasing interest in transboundary river management issues, as illustrated by the number of agencies involved in support to the SADC water sector. Special initiatives were evolving to unfold the best institutional model or framework and exchange between RBOs in the region was promoted.

Cuando-Cubango Governor Explaining the Complex Geography of the Province

2. OKACOM'S DEVELOPMENT IN BRIEF

2.5 2012 to present: Implementing the plans

With the TDA at hand and the SAP and NAPs developed, this phase is concerned with the implementation of the plans, which has both, financial and organisational implications for OKACOM.

An Institutional Functional Analysis was carried out in 2011/2012 to ensure that the institutional set-up was best suited to effectively implement the SAP and NAPs. This resulted in the development of a number of guiding documents for the running of OKACOM, such as the OKASEC Partnership Engagement Policy (final draft 2012); and the OKACOM Access to Information Policy and Strategy (2011. Following the recommendations of the institutional functional analysis and recognizing the need to strengthen high-level political commitment, 2015 saw the restructuring of the three Technical Task Forces into five Technical Committees, and the establishment of a Minister's Forum as a vehicle for raising awareness for joint river basin management.

2012
Instituational function Analysis Report finilized.
Approval of a number of OKACOM guiding documents: Partnership Engagement Policy; Stakeholder Strategy; Access to Information Policy; Information and Communication Strategy.

2014
Discussion papers on Benefits of Transboundary Water Cooperation and on Approaches to a Water Allocation Strategy for the CORB.

Celebration of OKACOM's 20th anniversary.

2014/2015
Development and approval of OKACOM's Vision and Mission.

2015
Programme identification Mission to support the implementation of the SAP by the EU Delegation to Botswana and SADC.

2015
Approval of the Ministers Forum to be part of the OKACOM Structure.
GIZ support to OKACOM instituational devlevopment of OKACOM Gender Mainstreaming Policy

2012
OKACOM enters International River Prize completion and becomes first African River Basin to be shortlisted as a finalist.

2013
OKACOM approves 5 Years Plan (2013 - 20180)

2014 - 2017
Support to implementation of OKACOM's 5 Year Plan 2013 - 2018 for institutional and Organization Capacity Development Phase II (Sida funding).

2015 - 2016
Multi-Sectoral Investment Opportunities Analysis (MSIOA) in the Cubango - Okavango River Basin (WB funding).

2015 - 2019
Support to development of regional project for the SAP implementation in the Cubango - Okavango River Basin (with GEF/UNDP funding).

2. OKACOM'S DEVELOPMENT IN BRIEF

Girls Fishing in Cuito Cuanavale Sub-basin

The Minister's Forum is expected to have a positive effect on Member States' contributions to OKACOM. OKACOM wants to become independent from external sources and agendas in the medium-term. Considering the tight public budgets in all three countries, the long-term financial sustainability model for OKACOM cannot rely solely on increased Member States annual contributions. Finding alternative sources to become financially sustainable will further characterize this phase. Options are currently being explored such as the establishment of "Biodiversity Conservation Endowment Fund" for the Cubango-Okavango River basin.

Moving forward, OKACOM has entered into a phase of higher levels of engagement where trade-offs and negotiations at political level will be critical. As OKACOM grapples with the definition and quantification of "development space", deeper levels of cooperation will ensure moving from a highly technical form of cooperation to a political cooperation.

OKACOM is currently transitioning from an organisation building a common understanding of the basin and the challenges it faces, to one supporting the sustainable, reasonable and equitable development of the basin in support of equitable economic growth and poverty eradication, while ensuring ecological sustainability, in each of its Member States. The implementation of the SAP and NAPs have again put forward the need to create tangible benefits for the local communities living in the basin, and with that, a move from "sharing water" to "sharing benefits". However, putting the "sharing benefits" concept into practice is one of OKACOMs present and future challenges.

3. LESSONS LEARNT

3.1 Preparing the ground for OKACOM

International agreements, guidelines and recommendations provided a framework, but it was national political concerns that brought the countries together.

In the early 1990s, environment was high on the international agenda with the Earth Summit (UN Conference on Environment and Development) held in Rio de Janeiro/ Brazil resulting in the Agenda 21, and the International Conference on Water and the Environment particularly recommending Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) in the so-called "Dublin Principles". The Helsinki Rules on the Uses of the Waters of International Rivers had been developed in 1966[1] providing a guideline regulating how rivers and their connected groundwater that cross national boundaries may be used.

The first success of OKACOM was the decision to create OKACOM as a new institution and with the perspective to act as an RBO pursuant to the SADC Protocol on Shared Water Resources.
A. Gomes da Silva., Retired Commissioner/ Angola

But at the time, the more pressing issues in the region were the independence of Namibia in 1990,

Technical Review meeting of draft TDA Report - "Mossulo/ Angola"

NAP-SAP Consultation Workshop_Botswana

and the elections in Angola in 1992, which were followed by a return to military conflict. Angola was struggling with its internal military conflict and keen on establishing good relationships with its neighbours. At the same time, Angola viewed the independence of Namibia as a continuation of its own internal struggle and was committed to further support the country. The bond between Angola and Namibia was strong, as Angola had hosted the South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), fighting for Namibia's independence. But there was also suspicion about hidden South African influence on the Namibian agenda, as South Africa had been strongly involved in Angola's military conflict with their support of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).

The existing international rules and guidelines were encouraging, and the interest in the sustainable management of the basin present. But the events leading to the foundation of OKACOM were not particularly based on a sense of "sharing", but rather motivated by suspicions and strong national interests: There were the plans of Namibia to construct a pipeline to provide water to central Namibia, Namibia's plans to build a hydropower dam on Angolan territory, and the suspicion that Angola had already built infrastructure on their side and was responsible for a reduced flow of water into its neighbouring

3. LESSONS LEARNT

NAP Consultation Workshop in Angola_Eng Quintino_Vice Governor of Cuando-Cubango and Eng Gomes da Silva

countries. The countries' governments were wise enough to realize that these plans and rumours had the potential of causing serious diplomatic conflict.

OKACOM was formed to increase transparency and to provide a platform to jointly assess and discuss such issues. Being able to jointly resolve some major threats and misconceptions in the early years was a reassurance to the existence of OKACOM.

In the early years, Member State's visions for the basin's development and their priorities were very national and country specific. Country consultation meetings were marked by no-consensus on what to do; there was no basin-wide thinking. Strong interpersonal dynamics led at times to heated discussions. Remaining professional and understanding that the differences they were dealing with were not personal was important, but required an extra effort. The challenge of finding consensus became a motivating factor as some participants of these meetings recall.

When signing the OKACOM Agreement, the three countries already had experience in managing Shared Watercourses through the agreements on the Cunene River, spelled out by the former colonial powers of Portugal and South Africa; the Permanent Joint Technical Committee (PJTC) between Angola and Namibia[2] ; and the Joint Permanent Water Commission (JPWC) between Namibia and Botswana. Nevertheless, OKACOM was one of the first RBOs to be established in the SADC region and before the development of the SADC Protocol on Shared Watercourses.Therefore, the awareness of the importance of such an organization among Member States was not very high, and little could be learned from the experience of other similar organisations.

Sometimes good things happen by coincidence not through deliberate or purposeful planning.

When in 1991 both, the PJTC and the JPWC meetings coincided to take place in Windhoek, Namibia in the same week, an opportunity arose to jointly discuss the possibility of establishing a commission for the Okavango Basin. The principle to establish a water commission was agreed upon and the draft agreement was accepted as a basis for further negotiation.

Technical Review meeting of the draft TDA - Mussulo/Angola

OKACOM The Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission

3.2 The glue that holds the organisation together

Trust has emerged to be the most important element – but requires time and effort to build.

> *Bringing some people of three countries together and make them listen, believe and trust each other. Also hear and understand what each countries' needs are.*
> *S. De Wet, Retired Commissioner/ Namibia*

Probably one of OKACOM's major successes is its mere existence - the establishment of formalized transboundary cooperation between countries that had been in a military conflict with each other only a few years before signing the Agreement[3]; and Angola still being in the midst of a military conflict. The on-going cooperation between the three riparian states gives a good indication of the impacts of transboundary cooperation on water-related issues on peace and stability.

Prof Jackie King Leading the Botswana Transdisciplinar Research Team in the Panhandle_Botswana

Dr Gabriel Miguel_Mr Paulo Emilio and Mr Hans Beuster leading the Angola Transdisciplinar Research Team in Capico-Angola.

> *If you want to go first, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.*
> *African Proverb*

No country feels superior to the other and there is a strong-shared belief that OKACOM makes sense.

Trust between Member States has emerged to be the most important ingredient of OKACOM's success in moving forward together. OKACOM's first ten years of existence were largely concerned with building trust and relationships – and even friendships. Hard work and dedication of the governments – and the people representing them – managed to bring three countries together to share a vision – and data. But also to bring people together and make them understand each other's perspective.

3. LESSONS LEARNT

> *Everything just took longer than anticipated. (...) We tried sometimes to fast track, but it did not work. Every person needs to feel comfortable with deceisions taken; be able to live with it.*
>
> *S. De Wet, Retired Commissioner/ Namibia*

But building trustful relationships required time, was nurtured by joint experiences, and supported by trainings and external mediation. Particularly in the early years, the perseverance and motivation of selected individuals and the personal trusting relationships they established with each other were essential. This allowed OKACOM to sustain even during times, when it did not yet have a Permanent Secretariat. Many of the friendships that grew during that time are still lasting, even if the people are no longer active in OKACOM and retired from their government jobs.

Namibia Transdisciplinary Research Team in the Field in Kavango residual pool

The cohesion within OKACOM has assisted the parties to resist any negative perceptions about either Member States or the Commission itself and not to allow it to undermine members' engagement.

Botswana Transdisciplinary Research Team in the Field along the Okavango Delta Lagoon

Member States' commitment and ownership are also a precondition to prevent bi-lateral agreements on issues affecting the basin - as is frequently experienced in other basins.

> *If we shared blood with those neighbours, why not share water with them?*
>
> *I. Pinheiro, OBSC/ Angola*

Moving together may slow down the process, but will be more effective in the end.

The three member countries being sovereign states do not

OKACOM The Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission

3. LESSONS LEARNT

17th OKACOM Meeting in Swakopmound that Culminated with the Technical Approval of the TDA

always move at the same pace in their development and may set different national priorities at different times.

Angola for example, had nicknamed its basin region "Terras do Fim do Mundo" (The Lands of the end of the world) for a long time. In recent years, the region has moved towards the centre of attention in the country's development plans. The pace of OKACOM's evolution had to take such dynamics into account, even if it meant to move slower. As a result, the countries have managed to grow together without conflict. The basin Region in Angola is currently renamed as "Asterras on Progresso".

Processes of organisational development are time intensive and cannot be fast-tracked.

The key to sustainability of OKACOM is the ownership by its Member States. OKACOM took a long time before it was ready to start implementing its SAP, which required a lot of perseverance of its Member States. But that time was necessary and the organisation is now able to build on a strong foundation. At times, OKACOM had tried to fast-track developments, but had to realize that this did not work: The meetings had to be as long as they were, so that all participants understood, felt comfortable, and a consensus could be found. And the time-consuming visits to the basin were necessary to better understand each other's perspectives; visits to other basins were important eye-openers and examples to learn from.

Strong ownership by Member States and clear objectives made OKACOM more effective and less distracted by external agendas.

OKACOM is owned by its Member States, and their representatives strongly identify with the organisation. This is largely because OKACOM was founded on the initiative of its Member States, and not by external actors. Member States and the individuals representing them are motivated because the issues OKACOM deals with are relevant to them.

In the course of the years, processes such as developing a joint basin wide vision, and strategic and national action planning have assisted OKACOM to be clearer about its priorities and how to approach challenges. It has brought Member States closer together in their national strategies. Clarity about own priorities has strengthened OKACOM in its communication with external actors and made less prone to distractions from external agendas.

Namibia Secondary School Students Invited to Attend the 17th OKACOM Meeting

3. LESSONS LEARNT

Developing a basin perspective was the precondition for all future work of OKACOM.

> *There was never an issue like 'if Angola gets this, we also want it'. The focus was always on the basin's interest.*
> *P. Segomelo, Retires Commissioner/ Botswana*

In 1998, the first Transboundary Diagnostic Assessment (TDA) for the Cubango-Okavango Basin was concluded. Both, Botswana and Angola were not satisfied with the report and insisted that their parts be reviewed as they felt that the quality of the data referring to their countries was either meagre or of bad quality. Only Namibia was content with the TDA and felt that Angola and Botswana were causing unnecessary delays with their requests.

This disagreement stirred up to an extent that put OKACOM's existence at risk; it paralysed the organisation for a couple of years. In 2002, a workshop on Strategies for Collaborative Planning, Problem Sharing and Conflict Management was organized; and representatives of OKACOM visited RBOs in North America. Many of those who participated in these events recall them as eye-openers, important for developing a basin perspective.

Despite the challenge of different national priorities[4], the countries realized that jointly managing the basin had great impact on the lives of people living in the basin. Developing a basin perspective means that at times national interests need to be negotiated and may become secondary. Having adopted a basin perspective, it was of less concern how much was allocated to each country, but what was required in the basin. After the end of military conflict in Angola for instance, the country's part of the basin received particular attention.

However, implementing the benefit-sharing concept will remain OKACOM's big challenge for some time. Agreements are easily made on paper, but very sensitive when concrete measures need to be adopted and implemented.

Mr Abraham Nehemia Namibia Commissioner Charing the Second OKACOM Open Dialogue Forum on the Theme_Is the OKACOM Founding Wisdom being Adhered to 17 Years After

> *The belief that the Commission makes sence is the main ingredient that helps us.*
> *P.Segomelo, Retired Commissioner/ Botswana*

A dynamic environment and a growing organisation require frequent reviews of vision and objectives.

In 2014, OKACOM reviewed its vision and objectives. The forward looking and progressive nature of the new phase it had entered with the finalization of the SAP and NAPs required a common vision of how to ensure the sustainable, reasonable and equitable development of the basin in support of equitable economic growth and poverty eradication, while ensuring ecological sustainability, in each of its Member States. A common vision also provides a focus for the upcoming studies and initiatives, aligning them towards the same objectives.

[4]Angola was in a military conflict until 2002; Botswana is highly dependent on the tourism industry in the Okavango delta; Namibia had plans for a pipeline and hydro-power plant; both Botswana and Namibia are extremely water scarce

OKACOM The Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission

3. LESSONS LEARNT

OKACOM 18th Annual Review and Planning Meeting in Luanda-Angola

> *Translating documents and interpreters during meetings has by now been integrated into our tradition.*
> *A. Tombale, Retires Commissioner / Botswana*

Although Member States sensed that they shared a joint vision since a long time, it was time to formulate it as one and write it down. In a first step, representatives gathered at a country level and formulated their vision for OKACOM. In a next step, these three versions of the vision were brought together at a regional integrating workshop. It was reassuring to see that the three versions did not differ much and that it was easy to find one common formulation. For OKACOM this meant that they had done well over the years to build a common understanding on what the basin needs and how it should develop.

For countries that are considering the foundation of an RBO, it is recommended that they start by investing time in understanding the basin and agreeing on primary objectives and on how they could possibly achieve these, including the financial sustainability of the organisation.

Sticking to a meeting calendar shows commitment and is motivating.

OKACOM made sure that the regular meetings of its different organs always took place. This continuous involvement is a motivating factor for its representatives. It is a precondition for the successful implementation of complex projects, such as the TDA.

All documents need to be in English and in Portuguese to ensure equality of all OKACOM Member States.

English has become the predominant language used within OKACOM as it is an official language in both, Botswana and Namibia. This may disadvantage Angola, as the Angolan government does not accept official documents in English language. Also, not everyone within the Angolan administration is fluent in English.

All documents have to be translated before reaching the Angolan Government; even draft versions of reports are translated to ensure an equal participation of Angolan representatives in the discussion and commenting of these documents. At meetings, interpreters have to be hired.

The translation and interpretation impacts on time and money required for carrying out studies and meetings etc. In the early years, Namibia and Botswana would at times be impatient because of the time it took to translate documents, but as the organization evolved, members came to accept its necessity. Translations and interpretations have become part of OKACOM's culture.

Language training for all OKACOM members is currently being discussed, so that all representatives will at least be able to speak some words in both languages. Even though the translation of documents or interpreters during meetings won't become redundant, it will further support the team building processes within OKACOM.

Simultaneous Interpretation Facilities at OKACOM Meetings_Mr Solunga Resident Interpretor for OKACOM

3. LESSONS LEARNT

Learn from others.

Visiting the Colorado River opened our eyes: if you don't collaborate, this is what can happed!
A. Tombale, Retires Commissioner/ Botswana

A major eye opener for OKACOM was a study trip to the Colombia and the Colorado Rivers in North America in the early 2000s. The Colombia River showed a best practice example for a transboundary basin management; whereby the example of the Colorado River emphasised what could happen if failing to find a common basin-wide approach. Since then, exchange took place with a number of other RBOs globally, such as the Mekong River Commission, the Nile Basin Commission and RBOs in Brazil.

Angola Government Leadership Lead by State Scretary of Water Mr Lusis Filipe at the Third OKACOM Open Dialogue Forum_Public Launch of TDA Report

But the major learning takes place at a regional level. Exchange with selected RBOs in the region is more intensive and frequent. Each Member State is involved in more than one RBO, and it is often the same people representing their country in several RBOs. In addition, there are personal relationships between individuals that go back many years. This facilitates exchange on an informal and formal level.

The establishment and consolidation of RBOs in Southern Africa are creating opportunities for cross fertilization of ideas and exchange of experiences that is proving to be helpful in the development of RBOs. "RBO Workshops" in Southern Africa provide a platform for exchange on selected topics and peer learning.

On-going processes driven by SADC and ICPs engaged in water resources management are providing the required technical and financial support for the successful development of RBOs. Support strategies should be informed by the experiences on the ground. External support needs to be flexible rather than imposing a top down approach based on mechanical transfer of models learnt elsewhere or captured from textbooks. Direct engagement with other RBOs and understanding the nature of challenges faced on the ground should be the guiding principle in distilling and capturing lessons to inform future development and consolidation of the RBO movement in the region. There is a need for existing RBOs to capture and document their own history and build up the necessary institutional memory to inform future planning and decision-making.

OKACOM Exhibition Stand at the Second SADC RBOs Workshop at the GICC-Gaborone

OKACOM The Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission

3.3 Organisational structure

Form needs to follow function.

Dream Team.
S. De Wet, Retired Commissioner/ Namibia

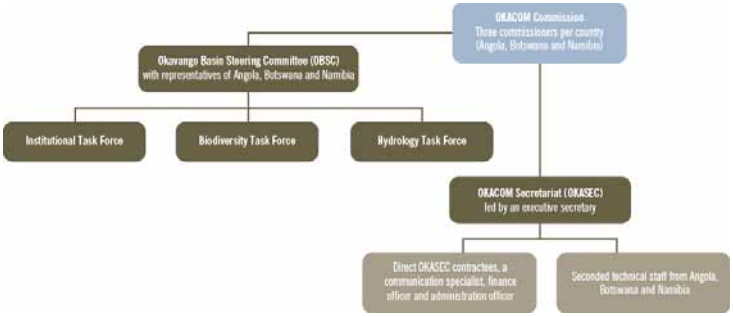
Since the signing of the Agreement in 1994, OKACOM has made several changes to its organisational structure - always guided by its growing mandate and functions, and limited by its financial capacities. The recent organogram was adopted in May 2015, but is not yet fully implemented (see figure above).

The Minister's Forum was added, the three Technical Task Forces were reviewed and transformed into five Technical Committees, and the Secretariat was extended to include a Policy Analyst and a Programme Coordination Unit. This chapter deals with OKACOMs lessons learnt with regards to its organisational structure.

Although each RBO has its own specific realities, some parameters of institutional and organizational arrangements are generic.

Each RBO has its own specific realities; however, there are some generic parameters of institutional and organizational arrangements that can constitute a common denominator for basin organizations.

Issues such as sustainable funding, organizational/institutional models and governance procedures are of critical importance for effective functionality of river basin organizations. Adequate administrative support, planning and management tools are instrumental in facilitating programme development and realistic and relevant management. An appropriate skills mix within the organization is needed to better respond to programmatic challenges, and team spirit is a must for quality product delivery.



Original OKACOM Organisational Structure as per 2007 Agreement on Organisational Structure

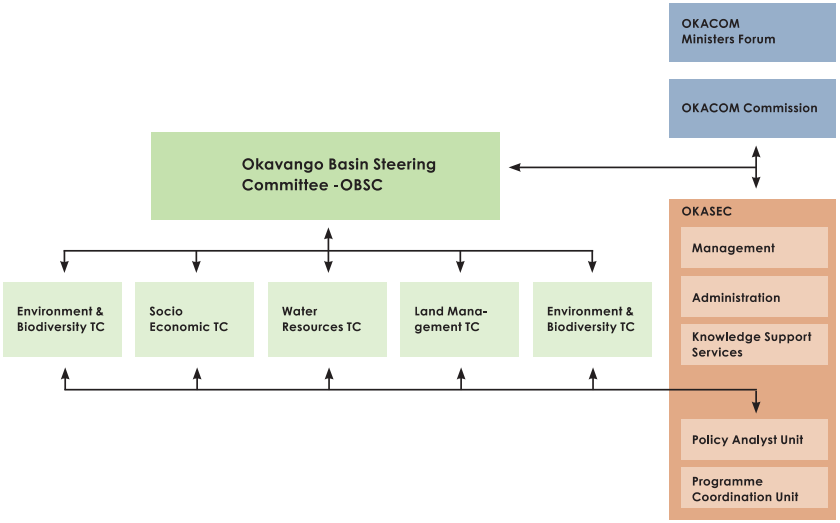
In addition to the above, the following issues are of importance:

- Clear roles and responsibilities of Secretariat and other structures
- Coordinating structures at national level
- Data management systems
- Regular reporting to governments
- Established links to national planning processes
- Sustainable funding of office and structures

Identification with the organisation and motivation are greater if representation is consistent.

Many representatives of OKACOM have been affiliated with the organisation for many years. It is not unusual that OKACOM Commissioners had entered the organisation as members of Technical Task Forces, moved to the OBSC and later became Commissioners. These members often develop a strong identification and ownership towards OKACOM and grow close relationships with other representatives of the organisation. They also have a good understanding of the tasks and challenges of OKACOMs organs.

3. LESSONS LEARNT



OKACOM organisational structure (as of May 2015)

Minister's Forum

A Minister's Forum will strengthen the link between the technical and the political sides.

It's a false divide. In Botswana, the biggest technocrat was a politician.
E. Chonguiça, OKACOM Executive Secretary

The Institutional Functional Analysis, which was approved in 2014, recommended the establishment of a Minister's Forum. The newly introduced Minister's Forum will make it easier for OKACOM to inform policy making, as Ministers are more directly involved. Besides the Ministers of Water of all three countries, the forum includes technical stafffrom other ministries, such as the Ministry of Planning or Members of Cabinet. The Minister's Forum meets annually.

OKACOM has always been driven by technocrats, whose task was/ is to inform and advice their Ministers on basin related issues. However, the ease of bottom-up communication within the government hierarchy depends a lot on the respective organisational culture. In Botswana for instance, accessing Ministers seems comparatively easy for technical staff. In Angola, such lines of communication are more formal. Here, an Interministerial Forum (Commissao Interministerial) for the utilization of water resources at international level provides a platform to inform politicians about technical aspects, and brings different sectors together.

Excluding the Ministers from OKACOM's organisational structure turned out a mistake, as it limited the level of political support and guidance to OKACOM; andOKACOM'sinfluence on policy making. Although in the end, decisions concerning the basin are taken at a national political level, the Forum provides an opportunity for better alignment.

OKACOM The Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission

3. LESSONS LEARNT

First OKACOM Ministers Forum Meeting Held in Luanda-Angola in May 2015_Minister Joao Borges Coelho Angola_Minister John Motwara Namibia and Mr Boikobo Paya in representation of Mr Mokaila Botswana

And even if the technocrats of one Member State had very good access to their Ministers, it was often merely a logistical challenge to get Ministers of all three countries together at the same meeting. So as the communication and technical advice to politicians took place at a country level, politicians were left behind in the development of a basin perspective. The Minister's Forum will provide a platform where Ministers from all three countries come together and jointly reflect on the issues in the basin. This will allow them to get a better insight into the concerns and national priorities of their neighbouring countries. It is also expected that the Forum will speed up decision-making.

The Minister's Forum is still a very new structure and the risks and challenges related to it need to be minimized. As politicians usually have a higher turnover than technocrats, extra efforts need to be made to ensure continuity in direction and approaches. The Minister's Forum has the potential to provide political guidance and strengthen ownership, but OKACOM will have to ensure that technical issues are thoroughly analysed before a decision is taken; the risk of politicizing technical issues needs to be minimized.

At the same time, technocrats need to know how to "package" and present their technical information to politicians, who do not have the time to read through lengthy and detailed technical reports, and who do not necessarily have a technical background.

Regional integration requires political decisions.

> *OKACOM was created as a technical advisory committee to its Member States, but learned in the process that regional integration requires political deceisions.*
> *S. Motsumi, OKACOM Programme Coordinator*

In the early 2000's, when OKACOM had managed to move away from a country to a basin perspective, politicians in each country largely remained with national views. The newly installed Minister's Forum will give Ministers of Member States a platform to consult with one another and understand the views of one another before taking a decision. OKACOM will have to make an effort to ensure that this forum also adopts a basin perspective and takes joint decisions accordingly.

The benefits of transboundary cooperation need to be visible for politicians.

> *As Commissioners we are technocrats, but we have Ministers we report to, who have to defens their budget.*
> *C, Sikopo, Commissioner/ Namibia*

Each of the three governments has a great number of important and urgent issues to deal with. When the Ministers of Water present their budget, they need to have arguments for why money should be spent on OKACOM activities and not on any other budget item. Ministers can only do that if they clearly understand the objectives and workings of OKACOM, and most importantly, see its benefits on the ground.

NAP-SAP Cross-Ministerial Consultation Workshop_Botswana.

3. LESSONS LEARNT

Council of Commissioners

The OKACOM Council of Commissioners defines and guides the development of policy, and provides general supervision of OKACOM activities. Ideally, each country assigns three Commissioners representing different sectors, whereby the water sector is always in the lead. The Council of Commissioners meets on an annual basis.

Namibia Delegation at the 18th OKACOM Annual Review and Planning Meeting_Mr A Nehamia - Centre - Mr Erika Akuenje to the Right and Ms Laura Nemee Left

The relationship with OBSC is very good and is further supported if Commissioners and technocrats sit in one office building, as is the case in Angola, where also the OBSC meets in the same building.

Okavango Basin Steering Commission (OBSC)

> *The OBSC was the technical brain and the driver of OKACOM.*
> *G. Gabaake, Retires Commissioner/ Botswana*

The OBSC was formed in 1995 to guarantee the accompanying and implementation of the decisions taken at the Council of Commissioners Meetings. In the absence of a Permanent Secretariat, the OBSC was the technical brain and the driver of OKACOM and took responsibility for project implementation.

Since the existence of a Permanent Secretariat, it is the role of the OBSC to supervise the Secretariat, to propose projects, to supervise consultants, to screen the technical work provided by the Technical Committees and to advise the Commissioners. Commissioners are represented in the OBSC, and the OBSC prepares the annual meeting of the Council of Commissioners.

Low turnover of representatives, and their commitment to OKACOM are the OBSC's success factors.

The low turnover of Commissioners and OBSC representatives has allowed for consistency in OKACOM's work. Member States' representatives show great motivation in OKACOM as the organisation's objectives and activities are relevant to them and their countries at national and sub-national levels.

However, with OKACOM's evolution and the growing number of projects running in parallel, the OBSC members' great commitment and passion for technical details might become a challenge. OKACOM is currently at a point where new ways of working are required. The Secretariat will have to filter more strongly and the OBSC can no longer get involved in such detail.

Technical Task Forces / Technical Committees

The Institutional Functional Analysis, which was approved in 2014, recommended the review of the three Technical Task Forces and transforming them into five Technical Committees, responding to the five thematic areas identified in the SAP.

Botswana Delegation at the 18th OKACOM meeting in Luanda-Angola

3. LESSONS LEARNT

Institutional and Polict Development Technical Committee Meeting Reviewing the IFA Draft Recommendations

The Technical Committees provide a viable means of decentralizing RBO work towards the Member States and thereby increasing their ownership. Technical Committees are a progressive way for OKACOM to utilize optimally the resources that are available within Member States.

The functions of the Technical Committees are to provide support to the Secretariat in all matters that require technical input and specific expertise in the various subject matter areas that the Secretariat has to manage.

With the growing number of projects OKACOM is involved in, the Technical Committees will increasingly carry out the detailed technical work to reduce the workload of the OBSC.

For Technical Committees to be most effective they need to be profoundly anchored in OKACOM's structure and their financing secured.

Technical Committees are coordinated/ chaired by an OBSC member to ensure a link between these forums and the upward communication of technical information into national policies. Meetings of Technical Committees precede OBSC meetings. At a country level, representatives of Technical Committees and the OBSC often work in the same divisions of their ministry.

The Technical Committees' Action Plans are aligned to the SAP and NAP. Their implementation and monitoring is currently a challenge, to which OKACOM is still to find a solution. The implementation of Action Plans becomes complicated as they are trans-national and chairs of Technical Committees do not have the necessary coordination power. They would require more support from the Secretariat, which itself is challenged by scarce financial and human resources.

Currently, the functioning of Technical Committees depends on financial contributions by Member States, as their activities are directly paid by the Member States. OKACOM is currently exploring opportunities for ensuring the financial sustainability of the Technical Committees – including the implementation of their Action Plans.

Environment and Biodiversity Technical Committee Meeting in Divundu_Drafting the Transboundary Fisheries Management Plan

3. LESSONS LEARNT

The contribution of technical experts towards OKACOM needs to be formally recognized by their organisation.

The use of Technical Committees within OKACOM needs to be further optimized to allow for an effective implementation of its ambitious SAP, while maintaining a lean Secretariat. Learning from e.g. the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), technical experts should be based within their government administration, but have reporting rules towards OKACOM and have their OKACOM related activities included in their performance contracts.

Technical Committee members are full time employees of their ministries and often find it difficult to make time available for OKACOM. Their Ministries should reward Technical Committee members' contributions to OKACOM.

For Technical Committees to be most effective and efficient, they need to be reviewed regularly.

Technical Task Forces or Committees were originally not part of the Agreement, but added at a later stage of OKACOM's development. For Technical Committees to be most effective, their focus follows OKACOM's strategic priorities. Thus, also their member composition needs to be reviewed regularly. The intersectoral representation in these Committees is important.

Having an office, a secretariat, is absolutely vital.

B. B. Paya, Commissioner/ Botswana

Permanent Secretariat

A permanent Secretariat with fully dedicated staff is necessary to allow for an effective and timely handling of OKACOM issues.

OKACOMsinstitutionaldevelopment and strengthening was carried by the commitment of Member States to move from a lose framework of rotational chairpersonship without dedicated Secretariat to a fully functional Secretariat.

Water Resources Management Technical Committee Training on the Use of ADCP in Divundu-Namibia

Since OKACOMs founding in 1994, there was a growing awareness on the importance of the Cubango-Okavango basin for the three riparian countries' economic and ecological development. In particular the economic growth experienced in Angola after the end of its military conflict brought along development plans also impacting on the Cubango-Okavango basin. The Angolan side was the most underdeveloped after the end of its military conflict, and its people's poverty and despair for food had diminished bio-diversity in the region.

Namibia Transdisciplinary Research Team in the Field

OKACOM The Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission

3. LESSONS LEARNT

Member States should be prepared to fully fund the Secretariats on their own and assign active country personnel to these RBOs.
B. Khupe, Retired Commissioner/ Botswana

In Botswana, the Okavango Delta has become an important tourist destination; whereby Namibia's water scarcity is becoming an increasing threat to its economic development and the livelihoods of its people. The increasing interest of the donor community to fund basin-wide approaches provided more opportunities for OKACOM to access external funding, with effects on the workload to coordinate projects.

The establishment of a Permanent Secretariat in 2007/ 2008 was a big change to the positive. With the Secretariat, OKACOM now had people in place whose main task was to drive OKACOM and to convene meetings and many other OKACOM related activities in the basin, etc. Before, meetings were often not minuted and the resolutions taken not followed up. This became a challenge in particular during the TDA process, when parties already found it difficult to agree on certain aspects of the report. With the development of the SAP, there was a need for office space to store information and have a physical address and respond to phone calls and other forms of external communication with basin stakeholders and interested parties.

OKACOM Institutional Memory

It became clear that the OBSC, which was at the time responsible for the coordination and oversight of all OKACOM activities, did not have the capacity to ensure the implementation of all activities. All OBSC members were – and still are – first of all employees of their respective Ministries and OKACOM is an additional task for them. So OKACOM went through a learning process, from their own experiences, but also learning from other RBOs worldwide, which lead to the establishment of a Permanent Secretariat.

OKASEC Open House to SADC Managers in Maun

Expectations towards the Secretariat and its mandate have to be met by an appropriate budget.

In the first phase of the Secretariat's existence, it became apparent that the budget allocated for its operations was not adequate. This created the need to re-allocate budget lines and re-prioritize elements (e.g. office renovation vs. office vehicle acquisition). Financial sustainability of at least or the Secretariat was one of the key criteria influencing the discussion around the Secretariat's mandate. OKACOM is still unable to fund all positions that were recommended by the Institutional Functional Analysis of 2014, and therefore currently employs only an Executive Secretary, a Programme Coordinator, a Finance Manager and two administrative staff.

3. LESSONS LEARNT

Honourable Minister Mokaila Officiating the OKASEC Office Inauguraion on February 2, 2008-World Wetlands Day

There remains a discrepancy between the Secretariat's expected tasks and it's funding. The Secretariat with its current staffing is not able to meet the high workload implied by its ambitious SAP. Additional staff at the Secretariat is required allowing for the implementation of the large number of projects with diverse topics.

ICPs present at the OKASEC Office Inauguration Ceremony

3-Way Handshake_Three Countries One River

Setting up a Secretariat requires time and effort: OKACOM took almost 4 years from the decision to a fully functional Secretariat.

As OKACOM did not have a Secretariat before, all staff had to be recruited; their salary packages decided upon; office space rented; furniture purchased; communications infrastructure set up etc. The remoteness of Maun as the location of the Secretariat only added to this challenge. It was difficult to find adequate staff willing to relocate to Maun; and furniture and support services to set up the office infrastructure were not always locally available. There were times when the Executive Secretary was alone in the office, as it was so difficult to find staff.

Guidelines for the operations and Human Resource policies had to be developed. With regards to salaries for the positions within the Secretariat, OKACOM benchmarked with other RBOs and international organisations. In the end, a decision was taken that the SADC Secretariat's salary levels should be a reference.

Once fully functional and staffed, the Secretariat's internal management and operations was severely hampered by the departure of the finance and administration officers. As replacements were difficult to find, OKACOM engaged an accounting and financial management firm locally based in Maun to provide distance financial management services. After this incident, the importance of documenting successful processes and procedures and of ensuring handover in staff transition became apparent. OKACOM entered a process to define the Secretariat's core responsibilities, to differentiate between core and temporary functions, and between works that can be outsourced.

OKACOM The Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission

3. LESSONS LEARNT

A Secretariat located in the basin ensures closeness to basin matters, but increases its distance to national institutions and key decision-making points.

OKACOM Signage in Maun

Locating the Secretariat within the basin was important to give confidence to stakeholders in the basin, to be visible in the basin, and to be close to and aware of the developments in the basin. However, it is also important for an RBO to have strong ties to national institutions – and these are located in the respective capitals. Also, travelling takes longer and is more costly as compared to travelling to one of the capitals.

Besides the logistical challenges, such as installing or repairing a server etc., it is also difficult to find adequate staff willing to be based in a rather remote town. Most of the professional staff of the Secretariat has been recruited from outside Maun. This creates specific challenges in terms of housing arrangements given the scarcity of appropriate houses. The experience indicates that new recruits take a while to settle their accommodation. Also, most of the Secretariat staff did not relocate with their families as schools or job opportunities for spouses are limited. This risks staff stability with possible implications for high staff rotation (difficulties in staff retention), productivity and continuity.

Rotating the Secretariat among Member States is a great idea but not practical.

The original idea of a Secretariat that is rotating on a 3 or 5-year rhythm between the countries had to be dropped. The efforts and costs implied by finding, equipping and staffing a physical office for the Secretariat had been underestimated. After the experience made with the first office in Maun, the idea of rotating the secretariat was no longer pursued.

The Secretariat needs to act as a neutral facilitator between the Member States.

In the recruitment of Secretariat staff, not only technical qualifications play a role, but also representation of Member States. In an RBO, Member States all have their national priorities; agreeing on measures that are best for the basin may require compromising on national interests. The trustful relationship among Member States and their unity are precious; but these can be easily at risk if a country feels disadvantaged. It is therefore of utmost importance that the Secretariat, and in particular the Executive Secretary, is seen as a neutral facilitator between countries. In addition to his or her management skills, s/he needs to have diplomatic competences.

Seconded staff

Seconded technical staff would help overcome staff shortages at the Secretariat and provide a closer link to the Member States, while at the same time pull away qualified staff from their Ministries.

There is a demand for the Secretariat to get stronger involved in the technical work and responding to the increasing number of requests and projects.

Water Resources Management Technical Committee in the Field_ADPC Training in Cuito Cuanavale

3. LESSONS LEARNT

Mr Paulo Emilio Angola Commissioner with Primary School Kids in Mocundi_Tele-Food Event

Since some time, OKACOM discusses the secondment of technical staff to the Secretariat to overcome its capacity limitations, which are expected to become even more severe in the near future. Seconded staff is expected to strengthen the link between OKACOM and its Member States, and facilitate the alignment of NAPs with the SAP.

Seconded staff would be a substantial contribution by Member States, but there are risks related to it that require further discussion. In the current set-up without seconded staff, OKACOM members are the highly qualified and motivated technical employees of its Member States. The respective governments are unlikely to second such qualified and motivated personnel to OKACOM. But in the case they did, this would further contribute to the brain drain in the public sector.

Preservation of the basin will be a utopia if we exclude its people.
C. Mendes, Commissioner/ Angola

The role of the local communities

Local communities need to understand why they should protect the natural resources.

River Cousins Play in Luanda-Angola

Communities need to be willing to work together and to be actively engaged in the protection of natural resources. But they will only get involved if they understand the interdependencies between nature and their livelihoods.

Ideally, OKACOM should make an effort to communicate basin-related information in an adequate manner to the local communities and the wider population, using local media and newsletters.

Tangible benefits for local communities need to be created.

People from the basin do question us: they believe that we tend to organise many meetings and them seeing few results on the ground. So we have put into practice the studies and projects, because in the end people want to have access to water and food.
C. Mendes, Commissioner/ Angola

At the core of OKACOM is the understanding that the livelihoods of local communities depend on the sustainable management of natural resources in the basin. It is important for an RBO to be aware that they are dealing with real needs of real people living in the basin. OKACOM spend a long time analysing the basin and developing plans, such as the SAP and NAP. These were important processes, but the organisation has now entered a phase where these plans need to be implemented.

OKACOM The Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission

3. LESSONS LEARNT

The people living in the basin need to be involved in these projects, but cannot be expected to become engaged in environmental protection if they cannot meet their basic needs – or if protecting the environment puts their livelihoods at risk without providing alternatives. People living at the brink of poverty tend to have rather short-term objectives and often rely on immediate benefits for their survival.

> *It turned out that ordinary people dealt better with the idea of sharing that the Commissioners.*
> *A. Tombale, Retires Commissioner / Botswana*

OKACOM's commitment goes beyond sharing water, and promotes the sharing of benefits from a joint sustainable management of the basin. Approaches are currently being discussed, such as tourist packages into the Okavango Delta (Botswana) to include – or at least promote - trips into Angola. The creation of the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA) has laid a foundation, but needs to be further developed in that regard.

Ways need to be found of involving the local communities in decision-making.

Informing communities is not enough. So far, OKACOM's work has been largely top-down and some of the local communities reportedly consider the organisation as being driven from outside, or from Gaborone. This has to do with OKACOM's organisational set-up, which forsees interaction with local communities through existing structures of its Member States.

People of the Basin Angola Mocundi

Members of Basin Wide Forum-Botswana Chapter

Ways have to be found to involve local communities in decision-making and to ensure frequent engagement between the political, technical and community levels in matters of managing the basin.

The Every River has its People (ERHP) project included the establishment of a "Basin-wide Forum", which brought local people living in the basin together. It thereby gave the people of the basin a voice – which could be heard by OKACOM and others. By creating awareness at a local level on who lives across the national borders and what these people's challenges are was important for the development and acceptance of basin-wide plans. Unfortunately, the Basin-wide Forum dissolved after the end of the project, despite its importance in ensuring that the people living in the basin take part in decision-making.

OKACOM is currently discussing the revival of such a forum, including different stakeholders, but especially those at grassroots level. The forum would provide a platform for local communities to identify projects and become actively involved in their implementation. OKACOM's role and involvement of such a forum is not yet decided.

3. LESSONS LEARNT

Visiting the basin and interacting with the locals was an important eye-opener.

(It was important) for the people in OBSC and OKACOM to realise it is not about them, OKACOM is about the people that live in the basin. The poorest of the poor.
S. de Wet, Retires Commissioner/ Namibia

Both, the above-mentioned ERHP project and the Okavango Integrated River Basin Management (IBRM)project[7] provided several opportunities for members of OKACOM, including the Commissioners, to visit the basin. The trips also included the Angolan side, which very few members had ever visited before due to the prevailing military conflict in the region. Seeing how people live in the basin and talking to them about their lives and challenges was an important eye-opener and reportedly had long-lasting effects on participants.

No country feel superior the the other.
P.Segomelo, Retired Commissioner/ Botswana

Decision-making

OKACOM's mandate is to advice policy makers based on technical information. With its recently installed Minister's Forum, OKACOM has managed to strengthen the link between technical information and political decisions.

The communication and processing of technical information follows clear lines from the Technical Committees, to the OBSC and to the Council of Commissioners, who make recommendations to the Minister's Forum. Even though the Minister's Forum provides a platform for discussion and ideally to reach agreements, political decisions will continue to be taken at a national level.

One of the first issues put on OKACOM's table was the

Mr Paulo Emilio an Dr Scott McCowarmic enegaging with Local Authorities in Cuando-Cubango Province

Namibian plan to build a pipeline and a hydropower plant in the early 1990s. Based on the feasibility studies and the political negotiations with its neighbours it was still the Namibian government, who took the decision to shelve its plans.

The fact that OKACOM is composed of only three Member States surely facilitates the decision-making process – as compared to other RBOs who are to find consensus among a much higher number of stakeholders.
In the past, the diverse political interests of Member States have sometimes inhibited the ability to reach consensus on substantive issues in the larger interest of managing the basin resources. In such instances, external partners / ICPs were paramount to mediate discussions and help resolve those issues between the parties.

Besides the technical competence, OKACOM, OBSC and Commissioners need to have good negotiation skills and understand the difference between issues, positions and interests. OKACOM has invested in such trainings in the past, when positions had hardened and no consensus could be found.

OKACOM The Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission

3. LESSONS LEARNT

NAP-SAP Consultation Workshop_Botswana

NAP Consultation Group Photo in Menongue-Angola with Eng Gomes da Silva and Vice Governor of Cuando-Cubango Province

Cross-sectoral cooperation

Both, OKACOM and the IWRM processes in member countries have managed to bring different sectors together.

The sustainable management of the basin requires cross-sectoral collaboration. Even though the water ministries take the lead in OKACOM, sectors such as environment and agriculture are of equal importance. OKACOM has managed to bring these sectors together to discuss, jointly carry out surveys and implement projects. OKACOM and the IWRM processes, which were carried out in Member States from the early 2000s on, were thereby of mutual benefit.

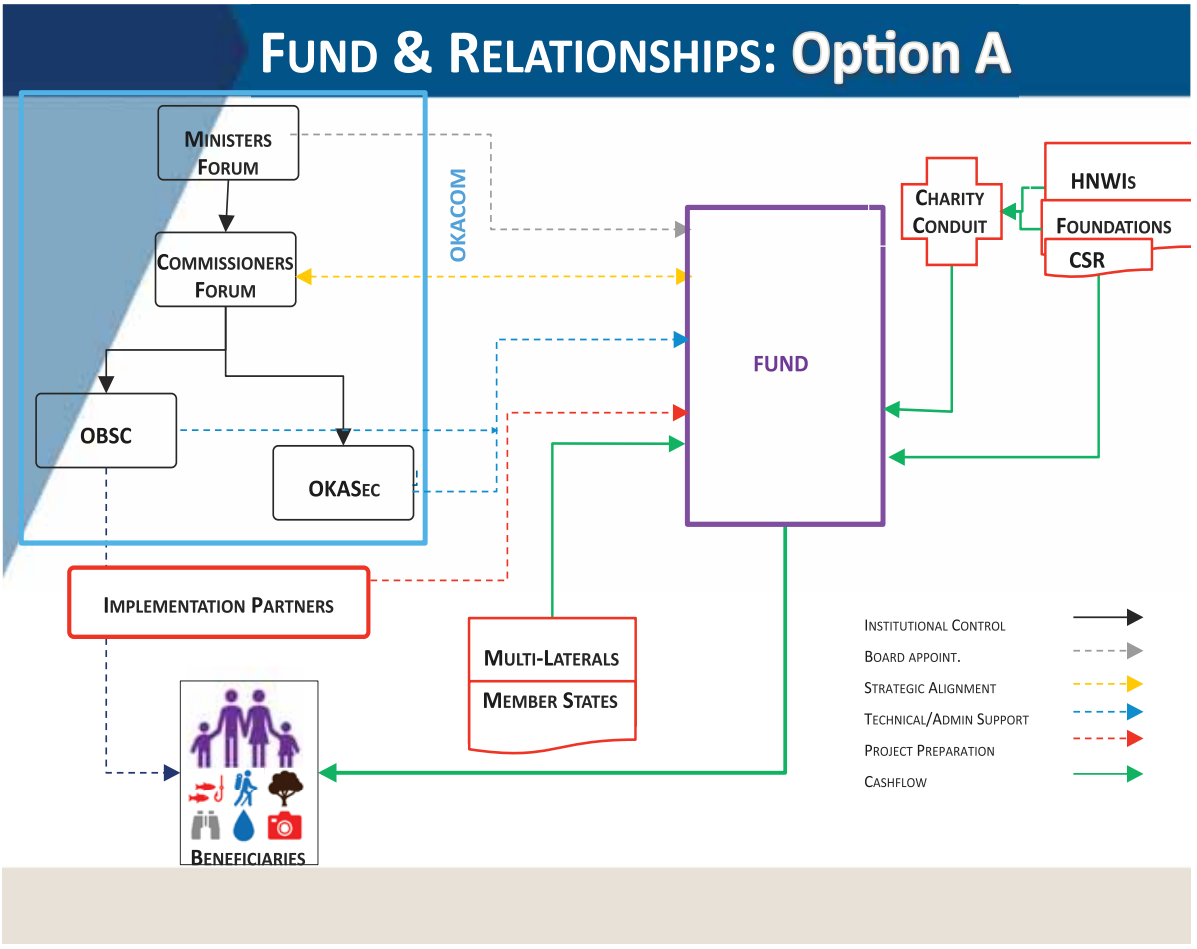
The challenges around bringing the different sectors together has led Angola to create an Interministerial Committee, which gives greater political weight to cross-sectoral collaboration.

Issues around coverage of expenses often challenge cross-sectoral collaboration in practice.

Though all Member States agree on the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration for managing the basin, they are at times faced by practical challenges related to financing: as the Ministry/ Department of Water is in the lead, other Departments/ Ministries find it difficult to cover the expenses of their own staff when attending OKACOM meetings. Acknowledging the bureaucratic processes prevailing in the public sector of its Member States, OKACOM discusses a financing mechanism, such as a "trust fund", that can overcome this challenge

NAP Consultation Group Photo in Rundu-Namibia

3. LESSONS LEARNT



Proposed Inatitutional Arrangement for the CORB Long Term Sustainability Fund

OKACOM spent too much time dealing with administrative and financial matters relating to the functioning of its organs. One of the resons is that Member States' budgeting processes are not aligned in time. However, we have always found ways to overcome this challenge: for example all GEF-funded projects were implemented on the basis of co-financing between GEF and OKACOM Member States.

A. Gomes de Silva, Retired Commissioner/ Angola

Insitutional strength and financial sustainability are very important elements for the success of the institution and should be addressed even at the design negotiation stage.

P. Ramoeli, SADC WD

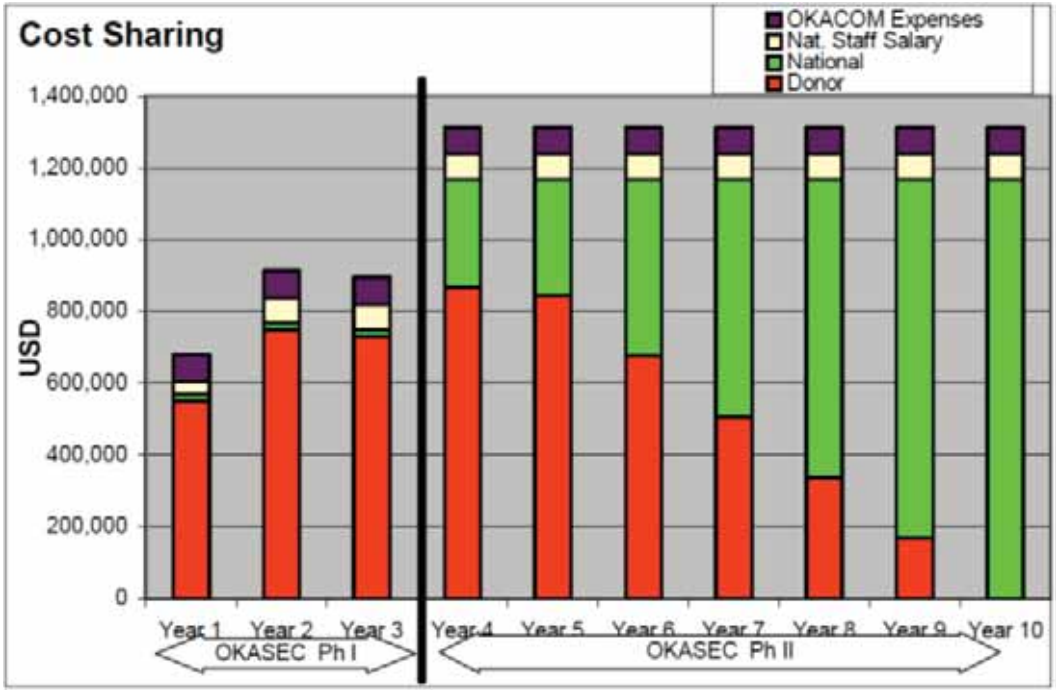
3.4 Financial sustainability and resource mobilisation

After more than 21 years of existence and having managed to resolve quite a number of challenges, one substantial challenge remains unresolved: sustainable financing. Financial sustainability is currently one of OKACOM's key priorities. Member State funding is very important; other additional sources of financing have to be found. Being financially sustainable means also to be independent of external agendas.

Acknowledging the limitations of Member States' contributions

OKACOM The Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission

3. LESSONS LEARNT



Sida Proposed Long term Financial Model

and striving towards greater independence from donor funding, OKACOM is in the process of developing a business case to generate income. Ideas include promotion of transboundary tourism; levies/ royalties/ charges paid by tourist operators visiting the basin; service fees when OKACOM acts as facilitator/ honest broker in bringing interested investors and Member States together.

Member States' contributions

From the beginning on, it was clear that OKACOM needed to be financially sustainable. When the Secretariat was installed, there was an agreement with Sida for the financing of the Secretariat for the period of 10 years. This agreement included an incremental increase of Member States' contributions from an initial 50.000 USD per country per year, and a concurrent decrease of Sida funding. In practice, the implementation of this agreement was faced by two major challenges: first, varying budget cycles of Member States did not allow them to disburse their contribution at the same time; second, the world wide economic recession also hit the OKACOM Member States and made it difficult for them to stick to their pledges. As a result, OKACOM could not extent the contracts of some of its Secretariat staff. Fortunately, Sida could be convinced to bridge the funding gap for a further project phase.

Even though the incremental increase in Member States' contribution did not go as smooth and quick as originally planned, their in-kind contributions (e.g. time allocation by employees, flight tickets, travel allowances etc.) are significant.

Secondment of technical staff to the Secretariat is a matter of discussion within OKACOM since some time, which would mean a substantial increase in Member States' contributions, though considered "in-kind". Seconded staff is expected to strengthen the link between OKACOM and its Member States and facilitate the alignment of NAPs with the SAP.

3. LESSONS LEARNT

The more costs are covered by Member States, the greater their ownership.

If Member States fund the core functions of an RBO, their influence on the RBO's agenda will be stronger. This will also strengthen the basin-wide perspective of each country's decision-making and help avoid bi-lateral agreements between riparian states (excluding other riparian states).

Member States need to justify their contributions to the RBO.

The budget allocated to support an RBO has to go through the respective country's national budgeting process. Ministers of Water need to have arguments, which convince their governments of the necessity of this spending. Visible benefits of transboundary cooperation on the ground are the best argument. Also, it needs to be understood that Member States are involved in more than one RBO. If they increase their contribution to one RBO, they might be pressurized to also increase the contributions to the others.

External Funding

Institutional stability, the share of Member States' contribution, and clearly outlined strategies are enabling factors for mobilizing external resources.

The more OKACOM evolved in its institutional development, the more it developed its ability to form strategic partnerships that have assisted when resources were limited. Demonstrated cooperation between the parties sharing a transboundary watercourse system attracts external funding. Increasingly, Member States' contributions become a precondition for donor support.

Many donors are eager to implement projects in the basin through OKACOM, but not willing to financially contribute to the management and coordination of the project, i.e. the Secretariat. This becomes a challenge for OKACOM with the increasing number of projects it gets involved in.

Ministers Signing their Commitments to the Forum within OKACOM Structures

Mobilizing external resources should not mean following external agendas.

OKACOM aims at ideally entering co-financing agreements with its donors, i.e. projects are not 100% funded by an external organization. For the Angolan government this is already a precondition for any project implemented on their territory. Co-financing arrangements will further guarantee OKACOM's control over the project.

In particular the implementation of the SAP will not be possible by merely relying on Member States contributions. For the approximately 60 Mio USD required, other sources of financing will have to be found. With this great amount coming from external sources, OKACOM will have to ensure that its own agenda (and with this the Member States') is followed.

OKACOM The Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission

3. LESSONS LEARNT

TDA Team Research Team in the Field_Mocundi-Angola_Prof Jackie King and Dr Filomena

3.5 Research and implementation

As early as in the 1990s, the need emerged for research with a regional/ basin perspective, independent of national agendas and national research institutions. OKACOM implements studies to better understand the structure and functionality of the basin system as a whole; the information gathered is to inform governments in their decision-making. Also, joint studies and planning contribute to living the "basin perspective", build trust and contribute to a better and shared understanding between the countries.

With the TDA, we were able to obtain facts about the system and could hence anticipate impacts of our development actions on it.

T. Molefi, OBSC/ Botswana

Carrying out a Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) was important to understand the basin.

OKACOM works towards a sustainable and fair development of the basin, improving the livelihoods of the people of the basin, while providing appropriate protection of its iconic ecosystems. Shortly after OKACOM's foundation, members realized the need to better understand the basin in order to take informed decisions. This lead to the realization of the first TDA in 1997 to 1999. This TDA was never adopted due to its deficiencies and inaccuracies – many of which were caused by the inaccessibility of the Angolan territory, which was heavily affected by the country's military conflict and lack of money on the Botswana side to collect the data. After the end of Angola's military conflict, OKACOM underwent a second TDA (2004 to 2006/ EPSMO Project), which built on the first one and filled the data gaps. In preparation of this, OKACOM arranged for the installation of hydro-met stations on the Angolan side, which provided the necessary data. The TDA involved modelling of future scenarios, based on different strategies of managing the basin. For the TDA to be successful, a scientific based approach was important as well as local involvement within the framework of IWRM.

Sharing and managing data

A lot of data and information was and still is owned and managed at national Ministries, where it is often not accessible to their neighbouring countries. A mechanism was needed for improving accessibility of data. Some progress has been made in this regard, but further improvements in its application are required.

TDA Transdisciplinary and Trans-Country Integrated Validation Workshop

3. LESSONS LEARNT

The Data Sharing Protocol of OKACOM emphasizes the high level of commitment and trust among Member States.

Accessing hydrological data across borders is an important milestone in transboundary cooperation in the water sector. In the year 2000, the OKACOM riparian states signed a protocol for sharing hydrological data in 2000 to formalize their commitment.
However, so far, its application is limited to accessing of data. Efforts are planned to facilitate data generation / collection and transfer (i.e. providing available data through the Secretariat) and to further support joint data collection. Also, currently the data sharing protocol is limited to hydrological data and needs to be extended to other categories (e.g. hydro-meteorological data, water quality, groundwater, etc.).

> *While implementing the adopted measures of the NAP and the SAP, each state should seek to improve their knowledge of the basin level to share the most of this information.*
> *A. Gomes da Silva, Retired Commissioner / Angola*

Data management / management information systems are needed.

Over the years, a wealth of data has been produced. For some time, the Okavango Research Institute (ORI) has acted as a hub for information and data on the basin and hosted the data information system also for OKACOM. Currently, OKACOM's limitations with regards to data and information management relate first and foremost to scarce financial resources, which do not permit the employment of further staff at the Secretariat.

SAP and NAP implementation

The SAP was developed on the basis of the information gathered by the TDA; each country developed NAPs, which were deducted from the SAP. It was OKACOM's aim to ensure that both, SAP and NAPs were robust, results/ impact oriented, credible and marketable plans that were able to captivate political will for their endorsement.

TDA Cross-Country Data Confirmation and validation Workshop

The SAP development first started in the context of the GEF funded EPSMO Project (2004 – 2006). This process was challenged by internal tensions and the resignation of the project manager in end 2005. The project was put on halt and underwent a Mid-Term Evaluation in 2006, with the result that project activities were again taken up. From 2008 to 2010 – now with a Permanent Secretariat officially in place - the SAP and NAPs were developed with intensive stakeholder consultation, high-level political commitment, and endorsement of the SAP at Ministerial and Cabinet levels in 2011.

HYCOS Station in Namibia_Water Resources Management Technical Committee in the Field

OKACOM The Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission

3. LESSONS LEARNT

ICP Representatives at the NAP-SAP Consultation Workshop_ Botswana

Both, Angola and Botswana have integrated their NAPs into existing development plans. Botswana had already developed its Okavango Delta Management Plan (ODMP), which later became its NAP. In Angola, the NAP was integrated into its National Masterplan for Water Resources Management (Plano Nacional de Aguas), which covers all river basins of the country. This provided an opportunity for sharing experiences among all RBOs the country is involved in, and for aligning (national) actions.

There is a risk to get stuck in the planning phase: plans need to be realistic and costed.

Experience from RBOs worldwide shows that there is a risk to get stuck in the data collection and planning phase of basin-wide development plans, without entering the implementation phase. OKACOM too took long to finally arrive at a phase where the SAP and NAPs are being implemented. An important step towards implementation was the endorsement of the SAP at Ministerial and Cabinet levels of the three Member States in 2011.

In support of SAP implementation, OKACOM defined a joint basin wide shared vision and aligned its objectives in 2014/ 2015 - a process which also had mobilizing and motivating effects.

Not costing the plans turned out a mistake; the planswere thus rather vague and not ready for implementation. It was also more difficult to find funding for their implementation. OKACOM has recently undertaken an exercise of costing the plans.

SAP and NAP need monitoring systems.

The greatest gap with regards to SAP and NAP implementation - besides the financing – relates to the lack of an effective monitoring system. Such a system should provide information on progress of implementation of activities; and should have mechanisms in place that allow for evaluating impact.

Frequently monitoring progress has to be an integral part of managing the implementation of SAP and NAPs. It will allow for early recognition of challenges and action taking. Knowing what has been achieved is an important precondition for accessing funding from both, Member States and external donors, as it will substantiate OKACOM's credibility. The monitoring findings can also be used to inform the public and raise awareness on developments in the basin.

Visioning Formulation Workshop_Botswana Chapter

3. LESSONS LEARNT

EPSMO PMU Team in Liapeca Rapids

Besides clear objectives and indicators, there is a need for consistent top management support and follow up of actions.

> *We need forums that not only sit for meetings, but forums that implement activites. We sometimes tend to loose focus on implementation.*
> *C. Sekopo, Commissioner/ Namibia*

OKACOM's structure had to be adjusted to allow for an effective implementation of the SAP.

In OKACOM's first attempt to develop the SAP it became apparent that the institutional structure of OKACOM at the time was not sufficient to ensure the implementation of the SAP.

The OBSC, which was at the time responsible for the coordination and oversight of all OKACOM activities, did not have the capacity to ensure the implementation of activities. All OBSC members were – and still are – first of all employees of their respective ministries' and OKACOM is an additional task for them. A Permanent Secretariat was installed to take over some of these tasks.

After the SAP was finally approved in 2011, its effective implementation was still challenged by OKACOM's limited institutional capacity. In particular the Secretariat's mandate, organizational configuration and capacity needed to be re-assessed and re-aligned to the scale of SAP complexity.

In addition, the three Technical Task Forces were reviewed and adjusted. The five Technical Committees, which were approved in 2015, are aligned to the SAP key priority areas. The recently installed Minister's Forum will ensure a continuous link between the political level and the SAP implementation; it is expected that decision taking will be faster.

> *We don't need projects and models that fall outside our context and realities, from a holistic perspective. The people need to feel comfortable.*
> *C. Mendes, Commissioner/ Angola*

At the national level, cross-sectoral National Committees were established, so-called Basin Management Structures and NAP Implementation Units to ensure the implementation of NAPs. These structures are still in their infant stages. It is important that they take up their role of coordinating the implementation of the NAP, including monitoring of progress.

Project Implementation

In the past, most of OKACOM's projects were initiated at a national level and then referred to the Secretariat. It is hoped that with the SAP and NAPs approved, OKACOM will only get involved in projects that form part of these plans.

Prof Terrence McCarthy delivering a public lecture on the origins and evolution of the Okavango Delta in Maun

OKACOM The Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission

3. LESSONS LEARNT

A number of lessons were learnt during project implementation, including:

- Projects should be in response to local needs, and consider local capacities and approaches.

- Time gaps between project formulation and start of implementation should be avoided. With some projects, OKACOM has experienced gaps of several years. This resulted in out-dated data, which needed to be updated.

- Projects need to be properly planned, including decisions on how to organize the project, which committees are needed, what are their roles, what are reporting structures etc.

- Institutional arrangement framework needs to include partners on ground to support the project or even manage project implementation. Otherwise project implementation can be neither efficient (travel costs, time needed to build relationships and understand the context etc.), nor effective (relevance, delays, late identification of challenges etc.).

- In the past, bureaucracies at the national level have often hindered timely delivery. Mechanisms need to be in place to ensure that resources are available at country level to ensure timely delivery.

3. LESSONS LEARNT

ICP at the 21st OKACOM Meeting in Luanda-Angola

3.6 External cooperation and relationship building

Partnerships should add value to OKACOM's work and enrich the work of its partners.

OKACOM Secretariat's strength lies in its ability to establish new partnerships and nurture existing ones. Cooperation with other actors include:

- Partnerships with organizations and projects with similar objectives. Synergies can be explored and resources can be pooled and thus saved. E.g. with the Okavango Research Institute, Agostinho Neto University, University of Namibia, Namibia Polytechnic for carrying out studies, or with local community-based organisations in the basin for project implementation.
- Cooperation with organizations and projects that can provide (technical) advice and guidance.
- Partnerships with ICPs for the funding of projects and studies, as OKACOM's own resources are very limited.
- Cooperation with external service providers for the outsourcing of selected Secretariat tasks, e.g. to support dissemination of information and data management.

Cooperation with research institutions

With a lean structure and no own research department, establishing a close relationship with researchers and research institutions of the member countries is important.

OKACOM has a lean Secretariat structure. Except for Secretariat staff, all other members are employees of their respective governments and are not assigned full-time towards OKACOM. Thus, due to their limited availability, usually external researchers carry out OKACOM studies, although coordinated by the Secretariat and with technical inputs and direction by the OBSC, often also by one of the Technical Committees.

To be more efficient and to ensure continuity, relationships with research institutions were sought. Partnerships particularly with institutions in its Member States exist since OKACOM's early days. Due to the shared focus, the relationship with the Okavango Research Institute (ORI) of the University of Botswana was and still is particularly strong. For some years, a professor of ORI acted as a technical advisor to the Commission.

A partnership with a local research institute should be a win-win situation.

Partnerships with research institutions need to benefit both sides, if they are to last long. The research institute can be involved in research carried out by OKACOM, such as the TDA. ORI for instance provided data from the Botswana side to carry out the environmental flow assessment. Also, the research institute can train OKACOM members on selected topics, e.g. in water quality testing and monitoring.

Mr Piet Heyns and Mr Abrham Nehemia exchanging views during the second OKACOM Open Dialogue Forum in Swakopmound

OKACOM The Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission

3. LESSONS LEARNT

Namibia Members of the Water Resources Management technical Committee_Ground Water Experts

Many research institutes wish their studies to be relevant and of direct benefit. Often, studies aim at influencing decision and policy making. OKACOM supports these objectives by defining a research agenda and by providing a forum where technocrats, researchers and politicians can talk about the basin. Ensuring that research results are of relevance to the sustainable management of the basin may also assist the research institute to attract external funds. This also facilitates strengthening the highly required science-policy and decision-making loop.

Relationships with other RBOs

RBOs can learn best from exchange with other RBOs.

Delegates Apreciating the OKACOM Exhibition Stand at the SADC Ministers Meeting in Maseru

OKACOM has relationships with RBOs worldwide. While the exchange with RBOs in other parts of the world is largely limited to events, the relationships with selected RBOs in Southern Africa are continuous and long lasting. As OKACOM was one of the first of its kind, it served as an example for many other RBOs. Member States are involved in a number of RBOs and many representatives in the OKACOM structure are at the same time representatives in other RBO structures, which facilitates exchange and peer learning between the RBOs.

The establishment and consolidation of RBOs in Southern Africa are creating an appropriate forum for cross fertilization of ideas and exchange of experiences that is proving to be helpful in the establishment and development of RBOs. RBO workshops in Southern Africa, which are supported by SADC and ICP, provide a platform for exchange on selected topics and peer learning.

Cooperation with SADC

In contrast to the establishment of other RBOs in the region where SADC took a prominent role, it was not involved in OKACOM's founding in early years. By the time the OKACOM Agreement was signed in 1994, also the SADC Secretariat was in its infant stages and the SADC Protocol on Shared Watercourses, which is nowadays providing guidance to RBOs, did not yet exist. By the time the SADC Member States developed and later revised "the Protocol", Angola, Botswana and Namibia could already draw from their experiences in transboundary cooperation.

SADC has a lot to offer, OKACOM needs to better tap into these resources.

OKACOM's relationship with the SADC Secretariat is not hierarchical, but characterized by cross-pollination as the organizations grew alongside each other. Although it is important to ensure OKACOM's autonomy from the SADC Secretariat, the link to SADC is important. SADC has developed guidelines to support RBOs on a number of issues including establishment, financing, strengthening and environment management. OKACOM needs to more actively tap into these resources and lobby for its causes at SADC.

3. LESSONS LEARNT

First OKACOM Briefing to its Member States Ministers Responsible for Water Sector in Maseru_Side event at SADC Water Ministers Meeting

Roles and responsibilities between SADC and RBOs need to be reviewed and clarified so that the principle of subsidiarity is applied.

The SADC Secretariat currently takes the role of facilitator of dialogue among RBOs of the Southern African region. As the organization grows stronger, it will eventually be able to act as a mediator between countries, which share a watercourse – or between basins (inter-basin).

As both the SADC Secretariat and RBOs in the regions further evolve and grow stronger, their roles and responsibilities in their interaction need to be reviewed and to ensure that the principle of subsidiarity is applied. Although SADC's initiative of coordinating exchange among RBOs is highly appreciated, they seem to be dominating the agenda. The agenda should be set by RBOs – who should also take over the coordinating role in future. The emphasis of RBO workshops should be on real learning and experiences of RBOs and less on theoretical concepts.

Cooperation with ICPs

A strong institutional set up, Member States contributions and visible impacts attract donors.

OKACOM has been successful in accessing external funding to support its objectives. The fact that OKACOM adheres to the SADC Protocol of Shared Watercourses makes it easier for ICPs to provide support. With growing institutional strength, increasing Member States contributions and visible impacts more ICPs are willing to provide technical and financial support.

OKACOM's cooperation with various ICPs has greatly contributed to its ability to manage its mandate. However, unlike many other RBOs in the SADC region, OKACOM was established by the imitative of its own Member States and not by ICPs. Support from ICPs was received only some years into OKACOM's existence.

In their early years RBOs may not be able to handle a great number of ICP partners – fewer and long-lasting relationships are better.

In its early years, OKACOM benefited from having only one major external partner (Sida), who remained its main partner for several years. This continuity has allowed OKACOM to find a certain steadiness, without being distracted or imbalanced by differing preferences of external partners and their diverging requirements. OKACOM was thereby allowed to take time to learn how to handle ICPs. Particularly during the times without a Secretariat, OKACOM would have been overwhelmed by having to deal with many different partners.

There is a tendency amoungst donors to impose their objectives and ideas.(....) If you are going to travel all the way from the U.S. or Europe and live in some strange place for years, spend your tex payers' money wisely and leave something of value behind for the people you are trying to help, don't let your ego take over! (...) Success often depends on the skills and the chemistry at personal level - and the strength of the recipient to say 'I have my independence and know what's right for me'.

G. Gabaake, Retired Commissioner / Botswana

Dr Therese Magnusson_ Sida Representative Addressing the Meetiong in Swakopmound

3. LESSONS LEARNT

OKACOM at the Flood Pulse Symposium in Maun_Mrs Portia Segomelo

Flexibility of ICPs assisted OKACOM to establish its Secretariat.

During the early years of the Secretariat, some of the constraints were effectively dealt with as a result of a genuine support and involvement of interested partners. The IRBM Project (USAID funded) demonstrated a great disposition to assist with whatever they found appropriate to alleviate negative pressures in the implementation of the Secretariat's start-up phase, including donations, financial advances whenever required, technical assistance, etc. Also Sida showed great flexibility and provided guidance on how best to address such changes without infringing the terms of the agreement.

OKACOM has to emphasize its own agenda, which ICPs need to respect.

Whereby ICP's support to OKACOM is highly appreciated, they can become dominant in the cooperation and at times destructive and pessimistic. ICPs should trust Member States that these know what they are doing; and need to understand that Member States want to improve the livelihoods of their people.

On the other hand, OKACOM has to emphasize and be clear about its own agenda and earn the trust of ICP partners. With increasing own financial contributions to projects, through Member States contributions or income generation, OKACOM's dependence on ICPs will decrease. In general, the way of cooperation has improved considerably over the years: what was a donor-recipient relationship has in most cases become a true partnership. Nowadays the quality of the cooperation often depends on the attitude of the individuals representing the ICP, and the confidence and clarity of OKACOM to express its support requirements.

There is a need for donor coordination to ensure efficient and effective use of resources.

With the increasing number of organizations active in the basin, there is an increasing need for donor coordination to ensure that resources are used most efficiently, synergies put into value and duplications avoided. In 2015, OKACOM has introduced a donor coordination platform back-to-back to its annual meeting to reduce travel time and costs for OKACOM representatives.

Mrs Erica Akuenje Retired Commissioner from Namibia and Mr Steve Horn USAID Manager of SAREP Project

4. CONCLUSION AND WAY FOWARD

OKACOM_at_2012_Riverprize_Gala_Dinner

OKACOM_at_2012_Thiess_International_Riverprize selected as one of the four finalists.

This report provides a historic review of OKACOM and is a living document at the same time, as the organization strives towards continuous learning and improvement of the organization's functioning. As OKACOM operates in a dynamic environment, the organization will ensure that it is a learning organization, i.e. it provides space for joint reflection and adjustment to internal and external needs and developments. Many lessons we have learnt have resulted in shifting priorities, led to changes in the way we operate, and the organizational structure. This document is primarily an internal introspection and reflection, it is not meant to be a comparative analysis of OKACOM and other RBOs.

Some of the lessons learnt have not yet led to changed behaviour or changed structure, mostly due to external limitations, such as funding. This document also shows that there are topics which are currently being discussed within the organization, but for which no agreement has yet been reached, e.g. financial sustainability or the integration of local communities.

OKACOM has compiled this document for its own internal use, but also for sharing it with external stakeholders. The document will assist new members of OKACOM to better understand the organization, by knowing how it developed over time. It may be important to know that OKACOM does things „this way", because it has tried „that way„ for some time, but it didn't work. Having this knowledge will help to avoid frustration and reinventing the wheel.

OKACOM decided to share its lessons learnt with others, so that they too can learn from its mistakes and successes. For OKACOM it was critical to provide an insight into a „real" organization – which can never be perfect, as it has to deal with its own internal and external limitations. Therefore, blueprints for a functioning RBO do not make sense, and practice will always look a bit different than the theoretical concepts. With this lessons learnt document, OKACOM would like to encourage other organizations to initiate similar processes and to enter into an open exchange among RBOs. RBOs in Southern Africa are already engaging in peer learning platforms – this exchange needs to be expanded to include all RBOs in the region, it needs to be intensified, more frequent and driven by RBOs themselves, and it needs to move away from theoretical concepts to an honest exchange about what works in practice and what doesn't.

OKACOM The Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission

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1.1. People, who were interviewed and/ or completed a questionnaire

Name	Position, Institution, Country	OKACOM Affiliation
ANGOLA		
Armindo Gomes da Silva	Co-Chairperson, General Director,Gabinete para a Administração da BaciaHidrográfica do Cunene / Cunene River Basin Authority (GABHIC), State Secretariat for Water, Angola	Retired Commissioner
Prof Serôdio de Almeida	Professor Titular/ Assessor do Reitor, AgostinhoNeto University, Luanda, Angola	Retired Commissioner
Mr CarolinoManuel Mendes	Técnico Superior, General Director, Gabinete para a Administração da BaciaHidrográfica do Cunene / Cunene River Basin Authority (GABHIC), State Secretariat for Water, Angola	Commissioner
Mr Isidro Pinheiro	National Director for International Relations, Gabinete para a Administração da BaciaHidrográfica do Cunene / Cunene River Basin Authority (GABHIC), State Secretariat for Water, Angola	Commissioner, OBSC Member , ITF Member
Mr Paulo Emilio Mendes	Department of Water Resources, State Secretariat for Water, Angola	OBSC Member, HTF Member
Mr Carlos Andrade	Technical Department, Gabinete para a Administração da BaciaHidrográfica do Cunene / Cunene River Basin Authority (GABHIC), State Secretariat for Water, Angola	OBSC Member, BTF Member
Mr Joaquim Tavares	State Secretariat for Water, Angola	ITF Member
Mr Jorge Manuel David	Chefe de Departamente de HidráulicaAgrícola, Ministry of Agriculture, Angola	BTF Member
BOTSWANA		

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Dr Akolang Tombale	Botswana	Retired Commissioner
Mr Gabaake Gabaake	Botswana	Retired Commissioner
Mr Boikobo B. Paya	Head of Research, International University of Science and Technology (BIUST), Botswana	
Mr Bernard Khupe	Botswana	Retired Commissioner
Ms Portia Segomelo	Consultant, Botswana	Retired Commissioner
Ms Tracy Molefi	National Coordinator, RBOs, International Waters Unit, Ministry of Minerals, Energy and Water Resources, Botswana	OBSC Member, ITF Member
Mr George Thabeng	Principal Hydrological Engineer, Department of Water Affairs, Ministry of Minerals, Energy and Water Resources, Botswana	OBSC Member
Mrs Felicity Ziga	Legal services manager, Water Utilities Corporation (WUC), Botswana	ITF Member
NAMIBIA		
Mr Piet Heyns	Consultant, Heyns International Water Consultancy (HIWAC), Namibia	Retired Commissioner
Mr Stefan de Wet	Consultant andfarmer, Namibia	Retired Commissioner
Mr ColgarSikopo	Director, Directorate of Parks and Wildlife Management, Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET), Namibia	Commissioner
Mrs Cynthia Ortmann	Chief Hydrologist, Water Quality Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF), Namibia	OBSC Member
Ms Josephine Iipinge	Environmentalist, Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET), Namibia	OBSC Member
Mr Christopher Munikasu	Water Planning Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF),Nambia	OBSC Member, ITF Member

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Ms Winnie Kambinda	Department of Water Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF), Namibia	Former OBSC Member
Mrs ShisaniMunyika	Aquatic Ecologist, Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF), Namibia	BTF Member
Mrs Laurica Celeste Afrikaner	Hydrologist, Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF), Namibia	HTF Member
Mr NiccoMasule	Hydrologist, Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF), Namibia	HTF Member
OKACOM SECRETARIAT		
Dr EbenizárioChonguiça	Executive Secretary	OKACOM Secretariat
Mr Sekgowa Motsumi	Programmes Coordinator	OKACOM Secretariat
SADC SECRETARIAT		
Mr Phera Ramoeli	Water Division, SADC Secretariat	
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATING PARTNERS		
Mr Thomas Schild	Head of Programme, TWM in the SADC Region, GIZ, Botswana	ITC Partner
Victor Fritzen	GIZ Technical Advisor, TWM in the SADC Region, GIZ, Botswana	GIZ
Mr Bruce Mead	Deputy Technical Director, Climate Resilient Infrastructure Development Facility (CRIDF), South Africa	ITC Partner
UNDP Team Angola		ITC Partner

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Marcus Wishart	Sr Water Resource Specialist, World Bank Group, South Africa	ITC Partner
RESEARCHERS		
Ms Jackie King	Water Matters SA, South Africa	International Consultant
Prof Masamba	Okavango Research Institute (ORI), Botswana	International Consultant


LEGENDA
Rio perene
Rio efémero
Rio fóssil
Fronteira internacional
Divisão interna
Bacia do rio Cubango-Okavango
Delta do Okavango
Captação activa
Bacia hidrográfica fóssil
Pântano efémero
RDC
Angola
Luena
Huambo
Cuito
Huambo
Bié
Lucusse
Moxico
Chitembo
Cangamba
Cubango
Menongue
Huíla
Cuito Cuanavale
Mongu
Zâmbia
Caundo
Mavinga
Nankova
Cuando Cubango
Savate
Jamba
Katima Mulilo
Zambeze
Ondangwa
Rundu
Divico
Mohembo
Zimbábue
Kavango Ocidental
Kavango Oriental
Seronga
Distrito do Nordeste
Grootfontein
Tsumkwe
Gumare
Otjozondjupa
Tsau
Maun
Sehithwa
Lago Ngami
Lago Xau
Pântanos de Makgadikgadi
Ghanzi
Omaheke
WINDHOEK
Botsuana
Oceano Atlântico
Namíbia
GABORONE
África do Sul
N
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250 km