

WATER FOR PEACE IN THE OKAVANGO RIVER BASIN

MARCH 2003, DRAFT REPORT



THE MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE WATER FOR PEACE IN THE OKAVANGO PROJECT IS TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF COOPERATIVE, INTEGRATED BASIN MANAGEMENT POLICY AND BENEFIT-SHARING STRATEGIES IN THE BASIN.

The project is focusing on the following priorities:

- To support OKACOM, as the legitimate intergovernmental agency responsible for the management of the Okavango River Basin, in the generation of knowledge that will be useful to the development of alternative policy options.
- To foster a healthy relationship between OKACOM and the scientific community, by sensitising the latter to the needs of the former, and by cultivating a professional environment in which future research needs can be adequately articulated, properly coordinated and sustainably funded in a manner that is conducive to the development of appropriate knowledge.
- To map out the hydropolitical dynamics of the Okavango River Basin in sufficient detail that OKACOM Commissioners can understand the basic drivers of potential conflict and thereby avoid this possible eventuality, while cultivating the dynamics of cooperation instead.
- To start the long and arduous journey towards the development of adequate policy for consideration by OKACOM, that will suit the needs of the three riparian states as they strive to attain their independent national development objectives, while attempting to get convergence around a set of common core values and goals, so as to institutionalise the cooperative sentiments that already exist.
- To generate accurate case study material for consideration by riparian states on any of the other fourteen international river basins that exist in the SADC Region. In this regard every effort is being made to build sustainable capacity within the SADC Water Sector by generating African literature on African water issues.
- To contribute meaningfully to the changing water management paradigm that is moving away from a rights-based approach, towards a more equitable benefits-sharing and needs-based approach.



The Okavango River is the only perennial source of water for two growing and exceedingly arid nations, Namibia and Botswana. The former wants to further develop the river and divert water to meet the needs of its population; the latter also needs to increase its out-take, but has a very strong economic incentive to preserve the beauty of the Okavango delta – tourism. The main objective of this project is to explore the possibility of sharing benefits between Angola, Namibia and Botswana as a catalyst for peaceful development of the water resources of the basin. The project will facilitate the adoption of a framework policy by riparian states to ensure equitable and sustainable use of the Okavango River, in accordance with the guiding principles of OKACOM, the intergovernmental basin authority. Conflict prevention measures are essential if serious disputes are to be avoided when the next drought hits the region.

Four main activities have been carried out during implementation of the current phase of the Okavango project.

- I.** Project planning.
- II.** Scoping Study. This involved visits to basin states Botswana and Namibia, and communication with partners in Angola, to promote the objectives of the project and gain both essential official government support and the good will of other organisations active in the basin for the Water for Peace in the Okavango Pilot Project (OPP).
- III.** Holding of Workshop 1 in Maun, Botswana, to build and share information and strengthen relations between government and OKACOM representative, scientists and experts and NGOs.
- IV.** Research and Publications. Preparation of a Hydropolitical Study of the Basin (completion in process) and combining the papers commissioned for and presented at the Workshop into an edited volume in book form (editing in process).

The Project is under the direction of Mr. Anthony Turton, and Project Manager Mr. Anton Earle, of the Africa Water Issues Research Unit at the University of Pretoria. The University has provided administrative support and financial management. The project is very heavily focused on the development of reliable data and information and for this reason the use of experts and commissioning of papers has been fairly extensive.

I. PROJECT PLANNING

This involved further research and investigations to determine the parameters of the project, where it is situated in regards to the wider Water for Peace, UNESCO's PC-CP and other related initiatives, and identify the most appropriate project partners.

(Please see Project Planning Report, Annex I)

II. SCOPING STUDY

Report of fact-finding trip to Namibia & Botswana, 20 - 25 June 2002, Anton Earle.

a) Goals of the trip:

- To inform and gain the support of the riparian states.
- Determine which issues the riparian states would like to have discussed at Workshop One.
- Get advice on gaining access to the Angolan government representatives.
- Gather information from the riparian states as well as NGOs in the region on the state of relations within OKACOM.
- Enquire about the possibility of making a presentation to OKACOM.
- To inform and gain the support of the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia, the IUCN, and the Oppenheimer Okavango Research Centre (HOORC).
- Assess venues in Maun for holding Workshop One as well as orientation activities.

b) Meetings with riparian government representatives:

The director of water affairs for Namibia, Mr. Piet Heyns, responded positively to the request to participate in the workshop in Maun. According to him, OKACOM is characterised by goodwill between the riparians, but does not have sufficient power to implement its policy recommendations. He indicated that a discussion or presentation dealing with possible ways to strengthen the co-operation between riparians would be welcomed. Additional points which Namibia would like to see covered included aspects related to gaining international finance for infrastructure development projects on transboundary water courses, as well as a contextualisation of the SADC Protocol on Transboundary Water Courses in international water law.

The Permanent Secretary of Water Affairs for Botswana, Dr. Okalong Tombale also responded positively to the request to participate in the Maun conference. He pointed out that OKACOM representatives had recently participated in a capacity-building project through the

US Embassy in Gaborone whereby they were taken to the USA and exposed to organisations involved in transboundary water management. The second component of the project was a workshop on conflict resolution strategies. A forthcoming study funded by the GEF would seek to research a management and strategic reaction plan for the basin. He expressed concern that the OPP may cover the same ground as the above-mentioned projects. His concerns were noted but it was explained that in fact the OPP is aimed primarily at building on the current level of co-operation amongst the riparians, rather than explicitly at conflict resolution. Additionally the scope of the commissioned papers for the first workshop was broader than that of the GEF project, as it includes environmental, ecological, political, economic, and social as well as policy components.

Regarding gaining access to the Angolan representatives of OKACOM, the Permanent Secretary suggested that they be approached in Windhoek during the OKACOM meeting on the 8th of July 2002. He also proposed that the Namibians be approached for permission to make a presentation to OKACOM about the OPP at the same meeting. This has been followed up and approved by the Namibian representative, Dr S de Wet. The date for the presentation in Windhoek on the Water for Peace Okavango Pilot Project, by Anton Earle, was the 9th of July 2002. After this meeting, OKACOM expressed their intention to present a joint paper at the Water for Peace workshop, which has never occurred before and was a very positive sign for the project.

It was made clear to both groups of government representatives that the Water for Peace initiative would like to work with OKACOM as much as possible and for the agenda for the second workshop to be largely set by OKACOM.

c. Meetings with NGOs

The Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (DRFN), Windhoek, was invited to present a paper at Workshop One entitled “Ephemeral and Endoreic River Systems: Their Relevance and Management Challenges”. At the meeting the DRFN representative, Judith Henderson, indicated that the head of the foundation, Mary Seely, would be presenting the paper. Ms Henderson also agreed to attend Workshop One, at the cost of the DRFN.

The Okavango Research Centre (HOORC) in Maun has been invited to make a presentation entitled “The Strategic Ramifications Arising from the Management of the Okavango Delta as a Ramsar Site”. At a meeting with the head of the centre, Lars Ramberg, he indicated willingness to be involved with the OPP and would collaborate with a partner from the University of Botswana, who would present the paper.

A meeting with the country director of the IUCN in Botswana, Masego Madzwumo, was also attended by Ruud Jansen. They both provided valuable insight into the workings of OKACOM and the level of co-operation between the riparian states. Ms. Madzwumo apologised for the IUCN not being able to participate as a full project partner as had been anticipated and for not being able to secure funding. They would however like to do a presentation at Workshop One dealing with case examples of transboundary water management in other parts of southern Africa. They also agreed to chair one of the sessions and play an active role in discussions at the workshop. Ms. Madzwumo will also inform the IUCN regional office in Harare of the OPP.

(Please see attached, Scoping Study, Annex II.)

III. WORKSHOP 1, MAUN, BOTSWANA, 9-11 SEPTEMBER 2002

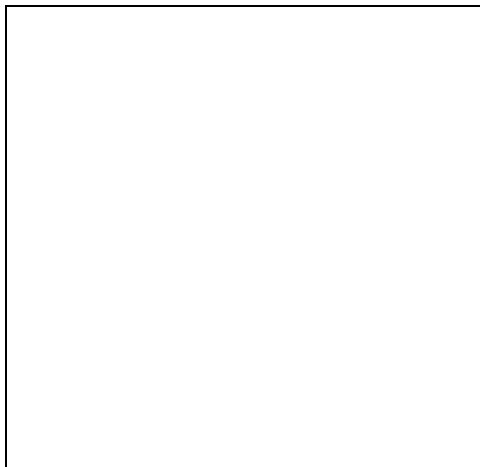
The first workshop of the Water for Peace Okavango Pilot Project (OPP) was held in Maun, Botswana. The workshop achieved several successes, notably the gathering of representatives from all the riparian states, a contribution to the building of good relations amongst OKACOM as well as contributing to the knowledge-base on the basin.

OKACOM

Representatives from (left to right) Namibia, Botswana and Angola presenting the joint paper at the Water for Peace workshop in Maun.



This workshop enabled the OKACOM Commissioners to meet for the first time outside of their normal OKACOM schedule, and they further distinguished this event by presenting a joint paper on their vision for the future. As far as is known, this is the first time that such a joint paper has ever been presented by OKACOM. This workshop also allowed a number of leading researchers to present specialist inputs for consideration by OKACOM. A field trip to the Okavango Delta the day before the workshop also helped to place the discussions in perspective, and was the first time many participants had ever visited this all-important area of the basin.



The opening session of the workshop was honoured by the presence of Sir Ketumile Masire, the former President of Botswana, internationally renowned peace advocate, and former member of the Sovereignty Panel with which Green Cross International worked to produce the report on “National Sovereignty and International Watercourses.” Sir Ketumile’s presence greatly inspired the proceedings, and brought the attention of the press, particularly from Botswana to the event.

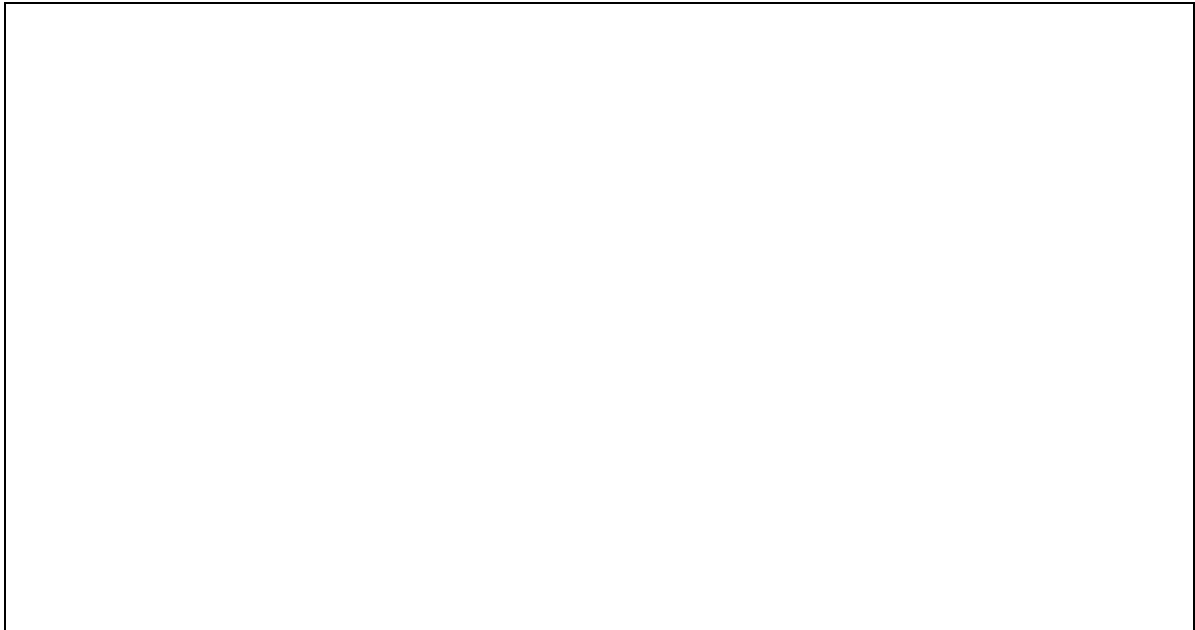
Sir Ketumile Masire, former President of Botswana, giving the opening address at the workshop

The Workshop was also fortunate to be filmed for a BBC-World Documentary being produced in connection with the 3rd World Water Forum. The Secretariat of the Forum had recommended the Water for Peace project to the BBC for the purposes of this programme, and a journalist attended the workshop, interviewed several key participants and went on field trips (at BBC expense) with the OPP team. This film will be broadcast on BBC World and at the 3rd World Water Forum as part of a series of films on water.

Please see attached:

Workshop 1 Summary Report (Annex III)

Workshop 1 Proceedings and List of Participants (Annex IV)



IV. RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

The project team at AWIRU is currently completing the Hydropolitical Study, which has been enhanced by the discussion and papers presented at the Workshop.

Proposal to publish workshop papers in book form

As part of the Water for Peace OPP, the project team propose that the fourteen papers presented at the workshop, covering various aspects of water management in the basin, be published as a book. The editing process is underway, and the book will be ready for discussion at the second Workshop in February 2003, and for presentation at the 3rd World Water Forum.

- The main driving force behind publishing such a book is that there is very little baseline data on the Okavango River system. This lack of knowledge about the various aspects of sharing the water of the river is, potentially, a major stumbling block to increased cooperation in the area. The book would seek to address this by providing baseline data on social, institutional, economic, legal and hydrological aspects of the basin. It is one of the few studies in the region which has covered such an extensive range of issues and would thus be useful to a wide audience both within and outside the region.
- The publication is not intended to be a definitive study – purely an introduction to the factors driving the hydro-political dynamics in the basin. This can benefit other forthcoming projects on the river by providing them with a starting point of ground already covered, as well as providing a foundation for further Water for Peace activities in the region. It will be a tangible benefit which can be used by researchers, students and decision-makers alike.
- The fact that the publication will be in print form, and not just digital, allows it to reach a wider audience in the region. Copies of the book will be sent to universities, research centres and training institutes, many of whom do not have easy access to computers and the internet. Most African students would find a book format more convenient than a journal or magazine format due to its durability. A single copy of such a book in a rural library will be used many times over.
- OKACOM has given its support to the book, with both the Namibian & Botswana commissioners agreeing to get their respective ministers of water to write a preface for the book (this has been followed up after the workshop). We are still attempting to contact the Angolan commissioner, but at the workshop he indicated that he would write a piece as a foreword in collaboration with his director of water and get it signed by President Dos Santos. It would seem that regional people are very eager to get the issues they confront on the Okavango out to a wider audience, as well as providing a level of data which can be discussed, built on and perhaps agreed on.

Budget

The total cost for the production of the book is \$9000. This amount will cover the production of 2000 books and distribution amongst stakeholders, educational institutions and water management agencies in the region.

Shortly after the original project budget was agreed on at the end of 2001, the South African Rand devalued by about 25%. The net effect of this is that in the absence of increased inflationary pressures the US\$ budget translates to a higher real value in the region. In conducting the activities to date the project team have either managed to produce the agreed to outputs under budget or have been able to enhance the activities of the OPP by being able to expand the scope of the first workshop to include more role players in the region. The idea to publish a book is founded on a desire not to let any part of this budget go to waste, but to rather use it to add value to the project as well as bringing tangible benefits to the region.

The project team requires \$7000 from the OPP for the production of the book, with the remaining \$2000 contributed from AWIRU. It is proposed that the \$7000 can be taken from other areas of the project without jeopardising the activities involved. All the agreed to outputs and activities would still take place, with money saved through the higher US\$ value in the region as well as through judicious spending contributing to the publication of the book. AWIRU will contribute the extra \$2000 needed partly so as to reduce the amount which needs to be used from allocated funds and partly as an act of good faith to show commitment to such a publication.

Please see attached: Draft Introduction to the Okavango book (Annex V) and book budget references in the financial report (Explanatory note 4).



ANNEXES

Annex I: Project Planning Report

Annex II: Scoping Study

Annex III: Workshop 1 Summary Report

Annex IV: Workshop 1 Proceedings and List of Participants

Annex V: Draft Introduction for the Okavango Book