

The Ramsar Convention's Swiss Grant for Africa



Swiss Grant for Africa - Report for 1998

The Swiss Grant for Africa is a generous voluntary contribution offered annually to the Ramsar Convention Bureau by the Federal Government of Switzerland, over and above the annual contribution provided to the Convention's core budget, in order to support wetland conservation and wise use and the implementation of the Convention in Africa. This annual contribution dates back to 1989 following the establishment of the Convention secretariat in Switzerland in 1988.

The Swiss Grant is extremely useful in financing suitable emergency action or specific activities in needy areas of wetland conservation and wise use. This contribution is also particularly helpful in promoting the Convention in the region.

Report of the activities and funding disbursements from the Swiss Grant for Africa 1998

In 1998 the Swiss voluntary contribution to Africa amounted SFR 135,470 and supported six projects as outlined below:

1. Botswana: Review of the Okavango Delta System for the preparation of an Integrated Management Plan for Ramsar site.

This activity is undertaken in response to the Operational Objective 7.1. of the Strategic Plan 1997-2002 as adopted at COP6 by the Contracting Parties. The purpose of this assistance is to prepare a "design mission" that will be carried out in order to prepare a document for undertaking the formulation of a management plan for the Okavango Ramsar site. A visit has been organised by the Bureau of the Convention in order to discuss with relevant institutions in Botswana. This visit has been instrumental in terms of setting up the "design mission": Meetings were organised with all relevant national institutions separately, including the National Conservation Strategy (Coordinating) Agency, the Department of Lands, the Department of Water Affairs, the International Rivers Network, the North-South Carrier Water project Coordinating Unit (Botswana's representative within OKACOM, which is a joint commission between Angola, Botswana and Namibia for the Okavango River Basin), the Department of Tourism and the Department of Wildlife and National Parks.

Overall, all national agencies were supportive to the management plan formulation process for the Okavango delta as a starting action for the integrated management plan for the whole basin. A global meeting was organised by the National Conservation Strategy (Coordinating) Agency (NCSA) with all the above institutions and the Okavango Research Centre to discuss practical arrangements for the design mission. In this regard, we reached an agreement on various items: a reference group was set up along with a scientific and technical team. A letter of understanding between the NCSA and the Okavango Research Centre will be signed in order to assign tasks to the Okavango Research Centre. For the tasks to be achieved by the design mission, a proposal will be sent to the Bureau of the Convention for approval. The proposed budget will include government contribution and financial support from the Swiss Grant.

Another trip to Botswana will be undertaken by the Regional Coordinator for Africa in March in order to have an input in the actual preparation of the draft proposal for undertaking the management plan. This trip will have to include a field trip to the delta and discussions with various interest groups.

Allocated budget in 1998: SFR20,000

2. Southern African Development Community (SADC): Wetland valuation project .

This activity was initiated with financial support from the 1997 Swiss grant. This activity is aimed at improving the understanding of wetland values in Southern Africa so as to promote the wise use of wetlands in both national and sub-regional planning processes. In order to complete the activity, an additional contribution was needed in 1998.

Disbursed budget: SFR 28,080

3. Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger and Togo: Consultative process for a common approach on shared wetland management.

This process was initiated with some financial assistance from the 1997 Swiss grant in response to the Operational Objective 7.1 of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 1997-2002. OMPO (Oiseaux Migrateurs du Paléarctique Occidental) is also providing a financial contribution (SFR 20,000) to this action. The purpose of this operation is to encourage exchange of information and promote harmonisation of policies/strategies and legislation between these countries. Following this collaborative initiative, a joint action plan is expected to be implemented within the framework of a regional project in the "W" national park area in Burkina Faso, Benin and Niger.

Disbursed budget in 1998: SFR 27,900

4. All Contracting Parties in Africa: Cooperative project on invasive species involving IUCN-The World Conservation Union, The Commonwealth Secretariat and the Bureau of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971).

Invasive species are animals, plants and micro-organisms that enter an ecosystem either as aliens or through an expansion of their range as indigenous species. They are often harmful to the ecosystem they encroach upon and are quite frequently introduced through the intentional or accidental activities of people.

The objective of this project is to begin to address the issue of harmful invasive species in Africa so that problems can be recognised and acceptable solutions can be found and applied in good time. This requires the development of a strategy and some actions that address this broad objective while taking into account the functions, values and uses of Africa's wetlands and the needs of those responsible for their management.

Disbursed budget in 1898: SFR 10,000

5. Zambia: Formulation of the National Wetland Policy for Zambia.

The objectives of this project are in line with the Operational Objective 2.1 of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 1997-2002. This action is undertaken with the collaboration of other projects in Zambia. A number of activities are planned, including a review of environmental legislation, the establishment of a Wetland Unit at the Environmental Council for Zambia, education and public awareness on wetlands, designation of additional Ramsar sites and adoption of the Policy document.

Disbursed fund: SFR 39,500

6. African Waterfowl Census 1998 Report.

As in 1997, part of the Swiss Grant is used to support the work of 30 African countries in collaboration with Wetlands International. The grant is contributing to the production of the African Waterfowl Report which will be used to advise on the implementation of the Convention in Africa.

Disbursed fund: SFR 10,000