

The Ramsar Convention's Swiss Grant for Africa



Swiss Grant for Africa - Report for 2002

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.

We are pleased to report a summary on the approved projects in 2002.

Summary of the approved projects for 2002

1. Accession process to the Ramsar Convention:

A number of African countries are taking steps for accession and it is planned to provide some input to accelerate the process so as to achieve the accession of six of them by COP8. To that end, technical backing along with a small financial support will be provided by the Ramsar Bureau through the Swiss Grant Fund. The financial support will be mainly aimed at organising a national workshop in the following countries:

Angola	SFR12,000
Mozambique	12,000
Seychelles	15,000

Lesotho	12,000
Djibouti	12,000
Rwanda	12,000

This initiative will require three trips by the Regional Coordinator for Africa to assist these countries in the following manner:

Our future work with Seychelles brings about special prospects for collaborative actions with the Small Island Developing States. Ramsar has high interest on small islands and the importance of their wetland ecosystems is recognized by the Convention in its work in the Indian Ocean, the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans.

As these islands become signatories to the Ramsar Convention, they are better placed to tell the global community of their special concerns and problems. It is important for the long-term future of the Small Island Developing States that wetland issues, such as protection of coral reefs, seagrass beds and storm-buffering mangroves, are brought to world attention and adequately considered in global environmental planning and support programs.

The workshop in Angola, Mozambique and Seychelles will be jointly organized with the WWF offices in Mozambique and Madagascar.

2. Guinea: Supporting co-ordinating mechanism for the promotion of integrated river basin management

Guinea is the West Africa "Water Tower" with the source of Niger River, the source of the Senegal River and the source of the Gambia River. The Bureau of the Ramsar Convention has established a joint work with WWF International Living Water Programme to assist Ramsar Contracting Parties in the implementation of the Ramsar Convention, especially through Ramsar sites designation and Management activities.

The work between the government agencies responsible for water and for environment has led to improved partnership between national institutions. A Ramsar National Committee has been established and a local committee is being established in relevant districts concerning the source of the Niger River and its headwaters.

This financial allocation is intended to consolidate the consultation process and promote the endorsement by local stakeholders of a strategy that integrates wetland conservation and wise use into the overall management of the Niger River at basin scale.

This project is jointly sponsored by the Swiss Grant and WWF International Living Waters Programme.

Approved budget by the Swiss Grant: SFR20, 000

3. External input to the above activities

It is suggested to set aside SFR10,000 to allow for input from the Ramsar Bureau and from Ramsar's representatives of International Organisation Partners (BirdLife International, IUCN, Wetlands International and WWF International) as appropriate in the pre-accession workshops. This amount will only cover travel expenses. The required staff time for technical input will stand for an in-kind contribution from the Bureau and Ramsar's partners.

4. Strengthening collaborative work with the Centre for African Wetlands (CAW) based in Accra, Ghana

This initiative is intended to support and encourage the work of the newly established regional Centre for African Wetlands (CAW) hosted by the University of Ghana. A specific action will be taken on promoting the use of alternative sources of energy that help save wetlands and other ecosystems: solar energy is used in the new building of the Centre.

The Centre seeks to maintain wetland biodiversity, enhance the general ecological integrity of wetlands, and through this improve the quality of life for people living within and around wetlands. In order to achieve this, the Centre has been established in Ghana and mandated, as a facilitator, to focus on research, capacity building, networking, information dissemination, policy development, and advocacy, for promoting sustainable wetland management in West Africa. This would be done through the pursuit of scientific research that would benefit the whole West African sub-region through links between the Centre, other institutions in West Africa involved in wetland research.

Stage 1 of the Centre's operation had several outputs, one of which was the construction of a seven office, conference room, library and laboratory complex. This has now been completed and the building is in use. In the spirit of conservation the Center has a solar panel, which supplies the emergency power instead of a generator.

The Center would like to construct a rainwater collection and redistribution system. This would be coupled with a small solar pump and a drip-irrigation system would serve two main purposes;

- 1) as a practical demonstration to the visitors to the Centre and the Ghanaian population as a whole of the potential of green technologies to conserve the environment as well as saving energy and resources
- 2) assisting the Centre maintain its grounds and image

Approved budget by the Swiss Grant SFR15,000

5. Strengthening communication with Contracting Parties

It is proposed to allocate SFR6000 to help the Ramsar Administrative Authority in Nigeria in improving their communication with the Ramsar Bureau and other players on wetland conservation and wise use activities.