

The Ramsar Convention's Swiss Grant for Africa



Swiss Grant for Africa - Report for 2003

The Swiss Grant Fund for Africa administered by the Ramsar Secretariat is a generous contribution offered by the Federal Government of Switzerland over and above the annual dues provided to the Convention's core budget. This contribution dates back to 1989 following the establishment of the Secretariat of the Convention in 1988.

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

The Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention wishes to convey to the Swiss government the positive reaction and the appreciation of the African Ramsar Contracting Parties for the precious support from the Swiss voluntary contribution to the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Africa.

The Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention expresses its gratitude and its encouragement to the Swiss government for this fruitful contribution that opens up opportunities and promising prospects for the conservation and wise use of wetlands in Africa.

We are pleased to submit the following summary report on the approved projects for the year 2003.

A. 2003 ALLOCATION - UPDATE

In 2003, five activities were supported by the voluntary Swiss contribution to Africa. Three of these activities (Djibouti, Lake Chad and NEPAD) have been initiated and for two of them, mid term reports have been delivered in late 2003 or early 2004.

Owing to the absence of a senior Advisor for Africa in the Ramsar Secretariat between August and December 2003, it was not possible to process as rapidly as planned the fourth activity for Ethiopia (Ethiopia pre-accession workshop) in 2003. However, a successful workshop was held in March

2004. That for Equatorial Guinea has also been delayed for the same reason, and because a Convention new Focal Point in the country has just been afforded.

The initiative related to the facilitation of the NEPAD Wetland Strategy and Action Plan has just started and is still ongoing and it is too early to appraise its achievements yet.

1. COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION AND AWARENESS ON WETLANDS IN DJIBOUTI

1.1 Background information

Djibouti has acceded to the Ramsar Convention since 2001 and the government was highly committed to establishing an enabling environment for the implementation of the Convention. Among the initial actions that are planned, Djibouti was undertaking a wide-ranging communication and education programme, through existing media (radio, television and newspapers) and government communication support.

However, the capacity of Djibouti to develop and implement a comprehensive outreach programme was limited and there was a clear need for support from external partners. Very few people had an expertise on wetlands and the country's important assets of the 170 km of coastal area was underestimated.

Djibouti had requested financial support from the Swiss Grant to improve the technical capacity for awareness raising and to disseminate Ramsar tools in the country. To that end Djibouti requested an assistance to undertake three types of actions: i) the production and dissemination of educational materials, taking into account the national context, ii) the establishment of a National Wetland Committee and, iii) the installation of an electronic communication system for the Wetland Unit:

Allocated budget: CHF 23,500

1.2. Progress Report

Challenge:

Consolidating the consultation process and promote the understanding of the Ramsar Convention by all major players.

Allowing Djibouti to have access to Ramsar information on internet and to communicate with the Ramsar Secretariat

Achievements

In response to this challenge, the Secretariat of the Ramsar undertook a special initiative with the financial support of the Swiss voluntary contribution to Ramsar, to provide Djibouti with the necessary equipment to allow them to access Ramsar information and be able to communicate with the Secretariat. In addition, the project allowed the organization of three workshops to share information on the wetlands resource of the country and to discuss the possible joint initiatives with other government agencies.

In addition, a National Wetlands Committee has been created. It brings together all the stakeholders which have an interest and a role to play in the management of the wetlands of Djibouti.

1.3. The way forward

The Ramsar Convention and the other development partners of Djibouti will keep alive the momentum gained during the project and make sure that there is a continuation after the project. Wetlands management will then have to be included in the country national environmental policy and resources for their sustainable management must be made available.

We need to keep on assisting Contracting Parties in the implementation of Resolution VIII.31 on the Convention's Programme on communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) 2003-2008. To that end, we will make available to the maximum of Africa countries the Convention's Programme on communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) 2003 - 2008, contained in Annex I to this Resolution, as an instrument to provide guidance to Contracting Parties in the development of appropriate actions to support the implementation of the Convention at the international, regional, national and local levels.

2. LAKE CHAD BASIN COMMISSION : INVENTORY OF THE LAKE CHAD BASIN WETLANDS USING REMOTE SENSING AND GIS TECHNIQUES

2.1. Background information

The Project was supposed to be carried out in the Ramsar site and address the following issues and objectives of Ramsar Convention Workplan 2000 - 2002.

Issue 1: Need to accurately define and document the Lake Chad Basin wetlands boundaries to Accelerate Designation as a Transboundary Wetland Site

This project aimed at defining and documenting the boundaries and present status of Lake Chad basin and accelerating the process of designating the Lake Chad as a transboundary wetland site requiring international cooperation relating to operational objectives 1, 10, 11 and 12 of the Ramsar Convention Strategic Plan 2003-2008.

Issue 2: Need to Strengthen Regional Capacity to Develop and Maintain a Shared Database among the Countries of Lake Chad Basin

An important objective of this proposal was to create a baseline database of inventory and assessment of the present situation of the Lake Chad Basin wetlands. The overall concern was to develop the database to meet the compatibility requirement of the Ramsar Database. A standard shared database format among the countries in the Lake Chad catchment is a prerequisite for continuous wetland monitoring, assessment and developing common catchments management plan. Thus the proposal related to operational Objectives 11, 14, and 20 of Ramsar Convention Strategic Plan 2003-2008.

Issue 3: Need to Promote Regional Cooperation for Lake Chad Wetland Conservation and Wise Use

The end result of the project was the development and maintenance of a database of the inventory of transboundary wetlands as a basis for developing joint management plans using the catchments approach. This objective of the project related to Operational Objective 1, 11, 12, in which twinning was encouraged as a mechanism for accelerating the flow of knowledge and assistance and promoting training opportunities.

The specific objectives of the project were;

Objective 1: To obtain baseline inventory information on Lake Chad Basin wetlands in accordance with the approved standard format.

Objective 2: To reinforce the capacity of LCBC and other institutions in Lake Chad Basin to create and share common database for inventory, assessment and monitoring of the state of Lake Chad wetland for the purpose of achieving conservation and wise use of the wetland.

Objective 3: To promote regional cooperation through twinning for the purposes of accelerating the flow of knowledge and assistance in promoting training opportunities.

Allocated budget: CHF 39,500

2.2. Achievements

Commencement of project activities was delayed due to errors in transfer of funds to Bank Commercial of Tchad instead of Commercial Bank of Tchad. Funds were only received in the proper account on the 3rd November 2003.

Despite this initial setback, project activities started in earnest in planning, literature review and establishing a library of available reports and maps. An expenditure of equivalents to CHF 2,061.63 was incurred in the travels to collect existing maps. An additional amount of CHF 701.5 was used to replace some mutilated Topographical Maps

Participated in Med Wet for initial steps towards a similar framework for Lake Chad (Chad Wet) was accomplished at the sum of CHF 4,421:00. En route for a Med Wet context, LCBC would imitate a similar setting.

Activities concerning conducting searches for availability of suitable archive of satellite imageries commenced in September. The result of archive searches led to the decision to purchase 5 Scenes of ETM + Landsat 7. Initially, the team wanted to procure images for different seasons (wet and dry) to accommodate number of GIS analyses (change detection, classification/categorization), but restricted for the obvious cost of the images, hence, left with option of buying one season. The total cost of the images amount to CHF 4,216.4 but the project also suffered another setback in funds transfer to USGS/EROS Data Centre. The project team working with its bank is at this moment just traced the payment and resend the amount.

The project however successfully procured computer equipment for processing of imageries and is in the process of upgrading existing software licences for GIS and Image processing. Expenditure of CHF 6,933.8 has been incurred in the purchase of computer equipment and accessories

2.3. The way forward.

- Perform satellite image processing to determine the extent of the wetland in the current year
- Undertake field visits for Ground Truthing
- Perform satellite image processing to determine the extent of the wetland in a representative wet year
- Perform satellite image processing to determine the extent of the wetland in a representative dry year
- Undertake sampling to determine water salinity, colour and transparency
- Procure software licence for GIS processing (Esri ArcGIS)

Most of these activities must be completed by mid-2004.

3. SUPPORT TO ETHIOPIA ACCESSION TO THE CONVENTION.

3.1. Background and information.

Ethiopia is one of the rare countries in East Africa that has not ratified the convention yet. After some hesitations, it is now clear that there is some political will from the government to ratify the convention. The Secretariat has therefore requested financial support from the Swiss Grant to Africa to organize the Ethiopia pre-accession workshop.

The objectives of this workshop were:

- to raise the awareness of Ethiopian people on the rationale and socio-economic challenges behind the ratification of the Ramsar Convention;
- to discuss the possible synergy between Ramsar and the implementation of the three Rio-born conventions at the national level;
- to identify the Ethiopia wetlands sites which meet the Ramsar criteria;
- to draw a plan of action to complete the ratification process

Allocated budget: CHF 25,000

3.2. Achievements:

The workshop was attended by 50 participants from government, research institutions, NGOs and the Parliament of Ethiopia. The East Africa Office of WWF was also represented and made a presentation. It is also important to indicate the participation at his own cost of Prof. Adrian Wood, Director, Wetland and Natural Resources Research Group (WENREG) of the University of Huddersfield in UK. Prof. Woods made a remarkable presentation on the issues of poverty reduction and community use of wetlands. This presentation highlighted the fact that the wetlands and the convention have both environmental and socio-economic functions. It had been requested by the government to emphasis some of the discussions on the issue of wetlands and food production.

It is important to indicate that a series of wetlands sites that qualify for designation of Ramsar sites of International importance were identified.

The active participation of the different government services that have an interest in wetlands management was a sign that collaboration in the implementation will be a key word once Ethiopia ratified the convention.

A plan of action to complete the ratification process was approved by the participants. A commission to nominate the first Ethiopia wetland site to be submitted for designation was set up after the workshop. This commission is supposed to make a decision in late April 2004.

3.3. The way forward:

- Implementation of the road map that will lead the country to the accession
- Preparation of a national CEPA once the convention is ratified.
- Designation of more Ramsar sites of international importance (including transboundary lake Turkana)
- Elaboration and implementation of a National Wetlands Policy.

4. PROMOTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTION VIII.44 ON NEPAD AND RAMSAR

4.1. Background and information

Following the adoption of NEPAD by the African Union in 2002 as the programme for sustainable social and economic development in Africa, wetlands conservation and wise use were included in the Environment Initiative of NEPAD, as a thematic area under the overall environmental strategy and action plan.

Subsequently, thanks to the financial support of the Swiss Grant for Africa, a workshop was convened by the Ramsar Secretariat and UNEP in Valencia just prior to COP8, on further developing the Plan of Action to implement Africa's Wetland Management Strategy under the Environment Initiative.

Taking into account that a number of pilot projects will soon be selected by the African Ministerial Council on Environment (AMCEN) in collaboration with the African Ministerial Conference on Water (AMCOW) for the initial implementation of the NEPAD Environmental Initiative, UNEP and Ramsar convened a meeting in early February 2003 in Nairobi for the preparation of pilot project proposals.

In order to ensure continued partnership and effective communication for the implementation of the NEPAD Strategy and Action Plan, we needed to fill a gap by proposing a liaison officer for

effective communication between the NEPAD bodies, the Ramsar Secretariat, and others who are contributing to the future implementation of the wetland component of NEPAD.

Allocated budget: CHF 25,000

4.2. Progress report

Challenge

The New Partnership for Africa's Development is the vision around which the development of Africa will be articulated for the next decade and it has been adopted by most of all the international institutions that have development activities in Africa. The challenge for the Ramsar Secretariat is to play its role in the implementation of NEPAD Environment Action Plan as far as Wetlands management of the continent is concerned.

Achievements

The Ramsar Secretariat has prepared the necessary documents and contracts which have been submitted to the Kenya Government for approval and signature. While we have received the official acceptance from the Government of Kenya to host the liaison office on NEPAD Wetland Strategy, we are still at the very beginning of the implementation. Nevertheless, it has been agreed that the liaison office will come up with a plan of action to be implemented in 2004 in relation with the terms of reference included in the contract between Ramsar and the Government of Kenya.

Contacts have already been made with the Regional Office for Southern Africa of IUCN in the framework of their project of wetlands conservation in Southern Africa. This project will focus on capacity development (wetlands inventories methodologies) as indicated in the NEPAD Environment Action Plan document. It's worth noting that Ramsar has already developed and adopted during COP8 a Ramsar Framework for Wetland Inventory under resolution VIII.6. In addition, it will use a regional and ecosystems management approach to addressing the issues which is essential because of the transboundary nature of the major categories of the wetlands in the region. That will be a pilot action and then the Secretariat will move on to other sub-regions for the same purpose.

B. FURTHER ALLOCATIONS IN 2003

In conjunction with the WSSD and the Ramsar COP8, the Swiss Government has decided to allocate supplementary financial support (CHF 60,000) to help in the following actions in addition to the voluntary contribution of CHF 140,000 received in early 2002.

JOINT SWISS / WWF GRANT FOR LAKE NYASA: 2003 PROJECT

Tanzania, Mozambique and Malawi : Designation of the three countries shares of Lake Malawi/Nyasa /Niassa as a Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar Site)

Background information

Lake Nyasa is situated in the southern part of the western Rift Valley. The lake is about 565 km long and a maximum of 90 km wide and has a maximum depth of 706 m. It is the second deepest lake in Africa after Lake Tanganyika. The lake is shared between Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique.

Lake Malawi/Nyasa/Niassa, referred hereafter to as Lake Niassa, with a total surface area of 30.800 Km² is the third largest lake in Africa after Lake Victoria and Tanganyika, and it is a shared natural resource among three countries: Mozambique, Malawi and Tanzania. This lake is the world's third deepest lake with a depth just over 700 m, and it's the southernmost of the Western Rift Valley lakes (Twombly 1983, Crul 1995, Konings 1995).

Lake Niassa (also known as Lake Malawi/Nyasa in Malawi and Tanzania, respectively) constitutes the largest portion of inland waters in Mozambique. In the part under its territorial jurisdiction and at coastal level there are socio-economic, cultural and ecological particularities, which are relevant from the point of view of management and conservation of micro and macro ecological regions, as is the case with the Eco-Region of the Lake Malawi/ Niassa/Nyasa Catchment Area altogether.

Justification and assumption:

Lake Nyasa is a very important cross-border wetland site, which was pointed out as a top candidate during the second meeting of the Informal Wetland Working Group (IWWG), the national wetland forum in Tanzania. The lake qualifies as a Ramsar site due to its outstanding ecological values and it is the most important lake in the world for endemic fish species due to a remarkably high and famous concentration of fish species in the Cichlid family. Technical know how and a participatory approach will be equally important in the designation process. The designation of Lake Nyasa is therefore based on the assumption that there are no major constraints in the designation process in the government system and among the local communities.

The Swiss Grant was awarded to Tanzania, Mozambique and Malawi through the Ramsar Secretariat and the WWF Living Waters Programme which deliver some support for the designation of Lake Nyasa/Niassa/Malawi as a Wetland of International Importance. The Ramsar Secretariat and WWF have taken a similar approach with Malawi and have initiated similar activity in Mozambique so as to assist in the designation of the whole Lake Malawi/Nyasa/Niassa.

Allocated budget: CHF 60,000

Progress report

The strategic target was to designate Lake Nyasa before the World Park Congress, Durban, South Africa September 8-17, 2003. However this has not been possible. To date, only Mozambique and Malawi have completed the Ramsar Information Sheet for the designation of their parts of the Lake as a wetland of International Importance. Tanzania has submitted the report of an identification mission for Lake Nyasa as Potential Ramsar Site. The Secretariat has contacted Tanzania to request that the RIS and the maps are produced as soon as possible and sent to us. (Note. Although the Ramsar Secretariat understands that Mozambique has completed its procedures for accession to the convention in 2003, the instrument of accession has yet to be received by the convention's legal depository, UNESCO, and to Mozambique has not yet formally joined the convention.)

In order to reach this target the Wildlife Division is undertaking a feasibility mission to Lake Nyasa. The aim is twofold: (i) to visit pre-selected sites in the field in order to assess values and propose Ramsar boundary scenario; and (ii) to see the district officials in the three districts. A brief mission report was prepared to the Director of Wildlife (DW), with recommendations.

A progression of activities is underway, including consultations with all relevant local stakeholders at district level, ecological surveys, socio-economic studies, and data analyses.

The Secretariat is waiting for the Tanzania RIS + map to designate the three sites at the same time.