

Swiss Grant for Africa - Report for 2004

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 wetlands 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.

We express our gratitude and our encouragements 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.

The Swiss Grant of this year is much appreciated as it coincides with the preparation of Ramsar COP9 which is going to take place for the very first time after almost thirty five years in Africa.

We are pleased to submit the following summary report on the approved projects for the year 2004.

It's important to indicate that all the activities sponsored by the 2004 Swiss Grant for Africa are still ongoing.

A. 2004 ALLOCATION - UPDATE

2004 Proposal Summary

<u>Initiative/Activity</u>	<u>Recipient countries/Institutions</u>	<u>Allocation</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
Support to countries for accession to the	Cameroon	SFR 18,000	Awareness on wetlands issues and the work of the

Ramsar Convention	Cape Verde	SFR 18,000	Convention National Parliamentarian Workshop on Wetlands Designation of the first Ramsar Sites Setting up institutional mechanism for the implementation of the Convention
Support to countries for the implementation of Ramsar Convention	Burkina Faso	SFR 20,000	Designation of more Ramsar sites
	Gabon	SFR 18,000	Wetlands inventory CEPA activities towards Parliamentarians Conservation and wise use of Ramsar sites Establishment of National Wetlands Committees
Ramsar Advisory Missions	Liberia	SFR 16,500	Assessment of the wetlands situation in a post-conflict period and sites designations.
	Cote d'Ivoire	SFR 20,000	
AFRICA REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING FOR COP9	Regional	SFR 35,000	Preparation of Ramsar Africa Regional Preparatory Meeting For Cop9

Management Fees and contingencies	10%	SFR14,550	Professional management of the fund, communication and Coordination of the field work
Total	7 initiatives	SFR160,500	To strengthen and expand the implementation of the Convention in Africa 2004

In 2004, seven activities were supported by the voluntary Swiss contribution to Africa. Most of these activities have been initiated in late 2004 and some of them in early 2005 as the funds were only disbursed in November 2004.

Two countries (Cameroon and Cape Verde) were granted a financial support for their accession to the Convention. Burkina Faso and Gabon received a grant to reactivate the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in these two countries. Three countries that have faced a civil war in the previous years have been allocated a grant to assess the state of the wetlands in a post conflict situation Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire.

At the regional level, the Swiss Grant for Africa also accepted to support the preparation of the Africa Regional meeting for COP9. This meeting is scheduled to take place from 4-8 April 2005.

As indicated above, most of these activities has just started and are still ongoing; it is therefore too early to appraise their achievements yet.

B. PROJECT REPORT

1. SUPPORT TO COUNTRIES FOR ACCESSION TO THE RAMSAR CONVENTION (CAMEROON AND CAPE VERDE)

1.1. Background and information.

Cameroon is one of the rare countries in Central Africa that has not ratified the convention yet and Cape Verde is the only one in West Africa which is not party to the Convention.

In the case of Cameroon, 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 assist Cameroon and Cape Verde in the accession process.

The grant is financing among others the following activities in the two countries:

- Awareness on wetlands issues and the work of the Convention
- National Parliamentarian Workshop on Wetlands
- Designation of the first Ramsar Sites
- Ratification of the Convention

1.2. Achievements:

The contracts with the two governments have been prepared and the funds will be transferred to the relevant Administrative Authorities.

While the contacts with the Government of Cameroon are improving, those with Cape Verde remain a bit slow. However, we have joined hands with Wetlands International (and WWF) to complete the ratification process of Cape Verde. In addition, Cape Verde has been invited as a non-CP to attend the Africa COP9 preparatory meeting.

It is important to indicate that for Cameroon a wetland has already been selected to become the first Ramsar site (Wazaa-Logoon Flood Plains) and will be submitted together with the map that Ramsar and IUCN have prepared to UNESCO when the Government of Cameroon signs the instruments of ratification. In one word, the RIS for the first site and the map are ready. What we are waiting for now is the Government of Cameroon to sign the letter of ratification and send the package to UNESCO. In addition, the new Minister of Environment of Cameroon has submitted us an implementation plan for the activities that will be funded under the SGA support. It is important to note that in order 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, the Cameroon project also includes the preparation of radio programs on wetlands issues in the two official languages of the countries.

The process with Cape Verde was far less advanced, but the country has just submitted an RIS and a map for the designation of the Curral Velho et João Barrosa lagoons as the first Ramsar site. The last step before accession is the signature of the instruments to be sent together with the RIS and the map to UNESCO.

1.3. The way forward:

- Mission to Cape Verde and preparation of a road map that will lead the country to the accession in 2005.
- Mission to Cameroon to assist in the ratification process.
- Implementation of the post-ratification activities in the framework of the Cameroon project
- Implementation of the post-ratification activities in the framework of the Cape Verde project

Allocated budget: CHF 36,000 (CHF 18,000 for each country)

2. SUPPORT TO COUNTRIES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RAMSAR CONVENTION (GABON AND BURKINA FASO)

2.1. Background and information.

Since its accession to the convention on the 30th of April 1987, Gabon had designated 3 sites for a total area 1,080,000 ha. After this, almost nothing has happened in the country as far as the Convention activities are concerned.

Following a correspondence sent to the Ramsar Secretary General to the Government of Gabon, the Minister of Environment has designated a new Administrative Authority which is the Directorate of Environment, to coordinate the Convention implementation in Gabon.

In order to reactivate the Convention implementation, the Head of the new AA has submitted a project to Ramsar Secretariat and proposed to carry out the following activities:

1. Updating the Ramsar Information Sheets of the following sites: Petit Loango, Wongha-Wonghé and Setté Cama.
2. Production of Maps for these sites.
3. Designation of new Ramsar sites.
4. Wetlands inventory in Gabon.
5. Organization of one-day workshop for the Parliamentarians of the environment commission of the Gabon National Assembly.

Burkina Faso is one of the Sahel countries that are struggling for the conservation of their rare wetlands. Although a Ramsar National Committee was yet to be established, Burkina Faso has many experts dedicated to wetland issues, coming from a wide range of institutions, the Ramsar Administrative Authority, including the IUCN office in Ouagadougou, the University of

Ouagadougou and 2 sub-regional engineering schools on hydrology and water management (EIR de Ouagadougou, EISTHER de Kambouensé), research centers, the European Union Programme on the "parc du W" wetland protected areas complex, and national NGOs.

As stated above, there was no Ramsar National Committee and this situation did not facilitate the involvement of all relevant institutions in the work of the Convention. There is no policy on wetlands; however the country has now expressed its willingness to undertake a series of action in the near future to reactivate the implementation of the convention.

A new Focal Point for the Ramsar convention has been recently appointed and the new Minister of Environment has made the wetlands management one of his priorities. The request for assistance received from Burkina Faso included the following activities:

- Establishment of a National Wetlands Committee
- Finalization of the National Wetlands Inventory
- Designation of new Ramsar sites.
- Strengthening the Ramsar Focal Point operational capacities
- Etc.

2.1. Achievements:

The contract with the government of Burkina Faso has been prepared, signed and the funds have been transferred to the relevant Administrative Authorities.

In furtherance of Recommendation 5.7 of Ramsar COP5, held June 1993 in Kushiro, Japan, the government of Burkina Faso has just established its Ramsar National Committee, "to provide a focus at national level for implementation of the Convention" in the words of the Recommendation. By the ministerial joint decree no. 2004-25/MECVF/MAHRH/MRA/MESSRS, dated the 16th of September 2004, the Ministries of Environment, Water and Agriculture, Higher Education and Scientific Research, and Animal Resources have nominated the new members of the Ramsar National Committee, which includes researchers, university professors, government organizations, and NGO representatives with different qualifications in the field of wetland management. The creation of the committee, a model of the kind of broad-based cooperative body envisaged by the COP in Recommendation 5.7, is the result of close fruitful consultations between the Ramsar Secretariat and the Ministry of Environment of Burkina Faso.

This must be considered as one of the major achievements of the Burkina Faso project.

The process with Gabon is far less advanced, however the Minister of Environment himself has acknowledged receipt of the grant and promised to initiate the necessary action for the project

start off. In addition, the government has decided to transfer the Convention management from Parks and Wildlife to the General Directorate of the Environment which manages the other MEAs. Gabon has already identified the sites to be designated and is currently working on the content of Parliamentarians workshop scheduled to take place in mid-June in Libreville. A series of case studies to illustrate the workshop presentation have already been identified.

The contract with Gabon has already been signed and the funds transferred to Libreville. The project is in its implementation phase.

2.3. The way forward:

- Assist the two countries to speed up the project implementation.
- Continuing support to the Burkina Faso Administrative Authority
- Completion of the two projects before COP9 in Kampala.

Allocated budget: CHF 38,000 (CHF 20,000 for Burkina Faso and 18,000 CHF for Gabon)

3. ASSESSMENT OF THE WETLANDS SITUATION IN A POST CONFLICT PERIOD

3.1. Background and information.

A military conflict always implies human suffering. But what do we know about the environmental consequences of conflict, what risks do they pose to human health and the recovery process and how can the environment be integrated into reconstruction efforts?

Those questions generally apply to the environment but can also be more specific when we refer to wetlands issues in Africa.

The West and Central Africa (Great Lakes) sub-regions have been facing a series of civil wars during the last 10 years. In spite of very difficult conditions countries like Liberia managed to ratify the Convention and Sierra Leone was able to initiate the inventory of its wetlands. Liberia has acceded to the Ramsar Convention in 2002. Liberia presently has one site designated as a Wetland of International Importance, the Lake Piso wetlands, with a surface area of 76 091 hectares. Two additional wetlands of particular importance are the Marshall Wetlands and the Cestos-Senkwehn wetland. Both are being considered for protection status.

Cote d'Ivoire, where the civil war started in 2003, has only one site which has been designated at its accession in 1996, the Parc national d'Azagny with a total surface of 19,400 ha. The country planned to designate a series of 5 sites in 2005. These sites will be presented at COP9 in Kampala.

Now that a cease-fire has been signed since July 2004, the whole country is accessible for the Ramsar project activities.

The grants to Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire is serving for the following:

- Identification of new Ramsar sites
- Collect relevant data on the sites
- Preparation of the sites Ramsar Information Sheets (RISs)
- Preparation of the maps showing the boundaries of each designated site
- Preparation of the National Wetlands Policy outline (see guidelines attached)
- Draft report of the Liberia and Cote d'ivoire Civil Wars Impacts on the Wetlands
- Establishing the National Wetlands Committee of Liberia
- Strengthening of the Ramsar focal points' operational capacities. Liberia, which does not yet have a National Wetlands Committee, will establish one

The draft reports on civil wars' impacts on wetlands will include the following:

1. Investigate (direct or indirect) impacts of conflicts on the status of wetlands sites;
2. Identify risks to human and environmental health;
3. Recommend strategic priorities for cleanup and remediation;
4. Promote an environmental agenda and regional environmental cooperation;
5. Catalyze and mobilize international support for wetlands projects;
6. Series of recommendation to integrate wetlands considerations into the recovery and reconstruction process.

All these activities are being carried out through National Wetlands Committees and the Administrative Authorities.

3.2. Achievements:

Both Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia have signed their contracts and the funds have been transferred to the respective. The Ramsar Senior Advisor went on mission to the two countries to assist in the preparation of an implementation plan. The two countries were then able to prepare their plans of implementation with a framework to deliver the project expected results.

In Liberia, four sites are under consideration for addition to the Ramsar list. They include the Mesurado River that is identified as a coastal type of wetland. Its estimated size is unknown and has no conservation status. This river is heavily polluted as a result of its proximity to the city of

Monrovia that has high population density. Most people are seeking refuge in Monrovia close to the Mesurado River and are polluting the river by constructing squat latrines over the river as well as dumping waste.

The second site is the Marshall Wetland (Du and Farmington basins) that is an inland riverine. Its size is also unknown but is being proposed as a nature reserve. This site is presently being used as experimental site by the VILAB (Virology Laboratory). VILAB is conducting research on Chimpanzees. The last two sites are the Gbedin and Kpatawe that are both inland swamp and riverine respectively. Their sizes are unknown and have no conservation status yet.

The Gbedin site has a large swamp rice project being supported by the Chinese government. This site is in the northern region of Liberia. The Kpatawe site has a waterfall and swamp portions. The waterfall portion has the potential for hydropower. The Bong County Agricultural Development Project BCADP once used the swamp portion sometime in the early eighties for lowland rice development.

Cote d'Ivoire has already submitted the 5 RISs for the designation of new sites and one RIS to update the data on the Azagny National Park. The Africa Unit has reviewed these documents and sent their comments to the Cote d'Ivoire AA for inclusion in the last version

The two countries have put in place the project implementation teams.

Allocated budget: CHF 36,500

4. AFRICA REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING FOR COP9

4.1. Background and information.

The 9th Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) will take place in Kampala, Uganda, from 8-15 November 2005.

As part of the groundwork relating to this Conference of the Parties, the Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention has decided that a series of meetings should be held in 2004 and 2005 in the six Ramsar regions (Africa, Asia, Europe, the Neotropics, North America, and Oceania) to review the current implementation of the Convention and prepare for the Conference of the Parties.

Some of the main features of this plan for meetings are:

a. in the case of Africa, Asia and the Neotropics, there should regional meetings, instead of sub-regional meetings for budgetary constraints. Nevertheless, to allow for more in-depth analysis among those Contracting Parties which, due to geographical proximity and other factors have more things in common, there will some sub-regional sessions organized back-to-back with the regional meeting.

b. these will be working meetings hosted by a Contracting Party, with the full assistance of the Ramsar Bureau, but will not constitute "official" meetings of the Convention. Thus, the meetings will make recommendations but not pass "resolutions" as such.

c. Each regional meeting will analyze the major issues and concerns that characterize the expansion of the Convention and its work in the region. There will be opportunities for sharing experience and for discussions of common problems, of the major achievements, and of the needs for future actions.

This meeting will serve as an important opportunity to provide inputs concerning the 9th Conference of the Parties to be held in Kampala, Uganda, 8-15 November 2005. The African Regional Meeting will have the opportunity to review and debate progress with the current Convention Work Plan, National Reports for COP9, the new Ramsar Strategic Plan for the period 2003-2008, the themes of the Technical Session of COP9 and the current work on specific themes by twelve working groups of the Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP).

The Swiss Grant for Africa has accepted to support the preparation of the Africa Regional Preparatory meeting for COP9.

4.2. Achievements:

More than 150 delegates from African countries and representatives from national and international organisations met in Arusha (Tanzania) from 4-8 April 2005, to prepare the African participation at Ramsar's 9th Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP9), to be held in Kampala (Uganda) next November.

During the first morning of the meeting, participants were briefed on the latest developments of the Convention and the preparations for COP9. After a cultural performance of songs and dancing by the school children from the Malagarasi-Muyovozi Ramsar site (Tanzania) and welcoming addresses from local and national authorities, the Ghana representative to Ramsar's Standing Committee, Mr. Yaw Ofori-Frimpong, as well as the Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism, Hon. Zakia Hamdani Meghji (MP), in her speech read on her behalf by the Regional Commissioner for the Arusha region, Mr. Mohamed Babu, stressed the need to raise more funds for the coming

COP9 and more generally for the operationalisation of the Convention in Africa. The minister invited the other African countries to join efforts to support Uganda in organising a successful Conference of the Parties. The Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention, Peter Bridgewater, explained the latest developments of the Convention, through the decisions adopted by the Standing Committee some weeks ago, and highlighted the need to work on a clear and realistic budget for the Convention, to be approved at COP9, in order to be able to build upon the work done until now and go forward in implementing the main theme for COP9: Water and wetlands, supporting life, sustaining livelihoods.

Participants also analyzed the problems and challenges they face when implementing the Ramsar Convention in Africa. Again, the lack of resources was highlighted as a major issue for wetland conservation in Africa. The Ramsar Secretariat also asked the participants for their active participation in Convention issues, particularly in the Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) programme and the National Reports process.

In a special session, several case studies from different countries were presented to focus the discussion on wisely managing wetlands to alleviate poverty and promote human well-being. Again, the major role played by COP9 in raising awareness on this issue and the different initiatives being developed on the African continent were highlighted. The same topic has also been discussed at the basins level with presentations from the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Nile Basin Initiative, the Congo River Commission, etc.

The meeting was concluded with the adoption of the "Arusha Call for African Wetlands", which identifies the problems of achieving the wise use of wetlands in the region and reaffirms the Africa countries commitment to the Ramsar Convention and the wetlands component of the action plan for the environment initiative of NEPAD, and calls for greater collaboration amongst the Ramsar Secretariat, NEPAD, the International Organization Partners, and development agencies, among a number of other priority points.

The participants have adopted the Arusha Call on Wetlands and agreed to continue the discussions to prepare a strategy for Africa participation to the COP9 meeting in Kampala, Uganda.

4.3. The way forward:

- Produce the final version of the meeting reports

Allocated budget: CHF 35,000