

Swiss Grant for Africa - Report for 2005

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 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.

The Swiss Grant of the year 2005 was much appreciated as it coincided with the preparation of Ramsar COP9, which took 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 2005.

As a final comment, we would like to bring to your attention that all the activities sponsored by the 2005 Swiss Grant for Africa are still ongoing as the funds were disbursed only in late 2005.

A. 2005 ALLOCATION - UPDATE

In 2005, five activities were supported by the voluntary Swiss contribution to Africa. Most of these activities were initiated in late 2005 and some of them in early 2006 as the funds were only disbursed in November 2005.

Three countries (Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Tunisia) were granted financial support for the development of their National Wetlands Policy, and Uganda received a grant to rehabilitate and restore a polluted wetland. The Ramsar Secretariat worked with Wetlands International and other institutions to support the preparation of a documentary to illustrate the importance of

wetlands in the provision of sustainable livelihoods in the Niger River inner delta. [The five initiatives, totaling 130,000 Swiss francs in support, will help to strengthen and expand the implementation of the Convention in Africa.]

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

1. DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL WETLANDS POLICIES (Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana and Tunisia)

1.1. Background and information

Ghana is one of the African countries to be quite advanced in the implementation of the Convention. The country completed the development of its National Wetlands Strategy in 1999. A Strategy was developed rather than a Policy because Ghana had earlier in the same year developed a comprehensive Land Policy that recognizes "Wetlands" as sensitive/environmental conservation areas and precludes certain activities in wetland areas in the country. The Strategy was officially launched and distributed to stakeholder organizations in the country the same year it was produced, 1999.

In order to speed up the Wetlands Strategy implementation, the Swiss Grant for Africa has provided support to Ghana to translate the Strategy into an action plan.

Unfortunately, we could not carry out the activities with Tunisia due to some communication problems.

The project with DRC has not started yet as the Secretariat has some reservations on the proper use of the funds due to the fact DRC civil servants have not been paid for a number of recent months. The solution could be to host the project within a more reliable institution such as the Commission Internationale du Bassin Oubangui Shanga (CICOS).

1.2. Achievements:

The contract with the Ghana government has been signed and the funds transferred to the relevant Administrative Authority.

The Government has produced a plan for the utilization of the grant focusing on the review of the existing Wetland Strategy document (1999) and the formulation of an approved version of the Action Plan

1.3. The way forward:

- elaboration of the action plan of the Ghana national wetlands conservation strategy
- due to the impossibility to communicate with the administrative authority in Tunisia (either by phone or email), in spite of several attempts, WWF Tunisia office's assistance is currently being sought to aid with the communication and the implementation of this project
- initiate the negotiations with CICOS to receive and manage the funds, and implement the project in collaboration with the government of DRC.

Allocated budget: CHF 75,000 in total

2. Preparation of a documentary to illustrate the importance of wetlands in the provision of sustainable livelihoods

2.1. Background and information.

The purpose of this grant was to assist with the preparation of a documentary on the topic of "water and wetlands: supporting life and sustaining livelihoods" in the framework of the COP9 preparation.

The coordination team brought together the Vrije Universiteit (VU, Free University of Amsterdam), University of California, Wetlands International and Ramsar. The VU has played an important role in coordinating the actual development of the documentary. The Ramsar Secretariat assured the overall coordination of the project.

The documentary was shot in the region of the Niger River Inner Delta in Mali where the link between environmental degradation and poverty among local communities is an important issue.

The interdisciplinary background of the coordinating team strengthened the credibility of the documentary and highlighted the need to recognize linkages between poverty and environmental destruction, and to seriously consider the possible solutions that have evolved from local research.

2.2. Achievements:

In spite of very tight deadlines before the COP, the team was able to produce an acceptable English draft of the documentary that was shown in Kampala during a side event. A final version of the documentary has now been produced in English with sub-titles in French. 1500 copies of the film will be produced and distributed worldwide and particularly in Africa. It has already been shown on

some European TV channels. A copy of the documentary will be sent to your office as soon as the Secretariat receives the final version.

We are also pleased to inform you that the film was selected to be part of the International Water and Film Event 2006 organized in the framework of the 2006 World Water Forum held in Mexico from 16th to 21st of March. The film was shown in the Banamex Center (Site of the IV World Water Forum) and in the National Cinematec of México.

This represents the first documentary in a series of films which the Secretariat intends to prepare over the coming years to implement its Communication, Education and Public Awareness program in Africa.

We also have the intention to develop radio programs in the local languages on the topic of wetlands and poverty reduction.

Allocated budget: CHF 14,000 (Co-funding)

3. Managing wetlands - Restoration of Polluted Wetlands in Uganda

3.1. Background and information.

Uganda, which held the Ramsar COP9 in 2005, had a wetland (Nakivubo) that had been contaminated with heavy metals. The site is cultivated with yams that are also contaminated with these pollutants. These yams are sold in the city of Kampala and represent a major cause of diseases related to the consumption of heavy metals in foodstuff.

The aim of the project was to re-establish the wetland ecosystem to its state prior to human influence. Restoration of Nakivubo wetland is supposed to present opportunities for improvements to water quality, habitat, water storage and other functions. The climax vegetation for Nakivubo wetland is predominantly papyrus. The wetland is approximately 3.5 sq. km. Activities envisaged during restoration include blocking drains, replanting papyrus and holding preparatory meetings on restoration among stakeholders.

The request presented by the government of Uganda was aimed to assist in the restoration and/or rehabilitation of 40% of the Nakivubo wetland polluted area and undertake the following activities:

Hold stakeholder meetings to build consensus for the restoration of Nakivubo

- Topographic survey: literature review

- Assessing water balance
- Survey of current wetland vegetation/soils
- Blocking and levelling of drains by cultivators
- Restore vegetation through replanting of papyrus

3.2. Achievements:

The contract with the Uganda government has been signed and the funds transferred to the Wetlands Inspection Division.

The Administrative Authority has drafted the following plan of implementation which has started since mid-April 2006 and the stakeholders' meeting has already taken place.

Activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Output	By who?
Topographic survey: literature review										Survey report	PM
Assessing water and chemical balance										Analysis report	Consultant
Survey of current wetland vegetation/soils										Survey report	Consultant
Stakeholder meetings										Meeting report	PM
Design of reticulation										Articulation design	Consultant
Establishing pilot site to test restoration methodologies										Pilot site	PM
Prepare and disseminate the Nakivubo Restoration poster										500 copies of poster	
Vegetation restoration										Restored vegetation	PM

Preparation of progress report												Report	PM
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3.3. The way forward:

- Implement the rest of the plan
- restore 40% of the degraded wetlands
- initiate the outreach activities
- evaluate the project

Allocated budget: CHF 28,000