

## Swiss Grant for Africa - Report for 2006

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 sincere appreciation of the African Ramsar Contracting Parties for the valuable 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 2006 was much appreciated as it came up right after the Ramsar COP9, which took place for the very first time in Africa.

We are pleased to submit the following summary report on the approved projects for the year 2005.

We would like to note that most of the activities sponsored by the 2006 Swiss Grant for Africa are still ongoing as the funds were disbursed only in December 2006.

### **A. 2006 ALLOCATION - UPDATE**

In 2006, five activities were supported by the voluntary Swiss contribution to Africa. Most of these activities were initiated in late 2006 and some of them in early 2007 as the funds were disbursed in December 2006.

Three countries (Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Senegal) were granted financial support for the implementations of projects related to wetland conservation and poverty reduction. The Ramsar Secretariat is working with Atelier Technique des Espaces Naturels (ATEN) of the French Ministry of Environment to elaborate a handbook to develop the capacities of the Convention Focal Points on

their daily role in the implementation of the Convention in Africa. The last portion of the funds for which a contract has not been signed is the accession of Zimbabwe to the Convention.

It's also worth noting that a project (Wetlands and Poverty Reduction in Burkina Faso) which was included in the original proposal was at the end funded with the Small Grant Fund money. We therefore have a balance of CH 29,500 to be allocated to another country after consultations with FOEN.

As indicated above, most of these activities have just started and are still ongoing; it is therefore too early to fully appraise their achievements. [The five initiatives, totaling 125,500 Swiss francs in support, will help to strengthen and expand the implementation of the Convention in Africa.]

## **1. DEVELOPMENT OF A HANDBOOK FOR RAMSAR NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS**

### **1.1. Background and information.**

Each Contracting Party to the Ramsar Convention designates an implementing agency within its government to take responsibility for the affairs of the Convention. These agencies, called "Administrative Authorities", are the Secretariat's main focal points, in addition to normal diplomatic channels within the Member States. Unlike the practice of some other conventions, the "national focal point" is an agency rather than an individual, but the Secretariat keeps in touch with a "daily contact" within each agency.

The role of the "daily contact" is to coordinate the implementation of the Convention at the national level and also serve as a Clearing House mechanism among others.

Serving as a Convention's "daily contact" confers a whole new and important set of responsibilities and duties that are not part of regular work.

In the case of the Africa region, a rapid assessment could show that most of the "daily contacts" if not all, have never received formal training on their role as the key person in charge of the coordination of the Convention's implementation. Nor have they necessarily worked in the area before or have they been able to familiarise themselves with the literature relevant to this field. This makes the assignment even more challenging and the learning curve steep.

Daily contacts very often also have many duties other than those related to the Ramsar Convention, and thus frequently sideline Ramsar activities, especially when in doubt regarding their responsibilities. In addition, the turnover in "daily contacts" is quite significant and often the Secretariat is not even informed of these changes.

This situation is a major stumbling block and also a challenge to African CPs as many of the "daily contacts" have been inactive over the last few years because they did not know what to do and/or how to go about it.

It's important that "daily contacts" understand that their roles do not consist only in the organization of the yearly World Wetlands Day and/or attendance to the COP and/or Regional Preparatory Meetings for the COPs.

The dynamism of the "daily contact" will and should influence how the Convention is seen and implemented at the national level. A majority of CPs have not been active at all since their accession and the current trends show that if nothing is done to put some order in the designation and activities (terms of reference) of the "daily contacts" we might end up in a situation where Ramsar will be seen as an inactive and useless Convention.

In order to avoid this, the Ramsar Secretariat (with support from the Swiss Grant for Africa) and the Agence Technique des Espaces Naturelles (ATEN, Government of France) initiated the preparation of a training module to guide "newcomers" and those who are already fulfilling their role of "daily contacts", and are looking for advice, inspiration and coaching.

## **1.2. Achievements:**

Ramsar and ATEN held a series of meetings to agree on the NFPs and NWCs capacity needs. We also consulted with the Secretariats of UNCCD and UNCBD to make sure that we were not reinventing the wheel and that the outcomes of our project could also serve them. We found out that CBD is in the process of finalizing a document that will explain the role of their NFPs and 6 thematic training modules which are oriented to develop the capacities of UNCBD NFPs. The project will take stock of the UNCBD initiative and adapt it to the Ramsar objectives and context.

During a meeting with UNCCD, UNCBD, ATEN and Ramsar which took place at the IUCN office in Paris (which followed an extensive exchange of emails), we came to the following conclusions:

- a) The training module will be prepared within a global framework to include the different steps from the NFPs designation process to the daily contacts between the Secretariat and the same NFPs.
- b) The collaboration between the three conventions' secretariats must be strengthened in order to facilitate the exchange of experience and information among their focal points at the national level.

c) The Ramsar IOPs should also be involved in this initiative as they are in daily contact with the NFPs and play an important role in the Convention implementation.

d) Special attention will be given to French speaking countries and translation into English will be done if resources permit.

In addition, we agreed to the following breakdown for the training module:

a) **Target:** National Focal Points

b) **Objectives:** This module should enhance the capacity of the National Focal Points (NFPs) of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar). It should help him/her to have a better political and technical working knowledge of their missions as NFPs. It should enable them to use the tools that are made available to them by the Secretariat to fulfill their mission.

c) **Content:** The baseline of the module will be the "NFP profile" which is a kind of "NFP job description". Each key word will introduce a chapter describing the expected results, the existing documents and good practice examples.

d) **Didactic support:** The module will be presented in electronic and hard copy formats.

e) **Outreaching:** The module will be presented to the public at different occasions such as the pre-COP regional meetings, Ramsar field missions in the CPs, etc... The time required to present the whole module is one half-day.

### 1.3. The way forward:

- Finalization of the Ramsar "NFP profile" document in early June.
- Validation of the Ramsar "NFP job description" in mid-June.
- Preparation of the modules chapters in mid-June as well.
- Presentation of the first draft of the module at the CBD regional meeting to take place in Paris, France in July 07.
- Presentation of the same first draft at the WWF ChadWet and NigerWet meeting in Ouagadougou in mid-July 07.
- Presentation of a 2nd draft at a meeting that will bring together ATEN, Ramsar, BAFU, CCD, CBD and a representative of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (venue and date to be determined).
- Validation of the module at the Africa COP 10 regional preparatory meeting in October 07 in Yaoundé, Cameroon.
- Translation and publication in early 2008.

- Official launch of the module at COP10 in Korea in November 2008.

Allocated budget: CHF 20,000 in total

## **2. ESTABLISHMENT OF A NETWORK OF RAMSAR SITES ALONG THE CONGO RIVER - CONGOWET.**

### **2.1. Background and information.**

One of the ways of promoting international cooperation among Ramsar's Contracting Parties and other partners, and of implementing the Convention at a regional level is to set-up regional initiatives. Guidelines on the development of such initiatives were provided to countries in Resolution VIII.30. A number of regional initiatives were put forward at Ramsar's Ninth Conference of the Parties in November 2005, with in Africa financial support being granted to the West African Coastal Zone Wetlands Network (WacoWet). Two other West African initiatives were also endorsed by the COP: NigerWet and ChadWet.

In Resolution IX.7 on Regional Initiatives the COP encouraged Contracting Parties, intergovernmental agencies, IOPs, national NGOs and other donors to support such regional initiatives seeking financial assistance from the Ramsar Convention with additional voluntary contributions.

The project looks at setting up a regional initiative for Central Africa called CongoWet, which would be shared among the countries along the Congo-Oubangui- Sangha River system: Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Central African Republic (CAR) and Cameroon, which are member countries of CICOS (Commission Internationale du Bassin Congo - Oubangui - Sangha).

Its main objective is the establishment of a network of Ramsar Sites along the Congo River system as well as the preparation of a sub-regional program for the management of the Congo River wetlands.

### **2.2. Achievements:**

The Africa Regional Unit of the Ramsar Secretariat and the WWF "Global Freshwater Program" have joined hands to work towards the achievement of the project objectives. A field mission has been organized in the region to verify the technical and institutional capacities of Cameroon, Congo and DR Congo. We were not able to go to the Central Africa Republic.

In DRC Congo, a rapid assessment of the situation and discussions with several stakeholders (including the Swiss Ambassador) showed us that it was not possible to give the project and funds management to the Administrative Authority as we had no guarantee that the NFP could deliver the expected results and manage the funds in the most transparent way.

It was decided that the WWF-DRC Office will take on total management of the project operations and report back to WWF-Global Fresh Water Program which is mainly funding the DRC component of the project. A note was sent to BAFU to inform them accordingly.

After a series of consultations with the Government of DRC and other stakeholders such as USAID, EU, WWF, COMIFAC, etc..., it was decided that Lake Tumba will be the wetland to be designated as a Ramsar site of international importance to represent DRC in the CongoWet initiative. Lake Tumba is expected to be officially designated in 2007 and will be announced by the President of DRC himself on WWD08 as the biggest Ramsar site of international importance (6,500,000 ha).

In Cameroon, the Secretariat is working with the Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection which has satisfactorily completed an SGA project which led to the country's accession and the designation of two Ramsar sites.

We have signed a contract for the designation of Shanga River (an (tributary?)affluent of the Congo River), which plays a key part in the conservation of the wetlands ecosystem and functions in the Cameroon part of the Congo River. The activities have already started and the site is expected to be designated in late 2007. Moreover, Cameroon intends to take the lead in this initiative and make it an official regional initiative at the next COP in Korea. In the meantime, a meeting to take place prior to the next Africa preCOP meeting is expected to bring together the delegates of the 4 riparian countries of Congo River at the invitation of the Government of Cameroon.

While the Swiss Grant for Africa will fund the designation of the Shanga River, the WWF Global Freshwater Program is providing financial resources to its office in Cameroon to designate the following sites: Nyong River Floodplain - 800,000 ha, (ii) Cameroon portion of Lake Chad - 300,000 ha, (iii) Lobeke River Marshlands - 217,854 ha, (iv) Nki River Marshlands - 309,362 ha, (v) The Crater Lakes (The Twin Lakes of Muanengouba, Benakouma, Bermin, and Disoni) - 2,000 ha, (vi) The Cameroon Estuary Mangroves - 500,000 ha, (vii) The Ntem Estuary - 5,000 ha and , (viii) Rio del Rey Estuary - 100,000

In Congo the Swiss Grant for Africa has already contributed to the preparatory activities for the designation of the "Grand Affluents", a series of rivers (Oubangui, la Sangha, la Likouala-Mossaka and l'Alima) that are the main tributaries of Congo River. The RIS and the map have been received and will be reviewed in due time. We will proceed with the designation in mid-07. This is a joint

initiative with WWF-Global Freshwater Program which actually was started two years ago and has no financial implications for the current SGA cycle.

Because of the administrative and political turbulences in CAR, the project has been delayed. However, the new Minister in charge of Environment and Water Resources appointed a new Ramsar Focal Point who is also the Head of the Department of Management and Surveillance of Hydrographical Basins. The first contacts have been initiated, the site to be designated identified and we are now working on the action plan for the project implementation.

### **2.3. The way forward:**

- Liaising with the new NFP of the Central Africa Republic to complete the contracting process and assist in the designation of the Congo River tributary in CAR.
- Completing the designation process in the 3 remaining countries.
- Assisting the Government of Cameroon to prepare the regional initiative document (plus a budget and an action plan) to be discussed at the Africa preCOP10 meeting in October 07.
- Launch the CongoWet regional initiative in Korea in 2008.

Allocated budget: CHF 30,000

## **3. FEASIBILITY STUDY ON THE PROMOTION OF TYPHA GRASS BRIQUETTING TECHNOLOGY AS ALTERNATIVE ENERGY AND INCOME GENERATION IN TYPHA INFECTED AREAS OF HADEJIA\_NGURU WETLANDS, NIGERIA**

### **3.1. Background and information.**

Hadejia - Nguru wetlands in Kano, Jigawa, Yobe, Bauchi and Borno States in North Western and North Eastern regions are currently embattled with proliferation of an invasive plant called Typha Capensis, (Typha Grass) which is colonizing most importantly, irrigated lands, ponds, grazing lands, river channels and reservoirs, causing blockages by the grass and siltation aided by the grass. The people are currently living in abject poverty and apprehension in fear of what to do next.

Further more, the citizens currently focus wholly on fuel wood and agricultural residues for their energy need for cooking, exposing the environment to the menace of desertification and associated gully erosion and further degradation of soil fertility.

Twenty years ago, waters of the Rivers Hadejia and Jamaare seasonally flooded their intricate network of smaller river channels, providing fish ponds and fadamas in abundance as productive

resources for fishermen, farmers and livestock rearers. It is on record that fish catches from the Hadejia-Nguru wetlands contributed about 6% of the annual national income inland fish sales in Nigeria. Today it provides only 0.6%. Cultivation of wheat, maize and vegetables brought local fadama farmers an average income of nearly N10, 000 per season (equivalent to roughly US\$ 114) a decade ago, but now brings barely N2, 000 (US\$14) even after investment in fadama development technology. Rice production, which rapidly expanded in the wetlands during the mid 90's as a lucrative form of dry season flood recession farming, has dwindled in recent years to near invisibility.

The main reason is that the rivers flowing through the wetlands have become blocked with Typha grass and siltation. Typha grass has taken over farmlands, grazing lands, and most of the fish ponds in the area. Farming and livestock rearing have therefore been drastically reduced. As well, fishes hide in the typha grass in those few remaining ponds, as a result of which fish catches have also fallen.

The RMEDC collaborated with the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU), Bauchi on the development of briquetting technology for compacting wood and agricultural wastes into fuel pellets as alternative to fuel wood. Incidentally, typha grass can be harvested, dried, carbonized and briquetted for use as alternative source of energy to fuel wood. The Council has identified through UNIDO an existing technology for typha grass conversion into briquette in Mali. The RMRDC wishes to promote productive uses of typha grass to integrate it into the eradication efforts to reduce the effects of loss of livelihood and increase in poverty in the affected communities in Hadejia-Nguru wetlands. In view of limited resources, the RMRDC is collaborating with the Ramsar Convention Secretariat to implement the project

### **3.2. Achievements**

Pursuant to this and with funding from the Swiss Grant for Africa, the project team conducted a sensitization visit to the wetlands where discussions were held with the stakeholders consisting of DFID staff (that have been working in the wetlands), representatives of communities and civil society groups, during which the need for critical analysis of the typha grass briquettes technology in terms of economic viability and technical feasibility was seen before embarking on the promotion of the technology. This led to phasing the projects in to two phases: 1. Feasibility Study Phase and 2. Implementation Phase.

The major objective of Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in the present collaborative effort to prepare the project phase 1 is to clearly assess the potential economic viability, technical feasibility and social desirability of establishing typha-base briquetting plant in the affected wetlands area.

The study co-sponsored by Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and RMRDC will be a comprehensive financial and economic feasibility that will guide investment decisions in setting-up of a mini typha grass based briquetting plant in the Hadejia-Nguru wetlands as part of a sub-sector development in Nigeria.

After having identified the specific objectives of the project, we agreed on the following outline:

### **1. Hadejia-Nguru Wetlands Profile - Present Status.**

- Analyze existing data and determine the present status of Hadejia-Nguru wetlands covering general economic activities and environmental issues as affected by the proliferation of the invasive typha grass.
- Identify and analyze the major constraints affecting the development of the wetlands.

### **2. Analytical Work**

- Assess the potential for integrating utilization of typha grass as alternative source of energy in the eradication process.
- Carry out the comparative analysis of utilizing typha grass as an alternative to fuel wood.
- Determine the optimal location of the briquetting plant in the wetlands.
- Analyze the internal rate of returns (IRRs) under different scenarios and evaluate varying investment configurations, based on the most common types of available financing.
- Determine the raw materials requirements, and consequently the average labour force or manpower required to generate sufficient raw materials for the plant under different scenarios at the wetlands. Assess raw material supplies on a year-round basis, indicating, where necessary, supplementation with other agricultural residues.
- Propose the most appropriate management structure, processes and marketing requirements.
- Elaborate a detailed cost analysis and all necessary fixed and variable costs, as well as cash flow analysis for the first 5 years of operation, clearly indicating assumptions.

### **3. Strategic Planning**

- Prepare a Gant Chart for all key activities, indicating timeframes and milestones with a view to measuring progress against plans for achieving a timely project completion.

The project team is currently in Mali for a governmental fact finding mission and to discuss how the existing technology for typha grass conversion into briquettes in Mali can be transferred to Nigeria.

### **3.3. The way forward:**

- Submission of the first draft report in August 07
- Finalization of the feasibility study
- Marketing for funding
- Implementation, monitoring and review.

Allocated budget: CHF 15,000

## **4. INCREASING AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD PRODUCTION USING WETLAND RESOURCES OF SENEGAL RIVER (MANDÉRY) TO ALLEVIATE POVERTY AMONG THE SURROUNDING RURAL COMMUNITY.**

### **4.1. Background and information.**

During the last COP, it's been recognized that the relevance of the Ramsar Convention as an important element in the delivery of the internationally agreed development strategies, including the Millennium Development Goals 1 and 7 ("Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger" and "Ensure environmental sustainability") and the World Summit on Sustainable Development's Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPoI, 2002), which promoted, inter alia, the adoption of integrated water resource management plans by 2005.

Many of the socially and economically excluded of the developing world depend on intact and functioning wetlands for their survival.

This assertion is particularly true for countries such as Senegal, located in the Sahel zone of the Sahara desert in West Africa that are facing severe drought and desertification issues.

The Ramsar Secretariat through the Swiss Grant for Africa considered support to a demonstration project in the Madéry area along the Senegal River.

The project aims at poverty reduction in wetland areas, and is supposed to demonstrate concrete and local partnerships between (poverty reduction agencies) development organisations and environmental organisations.

The specific objectives of the projects are the following:

- i) development of communication, education and public awareness tools towards key stakeholders in the framework of poverty reduction around the ponds;

- ii) increasing the agricultural (including livestock and fish) and food production;
- iii) ensure that the advantages of the project is well distributed among the key stakeholders and vulnerable communities (women, fishermen, farmers and conservationists)
- iv) designate the network of Madéry ponds as a Ramsar site and,
- v) maintain the ecological character of the ponds

## **4.2. Achievements**

As the Community Based Organization (CBO, Communauté d'Arrondissement de Madéry) that had been identified to implement the project did not offer the capability to properly manage the funds, we decided to look for another institution.

A Ramsar mission was organized in Senegal to meet with ENDA-Tiers Monde, a reputed International NGO which is very active in the Bakel region and has been involved in similar project to carry out the project's activities.

An agreement has been reached with ENDA-TM which has accepted to coordinate the project implementation, manage the funds and report to Ramsar. The two parties agreed on a plan of implementation and the contract is about to be signed very soon.

## **4.3. The way forward:**

- ENDA-TM to submit the draft plan of implementation for review
- Production of the final version of the plan
- Contract between Ramsar and ENDA-TM
- Project kick-off
- Project monitoring and review.

Allocated budget: CHF 30,000

## **5. ASSISTING THE GOVERNMENT OF ZIMBABWE IN ACCESSING TO THE CONVENTION AND DESIGNATING ITS FIRST RAMSAR SITE.**

### **4.1. Background and information.**

Zimbabwe is among the very rare Africa countries which have never received any support from the Ramsar Secretariat to access the Convention. It is one of the three countries in the Southern Africa subregion, together with Swaziland and Angola, that have not ratified the Convention yet.

The country has indicated that a Steering Committee has been established to oversee the accession process and prepare the necessary documentation, both administrative (approval by the Relevant Authority, Cabinet), and the technical aspects. This Committee is chaired by the Department of Environment.

The support to Zimbabwe is based on the Secretariat's willingness to secure universal membership in the Southern Africa subregion and to meet the strategic objective #5 of the Convention on membership.

Zimbabwe had requested a financial and technical support from the Swiss Grant towards accession work and to undertake the following activities:

- Designation of the first Ramsar site of international importance that has already been identified

Zimbabwe is believed to have several wetlands sites that meet the Ramsar criteria. But selection and Ramsar Information sheet preparation for the first site has yet to be initiated. The Ministry of Environment of Zimbabwe will have to submit to the President's Office the document for adhesion for signature. Such designation should include:

- (a) a completed Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands for each site, which can be obtained from the Ramsar Web site at [http://Ramsar.org/key\\_ris\\_index.htm](http://Ramsar.org/key_ris_index.htm) or requested from the Ramsar Secretariat; and
- (b) a map showing the boundaries of the designated site.

- Establishment of a National Wetlands Committee

In anticipation to the ratification and implementation of the Convention in Zimbabwe, it is important to ensure that all the stakeholders are associated to the process from the very beginning. As recommended by the Convention and its 2003-2008 strategic plan, the creation of a Wetlands National Committee will serve that purpose. As usual, a core group comprised of members of the following sectors will be approached to constitute the Committee: Water, Land Use Planning, Fisheries, Agriculture and Livestock Development, Tourism and of course Environment. The function and composition of the committee will be discussed taking into account the guidelines developed by the Secretariat for the Ramsar National Committees. One of the major

outputs of this committee will be the preparation and implementation of a national program on wetlands issues which would include among others: i) a wetlands inventory, ii) a communication and public awareness program, iii) the preparation of a national wetlands policy and, iv) any other issues related to wetlands management.

The current Steering Committee that has been established to oversee the accession process can be turned into a National Wetlands Committee when the accession process is completed.

#### **4.2. Achievements**

In spite of our repeated efforts to contact the Directorate of Environment of Zimbabwe to sign the contract and start the project activities, we have not been able to keep the communication channels between Gland and Harare active.

Therefore the project has not yet been started.

#### **4.3. The way forward**

- Requesting the assistance of the IUCN Office in Zimbabwe and the mission here in Geneva to establish the contact with the Government.
- Sign a contract with the Government and IUCN as we have no guarantee that with the current political and economic situation in Zimbabwe, the funds will be properly used if we give it to the government.
- Organize a field mission to Harare to speed up the project implementation

Allocated budget: CHF 10,000