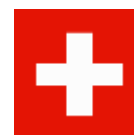


Swiss Grant for Africa - Report for 2007

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 2007 was much appreciated as the Africa Regional Preparatory Meeting for COP10 would not have been possible without it.

We are pleased to submit the following summary report on the approved projects for the year 2007.

We would like to note that most of the activities sponsored by the 2007 Swiss Grant for Africa are still ongoing as the funds were disbursed only in December 2007.

A. 2007 ALLOCATION - UPDATE

2007 Proposal Summary

| Initiative/ Activity | Recipient countries/ Institutions | Allocation | Purpose |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------|---------|
| | | | |

| | | | |
|--|-----------------|-------------|--|
| Communication, Education and Public Awareness and implementation of COP9. Res 14 | Rwanda | SFR 15,000 | Preparation of a radio program to illustrate the importance of wetlands for the socio-economic development and poverty reduction in the country. |
| National Ramsar/Wetlands Committee | Mali | SFR 20,000 | Preparation and implementation of the National Ramsar Committee's action plan. |
| Accession to the Convention | Swaziland | SFR 20,000 | Assist the government of Swaziland in accessing the Convention and designating its first Ramsar site. |
| COP10 preparation | All African CPs | SFR 90,000 | Organization of the Africa Regional Preparatory meeting for COP10. |
| Management Fees and contingencies | 10% | SFR 14,500 | Professional management of the fund, communication and coordination of fieldwork. |
| Total | 5 initiatives | SFR 159,500 | To strengthen and expand the implementation of the Convention in Africa in 2007 |

In 2007, four activities were supported by the voluntary Swiss contribution to Africa. Most of these activities were initiated in late 2007 and some of them in early 2008 as the funds were disbursed in December 2007.

Three countries (Mali, Rwanda and Swaziland) were granted financial support for the implementations of projects related to wetland (i) CEPA activities, (ii) accession to the Convention and (iii) implementation of the Convention strategic plan at national level.

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

B. PROJECT REPORT

1. COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION, AND PUBLIC AWARENESS (CEPA) - PREPARATION OF A DOCUMENTARY ON THE WETLANDS OF RWANDA

1.1. Background and information.

Rwanda is a landlocked country where the wetlands represent the alpha and omega of its socio-economic development. Thanks to funds from the Swiss Grant for Africa, the country ratified the Convention in early 2006.

Its population growth has put pressure on the limited natural resources such as water, land, and forests which do not match with the high demands of the population. Currently in Rwanda, a number of factors threaten the wetlands with degradation:

- Out of a total area of 165,000 hectares covered by wetlands, 92,000 hectares are used for agriculture. The impact of massive reclamation of water leads to the reduction of a number of permanent streams and disappearance of permanent springs leading to low groundwater levels in the wells.
- Many construction activities being carried out in urban centres countrywide require inputs from wetlands such as bricks and sand, a factor that has led to over-exploitation of the resources. High demand for brick-making coupled with sand-mining due to current development construction in the country has led to misuse of wetlands. It also has resulted into the creation of pits which accumulate stagnant water and provide habitats for vectors like mosquitoes and snails, hence causing health problems too. People to make ends meet regardless of environmental degradation practice such commercial gains.
- Location of industries within the wetlands such as Gikondo industrial area, Utexrwa, greatly affects the normal functioning of the resource to clean waste-water and prevent salutation of streams.
- The booming industry of handcrafts currently growing in the country could be a long-term environmental challenge as most raw materials used for making final products such as Agaseke, mats and other products are exploited from the wetlands.

- Most garages within Kigali City are operating near wetlands and this has a negative impact due to hazardous oils and other unwanted metals finding their way in the wetlands.
- The situation of poor garbage disposal is a threat to wetlands, though with introduction of skips in Kigali city, sanitation seems to have improved. Various women associations now dealing with garbage collection have established a dumpsite which processes garbage into fertilizers and household cooking materials. To them garbage is now a profit making activity.
- Lack of coordination between the ministry of Environment and urban planning authorities has led to degradation of various wetlands in and around the city. To this effect, concerned authorities have established clear linkages to enable smooth running of policies regarding wetland conservation in the country.

To support the population and the government in their efforts to influence decision-making in the country, the Ramsar Secretariat and FAO proposed to produce a documentary for various audiences to highlight the threats and opportunities that Rwandan wetlands are facing.

1.2. Achievements:

Ramsar and FAO had a series of consultations on the best institutional arrangements to carry out the project and agreed on the operational specifications such as the documentary coverage, the field mission team and timeline.

As for the coverage, we came to the conclusion that the most outstanding threats of wetland stability that are agriculture, industrial pollution, drainage activities and over-harvesting of wetland resources. The following regions have been identified and would be covered: i) Le marais de Rugezi, ii) Le complexe Akagera, iii) Le complexe Mugesera / Rweru and, iv) Le marais de Kamiranzovu.

Regarding the field mission team, we agreed that it will be made of a FAO Communication Officer and a Rwandes Radio/media reporter, in close consultation with Ramsar, the interested ministries and the FAO Resident Mission in Kigali.

We have also prepared the following ToR of the field mission team:

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Rwandese media producer and -- FAO Communication Officer

Radio Features and media reporting

Wetlands in Rwanda (June 2008)

Under the overall supervision of the Senior Adviser for Africa, Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, 1971) and in collaboration with the Communication Media Relations Branch, Communication Division (FAO, Rome), the FAO Information/Communication Officer and a local radio/media producer will produce three feature length radio programmes (between 8-10 minutes duration) promoting RAMSAR/RWANDA/FAO work in support of the Conservation of Wetlands in Rwanda.

The producers will undertake the following tasks:

(i) Production of three (3) 8 - 10 minutes long radio features focusing Wetlands in Rwanda and their on other sectors of the country's economy. Once packaged into MP3 format, the programmes will be distributed through RAMSAR Secretariat-Geneva and FAO Rome/Kigali for wider dissemination in the Africa Region and worldwide.

(ii) Deliverables and Payment:

All features will be submitted to RAMSAR Secretariat in MP3 format. Thee work will commence mid-June and be completed no later than 30 July 08. A first part of the payment will be made as the mission starts, a second part upon completion and satisfaction of the delivered products.

(iii) Other deliverables as required by the local context.

(iv) Qualifications

Senior broadcast journalist with experience in media reporting and ICTs.

In-depth knowledge of agriculture and rural development in the Africa region; excellent English/French writing/broadcasting/editing skills.

The field mission will take place from mid-June 2008 and the production will be finalised in mid-July 2008. The dissemination will start one month before COP10

1.3. The way forward:

- Field mission: mid-June 2008
- Production: to be finalised by end of July 2008

- Dissemination: August 2008
- Official launch in November 2008 at Ramsar COP10 in Korea.

Allocated budget: CHF 15,000 in total

2. AFRICA REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING FOR COP10

2.1. Background and information.

The 10th Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) will take place in Changwon city, Korea, from 28 October to 4 November 2008.

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) The organization of 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 be some sub-regional sessions organized back-to-back with the regional meeting.

b) These meetings hosted by a Contracting Party, with the full assistance of the Ramsar Bureau 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 Changwon city, Korea, from 28 October to 4 November 2008.

The African Regional Meeting was supposed to have the opportunity to review and debate progress with the current Convention Work Plan, National Reports for COP10, the new Ramsar Strategic Plan for the period 2009-2014, the themes of the Technical Session of COP10 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 and organization of the Africa Regional Preparatory meeting for COP10 which; was held in Yaoundé (Cameroon) from 26 to 30 November 2007.

2.2. Achievements

More than 150 delegates from African countries and representatives from national and international organizations met in Yaounde (Cameroon) from 26 to 30 November 2007, to prepare the African participation at Ramsar's 10th Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP9), to be held in Changwon city, Korea, from 28 October to 4 November 2008.

The meeting was concluded with the adoption of the "Yaounde Declaration", which identifies the problems of achieving the wise use of wetlands in the region and suggest a series of solutions, and reaffirms the Africa countries commitment to the Ramsar Convention and its mission, and calls for greater collaboration amongst the Ramsar Secretariat, other UN-managed MEAs' Secretariats, the International Organization Partners, and development agencies, among a number of other priority points.

The participants have adopted the "Yaounde Declaration" on Wetlands and agreed to continue the discussions to prepare a strategy for Africa participation to the COP10 meeting in Changwon, Korea.

The meeting report and annexes are attached to this document for consideration.

4.3. The way forward:

- Participation of African delegates to the next Ramsar COP.

Allocated budget: CHF 35,000

3. PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MALI NATIONAL RAMSAR COMMITTEE'S WORK PLAN FOR 2007-2008.

3.1. Background and information.

Following the Recommendation 5.13 of COP5, held from 9-16 June 1993 in Kushiro, Japan, the government of Mali has established its Ramsar National Committee. By the Ministerial Joint Decree no. 06/3173/MAE-MEP-MAT-MEN-MATCL-MA-MMEE-MSIPC-SG of the 29th of December 2006, the ministries of Environment, Fisheries and Livestock, Handcraft and Tourism, National Education, Territorial Administration and Local Communities, Agriculture, Mining Energy and Water, and National Security and Civil Protection, have created the Ramsar National Committee which, includes senior government representatives, university professors, government organizations and NGOs with different qualifications in the field of wetlands management. The committee has taken up its new responsibilities from the date its composition decree has been signed.

The decree creating the committee has 12 articles which describe its functioning and provides for the creation of regional and local Ramsar committees.

Article 1 indicates that the Committee is in charge of the overall implementation of the Convention at the national level.

The objectives of the Committee, which will meet twice a year, are among others: (i) implementation of the National Wetlands Policy, (ii) preparing the COPs' sessions, (iii) coordinating the fundraising effort for wetland management, (iv) preparing and organizing World Wetlands Day, (v) establishing a collaborative framework for synergy with other MEAs ratified by Mali, etc.

In addition to the government representatives, the Committee includes the Head of IUCN and the Wetlands International Offices in the country and the focal points of the biodiversity related MEAs (Ramsar, CCD, CBD, CMS, CITES, AEWA, etc.).

The committee's activities are coordinated by the National Directorate for Nature Conservation, which is under the administrative supervision of the Ministry of Environment.

The creation of such a committee is the result of collaborative efforts of the Ramsar Secretariat and the Ministry of Environment of Mali. The Swiss Grant for Africa has agreed to fund a project to prepare and implement the 2007-2008 National Ramsar Committee's work plan for Mali.

Total amount requested: CHF 20,000

3.2. Achievements

- The government of Mali has prepared its National Wetlands Committee 2007-2008 work plan.
- A launching workshop was organized to kick off the Mali NWC's activities in Bamako, Mali, on 28th March 2008. Pursuant to this and with funding from ATEN, a training workshop will be organized to

explain the functioning of a NWC and the role of its members. A training module has already been developed accordingly.

3.3.The way forward:

- Development of some mechanisms to monitor the effective implementation of the work plan between two COPs.
- Submission of the first draft report in March 09.
- Duplication of the project in another sub-region of Africa in a country when a NWC has been established.

Allocated budget: CHF 15,000

4. ASSISTING THE GOVERNMENT OF SWAZILAND IN ACCESSING TO THE CONVENTION AND DESIGNATING ITS FIRST RAMSAR SITE.

4.1. Background and information.

Swaziland 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 sub-region, together with Zimbabwe 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 Directorate of National Parks.

The support to Swaziland is based on the Secretariat's willingness to secure universal membership in the Southern Africa sub-region and to meet the strategic objective #5 of the Convention on membership by COP10.

Swaziland 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
- Obtaining letter of ratification signed by the relevant Ministry
- Establishment of a National Wetlands Committee

4.2. Achievements

- **Hawane National Park Wetland** has been nominated to be designated as the first Ramsar site for Swaziland
- Cabinet paper seeking government's approval for accession to the convention has been written and is tabled for discussion very soon. The paper also covers two other sister conventions ie. AEWA and Migratory species. Approval for ratification is likely to be obtained.

4.3. The way forward

- Get letter of ratification signed by the relevant ministry (**Foreign affairs and Trade**)
- Convene workshops to raise awareness on wetland's importance among stakeholders (**policy makers etc.**)
- Carry out a rapid assessment of wetlands in Swaziland highlighting location, size, status, management issues etc. (**hire a consultant or form a team of experts**)
- Form a national wetlands committee to oversee implementation of the Ramsar programme at national level (**Either part of the biodiversity national committee or stand alone**)
- Lay down the foundations for establishing and implement a national policy on wetlands (**Either incorporated in the biodiversity policy or stand alone**)

Allocated budget: CHF 20,000