

World Wetland Day 2011

02 February 2011

“Forests for Water and Wetlands”



Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry

Wetlands Working Group of Namibia



Ministry of Environment and Tourism



World Wetland Day 2011 was celebrated at the Frans Dimbare Youth Centre in the Mukwe Constituency of the Kavango Region on 02 February 2011. The theme for the celebrations this year is “Forests for Water and Wetlands”. This theme was chosen especially as 2011 is the UN International year of Forests.

The theme selected by Ramsar for this year WWD also draws attention to the function of forests-wet or not- and their role in our lives. Beyond the typical benefits they have to humans like providing timber, food, medicine, fruits and other goods, they also provide a whole range of services that are not always taken into consideration like watershed and local flood control, water quality regulation, protection from wind and soil erosion, air pollution filtering, avalanche and storm protection, carbon storage, production of oxygen and many others. Wetlands and their conservation are directly linked to healthy forests in our catchments, especially to riparian forests which are found around rivers, streams and lakes.

Guided by the international theme, the National Local Organizing Committee (LOC), spearheaded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism and the Wetlands Working Group, decided to focus the World Wetland Day 2011 celebrations in the Mukwe area of the Kavango Region, where the highest diversity of forests species in Namibia occurs.



Following is a report back on the program of the day.

1. The participating school learners were treated to a game drive through the Mahango Game Park and to the Muhembo Border Post in the morning.



2. The event officially kicked off in the afternoon and the Director of Ceremonies, Mr Ron Kaheka – Regional Head, Directorate of Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Coordination: Oshana Region, introduced the invited dignitaries and presenters present which were:

- The Minister of Environment and Tourism – Hon Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah
- The Governor of the Kavango Region – Hon Maurus Nekaro
- Chief of the Hambakushu Traditional Authority - Headman Konrad Mbote representing the Fumu Munika-Erwin Mbambo
- Deputy Director: Scientific Services – Ministry of Environment and Tourism – Mr Kenneth /Uiseb
- Principal Forester: Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, Mr Michael Otsub – on behalf of the Director of Forestry.

3. The Director of Ceremonies introduced the **Headman, Konrad Mbote**, who with translation by the Frans Dimbare Youth Centre Chief Matron, presented the following welcoming remarks on behalf of the Fumu Munika-Erwin Mbambo:

- ❖ I take pleasure to welcome you all to the Mukwe Constituency and the Hambukushu Traditional Authority area for the celebration of World Wetland Day 2011.
- ❖ I applaud the National World Wetlands and Water Day organizing Committee for choosing to host the event in the Mukwe Constituency. I was informed that this year's theme is "Forests for Water and Wetlands". This is no coincidence that our region was chosen to host this event. Kavango River, the riverine and associated floodplains are a lifeline to the region's residents and contribute to the national socio-economic development.
- ❖ As you may all be aware, wetlands and riverine forests play an important role in our livelihoods and that's no exception to the Kavango region. In addition, the Kavango River is the precious asset to the residents' livelihoods. As a result, we have to maintain a balance in using our wetlands and forest resources in such a way that we do not deny our future generations the benefits accrued from wetlands and forest resources.
- ❖ I would also like to applaud you all for choosing to involve the Frans Dimbare Youth Center and school children because the future of Namibia's wetland and forests resources is in the hands of the Youth of today. We the present leaders and Government can only manage our resources at present but it is the youth that has to take our efforts further. Hence I would like to call upon all the youth participating in today's event to make use of this opportunity to care for our wetlands and forests and other natural resources for the benefits of the entire region and country in general.
- ❖ With these few words, I would like once again to welcome you all to the Mukwe Constituency and wish you a fruitful event.

4. **Ms Cynthia Ortmann – Chairperson of the National World Water / Wetland Day Committee** presented the Purpose of the Day as follows:

- ❖ To celebrate World Wetland Day 2010 - 02 February, which has been selected because it marks the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the 2nd February 1971;
- ❖ The theme for 2011 is “Forests for Water and Wetlands” which was chosen especially as 2011 is the UN International year of Forests. The Directorate of Forestry within MAWF is to launch the activities earmarked in this regard in the near future;
- ❖ The National Wetlands / Water Day Committee aims to enhance awareness of the wetlands and their benefits, as well as to highlight the role of the riparian forests for water and wetlands;
- ❖ A message will be delivered on behalf of the Director of Forestry to highlight the importance of forests for water and wetlands;
- ❖ To involve school learners in water and wetland conservation – The Directorate of Forestry will donate trees to schools to groom their own forests, which will be judged after one year;
- ❖ School learners produced poems around Forests and their role in Wetlands, and these will be read throughout the program and a winner will be announced at the end of the event;
- ❖ This year the World Wetland Day is particularly important as the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands celebrates its 40th birthday. To this end, the Hon Minister of Environment and Tourism will officially launch of program of activities in this regard.

Poems 1 and 2 were read out by the learners themselves and there were cultural performances by the Frans Dimbare Cultural Group



5. **Mr Michael Otsub, Principal Forester in the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry** presented a message on behalf of the Director of Forestry, and the following were the highlights of the presentation:

- ❖ Forests promote effective functioning of wetlands, thus health of wetlands is linked to presence of forests in catchment areas. Forests play an important role in formation and distribution of water resources.
- ❖ Okavango river basin is highly floristically diverse and most of the endemic flora species occur at the surroundings of the Frans Dimbare Youth Center Wetlands. The north-eastern corner of Namibia supports significant agricultural activities, but it is certainly an area of also forests with unique and diverse botanical richness. The large number of Namibian flora is found here, including many endemic and near-endemic species.
- ❖ Thus, riparian communities depend on forests for their livelihoods including, construction materials, food, grazing, fishing, energy, shelter, medicine, etc.
- ❖ Despite their utility, forests are often under threat from development, drainage systems and conversion of land. Therefore, losing and degrading forests equally means losing and degrading wetlands. Hence, we can't manage without forests being terrestrial or forested wetlands. In this regards their protection, sustainable use and restoration are essential for sustainability of water resources management.
- ❖ Directorate of Forestry under the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry has a long involvement in natural resource management, biodiversity conservation and the maintenance of ecosystem services. Thus, one of the Directorate's mandates is to conduct forest inventories and subsequent develop vegetation maps and forest management plans. It promotes establishment of community forests and forest management areas, thus creates awareness among the people living near wetlands and other forest biomes, such as the Okavango river basin to conserve forests.
- ❖ Therefore, the Celebration of World Wetlands Day today once again creates awareness on importance of the forests as the source of wetlands functioning. Today's commemoration will enhance the public understanding and appreciation about the importance of forests and wetlands. This could also serve as a reference for those responsible for the conservation and management natural resources of this magnificent part of the region.
- ❖ With ever-increasing frequency of flooding in the river basin possibly exacerbated by climate change impacts, emphasis should be put on measures which can effectively protect river banks. This could only be attained when the existing riparian forests and wetlands systems are being sustainably conserved and managed.
- ❖ In conclusion, on behalf of the Directorate of Forestry, I would like to acknowledge the inputs of our colleagues of Water Resources Management and numerous collaborators who made this day a success.

Poems 3 and 4 were read out by their producers

6. **Governor of the Kavango Region, Hon Maurus Nekaro**, introduced the Minister of Environment and Tourism- Hon Netumbo Nandi- Ndaitwah to give the keynote address of the day and officiate the launching of the 40th Anniversary of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

7. **The Minister of Environment and Tourism- Hon Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah** presented the keynote address before the launching and following is a summary thereof:

- ❖ This year's celebration is unique and historical as it also marks the 40th anniversary of the Ramsar Convention. Today, people all over the world are celebrating the World Wetlands Day under the theme "*Forest for water and wetlands*". Therefore, as we are here today, we are not only celebrating the World Wetlands Day, but also mark the start of the Ramsar Convention's 40th anniversary year that will be remembered in Namibia throughout the year with different activities.
- ❖ The year 2011 has also been declared by the United Nations as the International Year of Forest. For Namibia, the health and integrity of our wetlands especially those of the Kavango River are linked to the health of the forest and this explain why we have chosen this area for us to celebrate the day and to launch the activities of the year. We may all know that, if forests are degraded, wetlands are also affected negatively. I am very happy and would like to thank the organizers of the event for their wisdom in choosing Divundu as the location for the event. Here in Divundu, we have both the forest and the wetland in the form of the Kavango River.
- ❖ The riparian forest found along our perennial rivers such as the Kavango River has significant water protection functions such as stabilizing of river banks thus reducing soil erosion, trapping sediments before it enters water, removing harmful nutrients, increasing aquatic insect populations in water bodies thus resulting in high water quality and providing shade to animals and people.
- ❖ Wetlands also provide us with clean water, nutrients in the form of fish, replenishment of underground water resources and water purification
- ❖ As ecosystems, wetlands do also support unique biodiversity - a major attraction to tourists. In Namibia, Wetlands such as Etosha Pan, Walvis Bay Lagoon and Sandwich Harbour attract many tourists annually that bring much needed foreign revenue, expand the tourism industry and create employment opportunities for our people.
- ❖ As a nation we must know that, conservation of our environment and the biodiversity including wetlands and forest is not only the function of the Ministries of Environment and Tourism and Agriculture, Water and Forestry but is a collective national responsibility. Therefore, in our efforts to conserve wetlands and forests, there is a need for strong and close collaboration. River basin management committees and integrated water resources management programmes implemented by line ministries are also some of the very useful avenues to be used in addressing wetland and forest management.

- ❖ The Ministry of Environment and Tourism has a programme of series of events to celebrate Ramsar Convention's 40 anniversary throughout the year. Some of the planned activities will coincide with the Environmental Calendar Days but with specific focus on wetlands and forest. The key among these activities will be the Biological Diversity Action Day and Scientific Symposium on Wetlands and Forest planned to take place in May 2011, Annual National Youth and Environment Conference focusing on wetlands and forest in September 2011.
- ❖ Special word of thanks to all participants for making time to be here with us to celebrate World Wetlands Day and the launch of Ramsar Convention's 40th anniversary celebrations. That is a clear testimony that we all accept that, Wetlands and Forest are important and it is our responsibility to make sure they are preserved to continue to provide us, and the future generations with the same ecosystem services. In the same vain I must acknowledge the dedicated staff of MET, MAWF and other stakeholders who worked hard for this event to be realized. I am looking forward to the successful celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Ramsar Convention as from today to the end of the year.
- ❖ It is now my honour to **officially launch the national** celebration of Ramsar Convention's 40th anniversary. Let us celebrate together with happiness and appreciation of services provided by wetlands and forest and let us commit ourselves to the preservation of Wetland and forest, our natural heritage.

Poems 5 and 6 were read out and the Director of Ceremonies announced that that the participants move outside the Conference Hall, where the handing over of trees and planting of trees by Dignitaries would take place.

8. Mr Michael Otsub and Ms Maria Kasera from the Directorate of Forestry handed over the trees to the school learners and their teachers, with explanations about the type of trees that they were receiving. It was also brought to their attention that these trees were donated to them to go back to their schools and groom good forests from them.



9. The Hon Minister of Environment and Tourism, the Governor of the Kavango Region and the Headman then planted a tree each, representing shade, food and beauty along the Okavango River.



10. The Master of Ceremonies announced the overall winner of the poems, the second and first runners- up and Ms Ortmann, together with the Minister of Environment and Tourism, the Governor and the Headman handed over the following winning prizes:

- ❖ 1st Prize: Basco Edwin – Max Makushe Secondary School
 - Book on Forests and Woodlands of Namibia by John Mendelzohn and Selma el Obeid - Compliments from the Directorate of Forestry and a Custard apple tree.



- ❖ 2nd Prize: Ngoma Hendrick – Rundu Secondary School
 - Set of Gardening Tools – Compliments from the Division: Water Environment and a Custard apple tree.



- ❖ 3rd Prize: NGasia Aloysius – Andara Combined School
 - Stationary set - Compliments from the Division: Water Environment and a Mango tree.



The winning poem was composed by Basco Edwin – Max Makushe Secondary School and was as follows:

“Wetlands”

*Our wetland, our pride
From all corners of the world
They come rushing
Europeans, Americans and all westerners
Called by the beauty of our nature*

*Not forgetting reptiles,
Hippopotamus, fish and crocodiles at last we say
We gain foreign income
Walking next to Okavango River
Birds rhyming from time to time*

*Conserve the nature
Our forefathers have done the best
Conserve the beautiful nature
Let's keep it for the benefit of generations to come
Let's do the same, Our nature, Our pride*

11. The event was officially closed by the Governor of the Kavango Region, Honourable Maurus Nekaro and Ms Ortmann presented the vote of thanks to the Hon Minister, the Governor, the Headman, the Frans Dimbare Youth Centre Management, the Director of Ceremonies, all the event participants and the World Wetland/Water Day Local Organizing Committee as well as their sponsors.

Conclusions

The objective of the event, which was to celebrate and raise awareness on the important role of the forests for wetlands and specifically around the Okavango River, was successfully met at the end of this event.

The Hon Minister of Environment and Tourism was particularly impressed by the originality and the creativity of the school learners, as was noticed in the poems that they composed. She also expressed gratitude and appreciation towards the National Organizing Committee Members for their continuous awareness-raising campaigns for water and wetland resources and the fact that school learners are actively involved in these deliberations.

Compiled by:

Ms Cynthia Ortmann – Snr Hydrologist

**CHAIRPERSON: WORLD WETLAND / WATER DAY LOCAL ORGANIZING
COMMITTEE**

POEMS

SELMA GIDEON – ANDARA COMBINED SCHOOL

WATER

Water is life
No water no life
We drink water and wash with it
We do allot with water.
We cook food with water
We make houses with water
Water is important to all creatures, for digestion to take place in animals and plants they
need water
Our plants use water to be healthy and to grow to stay upright and to make their own food.
In water there are many animals, some are dangerous and some are not
Some they survive in water, like fish and crocodiles
If there is no water they could die.
Every living thing depend on water
Our water plays a major role
Water wet our land, to look beautiful to have green plants
Water is basic need.

NGASIA ALOYSIUS - ANDARA COMBINED SCHOOL

FOREST

It was made by God
People depend from it
Good things we get
Many things are found
Animals is their playing area
Dangerous animals are found
Fruits we get
House we build from it
Water we get
Shelter we get
Animals and people to live
Bad things are found in the forest
Is the resting area for herbivores
If you are at the middle, both sides you turn just green
Rain we receive
Insect to survive
If you are tired and rest, you will hear different types of music from different birds
It makes me to think how big God he is.
The settler they settle
More different plants are found
Poles they supply
Now furniture is all over the world.

NGOMA HENDRICK - RUNDU S.S.S

**WATER MAKE WETLANDS
Thirsty cries for water
Makes the future clearly brighter
No! It reminds us about the creator
Land holds the water tighter
Free forests for water
Forced the colonisers to scramble for it
The local where in pain
It's believed to be land of the brave,
Hero and Heroines sacrifice their blood, only for peace
Let us celebrate the day
Water is in our hand, so is the forest
Roots cry for water
The leaves are ever smiling
Nature wears green colour and cover the land with a green garment.**

NGENDA FESTUS - ANDARA COMBINED SCHOOL

RAIN

**We respect you much as long, as we see clouds all over the sky.
It tells us to do the clearing of our fields.
Just the moment you start falling,
People will start preparing their oxen and seeds to start ploughing.
You will see that everybody is busy in field work.
Oh! Without you rain, some of us would have died already.
But fortunately God send you fall for us to plough and get food.
No person who can die of hunger,
Unless he or she is lazy to plough.
It is the time that people use to create piece works.
So everyone , people animal are all happy, because of fresh food and grass.
We don't even need water in the river, because you gave us clean and suitable water.**

WORLD WATER & WETLANDS DAY PROJECT
GRN OFFICE PARK, NELSON MANDELA AVE, GREEN BUILDING 1ST FLOOR, ROOM 161
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FINANCIAL REPORT OF THE WORLD WETLANDS DAY CELEBRATION FOR THE YEAR 2011

ITEMS	ACTUAL COST N\$ \$	SPONSORS	Funds Sponsored N\$	BALANCE
Venue	0.00	Frans Dimbare Youth Centre	0.00	0.00
P. A. System	1,050.00	MAWF (Division Water Environment)	1,050.00	0.00
T-Shirts	17,246.90	MAWF (Division Water Environment)	17,246.90	0.00
Meals and Refreshments for Event	9,995.79	Ministry of Environment & Tourism	9,995.79	0.00
Gift Prizes	Book on Trees and Woodlands of Namibia	Directorate of Forestry	0.00	0.00
	Fruit Seedlings	Directorate of Forestry	0.00	0.00
	200.00	MAWF (Division Water Environment)	250.00	0.00
School Learner Meals and Transport	1,849.70	NNF – Wetlands Working Group	3,150.00	1,300.70
BALANCE	30,392.39		31,692.69	1,300.30