

INVOLVING STAKEHOLDERS IN TRANSBOUNDARY WATER MANAGEMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

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Although water is essential to human survival it is estimated that more than a billion people worldwide have insufficient access to clean water supplies.



This situation, coupled with the fact that many surface and groundwater systems are shared between two or more states (261 watersheds cross the political boundaries of two or more countries) has led the United Nations to identify rising water demand as one of the major factors that will threaten human and ecological health over the coming generation.



The involvement of broad section of stakeholders holds the promise of improving the management of international watercourses and reducing the potential for conflict over water issues.



General Challenges in some areas of Southern Africa

- Weak national water management institutions with poor technical and financial capacity.
- Lack of adequate political and financial support from member countries.



- Inadequate legislative reforms.
- The serious decline in the quality of data collected in some parts of Africa.



Requirements to Ensure Effective Stakeholders Participation

- * Building of common views, stakeholders must agree on a common understanding of shared basin management.
- * Early dissemination of information, available information on the basin should be made available to all stakeholders to give a baseline for the development of a common understanding.



- * Trust in each other, and in the institutions that support action.
- * Skills such as effective communication and conflict management need to be developed within teams.
- * African women have a much less influential role in the management and decision-making processes related to water resources than men. Gender balance should be considered.



- * In addition, new funding strategies will be required to ensure that infrastructure for stakeholder participation is in place.
- * Involving the stakeholders in the water management plan must be present in all stages of the compilation of the water management plan.



- * At the national level, States are encouraged to guarantee legal rights for the public on access to information, participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters.
- * When taking decisions regarding water management, States should ensure that the outcomes of stakeholders participation are taken into account.



Stakeholder participation in the Okavango River Basin

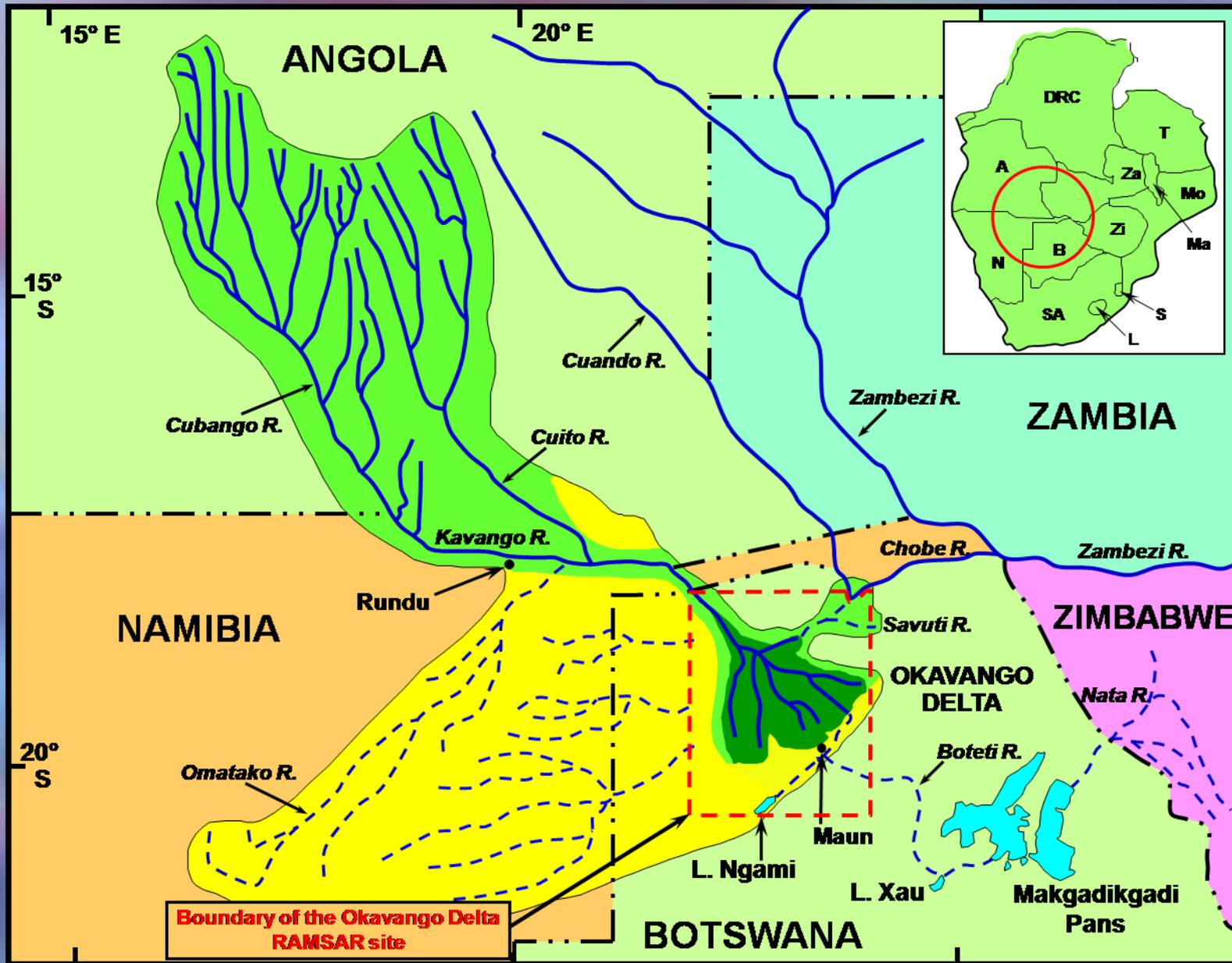
The Okavango River Basin extends across three countries: Angola, Namibia and Botswana, covering an area of some 700 000 km².

The Okavango River Basin is home to some 600,000 people. About 350 000 (58%) live in Angola, 163 000 (27%) in Namibia and 88 000 (15%) in Botswana.



The Okavango river is unusual in the sense that it does not drain into the sea, but ends instead in a large inland desert oasis covering an area of 15,844 km², which is a Ramsar site.





The Delta is recognized internationally as a site of ecological importance and it has rich biological diversity.

More than 200,000 large mammals are dependent on the Delta's aquatic and vegetative assets.

In Botswana the second largest foreign currency earner is from the water-based tourism. It accounts for more than 50% of the total income.



The OKACOM

Inter-governmental co-operation within the Okavango River Basin started shortly after Namibia's independence. The result was the establishment of the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission (OKACOM) in September 1994.



The OKACOM is now recognized as the highest-level, regional institutional body for the Okavango River Basin. Its main objective is to advise the respective Governments on:

- Measures to determine the long term safe yield of the available water resources.
- Reasonable water demands of stakeholders in the basin.
- Suitable criteria for conservation and sustainable water use.
- Pollution prevention and the control of aquatic weeds.



Stakeholder participation and interaction with OKACOM

At its annual meeting held in Maun in 1999, OKACOM approved and endorsed the Every River Has Its People project, requesting regional partners to assist OKACOM by developing the capacity of local communities within the basin to enable them to fully participate in future decision making.



One of the important activities recently is that stakeholders in the three countries have been able to exchange visits, using these opportunities to see different parts of the basin, gain a better understanding of how the system functions and to share ideas.



One success of every river has its people is the establishment of a Basin Wide Forum (BWF), in an effort to enhance stakeholders participation.

Communities in each country have elected 30 members. They have been capacitated, trained to make decisions and reduce potential for conflict.

There is a participation protocol whereby they sit with commissioners, they invite commissioners to their own meetings.



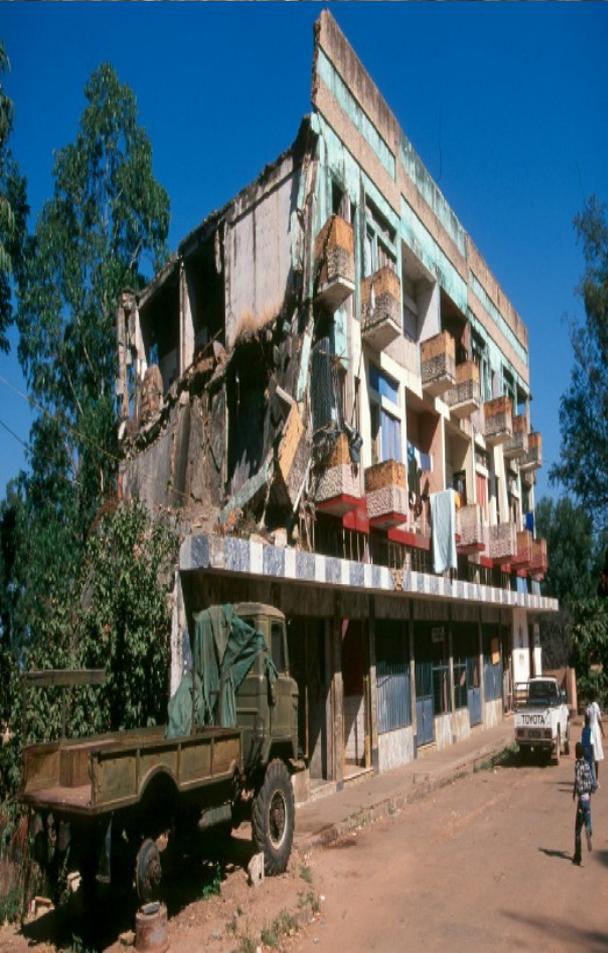
Basin stakeholders actively participate with the OKACOM in the co-management and development of the basin.



CHALLENGES THAT HAVE TO BE FACED

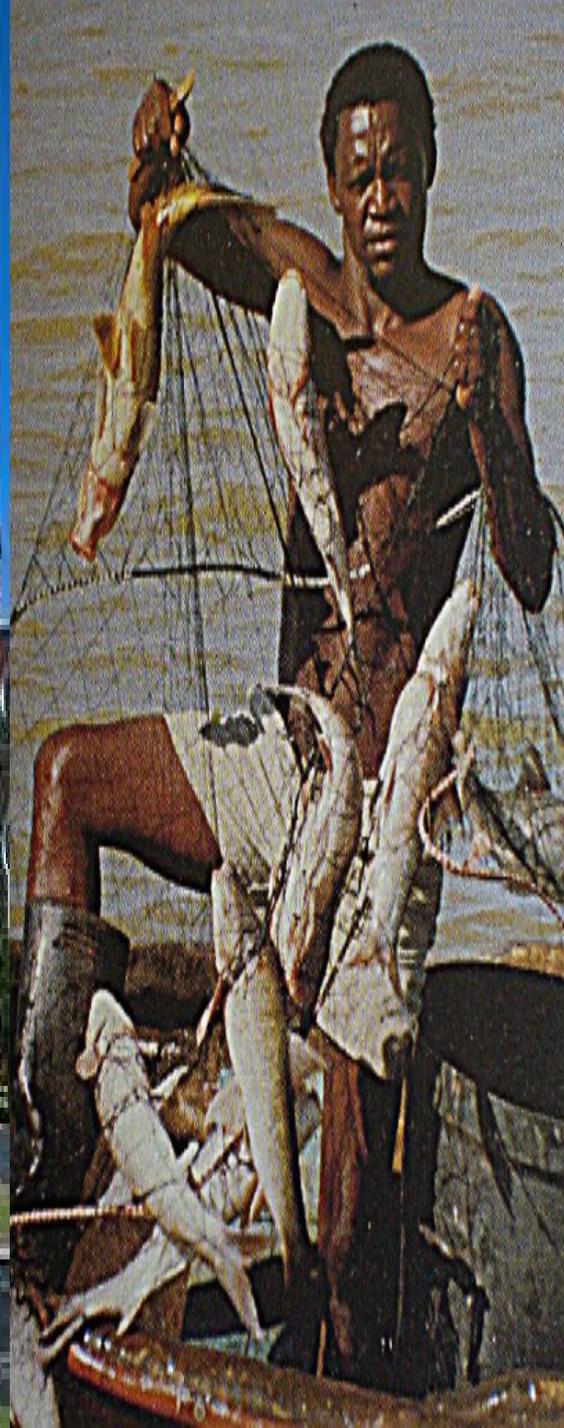
- Angola: post-war reconstruction.





- Namibia (one the driest countries in southern Africa): proposed pipeline as a strategic reserve, popa hydropower project and extension of the irrigation scheme.





- Botswana: rural livelihood support and eco-tourism.





Several national developments have been proposed but vetoed due to the sensitivity of the Okavango Delta to any alternations in the upstream flow.

In both Namibia and Angola governments feel that they have the right to use the water and not just letting it pass untouched.



Acknowledgements

I would like to express my profound gratitude and thanks to:

- The University of Namibia,
 - The Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry,
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- for their assistance and co-operation.



A vibrant field of flowers, including tulips, carnations, and daisies in various colors like pink, yellow, and purple. The tulips are on the left, and the carnations and daisies are on the right. The text "Thank You" is overlaid in the center-right.

Thank
You