

**The WERRD project and the follow up for
OKACOM – the Okavango River Basin Water Commission
Water and ecosystem resources in regional development: Balancing Societal Needs and
Wants and Natural Resources Systems Sustainability in International River Basin
Systems**

FP5 - ICA4 CT 2001 10040.
See <http://www.okavangochallenge.com>

Communication and impact

The WERRD Project was a very well conceived and implemented project involving the modelling of the basin hydrology and the socio-economic and livelihood activities of the region. The Okavango is an international basin. Compared with most inhabitants of the Okavango river basin, the people living in the Kavango region of Namibia have good access to grazing and fishing. But they cannot depend on these for their livelihoods because the rainfall is irregular. Drought is their single most important threat. The EU-INCO project¹ disentangled the complex coping strategies these and many other threads linking water, natural resources and power in the Okavango river basin.

The WERRD research group deployed a fully developed and comprehensive mode of IWRM. They were aware that they had to look beyond water and water issues and the livelihood focus kept the research relevant and application oriented. The WERRD team avoided the tendency of IWRM to focus on inter-sectoral issues, e.g. criteria for allocation between sectors and similar. In the Okavango River Basin, as in most transboundary basins, the upstream – downstream integration (or rather co-ordination) is a highly relevant and sensitive issue, with significant political implications. In *practical terms*, the integration between land and water (use) is crucial: land use without water is not a development option. Conversely, land use in terms of vegetation and tillage has implications for water flows; “a land use decision is also a water decision”. In terms of livelihoods it is the combination of resources, rather than a single natural resource, that is of interest. “Land” unfortunately is conceptually not included in the IWRM.

Take up by managers, policy makers, educators

In the WERRD outreach material an attempt was made to bridge the gap between traditional and culturally embedded knowledge and technical and scientific perspectives.

WERRD was asked by OKACOM Commissioners to arrange training programs where development scenarios should be combined with hydrological models for the entire basin. The request came in connection with a Technical Workshop (TW) arranged in Johannesburg in November 2004. The TW was arranged in close contact with the OKACOM Commissioners and supported by Sida (Sweden). Just before the TW, there was a workshop - also in Johannesburg - where the establishment of a Secretariat for OKACOM was discussed and decisions were made. Further training sessions are proposed for OKACOM.

Contribution to capacity building legacy

An important part of the project was to look into the future and try to anticipate what might happen in terms of socioeconomic development and what would be the implications in terms of changes in water regime in the basin and particularly for the Delta (see attached proposal) It is also relevant to mention that a number of Masters students were involved in the project.

Longer-term institutional cooperation

Some of the Partners continue to collaborate and contacts between the research community and decision makers are more likely to continue on an *ad hoc* basis. As usual, a continued contact requires financial resources. The interest is certainly there.

Enduring legacy of the project (political, social, economic, scientific, and connections to traditional knowledge)

Personal contacts have been promoted in the basin. We have also developed concepts and tools, which could be useful in planning as well as in sharing concepts and development scenarios in combination with hydrological models.

Local, 'grass-root' experience that would be valuable as case material for the WWF4 discussions?

Informal meetings were arranged between researchers, decision makers and different groups of stakeholders from the three riparian countries and also representatives from donors and other relevant external interests. These activities were executed through one of the Partners involved in WERRD (AWIRU; University of Pretoria), who

organised a Green Cross project in the basin on this very topic. Partners in Europe have had less opportunity to take part in these kinds of meetings. But we have developed good contact with Sida, Sweden, who has provided additional support.

Recommendations arising from the experience of having (or not) impact on discourse and action outside science to be taken into account for future research (e.g. FP7)

A special budget for training sessions, that is not only a couple of days of technical and scientific meetings. More resources for outreach.

General comment

It is not realistic to assume that a three year research project will result in tangible "end-user results" and *that they will use them* as the EU is expecting. We had the ambition to do something in that direction, but we had no arm twisting powers. And even if we had, there is a cautious attitude to people from Europe. Initiatives have to be - and should be - through people in the region. Anyway, we have made proposals for how the results of WERRD could be taken on board in planning and other discussions