

- Namibia Report -

Towards developing a Vision for the Okavango Basin

Introduction

The Namibian section of the Okavango River is about 440 km in length and lies in the middle of the Okavango Basin, between Angola and Botswana. The first 400 km forms the common boundary with Angola, while the last 40 km cuts across the Caprivi Strip within Namibia, before entering Botswana. About 9,800 million m³ of water flows out of Namibia and into Botswana each year, with about 55% from the Cubango and 45% from the Cuito. The Cubango is the more seasonal, and is mainly responsible for flooding in the system. The water in both rivers is very clear and clean.

Within Namibia, the Okavango River falls within the Administrative Region known as the Kavango. The Kavango Region (48,456 km²) is the home to some 200,000 people (11% of Namibia's population), with some 155,000 people (77%) living within 10 km of the river. Most of the people are rural (80%), with Rundu – the only urban area in the Kavango – supporting some 20% of the population. Ninety years ago the region supported just 4,500 people. A relatively large proportion of the present population consists of recent (past 20 years) immigrants from Angola. The area is serviced by 71 primary, 47 combined and 12 secondary schools; 42 clinics, 9 health centres and 4 hospitals. At least 20% of all sexually active people are infected with HIV. Many people in the region also suffer from diseases typical of poor, remote tropical areas. The most prevalent are malaria, diarrhoea, tuberculosis, bilharzias and malnutrition.

The landscape is generally flat (a decline of some 150 m towards the east over 400 km), and covered by deep layers of windblown Kalahari sand which forms gently rolling vegetated dunes. The region received on average about 500-550 mm of rain per year, which falls mainly between December and March. Rainfall fluctuates greatly from year to year and rainfall cycles are evident - dry cycle in the 1960's and again since 1980, wet cycle in the 1970's. Almost 2 m of water potentially evaporate each year, some four times more than the rainfall. Deciduous savanna woodlands dominate the area, while the river system supports floodplains, backwaters and riparian belts of varying width. Much of the riparian woodland has been cleared for cultivation, and about one-third of the region burns on average each year, which is far too frequent for a healthy fire regime.

In addition to the habitats created by the different vegetation types described above, a number of other habitats are also important, and are characterised by particular species that are either threatened, high value, important for peoples' livelihoods or that perform important ecological services. An indicative list of habitats, species and issues are set out below.

Key habitats	Important species	Issues
1. Open water	Hippo, crocodile, fish, birds	Seasonal flood pattern; Migration routes; Fishing – subsistence and sport/tourism.
2. Sandy islands	African skimmer (endangered species)	Breeds in small colonies on islands – small scrape in sand. Water pulses or waves destroy nests
3. Rocky islands and	Rock pratincole	Only breeds on rocky outcrops in river –

outcrops in river	(vulnerable species) and invertebrates	only site in middle and lower Okavango basin is from Shadikongoro to Popa Falls
4. Swamps and reed beds	Reeds, lilies, sitatunga, fish, birds and other aquatic species	Reeds & lilies for human consumption; Refugia for fish and other aquatic animals; Breeding and feeding site for birds; Specialist habitat for Sitatunga; Filter for cleaning of water; Protects against erosion.
5. Floodplains	Lechwe, reedbuck, waterbuck, buffalo, elephant and other large high value mammals, wattled crane, slaty egret and other threatened birds, many other species – rich habitat	Grazing area for livestock and wildlife; Specialist habitat for lechwe, reedbuck, cranes and many other species; Breeding area for fish; Refugia, feeding and breeding area for many species; Wildlife-based tourism; Filter for sediments, removed excess nutrients and cleans up pollution; Protects against erosion.
6. Riverine forests	Diversity of trees and shrubs – some threatened, bushbuck, many birds (e.g. western-banded snake eagle, Pel's fishing owl, parrots) and rich diversity of small mammals, reptiles, birds, invertebrates, etc.	Diverse habitat for many species; Link to tropical Africa – i.e. tropical species extend down into Namibia; As result of above, many rare and threatened species; Very limited habitat in Namibia; Rich in fruit trees and other non-timber forest products (e.g. medicinal); Important soil and river-bank stabilisation, prevents erosion.
7. Alluvial terraces	Above the general flooding area and largely cleared for cropping. Support baobab, palms and diversity of wildlife.	Dense croplands; Palms for baskets and crafts; Favoured grazing and browsing area for wildlife (e.g. elephants) and domestic stock
8. Woodlands on Kalahari sand	Relatively low production system because of leached Kalahari soils; Supports many of the plains game and predators, including reasonable wild dog population	Extensive habitat with significant micro-habitat diversity (mainly structural) depending on aspect, position of vegetated dune and other local conditions – but limited species diversity; Used as rangeland for stock; Local areas cleared for cropping, particularly near river; Timber and non-timber forest products; Overgrazing in areas near settlements, particularly along river; Excessive burning, results in damage to trees and loss of woodlands.
9. Inter-dune valleys	Important for specialist feeders, e.g. roan and sable antelopes	Pans in drainage lines hold water after rains; Somewhat higher clay content of soils allows for some cultivation;

		Excessive burning takes place.
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Of all these habitats, the riverine forest deserves special attention, as it has a very limited distribution in Namibia, is remarkably diverse, provides a wealth of sub-habitats for plants and animals, particularly those species which extend into Namibia from more tropical parts of Africa and reside only in these small patches, and because it produces a wealth of food and medicinal products for people.

The floodplains are a second important habitat, because they are fundamental to the efficient functioning of the Okavango ecosystem and people dependent on it, providing grazing for livestock and wildlife, specialist habitats for a number of high profile and threatened species, breeding grounds for many species including fish, and a filter system to reduce erosion and water turbidity.

Highest levels of overall species richness and diversity in Namibia are to be found in the northeast, along the Okavango and Zambezi systems, where wetland habitats and belts of riparian forest interface. For example, the highest local bird diversity recorded in Namibia is of 412 species, in the Mahango Game Park at the start of the pan-handle, just before the river leaves Namibia for Botswana.

Livelihoods have changed rapidly in recent decades. Much of the wild fruit, fish and wildlife that supplied people with food years ago have now gone. Most rural people are engaged in subsistence farming, but most of their income comes from jobs, pensions and businesses. Despite this shift in the local economy, the Kavango region remains one of the least developed and most poverty stricken of Namibia's 13 regions, with a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.55, and a Human Poverty Index (HPI) of 30. By comparison, the Khomas region, which contains the capitol city, Windhoek, has a HDI of 0.77 and a HPI of just 16.

Many people who earn off-farm income invest surplus cash in agriculture, mainly cattle but also in larger crop fields. These fields are cleared mainly on the alluvial terraces along the river, as well as in the larger inter-dune valleys (omurambas). Mahangu (pearl millet) and maize are the dominant crop (about 75% of planted lands) followed by sorghum, groundnuts, beans, melons and pumpkins which are also grown in small quantities, usually by intercropping with mahangu. The planting season is highly dependent on the rains, and planting is often staggered to follow good rainfall, in an attempt to optimise the chances of obtaining a crop. Average yields are low, typically 100-300 kg of mahangu per hectare.

There are two formal agricultural projects in the focal area, one at Divundu, a Prisons rehabilitation centre, the other at Shadikongoro, a National Development Corporation farm. Further agricultural projects are currently under development.

Livestock farming is dominated by cattle and goats. There are an estimated 150,000 cattle and about 65,000 goats in the region. The average number of cattle and goats per household is 15 and 11 respectively, including the 40% of households that have no cattle, and the 48% that have no goats. Along the river some 50% of people do not have cattle, while away from the river the figure is 23%. Average herd sizes along the river are 9 cattle and 9 goats, compared with 26 cattle and 16 goats inland of the river. There is a marked disparity between rich and poor in terms of cattle owned by different households; 12% of all households have 30 or more cattle, and these households jointly own about 65% of all cattle in the region.

There are a number of relevant institutions that are involved with the Okavango system in various ways. At the Basin-wide level is OKACOM, consisting of three commissioners appointed by the respective governments from each of the three river basin countries of Angola, Botswana and Namibia. OKACOM is responsible for advising the respective governments on the planning and development of the basin where such development would have basin-wide implications.

At the national level there are a number of government ministries, the following being most central to natural resource-based development: Agriculture, Water & Rural Development; Environment & Tourism; Local, Regional Government & Housing; Lands, Resettlement & Rehabilitation; Fisheries & Marine Resources; and Mines & Energy. A number of national non-governmental organisations also work in the area, most notably various Church groups, the Namibia Nature Foundation and Rossing Foundation. Two main international donors, Lux Development and Sida, provide financial support to developments in the region.

At the Regional level is the Regional Development and Coordination Committee of the Kavango, chaired by the Governor and including Councillors, heads of line ministries in the region, private sector and NGO representatives. This Committee is fairly new and not yet fully secure in its role and authority, but a good mechanism for consultations, information dissemination, obtaining advice and consensus on approaches to be adopted.

At the more local level there are a number of different organisations, ranging from the Traditional Authorities headed by a Chief (Fumu) and his headmen and headwomen, the Land and Farming Committees, the Village Development Committees, to Water Point Committees, and other small groupings.

The Okavango delta in Botswana is without doubt, one of the best-publicised river systems in Africa. There have been more wildlife and tourism-destination films and videos made of this area than of any other comparable system on this continent. As such, a perception has been created that the Okavango is a pristine system that epitomises African wildlife, wilderness and successful conservation. To an extent this is true. The Okavango is an exceptionally clean, stable system. Many options are open to its future development and management. What is less well reflected is that fact that people have lived within the Okavango Basin for many thousands of years and that the population is growing. It now stands at some 600,000 people, and this could double within 25 years. Any development on the Okavango system will need to carefully balance human needs, ecological considerations and international perspectives. A pro-active approach is far preferable to a reactive one.

Elements for a Vision

A vision for any part of the Okavango Basin, and indeed the basin as a whole, should include the following:

- The efficient functioning of the hydrology of the system
- Diverse, healthy, stable and productive ecosystems
- The people of the region being well developed, prosperous and healthy
- The region reflecting interpersonal harmony, peace and political stability
- The management of the system reflecting a good balance of needs at different scales, from local to national to basin-wide
- The system managed and developed to achieve its comparative and competitive advantages
- The system managed for equitable sharing of the costs and benefits
- The achievement of sustainable development in its full context

A vision should be based on the following guiding principles, which Namibia holds as being central to its national character and constitution:

- **Good governance**, peace, security and political stability through democracy, human rights, individual freedoms, civil liberties and open market economy;
- **Partnership**, through the creation of a conducive and incentivised policy environment, that promotes gender equity and outcomes oriented collaboration between government and civil society, including the private sector, NGOs, CBOs, tertiary training institutions, individuals and development partners;
- **Capacity enhancement**, that recognises that people are a country's most important resource, and that investment in people and in local institutions is a critical precondition for sustainable development;
- **Comparative advantage**, that capitalises on the competitive advantages of the region and basin, provides incentives and reduces obstacles to their productive management and development of the region;
- **People-centred economic development**, that promotes diversification, equity, balanced growth and a conducive macro and micro economic environment within the context of traditional practices, knowledge systems and cultures;
- **Sustainable development**, that meets the need of the present without limiting the future generations to meet their own needs, within a clean, productive and healthy social and ecological setting.

A **Vision** provides a strong framework for collaboration and cooperation. The successful implementation of a vision requires a paradigm shift from sector development to integrated approaches through strategic partnerships. This means that some structural changes may be necessary, as well as innovative thinking. The following “new ways” of thinking and working are important:

- Move from developing and implementing fixed plans which get increasingly out of date towards operating an adaptive, dynamic system or *process* than can continuously evolve;
- Move from a view that it is the state or government alone that is responsible for sustainable development towards one that sees responsibility to society as a whole – a *full partnership*, where the state helps guide the identification of goals and helps create the enabling environment;
- Move from centralised and controlled decision-making towards *sharing* results and opportunities, transparent negotiations, cooperation and concerted actions;
- Move from a focus on outputs (e.g. projects, laws,) towards a focus on *outcomes* (i.e. fundamental impacts) that actually contribute towards achieving visions; and
- Move from sectoral planning towards *integrated planning*, within and between sectors and institutions.

This rest of this report looks at a basket of visions that range from national long-term planning (30 year visions) to national medium-term planning (5-year), and then to regional and sectoral planning.

Namibia's long-term national vision: Vision 2030

The concise 30-year vision statement for Namibia is:

A prosperous and industrialised Namibia, developed by her human resources, enjoying peace, harmony and political stability.

This vision statement is supported by a number of sub-visions. In the chapter on “Peoples’ Quality of Life”, the following subsections and sub-visions are reflected:

Population and health: *A healthy and food-secure nation in which all preventable, infectious and parasitic diseases are under secure control; people enjoy a high standard of living, good quality of life and have access to quality education, health and other vital services. All of these translate into long life expectancy and sustainable population growth.*

Migration, urbanisation and distribution: *There is a free movement of the population within the country and population distribution is maturely adjusted to the location of resources for livelihoods. Namibia is a highly urbanised country with about 75% of the population living in proclaimed urban centres, while the predominance of Windhoek has considerably reduced as a result of growth of other urban centres throughout the country.*

Population age and sex distribution: *Namibia is a just, moral, tolerant and safe society with legislative, economic and social structures in place to eliminate marginalisation and ensure peace and equity between women and men, the diverse ethnic groups and people of different ages, interests and abilities.*

Healthy living for longevity: *Namibia is free of the diseases of poverty and inequality, and Namibians are living healthy lifestyles, provided with safe drinking water and a comprehensive preventive and curative health service, to which all have access.*

Wealth, livelihood and the economy: *Namibia operates an open, dynamic, competitive and diversified economy that provides sustained economic growth, the basis for availing resources for the fulfilment of major national objectives like poverty reduction, human resource development, employment creation and the provision of adequate social services and infrastructural facilities.*

Employment: *The economic environment is suitable for all citizens who are able and willing to work, and there is full employment in the economy, with a well-established and functioning labour market information system for the effective management of the dynamics of the labour force.*

Production technology: *Namibia is an industrial nation, with a viable natural resources export sector, increased size of skills based industrial and service sector, and market oriented production; there is a high level of self sufficiency, reliable and competitively priced energy, meeting the demand of households and industry.*

Education and training: *A fully integrated, unified and flexible education and training system, that prepares Namibian learners to take advantage of a rapidly changing environment and contributes to the economic, moral, cultural and social development of the citizens throughout their lives.*

Culture and tradition: *People and society are tolerant and supportive of a diversity of religious beliefs, cultures and ethnicity, and work to optimise the strengths of diversity.*

Civil society: *Civil society, its individuals, groups and organisations are highly resourceful and cooperate with government and its agencies at local, regional and national levels; respect each other and strive to consolidate democratic ideals, and collaborate in social and economic development for the benefit of all.*

In the chapter on “Sustainable Resource Base”, the following subsections and sub-visions are reflected:

Freshwater and associated resources: *Namibia’s freshwater resources are kept free of pollution and are used to ensure social well-being, support economic development, and to maintain natural habitats.*

Land and agricultural production: *Land is used appropriately and equitably, significantly contributing towards food security at household and national levels, and supporting the sustainable and equitable growth of Namibia’s economy, whilst maintaining and improving land capability.*

Forestry: *Namibia’s diverse natural woodlands, savannahs and the many resources they provide, are managed in a participatory and sustainable manner to help support rural livelihoods, enhance socio-economic development, and ensure environmental stability.*

Wildlife and tourism: *The integrity of Namibia’s natural habitats and wildlife populations are maintained, whilst significantly supporting national socio-economic development through sustainable, low-impact, consumptive and non-consumptive tourism.*

Fisheries and marine resources: *Namibia’s marine species and habitats significantly contribute to the economy without threatening biodiversity or the functioning of natural ecosystems, in a dynamic external environment.*

Non-renewable resources: *Namibia’s mineral resources are strategically exploited and optimally benefited, providing equitable opportunities for all Namibians to participate in the industry, while ensuring that environmental impacts are minimised, and investments resulting from mining are made to develop other, sustainable industries and human capital for long-term national development.*

Biodiversity: *The integrity of vital ecological processes, natural habitats and wild species throughout Namibia is maintained, whilst significantly supporting national socio-economic development through sustainable low-impact, high quality consumptive and non-consumptive uses, as well as providing diversify for rural and urban livelihoods.*

In the chapter on “Creating the Enabling Environment”, the following subsections and sub-visions are reflected:

Sustainable Development: *Namibia develops a significantly more equitable distribution of social well-being, through the sustainable management of natural resources in a mixed economy, characteristic of higher income countries, primarily through stronger growth and poverty reduction.*

International relations: *A new international order has been established, based on sovereign equality of nations, where sustainable development, peace and human progress is ensured.*

Development cooperation: *Namibia has achieved a level of transformation in the flow of development cooperation in which it has advanced from a recipient of grant assistance to a provider of assistance to countries in need.*

Regional peace and security: *Collective regional and international peace and security have been accomplished.*

Regional integration: *Namibia enjoys full regional integration in terms of socio-economic and political structures through effective supra-national organisations.*

Globalisation: *The benefits of technology transfer, trade, investment and capital flows have contributed to a significant reduction in poverty in most regions of the world, and Namibia enjoys optimal participation and integration in the global village.*

Democratic governance: *Namibia maintains, consolidates and extends the good governance practices of a multi-party democracy with high levels of participation, rights, freedoms and legitimacy (under the Constitution), which continue to serve as a model for other countries.*

Decentralisation: *Local communities and regional bodies are empowered, and are fully involved in the development process; they actually formulate and implement their respective development plans, while the national government – working hand-in-hand with civil society organisations – provide the enabling environment (laws, policies, finance, security, etc.) for the effective management of national, regional and local development efforts.*

Responsible decision-making: *Namibia's goal is to promote and strengthen "smart partnerships" for sustainable development, to optimise her comparative and competitive advantages, and to generate and manage good quality information and knowledge by supporting and fostering active and critical science and research through well-structured national institutions, as well as in partnership with institutions abroad.*

Namibia's five-year national development plan: NDP2 (2001/02 – 2005/06)

The National Development Objectives for NDP2 are:

- To reduce poverty
- To create employment
- To promote economic empowerment
- To stimulate and sustain economic growth
- To reduce inequalities in income distribution
- To reduce regional development inequalities
- To promote gender equality and equity
- To enhance environmental and ecological sustainability, and
- To combat the further spread of HIV/Aids

The vision for NDP2 is: *Sustainable and equitable improvement in the quality of life of all the people in Namibia.*

The Plan's national strategies focus, among other things, on:

- Promoting and strengthening an enabling environment for economic growth and development
- Promoting sustainable use of natural resources and environmental management
- Promoting participatory development and equity
- Developing human resources
- Promoting good governance
- Strengthening Namibia's international role.

NDP2 consists of a number of sectoral and crosscutting chapters. Each chapter contains a “mission statement” which is effectively the chapter vision. The following chapter titles and mission statements have relevance:

Chapter 7: Population in Development: To improve the standard of living and quality of life of the people of Namibia, and to ensure sustainable development through the harmonisation of Namibia’s population dynamics (growth rate, age and sex structures, migration and urbanisation) with the country’s financial and natural resource availability and potential.

Chapter 8: HIV/Aids: To reduce HIV/Aids transmission to below pandemic levels, and to minimise the impacts of HIV/Aids on infected individuals and affected families, communities, regions and sectors.

Chapter 9: Human Resources Development: To ensure that appropriate policies and actions are adopted and implemented towards enhancing and improving human resources planning, education and training, health and employment creation, with a view to meeting economic, social and sustainable development needs and prospects of Namibia.

Chapter 11: Agriculture: To contribute to the national goals of improved food security at both household and national levels, and to create employment opportunities for secure and equitable growth throughout the economy.

Chapter 12: Water: To provide safe water to the whole population, to manage the resource according to the principles of equity and sustainability, and to ensure that water provision contributes effectively and efficiently towards the development of Namibia’s economy.

The following major objectives are listed:

- Provide access to water of acceptable quality for the whole population, with priority to rural areas
- Utilise, conserve and protect all water resources in an environmentally sustainable manner
- Manage and allocate the scarce water resources in an equitable and efficient manner with due consideration to the environment
- Promote institutional efficiency and financial sustainability taking into account affordability and equity for all consumers
- Ensure that the availability of water promotes and supports gender balance, social and economic development

The following sector strategies are relevant:

- Integrated water resource management
 - Including collaboration between government, NGOs, private sector, etc.
 - Making use of water demand management
 - Conducting applied research
 - Collaboration, cooperation, partnerships, devolution
 - Evaluating sustainable development based on water availability
- Data collection and monitoring of water resources
- Legislative, institutional and administrative change and development
 - Including partnership with local institutions
 - Sustainability of water and wetland systems

Chapter 16: Forestry: To practice and promote the sustainable and participatory management of forest resources and other woody vegetation to enhance socio-economic development and environmental stability.

Chapter 17: Tourism: To develop the tourism industry in a sustainable, equitable and responsible manner, and to contribute significantly to the economic development of Namibia and to the quality of life of all her people.

Chapter 18: Wildlife: To contribute towards national sustainable development through the promotion of sustainable use of renewable natural resources, the promotion of sustainable rural and urban livelihoods, and the maintenance of essential ecological processes, biological diversity and ecosystem functions.

Chapter 21: Energy: To provide the energy resources required to power the socio-economic growth of the nation in an efficient, competitive and sustainable manner, and to provide all stakeholders with an equitable say.

Chapter 33: Poverty Reduction: To reduce poverty and unequal income distribution through fostering more equitable and efficient delivery of public services for poverty reduction countrywide; to accelerate equitable and sustainable agriculture expansion; to accelerate options for non-agricultural economic empowerment and provide safety nets for vulnerable groups to prevent them falling into poverty.

Chapter 35: Environment and Sustainable Resource Management: To contribute to national sustainable development through the promotion of the sustainable use of renewable natural resources, the promotion of sustainable rural and urban livelihoods, and the maintenance of essential ecological processes, biological diversity and ecosystems.

Sector strategies include:

- Incorporate environmental and social costs (e.g. water) into all levels of decision-making
- Integrate the planning of water use and other resource management (e.g. irrigation, livestock management)
- Harmonise natural resource management policies
- Develop institutional mechanisms for integrating sectoral policies, legislation and implementation approaches concerning community-based natural resource management
- Decentralise, devolve and democratise environmental rights and responsibilities
- Co-operate with neighbouring countries over the use and management of water, other shared resources and environmental monitoring

Chapter 39: Research, Science and Technology: To develop Namibian society with a strong cultural motivation, and a bias towards production, functional research and innovation. To ensure development in which all citizens use, adapt and apply modern scientific and technological tools to advance their knowledge, productivity, competitiveness and environmental responsibility.

Chapter 41: Developing Partnership with Civil Society (CBOs & NGOs): To create an enabling environment for civil society organisations, community based organisations and non governmental organisations to operate more effectively and efficiently in mobilising, managing and utilising resources; and to facilitate these organisations to play an active role in the social, political and economic development of Namibia.

Chapter 42: Decentralisation: To ensure economic, cultural and socio-economic development; to provide people at the grassroots level the opportunity to participate in decision-making on all matters that concern them; and to extend democracy as a right based on national ideals and values.

Namibia's Wetlands Policy (draft)

The Policy Vision for Namibia's wetlands is:

Namibia shall manage national and shared wetlands wisely by protecting their vital ecological functions, life support systems and biodiversity for the current and future benefit of peoples' welfare, livelihoods and socio-economic development.

The policy objectives in support of this vision are:

- To protect and conserve wetland diversity and ecosystem functioning to support basic human needs
- To provide a framework for the sustainable utilization of wetland resources
- To promote the integration of wetland management into other sectoral policies
- To recognise and fulfil Namibia's international and regional commitments concerning shared wetlands and wetlands of international importance

The basic principles used in Namibia's National Water Policy which “.. are intended to provide a framework for the development of all water-related policies” (Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development, 2000) have been adapted for the Wetlands Policy, as follows:

1. Ownership – vested in the state, but with due consideration for regional, continental and global collaboration and obligations
2. Sustainable and equitable use – these concepts, as advocated in Namibia's Constitution, NDP2 and Vision 2030, are fundamental
3. Economic value - the scarcity and vulnerability of wetlands in Namibia's arid environment require that their total economic value be recognised, and that their social and environmental value be fully included
4. Awareness and participation – committed to ongoing research and monitoring, dissemination of information and participation by stakeholders
5. Openness and transparency – socio-economic and environmental information open and accessible to public, and decision making regarding wetlands open and transparent
6. Decentralisation – where capacity exists, management of wetlands shall be decentralised to the lowest appropriate level
7. Ecosystem values and sustainability – the environment is a legitimate and essential water user to safeguard water quality and maintain ecological functioning. Full care to be taken to protect these services
8. Integrated management and planning – wetlands have multiple uses and functions and are thus cross-sectoral. They require a shared vision and integrated management approaches
9. Clarity of institutional roles and accountability – need to be clearly identified and clarified, and separate policy and regulations from management
10. Capacity building – continuous process on institutional and human development at all levels, including the participation of public, private, NGO, CBO and others
11. Shared watercourses – Namibia shall cooperate with neighbours and the international community regarding the conservation, management and sustainable utilisation of shared wetlands and wetlands of international importance. In all negotiations

regarding shared watercourses, Namibia shall adhere to generally accepted principles of international law. User rights asserted by Namibia will respect the rights of upstream and downstream users, and support the need for shared rivers to produce optimal benefits to all riparian countries.

Regional perspective

Between May and August 2001, a detailed socio-ecological survey was carried out in the Kavango region of Namibia, for the “Every River has its People” project. The survey focussed on the river and riparian belt, where some 70% of the people live, but also extended into the adjacent Kalahari system away from the river. The survey covered 45 villages and was divided into four components tackling

1. the Gciriku area
2. the central areas in the Sambyu and Mbunza areas
3. the Kwangali area, and
4. the Mbukushi area

The survey was carried out using qualitative and quantitative data gathering instruments to interview whole villages, focal groups (formal and informal approaches, resource mapping), traditional leaders, traditional medicine people, and other stakeholders.

The following results and findings are widely applicable, and represent vision-type aspirations of the people in the region.

- The natural resources of the region should be carefully managed, used and developed to derive both livelihood support and optimal economic benefit for the people of the region. Local individuals and communities should be involved in tourism in the region – and tourism should be strongly promoted – as a way of increasing income and increasing local control over land and resources.
- Institutional arrangements should be developed and implemented, to allow for greater cooperation between individuals, families and communities, in the management, use and conservation of natural resources.
- The survey demonstrated a high degree of awareness among community leaders and community members about the main issues and problems concerning natural resources associated with the river, as well as a good variety of possible solutions. Interventions should focus on assisting communities to identify and solve local problems, by way of applying practical and appropriate local solution tailored to local circumstances. This should also involve the strengthening of the capacity of traditional authorities and other relevant institutions to enforce traditional laws and other agreed control mechanisms regarding sustainable natural resource management.
- Existing community structures, institutions, cohesion and commitment should be supported to manage and conserve natural resources, and to promote appropriate and sustainable local development.
- Communication and collaboration across the basin between different communities should be encouraged and supported, to help share ideas and to create a sense of intra-basin partnership. Similarly, communications and joint planning should be implemented between the different layers of decision-making, from village through to traditional leaders, regional councils, central government and to OKACOM.

- Information and relevant materials should be widely disseminated and shared across the basin, covering social, institutional, economic and ecological aspects, as well as management and monitoring techniques. The information should focus on providing practical advice and guidance on specific priorities, rather than broad-based environmental awareness. Capacity building should focus on support for the establishment of community conservation and management areas and associated local institutions.
- Interventions should support the sustainable use (consumptive and non-consumptive) of natural resources rather than the prohibition of their use.

In 1999 Namibia's Cabinet approved a vision for the development of the northeast of Namibia, taking cognisance of the opportunities created by the upgraded Trans-Caprivi highway, better links and tourism circuits to neighbouring countries (Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe) and the opportunities that indigenous biodiversity and protected areas create for rural development. The following points were approved:

- The Caprivi Game Park shall be renamed the Bwabwata National Park and shall include the Kwando Triangle (previously unproclaimed) and incorporate the Mahango Game Park.
- The central area of Bwabwata shall be zoned for multiple use trophy hunting, human settlement and community-based tourism. The core areas of Buffalo and Mahango will be for special protection and controlled tourism.
- No cattle shall be allowed in the Bwabwata Park.
- The communities neighbouring or living in the Bwabwata National Park shall be given conditional tourism rights in the park, either to establish on their own or in joint venture partnership, appropriate tourism facilities in the Park.
- Tender proposals for the development of a tourism lodge at Buffalo shall be issued and allocated to the best bid, judged against a number of development criteria.

Unfortunately, because of the security situation in the northeast spilling over from Angola, these developments were not implemented. However, the situation is now improved and progress on these instructions is anticipated.

Conclusion

There are many sectoral and thematic policies, plans and reports that contain elements of visions that one could consider when developing a Vision for the Okavango Basin. We have focussed here on the most relevant ones that provide a broad-based socio-economic and environmental approach. These should be viewed as simply providing the backdrop and the framework in which a Vision for the Okavango Basin should be crafted, taking into account the principles and "new ways of thinking" outlined in this report.

Prepared for the Sharing Water Project
CJ Brown
Namibia Nature Foundation
Windhoek
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