

## **What is Regional and Appropriate for Support under USAID/Southern Africa Regional Environment-Water Program**

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### USAID Guidance

USAID defines regional programs as “those that serve regional goals and are not identified with a specific bilateral program.”<sup>1</sup> Regional programs must meet at least one of the following criteria:

1. Provide support to regional organizations such as African Union, SADC, River Basin Organizations (RBOs)<sup>2</sup>
2. Provide support to activities that serve a group of countries, such as regional training centers

Regional activities are those that advance the objectives of foreign assistance but transcend a single country's borders and are addressed outside a bilateral country strategy. The activities should reflect strategic value-added and or economies of scale due to the use of a regional platform.

In special cases (when explicitly authorized and funded), regional platforms also manage assistance to countries within the region that do not have USAID Mission presence. These are referred to as “non-presence countries” (NPCs).

The objectives of the Regional Environmental Program are defined in annual Operational Plans and Mission Strategic Plans. Additional guidance includes the Agreement with SADC for the water sector and environment and the current Performance Management Plan. These documents are consistent with the definition for regional programs above. Work performed under this program should be designed to generate measurable results with regional impacts.

### Environment and Water Program for Southern Africa Guidance

Support for improved management of shared river basins, water resources, provision of improved water and sanitation services, and biodiversity conservation in a river basin landscape, that is managed through the regional platform for Southern Africa, should demonstrate clear linkages to:

- a) Regional priorities (defined by SADC, corresponding RBOs or other regional institution) for river basin and water resource management, conservation of regionally (or globally) threatened species and ecosystems<sup>3</sup> (as defined by IUCN and regional collaborators), and support for water supply and sanitation programs that can be most effectively provided through a regional mechanism.
- b) Leadership by or through regional counterpart organizations (SADC, RBOs, or others).
- c) Actions that address prioritized threats to ecosystem services, water sources, water sustainability/security, and biodiversity that could impact a target river basin or transcend national boundaries.
- d) Geographic locations prioritized regionally as biologically important areas.
- e) Approaches that reinforce a “shared resource, shared benefits” concept by involving all riparian states in the process (cost and benefit sharing across borders).

- f) Processes that strengthen effective linkages between and among regional organizations (SADC, OKACOM), national organizations, provincial and local authorities – showing how these linkages can add value.
- g) Demonstrating the capacity for regional platforms to build consensus, mitigate conflict, and more effectively address issues of mutual interest than a single nation could if working alone.
- h) Actions that take place in an upstream nation, but are actively supported by downstream nations due to expected sharing of benefits.
- i) Processes that build regional constituencies for IWRDM, biodiversity conservation and effective RBO services.
- j) Actions that are “owned” and supported by multiple riparian states and involve key stakeholders from multiple nations in the process of design, implementation, and assessing activity progress and impacts.
- k) Demonstrated respect for the ‘subsidiarity principle:’ a regional program should not support work that can be better and more appropriately done bilaterally.
- l) Activities such as regional training and specialized technical assistance that show significant economies of scale.
- m) Support for multi-national groups and organizations established to address trans-boundary natural resource management, water concerns and biodiversity issues.

“Support to regional organizations” may include support to regional organizations through multi-country networks, commissions and task forces that span the region and enjoy recognition by an official or sponsoring regional organization. Such networks support effective implementation of regional agreements and SADC protocols. Implementation may often be undertaken by public and private partnerships that work within the SADC framework.

Concerning economies of scale, in addition to training, there may be appropriate roles for regional platforms to provide technical assistance on best practices and harmonization for regional standards, policies, procedures, regulations, etc. Any activity of this nature would need to be done under an appropriate regional institutional framework (SADC) and in close coordination with national counterparts (and bilateral missions), and other ICPs where appropriate.

Finally, a regional platform can add unique value by collaborating with bilateral programs (and bilateral USAID missions) in developing constituencies along watersheds and wildlife corridors that transcend one nation’s boundaries. Constituency building across a group of countries that share common natural resources can lead to increased ownership and shared responsibility, respect for other “users” across borders, build confidence among various stakeholders, support more efficient use of soil and water, and demonstrate measurable improvements with trans-boundary impacts through planning and cooperation among groups sharing the watershed. A necessary part of multinational watershed planning is consultation and buy-in by the people living in the watershed and all those that use or impact on the basins resources.

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<sup>1</sup> From U.S. Foreign Assistance Reform web site: <http://inside.usaid.gov/A/F/programs.html>  
 “Guidance - Global, Regional, and Central Programs”

<sup>2</sup> See expanded definition of “support to regional organizations” on page 2 of this paper.

<sup>3</sup> Note that freshwater ecosystems are recognized as the most threatened biome on the planet, and the stress on these ecosystems is extremely high in Southern Africa.