

**Mid-Term Programmatic Evaluation of the USAID/Southern Africa Regional Environment
Program to Improve Management of Shared River Basins
USAID Summary of Findings, Recommendations and Next Steps
July, 2007**

This summary of findings and recommendations was prepared by USAID based on its review of the final Evaluation Report presented by Marc Andreini, Kumbulani Murenga and Tom Wilbanks in June, 2007, along with comments received on the April draft report from reviewers and stakeholders, and other considerations relevant to the regional USAID Environment program.

Evaluation Findings. Accomplishments highlighted by the evaluation based on the first two years of this program included: a pioneering SADC river basin organization (RBO) workshop; contributions to establishing and transferring responsibilities for a Secretariat for OKACOM; building cross-boundary basin management networks; increased understanding of the importance of benefit sharing to protect the active catchment area; and significantly strengthened relationships with and among partners. Challenges identified by evaluators included: institutional, technical, and financial sustainability of river basin institutions; differing priorities among USAID and regional partners; strengthening SADC activities; and uncertainties about future roles for USAID, GEF and other donors related to the program.

Evaluation Recommendations. The primary recommendation was to “stay the course” and provide continuity to this emerging and promising program. Priorities to be implemented in the near term (2007-08) included: assure smooth and effective transitions for OKACOM Secretariat and technical committees, from organizational phases to more technical issues and longer-term priorities; and continue strengthening regional cooperation, exchanges at technical levels, capacity building, and collaborative relationships with SADC and GEF. Recommendations for USAID’s longer term regional efforts included: build upon OKACOM’s experience to establish sustainable regional institutions for future water resource management and transboundary cooperation; further improve regional technical capacity for water and natural resource management, integrated planning, research and modeling; and assist partners to transfer lessons learned from experiences with integrated basin management among other major river basins in Southern Africa.

USAID Observations. The evaluation team produced a balanced and useful assessment of the program that identified areas for improvement and priorities for future efforts, despite time and resource constraints that prohibited field visits and review of some activities (e.g. regional cooperation on land use planning for watershed protection in the Mucussu-Capriivi region). All parties agree that this USAID activity, which began in 2005, is on track to achieve desired results and merits (requires) more time to do so. USAID supports the evaluation recommendations to provide continuity and build on successes, while taking measures to ensure activities are appropriate for a regional platform.

Opportunities for future regional USAID funding will likely be linked to biodiversity issues that can be best addressed through an integrated, trans-boundary river-basin management context, and that build upon the relationships initiated during the program’s first two years. USAID agrees with the evaluation report on the biological significance of the Okavango Basin due in part to its strategic location, forming the heart of the recently proclaimed Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area—KAZA TFCA. USAID also concurs that the present approach offers a unique and important contribution to region development due to the strong relationships established and the potential to share lessons learned to neighboring basins.

Intersecting regional interests related to economic development, biodiversity conservation, integrated resource planning and sustainable management of water and natural resources are reflected by several

recent proposals that should be considered as this program moves forward. These include (a) the KAZA TFCA, (b) research on sediment flows in the basin, (c) a trans-boundary environmental assessment of irrigated agricultural schemes, and (d) biofuel plantations and other major development programs impacting resources in the basin. Support for developing science-based plans related to these initiatives would fit well with the evaluation recommendation to assist OKACOM in effort to develop technical IWRM planning and management products consistent with its charter. If prioritized by regional partners (SADC and OKACOM), one or more studies might be completed under the current program in collaboration with other donors.

Next Steps. Table 1 proposes areas for increased focus during the remainder of the current project (2007-2008). These should be carried out in a manner that strengthens foundations for future activities. Table 2 presents potential activities for a follow-on program (2009-2013) that would evolve from the ongoing activities, those proposed in Table 1, and dialogue with stakeholders and other donors (this preliminary list based on the evaluation must be further studied and consulted with regional counterparts). Table 3 presents a planning framework for the USAID regional environment program and management decisions needed for successful completion of the ongoing program and follow-on design activities. Annex 1 presents guidance on “what is regional” under the current and proposed Environment Program.

**Table 1: USAID Regional Environmental Program for Southern Africa—
Recommendations for Current Program (2007-08)**

Recommendation	Examples of Proposed Activities for the Current Program (2007-08)
1. Assure Effective Transfer of the Secretariat to OKACOM – in coordination with Sida and other partners	Continue support for: 1.1 a strategic plan linked to annual work plans and updated ISAT 1.2 development of a sustainable financing strategy 1.3 document translation and increased bilingualism 1.4 development and clarification of effective OKACOM administrative procedures (outcome focused)
2. Assist OKACOM in Assuring a Structure for Technical Oversight and Assistance Functions	2.1 Support appropriate structures to perform tasks in an efficient and effective manner (OBSC, task forces, others). 2.2 Focus near term on ongoing tasks: hydrology, ecology, and data base management (organize and institutionalize).
3. Increase the Focus on Assisting OKACOM with the Longer-term Priorities (Charter and laying foundations for activities in Table 2 below)	3.1 Facilitate ongoing dialogue about benefit sharing 3.2 Assist OKACOM to prioritize and conduct a technical study responsive to immediate management needs (such as proposed environmental assessment of irrigated agriculture). Work with other donors as appropriate to provide continuity.
4. Strengthen collaborative relationships with SADC, GEF and other donors	4.1 Identify and implement projects responsive to SADC, OKACOM and USAID priorities, partnering when appropriate 4.2 Develop streamlined mechanisms for SADC activities 4.2 Renew collaboration with GEF in technical areas; coordinate to ensure fit with OKACOM strategic plan (sustainability issues need to be addressed consistently among OKACOM partners)
5. Review and adjust project investments to focus on the priorities and results most appropriate for a regional platform and on USG comparative advantages	5.1 Discuss guidance ¹ with IRBM and key stakeholders to improve awareness of criteria and subsidiarity principle. 5.2 Adjust staffing and investments to focus increasingly on the strongest, regional program components ² 5.3 Build upon donor relationships and strengthen links among activities to mesh with SADC, OKACOM & USAID goals.

**Table 2: USAID Regional Environmental Program for Southern Africa—
Recommendations for Future Program Directions (2009-13)**

Recommendation (and related USAID Sub-Elements under Element 8.1 Natural Resources and Biodiversity)	Examples of Proposed Activities to be Studied for Possible Inclusion in Future Program
<p>1. Technical Capacity Building³</p> <p>(Biodiversity Policy and Governance; Sustainable NRM and Production; Science, Technology, Information)</p>	<p>Training topics include: hydrological data; water quality; watershed management; conserving biodiversity and ecological services; integrated land use planning; GIS applications; water resource management; data analysis and modeling; strategic planning; financial management and public administration.</p> <p>1.1 Standardization of procedures across region 1.2 Improve data quality 1.3 Build shared understanding and trust while strengthening transboundary perspective in problem-solving and research</p>
<p>2. Increase Capacity for Communication, Collaboration, and Cooperative Management⁴ (International Cooperation⁵)</p>	<p>2.1 Improve technical capacity for assessing impacts of proposed actions (withdrawals, sediment diversions, intensified agriculture) on member states 2.2 Preempt issues with proactive, science-based research</p>
<p>3. Data For Regional Water and Biodiversity Decision Support (International Cooperation; Science, Technology, Information)</p>	<p>3.1 Improve access to existing records, and capacities to monitor current and future conditions 3.2 Re-establish a practical, functional gauging network 3.3 Develop a sustainable data collection and sharing systems including GIS capacities 3.4 Improve the understanding of species distributions and biodiversity including extent and types of uses made by local communities 3.5 Activities to ensure “ownership,” budgeting for continuation, and institutionalization of data collection, analysis and sharing protocols 3.6 Develop technical approaches to generate data and information in support of regional research and dialogue</p>
<p>4. Regional Collaboration at a Provincial Scale for Local Planning and Development (Biodiversity Policy and Governance; Sustainable NRM and Production; Science, Technology, Information)</p>	<p>4.1 Work with partners to clarify appropriate channels for communications among stakeholders at all scales: from community resource users, to local authorities, to NCUs⁶, RBOs and SADC (as appropriate, per issue). 4.2 Assist OKACOM to develop effective means for communicating decisions and regional issues to appropriate decision-makers in member states (regional and national levels)</p>
<p>5. Regional Systems for Water and Biodiversity Research and Analysis (Science, Technology, Information—Regional)</p>	<p>5.1 Improve capacity for data analysis and modeling to connect facts with policy questions and issues. 5.2 Develop regional data system management capacity 5.3 Support joint technical studies responsive to basin planning and management needs 5.3 Consider regional priorities (abstraction, sediments, water quality)</p>

6. Enhanced Stakeholder Participation In Shared (Water) Resource Management (Biodiversity Policy and Governance)	6.1 Build capacity and demonstrate participative policy and decision-making for river basin management 6.2 Develop frameworks and best practices for linking resource users with appropriate decision makers at various levels 6.3 Share learnings through regional stakeholder exchanges
7. Cross Basin Regional Institutional Strengthening: OKACOM, ORASECOM &/or others ⁷ (International Cooperation)	7.1 Support structures and mechanisms for institutional renewal 7.2 Enhance qualified human resource base for IWRM, impact assessment, and biodiversity conservation in a river basin context 7.3 Facilitate staff exchanges, case studies and best practices
8. Sharing Best Practices and Lessons Learned (International Cooperation: Biodiversity Policy and Governance; Sustainable NRM and Production; Science, Technology, Information)	8.1 Organizing and Conducting Annual River Basin Organization (RBO) Meetings and follow-up actions; 8.2 Develop RBO and SADC frameworks within which lessons and experiences can be shared in the context of strengthening relationships 8.3 Strengthening Relationships between OKACOM and other basin (ORASECOM, Kuando) as Prototype for Cross-Basin Regional Institutional Strengthening 8.4 Publish joint papers on learnings from experiences with Secretariats, environmental assessments, stakeholder involvement, task forces, donor coordination etc.)

Attachments:

Table 3: Management Plan and Design Schedule, for the Regional Environment Program Element
Annex 1: Guidelines for what is appropriate for “Regional” USAID program support

¹ See Annex 1, “What is Regional and Appropriate for Support under the USAID Southern Africa Environment Program Element”

² This includes: (a) wrap-up and transfer community work near Menongue ASAP while linking local counterparts to other sources of support for ongoing efforts; (b) staff appropriately to support SADC activities; (c) increase the integration of priority regional components (RBO governance, capacity building and biodiversity conservation); (d) continue to explore ways to build regional capacity for collaborative research; and (e) pro-actively respond to OKACOM requests to support technical studies relevant to its charter, SADC Protocol, and USAID program goals, in close coordination with other donors.

³ Support for training and capacity building must be carefully coordinated with other donors to develop a coherent set of complementary activities in the basin and to maximize benefits from regional economies of scale.

⁴ Conflict mitigation and avoidance is an important by-product of the establishment of effective systems for trans-boundary communication and collaboration. As with prior recommendation, capacity building activities with RBOs should be coordinated with SADC and other ICPs to maximize impacts and benefits from regional economies of scale.

⁵ Due to the regional nature of this program, the “International Cooperation” sub-element is applicable to all activities. It is only noted separately in cases where this is a primary desired outcome.

⁶ National Coordinating Units (NCUs) for a shared river basin form one element of the GEF basin-wide planning project; they will use existing institutional arrangements in each country to the degree feasible. Namibia has already formalized NCUs for its major shared basins. Angola plans for decentralized basin planning and management units (with one proposed for Kuando Kubango Province—the Okavango and Kwando Rivers).

⁷ Given relationships established with key regional stakeholders in Angola, Namibia and Botswana, other donors, the KAZA initiative, and SADC priorities, it may be useful to consider the upper Zambezi (Kuando-Linyanti Catchment) and/or other basin areas involving similar set of partners and issues.

What is Regional and Appropriate for Support under the USAID' Environment Program Element for Southern Africa

July, 2007

USAID Guidance

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

1. Providing support to regional organizations such as African Union, SADC,... (RBOs)
2. Providing support to activities that serve a group of countries, such as regional training centers

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

The objectives of the Regional Environment Program are defined in the 2007 Operational Plan. Additional guidance includes a 2006 Strategy Statement for the regional portfolio, including improved management of shared river basins, and the recently updated Performance Monitoring Plan. These documents are consistent with the general USAID definition for regional programs above. Work performed under this program should be designed to generate measurable results with regional impacts.

Environment Program for Southern Africa Guidance

U.S.G. support of improved river basin and water management and biodiversity conservation from the regional platform in Southern Africa, should demonstrate clear linkages to:

- a) Regional priorities for basin and water resource management (defined by SADC and or corresponding RBO) and/or conservation of regionally (or globally) threatened species and ecosystems (defined by IUCN and regional collaborators). Note that freshwater ecosystems are recognized as the most threatened biome on the planet, and certainly the most threatened in Africa.
- b) Leadership by or through regional counterpart organizations (SADC, RBOs, IUCN or others)
- c) Actions that address prioritized threats to ecosystem services and biodiversity that could impact the overall basin
- d) Geographic locations prioritized regionally as biologically important areas
- e) Approaches that reinforce a “shared resource, shared benefits” concepts by involving all riparian states in the process
- f) Processes that strengthen effective linkages between and among regional organizations (SADC, OKACOM), national organizations, provincial and local authorities – showing how this can add value
- g) Demonstrating the capacity for regional platforms to build consensus, mitigate conflict, and more effectively address issues of mutual interest than any 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 IWRM, IRBM, 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:’ the regional program should not support work that can be better and more appropriately done bilaterally
- l) Activities such as regional training that show significant economies of scale
- m) Support for multi-national groups and organizations established to address trans-boundary natural resource management and biodiversity issues.

USAID/Southern Africa defines “support to regional organizations” to include support to regional organizations through multi-country networks that span the region and have some recognition by the regional organization. SADC requires such networks to support effective implementation of regional agreements and 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 are appropriate roles for regional platforms to provide technical assistance on harmonizing regional standards, policies, procedures, regulations, laws, etc. This needs to be done in close coordination with bilateral missions, other donors and under an appropriate regional institutional framework.

Finally, a regional platform can add unique value by collaborating with bilateral missions in developing constituencies along watersheds and wildlife corridors. Constituency building across a group of countries that share the same watershed and wildlife 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 there and using the resources.

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