

## THE OKAVANGO RIVER BASIN

The Okavango River rises in south-east Angola. After 600 km the river forms the boundary with north-east Namibia for a distance of 400 km, here joined by its largest tributary. It enters north-west Botswana, forming the terminal delta in the Kalahari sands, with a maximum flood area around 15, 000 km<sup>2</sup>.

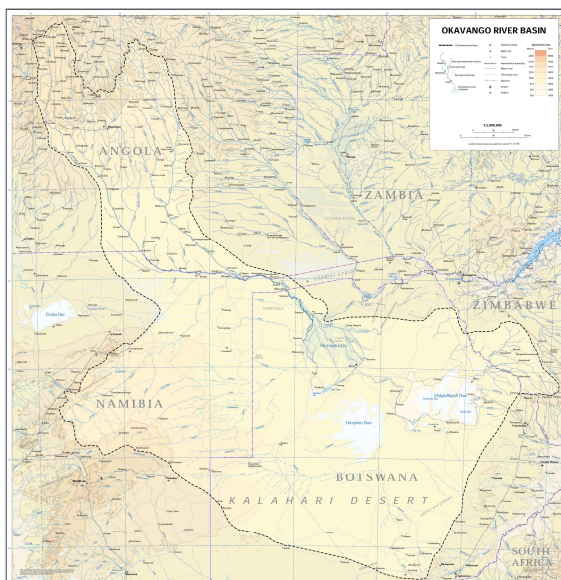
To date there has been little human interference in the basin, largely owing to civil strife negating the opportunity for development in the upstream basin and to the realisation that interference in the delta would have major environmental consequences. With peace settling in the region, there is a strong pressure for water resources development in the basin, which is seen as the greatest threat to the sensitive environment in the delta.

Twelve government departments have cooperated to prepare a management plan for the delta. A critical issue is that international collaboration is assured and that the upstream countries in the basin share the philosophy behind the management plan and respect its provisions.

The International Waters Unit and Department of Water Affairs of the Water Ministry is represented in the international Okavango River Basin Commission (OKACOM).

## TWINBAS PROJECT

The overall objective of TWINBAS project in Okavango is to fill gaps in knowledge and methods in order to enable implementation of a harmonised integrated water resources management (IWRM) that addresses the European Water Initiative.



## WORK PACKAGE 3 – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

At present there is a particular lack of dependable information tools and communication mechanisms for the management planning process in the delta. Considerable work is required to develop and implement these. While hydrology is recognised as being fundamental to the behaviour of the delta, it is also necessary to develop a sound understanding of ecological, social, and economic conditions.

In many respects, stakeholders in Angola hold the key to the sustainability of the Okavango Delta in terms of managing the water flowing in to the delta. A special effort has been made by TWINBAS to identify the stakeholders in the upstream basin and assess their views and possible future actions.

Participation in the planning process commenced at an early stage with traditional council (kgotla) meetings held in 33 settlements. Lessons learned were that provision of government services to the communities of the delta is inadequate due to lack of communication, no action is taken on previously raised issues, there is a lack of feedback from government departments and consequently little or no influence on decisions from the local communities. Local land users have profound knowledge based on lifelong experience and as such are better informed than the technical experts, but they do need more information and technical knowledge, through educational workshops, to contribute meaningfully. There is a need for a central data and research institution, focussing on well targeted research with data and results readily accessible to all stakeholders.

## ABOUT TWIN2GO

*Twin2Go reviews, consolidates, and synthesises research on adaptive and integrated water resources management in basins around the world. The aim is to draw insights relevant to policy and research on issues around adaptive water governance in the context of climate change, and to make them transferable to other basins. Twin2Go further promotes sharing of research results with practitioners and high level decision makers through effective dialogue.*

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