



A milestone BirdLife Botswana project successfully completed

Title

A project *Strategic Partnerships to improve the financial and operational sustainability of protected areas* funded by UNDP-GEF to a tune of USD 953,300.00, implemented by **BirdLife Botswana** in association with the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP, statutory agency managing Botswana's PAs), and the Department of Environmental Affairs (Convention on Biological Diversity, CBD, focal point) has come to an end in November 2013.

The overall objective was to improve the financial and operational sustainability of protected areas in Botswana through enhanced working partnerships (PA co-management) between public, private, NGO and community stakeholders.

To showcase how PA co-management could work, a demonstration site in the Makgadikgadi wetland system was identified. This area (in Southern Sua pan, a significant component of the Makgadikgadi Wetland System), forms an important breeding site of the **Lesser Flamingo** *Phoenicopus minor*, and is surrounded by the four villages of Mmatshumo, Mosu, Mmeya and Mokubilo. Initially Southern Sua was unprotected, and this posed a huge threat to the survival and breeding success of the flamingos. Through this project, lobbying was done to the Government of Botswana through the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP), and now the area is a protected site, known as the flamingo sanctuary.

Results

The project had three key result areas:

1. Strengthened enabling environment for PA co-management, revenue generation and benefit-sharing; focused primarily on the Wildlife Conservation Policy review to ensure it included issues of cooperative governance and allowed for partnerships in managing PAs to ensure not only sustainability but also equitable sharing of benefits. An assessment of the financial and operational management effectiveness of Botswana's PAs was done. The assessment identified key issues that have to be addressed to improve PA financial sustainability; for instance some PA's running at a loss, and some PA's under-priced entrance fees.

2. Effective PA co-management systems (Site Support Groups) and district oversight framework (linked to the Makgadikgadi Integrated Management Plan) demonstrated at site-level and new revenue generation schemes tested; primarily geared towards supporting on-the-ground actions at the demonstration site, Southern Sua Pan and the Makgadikgadi Wetland Area. Funding was also provided to increase the academic level and professional acumen of some community members in order to enhance their capacities to plan and implement alternative livelihood strategies.

3. Increased institutional capacity for effective PA co-management enhanced through capacity development of DWNP, private sector and civil society; some of the activities included supporting 12 park managers (with representatives from each of Botswana's PAs) to undertake a 2-week course on *Effective Park management and project management* at the Southern African Wildlife College. Moreover, the project produced a *biodiversity monitoring and PA co-management* training module for the DWNP training arm (Botswana Wildlife Training Institute) so that biodiversity monitoring in PAs and PA co-management are improved at a systemic level.

Partners

This project is primarily about partnerships and therefore stakeholders formed a critical part of the implementation process. The project began with the setting up of a Project Steering Committee which was set up constituting: (1) communities around the Southern Sua pan (Mmatshumo, Mosu, Mmeya and Mokubilo villages); (2) Private sector representatives (Debswana and BotAsh), being the mining industry in the area; and (3) The government sector, including representation from Land Board, Boteti Council's Physical planning unit, Department of Tourism (DoT), Botswana Tourism Organisation (BTO), Boteti District Administration, Department of Wildlife and National Parks and the Department of Environmental Affairs. This formed a critical governance structure through which strategic and operational decisions were taken, and knowledge shared to guide project implementation. In addition to the Project steering Committee, there is a Project Coordination Group which consists of head of relevant departments (DWNP, DEA, DoT, BTO, UNDP and BirdLife Botswana) which meets regularly for updates on projects.

Plans for the Future

BirdLife Botswana is interested in up scaling and replicating efforts and results to other areas in the country. Through this project, co-management of protected areas seem to be a cost effective and efficient method of ensuring sustainable management of natural resources in the country. Concurrently, efforts are on-going to consolidate work at the demonstration site so that project partners continue benefiting from the momentum created by this project. The future does in fact look very bright for the Makgadikgadi Pans, its people, and its wildlife!

For more information on this project, contact BirdLife Botswana at: Email blb@birdlifebotswana.org.bw Tel +267-3190540/1 or visit www.birdlifebotswana.org.bw

Report by Mr. Motshereganyi Virat Kootsositse, Project Coordinator. BirdLife Botswana