

Water Cooperation, Building Partnerships



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The Southern Africa Water Wire provides in-depth coverage of a diverse range of water-related issues in southern Africa, linking water to economic development, social well-being and environmental protection.

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For this year's World Water Week (1 – 6 September) conference in Stockholm, Sweden, the Southern Africa Water Wire (SAWW) TerraViva is revisiting a selection of the best feature stories and photographs from across the southern African, exploring the challenges, failures and successes of managing and sharing this vital resource.

TERRAVIVA

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Publisher:
Mario Lubetkin

Managing Editor:
Kudzai Makombe

Chief Editor:
Nalisha Adams

Reporters:
Thabani Okwenjani
Claire Ngozo
Mabvuto Banda
Charles Mushizi
Meekaeel Siphambili
Busani Bafana

Administration:
Tafadzwa Rafemoyo
Kervine Phiri
Jennifer Mckellar

Design and Layout:
Marshall Patsanza

Sharing Southern Africa's Water

By Thabani Okwenjani

HARARE, Jun 2012 (IPS) - The Southern African Development Community's protocol on shared watercourses is recognised as one of the world's best. But sound agreements on the sustainable and equitable management of joint water resources require effective means to implement them.

Water officials from across Southern Africa met in Harare, Zimbabwe, in Jun 2012 to develop a mechanism to monitor the implementation of the regional agreement.

SADC's 2003 Revised Protocol on Shared Watercourses stresses a basin-wide approach to managing transboundary waters, rather than an emphasis on territorial sovereignty. It spells out the objectives of sound management as including coordinated management, sustainable use, and environmental protection.

The river basin organisations that held their fifth meeting in Harare are charged with promoting equitable use, setting out strategies for the development of shared rivers and lakes, and developing a policy for monitoring shared watercourses.

Armed conflict over water has long been predicted; most recently the United States Office of the Director of National Intelligence said such wars would break out within the next decade. But although many parts of the region are already facing water stress, SADC expects its numerous transboundary watercourses to be the basis of closer cooperation rather than conflict.

"They say the next wars will be fought over water," Dr Kenneth Msibi told IPS in Harare, "but with these agreements, we are making sure that water will instead be an instrument of peace."

Msibi, a water policy and strategy expert at the SADC Secretariat, said the water sector is critical in helping build regional integration. "Cooperation will also lead to further integration and water is an engine for development and this means a tool for poverty reduction. This means protocols for shared water are critical for regional integration."

Msibi believes managing shared river basins in line with integrated water resource management principles – recognising that water management encompasses both social and economic goals, and should involve policy-makers, managers and users – contributes to SADC's three key objectives: regional integration, peace and stability, and poverty reduction.

Sipho Nkambule, the chief executive officer of the Komati Basin Authority, which coordinates management of a river system that extends across South Africa, Swaziland and Mozambique, said he would use the Harare meeting as a chance to compare notes on how other river basin authorities were monitoring implementation.

He said the main challenge was explaining management of a shared river to people living along its banks.

"People are struggling to understand why they should share the resource with others," Nkambule said. "Those upstream are not happy to be told to allow water to pass, when they want to trap it for their own needs."

Sergio Siteo, the Interim Executive Secretary of LIMCOM, the Limpopo Watercourse Commission, said he hoped the new monitoring tool would emphasise communication



Credit: Sarah McGregor/IPS

among member states sharing a river basin.

"Member states should notify each other on development projects along the basin, as notification is crucial and failure to do so may create problems downstream and might impact negatively on other members," he said.

As an example, Siteo mentioned a complaint in which the Botswana government felt their South African counterparts should have officially informed them before beginning a development in the river basin.

The LIMCOM head said that while regional agreements allowed for disputes to be taken to the SADC Tribunal, there were a number of conflicts in the region that were being discussed behind closed doors.

"It's good that we are trying to prevent these conflicts," Siteo said, "and we are building trust so that everything runs smoothly."

Officials from across the region are agreed that implementation of the 2003 Revised Protocol on Shared Watercourses will promote peace and stability in the region.

Msibi said the river basin organisation meeting – which welcomed its latest full member, the Zambezi Watercourse Commission, whose founding agreement was ratified in September 2011 – was meant to provide guidelines and reach a consensus on what indicators would be used and how these could be applied in each of the region's transboundary river systems.

"We are taking input from all the stakeholders, we will discuss the tool and indicators to monitor progress," Msibi said.

"This agreement can unlock potential for member states, and it creates an opportunity for member states to work together to beat economies of scale," he said.



A large number of people in Malawi rely on charcoal as a source of energy.

Credit: Travis Lupick/IPS

Malawi Turns to Mozambique for Power

By Claire Ngozo

LILONGWE, Jun 2012 (IPS) - On-again, off-again... it's the story of both Malawi's power supply and the interconnection project that could end blackouts with power imported from neighbouring Mozambique.

Malawi's total demand for power currently stands at 300 megawatts, but the country's generation capacity is only 266 MW. The shortfall is projected to grow rapidly in a country where the World Bank says only eight percent of the population of 14 million has access to electricity. The Ministry of Energy estimates that the country will need 603 MW by 2015 and 829 MW by 2020.

Malawi's hydro-electric station on the Shire, the country's largest river, is hampered by siltation and outdated equipment, making the power supply in this Southern Africa country erratic.

Daily power cuts can last up to six hours and small and large companies alike struggle in the face of an uncertain power supply.

"I can't wait to see the situation improve. I am putting my hope in this new deal with Mozambique," said Judith Chilika, who runs a hair salon and a restaurant in Malawi's capital, Lilongwe.

She told IPS her businesses have suffered greatly from frequent blackouts.

"I have had to close down both the restaurant and the salon many times due to the power blackouts. I can't afford to run my stand-by generators for long, because fuel is expensive and there have also been shortages of diesel and petrol for some time now," said Chilika.

Yet plenty of power is available from a dam just across the border in Mozambique. The giant Cahora-Bassa dam was constructed in 1974 and supplies electricity not just to Mozambique, but to neighbouring South Africa.

A 2008 proposal – backed by a 200 million dollar package from the World Bank – to buy power from Cahora-Bassa has faced numerous delays. Last year the plan seemed stillborn, when Malawi's government canned it over cost concerns.

But Malawi's new government, led by Joyce Banda – who assumed power three days after President Bingu wa Mutharika's death from illness in April 2012 – has moved quickly to revive the project. On May 12, Banda's government signed a memorandum of understanding with Mozambique to again move ahead with

the power link.

The interconnection plan is directly in line with the Southern African Development Community's emphasis on cooperation along shared watercourses – exemplifying cooperation for sustainable development, and advancing the SADC agenda of regional integration and poverty alleviation.

Energy-pooling is among the strategies employed in implementing the 2003 Revised Protocol on Shared Watercourses, which supports joint development, transmission, and storage of energy to achieve greater reliability, economy and equitable sharing of costs and benefits among riparian states.

Malawians are cautiously optimistic about news the deal is back on. "We hope we will have a more reliable power supply which will boost our industrial work and help improve Malawi's economy and alleviate poverty in the country," said John Kapito, executive director of the Consumer Association of Malawi, the country's most influential consumer rights body.

Kapito said the power outages must end if the country is ever to get back on its feet economically.

"This agreement is our biggest hope," Kapito told IPS.

Two Million People Hold their Breath Over Lake Malawi Mediation

By Mabvuto Banda

LILONGWE, Mar 3 2013 (IPS) - Over two million families who solely depend on Lake Malawi for their livelihoods are anxiously putting their hopes into an upcoming mediation between Malawi and Tanzania intended to put an end to a longstanding ownership dispute.

The mediation will start this month after both parties agreed in December to engage the assistance of the Forum for Former African Heads of State and Government, which is chaired by Mozambique's former President Joachim Chissano.

"After several attempts to settle the dispute, we came to the realisation that we have failed and we needed a third party to help us," principal secretary in Malawi's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Patrick Kambabe, told IPS.

"In January, Malawi submitted its position after agreeing that the Forum help us to settle the dispute," Kambabe said.

In an interview with Tanzanian media, Kambabe's Tanzanian counterpart John Haule confirmed that his country, too, had agreed to involving the former leaders and had submitted its own position paper to Chissano.

"The forum is now reviewing the document and we will thereafter seek consultation if it is needed," according to Haule.

He said that he expected the matter to be settled in three months.

According to authorities, about 1.5 million Malawians and 600,000 Tanzanians depend on Africa's third-largest lake for food, transportation and other daily needs.

When IPS visited Karonga District, on the shores of Lake Malawi, surrounding communities said they were worried about the increased tension and keen to see a resolution.

"I used to cross the border into Kyela in Tanzania every two weeks to exchange sugar for clothes, which I sell. But now I only go once a month because Tanzanian immigration officials at Songwe border have become very harsh and are mistreating us," said Joyce Nyirongo, a mother of four. She was fearful to elaborate on the mistreatment.

Known as Lake Nyasa in Tanzania and Lago Niassa in Mozambique, the disputed water mass is thought to sit over rich oil and gas reserves, according to recent Malawian government reports.

The mineral potential has rekindled a border dispute between Malawi and Tanzania, which has remained unresolved for almost half a century.

The conflict escalated last July when Malawi awarded oil exploration licenses to United Kingdom-based Surestream Petroleum.

And last December, Malawi awarded the second-largest license to SacOil Holdings Ltd. of South Africa, a move that deepened the crisis.

Twice, the two countries tried to resolve the dispute diplomatically, but to no avail.

Both countries are hoping for the best outcome that will settle the dispute, once and for all when mediation begins this month. Colonial treaty claims

Malawi's first president, Hastings Kamuzu Banda, was the first to claim that Lake Malawi was part of the southern African nation. He based his claim on the 1890 Heligoland Agreement between Britain and Germany, which stipulated that the border between the countries lay along the Tanzanian side of the lake.

The treaty was reaffirmed at the 1963 Organisation of African Unity Summit in Ethiopia and was reluctantly accepted by Tanzania.

Malawi's Foreign Affairs Minister Ephraim Chiume told IPS that their position is based on the 1890 Treaty and that the African Union in 2002 and 2007 upheld the colonial agreement.

"The Heligoland Treaty gave the entire lake to us and this is what forms the basis of our position and proof that we own the entire lake," said Chiume. Tanzania's position is that the treaty was flawed. Tanzania has remained resolute that it owns half of the lake - saying that the border runs through the middle of the lake excluding the section that lies in Mozambique.

Tanzania's position is that a partition drawn in the middle of the lake, stressing that this is the practice among countries which share water bodies. "Tanzania has sought recourse to international law, which indicates that borders are generally in the middle of a body of water... Tanzania should therefore own half the lake," Tanzanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Benard Membe told IPS in a telephone interview.

Membe said that the treaty was flawed because it denied Tanzanian's living on the shores of the lake their given right to utilise proximate water and marine resources to earn their daily living.

These are the positions that Chissano and his two colleagues; former South African President Thabo Mbeki and former Botswana President Ketumile Masire will have to consider. Environmental concerns

Meanwhile, the dispute has also brought to the fore the impact oil drilling would have on a fresh water lake blessed with over 2,000 different fish species, which attracts scuba divers the world over.

Local environmentalists fear that drilling in the lake will damage eco-tourism and the marine environment affecting the fishing region in the northern part of the country.

"It will endanger the social and economic lives of millions of people directly dependent on the lake for water, transport and most importantly fish for protein," said Reginald Mumba of Rehabilitation of the Environment - a local environmental non-profit.

After direct talks between the two countries failed at the end of last year, Malawi President Joyce Banda had stated her intention to take the dispute to the International Court of Justice. Politicians and fisherfolk alike now hope that the mediation process will expedite a peaceful resolution to the conflict without the involvement of the court.

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For more insightful water stories in Southern Africa visit our Southern Africa Water Wire web page

<http://www.ipsnews.net/news/projects/the-southern-africa-water-wire/>



Malawi's claim to the Lake Malawi is based on the 1890 Heligoland Agreement between Britain and Germany. Credit: Claire Ngozo/IPS

Majority Still Lack Access to Safe Water



Groundwater remains the primary source of water for many in southern Africa. Credit: Kelvin Kachingwe/IPS

By Charles M. Mushizi

MBABANE, Jul 2011 (IPS) - Only two in every five people in the Southern African Development Community has access to safe water for drinking and household use. Three quarters of those lacking access, live in rural areas and the majority of these are women and children.

Chrispin Sedeke, head of the Transboundary Water Management Division of the Ministry for the Environment of the Democratic Republic of Congo, believes that even these discouraging figures are likely understated.

"The statistics from certain countries – like the DRC – are not up to date. The numbers are approximate; those from other countries are only partial. And all the numbers do not cover the same period; that's what makes the global statistics presented less than reliable," Sedeke told IPS on the sidelines of the Fifth SADC Water Dialogue, held in the Swazi capital, Mbabane, in Jun 2011.

"If we refer just to some of the large countries in the region, like the DRC where more than 75 percent of the population lacked access to potable water at the end of

2010, one can readily see how the reality for SADC is worse than the statistics show," he added.

"More than 60 percent of the population without access to water in DRC is made up of women and children; to put it another way, more than 35 million Congolese women and children do not have access to potable water," Cyrille Masamba, another Congolese delegate in Mbabane, told IPS.

According to a report published in March 2011 by the United Nations Environment Programme, the DRC possesses half of the water resources in Africa, but more than 50 million Congolese do not have access to water.

"With the support of development partners like the United Nations Development Programme, the Congolese government could extend water to only [an additional] two percent of the population between 2005 and 2010," Masamba said.

The African Development Bank (AfDB) provided two million dollars from its Africa Water Supply programme to strengthen the efforts of the DRC and other SADC member states to address weaknesses in the water

sector.

According to Phera Ramoeli, head of SADC's Water Division, "This amount will help to support member states in conceiving and implementing national policies that can help people to access water for drinking and household use."

He said the funding from AfDB would cover project expenses for 27 months.

"Despite the assistance provided," Ramoeli said, "the question of finance for water projects remains a political and social engagement that states take on individually. It is above all a political commitment that decision-makers must take for their own citizens," Ramoeli told IPS.

"It's in this sense that each state has a national policy to finance access to water as well as to guide sustainable management of water in the context of climate change," said Jonathan Kampata, a Zambian expert in water finance. According to him, "water is becoming a big asset for adaptation to greenhouse effects and in the struggle against food insecurity through agriculture."

Southern Africa Sharing the Okavango



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By Meekaeel Siphambili

GABORONE, Apr 2010 (IPS) - Each January, a giant pulse of water from heavy summer rains over the south of Angola enters the Okavango River system and begins a five-month journey through Namibia to a richly biodiverse swamp in Botswana's Kalahari desert. The river is a rarity, scarcely disturbed by human development along its 1,100 kilometre length: shaping its future is the delicate task of the Okavango River Basin Commission.

The Okavango Delta, which expands to three times its permanent size when the water arrives between June and August, is home to a tremendous concentration of wildlife.

There are just under 600,000 people living in the basin's 323,000 square kilometre area, relying on its waters for small-scale agriculture and livestock, fishing, and household use. But aside from evaporation, a few sips drawn off to supply the Namibian town of Rundu and 1100 hectares of irrigation nearby, the water that falls in Angola at the turn of the year arrives in Botswana in mid-winter to recharge the Delta.

"Water usage in Angola and Namibia is minimal, 99.2 percent of the Okavango river water still reaches the delta in Botswana where it is used for tourism," says Chaminda Rajapakse, of the Environmental Protection and Sustainable Management of the Okavango River Basin (GEF-EPSMO) project.

"[It has been] agreed any country that wants to develop their part of the basin have to go through consultation and studies done to find out if the development will have any effect on the river flow or the ecosystem."

But there is continuous, even growing, pressure on the river. When Namibia faced severe drought in the late 1990s, it considered drawing water off the Okavango to supply its capital, Windhoek, hundreds of kilometres away. Namibia also has a long-standing desire to build a hydroelectric dam on the river at Popa Falls, 50 kilometres upstream of the border with Botswana.

Further north, the consolidation of peace in Angola means a growing population around the river's headwaters and the government in Luanda – flush with oil wealth – is turning its attention to long-delayed rural development.

But Botswana opposes any additional use of the water, arguing that it will disturb the fragile ecology of the Delta, leading to lost biodiversity and revenue from tourism.

Rajapakse's project is to analyse the potential harmful impacts to the health of the river and draw up a strategic programme for joint management of the river basin's water that will protect its diversity. He works closely with the Okavango River Basin Water Commission (OKACOM), which was set up in 1994 to, in its own words, "anticipate and reduce those unintended, unacceptable and often unnecessary impacts that occur due to uncoordinated resources development."

OKACOM, one of five river basin commissions and joint water authorities that gathered in the Botswanan capital, Gaborone, for the Fourth Annual Regional Workshop on Strengthening River Basin Organisations in April 2010, is charged with establishing the safe long-term yield of the Okavango basin, estimating demand on its water resources, investigating the feasibility of water infrastructure and recommend measures against pollution, and designing schemes to deal with short-term challenges like temporary droughts.

OKACOM executive secretary Ebenizario Chonguica said the Commission has overcome several obstacles as it mediates potential conflicts between the three countries over water use.

"The challenges are joint fact-finding. The three countries will find trends and opportunities through trans-boundary diagnostic analysis of the Okavango. There should then be a strategic action plan put in place to address the issues of all the three countries."

Christmas Maheri works on the Regional Strategic Action Plan for the Water Division of the Southern African Development Community. He says language – Angola's documents are in Portuguese, the other two countries' in English – is a simple but serious hindrance to information-sharing; as are the long delays in ratifying agreements that will permit a river basin commission to carry out its work.

In his case study of the Okavango Basin, Rajapakse presented the workshop an assessment that suggested the most advantageous development plan would focus on protection of the Delta's biodiversity and valuable tourism associated with it.

At first glance, this would seem to unfairly restrict use of the water by Angola and Namibia, to the benefit of Botswana alone. But in the context of the benefit-sharing approach that the Gaborone workshop was built around, the idea would be to negotiate over shared water resources in terms of how to optimise and share benefits, rather than simply competing over allocation of limited water. This might include joint investments where all three countries would reap the rewards of productive investments at a basin rather than national level.

The concept is an ambitious one which would require real commitment to regional integration in order to exploit the comparative advantages of each segment of the river, but OKACOM's Chonguica believes the Commission will be equal to the task.

"There have been shortcomings, but we have overcome them by means of complex working arrangements. People are now thinking on a trans-boundary scale. Thinking across borders is a major challenge and encouraging people to be transparent is not an overnight thing."



Credit: Mantoe Phakathi/IPS

Climate Change: A Threat to Food Security in Africa's River Basins



Silt build-up in the Orange River.

Credit: Patrick Burnett/IPS

By Busani Bafana

PRETORIA, Nov 2011 (IPS) - While Africa has successfully avoided conflict over shared water courses, it will need greater diplomacy to keep the peace as new research warns that climate change will have an effect on food productivity.

"Climate change introduces a new element of uncertainty precisely when governments and donors are starting to have more open discussions about sharing water resources and to consider long-term investments in boosting food production," Alain Vidal, director of the CGIAR's Challenge Programme on Water and Food (CPWF) told more than 300 delegates attending the Third International Forum on Water and Food held in Pretoria, South Africa from in Nov 2011. CGIAR unites agricultural research organisations with the donors.

"To prevent this uncertainty from undermining key agreements and commitments, researchers must build a reliable basis for decisions, which takes into account the variable impacts of climate change on river basins."

Scientists at the global water forum added that climate change will increase water pressure on the already stressed Limpopo, Nile and Volta River Basins on which more than 300 million people depend.

Vidal said new insights on the effect of climate change on river basins calls for a rethink on assumptions about water availability. However, investment in research to support far-sighted water policies will give decision makers the information they need to address challenges introduced by climate change that could otherwise impede agreements and investments in food security, he said.

As part of a five-year global research project scien-

tists from more than eight major research institutions around the world examined the potential effect higher temperatures and shifting rainfall patterns, caused by climate change would have on river basins around the world in 2050. CPWF scientists say some unsettling scenarios have emerged for parts of Africa, particularly in the Limpopo Basin, in Southern Africa, which is home to 14 million people.

Using data averages from climate models by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, CPWF scientists found that rising temperatures and declining rainfall in the Limpopo Basin over the next few decades would affect the already marginal environment, depressing food production while intensifying poverty.

"We need to ask whether current agriculture development strategies in the Limpopo Basin, which are predicated on current levels of water availability, are in fact realistic for a climate future that may present new challenges and different opportunities," said Simon Cook, a scientist with the International Center for Tropical Agriculture and head of CPWF's Basin Focal Projects.

"In some parts of the Limpopo Basin even widespread adoption of innovations like drip irrigation may not be enough to overcome the negative effects of climate change on water availability," Cook added. "But in other parts, investments in rain-fed agriculture such as rainwater harvesting, zai pits (deep planting pits) and small reservoirs might be better placed."

The key, said Cook, was data for informed decision making.

Rainwater management is viewed in Africa as the key to improving both crop and livestock farming. Innovative ways to make productive use of rainwater are also

being touted as a new "climate smart" approach to agriculture. For example, small reservoirs can be used to store water during dry periods or to help control flooding.

"These decentralised approaches to farming with rainwater are inexpensive, highly adaptable and provide immediate options for farmers to be their own water managers," said Lindiwe Sibanda, CEO of the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network.

"Enhancing farmer's adaptive capacity to respond to current challenges is smart even without climate change, but it is an absolute imperative now that we see what the future hold," she added.

The CPWF research has highlighted the important role of effective water management to ensure food production stays abreast of population growth, even in times of climate uncertainty.

Experts argued that the strong link between climate change and food security should give agriculture a boost in the global climate talks at the forthcoming 17th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Durban, South Africa.

"But water for food and agriculture and the impact of climate change on global food security is barely a blip on the radar for the negotiators meeting in Durban later this month," added Sibanda.

She said that the first step towards climate security was ensuring farmers and the world's poor would be able to feed themselves under rapid environmental change that puts the local and global food system at risk.