Transboundary Water Management in SADC

Strengthening institutions and promoting water cooperation to become the engine for regional integration and development

**Context**

The water resources in southern Africa are under enormous pressure. Economic development, population growth and the effects of climate change lead to increased water scarcity and water pollution. In addition, water resources are unevenly distributed both seasonally and geographically. Socioeconomic development varies considerably among the Member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Over 70% of the lakes and rivers in the SADC region are shared by two or more countries. Cooperation between the neighboring countries is therefore necessary to prevent conflicts and to protect water resources.

**Objective**

The programme aims to improve the implementation of selected, harmonised strategies and policies on transboundary water cooperation in the region.

**Approach**

The programme works in all 15 SADC Member States and applies a multi-level approach:

- Regional Level (SADC)
- Basin Level (River Basin Organisations)
- National Level (Member States)

The programme supports SADC in the following areas: preparation of water infrastructure projects, strengthening of River Basin Organizations and strengthening disaster preparedness and climate resilience. The technical preparation of infrastructure projects also mobilises third-party funding, which allows SADC and the Member States to implement further projects.

River Basin Organisations are advised on the joint management of water resources, for example in the preparation and implementation of integrated water management plans and data management systems. In addition, these organisations are also strengthened in their institutional capacities, e.g. through sustainable financing concepts or improved cooperation mechanisms between countries.

At the level of Member States, water resources and disaster risk management projects are implemented, including development partnerships with the private sector. In addition, to ensure that both women and men benefit equally from the measures, decision-makers in SADC are sensitised and national gender focal persons trained in the respective countries.

**Project Details**

- **Project Title:** Transboundary Water Management in SADC
- **Commissioned by:** German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) with co-financing from United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID)
- **Executing Agency:** Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
- **Project Area:** SADC Region
- **Partner:** SADC Secretariat
- **Period:** 04.2016 – 12.2019
- **Volume:** 14,200,000 Euro
Results in figures ...

More than 1,600,000 people directly benefit from the various infrastructure and pilot projects. Through targeted water saving measures in the South African municipality of Emfuleni, as well as in Botswana’s capital Gaborone, more than 700,000 people benefit from a more reliable water supply. As a result of the cooperation with the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), more than 860,000 people have access to safe drinking water in the north of Namibia and in the south of Angola. Furthermore, measures protecting the source area of the Orange River from overgrazing guarantee the sustainable water supply of up to 45,000 people in the Johannesburg metropolitan area in South Africa.

Through pilot projects in partnership with private businesses and feasibility studies for infrastructure projects more than 23,000,000 EUR of private and public resources have been mobilised. Particularly in the case of infrastructure projects a cost-intensive preparation of feasibility studies is necessary. Member States often lack the necessary technical and financial resources for this process. The Development Bank of Southern Africa has committed 8,000,000 EUR for the construction of a cross-border water supply system between Mozambique and Swaziland based on the plans of such a feasibility study. 2,000,000 EUR of the construction costs are borne by the two countries themselves. Private companies have invested more than 600,000 EUR in the implementation of water projects.

The region benefits from improved disaster preparedness. To ensure that the disaster management authorities in SADC member states are better prepared for floods and, for example, warn the population in due time, flood risk maps and early warning systems have been developed. Over 900,000 people along the Limpopo River can now be reached and warned by radio and mobile phone. Committees were formed in the villages, which react at an early stage and bring people and animals to safety.

... and in stories

The Vaal and the Orange are the most important rivers in the Orange Basin. They supply drinking water and water for industry and businesses. The majority of the water comes from the Drakensberg Mountains in the border area between Lesotho and South Africa. The above-average rainfalls are absorbed in wetlands in Lesotho’s highlands during the rainy and released over the year into the rivers. A canal built by the Lesotho-South African Lesotho Highlands Water Project supplies the greater Johannesburg area with water. However, the wetlands of Lesotho are endangered due to heavy overgrazing. This threatens the long-term water supply of the entire region and will be exacerbated by the effects of climate change.

With the support of GIZ, the Orange-Senqu River Basin Commission has, in cooperation with the SADC Secretariat and the Lesotho authorities, set up small weirs in a pilot area that allow the wetlands to re-saturate in the short term. At the same time, the local authorities work closely with farmers and herders to better manage the wetland and rangeland areas. This helps protect the important ecological functions of the wetlands. Local sheep and livestock farmers also benefit from increased productivity thanks to the changed grazing practices.

The results of the pilot phase already indicate that the wetland and rangelands regenerate into their natural state. The government of Lesotho will therefore introduce a new range management regime together with farmers and herders throughout the catchment area. The European Union has announced to support the project with up to 28,000,000 EUR.