

# Strategic Partnerships to Improve the Financial and Operational Sustainability of Protected Areas



Flamingos at Sunset in the Makgadikgadi Pans, Botswana

**Project Award ID and Title:**

00050137 - Strategic Partnerships to Improve the Financial and Operational Sustainability of Protected Areas

**National Executing Agency:**

BirdLife Botswana, Department of Wildlife and National Parks and Department of Environmental Affairs

**Project start Date:**

1<sup>st</sup> January 2009

**Project Completion Date:**

31<sup>st</sup> December 2012

**Description:**

The PSPA Project is a four-year project in which funding will be available between January 2009 and December 2012. It is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through United Nations Development Programme, and implemented by BirdLife Botswana in partnership with the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, and the Department of Environmental Affairs. This project seeks to strengthen

management partnerships between public, private, NGO and community stakeholders for the improvement of financial and operational sustainability of protected areas in a measurable manner; using Makgadikgadi/Nxai National Park as a pilot site. However the Pilot site has now been focused at Flamingo Sanctuary in Southern Sua Pan; which is in the Makgadikgadi wetland system.

## **Project Background**

Inadequate management effectiveness of small protected areas, epitomised in this case by the Makgadikgadi Pans/Nxai Pan National Parks, is a key challenge facing small protected areas in Botswana; hitherto, most of the state-mobilised resources meant for PAs are invested in the larger protected areas such as Central Kalahari Game Reserve, Chobe National Park, and the Kgalagadi Trans-frontier Park. Despite this 'marginalisation', small protected areas are rich in biodiversity, and worthy of receiving meaningful conservation efforts.

In Botswana, the responsibility for managing protected areas currently solely lies with the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, and has proved to be very expensive and a mammoth task. This project investigates an alternative way of managing protected areas which will improve the effectiveness and cost efficiency of management, ensuring that scarce PA funds are optimally employed, thus maximizing impact-per-unit investment. Local communities residing around protected areas will be capacitated to co-manage these areas, together with government, the private sector and NGOs, to reduce the current expenses, and also the resentment which exists towards conserving these areas. Nature-based tourism initiatives will be developed so that local communities realise direct economic benefits from conserving these eco-systems.

Implementing partners in this four-year project are the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) and the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA). Other role players include the private sector (Botswana Ash, safari operators), local communities residing near the project site, and NGOs working in the Makgadikgadi area. The project forms part of the Integrated Management Plan for the Makgadikgadi which is being spearheaded by the Department of Environmental Affairs.

Major activities envisaged for this project include:

- Facilitating the revision of the Wildlife Conservation and National Parks Act of 1992 which provides the legal framework for protected area management in Botswana. Currently, this legislation lacks provision for multi-stakeholder involvement and community participation in management of protected areas.
- Strengthening of participating community Trusts through capacity-building processes which include training, to ensure effective participation in protected area co-management. Revision of their constitutions and business plans will also be facilitated through this project.
- Strengthening DWNP's institutional capacity to engage in effective partnerships with civil society and other role players, and also oversee and support protected area management.

- Engaging the private sector to make investments towards the management of protected areas which may be monetary or in the form of provision of skills and services.
- Mainstreaming of PAs into District Development, in an effort to motivate for and provide avenues for other stakeholders (and not just DWNP), to a) finance PA conservation and b) adopt more pro-conservation activities in the proximity of the PAs, minimising management costs.

It is expected that at the end of this project, a co-management model for protected areas and tools to improve the financial and operational sustainability of the demonstration PAs would have been developed, tested and rolled out to other protected areas in the country for replication of best practice.

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