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Networks for Collaborative, Systemic Action in the Middle Olifants River Catchment

PROJECT SUMMARY



USAID
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SOUTHERN AFRICA

Project partners

Rhodes University's vision is to be an outstanding internationally-respected academic institution which proudly affirms its African identity and which is committed to democratic ideals, academic freedom, rigorous scholarship, sound moral values and social responsibility.

The objectives of the **Institute for Water Research, (IWR)**, are to contribute to the knowledge of and promote the understanding and wise use of natural water resources in southern Africa.

These objectives are achieved in a number of ways:

- Research into the structure, function and components of natural water systems
- Contract projects aimed at solving specific water-related problems
- Teaching at all levels within Rhodes University
- Dissemination of information by written articles and public lectures
- Service on research and management committees outside Rhodes University
- Capacity building and community education for the water sector

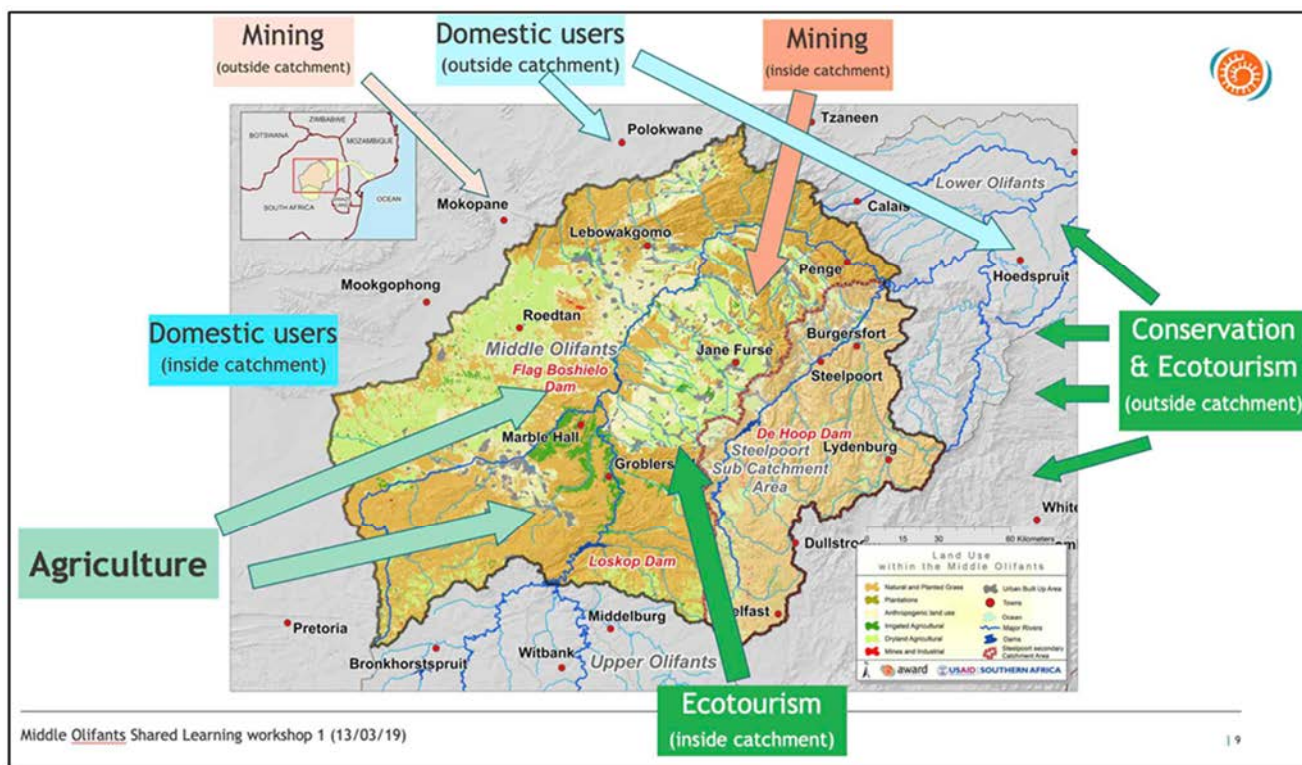


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Introduction

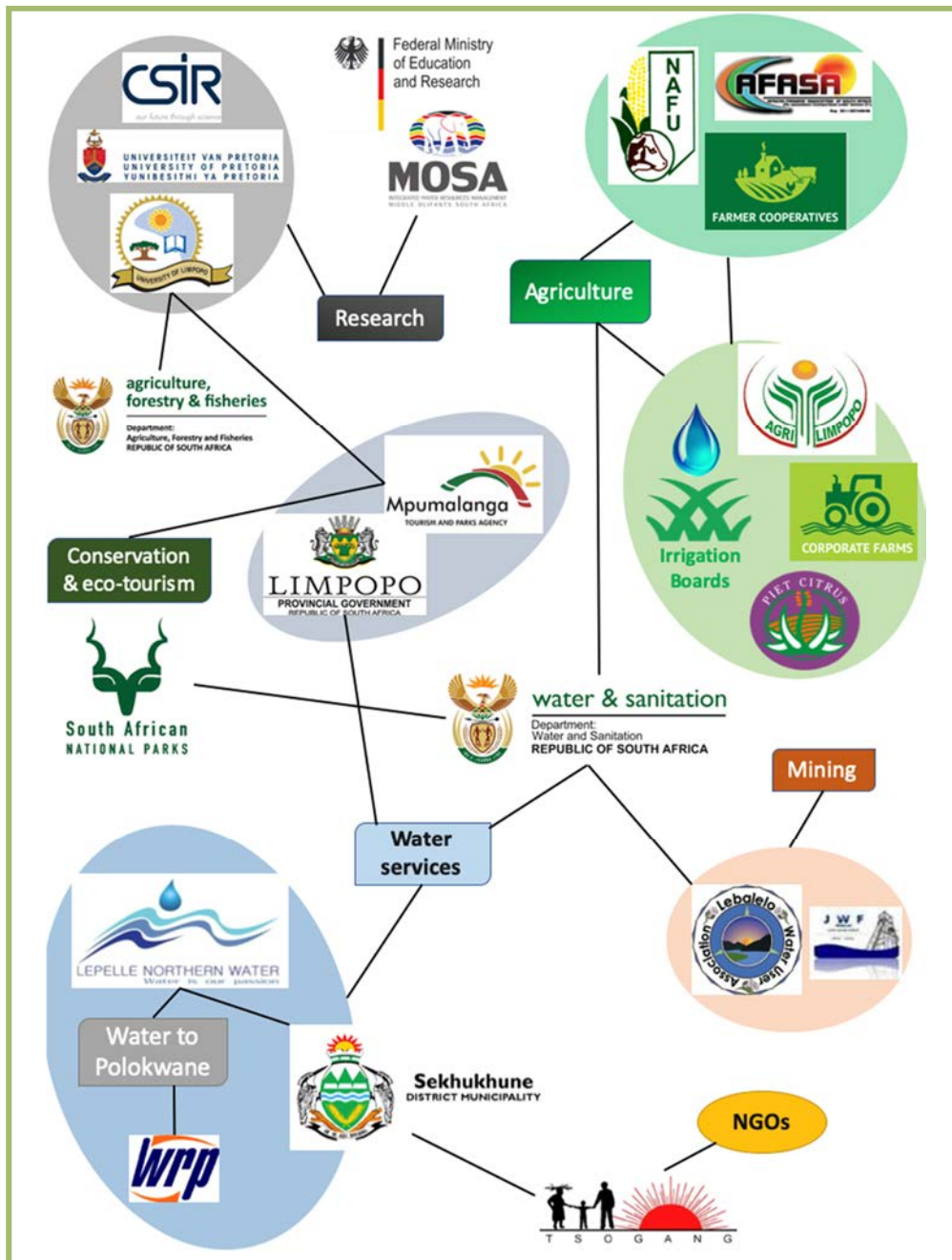


The middle Olifants has had almost no collective network regarding water, although some individual sectors manage aspects of water use. Nonetheless, the middle catchment is persistently besieged by low flows and poor water quality issues. Water is transferred out of the catchment despite the fact that there is insufficient water to support livelihoods within the catchment. This compromises both the middle and the lower Olifants.



Project Purpose

The project objective was to use a dialogical, systemic approach to help build and strengthen a collaborative, systemic co-learning approach and stakeholder network towards greater custodianship of the **Olifants River Catchment (ORC)**, using a simplified version of the **Collaborative Dynamic Modelling (CoDyM)** approach piloted in the Selati sub-catchment between 2015 - 2016. The intended outcome was to establish a network in the Middle Olifants that was already beginning to use a collaborative, systemic approach towards planning and acting.



Additionally, the project aimed to foster a collaborative, systemic approach more broadly between the middle and lower Olifants using both the **Decision Support System (DSS)** as well as a collective planning approach to support cross-sectoral learning. The intention was for more stakeholders to consider the complexity of upstream-downstream relationships in both the middle and lower reaches, and how to approach complex, systemic problems under different scenarios.



Activities

1. MOROC Phase	A. Scoping & initiating phase	B. Building a collaborative network phase		C. Post sub-grant phase
2. Specific, stakeholder-relevant activities	individual meetings and small workshops with individual stakeholders	sector-based engagements	multi-sector workshops/engagements	ongoing network meetings (as deemed appropriate)
3. Illustration				

1. Lower Olifants network Shared Learning: 28th November 2018, Hoedspruit

2. Middle Olifants network Shared Learning: 13th March 2019, Marble Hall

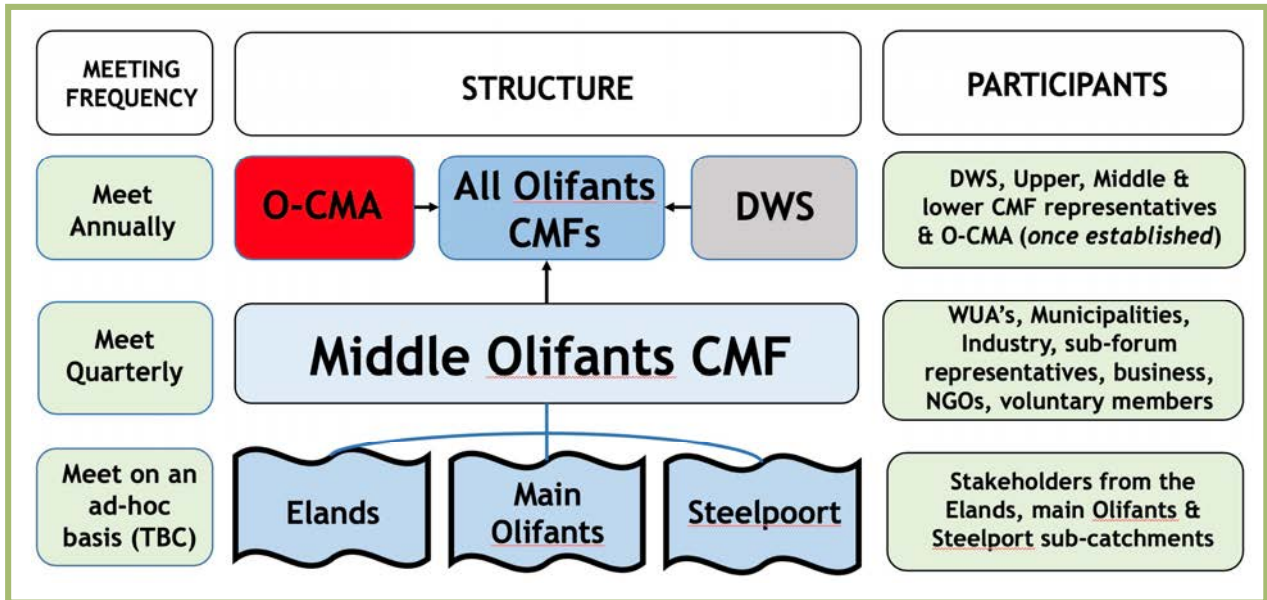
3. Middle & Lower Olifants Shared Learning: 30th October 2019, Burgersfort

The 30th October 2019 workshop was attended by **37 participants** representing more than **21 organisations**

- 1
 - Stakeholder analysis and stakeholder meetings
- 2
 - The development of a more visual, user-friendly interface (VUI) of a dynamic model for use in the broader developmental context of the Olifants River Catchment
- 3
 - Shared learning events for the Middle and Lower Olifants Catchments
- 4
 - Supporting Department of Water & Sanitation (DWS) with finalising charter development for the Middle Olifants Catchment Management Forum (CMF)
- 5
 - Synthesise information and integrate perspectives, primarily focusing on the analysis of the Olifants River Water Resource Development Project (ORWRDP) and the ORC reconciliation strategy

Results

- A Middle Olifants (MO) network has been initiated and supported via a combination of AWARD-facilitated and hosted shared learning workshops and the formation of the MO catchment management forum (CMF).



- Analysis of the Olifants River Water Resources Development Project (ORWRDP) concluded that:
 - The ORWRDP was planned with outdated information and without adequate recognition of the potential impact of reduced water resource availability on the viability of the scheme and the impact of the scheme on downstream users in the ORC, right through to Mozambique.
 - The lack of incorporation of the realities of climate change, along with the reduced yields forecast under the more recent 2012 national Water Resources Study (WR2012), provide further motivation for why the ORWRDP should be reviewed in light of a revised reconciliation study (recon).
- A visual, user-friendly interface (VUI) application developed for use in the Olifants River Catchment.





Recommendations

Regarding network-building

Recommendation 1

- Catchment Management Forums in the middle and lower Olifants should continue to be used strategically as vehicles for stakeholder participation in local and catchment level water resource management and governance. In particular, the formation of the MO CMF offers the opportunity to continue to build on the network initiated around the CMF.

Recommendation 2

- The final SL workshop undertaken in October 2019 was the first time that the networks in the middle and lower Olifants, facilitated by AWARD, had interacted within the context of catchment-level thinking and planning. This will remain important going forward, particularly in the absence of a functioning and operational CMA in the Olifants.

Recommendation 3

- The March 2020 CMFs in the middle and lower Olifants should be used as a means of communicating the outcomes and recommendations arising from the ORWRDP and recon analysis, cognisant of the fact that there are many stakeholders attending the CMFs in the respective regions who did not attend the joint workshop in October 2019.

Regarding the ORWRDP and the reconciliation study

Recommendation 4

- The ORWRDP urgently needs reviewing in light of a combination of factors, including the reduced yield of the WR2012 hydrological survey; the impacts of climate change; and the feasibility of the interventions proposed in the reconciliation strategy to reconcile the available supply with the growing demands.

Recommendation 5

- As per (4), the reconciliation study and associated strategy for the ORC urgently needs re-doing before any major decisions are taken around the ORWRDP.

Recommendation 6

- The AWARD team, in collaboration with the IWR sub-grantee, should further commit to communicating the results of the ORWRDP and recon analysis in the form of technical briefs, succinct reports and presentations, and possibly, in the form of a journal article submitted to a local open-access online water journal (e.g. WaterSA).



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The Association for Water and Rural Development

AWARD is a non-profit organisation specialising in participatory, research-based project implementation. Their work addresses issues of sustainability, inequity and poverty by building natural-resource management competence and supporting sustainable livelihoods. One of their current projects, supported by USAID, focuses on the Olifants River and the way in which people living in South Africa and Mozambique depend on the Olifants and its contributing waterways. It aims to improve water security and resource management in support of the healthy ecosystems to sustain livelihoods and resilient economic development in the catchment.

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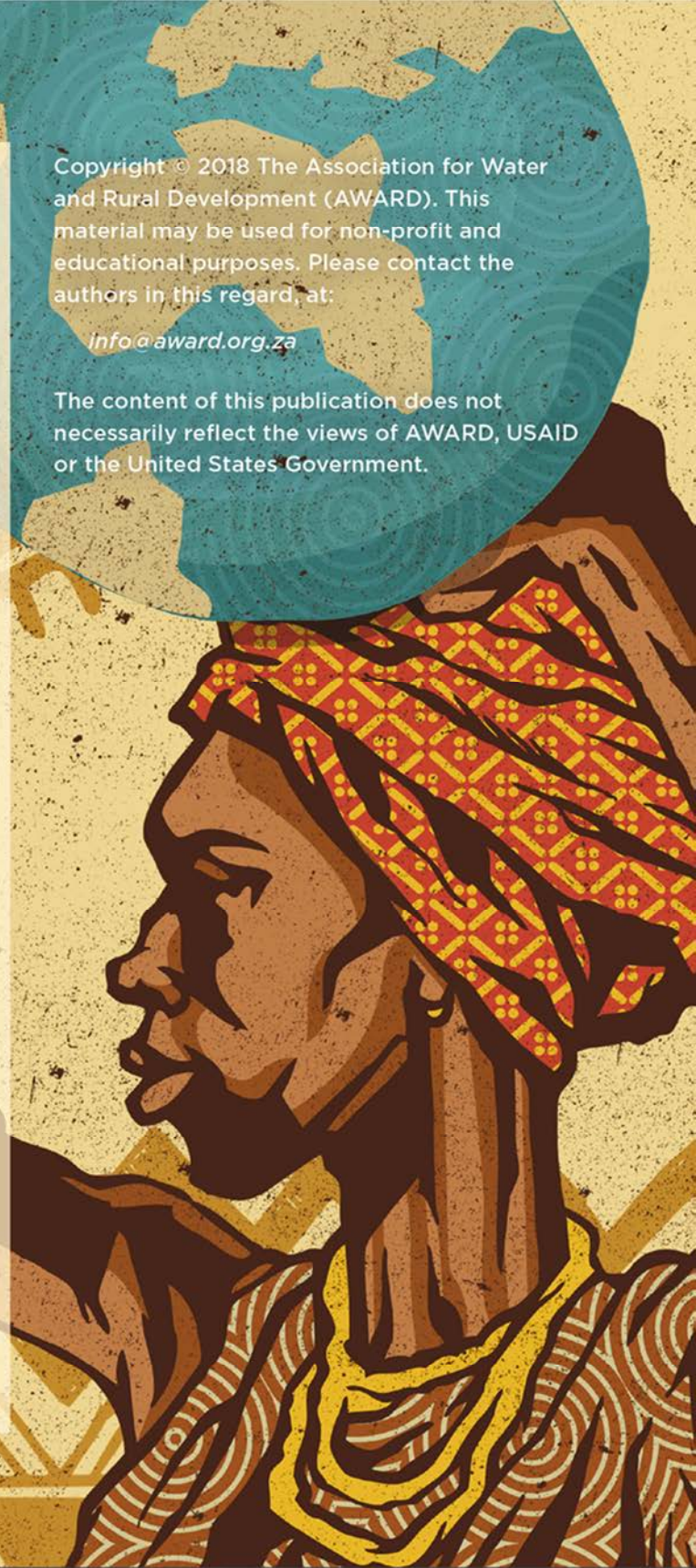
About USAID: RESILIM-O

USAID: RESILIM-O focuses on the Olifants River Basin and the way in which people living in South Africa and Mozambique depend on the Olifants and its contributing waterways. It aims to improve water security and resource management in support of the healthy ecosystems that support livelihoods and resilient economic development in the catchment. The 5-year programme, involving the South African and Mozambican portions of the Olifants catchment, is being implemented by the Association for Water and Rural Development (AWARD) and is funded by USAID Southern Africa.

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