

## Conserving the Angolan highlands with two new parks

MENONGUE, Angola - The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has handed over management plans for two newly-created Angolan national parks in Menongue. The two new parks, Mavinga and Luengue-Luiana, are located in the Kuando-Kubango Province of SE Angola and encompass 6.8 million hectares.



The management plans will help guide the development of the two parks through the critical first years. Pedro Camelo, vice governor of Kuando Kubango, Abias Huongo, general director, and Maria Loa of the National Institute on Biodiversity and Protected Areas, and Joaquim Manuel, director National Biodiversity of the Ministry of Environment, represented the Government of Angola.

The effective management of these new parks will secure Angola's natural resources for the benefit of nearly 12,000 people living within the park's five main settlements. These conservation areas are critical habitats for important wildlife and plant species that have the potential to attract tourists.

Healthy, well managed parks are also necessary to provide clean water and serve as important buffers to anticipated climate change impacts, such as droughts and floods.

The development of the management plans was supported through USAID's Southern African Regional Environmental Program. This six-year project supports the initiatives of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) to address threats to biodiversity and the environment within the Okavango River Basin, including portions of Angola, Botswana and Namibia, and the Okavango Delta, a World Heritage Site.

The Okavango Delta, an ecosystem rich in biodiversity but extremely sensitive to climate impacts and changes in land use, relies heavily on water from the Angola highlands, as 90% of rainfall in the Okavango comes from this area. The Okavango Basin is not only critical for biodiversity conservation, but also for economic development. Nature-based tourism accounts for about 14% of Namibia's GDP and 13% of Botswana's.

The SAREP project works in collaboration with the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission (OKACOM) to create strategies and carry out activities centred on conserving biodiversity, improving water supply and sanitation services, and strengthening capacity to respond to the effects of climate change and HIV/AIDS within the region.

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