

Future Okavango to strengthen ODMP implementation

By Bright Kholi

The minister of environment, wildlife and tourism, Kitso Mokaila says The Future Okavango (TFO) research project will go a long way in contributing towards his ministry's Okavango Delta Management Plan (ODMP). Speaking at the first workshop of TFO in Maun this week, Mokaila said the principles that guided ODMP process are

still as relevant for TFO as they are for the ODMP. The guiding principles for ODMP were ecosystems approach, participatory planning, capacity building, data management, socio economic considerations, alignment to RAMSAR planning and Transboundary planning. TFO is an interdisciplinary research project that aims to support a sustainable land use and resource management in

the Okavango Basin countries of Angola, Botswana and Namibia with scientific knowledge. With an innovative and trans-disciplinary approach TFO aims at supporting the already well-established communication between science and decision makers leading to the participatory implementation of research results. "Out of these planning principles, several sectoral plans, strategies and guidelines emerged through the ODMP to address management issues within thematic areas that cover land,

water, livestock, settlement, research, data, training, waste, biodiversity, fisheries and tourism," Mokaila said. He further said the long term sustainability and assurance of the flow of the Okavango resources require generation of information and knowledge so that all planning decisions are based on science, facts and not to forget indigenous knowledge. The TFO approach, he said will analyse the inter linkages between human action on the natural ecosystem services. The workshop's objectives were to develop inputs at policy level,

deepen project ownership amongst participants, provide a platform for learning and exchange, develop a common understanding for the goals and desired project outputs, to organise the interim evaluation report and develop interwoven strands for interdisciplinary cooperation amongst others. The project is sponsored by the German federal ministry of education and research while the workshop was hosted by the Okavango Research Institute. There are 18 partner universities and research centres world over in this project and 11 partner

institutions from the three countries of Angola, Namibia and Botswana. Research activities already commissioned in the three countries by TFO include those on climate change in the Okavango River region, impact of land management and climate change on hydrology, land use and climate change, impact of land use change on vegetation cover, cultural knowledge and valuation. Research also covers economic valuation of ecosystem services and also in the area of capacity development and innovations.