

THE LIMPOPO RIVER BASIN THAT WAS, IS AND CAN BECOME: TRANSBOUNDARY WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN A CHANGING WORLD.

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Water is life, without it you will not make it to Christmas! Without water we will not survive the end of the month. This is also true for the ecosystems and vulnerable human communities that depend on our limited water resources. Many are lost, some can be saved.

In the last 100 years the Limpopo River and its tributaries have largely been transformed from permanently flowing rivers, into seasonal or episodic river ecosystems that are often dry. These rivers that used to support aquatic life and people permanently, is now devoid of the life it used to maintain and does not provide the services it used to provide. How did this happen? Does it matter? And why should we talk about it today? This is not a story about a river. It's a story about us, our people, what we have done, and how the livelihoods of our people are connected to the rivers we are changing. And what it is costing them, what it is costing all of us.

Sustainable river management is an established science. We ultimately want to balance the use and protection of our ecosystems that we can both, build our economies, and continue to use and benefit from our ecosystems forever. For sustainability the ecosystem itself must survive and thrive, if we are to survive and thrive. Achieving the sustainable use and protection balancing act is hard, especially in vulnerable, shared ecosystems like the Limpopo where "everyone's river is proverbially also no one's river." The Limpopo River Basin covers an area as large as Germany, across four countries, with more than 21 million people today, who live in and depend on the Limpopo and its tributaries. In Botswana both Gaborone and Francistown are dependent on the Limpopo for water, and Bulawayo in Zimbabwe, and parts of Pretoria and Maputo in South Africa and Mozambique, all depend on the Limpopo River Basin.

In this presentation I will show you the Limpopo River Basin we had, the Limpopo we have and a possible Limpopo we could have, a healthy, "great green greasy river" that we all benefit from. The Sustainable African Rivers Initiative, regional scientists, and stakeholders from all of all of the countries that share the Limpopo, have been working together towards a sustainable future for the river. We have the local and international mechanisms and intent to recover the sustainability of the basin. I will show you not only how we can do this, but that it's already being done.

