

For Immediate Release

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Okavango Research Institute to Streamline Wetland Data Access

SEATTLE, Washington – January 10, 2017 – JRS Biodiversity Foundation is grateful for the opportunity to support the efforts of University of Botswana Okavango Research Institute (ORI) to protect one of the planet's greatest wetlands. The grant of \$111,600 to ORI will fund the launch of an integrated data portal for the region, unifying previously unconnected attempts to document the immense biodiversity of the Okavango Delta, a World Heritage and Ramsar Convention site.

Biodiversity in Africa continues to decline, and freshwater habitats are among the most severely impacted; this according to [a report](#) on the state of African biodiversity published this month by the European Union, United Nations Environment Programme, and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Okavango Delta is a 12,000 square kilometer oasis in the Kalahari Desert, wetlands pulsing with seasonal floods, concentrating wildlife, and supporting the people who rely on them. The network of marshes, streams, channels, pans, and ponds hosts a stunning assemblage of birds, fish, mammals, and plants, that attracts tourists from across the globe. The Okavango Basin, which extends northward into Namibia and Angola, faces growing pressure of rapidly-expanding human development and increasing the agricultural and infrastructural demand for water resources that threatens both the quality and quantity of water available to the Delta.

The conservation and sustainable management of these wetlands must be based on knowledge of biodiversity status and trends. Yet, these needs are poorly met by the current information landscape. Biodiversity and environmental data on the Delta are scattered across multiple disconnected databases, frustrating attempts to assemble a holistic picture of life in the Delta.

By creating an integrated resource for accessing information, and building the regional capacity to sustain this resource, ORI seeks to strengthen the role of data in resource management and conservation. The JRS Biodiversity Foundation believes that connecting knowledge providers with knowledge users to address critical challenges in conservation and sustainable development will result in better decision-making and will expand access to biodiversity data and information services.

See "[Okavango Delta Biodiversity Monitoring Website](#)"

About ORI— The Okavango Research Institute of the University of Botswana was originally established to study the Okavango Delta in response to insufficient knowledge to formulate sustainable development plans for this world-class wetland. ORI is a multi-disciplinary institute with a vision of becoming a leading wetland research center in Africa and the world. Visit online at <http://www.okavangodata.ub.bw/ori/>.

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About the JRS Biodiversity Foundation – The mission of the JRS Biodiversity Foundation is to increase access to and use of information that will lead to greater biodiversity conservation and more sustainable development in sub-Saharan Africa. Founded in 2004, the JRS Biodiversity Foundation works to increase the capacity of the institutions and people who collect, manage, and disseminate biodiversity data and information in sub-Saharan Africa, and to connect this knowledge to stakeholders who make and influence decisions that are crucial to supporting biodiversity. The foundation has awarded more than \$15M in grants since 2007. Visit us online at <http://www.jrsbiodiversity.org>

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