

For Immediate Release

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## JRS Award to Develop a Low Cost Fisheries Monitoring Program for the Okavango Delta

SEATTLE, Washington – 15 November 2017 – The JRS Biodiversity Foundation is pleased to announce a new \$180,840 grant to the Okavango Research Institute (ORI) to implement a pilot project to develop a scalable fisheries monitoring system in the Okavango Delta using low-cost technology. Professor Keta Mosepele will lead the project.

The Okavango Delta is a globally important freshwater wetland that supports a rich and diverse ecosystem in the otherwise arid southern African region. In addition to supporting unique flora and fauna, the ecosystem supports services ranging from crop irrigation to a growing tourism economy. Of particular importance is the Delta's support of subsistence and small-scale commercial fisheries, which comprise the livelihoods of thousands of people.

Until recently, the Okavango Delta has remained largely intact, with relatively low levels of impact from human induced land-use change. However, with rapidly increasing agricultural and infrastructure in the upstream reaches of the delta, the future health of the fishery and ecosystem as a whole will depend on careful monitoring and conservation management. Unfortunately, the data necessary to assess the health of this ecosystem are not available.

ORI hopes to address this gap by partnering with a variety of stakeholders to pilot low-cost fisheries data collection protocols using the [iNaturalist](#) platform. iNaturalist is a freely available software that enables “citizen-science” observations to be verified by an expert, resulting in accurate, research grade data. For this project ORI will partner with three external data providers, the Division of Fisheries, local fishermen, and recreational fishing tour operators, to collect and upload thousands of observations to the [OkavangoDataBase](#). The team expects that this pilot project will result in strategies to decrease costs in collection of high quality data that can be used to inform policy. Increased availability of data on the Okavango Delta's biodiversity will allow ORI to manage and disseminate data products relevant to policy makers, resulting in more informed and data-driven decision making throughout the region.

The JRS Biodiversity Foundation is the only conservation donor dedicated to increasing access to biodiversity data and information in sub-Saharan Africa. Mobile technologies that allow for rapid data collection, efficient quality control, and moderate technical expertise are key to unlocking knowledge of Africa's biodiversity. The Okavango Fisheries Monitoring program, in addition to the [University of Bangor's TilapiaMap](#), is one of two recently funded JRS projects that use customized mobile biodiversity data platforms for fisheries monitoring and management.

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See "[University of Botswana Okavango Research Institute \(2017\) – Okavango Fisheries Monitoring](#)"

**About the JRS Biodiversity Foundation** – The mission of the JRS Biodiversity Foundation is to enhance knowledge and promote the understanding of biological diversity for the benefit and sustainability of life on earth. Founded in 2004, the JRS Biodiversity Foundation supports biodiversity data and knowledge tools that are used to preserve biodiversity in developing economies where biodiversity is most threatened. The foundation has awarded \$16M in grants since 2007. Visit online at <http://jrsbiodiversity.org>

**About the Okavango Research Institute** – 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.uw.bw/ori/>.

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