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Harmony And Discord: An Analysis Of Donor Cooperation In The Orange-Senqu River Basin

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The last decade has seen an increase in the involvement of international donors in transboundary water management in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. Described by some as the “donor scramble for southern African rivers,” this influx of foreign aid is aimed at enhancing state cooperation over internationally shared waters. Yet as multiple donors strive to support initiatives for inter-state collaboration in the region, the importance of communication and cooperation within the donor community is often overlooked. The consequences of this oversight may be severe. Where multiple donors are working in a single international basin, the lack of donor coordination has the potential to lead to project redundancy and the inefficient and ineffective use of both human and capital resources. This paper explores the incentives for donor coordination in the field of transboundary water management and examines the potential benefits and risks of increased donor collaboration for recipient countries and river basin commissions. The analysis is grounded in a case study of the Orange-Senqu River basin which is shared between the countries of Lesotho, South Africa, Botswana and Namibia and has become a focal point for foreign aid from the European Union (EU), the French Global Environment Fund (FGEF), the German Development Fund (GTZ) and partnership between the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Global Environment Fund (GEF). Drawing in-depth interviews with donors and policy makers through out the Orange-Senqu basin, this paper evaluates the implementation and effects of donor- and recipient-driven coordination mechanisms currently in place at basin-wide and regional levels.