

Improving water governance and management in Western Africa

Background

One out of every three persons of the world live in areas of moderate to high water stress. It is therefore imperative to wisely manage water resources to meet growing demands. To this end UNEP is supporting national Governments to improve water management and governance. In Western Africa, UNEP is supporting seven countries to develop and implement Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) plans to facilitate reforms in water governance and management by introducing cross-sectoral and participatory management of water resources. The plans will also catalyse national planning processes as well as enhance cooperative management of transboundary water resources.

Key issues in Western Africa countries

- Lack of effective coordination due to fragmented mandates governing water resources management across several agencies. As a result the potential contribution of water resources in sustainable development remains generally unrealized
- Inadequate capacity among water managers and decision makers to undertake IWRM planning
- Lack of awareness and stakeholder participation in management of water resources especially on the importance of ecosystem approach in IWRM processes
- Increased pressure on water resources due to population growth, uncontrolled waste disposal, agricultural activities, mining, logging, aquaculture and activities in other economic sectors
- Degraded water quality leading to health risks

Project Objectives

- The overall objective is to “Improve water management and governance in West Africa with the long term goal of livelihood security and environmental sustainability”;
- The specific objective is to “Promote and support development and implementation of IWRM plans in the targeted countries with special focus on environmental aspects”

Region: West Africa

Location:

Gambia,
Guinea Bissau,
Guinea Conakry,
Sierra Leone,
Togo,
Cote d'Ivoire and
Liberia.



Beneficiaries: Primary beneficiaries of the project are the Regional water bodies, national water ministries and local water managers.

Secondary beneficiaries are the more than 45 million people from the seven target countries.

Duration: 2007 – 2010

Donors: European Commission, UNEP (Government of Norway) and UDC

Budget: Euro €1,595,712

Partners:

- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- UNEP-DHI Centre for Water and Environment (UDC)
- ECOWAS through its Water Resources Coordination Centre (ECOWAS/WRCC)
- Global Water Partnership (GWP) through GWP West Africa (GWP/WA).

Main activities

- Supporting the preparation of national IWRM roadmaps (in Gambia, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau and Sierra Leone) and implementation of national IWRM roadmaps leading to national IWRM plans (Liberia, Togo and Cote d'Ivoire)
- Expanding national stakeholder networks to ensure broad representation (especially women and vulnerable groups) through the establishment or strengthening of country-wide water partnerships
- Support and strengthen national and regional governing bodies, including provision of technical assistance to spearheading institutions as well as training government representatives and stakeholders, based on IWRM needs and priorities addressing country specific issues
- Raising awareness of stakeholders on the importance of ecosystem approach
- Preparation of guidelines, case studies and documentation of best practices, based on experiences and lessons learned through the IWRM processes, to be included in Global Water Partnership (GWP) IWRM toolbox and published
- Technical advice to national policy makers to increase access to and use of implementation tools developed by UNEP and partners for the sustainable use of natural water resources
- Training courses and workshops to build capacity of national and local stakeholders in the use of scientific, technical, legal, financial tools and guidelines for the implementation of national IWRM plans

Results Anticipated

- Increased awareness on importance of environmental approach and considerations in IWRM, stakeholders empowered and committed to participate in IWRM processes
- Increased access to relevant IWRM information and tools
- Strengthened capacity of key water managers and decision makers on IWRM planning.
- Empowered institutions to spearhead the implementation of IWRM plans
- National roadmaps developed for the IWRM target in The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone
- IWRM Plans developed for Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Togo
- Documentation on best practices, case studies and guidelines

Challenges

- Weak institutional set-up and capacity for implementing IWRM
- Funding availability beyond the project to assure the continuation of the IWRM process
- Political instability and civil unrest
- Inclusive and complex nature of IWRM

Lessons learned

- Political will is vital for the success of IWRM processes
- National IWRM training courses provide an excellent forum for the participating key stakeholders to exchange experiences on different elements of the IWRM reform process
- The very concrete and informal approach to IWRM roadmaps has proved practical in terms of engaging the main stakeholders in the process
- IWRM provides a good policy framework for good water governance, which is essential in achieving the MDGs, in particular poverty and hunger, health and gender, environmental sustainability and global development

Web links

www.unep.org/ecosystemmanagement/

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Global Water
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