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The Senegal river: Organisation for the development of the Senegal river 1998 - 2000

- International Office for Water - Cooperation - International actions - Integrated water resources management (IWRM) -
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The Organisation for the Development of the Senegal River (OMVS), established on 11 March 1972, regroups the three riparian countries of the river: Mali, Mauritania, Senegal. It provided the impetus for the building of two dams, Manantali and Diama, that have partly regulated the river since 1988. An ambitious project, using the Manantali dam for providing energy to the three countries, is under way. When this project is completed, OMVS will have to make sure that the management of these two dams will ensure electric energy production, agricultural development and river navigation in the long-term while minimising the adverse impacts on the environment.

OMVS High Commission is the only administrative structure common to the three countries. It plays an important role in the management of the river water resources by co-ordinating economic development policies in the valley and monitoring their impact on the environment. In 1994, the donors of the "Energy" project, together with OMVS, analysed the conditions necessary for the management of hydropower infrastructures and proposed stringent institutional reforms.

The implementation of these reforms, one objective of which was to focus the High Commission on supranational assignments, implies the provision of additional technical means.

Over the last few years, OMVS High Commission almost exclusively dealt with the furthering of two important projects: the preparation of the "Energy" project and the building of levees for Diama dam and main headworks. This priority, given to studies and construction works, led to a decline in the other functions.

It was then proposed, within the decided reorganisation, to transfer these studies and works to management companies in order to focus functions on administrative tasks common to the three States. Among these tasks, three are of prime importance and were the objective of the French Co-operation financial support.:

Sharing of water among the countries and the users and the standardisation of the States' legislation on the river water resources,

Establishment of rules for water management (general and annual according to rainfall) and the monitoring of their application by the management companies,

Follow-up of environmental protection measures.

The following had been necessary to achieve these objectives:

Information on flow rates upstream of the dam, for accurate 10-day forecasting, the natural high water flow for non-regulated tributaries and for the Bafing. This early warning will enable the replenishment of low water flow from the reservoir to be limited (man-made high water flow) by tallying it with the peak of the natural water flow and to mitigate flood in case of heavy rainfall. During periods of high rainfall shortage, it will enable the High Commission to arbitrate between the different water uses in liaison with the political authorities,

Establishment of instruments for the forecast and monitoring of flow rates and for the management of infrastructures,

Determination of the optimal high water levels necessary for supplying water to flood recession crops, for groundwater recharge, for forecasting ecosystems while minimising losses in electricity production,

Setting-up of an information system on the environment to monitor the impact of economic development in the valley and of dam management on the river and rural ecosystems and to define and implement the indispensable mitigation measures.

In this framework, IOWater provided technical assistance in line with the reorganisation:

- . legal advice for setting up various companies and management organizations to replace AGOC: Manantali Energy Management (SOGEM) and Diama Management and Operation (SOGED);
- . an assessment of Diama dam and cost estimate for the rehabilitation and maintenance of installations
- . a budget valuation and cost estimate for SOGED and conditions for selling water.
- . a priority training programme for SOGED's personnel