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Africa : European water initiative for integrated water resources management 2003

- International Office for Water - Cooperation - International actions - Integrated water resources management (IWRM) -

Date de mise en ligne : Tuesday 4 November 2008

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Water resources management has become one of the major challenges for international co-operation in Africa.

Many African countries have started with an in-depth legal and institutional reform focusing on a water policy organised according to the integrated management concept (IWRM) and based on river basins.

However, most of the Countries have worked alone and reforms implementation suffered from this situation.

Many bi and multilateral donors, especially European ones, NGOs or large private companies have been working beside Governments, Local Authorities and rural or urban groups of people for a long time and they have wished to strengthen and better co-ordinate their actions in this sector.

Many international meetings were organised to facilitate the implementation of a better governance of water resources on the regional scale.

It proved to be especially necessary to implement sustainable water management on the African continent, in accordance with the commitments and the recommendations of the international Community made in the Conferences of Paris (1998), The Hague (2000), Bonn (2001) and in the World Summit (Johannesburg, September 2002).

Following the Earth Summit on Sustainable Development of Johannesburg, a strategic partnership was established between African countries and the European Union on Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) especially at the level of Transboundary Basins to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

A working group, led by the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs, was entrusted, according to the Strategy approved by the EU and the African Ministerial Council on Water (AMCOW), with the launching of a programme:

- for transboundary water resource management (TB);
- for drafting national IWRM plans.

AMCOW identified the needs for support in four sub-regions (East, West, Central and Southern Africa) and selected five "pilot" transboundary basins for which support will be requested from the 9th EDF intra-ACP budget:

- Southern Africa: Orange-Senqu Commission (ORASECOM);
- Central Africa: Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC);
- East Africa: Lake Victoria basin (Nile Equatorial Lakes Subsidiary Action Programme - NEL-SAP), and Kagera Basin Organisation (KBO);
- West Africa: Niger Basin Authority (NBA) and Volta river basin.

The French Ministry for Foreign Affairs requested the International Office for Water for assistance in the analysis and proposal stage of the "large rivers" component: a first step of this second component consisted in an inventory, whose method was validated by the main partners involved.

The inventory aimed at analysing the situation and at **characterising 10 major transboundary basins in Africa, based on about twenty studied cases.**

The interim report of this step was presented during a meeting in Paris in September 2003 to representatives of the

European Commission, of Member States and different NGOs and organisations (GWP).

The Ouagadougou Conference in October 2003 was then a significant step of the process with the identification of the first four basins in which the European Initiative will start (Lake Chad, Lake Victoria, Orange, Volta), French Co-operation also supporting the Niger.

The second phase was implemented in 2004 and included two steps:

- Drafting of a methodology to develop basin action plans suited to the African situations;
- The implementation of this methodology in each of the chosen basins, in collaboration with the African and European partners, to make a proposal for action plans complying with IWRM criteria (contents, priorities, budgets).

The following trends may be underlined:

Stakeholders' involvement

During the whole process, liaison and consultation were made with both African (AMCOW-TAC, NEPAD, River Basin Authorities, Regional Economic Commissions, National Authorities such as Ministries of Water and Environment or Water Authorities) and European officials (European Delegations in riparian countries, European bilateral Co-operation and Local Technical Assistants).

Preparatory missions also enabled meetings with local stakeholders of each basin to discuss about priority actions.

Methodology

Project analysis was based on six IWRM "pillars" or priority areas of action:

- enabling environment and institutional roles,
- mobilisation of financial resources,
- capacity building,
- assessment and monitoring,
- awareness and confidence building,
- basin management plans and action plans.

The IOWater Consultants reviewed many already available documents and numerous meetings and talks with local and regional stakeholders, in each of the five pilot basins, allowed the necessary integration of due information and the identification of priorities.

Through the assessment of the current situation, the Consultants considered on-going and foreseen projects, identified gaps and hence priority activities, that can be supported under the programme, add value to other activities and help to remove obstacles to improved water management in the basin.

First orientations

"Institutional frameworks strengthening" seems to be a permanent need, in all basins. Indeed, even when financial means appear to be available, it is sometimes difficult to apply them because of weakness of administrative structures.

"Ownership" is clearly an important issue. The Consultants systematically looked for River Basin Authorities (main beneficiaries of the Programme) and Regional Economic Commissions to own the programme. Ownership will definitely be a key factor for the sustainability of foreseen actions.

National IWRM is needed.

Some institutions still have problems to switch from an official stereotyped speech (IWRM, Civil Society involvement with decision-making process, etc.) to its concrete field application.

Many countries still do not have suitable legislative and regulatory frameworks that define statutes, tasks, responsibilities for national institutions and that allow inter-sectoral and inter-administrative co-ordination between them.

Most countries have no National Water Resources Management Plan.

Real participative processes, which involve water users, local authorities, NGOs, etc, are rare.

Improving this situation is urgent, so that strategies elaborated at transboundary level can really apply within each national section of the basins.

The European Initiative on the IWRM topic will “facilitate” a better management of African transboundary rivers and the preparation of National IWRM Plans in the concerned riparian countries.