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Mexico - CONAGUA : The National Water Information System (SINA) & Regional Water Information Systems (SIRAs)

Date de mise en ligne : samedi 30 décembre 2006

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(The News - n°14 - December 2006)

For five years, many information and cooperation missions have been carried out by experts from IOWater and the French Water Agencies, within the "Program for support to the Mexican Water Sector", financed by the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The Mexican National Water Commission (CONAGUA) has been interested in the French experience and especially in the know-how developed by IOWater in the field of water data and information management.

The Mexican Water Law of 29 April 2004 (Ley de Aguas Nacionales) stipulates that "planning and national programming of water resources will be based on a National System (SINA), and Regional Water Information Systems (SIRAs)".

The CONAGUA became in charge of creating and developing this National Water Information System of Mexico (SINA) and of supporting the new "Basin Organizations" in the creation of Regional Water Information Systems (SIRAs).

Within its partnership with IOWater, CONAGUA and the Mexican institutions concerned by this project carried out a detailed analysis of the legislative, institutional and technical context of water data and information management in Mexico, in order to define :

- a vision of the SINA and SIRAs in the medium term (main tasks, targeted public, types and fields of data and information to be managed, etc.) ;
- the organizational and inter-institutional tools to be developed and the various essential technical aspects of the project ;
- a multiyear action program and a detailed plan for the first two years.

In 2005, the "SINA/SIRA project" started its implementation phase with a continuation of IOWater technical support.

At the inter-institutional level, a Water Topical Group was officially created as well as specialized sub-groups from the main institutions concerned at the federal level : CONAGUA ; SEMARNAT (Governmental Secretariat in charge of the Environment), INEGI (Cartographic and Statistical Institute responsible, in particular, for standardizing the Mexican sectoral information systems), etc.

The Planning Department of the CONAGUA is coordinating these topical groups and developing common tools for the system :

- the SINA website for presenting ongoing actions, enhancing already existing products (SUIBA, etc.), making available the elements of the common language, etc. ;
- the catalogue of Mexican water stakeholders ("yellow pages").

(The News - n°13 - December 2005 - January 2006)

Reminder of the context...

At the end of the 1990s, the "Basin Councils", created in Mexico according to a logic of decentralization of water resource management, very quickly felt the need to access the information allowing them to make suitable decisions. In order to meet this expectation, the CONAGUA (National Water Commission) then planned the creation of information centers called CICAs (Centros de Información y Consulta sobre el Agua).

The CONAGUA wished to benefit from the French experience in the field of management of water-related data and information.

The International Office for Water and the French Water Agencies provided an organizational and technical assistance, co-financed by the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs since 2001. Since 2003, the various recommendations have started to be approved and take effect :

- Preparation by CONAGUA and INEGI (Institute of Statistics and Cartography), SEMARNAT (Secretariat in charge of the Environment) and IMTA (Mexican Institute of Technologies on Water), of protocols for the exchange of information at the national level ;
- Adoption by the Basin Committees of the Yucatan Peninsula and Mexico Valley of the launching of the first two pilot "CICAs", and this with a strong support from the States concerned ;
- Study tour in France of representatives from the CONAGUA, INEGI, SEMARNAT, IMTA and the government of Quintana-Roo, for an analysis of the methods adopted for the management of data and obtained results.

Changes and new orientations…

The Mexican water law of 29 April 2004, appreciably modifies the organization at basin level and provides for :

- the creation of autonomous Basin Organizations, which will be in charge of, among other things :
 - formulating and proposing the Hydrological Plan for their basin ;
 - operating the basin financial system ;
 - allocating concessions for the exploitation of facilities and water resources ;
 - preserving water quality and promoting its effective and sustainable use in coordination with the States and the Basin Councils.
- A redefinition of the role of the "Basin Councils", which become, from now on, consultative bodies of the Basin Organizations. With regard to the information systems, the law :
 - Reminds the general principles of free access to water-related information ;
 - Entrusts the CONAGUA and the Basin Organizations with the task of disseminating this information ;
 - Plans that "the national planning and programming of water resources will be carried out on the basis of a National System (SINA) and Regional Water Information Systems (SIRAs) which will be supported by the Commission and the Basin Organizations."

In 2005, the SINA/SIRA "project" entered into an implementation phase, with a support from IOWater, within the French- Mexican cooperation. A Topical Group on Water was officially created involving the CONAGUA, SEMARNAT and INEGI.

The first 7 topical sub-groups were created to define the future common language for data exchange in Mexico : "administrative and institutional context", "surface waters", "groundwater", "water quality", "climate/meteorology", "urban hydraulics", "agricultural hydraulics".

The Planning Department of CONAGUA takes care of the information, facilitation and coordination of the topical groups and prepares, for 2006, the SINA website, the reference frame for the characterization of the main water resources of Mexico and a catalogue of the Mexican water stakeholders.



"SINA" - "SIRAs"