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# **Algeria : Institutional assistance to Basin Agencies on water taxes**

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Date de mise en ligne : jeudi 4 décembre 2008

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# Institutional assistance to Basin Agencies on water taxes

(The News N° 16 - December 2008)

**At the beginning of 2008, the French Development Agency financed an institutional and legal assistance to improve the water abstraction tax**, which has been adopted since the creation of the Algerian River Basin Agencies (ABH) in 1996, as an economic incentive tool for better water resources management.

This assistance was provided by Pierre Henry de Villeneuve of the **International Office for Water** and André Wulf, from the Seine- Normandy Water Agency.

It allowed two executives of the Algiers- Hodman-Soummam ABH to come for studying the practical aspects of water tax management at the Seine-Normandy Water Agency.

This in-depth thinking about the evolution of the water tax in Algeria led to the proposal of practical texts, which were drawn up with the main Algerian interested parties. It is especially necessary to combine water management planning and water tax. The latter, now only applied to the industrial water abstractions, which remain a minority (less than 2% of abstracted volumes), must become an incentive tool for water saving applied to all the main uses of the resource. After consolidation of this prime objective by the National Water Plan in particular, the tax could be more efficiently used to stimulate water resources conservation in Algeria.

## **Analysis of the training needs for staffs of the water and sanitation sector**

Algeria continues to face major challenges as regards water resource mobilization and pollution control to meet an increasing demand generated by demographic growth and the economic and social development of the country.

Also, together with an ambitious investment program, the Ministry of Water Resources (MRE) has been implementing a modernization process for five years through an institutional and organizational renewal of its services.

In this context, continuing training is a genuine tool for supporting the development strategy of the sector. It covers all issues : design and planning, project management, contracting authorities and prime contractors, engineering studies, new work and repairs, preventive maintenance and operation of facilities, water resource mobilization, urban hydraulics (water supply and sanitation), irrigation, etc.

**The 2004-2006 training plan, with a three-year budget of 40 million dinars (nearly 5 million euros), allowed the organization of more than 186 training courses in 30 fields. 4,000 civil servants of various ranks benefited from this plan.**

On their side, the public institutions (ANBT, ANRH, ABH, ADE, ONA and ONID) supervised by the Ministry made a huge effort for training their staffs and, in 2005, they mobilized a budget of more than 21 million dinars for the training of 1,600 agents.

The "Algérienne des Eaux" (ADE) alone used a budget of more than 16 million dinars for training 1,432 agents. In-house training is mainly carried out by ADE and ONA training centers, and by INPE, which trains the staff of the 48 Water Directorates of the Wilayas, and outside training is carried out by training centers, dependent either of the

Ministry for Higher Education and Scientific Research or of the Ministry for Training and Professional Education. To improve the effectiveness of its training system, the **MRE decided to carry out a study for defining strategic lines for the capacity building of the staffs to face unavoidable changes.**

Benefiting from a financial support from the French Development Agency (AFD), this study on the "Analysis of the training needs and improvement of the staffs of the water resources and sanitation sector" was entrusted to the International Office for Water and has the following main objectives :

- Assessing the training needs,
- Analyzing the current offer of the national training system,
- Drafting the terms of reference for a multiyear training plan.

## Consolidation of river basin agencies 1999 - 2006

Within the framework of its new water policy, the Algerian Government created five River Basin Agencies in August 1996 :

- Oran & Chott & Chergui,
- Algiers & Hodna & Soumman,
- Constantinois & Mellégué & Seybousse,
- Cheliff & Zahrez,
- Sahara.

From 1999 to 2006, a programme of activities was implemented according to the requirements of the Ministry of Water Resources and ABHs within the French-Algerian cooperation programme.

A first programme for assistance to these young Algerian basin agencies, financed by the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs and by the Algerian Government, was carried out in France, in Sophia Antipolis, Limoges and Paris and at the head offices of the French Water Agencies concerned, from 1999 to 2001.

This programme dealt with two types of action :

• training seminars, organised by IOWater with the collaboration of the French Water Agencies, dealt with :

- data bases / GIS
- documentation
- communication
- water quality control and monitoring
- management/strategy for an agency's action/project evaluation

&bull; an "immersion" in the French Water Agencies on the following topics :

- water resource management
- action programmes/planning
- aid

The training courses were implemented with a view to transferring know-how, exchanging viewpoints and adapting it to the Algerian institutional context.

In 2002, a specific training programme aimed at enabling the preparation of a work plan model for implementing the Algerian Basin Schemes and the formalisation of preliminary proposals for the main orientations and for some parts of the strategy.

Each ABH, which has qualified staff to implement its Basin Scheme, was to adapt this work plan to define the orientations and, above all, the strategy according to the inventory of the situation in its own basin.

Their inventory must be completed regarding drinking water, the management of flood hazards and the management of aquatic environments and wetlands.

From 2003, the ABH managers requested reinforced on-site assistance to the ABHs for the preparation of these schemes.

In addition to the training activities of the previous programmes, two 1-week assignments in Algeria of a French specialist in water-related cartography allowed to assist the ABH with the drawing up of these maps, essential tool for the Basin Schemes.

Technical assistance on water information systems was provided by IOWater : structuring analysis of water data, proposal for data bank modelling and operation

Activities conducted in 2004 dealt with the role and functioning of the Algerian Basin Committees. These bodies are important for dialogue between all the water stakeholders (State, local elected representatives, users), but they are currently under-used and must be reactivated so that they fully play their role of evaluating, discussing and approving the schemes.

Related communication aspects and techniques were developed.

A French expert's mission took place according to the meetings of these bodies, in agreement with the ABH management, to help with the preparation of the presentation of the Basin Schemes and, in a broader sense, with the preparation of the meetings of these Basin Committees.

In addition, two members of French Basin Committees participated in the meetings of the Algerian Basin Committees for directly exchanging their experience.

Finally, on the occasion of "Pollutec" 2003, a seminar addressing the managers of the Algerian ABHs was organised as a phase of training on communication, through meetings and interviews with French specialised journalists and with people in charge of communication in the Seine-Normandy Water Agency and IOWater.

In 2005 and 2006, the scope of activities resulted from the Algerian Financial Law of July 2005 which entrusted the River Basin Agencies (ABHs) with the levy of taxes for the direct use of water resources from the "Public Water Domain". It aims at inciting the water users to better manage the water abstracted from the natural environments, by making them pay a use cost by way of this tax on abstractions.

IOWater, in collaboration with the Seine-Normandy Water Agency, provided technical assistance as the development of this new financially incentive tool requires an adaptation of the organisation and a quick capacity building of the ABHs.

The support missions carried out in 2006 focused on :

- \* the definition of a strategy and precise timetable for starting the system ;
- \* assistance with the development of an Access application software for the issue and follow-up of the "tax invoices" ;
- \* the development of communication with the users ;
- \* the control and follow-up of meters ;
- \* the evolution of the system to make it an economic tool for better quantitative water management.

This action is essential for the River Basin Agencies, because part of the levied tax, excluding the cost of its recovery, could be used to finance actions, such as planning, the development of integrated water resources management, users' awareness on water saving, but also the financing of measures to promote recycling, the fight against wastage, etc.