

Press release

Benin to integrate Water and Climate Change in Development Planning and PRSP

Recognising the importance of water to national development, the Benin Water Partnership is supporting the government in strengthening the integration of water and climate change in national development planning frameworks, specifically the Poverty Reduction strategy Paper.

Addressing representatives of the GWP Reference Group¹ who visited the country to review Benin's draft IWRM plan, Benin Minister of Water and Energy Mr Sacca LAFIA, mentioned that the government is committed to water reforms and adopted the National Water Policy in July 2009. The draft Water Law is now in parliament hope to be adopted in 2010. These instruments are important to help move forward with the water reforms. The Minister acknowledged the important role being played by Benin Water Partnership in supporting the water policy, the water law and drafting of the IWRM plan for the country.

The Minister reaffirmed his support for the Country Water Partnership and indicated that while he was not going to participate in Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen during the COP 15, he would be pleased if the representatives of the Country Water Partnership can participate as they are an important actor in the water sector in Benin.

At the same occasion, Mr. Alex Simalabwi, Program Manager from the Global Water Partnership for the National IWRM planning program in six countries in Africa (Benin, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Eritrea, Swaziland, and Mozambique) emphasised the importance of water in adaptation to climate change. 'While the international debate is heavily tilted on mitigation, it is important to underscore that for Africa, Adaptation is urgent and critical and good water resources management has an important role to play' he said.

Addressing key water sector donors (Dutch, GTZ, Dannida) in Benin, Mr. Simalabwi further highlighted the importance of the IWRM Plan to address national development priorities in order to help achieve the goals of the country. 'It must be part and parcel of national development planning', pointed out Mr. Alex Simalabwi.

Reference Group members Prof. Yang and Jean Boroto expressed satisfaction with the progress of IWRM planning in Benin and especially the partnership between the government, Donors and the Benin Water Partnership. 'This is a good model for countries and GWP', Prof. Yang said.

¹ GWP Reference Group was established as part of the GWP Technical Committee to support countries developing IWRM Plans and exchange perspectives for enhancing the effectiveness of IWRM plans. The RG composed of Prof. Yang, GWP TEC Member, Jean Boroto, resource person in addition to the programme manager at GWPO and members of GWP West Africa RTEC and secretariat took part in a two days meeting with the Benin IWRM Plan development team. The GWP reference Group (RG) visited Benin on 08 and 09 October 2009.

National IWRM planning in Benin has made impressive progress and the partnership is working actively with Economic planning unit and other ministries in the sector to ensure that water takes a central role in development and helps to adapt to climate change.

Benin Water Partnership is working with both the focal point for the National Adaptation Programs' of Action (NAPAs) and Economic planning unit to ensure that water and climate change issues are integrated in the National Development Strategy for Growth and development. The Growth Strategy for Poverty Reduction is the framework for socio-economic development of Benin and the document for dialogue between the Government and Technical and Financial Partners and is a mechanism for mobilization and coordination of external resources. It contributes to strengthening aid coordination based on national priorities and leadership of the Government

During a workshop convened by Benin Water Partnership and GWP West Africa and attended by the GWP Reference Group, Executive Secretary of Benin CWP ; Mr. Armand Houanye emphasized that that first generation PRSP (2003-2005) did not adequately address Integrated Water Resources Management and only focused on water supply and sanitation. The CWP worked with the government to strengthen this aspect in the second generation PRSP, the Growth Strategy for Poverty Reduction (2007-2009). 'The second generation PRSP marginally addressed IWRM and outlined actions on establishing a water resources hydrometric network and nationwide database; establishment of a national advisory and operational support to institutional development for IWRM' Eric George Yetongnon said.

According to Eric George Yetongnon, Director of Financial Services responsible for sector reforms of Water and Energy from Ministry of Economy and Finance in Benin., under the PRSP, IWRM was not a specific priority in the first and second PRSP, although improvement was made in the second PRSP.

Mr. Eric George Yetongnon mentioned that Benin is currently in the process of developing the third generation Growth and Development Strategy (PRSP) for the period from 2010 to 2015. 'We are working with the Benin Water Partnership to further strengthen IWRM in the 3rd Generation PRSP', said Eric George YETONGNON.

Efforts have been made by government in reorganizing the General Directorate of Water and creation of the Directorate of Planning and Management of Water (DPMW), which has been entrusted with Coordination. The Benin Water Partnership is working with the Directorate of Planning and Management of Water and the Economic Planning Unit to further strengthen IWRM in the third generation PRSP whose preparation will commence before the end of the year.

And addressing representatives of the GWP reference Group the first secretary to the embassy of Netherlands Mr. Carel De Groot acknowledged the important contribution made by Benin CWP in the water sector reforms and highlighted various awareness activities including planned sensitization meetings with members of parliament on the draft water law and IWRM.

The Netherlands Embassy in Benin is supporting Benin Water Partnership and contributing Euros 1. 270 Million to the CWP activities related to IWRM promotion from 2007 to 2011. Danida, GTZ are also supporting the water partnership and contribution financial resources to IWRM process.

According to Danida representative in Benin, Mr Karl Jorgensen, it is important that the draft Water Law is adopted as it will also affect the implementation of the IWRM Plan once completed. This is key challenges that need to be addressed, he said. Other challenges remain around implementation of the Paris Declaration on Harmonisation of Aid.

Mr. Carel de Groot mentioned that there is need to address barriers to implementation of the Paris declaration and address procedural issues as these are affecting progress of activities. 'We have to keep in mind the long term objective and trust that in the end, it is for the benefit of the country', said Mr. Carel de Groot

As part of the implementation of the Declaration of Paris in Benin, many actions have been taken to operationalize the objectives of the declaration including coordinating the exercise launched by the OECD to assess the indicators of the Declaration of Paris in Benin. This was followed by a more ambitious approach which led to the definition of an action plan to implement the recommendations of the Declaration of Paris and improve the effectiveness of aid.

The Benin IWRM plan development process started in 2005 with support from various donors including the Dutch through GWP's initiative of the Programme for Africa's Water Development (PAWD) that is supporting IWRM plans development in six African countries.

Benin has gone through a broad participatory process for the development of its IWRM plan. Many consultations with water users and water sector actors were carried out all over the country and also many thematic studies. The plan is expected by end December 2009. "The Reference Group came in at a critical moment", said Prof. Afouda, Chair of Benin CWP.



RG visitors and some members of the Benin IWRM plan drafting team



RG visitors the Minister (in the middle next to Prof Yang and Alex)

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