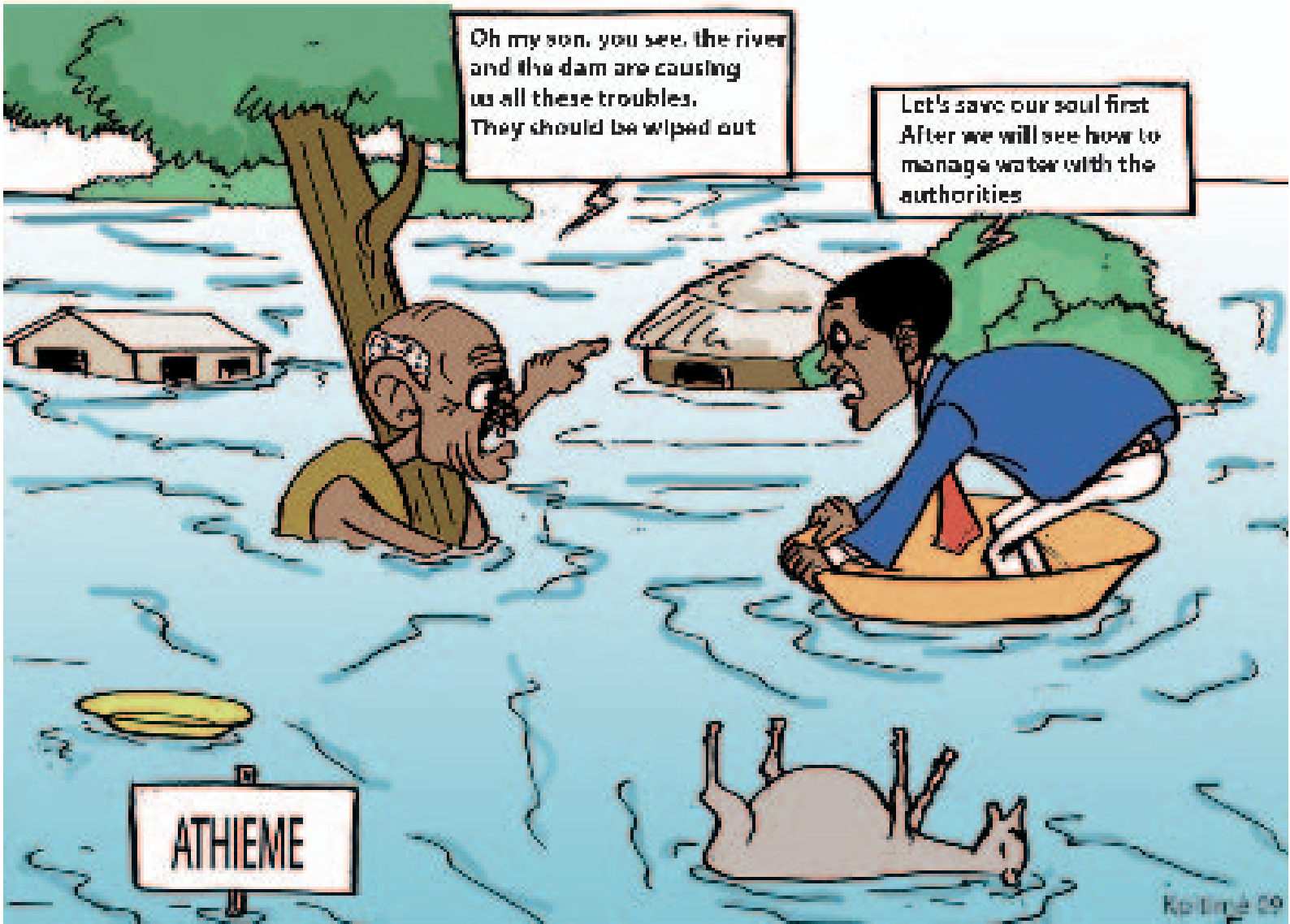




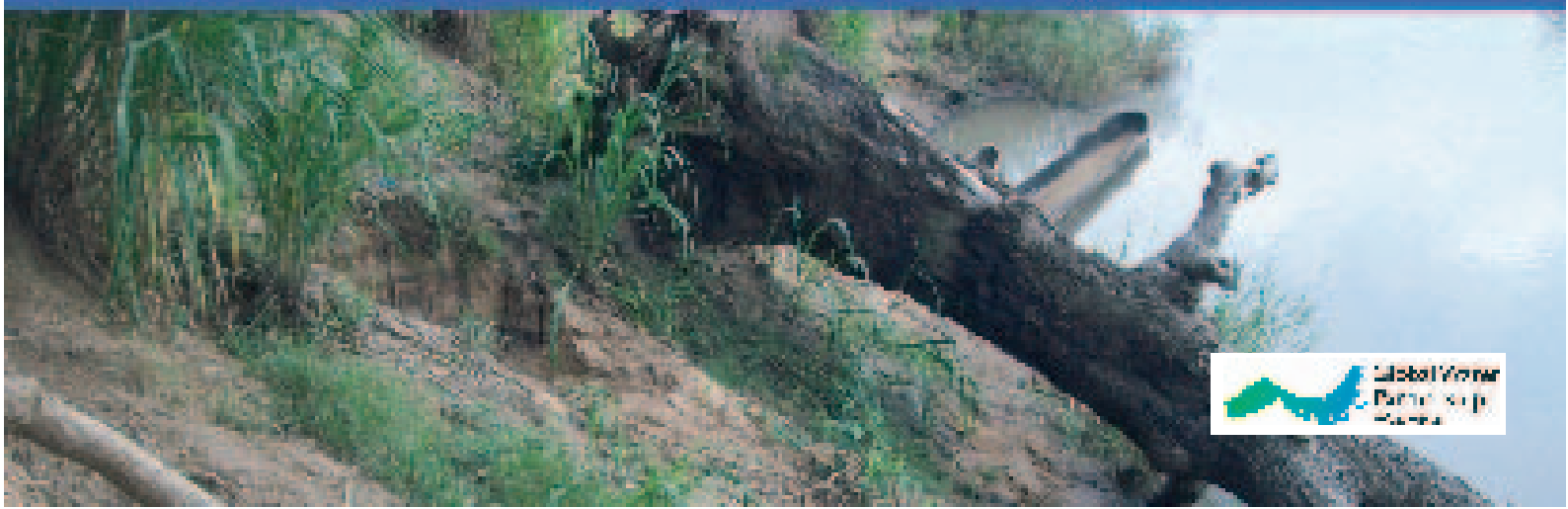
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Regional workshop for journalists on the management of transboundary waters in West Africa

WATER IN CATCHMENT BASIN IN BENIN MONO SWALLOWS ATHIEME



Nangbeto Dam : When energy source creates misfortune



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Newsletter on water and environment

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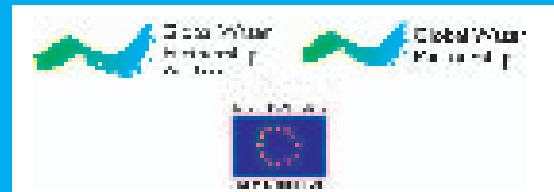
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Programme for Improving Water governance in West Africa funded by the European Union and Global Water Partnership

By **Dam MOGBANTE** *GWP/WA Executive Secretary*

EDITOR'S WORD

So many events in a few days, five precisely! This is an experience that Global Water Partnership West Africa (GWP/WA) and the Benin Country Water Partnership (CWP) wanted to share with media people from the West African sub region.

Since December 2007 in Bamako (Mali), GWP/WA made the commitment of allowing a group of journalists meeting once a year in a country of the region over a period of at least three years. The Bamako meeting took place on the topic « IWRM and environment, which role for the media in West Africa? ». In 2008, we met in Niamey on the theme « Climate Changes and Water Resources: IWRM issue in Niger ». This meeting extended to a group of members of Parliament from Niger allowed further learning about the challenges related to climate changes which the West African region faces since some times and the consequences related to the development of this phenomenon in the future years, and this, in accordance with the trends observed by the forecasting models. Cotonou, gave us the opportunity to speak with one voice with the World community about the challenging issue of the management of shared watercourses and more specifically about the contribution of media in the feeding of this debate over the issue, in order to trigger proper political decisions. The importance of this theme has been highlighted many times for West Africa, a region where all countries share with at least one neighbour a watercourse, except Cape Verde Islands.

The following articles recall all what has been experienced during these five days that we spent together. The workshop was conducted around four prime times : in-room presentations with specialists during one day; a panel debate including experts, national level political authorities ; but also a field tour at Grand Popo and Athieme especially where journalists discussed with local populations and authorities over the challenges related to the management of the Mono River shared by Benin and Togo. The fourth prime time is this newsletter you are reading, written by the print journalists, three audio magazines (10 to 15mn) and one audio interview (8mn) for radio and TV journalists.

This is the opportunity to thank all the journalists (radio, TV, written press, including cartoonists) who allowed implementing this exercise. Great thanks to the entire team of the Benin Country Water Partnership (CWP) for their support to the perfect organisation of this workshop. We address our gratitude to the European Commission



Dam MOGBANTE, GWP/WA Executive Secretary

and the Global Water Partnership (GWP) which accepted funding in the framework of the ACP/EU Water Facility, the GWP/WA work plan for an amount of 2.5 million Euros for three years. It is this « Program for Improving Water Governance in West Africa through building the capacities of the stakeholders, basis for integrated water resources management » which allowed holding this workshop.

Thus, GWP-WA sticks to the philosophy of « Building alliances and strengthening the institutional capacities of its members to encourage and strengthen research, expertise and information networks on integrated water resources management » while supporting the countries in the sustainable management of their water resources in accordance with GWP's mission.

The media have a specific place in the awareness raising of stakeholders individually and collectively on the major stakes that appear to us. They are also the capital link for calling on politicians to make appropriate decisions in accordance with the aspirations of the people and we have just proved it once again!

Programme for improving water governance in West Africa (PIWAG)
REGIONAL WORKSHOP FOR JOURNALISTS ON THE
MANAGEMENT OF SHARED WATERS IN WEST AFRICA
Cotonou, HOTEL DU LAC, 20-24 July 2009

ANALYSIS

By Alain TOSSOUNON (*Le Municipal /Benin*)

Nangbeto Dam : When energy source creates misfortune

Built to induce a sustainable economic impact with energy supply, the Nangbeto hydroelectric dam on the Mono River is probably a disaster for the municipalities of Grand-Popo and Athieme. With unexpected floods every year with dramatic consequences in communities with very poor budgets, the alarm call of the local authorities is not always heard.

Floods were a cyclic natural phenomenon in the past, but now they are causing the daily suffering of the people of the communities of Grand-Popo and Athieme after the building of the Nangbeto dam. Today, the installation of this infrastructure is like a curse on these people sentenced to incur the wrath of water.

In 2007, according to the estimates from the local development Officer at the city hall of Grand-Popo, Mr. AGBETI Kokou Fostin, floods lasted exceptionally 60 days and killed 2 people, injured 6 and caused huge material losses. Some 12,839 were left homeless, 3,337ha of crops were destroyed or carried away and decimated 1,918 cattle. At the infrastructure level, the damages were very important: 2,009 huts were demolished and 13 classrooms damaged.

The Mayor is accusing the Nangbeto dam for this tragedy. If water releases bring happiness to some populations in Togo and Benin (since the dam is producing annually 140 Gwh of electricity), they constitute a real suffering for others.

The dam has been installed about a hundred kilometres from the town of Athiémé on the Mono River that has its spring in Benin, flows through Togo and runs into the sea, in Benin, at Grand Popo.

So the cyclic flooding aggravated by the water releases from the dam are giving the local authorities of Grand-Popo and Athieme who are crying out. « We do not draw any benefit from the dam. These water releases leave us only harmful effects», hammers out the mayor of Grand-Popo, Mr Benjamin Ablo. whose municipality covers a surface area of 289 km² is naturally liable to flooding over 62% of its land surface. Today, as testifies his counterpart the mayor of Athieme, « the presence of the dam is accentuating the rises in the level of water », leaving behind damages every year.

For the local development Officer at the city hall of Grand-Popo, since 1988, one year after starting up the dam, the water releases operated by the Communauté Electrique du Bénin (CEB), a mixed corporation in charge of managing the dam, the levels of water keep on rising now and cause stronger floods. These floods manifested in real size during the months of August,

September and October 1991, 1995, 1999, 2003, 2006, 2007 and 2008, he adds.

In Athieme where no evaluation exercise has been carried out so far, according to the mayor, many localities might disappear such as the villages of Akplo, Tokpame, Anoukou in the district of Atchannou or Ahiwedji in the district of Athieme...

Local authorities' emergency call

In face of the magnitude of floods with their induced damages every year, local authorities are confused, in disarray and are powerless so far. The low level of the budgets (only 500 millions) of the municipalities does not allow the local authorities to address properly the problem. « We need heavy investments and we have no money », complains the mayor of Athieme. The integrated water resources program, developed in response to the water evasion by the municipality of Grand-Popo and which has difficulties having the concurrence of victim communities, is far from being a panacea.

Thus, incapable to rescue people, local authorities disillusioned; keep calling for the central authorities, a call which seems not to have been heard so far. In all cases, like in the previous years, the communities keep experiencing their suffering on the side of a river which some years before, generated their prosperity. Adviser Joseph Amavi Midjressou from the municipality of Athieme, remembers as if it were yesterday: « Before Nangbeto, Athieme was a shining community where oil palm trees grew and brought us prosperity ». Whenever floods arise, crops are not spared. While he sees no hope, dialogue seeming to be on standby between the Communauté Electrique du Bénin and the people on both banks of the river, he does not miss the opportunity to express sharp concerns on another dam project called « Adjarrala ».

For the time being, the communities living in the fear of the next floods seem abandoned. Even if developing or the servicing of the river is included in the Government agenda, they have no hope to see life improving. Because of Nangbeto, life stopped in Grand-Popo and in Athieme. The energy source is far from being a source of progress for these communities who still live in the darkness.

By Bonaventure KITI (*Notre temps /Benin*)**ZOOM**

Shared Water Management in West Africa Media Professionals equipped

In the framework of the activities of the Program for Improving Water Governance in West Africa (Piwag), Global Water Partnership West Africa with the financial support of the European Union organised from 20 to 24 July 2009 in Cotonou, a regional workshop for journalists.



Journalists with municipal authorities in Grand Popo

About thirty professionals of the media from ten countries of the sub region have, during five days, built their capacities on the issue of shared water management in West Africa through communications followed by debates.

Participants followed many communications over the concept of shared waters, shared water management tools which are amongst others the 1997 United Nations Convention, the case study of UNESCO over the practical management of the Mono river shared basin and the shared vision of the Niger Basin Authority (NBA).

At the opening of the workshop, Mr. Andre Toupe, vice-chairman of the Benin Country Water Partnership (CWP-Benin), highlighted the importance given to the issues over the use of water resources, mainly when they are international or shared watercourses.

Mr. Dam Mogbante, Executive Secretary of the GWP West Africa said that the initiative of holding an annual regional workshop came from the fact that journalists generally feel concerned by water issues only when there is a shortage, a disaster, in all cases a news item supposed to have some interest for their readers, listeners or TV

viewers. He stressed that Cotonou remains a very decisive step since this activity is an illustration of the actions of his institution on the ground in line with the new strategy.

Mrs Bintou Taro Chabi, Deputy Chief of Cabinet of the Minister of Energy and Water, stressed that water as an important natural resource at the level of the climate system imposes cooperation requirements. This is why, says the Deputy Chief of Cabinet, the Government of Benin is striving to promote a rational management and use of the country's water resources, for both meeting domestic needs in potable water and also ensuring the increase of agricultural and industrial activities and strengthening cooperation with the countries sharing the same water resources.

After these presentations and the rich debates that followed them, the journalists went to learn from the field realities by getting down to the communities of Grand-Popo and Athieme located in south-west Benin and crossed by the Mono River, a watercourse shared between Benin and Togo.

ZOOM

By A.P. Virgil HOUÉSSOU (*L'Événement Précis /Benin*)

Consequences of uncontrolled water in catchment basins in Benin Mono swallows Athieme

Water causes damages in the municipality of Athieme. People suffer from the closeness of the Mono River which then appears as the summary of their misfortune. The consequences are numerous at such extent that they do not want to hear about it anymore. Zooming the tragedy.

« If the disappearance of the Mono River was submitted to the vote of the population of Athieme, I am sure that the "Yes" will win as we are no more aware of the wealth that it constitutes. We draw only misfortune from it ». This categorical reaction from Joseph Anani, mayor of the **municipality** of Athieme – 110 km North-west from Cotonou – illustrates the general feeling of the population. By wishing the disappearance of the Mono River, a wise octogenarian believes that this will have no impact. The bitterness of the people of Athieme, riparian of the Mono River which serves as natural border between Benin and Togo, shows the tragedy they are living. There is no fish, the bank is eroding, crops are destroyed, and the patrimony evaporates.

Twenty years ago, Athieme could pride itself from the closeness of this river that provides huge advantages. Water bodies full of fish, fertility of the bank, strong palm oil yield ... « It is thanks to the palm oil that our town became, during the colonial time, the seat of the Grand Mono Circle (current departments of Mono and Couffo : Editor's note). Due to its by-products well valued on the market, the French had built the railways up to Athieme which also becomes an administrative and commercial town where large trading companies prospered », says the mayor of Athieme to focus on the glorious past of his home-town. The residence of the Commander of Circle at that time, a patrimonial and cultural vestige, became the residence of the current mayor is endangered by water. The proof that water spares no one in Athieme, even not the authority.

It all started in 1947. During the exceptional swelling, water carried away the "prestige" of Athieme that the town of Lokossa, current department seat of Mono and Couffo, recuperated. The extent of the disaster which destroyed the railways had dislodged the colonial administrator and the traders. This gloomy parenthesis had not blunted the determination of people who believed in their dreams to rebuild their town. The revival flame was maintained till the end of the 80s with the advent of the hydroelectric dam of Nagbeto, a joint initiative of both riparian countries, Benin and Togo. It is the beginning of hell.

The Good that hurts

The absence of an appropriate environmental study



Erosion of the river bank in Athieme

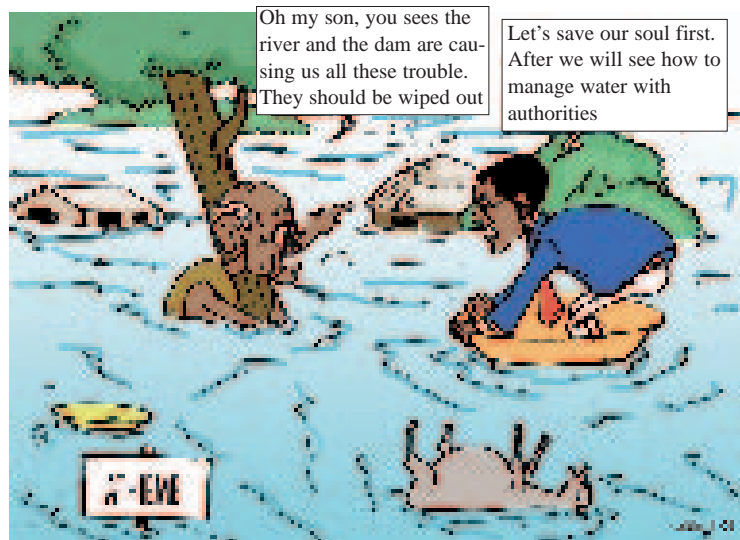
prior to the dam project caused huge, sometimes deadly damages. The fish which used to be abundant in the river is now kept upstream the dam on the Togolese territory. After many non productive trips on water, fishermen decided to leave their lands and settle on the sides of Lake Toho in the neighbouring **municipalities**. Others turned into motorcycle-taxi drivers and other less profitable activities. The youth migrated to large towns like Lokossa, Come, Lome and Cotonou. Athieme lost its workforce. Those who stayed to exploit their rich lands beside the river live in the permanent fear of the next floods. Water releases from the Nagbeto dam add to the abundant water bodies located in the hydromorphic soils and cause very devastating cyclic floods which negative amplitude has often no limit. Joseph Midjressou, a local councillor, Chief of one of the districts testifies: « In the past, we used to suffer from the flood only once every five years, but today, floods arrive every year and sometimes twice yearly ». His colleague adviser Gaspard Acakpo gives the precision: « We are now in July and we are already packing our stuff before the invader arrives ». The use of the term invader shows the extended and the destruction speed of the phenomenon. The mayor of Athieme explains: « Everything is a matter of minute when the river water rises suddenly and sub-

merges everything on its way with a strong current that takes away sometimes farmers who are in their farms at the moment of water releases in Nagbeto. The people who escape the river's fury find themselves, against their will, suddenly belonging to another citizenship. It is the case of part of the village of Hadjivi, Beninese since the origin, which then finds itself under the diktat of the loops created by the releases from the dam. « They do not accept it. We neither agree to lose part of our territory to the profit of neighbouring Togo although the river is a natural border », regrets the mayor. The Mono then creates a risk of a territorial conflict which can arise anytime. Beyond land losses, it is also the story of Athieme which plunges in the abyss. Centennial trees which constitute the historical patrimony are uprooted because of the bank that degrades. The last kapok tree has some respite. The three quarters of the roots, totally bared with no aid, wait to answer the invitation of the waters. « By September, the river will carry it away », ensures the mayor who calls for the journalists' aid: « Shout with us our despair for solutions to be found for us. »

23 billions for restoring happiness

Solutions do not lack. They sum up to controlling the water through three possibilities according to Desire Sessou, an executive native from Athieme. They are of three orders and have a national, sub regional and regional character. The most important is the initiative of sub regional and regional projects on the exploitation of the river in favour of sub regional integration. Desire Sessou states: « Building a bridge on the river and spillways by the embankment for stopping the damages, stimulating agriculture and fish breeding on both banks and boost the development of trade exchanges between Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana, and

ZOOM



Côte d'Ivoire. A bridge on the Mono in Athieme can allow saving 80 km for hundreds of Nigerian traders who go to Togo or Ghana ». This CFA 23 billion francs project, piloted by the Italian section of the Beninese Diaspora, includes the support from some development partners who require that the governments of Benin and Togo make some commitments ». These commitments are still expected because of the absence of a dialog framework between both countries for exploiting the Mono River's water resources. At the same time, the populations are getting impatient with a string of hope that a solution will be found sooner or later for water control to benefit future generations and boost palm tree crops.

At NBA's school and under the protection of the 97 Convention

The absence of an authority for the management of the Mono River water is the basis of the difficulties to meet donors' conditions for funding the above-mentioned project with the abandonment of the people in their suffering. This limits the opportunities which constitute this watercourse. Putting in place joint infrastructures like the Nagbeto dam and soon, that of Adjalala is not enough. Establishing a structure drawing on the Niger Basin Authority could be the appropriate solution which creates the dialogue environment with the collaboration of the other countries from the sub region for integrating the river in the sub regional development strategies. These strategies could lead to periodic **water resources** development plans on a sustainable and fair way, supported by important investments **in order to promote prosperity, security and peace between the people of the Mono basin, to reinforce the legal and institutional framework favourable to dialogue and consultation for cooperative action between both States. The example of the NBA's shared vision is a textbook example as this institution which features many countries could have allowed exchanging and finding sustainable solutions for many problems and conflicts. The acceleration of the 97 UN Convention ratification process with its constraints is also a solution which will compensate the people of Athieme who suffer from the harmful consequences of the Nagbeto dam without drawing the actual benefits.**

INTERVIEW

Par Alain Assogba (*La Nouvelle Tribune / Bénin*)

Benjamin Ablo, Mayor of Grand-Popo

« We lack drinking water, though we are surrounded by water »

The Mono River is causing many problems to the people in the municipality of Grand-Popo: frequent floods, lack of potable water, lack of electricity, and many others. For understanding the origin of these paradoxes and the solutions contemplated for strangling them, we met the mayor of the town, Mr. Benjamin Ablo. He amongst others accused the Nangbeto dam, while evocating the rather favourable welcome by populations to these floods, for their fertilising effects.

Info: Can we say, Mr. the mayor that Grand Popo is in terms of water, like a barefoot shoemaker?

We are surrounded by water, but we do not have drinking water. This is a paradox. We have the sea, we have the river, many lagoons flow here but our people do not have drinking water. So if we say that before average individuals, they say it is not possible! Yet this is the reality. In some places of the town, wells and boreholes should be more 1200 metres deep to have water. If not, the water we find is brackish. Our people use the watercourse for making the laundry, doing the washing-up but they always spare a place where they say water is potable. Is it the reality? We do not know.

The other problem in Grand Popo the transboundary feature of your watercourse?

When one speaks about transboundary waters, I think that the area is very well located. The NGO Eco-Ecolo supports us in terms of environment management and especially, regarding transboundary waters. I can say that the lagoon or the Mono river water that we use is assessed. I mean first the development of Nagbeto which must normally supply us electricity. But we do not profit from this development in Grand-Popo. We rather have harmful effects. If unfortunately a farmer is in his farm and the dam released water, it will be the end. At the beginning, we used to receive information on the water release schedule. But since sometimes, there is no more information. Thus water releases surprise us and if ever a farmer is in his farm he is carried away. And we often deplore this fact.

What about the floods in the region?

There is the natural flood phenomenon. At the beginning it occurred every five years but today it is an almost yearly phenomenon. When the floods install, there are damages on people houses, there are people drowned and many other phenomena. This destroys farmers' crops and even sometimes stocks are carried away

Yet, it seems clear that people desire these floods. How is this paradox explained?

It is understandable. When water withdraws, this phenomenon is so appreciated by people, that they wish



Benjamin Ablo, Mayor of Grand-Popo

the flood to occur every year. When people are flooded, they are unhappy but the same people wish the flood to occur because during the floods they can produce a lot of fish. When water withdraws, soils are fertilized and this allows crops to grow well. But when it is there, it destroys their houses. This is what led to designing an integrated water resources management program in Grand-Popo. This program aims at helping people prepare against water, managing them when water installs, drawing the maximum and limiting their damages. As this program cannot be only for the municipality of Grand-Popo, it has been extended to the other riparian municipalities. The development with all the cities is going on so that we could have a joint flood control program.

How do you think you can address the river silting issue?

The river is totally silted because when water withdraws after a flood, it carries sand. The river bed is totally reduced with the result that at the next flood, water takes much more space than the previous year.

This is a dilemma we are facing. When we remove the sand, the water will rather remain in the bed that we would have dug for it. This will allow making fish reproduction and making the river navigable. For that we have an association that gather five municipalities: Grand-Popo, Come, Ouidah, Pomasse and Abomey-Calavi.

For those who know Benin or Cotonou, it is via Grand-Popo that navigation to Calavi is possible. There is a channel that exists for that but which is totally blocked today. One has to remove the sand and make it navigable.

We accompany the sand removal with bank protection. There are many methods that allow to putting rocks along the bank for protecting the river or we allow vegetation reproduction on the lagoon bank. This is what the NGO Eco-Ecolo is currently doing. It has a project in Benin and in Togo where the bank must be replanted with mangrove. If we do that we allow limiting the effects naturally.

You know, the effects that have been recorded, i.e. the lagoon silting, made many people left the town. You know that we are basically fishermen. But if there is no fish in the water what will we fish? Water is located at less than one metre deep then, there is no more reproduction, people leave. Thus, by removing the sand, I believe it will make people live again. Today, Nagbeto does nothing about the effects it created to Grand-Popo. There are no social measures for accompanying the municipalities downstream the river mouth. Normally, one should think at developing the site for agriculture.

This program is not yet implemented so far. It makes many young people, the workforce leaves the area to go and increase the population of Cotonou. The town did not remain doing nothing. We know that all this requires a lot of money. But with the means we got we did our policy.

It seems that your worse nightmare is the Nangbeto dam...

If I must come again on Nagbeto, I must briefly say that we suffer from the harmful effects of the dam; but in return, we don't even have 10% of the electricity produced. If at least the entire town was serviced with electricity, we could have said we have the good but with the harm coming along with it. But we do have much more harmful effects.

How, Mr. the Mayor do you manage the proliferating plants phenomenon?

This NGO Eco-Ecolo supports us a lot. Floods give proliferating plants good ground to develop. Like the water hyacinth. We have a program for clearing the water from these invaders.

The municipality of Grand Popo also faces sea

INTERVIEW

progress that makes many casualties.

The fact that we take sand on the coast accelerates sea progress. The town council decided to stop sea sand exploitation. Before the President's decree was promulgated to prohibit it, the town council had already stopped it two or three months earlier. You understand with me that this activity gives the maximum of resources to the town. Having stopped it induced a budget deficit that had to be made up. But we had no one to support us making up this deficit. As a solution we decided to start removing the sand ourselves. We conceded part of the waters to a businessman to remove the sand which is in the lagoon. This sand could be sold to people for generating resources. This operation is currently going on. But as the town has not enough means, it could not extend it because there are areas where the operation might not be economically profitable. Those places where there are few tracks have already been developed. Currently, we are removing the sand down to 5 to 6 m deep in some places, according to what the studies showed. We hope we will progressively cover a very large surface. The operation was scheduled for early this year but we have been a bit late. The sand is there but the track for evacuating it is now being built. You will agree that this is what will bring again some inputs to the yearly budget. Yet we will try to get to it and make it operational now so that by next year we suffer less. This is broadly and briefly the water management issue.

What policy do you have for settling possible transboundary conflicts?

About this issue, the NGO Eco-Ecolo has a program for the two communities. We developed in Grand-Popo a flood control program. But we did not want to keep this program only for us because if everything goes to Grand-Popo and that nothing is done in Athieme, we will not fully succeed. We designed a city program which we are extending to departments. All the communities concerned in the department are included in the program. We have entrusted Eco-Ecolo with the task of being our liaison institution for the Togolese part but this did not forbid the town council to have contacts with authorities of Anecho especially for settling the conflicts that arise. Because there are conflicts which arise and which are always related to territories, i.e. to the land portion that a given community considers being their property. You know, between Benin and Togo, it is the watercourse that constitutes the border. Thus, the border may have different meaning. And often, we succeed in establishing the contact with our Togolese counterparts for settling these conflicts.

This way, there is an association of five municipalities

INTERVIEW

sharing one watercourse. It is intercommunity. The program also covers these areas. There are also school marriage conflicts, etc.

Can we have an idea of what the river sand exploitation generates for the town?

Normally, if sand removal exploitation was put in place since the beginning of the year, it would have generated about fifty millions for us. We couldn't because the company had to set and start extracting the sand. But it is there today. The only thing missing is the road. We have about three kilometres of track to build and which are being currently built. But we have to admit that this is not the right time for building a track.

Can you tell us how does water hyacinth develop?

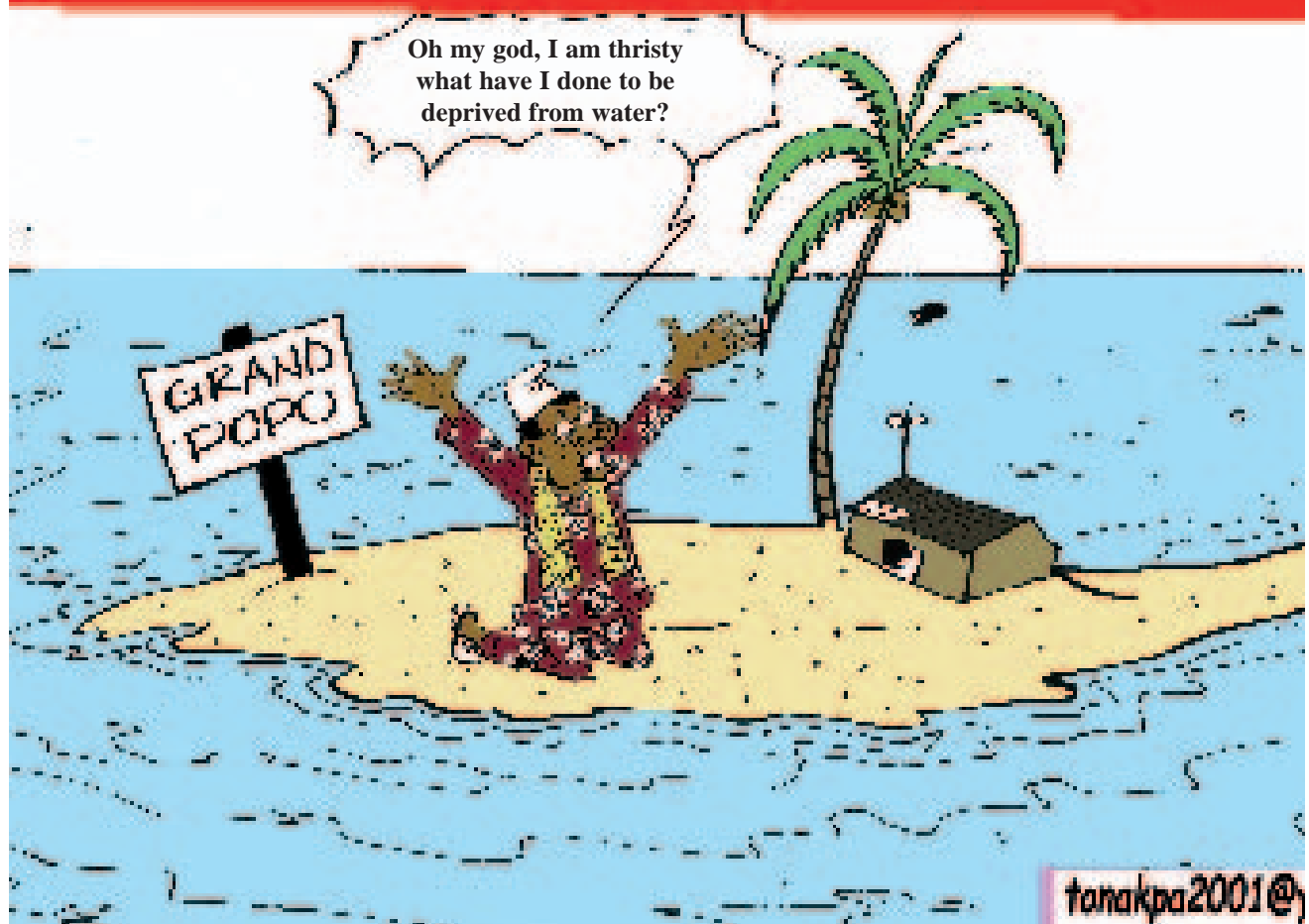
Water hyacinth is mainly produced by the water released by Nagbeto. It seems that there is some in their dam. It is not the release itself that causes the

silting. But it is water passage speed that corrodes watercourse banks and makes the sand falling in the water when nothing is done, and it broadens. If you go to Athieme, you will notice that even the mayor's residence is endangered because they are stronger and water speed at that level is stronger. There are not only water releases from Nagbeto which cause floods. Climate changes have also something to do with it. Storm rains from the Mono River drain some sand. Human casualties are huge.

About the almost total lack of potable water, could you give us the water supply coverage rate of the town?

There is a 30% coverage rate of the Soneb (national water supply company in Benin) network in Grand-Popo in the Central District. There is ground water but it is not potable. Donors say that if they must go deep to 1200 m to get potable water, they would rather get water from elsewhere and pipe it to here. The water used today in Grand-Popo comes from Come. Our partners helped us reinforcing the Come pumping station by supplying them equipments for increasing the flow.

SOMEWHERE IN GRAND POPO (BENIN)



By Hénoc ALLAGBADA (*Le Municipal /Benin*)**COMMUNICATION**

Managing shared waters by Municipalities Case of the Mono transboundary basin

A UNESCO led study was carried out on the exploitation of the Mono basin shared between Benin and Togo, the management of this river faces many huge environmental and socioeconomic problems, related amongst others to the use of its natural resources. A communication was done on this study to journalists from WA meeting at a workshop in Cotonou, from 20 to 24 July 2009.



Grégoire ALE, Director of Water Planning and Management / Benin

« This watercourse faces problems related to soil erosion and to the decrease of soil productivity, degrading river banks and the silting of the river, the strong vulnerability of communities to floods, the various conflicts over the use of water and their negative impacts on wetlands productivity ». This is one aspect of this case study that Grégoire Ale, Director of Water Planning and Management/DGE Benin presented on 20 July 2009. It allowed journalists to understand the management mode of this watercourse used to provide energy to Benin and Togo in accordance with the cooperation Conventions. Furthermore, the Director of Water Planning and Management/DGE Benin explained that the Nangbeto hydroelectric dam construction and operation in 1987, which the Communauté Electrique du Bénin (CEB) has been entrusted with its management is also a source of concern, « as it does not take into account the global management of the basin except for the hydro-agricultural development of 40,000 hectares », stressed Mr. Ale. To fill all the gaps related to the exploitation of trans-

boundary watercourses, Ale Grégoire wishes a « bilateral cooperation for the integrated management of the basin's water resources » to be put in place for creating favourable conditions for the knowledge and conservation of water resources. He also recommends the harmonisation of practices for ensuring an effective and sustainable management of the basin's water resources. There are, according to him, many challenges to overcome in order to come to « shared and common vision of the management of transboundary basins ». They are: controlling coastal erosion, creating a synergy of efforts and formalizing the participation of the various stakeholders including the society in the basin at bi-state, national and local, levels engaged in the decision-making process. The implementation of a shared vision process based on a legal framework and a joint policy must then translate the commitment of both member States to put in place an action plan for developing this shared river basin, for both countries to benefit from the profits of its good management, said Mr. Ale.

COMMUNICATION

By Assane Kone (*Le Republicain /Mali*)

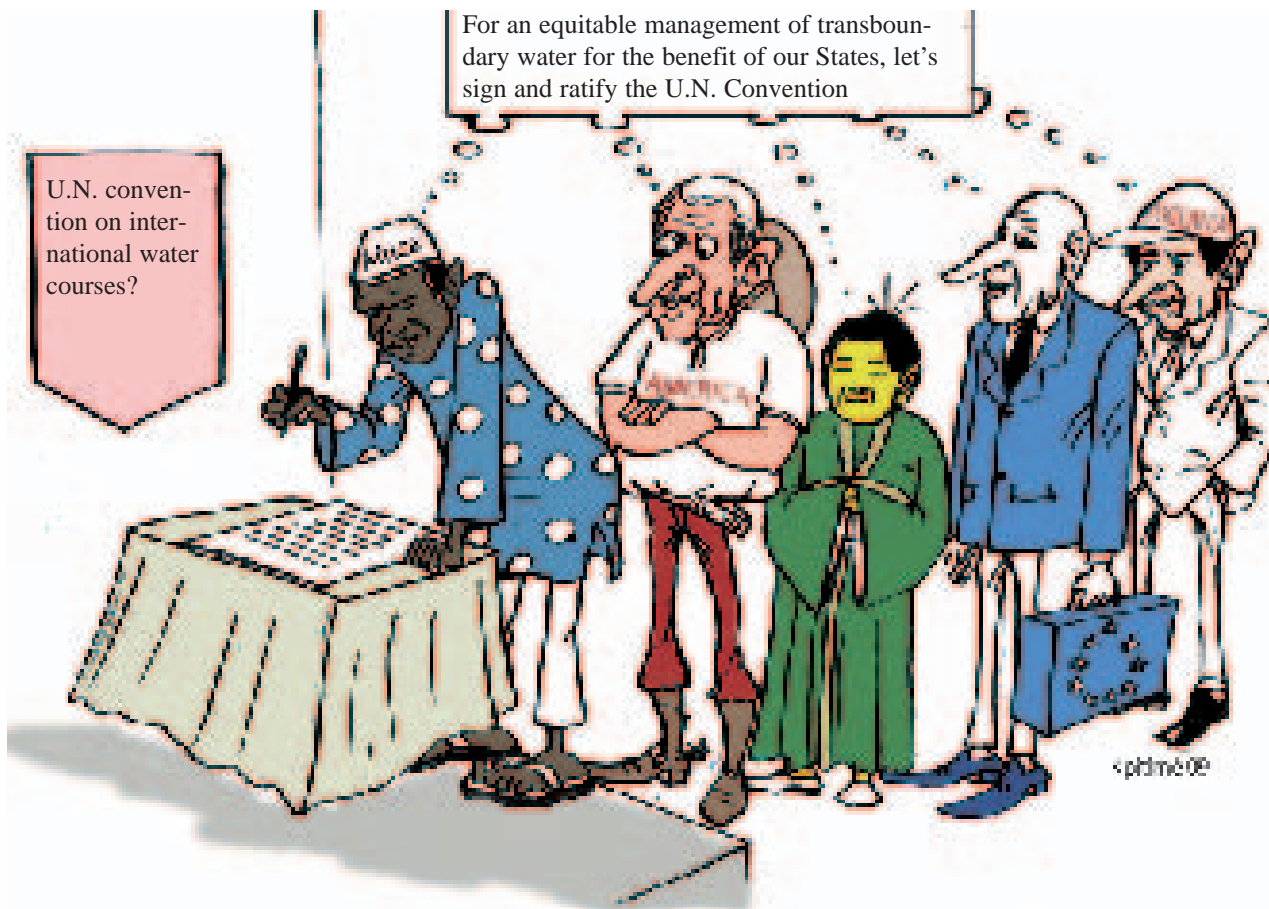
WATER BODIES : Joint management for shared resources

« From fragmented management of transboundary water resources, the time has come to shift to shared management », this is briefly the conclusion made by Gregoire Ale, Water Planning and Management Director, at the General Directorate of Water in Benin, at the end of his communication on the implications and importance of the transboundary water issue for West Africa.

Mr. Gregoire Ale, Water Planning and Management Director, at the General Directorate of Water in Benin, discussed with journalists over the implications and importance of the transboundary water issue for West Africa.

The Beninese expert defined transboundary water bodies as surface and ground water bodies shared between two or more countries. According to him, there are more than 263 transboundary basins in the world, of which 59 are in Africa. African basins cover 62% of the continent's surface. With 25 shared basins, West Africa is the most endowed African region. « Except Cape Verde, every country shares

at least one transboundary watercourse », said Gregoire Ale. These shared water bodies which should constitute a good opportunity for collaboration between countries, are unfortunately sometimes sources of conflicts. Consequently, the Beninese water expert proposed some pathways for the shared basins to be spaces for cooperation for development rather than confrontation places. He suggested shifting from the fragmented management according to uses and country to a shared and integrated management.



By Diane Aurore KINDJI (*Fraternité /Benin*)

COMMUNICATION

United Nations Convention 97 on International Watercourses A transboundary water management tool in West Africa

Adopted in May 1997 by the United Nations General Assembly, the United Nations Convention on International Watercourses defines the rights and duties of the States which share watercourses. Due to the situation in the West African region where, except Cape Verde, all the countries share at least one watercourse with a neighbouring country, the advent of such tool is much desired. Since the bad use of this resource by one country inevitably leads to disastrous effects in the other country and that the joint use of water is not free from regional conflicts, such as what almost happened between Niger and Nigeria during the Kandadji dam project, it appears necessary for the countries of the sub-region to commit themselves on the way of cooperation and to consolidate this option with the ratification of the convention.

In the communication he gave to journalists during the regional workshop on 21st July 2009 in Cotonou, Pr. Aboubacar Awaiss, member of the GWP-WA Technical Committee and Coordinator of the WWF Fresh Water regional programme, explained that the adoption of this convention by the countries which share a watercourse would fill the legal gaps of the current international water governance. It would work as the exhaustive legal and coherent framework. According to Mr. Awaiss, this ratification will also allow putting all the countries at the same level, integrating the social and environmental considerations in managing the development of international watercourses. This is why efforts are deployed for accompanying the West Africa countries in ratifying it. « Being aware of the importance of the ratification of this convention for West African countries Global Water Partnership, Green Cross, the



Pr. Aboubacar Awaiss, member of the GWP-WA Technical Committee and Coordinator of the WWF fresh water programme

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), are supporting some West African countries in the ratification of this tool. The joint efforts undertaken by the partners incited some countries like Benin and Ghana, to trigger the process for the ratification », he added.

Assessing the Convention Status

Côte d'Ivoire *signed*, but did not complete the ratification process.

Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone *voted for* the adoption of the Convention

Ghana and Mali *abstained from voting*;

Benin, Guinea, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal *were absent* during the vote.

FOCUS

Par K. Mara (Le Lynx- La Lance /Guinea)

Water, a source of life or conflict The Mono River paradox

On 22 July, the journalists attending the seminar visited the localities of Grand Popo and Athieme (district of Mono), to discuss with local authorities and the population «over the environmental and socioeconomic issues related to the Mono basin's natural resources management and use ». They also had to finger-touch the realities on the ground. They have been very surprised

The assertion « water is life » is not a reality in these localities which are in permanent conflict with this source of life. << *The lagoon water undergoes permanent variations. Today, the people of Grand Popo face floods as we are surrounded by water. But before we had floods every five years; today, with the installation of the Nangbeto dam on the Mono River, the phenomenon became more recurrent. Grand-Popo lives into water every year. The flood destroys farmers' crops and houses, whereas they do not draw any benefit from the dam. We do not even have 10% of the electricity produced. If at least the entire community was serviced in electricity we could have said that we benefit from what causes us problems* >>, says with indignation Mr. Benjamin Clotaire Ablo, mayor of Grand Popo, first step of this field visit. The contrast is that since there are more floods, people are being used to them and one would say are even enjoying them. The mayor says « people fish in the peripheries of houses, and draw a lot of incomes. When water withdraws, lands are fertile and they can grow crops », he adds. The silting of the river bed is not overlooked.

Talking about water for households, the mayor focuses on the Grand Popo paradox << We are surrounded by water but we do not have drinking water. In some areas of the community, to have potable water, wells should be 1200-metre deep. When you tell it to average people they are surprised>> explains the mayor.

In the village of Nicoue Condji, visitors are welcomed on the side of the Gbagan lagoon, by Amoussou Jose, resource person. Like the mayor of Grand Popo, he deplores the activities of the Nagbeton dam on the Mono. << The watercourse is sometimes salted because the dam does not allow water to circulate. This makes water invaded by proliferating plants like the water hyacinth. Fish have difficulties living there and we are losing some species which used to follow the Mono. Consequently, we suffer from the lack of fish ». About the transboundary character of the river shared by Benin and neighbouring Togo, Professor Jose stresses: « We have a joint mangrove reforestation program with Togo. We recorded no conflict with Togo because our villages are not close but also, the land is on our side », he noted.

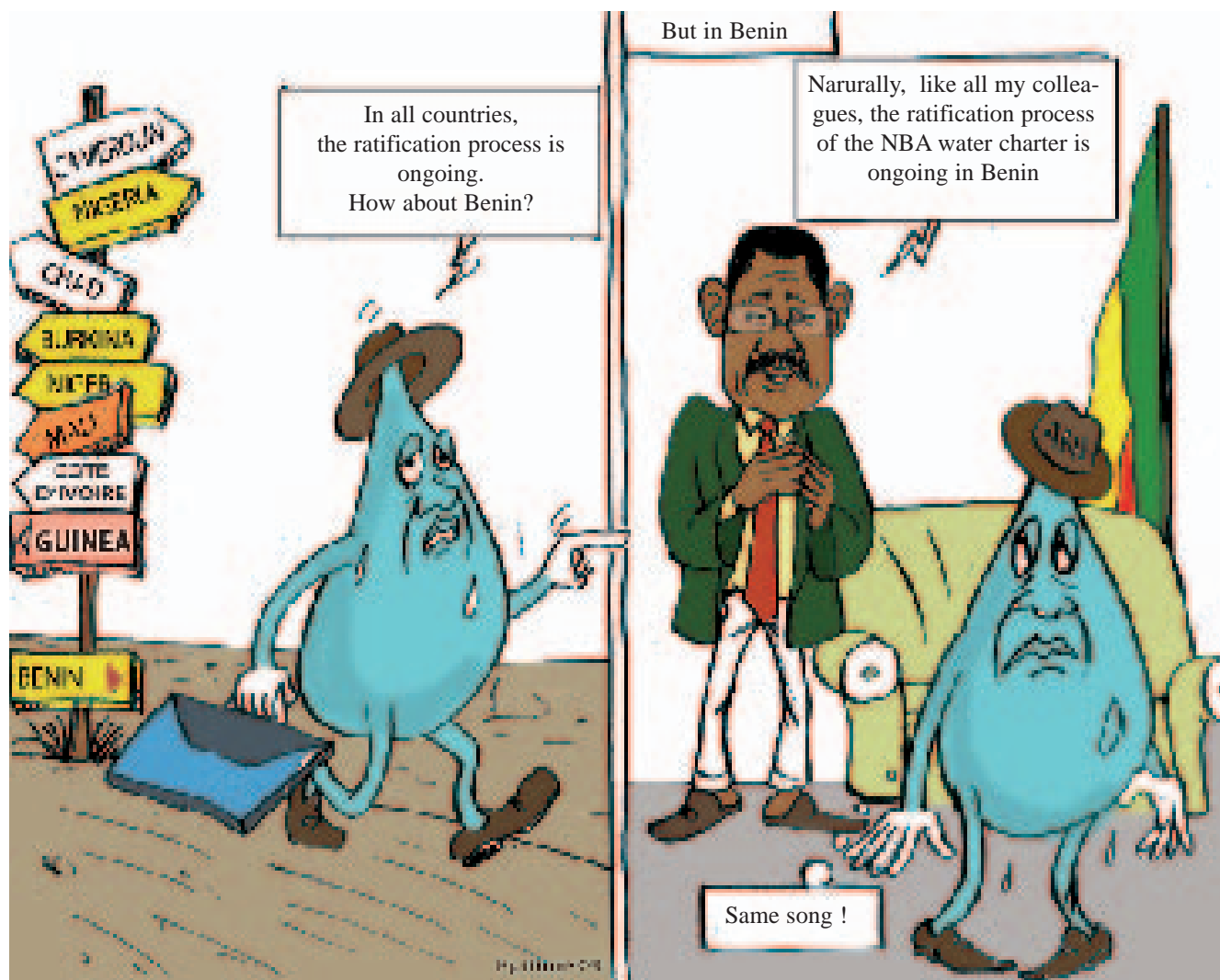
In the afternoon, the trip continued in the community of Athieme. After the welcome address from Mr. Anani Amavi Joseph, Mayor of Athieme, the journalists and their hosts went to the lagoon side. At first sight the river is gaining ground every year. Even the mayor's house, located by the lagoon side is seriously endangered. According to the mayor, << in Athieme, water caused the

displeasure of some people. The story of Athieme started at colonial times. This town was a big trade centre as there were the railways and the train used to come so the city was prosperous with lots of activities. But in 1947 there was a flood in Athieme that carried away part of the rails, then the train stopped coming ». The Nabgeton dam, once again a source of problem: « After the independence, the Nagbeton dam has been constructed in the late 1980s on the Mono bringing more suffering, since the flood that occurred every 5 years now occurs every year. Before Nangbeto, people earned their living from agriculture. There were oil palm trees. But because of regular flooding, there is nothing today. Even the fish is finished. The outsider who came in the past in Athieme was wel-



Mono lies for integration with its paradox

comed with fish. This is why there are sometimes conflicts between the populations and the CEB (Communauté Electrique du Benin), as people do not draw any profit from the dam », said the mayor added. The management of this transboundary river is not without consequence, the mayor noted some small problems that arise sometimes between States, which the elders from both sides of the river try to settle without even, involving their respective countries' top authorities. It is for instance deforestation or sand extraction problems.



Solutions and advantages of the Mono

On the side of Grand-Popo, the community is striving to remove the sand from the river and make it navigable to allow fish reproduction. Also, an association of the municipalities that are victims of the flood phenomena is being put in place. The community also decided to stop the river sand exploitation, a decision ratified by a President's Decree. Concerning the advantages of the river, the mayor of Grand-Popo notes that they are minimal, only fishing that develops during the season when the level of water is high.

In Athieme, they are proposing solutions that include the regional, sub regional and national aspects and actions. The regional solution is for Benin and Togo to redress the river bed by embanking it. At the sub regional level, it is putting in place a bridge on the Mono for connecting Togo to Benin, in order to facilitate traffic not only between both States but also with others. At the national level, it is making internal investments. For meeting this ambitious objective, the authorities from Athieme expressed their need for support from the Beninese Government but also and mostly from donors.

About the advantages they draw from the Mono, the mayor answers: « If we had to vote concerning the advantages that people draw from the river, the majority would vote for the river to disappear for ever. Because they do not know yet the wealth they can get from the river. The river, instead of being a source of happiness became a source of misfortune. Other works should be implemented for people to profit from it ».He concluded.

FOCUS

By Sani Aboubacar (*L'événement / Niger*)

Shared water management tools Ensuring a better management of transboundary waters

Most African countries are not autonomous in terms of water resources. This interdependence of countries to which adds the multiplication of big dams projects and drastic reduction of water resources availability due to climate changes, are increase water-related hazards in West Africa. Shared watercourses management actually remains a real challenge for countries.

The joint management of water resources has a capital importance for West African countries since many of these countries share watercourses which sometimes mark the borders between two nations. This is the case of the Mono River which, for about one hundred kilometres, constitutes the natural border between Benin and Togo. According to professor Awaiss, regional coordinator of WWF Fresh Water Program in West Africa, 25 basins are

Still, asserts Mr. Gregoire Ale, Water Planning and Management Director in Benin, the NBA since its creation has focussed the role of promoting the development and the implementation of the development plan of the waters of the basin. Yet, cooperation level between the member States is still low, despite the numerous reviews of the convention on the creation of this organisation, underlines Mr. Gregoire Ale. Besides these regional tools,



Shared water management is an opportunity for countries

shared between many countries.

Since water is essential for the development of all countries, creating a consultation framework to prevent possible water-related conflicts is more than necessary. So far, conflicts generated by the management of shared water bodies have been in general settled by cooperation formula, like the conflict between Niger and Benin around the Lete Island. Today, management bodies are created around the main transboundary watercourses like the the Niger Basin Authority (NBA), the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), said Professor Awaiss Aboubacar. He adds that these organisations have both development and regulatory functions, yet, the effectiveness and the efficiency of the role of basin organisations vary. Thus, some of these organisations seem more dynamic than others. NBA for example was created in 1963, and is since then subject to diverging interests of member countries.

there are other international agreements like the 1997 United Nations Convention on the uses of international watercourses for purposes other than navigation. The Convention gives international standards on the definition of States' responsibility in the management of transboundary water bodies. It lays down the great principles like those on the « fair and reasonable » use of shared watercourses, the obligation to cause no significant damages to third countries. Countries are still reluctant to engage the ratification process of this convention. However, principles are drawn from the Convention to define codes of conduct and general principles for managing shared watercourses. The Ramsar Convention on wetlands in addition to local tools put in place by riparian populations is used to prevent possible conflicts.

By Oulimata DIOP (*Le Matin /Senegal*)

REPORT

MONO RIVER A now long awaiting wealth

Some time after 6pm on the Mono River, about one hundred kilometres from the capital city of Benin. On the river bank located in the municipality of Athieme (Benin), women are busy making the laundry. Besides, others are quietly swimming. On the other side of the bank in Togo, you can see men and women busy with their activities. This river shared between riparian communities serves as a border between Benin and Togo. A small tour along the river bank and you come across the fears of the riparian populations. The story is told by our reporter.

The Mono River is the second longest river of Benin after the Oueme and runs over more than 500-kilometre. It is also the natural border between many municipalities of Benin such as Grand Popo and Athieme which we visited, but also Djakotome, amongst others and Togo. According to the mayor of Athieme, Mr. Anani Amavi Joseph, the Mono, serves as a natural border between Benin and Togo over about 40 km. The river records the greatest rises in water levels in August, September and October flooding the entire town. These floods which occur suddenly are worsened by water releases made by the Communauté Électrique du Bénin (Cbe) from the Nangbeto dam causing important human, economic and material damages, depending on years.

In the past, the the Mono River had a lot fish but today it is fishless that forces « fishermen to abandon the river and turn to other activities like agriculture or to go and fish in other water bodies », according to the deputy mayor, Mr. Houssou Jean. He indicates that in addition to fishermen who abandon the locality « A flooding occurred in 1947 and carried away the bridge that used to link Benin and Togo. It also destroyed the rails and all the major offices have been moved to other towns ». In addition to these difficulties are the harmful effects of the Nagbeto dam, which is a source of great concerns for the riparian populations who do not draw any profit from it. For agriculture, even if the crops are destroyed by floods, water from the river is used for market gardening. Mr. Houssou also says that « the river that Benin and Togo share allows for the transportation of people ». He adds that « a development project of the Mono valley is being implemented».

The floods of the Mono River cause many damages almost every year. « They carry away crops, destroy houses, make many homeless and cause drowning of peo-



A partial view of the Mono River

ple ». Because of all these difficulties, some riparian populations think that the river should disappear as the best solution to their suffering.

When asked if there are any conflicts around the river, the Mayor of Athieme asserts that Togo and Benin are friends and that there were rare problems arising amongst them. But, says Mr. Anani Amavi Joseph: « there are some rare conflicts caused by sand extraction, deforestation for making canoes which contribute to enlarge the river, with bushfires ». In addition to that, explains Mr. Joseph Anani Amavi « people throw all kinds of rubbish in the river; some even defecate inside the river, beside some other people who consume the same water». The electric wires that cross the fields seem to be another problem that is a source of insecurity for the people, according to the mayor.

Considering these problems, local authorities do what they can to sensitize people on both sides. In addition, the authorities of both countries have agreed on the construction of a bridge linking both sides for servicing the Mono river basin.

OPINION

By Michael Simire (*Daily Independent /Nigeria*)
Dzifa Azumah (*Ghana News Agency /Ghana*)
and Obi Amako (*The Sanitarian /Nigeria*)

W/A Neighbours May Clash Over Shared Water, Experts Warn Nations Urged To Ratify Watercourses Convention

The existence of several platforms of cooperation regarding the management of transboundary streams notwithstanding, many countries within the West Africa sub-region run the risk of engaging in conflicts with neighbours arising from the sharing of water bodies, according to a team of experts.

In recent past, Nigeria was involved in a face-off with Niger over the latter damming the Niger River upstream, Ghana has confronted Burkina Faso over alleged rash release of water upstream and a similar case arising between Togo and Benin led to large scale flooding of downstream settlements along the Mono River. Observers believe that these scenarios – which had led to loss of lives and economic downturn – may worsen if measures are not put in place to forestall further occurrences.

Within the six transboundary river basins in West Africa, Nigeria shares her major water bodies like the Niger River and Lake Chad with other countries, while Ghana shares the Volta with six countries and Benin sharing the Mono with Togo.

Besides Nigeria, the Niger Basin Authority (NBA) – which aims at ensuring cooperative management of water resources – comprises Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Chad, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Mali and Niger. The Volta Basin Authority (VBA), charged with managing agriculture, hydro-electricity and animal husbandry among others, comprises Ghana, Mali, Benin, Togo, Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso.

Charged with regulating the use of the waters of the lake and the basin for the development of livestock, crop, fishery and water resources, the 45-year-old Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) features Cameroun, Chad, Niger, Central African Republic and Nigeria.

Benin and Togo are however yet to put in place a formal body to officially administer the sharing of the Mino River, which forms the boundary between the two French-speaking nations.

Ms. Flavia Loures of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) together with co-authors Dr. Alistair Rieu-Clarke of the United Nations Social and Economic Organisation (UNESCO) and Ms. Marie-Laure Vercambre of Green Cross International stated that the NBA, VBA and LCBC still fall short of addressing certain issues that might arise along the watercourse.

A watercourse is a single unit of surface and underground waters that includes the main river, its tributaries and distributaries, as well as any connected lakes, wetlands and aquifers.

In a recent publication sponsored by the WWF, the nature conservation experts submitted that the agree-

ments governing the Niger and Lake Chad basins lacked water allocation criteria and do not require information exchange.

They added that VBA agreements lacked the ability to forestall conflicts and do not clarify the rights and duties of feuding watercourses states.

Citing a case two years ago, Ghana accused Burkina Faso of aggravating floods downstream by opening the flood gates of a dam in the river's upper stretches.

“The VBC is a significant commendable step taken by the states concerned to improve transboundary cooperation within the basin. However, that convention has little to offer to prevent a similar situation from happening again,” they declared, adding that the UN Watercourses Convention deals in more detail with harmful conditions and emergencies, and could be applied to supplement the VBC.

The experts stated that the convention on the Gambia River fails to cover ground water.

According to them, such gaps or failings might pose a serious obstacle to cooperation, and that the United Nations (UN) Watercourses Convention could serve as a supplement.

Loures, Rieu-Clarke and Vercambre urged nations to embrace and ratify the Convention as most of the world's transboundary water resources still lacked sufficient legal protection.

“In most basins, either no management agreements are in place, existing agreements are inadequate, or not all states within the basin are parties to existing agreements. Without such protection, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for watercourses states to cope cooperatively with existing and future threats from human pressure and environmental change,” they noted.

Adopted in 1997 by an overwhelming majority by the UN General Assembly, the Convention seeks to supplement, facilitate and sustain transboundary water cooperation at all levels. It governs the utilisation, management and protection of international watercourses.

Ivory Coast, Luxemburg, Paraguay, Tunisia, Venezuela and Yemen have signed the Convention (during the three-year period it was open for signature) but yet to ratify it. Ratification applies when the final act for becoming a party is preceded by signature.

OPINION



Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Qatar, Sweden and Uzbekistan that became contracting states after the three-year period, did not sign but directly accepted/approved/acceded to the Convention. Similarly, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Jordan, Namibia, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, South Africa and Syria have signed and ratified the Convention.

Observers believe that the pathetic situation now is that aside Ivory Coast that has signed but yet to ratify the Convention, no country within West Africa has signed nor ratified it. They called on the existing six river basin authorities in the region as well as those yet to be officially put in place (proposed Mono River Authority) to impress on their governments to sign, ratify/accept/accede to the Convention so that it would come into force.

According to submissions at a weeklong forum involving water journalists and experts that held recently in Cotonou, Benin, countries should not ratify the Convention for the sake of it, but domesticate its provisions in order to ensure that it is workable for peace to prevail within West Africa.

The "Regional workshop for journalists on shared

waters in West Africa" was organised by the Global Water Partnership West Africa (GWP/WA), with financial support from the European Union (EU) through the Programme for Improving Water Governance in West Africa (PIWAG). It featured 33 participants from 10 West African countries (Benin, Togo, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Nigeria).

The deputy Private Secretary of the Benin Energy and Water Minister, Mrs Bintou Taro Chabi, disclosed that the country has a water potential which can enable it to energise its economic and social development and to effectively alleviate poverty. But she added that Benin was in a situation of hydrologic interdependence with many countries in West Africa due to the transboundary or international character of all or substantially all the country's watercourses, namely Mono, Oueme, Pendjari and Niger.

According to her, the country's downstream position in the watershed basins of those watercourses position it in an uncomfortable situation should there be any mismanagement damages. She stresses that is why the Benin Government constantly strives to promote rational management and use of the country's water resources,

not only in view of domestic use and clean water distribution, but also to ensure agricultural and industrial activities growth and to invigorate the cooperation with the states sharing the same water resources.

She said, "Benin Government has submitted to the National Assembly the request of authorisation for the ratification of the United Nations Convention 1997 on the Right relating to the uses of International Watercourses for purposes other than navigation."

The GWP/WA Executive Secretary, Mr. M. Dam Mogbante, said that the forum was informed by the observation that journalists' general feeling is that water management is not their business unless there is the occurrence of scarcity, disaster, or any item of news likely to be of interest to their readership, listeners and viewers. According to him, the aim is to change this perception and make the media executives more interested in day-to-day issues relating to water.

OPINION

By **Michael Simire** (*Daily Independent /Nigeria*)
Dzifa Azumah (*Ghana News Agency /Ghana*)
 and **Obi Amako** (*The Sanitarian /Nigeria*)

Mono River : Damming the consequences

Mr. Anani Mensah, a family man with six children, has always relied on his canoe for daily bread. He hails from Nicoué-Condji in the province of Mono in the Republic of Benin, West Africa. Anani has known fishing all his life and enjoyed the benefits of fishing in his town's God-given River Mono.

Day after day, he would cast his net into the large fresh water river at different times of the day and night in search of various species of fish that dwelt in this river.

After the night's fishing toil, Anani would usually take his catch home where with the help of his wife and children, they separate the marketable fish and the ones for home use.

Anani's wife Afiavi and their first daughter Ayele will then take the fresh fish to the local market for sale, while some are processed and sold as dry fish. For decades Anani has depended on fishing for his daily sustenance and has even started teaching his first son Amavi how to fish just as his father taught him.

But things appeared to have turned around following the construction of a dam on the Mono River. Anani feels that this contributed to the sudden drop in fishing, even as flooding, which was hitherto experienced once in five years, became a yearly affair. He toiled day and night without a single catch.

He prayed and consulted the gods to curb this unpleasant development but no solution seemed to come forth. Frustration then sets in as his family faces hunger on a daily basis.

Anani's pride was hurt steadily as he tutored Amavi on a seemingly dying profession.

Like many of his colleagues in the village Anani has been forced into farming, which is also threatened by the flooding.

Professor Anoussou Josee, President of Ramassage Committee charged with observing the growth of river plants in the river, told a team of journalists who visited the community recently that the few canoes present at the community's side of the river signified the low level of fishing activities there.

He confirmed that due to the unpredictable flooding of the Mono River, the ocean water from the lagoon had started flowing into what used to be a fresh water territory, leading to fresh problems for the ecosystem in the area.

Faced by this dilemma, the workforce of communities along the course of the Mono River was diminishing as the youths leave for the cities.

Observers have described this development as a portrayal of government's insensitivity to the plight of



affected local indigenes.

Just like those along the Mono River course in Benin Republic, riverside communities in other countries in West Africa especially those around the 110 dams located in the region are crying out over the distortion of their social and economic lives.

Most of these communities have had to sacrifice their lands and economic ventures for the good of their country, but for their reward, they have often been denied the very substance for which they sacrificed - electricity and potable water.

Should the governments continue to look on unconcerned until the communities begin to strike? The answer is no! They deserve to be served better to curb the rural urban migration as well as make every citizen feel equal.

By Edem Gadegbeku (*Golfe Info / Togo*)

INTERVIEW

Nikoue-Condji: living with the River

José Amoussou, chair of the comity for the management of proliferating plants: “We reforest the river bank to tackle the lack of salt content”.

Nikoue-Condji is a Beninese village located in the Mono department. Here, the populations are having it cyclically since some years now the drawbacks from settling on this waterway on which is the dam. José Amoussou, resource person in the village, speaks about the solutions they are bringing to it.

Info: As a member of the community living upstream the Mono River, can you give us an idea of the annoyance that you are facing and that may be related to the Nangbéto Dam?

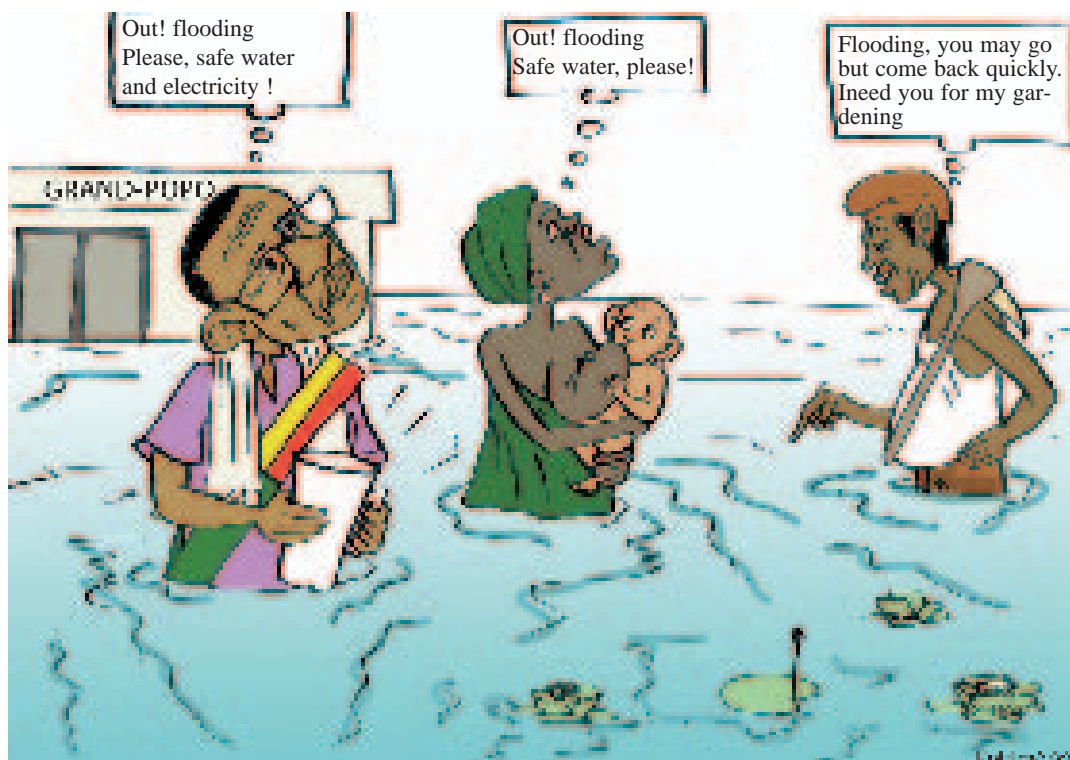
During the rainy season and specifically in June, there is what we call “the Mono cycle” in this area. The phenomenon starts in northern –Mono (between Tog and Benin) and goes to the region of Kopégan via Agbografo through the mouth of the Mono. Since some years, this cycle is no more observed because of the building of the hydro electric dam of Nangbeto. The phenomenon is modifying the chemical composition of the Mono River, noticeably the lost of its salinity. This lack of salt content is due to the fact that the River no more flows for the reasons I said before, since the rate of flow of the river decreases in June.

The consequences that the downstream populations are living with are the proliferation of invading plants like

the fresh water hyacinth. These plants disappear when the Mono comes to its full salt content. The lack of salt content does not allow various species of fish that were seen in the Mono to reproduce anymore. Riparian people are losing their source of revenue. Another consequence of the lack of salt content is the multiplication in the River of reptiles and harmful insects. Furthermore, the brackish water of the Mono during the rainy season brings a migration of fish towards favourable areas for their reproduction.

What solutions have you envisaged to tackle at local level this harmful problem?

(...) Among others envisaged solutions I can cite the reforestation of the mangrove along the river bank by planting seeds on both sides in Benin and Togo. A project has started on this in our area (...).



THE CALL

DECLARATION OF THE MEDIA FOR THE ADHERANCE TO THE UN 97 CONVENTION ON THE USES OF INTERNATIONAL WATERCOURSES FOR THE NON NAVIGATIONAL PURPOSES BY WEST AFRICAN STATES

- We, journalists from media organisations in ten West African countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo;
 - Having taken part in the regional workshop organised by GWP West Africa on *The contribution of the media to the management of shared waters in West Africa*, held in Cotonou, Benin, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24 July 2009
 - Sensitized to the importance of international water courses for the development of West African countries
 - Informed that all West African countries, except Cape Verde, share at one least of the 25 basins in the sub region out of about 60 basins on the African continent
 - Conscious that there are potential factors that caused and can aggravate tensions between countries that share water courses in the region;
 - Considering that all West African States have taken the responsible option of solving peacefully all the conflicts related to transboundary water courses
 - Noticing the strategic options of water resources management taken by the West African States in line with the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), since 1998 at the West African Conference on IWRM in Ouagadougou;
 - Conscious of the opportunities provided by the coming into force of 97 UN Watercourses Convention for the promotion of cooperation and peaceful co-existence amongst riparian states of watercourses within West Africa;
 - Considering that 12 years after its adoption the Convention has not been ratified by the required number of states (35) in order for it to enter into force, and no West African state has become a contracting state at the date of 30 June 2009;
- Appeal to:
- Governments of West African States to take the necessary measures in order to become Party to the Convention as soon as possible;
 - ECOWAS Parliament and National Parliaments of each country and the Civil Society, together with the media to undertake concrete actions to bring awareness and ownership of the principles of the Convention by decision makers at various levels ;
 - Civil Society organizations and the media in the countries to undertake activities for the information and sensitization of the population on the relevance of the Convention as a means of strengthening regional cooperation around shared water resources.

Done in Cotonou, 24 July 2009

by the participants to the workshop.”

The Programme for the improvement of Water Governance in West Africa (PIWaG)

The Programme falls in line with the work plan of the Global Water Partnership West Africa (GWP/WA) started since October 2007 is entitled: **Support to water security in West Africa through the strengthening of partnership between actors, basis of Integrated Water Resources management.**

Overall objective: reinforce the strategies and policies of water resources management to contribute to poverty alleviation, improve the welfare and protect natural resources.

The aim is to contribute to improve water management and governance in West Africa.

BENEFICIARIES AND PARTNERS:

- ↳ The primary beneficiaries are the Country Water Partnerships (CWPs), the Basin Organizations (BOs), the Training and research institutions and the environmental agencies.
- ↳ The secondary beneficiaries are the decision makers, the government agencies and the regional institutions in charge of water resources management, which will see their capacities, built through the project in terms of effective collaboration.

The financial support to PIWaG is provided by the European Commission through ACP/EU Water Facility and the Global Water Partnership (GWP).

Total cost: < EUR > 2,546,429 - 75% i.e. < EUR > 1,909,822 by the EU and 25%, i.e. Euros 636,607 by GWPO.

Duration: 3 (three) years from October 2007 to September 2010.

PIWAG is targeting the 16 countries in West Africa but specially the countries where there is a CWP.

EXPECTED OUTPUTS:

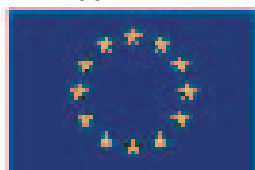
- ↳ IWRM considered in water sector reforms in the countries of the sub region
- ↳ IWRM programmes and tools are developed at regional, national and local levels
- ↳ Co-operation and coordination of water sector actors are improved
- ↳ CWPs and BOs (particularly transboundary issues management organizations) are set up and/or reinforced to take a leading role in IWRM implementation
- ↳ Partnership between water actors and those of water related sectors is reinforced.

ACTIVITIES

- ↳ West Africa partners are meeting and exchanging regularly
- ↳ Regional workshop on fund raising organised for CWP executive secretaries
- ↳ Regional workshop to inform and link up with the journalists and parliamentarians of the region

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With financial support from the European Union



SOMEWHERE IN GRAND POPO (BENIN)

Oh my god, i am thirsty
what have i done to be
deprived from water?

P
A
R
A
D
O
X
E

GRAND
POPO

tonokpa2001@yahoo.fr

SOMEWHERE IN THE TENERE DESERT (NIGER)

Oh my god, i am thirsty
what have i done to be
deprived from water?

