



**National workshop for the media actors on the
popularization of policies and texts adopted on water,
environment and climate in Benin
Cotonou, June 21 and 22, 2021**

Final Communiqué

Cotonou, June 22, 2021

1. On June 21 and 22, 2021 was held in the conference room of the Hotel du Lac in Cotonou, Republic of Benin, the national workshop of the media actors on the popularization of policies and texts adopted on water, environment and climate in West Africa and Benin.
2. The workshop is organized by the Benin Country Water Partnership (CWP-BENIN) in collaboration with Global Water Partnership West Africa (GWP-WA) and the Coordination Unit of the IUCN/PACO Regional Partnership on Water and Environment in Central and West Africa (PREE) project.
3. The PREE is a project funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) and implemented by the World Conservation Union's Regional Office for West and Central Africa (IUCN/PACO). The PREE is implemented in collaboration with IUCN partners including Global Water Partnership West Africa (GWP-WA).
4. The objective of the workshop in Cotonou is to equip women and men of the media to better inform, sensitize and mobilize populations and decision-makers at different levels on the major issues and policy instruments on water, environment and climate in Benin and in West Africa. The ultimate goal is for these target actors to participate significantly in collective action for sustainable management of natural resources and the fight against climate change in Benin and at the regional level in West Africa
5. The opening ceremony was chaired by the Minister of Living Environment and Sustainable Development represented by his Director of Cabinet, Ms. AKOHA Jeanne in the presence of the Coordinator of the PREE Project /IUCN, Mr. Ludovic Aristide TAPSOBA, the head of communication and knowledge management of GWP-WA, Mr. Sidi COULIBALY and the Executive Secretary of the CWP Benin, Mr. André ZOGO.
6. The national sensitization workshop for media women and men was attended by representatives of the following media organizations:
 - a. **the written press:** Fraternité, Matin Libre, Le Rural, La Nation;
 - b. **Radio stations:** Nanto FM, Allada, ORTB, Frissons Radio, Océan FM and Banikoara FM;
 - c. **Television:** ORTB, BB24;
 - d. **Online media:** Terre à Terre, ODD TV, AGRITYOUTH.
 - e. Also participating were the coordinator of the PREE project Implementation Unit, the IUCN/PACO communication and membership relations officer, the GWP-WA communication and knowledge management officer, the Executive Secretary and Technical Assistant of the CWP-Benin, Professor Fabien HOUTONDJI, member of the GWP-WA Technical Committee.

The list of participants is attached in Annex 1.

7. The opening ceremony was marked by the welcome speech of the Executive Secretary of the Benin Country Water Partnership, words from the GWP-WA Communication and Knowledge Management Officer, the speech of the PREE project/IUCN Coordinator and the opening speech of the Minister read by the Cabinet Director.
8. In his speech, Mr. André ZOGO, Executive Secretary of CWP-Benin welcomed all participants. He expressed the satisfaction of the CWP for the choice of Benin to host this workshop which strengthens the already existing links between the press and the CWP. He ended by wishing those who had come from Burkina Faso a good stay in Benin.
9. Taking the floor after the ES/CWP BENIN, the head of communication and knowledge management of GWP-WA, Mr. Sidi COULIBALY thanked all the partners involved in this activity and indicated that this is part of a tradition of consolidated relations with the press at the regional level in West Africa and national level in the countries.
10. The Coordinator of the PREE project Implementation Unit indicated in his speech that "by agreeing to finance the Regional Partnership on Water and Environment (PREE) in Central and West Africa, Sida is renewing its confidence in IUCN and the Volta, Niger, Senegal, Mono, Lake Chad and Fouta Djallon basin agencies, to strengthen the resilience of natural ecosystems and local communities in these river and lake basins.
11. In his opening speech, the Minister, through his Director of Cabinet, welcomed the presence of all the participants in the workshop. The Minister recalled "the important role that the media play in terms of information, public awareness and citizen watch for the improvement of governance in the water, environment and climate sectors". He indicated that the objectives of the workshop "are in perfect harmony with those of the Government, which has taken strong actions to achieve the SDG 6 on the access to water, sanitation and sustainable management of water resources, through reforms and flagship projects that are implemented to ensure universal access to safe drinking water and sustainable management of water resources as well as improving the resilience of populations to climate change. He concluded by thanking the financial partners of this workshop, namely the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and the technical partners of the PREE project implementation, namely IUCN PACO, GWP-WA and CWP-Benin.

Progress of the work and identification of important points:

12. The work took place in two stages: a first stage with presentations and a second practical stage marked by the participants' production work.

Stage 1:

13. After the presentation and the statement of the participants' expectations, the presentation of the objectives and agenda of the workshop, the work continued through the communications focusing on:
 - a. The presentation of the PREE project by Mr. Ludovic TAPSOBA, PREE coordinator;
 - b. Problems related to water, environment and climate in West Africa; and Problems related to water, environment and climate in Benin by Prof. Fabien HOUTONDI, Lecturer-researcher at the University of Parakou;
 - c. The legal and political framework on water, environment and climate in West Africa by Prof. Amidou GARANE, Lecturer at the University of Ouagadougou;
 - d. The legal and political framework on climate change in Benin by Dr. Pulchérie DONOUMASSOU, jurist-environmentalist, member of the Committee of Experts of CWP-Benin.
 - e. The legal and political framework on water in Benin by Cyriaque ADJINACOU, independent consultant, vice-chair of CWP- Benin.
 - f. The difficulties of the media in popularizing texts, policies, laws and approaches of solutions by the journalist Alain TOSSONOU followed by the presentation of some principles for the coverage by the media of the concerned areas by Sidi COULIBALY, communicator of GWP-WA.
14. All these presentations were followed by exchanges with the participants for clarifications, contributions and questions. The presentations are given in the appendices.
15. Overall, it appears that:
 - a. West Africa is a region faced with great variability in rainfall from one season to the next, with alternating deficits and surpluses of rainfall depending on the area, and an exacerbation of extreme phenomena; this affects the achievement of the SDG 6 on water and sanitation
 - b. There are several policies and legal instruments governing water, environment and climate management in West Africa and Benin that journalists need to know about. Several of these texts, policies and legal instruments were presented and explained during the presentations. Some areas have policies but for the moment legal instruments are slow to emerge both at the regional and national levels. National jurisdictions are sometimes slow to adopt and comply with regional texts, just as magistrates need to be updated on legal instruments on the environment and natural resources;
16. Journalists in all cases should seek information from the appropriate resource persons and keep themselves informed on a regular basis on the

evolution of policies and legal instruments in order to better inform and mobilize the appropriate targets.

17. On the difficulties related to the work of journalists to achieve the objectives of informing and sensitizing the target audiences, it was recommended to the States and the technical and financial partners to:
 - a. Support the press organs with appropriate material and financial resources;
 - b. Facilitate the access of the media to different sources of information and appropriate resource persons in the state structures, NGOs and civil society;
 - c. Strengthen collaboration between the media and the technical structures of the water and environment sectors for a better popularization of the legal and political texts of the said sectors;
 - d. Relaunch the organization of the Water and Environment Media Award at the West African level to encourage participating journalists to take part;
 - e. Involve journalists in the advocacy and monitoring mechanism on IWRM set up by CWP-Benin in the framework of the OmiDelta program;
18. To journalists themselves, despite the difficulties, they have the duty to inform, enlighten and educate citizens and as such they must:
 - a. Focus on legislation and policies in programs and articles produced and broadcast on water and the environment;
 - b. Seek out information through the means available to them in order to specialize and build credibility and not wait to be invited all the time.
19. The participants in the national media awareness workshop in Cotonou, considering the crucial role of the media in interpreting complex environmental problems, retained from the proceedings four principles that apply to their work, namely
 - a. Principle 1: Relate to people's life by writing with care
 - b. Principle 2: Use active ways of writing texts that are engaging and interactive
 - c. Principle 3: Use trusted spokespersons and ambassadors in addition to expert resource people
 - d. Principle 4: The journalist must always consider and emphasize as much as possible the benefits of his/her information for his/her audience
 - e. Each principle is accompanied by appropriate explanations
20. The participants in the workshop commit themselves, by requesting the support of the CWP Benin, to :

- a. Create a platform for sharing and disseminating information and resources on Water, Environment and Climate;
- b. Elaborate a production project to be submitted to the National Fund for the Environment and Climate (FNEC).

Stage 2

21. The participants were divided into two working groups: one group for print and online multimedia and one group for broadcasting (radio and television).
22. Each group held an editorial conference to identify angles and articles to be produced. This work of gathering and processing information in light of the presentations made occupied each participant on the second day of the workshop.
23. All the productions made by the participants will be compiled and published in the form of a newsletter "Inf'O" and constitute the results of the workshop.
24. Before the closing of the workshop, the main results of the workshop were presented including the final communiqué and some of the participants' productions.
25. The participants of the Cotonou media workshop thanked CWP Benin for the opportunity it offered them through this training and through the CWP all the technical and financial partners who allowed the workshop to be held, mainly GWP-WA, Sida through PREE project/IUCN. They called for such initiatives to be multiplied.

Done in Cotonou, on 22 June 2021

Participants in the national workshop