

West Africa Water Resources Policy (WAWRP)

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Contributing to poverty alleviation and sustainable development by guiding ECOWAS and its member states towards water resource management approaches that reconcile economic development, social equity and the preservation of the environment.

The West Africa Water Resources Policy (WAWRP) sets out objectives, means and actions to improve the management of water resources in West Africa in order to put water at the service of sub-regional development, in particular by guaranteeing access to water and to sanitation, supporting economic development and ensuring the health of ecosystems. The policy is a response to key concerns in the West African region about water.



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Briefing note

The briefing note aims to give the public the essential points for better understanding the West Africa Water Resources Policy. Written in an accessible language and structured to facilitate understanding, the briefing note is intended to be a practical tool made available to the public to help them better engage in the issues related to water resources management.



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Why does West Africa need a regional water policy?

ECOWAS, in collaboration with UEMOA and CILSS, under a common initiative based on a partnership between these three institutions, developed and adopted in 2008 the West Africa Water Resources Policy (WAWRP, Supplementary Act A/ SA. 5/12/08 dated 19 December 2008 on the adoption of the West Africa Water Resources Policy).

The legal basis of the West African regional water policy is founded in particular in:

- The ECOWAS Revised Treaty, Article 3 (Aims and objectives): “the harmonization and coordination of national policies and the promotion of programmes, projects and activities, especially in the field of agriculture and natural resources...”.
- The statutes of the Permanent Framework for Coordination and Monitoring of IWRM in West Africa (PFCM-IWRM/WA), Article 2: “The Permanent Framework for Coordination and Monitoring of IWRM in West Africa’s mission is to promote, coordinate and ensure the implementation of a regional water resource policy in West Africa, in accordance with the mission and policies of ECOWAS...”

Water, a vital and strategic resource

Water is a key factor for socio-economic development. West Africa possesses large water resources, but the region is afflicted nonetheless by chronic deficits arising from the unequal distribution of rainfall and run-offs in time and space,

the weak exploitation of the potential resources and poor management of existing resources.

Water resource management is linked to issues of alleviating poverty to satisfy the fundamental needs of fast-growing populations, anticipating crises, preserving resources and participating in cost recovery for water usage. These challenges led to the adoption of integrated water resources management in West Africa, which takes into account all the different uses and involves all stakeholders.

Given the strategic nature of the issues linked to water, the WAWRP makes reference to the ECOWAS vision and the West African Vision for Water, Life and the Environment for 2025. This vision aims for, by 2025, efficient and practical management of water resources, in an environmentally sustainable manner that enables all individuals in the region to access safe drinking water for basic needs, systems for waste disposal and food security; poverty alleviation; protection of human health and of the biodiversity of terrestrial and aquatic systems.

Great potential under threat

West Africa has a surface area of more than 6 million km² and a population of more than 260 million inhabitants. The region is characterized by strong interdependence between its states for water resources. These resources represent a large potential, but the region continues to be confronted with situations detrimental for its development. Water resources are subject to increasing



pressure through rising water usage. Access to drinking water and sanitation remains a concern for respectively 40% and 60% of the population. Irrigated agriculture is still marginal: only 10% of land that can be irrigated is irrigated. The potential for hydroelectricity is enormous, but only 16% of this potential is exploited. Climate change and climate variability with negative effects pose increasing threats to water resources.

West Africa is also confronted with institutional instability which hampers the implementation of policies and legislation on water issues and with insufficient coordination of policies for using water resources in the region's states (on the national, basin and regional levels). Moreover, there are insufficient human and financial capacities and a lack of data on water resources and the state of their degradation by various factors such as pollution, proliferation of invasive aquatic plants and silting.

Better water management to support sustainable development

West Africa has to meet several challenges related to water to ensure its sustainable development. Firstly,

Participatory approach for developing the Policy

The WAWRP was drafted using a participatory approach and an innovative collaboration between ECOWAS and UEMOA to develop a common sectoral policy for the region. The main steps were the following:

- Situational analysis of water resources and their management frameworks in ECOWAS countries
- Preparation of a regional summary of the situational analysis
- Preparation of the first draft of the policy document by a task force composed of ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS experts and key resource persons recognized for their experience and expertise in water management in the region
- Sharing of the first draft at the ECOWAS country level
- Sharing of the draft with the Regional Council for Consultation on Water Resources (RCCWR)
- Validation by water sector stakeholders (Regional workshop held in Ouagadougou on 9-11 October 2007)
- Approval by the Ministerial Monitoring Committee
- Approval by the ECOWAS Council of Ministers (Abuja, 18 May 2008). Adoption of the text of the water resources policy for West Africa by the 35th Session of the Conference of Heads of State and Government held in Abuja on 19 December 2008 (Supplementary act A/SA. 5/12/08).

Why does West Africa need a regional water policy? (suite)

it is necessary to improve knowledge on groundwater and surface water resources through quantitative and qualitative data on these resources, in order to ensure better planning and a sustainable management of the resources. Secondly, water needs to be better exploited to contribute to socio-economic development (drinking water supply, sanitation, irrigation, industry, energy) but also to satisfy the needs of natural ecosystems.

Another challenge is anticipating crises and preserving water resources and associated ecosystems. This involves fighting against the quantitative and qualitative degradation of water resources arising from various factors such as changes in hydrological patterns, reduction in groundwater resources, the silting up of rivers and water bodies and pollution. It is also important to

promote community participation by setting up mechanisms for participatory management to improve water governance. This participation should take place at all steps of the policy process or the development of projects and programmes, including resolving conflicts related to water.

The financial sustainability of the sub-sector of drinking water and sanitation is another priority. Despite various subsidies and grants, this sub-sector performs very poorly. Infrastructure is afflicted by malfunctions, poor maintenance and poor service provision. It is thus necessary to undertake a significant regeneration for sustainable drinking water and sanitation services, through efficient cost recovery and obliging institutions to greater transparency and accountability on their financial performances.



Broad guidelines and implementation methods of the WAWRP

Ambitious goals for an essential resource

The overall objective of the regional water policy is to contribute to sustainable development and poverty alleviation by guiding ECOWAS and its member states towards water management approaches that reconcile economic development, social equity and preservation of the environment. More specifically, the policy aims at encouraging the development of regional guidelines for water management and at encouraging harmonization and integration between national and regional water resources management policies and to push states to develop appropriate frameworks for water management (national level and trans-boundary basin level) to contribute to sustainable development.

Clear guiding principles for streamlined action

The policy upholds several key guiding principles for harmonized action by stakeholders. One of these is the principle of managing water resources according to hydrographical basin or aquifer system which entails managing water using natural units, the most appropriate frame for such issues. Other principles that encourage collaboration between water sector stakeholders that should be highlighted are the principles of collaboration, of fair and reasonable use, of partnership, of solidarity and of complementarity. Economic principles such as the principles of “user pays” or “polluter pays” are also worth noting as their implementation contributes to the sustainable financing of the water sector.

Principles aimed at protecting water and environmental resources, such as the precautionary and prevention principles, are also upheld in the WAWRP. Lastly, good governance is fundamental for water resources management. It is based on basic principles such as gender mainstreaming, partnership, information and participation, as well as the principle of advance notice by which all activity that may be detrimental to the health of humans, animals or the environment, must be declared in advance to public services and brought to the knowledge of the general public.

Solid strategies for greater efficiency in the management of water resources

The policy has three main strategic focuses which are also broad guidelines in water management. These are governance, investment and cooperation for good management of resources. Actions to reach objectives are to be organized around these focuses.

The first main strategic focus is water governance reform. This covers the processes, mechanisms, rules and institutions that aim to respond to the legitimate and legal interests of all stakeholders. A new system of water governance will enable the move from a sector-wide approach for water management towards integrated water resources management (IWRM), which considers all relevant factors and brings together all stakeholders to arrive at fair distribution and balanced, ecologically rational and sustainable use of water resources. For this, it will be necessary to put in place a regional and national legal

and institutional framework, to introduce instruments for economic governance (fees and taxes for water), to promote the participation of non-state actors (private sector, NGOs and associations), to develop information and knowledge on water, to promote research and capacity building of stakeholders and to integrate environmental dimensions, in particular, the quality of water, through the adoption and respect of norms on polluting discharge in water.

The second major focus for action of the water resources policy is the promotion of investments in the water sector. ECOWAS will support states in raising funds for putting in place the drinking water supply infrastructure needed to improve communities' access to drinking water and sanitation in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The promotion of cooperation and regional integration in the water sector is the third major focus of the regional water policy. This involves promoting coordinated management of trans-boundary waters between states, mechanisms of inter-state conflict prevention and resolution, mechanisms for preventing humanitarian crises such as crisis management plans or early warning systems and the monitoring of the implementation of international commitments. Support from ECOWAS to member states for the ratification and implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses will be particularly useful for encouraging coordinated management of shared waters in West Africa.

An effective regional institutional and financial mechanism pour implementing the WAWRP

The regional water policy will be implemented through an appropriate institutional mechanism, fundraising, a monitoring and evaluation system and a regional action plan.

For the **institutional mechanism**, the main stakeholders involved in implementing the WAWRP are sub-regional organisations such as UEMOA, CILSS and ECOWAS who have a leadership role, other intergovernmental organisations and specific basin organisations. On the national level, stakeholders are public services (central and local government) and non-state actors (private sector, NGOs, associations, training and research organisations, water users). Each stakeholder participates in the implementation of the policy according to their mandates and areas of competence.

Within the mechanism, the ECOWAS Permanent Framework for Coordination and Monitoring (PFCM) of water resource management, plays a particular role in the policy's implementation. It is the ECOWAS organ which has the mission to promote, coordinate and ensure the implementation of the regional policy for water resources management in West Africa. In this capacity, it is the organ that coordinates and monitors the regional water policy in collaboration with the member states and other stakeholders. It is composed of four organs, of which a political organ (Ministerial Monitoring



Committee), a technical organ (Technical Committee of experts), a participatory consultation organ (Regional Council for Consultation on Water Resources) and administrative organ (Water Resources Coordination Centre).

As for the **funding** of the policy, this should combine public funding with private funding. The first source of funding comes from sub-regional sources, including from the ECOWAS/ UEMOA/CILSS trio and the West African Development Bank, as well as regional sources, such as the African Development Bank and the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). In addition to these regional and sub-regional sources, there are also financial resources from the private sector, civil society and users (through enforcement of the principles of "user pays" and "polluter pays") as well as from bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

As for **monitoring and evaluation**, the Ministerial Monitoring Committee and the Permanent Framework for Coordination

and Monitoring will periodically review progress made in the implementation of the regional policy, on the basis of monitoring and evaluation tools (especially indicators) put in place by ECOWAS, in collaboration with UEMOA and CILSS, with the aim of regularly making necessary adjustments. At the same time, ECOWAS in collaboration with UEMOA and CILSS will monitor the technical and financial implementation of regional projects and programmes in the water sector in collaboration with states, basin agencies and intergovernmental organisations. Regular evaluations will also be done to assess the real impact on communities of the measures taken under the policy and their contribution to the construction of regional integration.

The **implementation** of this water policy will need a regional action plan. For this, the Regional Action Plan for Integrated water resources management for West Africa (RAP/IWRM/WA) should be updated to align with the West Africa Water Resources Policy.

For more information

- Full text of the Water Resource Management Policy for West Africa (WAWRP): <http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/wawrp.pdf>
- Full text of the implementation plan of the Water Resources Policy in West Africa (PAMO-PREAO): http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/pamo_preao.pdf
- Ruling C/REG.9/7/96 dated 25 July 1996 on that adoption of a regional programme to fight floating plants in ECOWAS countries
- Decision A/DEC.12/12/00 dated 16 December 2000 on the adoption of the Regional Action Plan for Integrated Water Resources Management in West Africa (RAP/IWRM/WA)
- Decision A/DEC.5/12/01 dated 21 December 2001 on the creation of the Permanent Framework for Coordination and Monitoring of Integrated Water Resources Management in West Africa (PFCM/IWRM/WA)
- Supplementary act SA. 5/12/08 dated 19 December 2008 on the adoption of the West Africa Water Resources Policy.

The ECOWAS Water Resources Coordination Centre (WRCC)

The WRCC is the executive organ of the Permanent Framework for Coordination and Monitoring of IRWM. It is responsible for monitoring and supervising ECOWAS activities in the field of water management, through the implementation of the WAWRP and its regional action plan. The goal of WRCC is to promote integrated water resources management practices, to coordinate and monitor regional actions in order to render effective integrated management of water resources in West Africa, in accordance to the articles, policies and programmes of ECOWAS.



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INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURE

Central and West Africa Programme - PACO

01 BP 1618 Ouagadougou 01 - Burkina Faso - Phone: + 226 25 37 42 16 - E-mail: paco@iucn.org - www.iucn.org/paco

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Water Resources Policy (WAWRP) is available
online. To view it, thank you to flash the code
below or visit:**

http://youtu.be/_3H3_hJp-Xo

