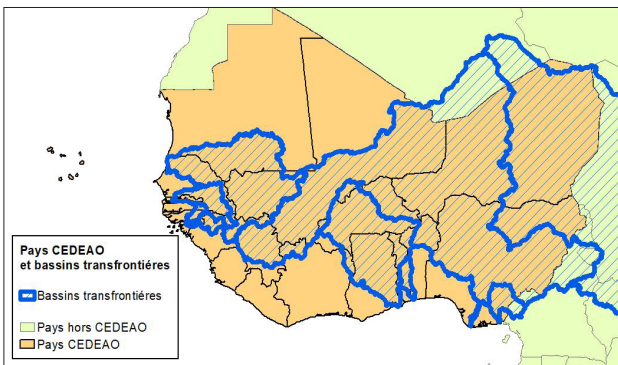


ECOWAS regional water observatory: an important tool for monitoring and coordinating action in the water sector in West Africa

INTRODUCTION



Map of ECOWAS countries and transboundary basins

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has 15 Member States for a total population of over 356 million inhabitants (estimation 2016, source ECOWAS). Each country manages its own water resources in line with national regulations, but they are also managed at

the level of various transboundary river basin organisations, such as for the Senegal (OMVS), Gambia (OMVG), Niger (NBA), Mono (MBA), Volta (VBA) and Cross (CRBDA) rivers, and Lake Chad (LCBC).

In the late 1990s, political authorities in the region initiated an Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) process, supervised by a Permanent Coordinating and Monitoring Framework for IRWM (PCMF).

The regional water observatory is one of the pillars of this PCMF. It was established thanks to a first project co-financed by the AWF from 2014 to 2019. Managed by the ECOWAS Water Resources Coordination Centre (WRCC), it was designed to act as a tool for collecting and exploiting indicators useful for monitoring and guiding IWRM policies, mostly produced by the countries of the region.

Reinforcement of the observatory could contribute to the coordination of water planning/management action between countries, transboundary basin organisations, and regional and pan-African organisations.

This project contributes to generating various SDG indicators such as:



SDG6 – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all



Indirectly SDG13 – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts



At West African level, one of the main achievements is the creation of a water resources unit at ECOWAS. It establishes recognition of how important water resources are in the economic and social development process of West Africa.

Francis Daniel Bougaire,
Head of Water
Coordination
and Partnership
division at the
water and
sanitation
department of the
AWF



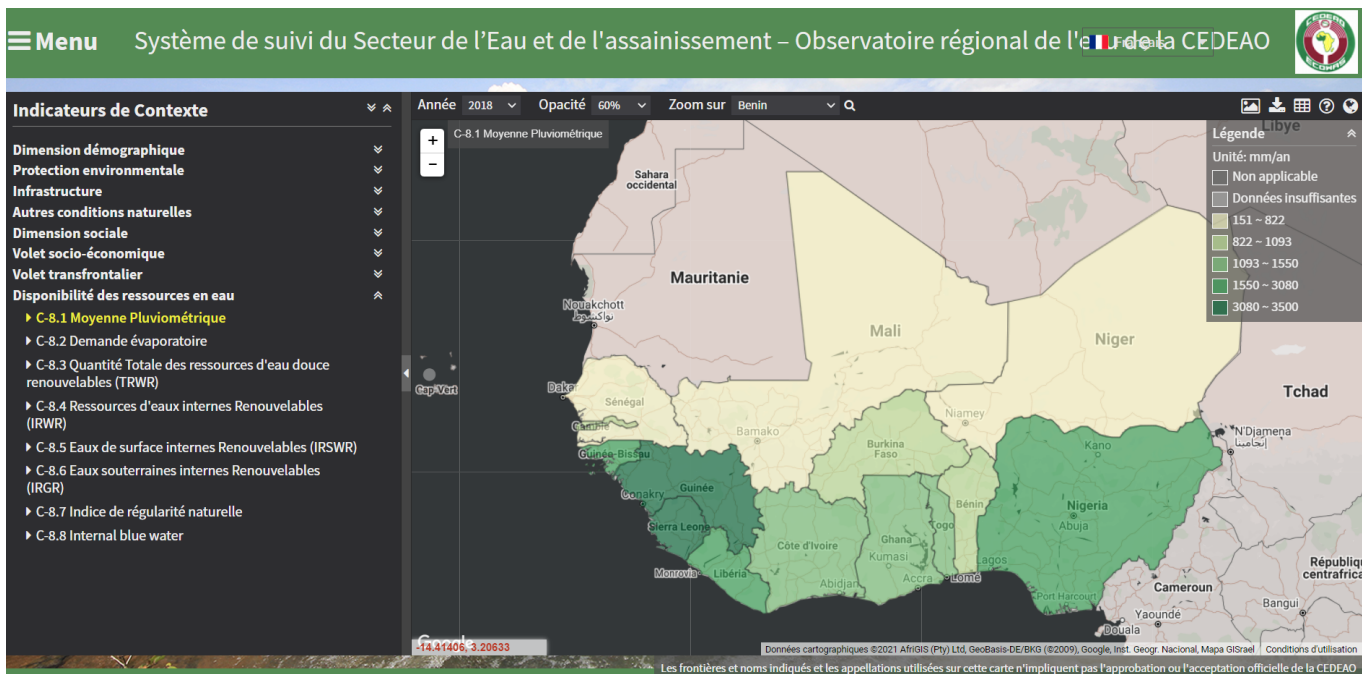
KEY MESSAGES

- 1** In West Africa, water plays a key role in reaching socio-economic development objectives, but countries come up against a range of problems related to insufficient governance of water resources and access to the information required to manage water efficiently.
- 2** The project for creating the observatory, coordinated by the WRCC, led to a first inventory of IWRM in countries of the sub-region, but it still faces governance/funding problems and a lack of national capacities to produce the indicators required.
- 3** Better coordination of the observatory's actions with the main regional and pan-African actors would develop synergies, including for collecting and effectively using data.
- 4** It is also important to work towards standardising ECOWAS indicators with those used nationally and those expected at pan-African level (AMCOW) and global level (SDGs).
- 5** The ECOWAS water observatory constitutes a key tool for monitoring IWRM and could also facilitate the coordination of action related to water resources management at sub-regional level, working with countries, basin organisations, and other regional actors.

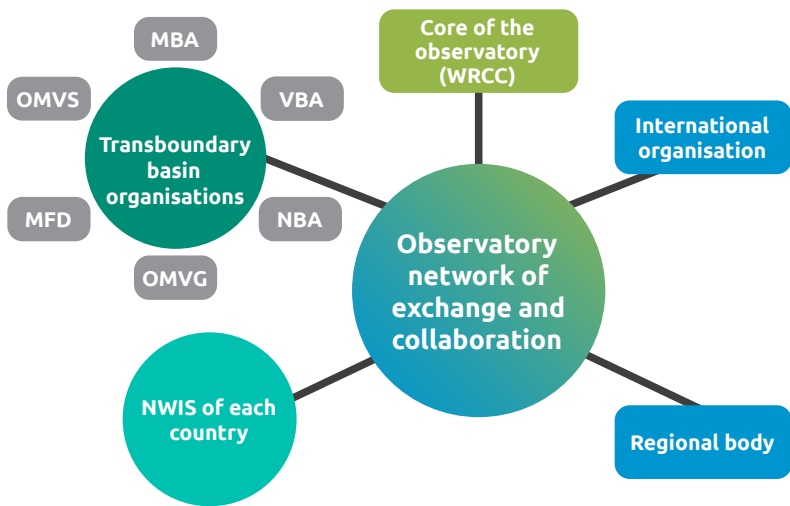
KEY OUTPUTS

With support from the African Water Facility, concrete results were obtained on the key components of the project:

- The necessary tools were developed to make the observatory operational; the existing internet portal was improved and transferred onto the ECOWAS website.
- A set of IWRM indicators for regional level was devised and provided for 2015.
- National evaluation reports on gauging stations for surface and ground waters (quantity and quality) were produced and priority support/reinforcement actions for these networks were identified.
- A report on the development of the water sector was produced based on the information provided.
- The results of the project stipulating the means of funding the observatory and the technical supports were produced and disseminated in the form of reports (250 copies), summary documents (250 copies) and CD-ROMs (250 units).
- Two training seminars for key stakeholders in the regional water observatory were organised on managing water observatories and on interactions between the NWIS, regional observatory and basin observatory.
- A project launch workshop was organised to train the members of the Project Management Unit (PMU), along with a project kick-off workshop and a workshop validating the technical report and monitoring and evaluation actions.



Screen shot from the ECOWAS regional water observatory website



Overall organisation of network of exchange and collaboration



Photos of workshop meetings

LESSONS LEARNED

LESSON 1

Creating a regional water observatory is a long process. This aspect should be taken into account when estimating the duration of the project.

- The project was initiated following the creation of the WRCC in 2004, the first studies began in 2008, and the project kicked off in 2014. The first phase came to an end in 2019.
- Particular attention should be paid to rigorous evaluation of the project's delivery timetable at the time of the appraisal, taking into account: (1) the number of actors involved and the complexity of the activities to be implemented; (2) the capacities of the project stakeholders; and (3) the complexity of procurement rules and procedures.

LESSON 2

The implementation of an environment that ensures the sustainability of processes should be one of the priorities of this type of project: management frameworks and financial resources need to be reinforced in this area.

- The project for establishing a regional water observatory is a long-term governance project par excellence (institutional capacity-building).
- Current financing means and mechanisms are insufficient to guarantee a constant flow of benefits after the project comes to an end and to ensure its financial stability.
- It is necessary to extend beyond the lifespan of the project to consolidate its achievements and ensure their effectiveness in building institutional capacities.

LESSON 3

It is vital to support/build the capacities of countries to produce and supply the expected data.

- The observatory employs data provided by the countries: it is important to build their capacities to produce the expected data.
- Most of the indicators should be produced at national level, but countries often come up against a shortage of means, resources and technical capacities.
- The principle according to which "Focal Points would collaborate without difficulty" has turned out to be ineffective in at least five countries, while exchanges of experience between stakeholders have been unfruitful in more than half of the countries.

LESSON 4

Building the capacities of data-producing partners and data collection are important actions: synergies should be developed with pan-African and regional organisations:

- By developing a win-win partnership with ECOWAS member countries and basin organisations to ensure that the regional observatory is operational.
- ... and by seeking to standardise indicators and processes anticipated with regional organisations.

LESSON 5

Produce the expected information.

- The observatory needs to succeed in generating information that is useful to both managers and decision-makers.



An issue concerning the reporting of some indicators emerged during the implementation of the project. The problem is the capacity of some countries to provide these indicators.



Bougonou Djeri Allassani, Head of the water governance and policy division at the ECOWAS Water Resources Coordination Centre in Ouagadougou



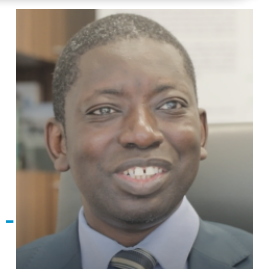
It is important for our countries to have indicators to monitor water resources with the aim of planning and developing these resources. Indicators illustrate the effectiveness of implementing integrated water resources management.



Janvier Bazoum, Coordinator of the ECOWAS Observatory project



ECOWAS should be able to develop and reinforce the use of tools in countries to improve the development of integrated water resources management.



Niokhor Ndour, Director of water resources planning and management at the ministry for water and sanitation of Senegal

WAY FORWARD

- ➔ **It is important that ECOWAS should reinforce the means of the WRCC and the observatory to ensure that it is sustainable and can provide the services and information expected by countries and partners:**
 - Given that the final outcomes of the project are still fragile in terms of sustainability, it is vital that ECOWAS should consolidate the project's achievements. This consolidation involves: (1) stabilising the team of experts at the Management Unit that implemented the project; (2) granting an annual operating budget for the observatory to the WRCC from ECOWAS; and (3) developing synergies with states and basin organisations to improve operations.
- ➔ **The observatory's missions and organisation could be adapted in order to:**
 - Contribute to coordinating regional actions in the water sector, such as for data production and management.
 - Serve as an intermediary between the countries and AMCOW, working with transboundary basin organisations and the African Network of Basin Organisations (ANBO) to report data.
- ➔ **Cooperation between AMCOW and regional organisations should be reinforced by:**
 - Continued coordination of the definition of indicators and collection of data.
 - Standardisation of collection processes. ECOWAS could act as an intermediary between member countries and regional organisations in West Africa.
 - Development of better communication between information systems, including the development of interoperability processes.
 - Pooling of training action and capacity-building at country level taking into account the creation of national coordination platforms (NCPs) planned by AMCOW.
- ➔ **The production of data/indicators should be coordinated between countries/basins/economic communities.**
- ➔ **The development of a better communication system (interoperability) with national WISs is recommended in order to reduce the workload of national focal points.**



A second phase of this project would be an opportunity to make the system operational.



Janvier Bazoum, Coordinator of the ECOWAS Observatory project



If we manage to get data on all of the countries at the Observatory, we'll have the information and tools we need to improve water resources management.



Niokhor Ndour, Director of water resources planning and management at the ministry for water and sanitation of Senegal

PRESENTATION OF THE AWF



"The African Water Facility supports both countries and multinational organisations to develop their information systems and their capacities to collect and synthesise information to ensure more effective planning and development of water supply and sanitation facilities."

Oswald Chanda, Director, Water Development and Sanitation – African Development Bank

REFERENCES

- [Website of the Water Supply and Sanitation Monitory System – ECOWAS Regional Water Observatory](#)
- *Project appraisal report - AWF (Oct. 2013)*
- *Project completion report - AWF (Dec. 2020)*
- *Interviews carried out by OiEau in June and July 2021*