

Challenges for ILBM/Integrated Lake Basins Management implementation in West Africa

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In West Africa, discussions on lake systems, IWRM, ILBM, IILBM, and wetland ecosystems have been held within the context of the multiple crises recorded in the region during the last decades, such as climate change and extreme events, population growth, expansion of cities and sustainable provision of drinking water and sanitation infrastructure, ecosystems degradation, and pollution. These evolving conditions require research and scientific interventions while considering societal realities and activities in order to come up with options for sustainable management solutions.

The overall objective of these efforts is to develop knowledge and initiate research action especially focused on the area of the preservation of lake basins and other aquatic ecosystems. The specific objectives are to describe the situation, the characteristics, and the dynamics of lake systems in West Africa; to conduct an analysis of policies concerning water resources management and compliance with laws and regulations, and to develop areas of cooperation between experts to adopt a common approach to common research in the area of lakes and watersheds and wetland ecosystems. The main focus is on: 1) Drinking water supply to large coastal cities populations, including addressing the issue of Water Security and Sanitation in Africa, one of the main themes of Dakar 2022 next WWF9, 2) Food self-sufficiency of lakeside villages and cities and the improvement of living conditions of populations living around lake basins, and 3) An ecosystem approach in the context of improving environmental status and governance of lake basins similar to ongoing efforts in East Africa, as largely discussed during various workshops in Dakar and in Abidjan. In these efforts, we have to retain the importance of the Integrated Lake Basin Management (ILBM) approach that takes into consideration the interface between the six Governance Pillars. It is important to constantly consider ILBM while reducing stresses in lake basins and ecosystems, restoring and maintaining lakes ecosystem services, and providing sustainable ecosystem services in lake systems in equilibrium with their environments.

The African Development Bank has been the main funder of programs related to lake issues in Africa particularly Lake Chad and Niger Basin (under NBA/Niger Basin Authority). There are series of lake basin programs or projects that have been funded by the African Development Bank. It is a good time to look critically at the outcomes of these projects and programs and to explore possible linkages with the ongoing exercise of ILBM in areas such as the exchange of information on how to reinforce those projects' outcomes. Particularly, it is important, when we consider the range of issues they are dealing with such as early warning systems, drought, floods, and restoration, which are the same issues at the heart of what we are striving to address within ILBM as well. In Senegal, we have one major institution, OLAC that is dealing exclusively with lakes and other water systems.

In the upcoming World Water Forum 9 with a focus on water security and sanitation and a strong orientation on ecosystem-based policies and governance, we have identified a window of opportunity where

ILBM could be proposed, particularly considering the SDGs linkages. We hope to highlight the interlinkages issue among the water system and ecosystem services during the WWF9. Now, we have to see how far the critical theme on an integrated approach to managing inland freshwater resources, lake basins, and their ecosystem services will evolve up to March 2022, the next date for the WWF9 to be organized in Dakar, Senegal.