



## Partnership approach in capacity building for IWRM, West Africa

Paul Yillia<sup>1</sup>, Dogara Bashir<sup>2</sup> and Emmanuel Donkor<sup>3</sup>, Nigeria

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### Introduction

WEST AFRICA IS endowed with a diversity of fresh water resources – rivers, lakes both natural and man-made and wetlands of various types characterize the West African landscape. These systems have been subjected to intense use and degradation accelerated by population growth, urbanisation, land use changes, over-abstraction and pollution but more so by bad management practices. An overview of the freshwater resources and ecosystems of West Africa and some of the key issues and threats facing these systems can be found for example, in Gordon (1998). Wells, lakes, rivers and wetlands are drying up with serious implications for the rich biodiversity associated with these systems making their sustainability and use for future generations highly questionable. Some countries in the region are already confronted with serious water problems and those in the Sahel zone are already “water stressed” – a situation that creates a variety of scientific, technical, institutional and human issues that need to be addressed.

Water management is still based on a fragmented approach with a focus on the provision of essential services – a supply oriented approach – with little or no concern for the environment. A shift in paradigm based on demand management, a participatory and an integrated approach is required to manage West Africa’s water resources. There are growing calls for the introduction of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) (Box 1). The concept has attracted particular attention following the international conferences on water and environmental issues in Dublin and Rio de Janeiro during 1992 and very recently at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 and the third World Water Forum in Kyoto this year. IWRM can assist countries in their endeavour to deal with water issues in a cost-effective and sustainable way. In West Africa IWRM is being discussed at the policy level in almost all the countries with reform in the water sector throughout the region being imminent. Some countries are already in the forefront and have embraced the initiative to implement the IWRM process.

This is a good move that sounds promising but already

### Box 1. GWP Definition of IWRM

*A process which seeks to promote the co-ordinated development and management of water, land and related resources, in order to maximise the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems.*

there are obstacles with the potential to slow down the implementation process or even halt it all together. West Africa in general lacks adequate institutional and human resource capacity needed to successfully implement the principles of IWRM – four simple, yet powerful messages, which were provided in 1992 in Dublin as the Dublin principles (Box 2). Throughout the process of implementation capacity is required. Capacity building for such a major shift in the management of water resources is essential and a critical component to speed the transformation process. In West Africa there are foreseeable capacity gaps at all levels of implementation and the critical mass of expertise needed for the successful implementation of IWRM is far from being reached. Previous capacity building strategies are fundamentally flawed and are not up to the challenge. A North-South knowledge transfer is still

### Box 2. The Dublin Principles

- *Freshwater is a finite and vulnerable resource, essential to sustain life, development and the environment.*
- *Water development and management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners, and policy-makers at all levels*
- *Women play a central role in the provision, management and safeguarding of water*
- *Water has an economic value in all its competing uses and should be recognised as an economic good*

<sup>1</sup> CAP-NET, 3015, 2601 DA, Delft, The Netherlands ([paulyillia@hotmail.com](mailto:paulyillia@hotmail.com))

<sup>2</sup> National Water Resources Institute, Kaduna, Nigeria

<sup>3</sup> Dept. of Civil Engr., Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana

the basis of technical assistance to the region. This approach is faulty and new strategies should be sort. Indigenous capacity should be developed, local involvement in knowledge building should be encouraged and global information should be adapted to suit local or regional needs. The practicality of this move is that it places high premium on local instead of international expertise and sets the stage for partnerships among capacity builders in the region – a response to a global call for the effective delivery of capacity building services. The need for partnership is essential and should be emphasised not only for the successful implementation of the principles of IWRM but also for achieving the targets of the Millennium Development Goals adopted at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in September 2000.

The multidisciplinary nature of IWRM highlights the need for co-ordination among capacity building institutions in the delivery of IWRM services in the region. In West Africa capacity building institutions are responding to this need by forming partnerships and focusing on the development and delivery of career-focused and demand-responsive training, education and research. The result of this move is a regional network called WA-Net. WA-Net is the West Africa Network for Capacity Building in IWRM. It is a local initiative, supported by Cap-Net the global network for capacity building in IWRM and WAWP the regional arm of GWP. Both organisations have been very supportive and useful in the formation of WA-Net.

The idea for the establishment of WA-Net was conceived at the GWP/WATAC meeting held in Accra in June 2002. At this meeting a session was organised to discuss a draft proposal for three leading capacity building institutions in West Africa to take the leading role in forming partnerships in the delivery of capacity building services. These institutions will form the core of a regional capacity building network with the aim of improving the human resource and institutional capacity for the successful management of freshwater resources in the region. Subsequently, an agreement was made between NWRI, EIER/ETSHER and DCE – KNUST to carry out a feasibility study towards the establishment of the network with the hope of expanding beyond the three institutions by incorporating other capacity building institutions in the region.

WA-Net is a timely initiative because IWRM calls for integration – between sectors, between users, and equally importantly across the different components of the water cycle and more so among institutions involved in the capacity building process. In all the sub-sectors capacity is required and no institution can provide all the services alone. WA-Net emerged from this growing recognition with a call on all capacity building institutions in the region to pull together the limited resources at their disposal by forming partnerships. WA-Net is thus pursuing an integrated partnership approach and seeks to achieve this through four strategic objectives (Box 3). The immediate beneficiaries are water sector professionals, managers, policy makers and capacity building institutions. In the long-term it is

### **Box 3. WA-Net: Objectives**

- Promote partnership among capacity building institutions through joint regional training, education and research in West Africa.
- Strengthen the capacities of capacity building institutions in West Africa for effective service delivery in IWRM
- Facilitate research and the delivery of demand-driven training/education in IWRM in West Africa
- Promote the implementation of IWRM in West Africa

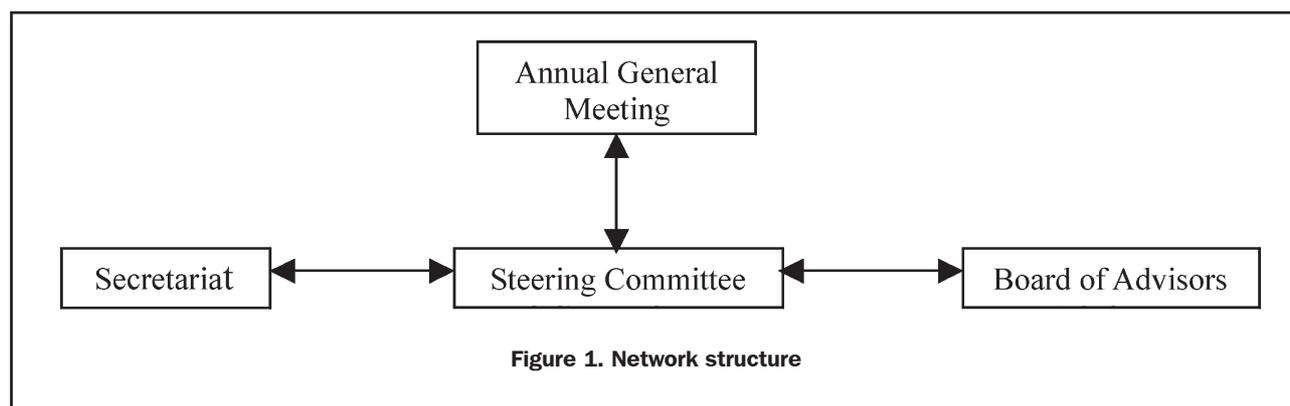
anticipated that the human resource and institutional capacity of countries in West Africa to manage water resources in a sustainable manner for improved economic growth, increased social equity and improved ecosystem health and function would be developed.

WA-Net is an inclusive organization with its membership drawn from capacity building institutions in the region directly engaged in training and/or education and/or research in various fields relevant to IWRM. Members have expertise in various aspects of water resources management, including water supply, sanitation, wetlands, irrigation, water law, water economics, gender aspects, community based resource management, water conservation etc. Therefore co-operation is highly needed as services can be effectively delivered by building on the strengths of partners. All members subscribe to the principles of IWRM and each member is an implementing body of the activities (Box 4) planned by the secretariat. WA-Net has supporting partners and these are described as institutions and organisations within or outside West Africa that are involved in activities in the region with relevance to IWRM. At present these include WAWP, Cap-Net and UNESCO-IHE: Institute for Water Education. The secretariat is in the process of identifying more supporting partners to organise joint programmes in education, training and research in the region.

For administrative reasons there are three nodes with centres in Kaduna (Nigeria), Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso)

### **Box 4. WA-Net: Immediate Activities**

- Establish linkages between capacity building institutions in the region
- Assess capacity building needs and the status of IWRM implementation in West Africa
- Develop relevant IWRM courses/training programmes and materials for water sector professionals



and Kumasi (Ghana). These nodes were selected on the bases of language and geopolitical divisions at the Network Co-ordinators Meeting held in Accra on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 2003. The meeting was called primarily to discuss the modalities for improving the management mechanisms of the network and strengthening linkages between its members. At the moment three leading capacity building institutions in the region are serving as nodal centres – NWRI in Nigeria, ETSHER in Burkina Faso and DCE in Ghana. The Nigeria node is serving capacity building institutions in Nigeria and because of its size and the number of capacity building institutions under its coverage, it is anticipated that this node will be transformed into a national network. The node in Burkina Faso covers Franco-phone West Africa including Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau while the Ghana node in addition to Ghana covers Sierra Leone, Liberia and The Gambia.

The network has a structure of four components (Figure 1). The Annual General Meeting (AGM) is the main decision-making and the overall governing body of the network. It is composed of nominated representatives of members and supporting partners. The AGM is held once every year but may hold extraordinary general meetings when the need arise. It approves strategic policy for the network and its programme of activities, approves or reject membership, adopts any revisions of the constitution and will decide on the dissolution and liquidation of the network if the need arise.

The Steering Committee is the policy-making body of the network and exercises all managerial and administrative powers, which are not reserved to the AGM and assigns such powers to the Secretariat. It evaluates and reviews the performance of the Secretariat, facilitates the acquisition of resources and solicits possible funding opportunities for the network. The present Steering Committee is an interim arrangement consisting of five members – the heads of institution of the three nodal centres and one representative each from WAWP and Cap-Net.

Soon a Board of Advisers will be formed to advise the Steering Committee on policy-making and IWRM priority settings in terms of the objectives of the network. It would

be drawn mainly from stakeholders in the region – governmental, quasi-governmental, non-governmental or private sector organisations involved in the delivery of services in the water sector and for whom targeted training would be delivered. These organisations and professional bodies shall nominate the members of the Board of Advisors.

The Secretariat is the co-ordinating unit of the work programme and is concerned with the day to day running of the network. Currently the Secretariat has a Manager and an Administrative Assistant located at one of the nodal centres in Kumasi, Ghana. It is rotational for a period of two years each between the three nodal centres. By ensuring effective implementation of its programmes the Secretariat is responsible for the activities and outputs of the network and implements the decisions of the Steering Committee and the AGM.

Multilateral, bilateral, non-governmental, private sector organisations and especially stakeholders in the region are called to support this local initiative

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### List of abbreviations

**Cap-Net:** Capacity Building Network for Integrated Water Resources Management

**DCE–KNUST:** Department of Civil Engineering–Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana

**EIER/ETSHER:** Ecole Inter-Etats des Ingénieurs de l'Équipement Rural/Ecole pour Techniciens Supérieurs de l'Hydraulique et de L'Équipement Rural, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

**GWP:** Global Water Partnership

**IWRM:** Integrated Water Resources Management

**NWRI:** National Water Resources Institute, Kaduna, Nigeria

**UNESCO–IHE:** United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization – International Institute for Infrastructural, Hydraulic and Environmental Engineering, Delft, The Netherlands

**WA-Net:** West Africa Network for Capacity Building in Integrated Water Resources Management

**WATAC:** West Africa Technical Advisory Committee (now transformed into WAWP)

**WAWP:** West Africa Water Partnership

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PAUL YILLIA, DOGARA BASHIR and EMMANUEL DONKOR.

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