

Transboundary Water Cooperation in Africa

All African countries are part of at least one international water basin and around 65% of the total African population live in one. Increasing and competing water demands from different water consuming sectors in multiple countries highlight the importance of transboundary cooperation. Sida provides long-term support to transboundary water resource management at macro and micro levels in Africa.

Water is a valuable resource, critical to attain food, water and energy security goals in Africa. Although Sub-Saharan Africa on average is well-endowed with water resources, the water is unevenly distributed in time and space, highlighting the need for good water governance. Water is already scarce in some parts of the continent, making it difficult to meet the human rights to food, water and sanitation, and maintain ecosystem services and peace. Cooperation around the shared water resources offers new development opportunities for all riparian states.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Africa's water resources offer great opportunities to enhance human and economic development: at present only 10% of the hydropower potential has been developed, and the area of irrigated land could expand significantly. Transboundary water cooperation contributes to increased access to and distribution of water, electricity and food, reduced risks of floods and droughts, improved resilience, and sustained ecosystem services. Other opportunities provided by transboundary water cooperation include improved data access, monitoring and enforcement and improved water governance also at national level. Cooperation around shared water resources is also known to contribute to peace and stability between countries.

The fact that a large share of the African water resources crosses national boundaries complicates water

management and development efforts. Another challenge is the increasing water demand, generally caused by urbanisation, industrialisation, population growth, expansion of irrigated agriculture, and increasing living standards. It is estimated that by 2040 Africa's food demand will double, the energy demand will quadruple, and water demand will increase by five times compared to current demand. Meeting the increasing demand will be further obstructed by reduced water availability, due to unsustainable use, pollution and climate change. Enhanced competition over the scarce water resources brings along a risk for vested interests and conflicts. People living in poverty, especially women and girls, are disproportionately affected by water stress, through reduced access to water and unstable energy and food prices.



Construction of an irrigation scheme in the Nile Equatorial Lakes Strategic Action Programme (NELSAP). Photo: Maria Vink/Sida

SWEDEN'S ENGAGEMENT

To ensure that the rights of poor and vulnerable groups are in focus, Sida integrates the poverty perspective and works according to a rights-based approach. Sida supports water governance, management, investments and development planning at macro levels, as well as via local level implementation. During 2010-2014, Swedish support to transboundary water management in Africa amounted to SEK 263 million.

Examples of Swedish support to transboundary water resources

Swedish support is mainly provided to African partners, such as intergovernmental organisations, civil society or research institutions. Cooperation with other development partners is a priority why support is sometimes channelled through multilateral channels, such as the World Bank managed Cooperation in International Waters in Africa (CIWA) program. Cooperation around the Nile and river basins in Southern and Eastern Africa have received most support (Okavango, Pungwe, Zambezi), while support to West Africa has increased more recently (Volta, Niger). Examples of typical Swedish support are presented below.



A women's association in Pungwe basin received support to start a fish farm. Photo: Maria Vink/Sida

TRANSBOUNDARY WATER GOVERNANCE

Governance is a key component to obtain sustainable, efficient and equitable use of the world's water resources. Commonly, Sida supports development of inclusive and accountable institutions and organisational capacity to manage the shared resources according to best practice. As an example, Sida supported the Zambezi basin states to negotiate an agreements and agree on governance principles. Swedish support has enabled the Okavango riparian states to set-up organisational structures with clear roles and mandates, establish a secretariat, and develop more inclusive and transparent planning and decision making.

Ten years support to NELSAP has contributed to improved intergovernmental and cross-sectoral coordination, and consensus-based decision making and management, in order to balance user-needs with water resources. NELSAP notes that Sweden's particular attention to gender has enhanced the quality of decisions and the effectiveness of implementation.

Information sharing between governments and society enhances accountability and enables improved and more transparent investment planning. Intensified stakeholder

participation in the Pungwe basin has led to increased understanding of upstream-downstream water resources management challenges and has helped to build trust.

WATER MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT

Stakeholder participation and access to high quality information are key features to balance different user needs and prioritise development options. Swedish support contributes to improved access to information, for instance through hydrometric stations and resource inventories. The Nile, Zambezi and Pungwe basins have established structures for early flood warning. 350 000 people in the Nile basin alone today receive early warning notices which increases their ability to build more resilient societies.

Good quality pre-investment preparation is another key feature for successful joint development projects. CIWA assists African basins to prepare bankable projects, such as hydropower plants. During 2014, CIWA was involved in 21 different projects, with 46 million potential direct beneficiaries.

The Okavango riparians have secured financing for implementation of their joint basin plan and NELSAP has prepared 6 multi-purpose dam projects that have been approved by the World Bank. Through Swedish support Rwanda, Tanzania and Burundi will initiate construction of a joint hydropower plant in the Rusumo falls which will provide renewable electricity to almost 1 million people.

LIVELIHOOD IMPROVEMENTS

Sida's support to transboundary water management has a direct effect on poor peoples' livelihoods. Through a small grants component in Sida's support to the Pungwe basin, a total of 1500 school children and 543 families have improved their livelihood through income generating activities, including irrigated agriculture and aquaculture combined with training in water catchment protection. It is estimated that the income of the beneficiaries has increased from about 30 USD per month to more than 150 USD per month due to the project.

Policy direction – water and sanitation

Sweden promotes efficient, fair and sustainable management of water and sanitation. Sida's interventions are directed by strategies at country, regional and global levels.