



Dams in Guinea: proposals for achieving local development



Why is this important?

A large number of dam projects are in planning or under construction in Guinea. The pressing challenge is how to learn from past experience, either in the same country or in the wider region, to ensure that the benefits of these projects are equitably shared with local people. The Niger Basin Authority (ABN) and the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS) provide a frame of reference for encouraging good practice at local level through the use of transparent and cooperative approaches to provide sustainable local development for those directly affected (for example, the 48,000 people to be displaced in Fomi).

Key spaces

- **Local and national consultation forums:** these enable people to debate responses to specific and identified local needs (such as sharing of revenue from sale of electricity, written agreements between the state and the affected population, guarantees of rights to land in cases of compulsory purchase etc.)
- **Local, national, inter-ministerial and inter-country (Guinea-Mali) Fomi project meetings:** these work to establish the specific actions to be taken, on the basis of feasibility studies, environmental and social impact assessments (ESIA) and resettlement action plans.

The people most directly affected by dam construction projects should be considered as partners and beneficiaries; this allows local and national development priorities to be reconciled. Pilot studies for the Fomi dam project in Guinea offer insights into this approach and are launching the debate around it.

Following on from dam projects at Banéa (1988), Garafiri (1999) and Kaléta (in progress), new large dams are being planned in Guinea, with the aim of improving management and control of national water resources. They are intended to provide access to cheap energy and drinking water, and to deliver major agricultural developments. The environmental and social impacts of large dams on surrounding areas make them highly complex projects. Previous experience in West Africa (for instance, Akosombo in Ghana, Kainji in Nigeria, Manantali in Mali, Bagré in Burkina Faso), as well as in Guinea itself (the well-documented case of Garafiri), highlights the challenging task of restoring the livelihoods of those directly affected, and intergenerational grievances remain alive at all these sites.

Drawing on lessons from the past

African governments today, with ambitious national development objectives, are attracted by the potential of multi-purpose dams. Guinea is no

exception. This is an opportune moment to attempt to improve on the past, learn the lessons, and apply best practice using consultative approaches at catchment, country and ECOWAS levels.

Appendix 1 of the Water Charter of the Niger Basin Authority, and the ECOWAS guidelines on the development of water management infrastructure in West Africa (see text box below), recommend approaching these large projects as opportunities for sustainable local development, with effective and equitable benefit-sharing among all stakeholders. This applies particularly to the populations directly affected by the project, who have too often been marginalised.

Supporting social transformation

Creating the 500 km² reservoir at Fomi will result in the displacement of 48,000 people. Another 70,000 people living in the zones where those displaced by the project will resettle, will also have their livelihoods affected. How can a peaceful process be ensured, which provides

The ECOWAS Guidelines for the development of water infrastructure in West Africa¹ (2012) are the result of a regional dialogue begun in 2009 by ECOWAS, which brought together governments, basin organizations and civil society. They promote good practices for socially equitable, environmentally sustainable and economically viable dams, and will be made binding through a ECOWAS Directive.

Appendix 1 of the Water Charter of the Niger Basin Authority² (2011) aims to ensure appropriate protection of the basin's environment based on sustainable, collaborative and participatory management in accordance with sustainable development objectives. In particular, it establishes the principle of equitable sharing of benefits with the people affected by development projects.

opportunities both for development and for improvement in livelihoods?

There is no question that this is a huge challenge. The environmental and social impact assessment for Fomi dam lays the theoretical foundations for minimising negative side effects and sets out the prevailing legal framework and principles. However, practical methods need to be designed and prepared, and the capacity to apply them put in place, well in advance.

Over the past few years the Global Water Initiative in West Africa has supported three research studies and a study visit to the Garafiri dam, which have fed into this thinking and have focussed on the following proposals:

- **Sharing of revenue from the sale of electricity produced by the planned power station, to provide a regular monetary income for a local development fund.** The principle of allocating two to three per cent of the gross income of the future power generator, as a stable source of funding for local development initiatives chosen and prioritised by local communities, is sound and financially viable. It will require reform of energy sector legislation.
- **A signed convention between the state and the affected local population, defining their respective responsibilities and commitments in a rigorous and transparent manner.** This kind of

legal instrument, which has its basis in national statutes (the constitution, land law, water regulations) has been approved in principle by the state and the local population in Fomi. It should prevent the kind of frustrations experienced at Garafiri, where local people claim (rightly or wrongly) that promises of local development have not been kept.

- **Security of tenure and compensation for land ownership rights to support equitable and inclusive development.**

Expropriation of land for the reservoir must be fairly compensated according to Guinea's constitution. The state is obliged to 'restitute' equivalent entitlements to new land, in place of holdings which will be flooded, for people who have been displaced. However, this has to take into account the existing rights of 'host' communities and also the different landscape configurations (hill slopes, developed land, mineral-rich sub-soil etc.). The state will have to undertake a revision of the laws relating to land tenure and expropriation procedures, which at the moment are not very clear. It will also need to provide social support, including local consultation and negotiation, for the process.

From theory to practice

Solutions are one thing: putting them into practice is another. Converting options described on paper into reality

"Dam projects such as the multi-purpose Fomi project are opportunities for us, the users, to enjoy better working and living conditions. But for this to happen, we have to ensure that an equitable share of the wealth they create goes to local development."

Jean Edouard Sagno
President of the CNU-Guinée
(National Coordination of Users of the Niger Basin in Guinea)

will be a challenge for the various stakeholders involved in Guinea. This process of research, followed by local and national consultation, in the case of Fomi has led to the validation of specific recommendations for support to the affected communities. All of which have been endorsed by participants in the consultations, through 'final communiqués'. These recommendations therefore have the advantage of having been discussed and accepted by the communities themselves from the outset. In the same way, the decision-making and implementation process that follows needs to continue to respect these dynamics, if trust between state and local communities is to be created and maintained; and such trust is the essence of success for the Fomi project and for other dams in the future.

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1. ECOWAS Guidelines for the development of water infrastructure in West Africa http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/ccre_cedeao_lignes_directrices_barrages_1.pdf
2. Appendix 1 of the Water Charter of the Niger Basin Authority http://www.inbo-news.org/IMG/pdf/Annexe_N-1_Environnement_Franc_Fina2I_5_10_2011-2.pdf

GWII in West Africa

The Global Water Initiative (GWI) in West Africa is implemented by IIED and IUCN and is funded by the Howard G. Buffett Foundation as part of the global GWI.

In West Africa we are working in Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Niger, and Senegal on the theme of agriculture linked to large dams and irrigation schemes.

To find out more about our work in Guinea, or to read the studies and final reports mentioned in this factsheet, see: www.gwiwestafrica.org/en/countries/guinea-1

