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Ivory coast : Technical assistance for integrated water resource management 1999 - 2002

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The Water Directorate of the Ministry of Economic Infrastructures had been proposing for years that a more integrated management policy be adopted for the country's water resources due to the significant problems encountered in Ivory Coast's water sector.

A National Seminar was organised in September 1996 by the newly created High Water Commission with the support of the French Ministry of Co-operation. It gathered 80 participants coming from the different Ministries involved in water resource management, and from other specialised organisations (SODECI), industry and multilateral donors (the World Bank) or bilateral donors (French Co-operation Mission).

Discussions were based on a report, drawn up by the International Office for Water, which presented three scenarios :

- the setting-up of a single National Water Authority,
- a decentralised river basin management,
- a mixed solution comprising of a National Water Authority and 3 decentralised River basin Committees.

The third proposal was finally adopted by the Government of the Ivory Coast.

Thus, a new Water Code was passed by the Parliament on 23 December 1998 (Law n°98 – 755). It mainly aimed at developing and strengthening the functions which were insufficiently or not at all fulfilled, such as :

- * assessment of water resources, in quantity and quality ;
- * interministerial co-ordination ;
- * planning of the whole sector with keeping integrated management in mind ;
- * dialogue with elected representatives and users ;
- * water policing (authorisations and notifications for water abstraction, discharges, hydraulic works, control of compliance with regulations) ;
- * contracting authority for infrastructures of common interest ;
- * international co-operation for the management of transboundary watercourses.

In addition, an incentive economic system was to be set up with water taxes and aid.

The aim of the reform was to create a National Water Authority with decision-making power, and a National Water Agency, executing tool for water policy, whose main functions concern the implementation of programmes, the collection of data on water resources and uses, the drawing up of planning documents, the levying of water taxes and aid management.

Technical assistance, funded by the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs and implemented by IOWater, was requested by the Ivory Coast's partners regarding various priority topics :

- The strengthening of the institutional scheme (the setting-up of Basin Committees and of the Water Agency) ;
 - A technical, administrative and legal assistance with the preparation of decrees for implementing the Water Code ;
 - The study of a water tax system for establishing a National Fund for Integrated Water Resource Management.
- The resulting economic study has provided key elements for the "sustainable" implementation of these reforms.