

## 13<sup>TH</sup> WATER INFORMATION SUMMIT HELD IN OUAGADOUGOU, BURKINA FASO

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The USAID West Africa Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene (USAID WA-WASH) is a program funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID). The primary goal of the Program is to strengthen resilience and sustainable access to water supply, sanitation, and hygiene for better livelihoods in Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Niger. To contribute to this objective, the Program aims to strengthen the regional enabling environment and to build the capacity of the human resources in the WASH sector in order to achieve the WASH Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in West Africa. In line with this objective, the Program, in collaboration with the WaterWeb consortium organized the 13<sup>th</sup> water information summit on April 11 to 13, 2012 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The theme of the summit was; “Water Information: an Intercontinental Dialogue”. The summit brought together 74 scientists, policymakers, information specialists and other stakeholders to share case studies on water information approaches and to discuss how to best collect and disseminate information on water resources. The summit was the first step in developing reliable reporting mechanisms that provide consistent methodologies for monitoring and evaluation in the water sector. The objectives of the summit were to: (1) determine the water information needs at the national and regional levels; (2) review water information management, and (3) share knowledge and experiences on water information management. These objectives were achieved through four sessions.

The first session reviewed water information needs at the national and regional levels in Burkina Faso. This session was facilitated through two presentations: (1) the state of implementation of the National Water Information System in Burkina Faso; and (2) the Village Water Program funded by the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA in French) member states. The National System of Water Information in Burkina Faso is implemented in the context of the multiple-use water services and recognizes that water resources are not static particularly due to the impact of climate change, human activities, and population growth. The system is an operational structure that gathers, analyzes and disseminates information on water resources, needs, uses, and risks associated with water use. The system is constrained by inadequate human and financial resources, lack of synergy in information management, untimely disbursement of operating budgets, procedures not adapted to monitoring water resources, and acts of vandalism on equipment. The Village Water Program aims to improve water supply in the rural areas of member countries. The activities of the program include construction of boreholes fitted with hand-pumps. However, the program is also constrained by high depths for drilling boreholes (high costs) and lack of open collaboration between the implementing agencies and the state water ministries.

The second session emphasized the purpose of water information management. The session was facilitated through three presentations: (1) on the International Center for Hydro-Informatics; (2) the monitoring and evaluation system at the African level; and (3) the Africa Water Information Systems (AWIS). The International Centre for Hydro-informatics is an international center made up of a worldwide network of 20 specialized centers, accredited by UNESCO-IHP to work on the issues of water management. The center promotes hydro-informatics applied to water management and develops models and free software to monitor the level and quality of available water in water bodies. It provides solutions for the management of water resources through the use of hydro-informatics that solves the problems of human resources, energy, and natural resources through development of tools for water management, management methodologies, monitoring and modeling, training of professionals and communication on water resources through the media.

The monitoring and evaluation system at the African level was initiated at the conference of Heads of States on Water that was held in Egypt. Its objective was to develop a harmonized methodology for monitoring and evaluation of the water sector in Africa and to achieve the development of a comprehensive report by 2015 in line with the millennium development goals. First, the system identified water information gaps such as fragmented information, inadequate capacity to collect analyze, and report, lack of national monitoring and evaluation frameworks, poor data collection and management tools, insufficient information to support the planning, budgeting and management of the sector, and the lack of harmonized data at the national and sub- regional level. To address these challenges on the African continent, there are various ongoing initiatives such as the Africa Water Information Systems that aims to strengthen the information management capacity of the water sector organizations in Africa, particularly through the sharing of knowledge, experience, and information between industry professionals, communities, local, and national governments at the African level. The initiative aims to facilitate access to existing information in the water sector in Africa.

The third session reviewed water information management at the international level by sharing experiences from organizations from other parts of the world. The session included three presentations on: (1).water source protection and evaluation program in Florida; (2) regionalization of water that shared the experiences of Latin America and the Caribbean regions; and (3) the national council for environment and sustainable development in Burkina Faso role in in water information management. Other presentations included the contribution of the General Directorate of Meteorology in Burkina Faso in the water information process, the experiences of the Rural Development Institute in Bobo Dioulasso in water information management and the evolution of groundwater access in Burkina Faso.

The fourth session covered the issue of trans-boundaries water resources. The presentations aimed to share experiences on trans -boundaries issues relating to water information management through dialogue involving watershed managers in Africa. The presentation shared the experience in trans-boundary water information management in the Volta watershed in Burkina Faso and Ghana. The highlights of the cross-boundary management of the Volta watershed include: (1) developing a code of conduct between Ghana and Burkina Faso that provided a framework for cooperation in the management of shared water resources in the basin; (2) establishing the Volta Basin Authority to coordinate management of the water resources; (3) establishing a joint trans-boundary committee for the coordination of joint activities and conflict resolution between Ghana and Burkina Faso; (4) developing an integrated governance framework to link local governance structures to the national structures; (5) implementing pilot projects that link livelihood benefits to integrated water resource management and water governance mechanisms; (6) knowledge and information gathering about the basin through surveys and studies to provide data for decision-making; and (7) water management planning and mapping.

The summit served as a platform to share ideas and experiences on water information systems and communication. The participants agreed that the collection and dissemination of water information in the most accessible and efficient way for the stakeholders. This calls for a greater collaboration among the region' stakeholders and the rest of the world. Other recommendations made to improve water information management included: (1) identify research themes to gather information; (2) clearly define the steps in data gathering; (3) create a network to link institutions that gather information and institutions that use the information; and (4) create an information exchange body to bring together all actors from all member countries of the Volta Basin Authority as well as other basin organizations and stakeholders.

*The full report is available (in French) upon request via our website. For more details about our program activities and other reports please visit <http://wawash.fiu.edu/>.*

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