

## **Transboundary Water Governance for Agricultural and Economic Growth and Improved Livelihoods in the Limpopo and Volta Basins: Towards African Indigenous Models of Governance (PN47)**

### ***Objectives***

To assess local level water governance structures and strategies, and distill out key principles that could be incorporated into transboundary institutions

**Where:** Basin, country and local levels. Volta Basin; Ghana and Burkina Faso

### ***Method/Activities***

- Historical studies of hydro-politics were produced in both basins. Case studies of local institutional experiences were developed, and aggregated at country level. The main sources of field data included local officials, community leaders, community members and other water resources users. The information was collected by graduate students from each country. Contributions of each country team were aggregated to basin level.
- Recommendations were made for incorporating indigenous approaches in the Volta and Limpopo basins. The Volta Basin project team had direct access to policy makers at the basin level. This allowed emerging findings to reach policy makers and inform the emerging Volta Basin Authority. Volta Basin data were provided to the basin authority for inclusion in their collection of data.

### ***Key Achievements***

- A paper describing the treaty collection, freely available at [www.africanwaterlaw.org](http://www.africanwaterlaw.org) provides some examples of how policy and research insights were derived.
- Development of key principles for transboundary institutions

### ***Conclusions***

- Local water institutions are more respected when they include elements of both traditional and modern institutions. Customary institutions take a holistic approach and minimize risk by accessing multiple water sources for multiple purposes. A key local principle is 'some for all' suggesting that water is consumed with some awareness of other (downstream) users.
- At the transnational level, institutions endeavor to avoid conflict over water, in order not to be excluded from decision-making processes. Water resources management continues however to be highly gendered suggesting that the traditionally powerless remain so.
- Translating and incorporating local experiences to the national and transboundary levels remains a challenge, due to e.g. varying interpretations of equitable and efficient water use and distribution based upon perspective and scale.

### ***Value/relevance for the BDC***

- Volta BDC project V3, *Integrated management of small reservoirs for multiple uses*. Project V3 will build on existing local institutions, where appropriate, in order to propose innovative institutional and governance mechanisms. It will take local land tenure rights into account in order to support integrated strategies, and relate these with institutional arrangements at district and provincial levels. PN47 has provided important insights into principles followed by local customary institutions, and how to translate and incorporate these at national and transboundary levels.

- Volta BDC project V4, *Sub-basin management and governance of rainwater and small reservoirs*. PN47 has provided valuable insights into the need to move beyond traditional and sectoral approaches in order to support the governance structures and mechanisms required to enable and support integrated management.
- Volta BDC project V5, *Coordination and learning for adaptive management and change*. Together with project V3, multi-stakeholders platforms will be organized to support adoption and promote scaling up of management strategies at upper institutional levels. PN47 has highlighted the challenges remaining in scaling up local water governance strategies to the national and transboundary levels.