Regional Cooperation and Benefit Sharing in the Senegal River Basin

Challenge
The four riparian countries of the Senegal River Basin—Guinea, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal—rank among the twenty-five poorest countries in the world. All riparian countries are facing energy shortages and growing water constraints, which is hampering their economic performance. The Basin’s hydropower potential is estimated at 1200 MW, of which less than 25 percent is currently exploited. Similarly, potential irrigable area is estimated at 320,000 ha, of which less than 32 percent is currently developed. Health issues also represent a major challenge: waterborne diseases have steadily increased, yet control intervention is among the lowest in the world. Although the Senegal River Basin Organization (OMVS) has existed since 1972, the structure has not been fully inclusive due to the lack of involvement of upstream riparian Guinea. This has limited the development opportunities and shared benefits that could arise from cooperative and integrated management of the entire basin.

Approach
• The project’s primary development objective is to enhance the regional integration of the riparian countries of the Senegal River Basin for multi-purpose water resources development that fosters growth, including improved community livelihoods. The project draws on the strong foundation established by an earlier IDA-funded Hydropower Development Project in Mauritania, Senegal and Mali, which supported joint ownership of water infrastructure.
• Focus is placed on three activities to reach this objective: (i) regional institutional development for water resources, including modernizing and building the capacity of the OMVS and making the necessary legal and institutional changes required to include Guinea; (ii) local level multi-purpose water resources development to promote income-generation activities and to create tangible basin-wide benefits at the ground level; (iii) regional
multi-purpose and multi-sector master planning, including feasibility studies to identify future potential water infrastructure investments in the basin.

**Results**
Integrated river basin management coupled with the development of multi-purpose water resources infrastructure is expected to yield expanded opportunities for growth, reduced immigration and poverty, and improved health and livelihoods of the population while also preserving the environment.

The multi-purpose approach will also broaden the scope of potential investments, generate a wider range of direct and indirect benefits (e.g., the development of a least-cost energy market in the context of the West Africa Power Pool), and enhance the participation of local communities in water management.

**Highlights**
The earlier Hydropower Development Project produced a number of positive impacts that the Multi-Purpose Water Resources Development (MWRD) Project builds on. These include:

- Preparation of a Water Charter, which establishes principles for guiding water resources management and allocation amongst the signatory states.
- Establishment of operating procedures for the Manantali dam, which resulted in managed flooding of approximately 50,000 ha for traditional recessional agriculture.
- Piloting of health projects, which, when extended, are expected to decrease the prevalence of bilharzia and malaria by 50 percent, infant mortality due to diarrheal diseases by 40 percent, and intestinal parasitosis by 50 percent.

The expected outcomes of the first phase of the MWRD Project are:

- Equitable sharing of benefits among all riparian countries and communities living in the Basin.
- Benefits flowing to two million people in the project area.
- Higher agricultural productivity and incomes through improved water and land management.
- Reduction in the prevalence of malaria and schistosomiasis through improved access to and utilization of control interventions.

**IDA Contribution**
- The total project cost at the time of approval was US$141 million, with IDA contributing US$110 million. This includes an IDA credit of US$31 million each to Senegal, Mali and Mauritania and an IDA credit of US$18 million to Guinea.
In its support for the Senegal River Basin Organization (OMVS), the project is firmly grounded regionally. It will assist in consolidating thirty years of cooperation and joint development in various economic sectors within the Basin. For the first time, upstream riparian Guinea will be fully involved in decision-making and the benefits that derive therefrom.

The design of the project takes into account the water balance of the Senegal River and the countries’ different interests and levels of capacity and development, and tailors the activities to suit regional, national, and local levels.

The approach adopts a long-term vision, takes the river basin as the basic unit for water resources planning and management, and promotes an un-fragmented institutional framework that includes both top-down strategies and bottom-up stakeholder participation.

**Next Steps**

Phase 2 components will depend largely on the results of phase 1, including the involvement of Guinea. Phase 2 will include selection of the second round of local level multi-purpose water resources development activities to be scaled up and the development of water resources infrastructure, including multi-purpose hydropower, for which the relevant studies will be done under the first phase.

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