

# Governance in African Transboundary Water Basins

Diane A. Dumashie (United Kingdom)

## SUMMARY

Water is fundamental to life and at the centre of economic and social development. Water drives economic growth; it is vital to maintain people's health and food production; it supports healthy ecosystems and is central to the management of the environment.

This paper examines the World Bank's approach to water resource management projects in the Sub Saharan African region. It seeks to understand if projects have addressed the inevitable coexistence of conflict and cooperation in transboundary river basin governance. In addition, highlighting the degree to which FIG professionals have an influencing role.

Water resource management is a major challenge and an even greater and growing challenge is water scarcity. There are many transboundary basins around the world where agreement to freshwater flow and abstraction requires cooperation and collaboration amongst riparian nations. The resulting impact on governance institutions sheds light on the challenges concerning sustainable development.

The link between water and poverty alleviation is very clear. Water touches every aspect of development and represented in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG); water resource management is identified in SDG 6.5 and also influences other SDGs and targets.

As an important economic factor of production, the supply of water will determine the levels of growth. Some regions could see their growth rates decline by as much as 6 percent of GDP by 2050 as a result of water-related losses in agriculture, health, income and prosperity (WB April 2020).

The World Bank has long intervened in water projects, having an impressive intervention portfolio.

They are “the world’s largest multi-lateral source of financing for water in developing countries... to achieve a water-secure world for all” ([www.worldbank.org/water](http://www.worldbank.org/water))

To deal with the complex and interlinked water challenges, the World Bank projects, aims are to strengthen water security by building capacity, adaptability, resilience for the future planning and management of water resources.

A considerable number of water resources management projects focus on infrastructure, incentives and information systems that support and guide water management; but to what degree are the governance institutions involved? The focus here is on projects located in transboundary basins, given that collaboration across nation states is a prerequisite of fair sharing. This desktop retrospective project review concludes with an assessment of the degree of interaction with riparian governance institutions to unlock the potential for sustainable and inclusive growth, climate resilience, and poverty reduction.

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