

Coping with external pressures

Despite consensus on the principles of the wise use of wetlands and the related best practices, actual implementation has proven difficult and is hampered by various factors. This factsheet focuses on the institutional context and adaptive capacity to cope with pressures from upstream developments, climate change and variability, and urbanization.

Working within the local context

A review of international, national and local guidelines related to wetland management and the wetland case studies was made. International guidelines include those of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, World Health Organization (WHO), Global Water Partnership (GWP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Several aspects of international guidance are used as a basis for national guidance (for example, WHO and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands). Although the national and local guidelines of the WETwin case studies varied considerably, common lessons were derived.

Strong points of the reviewed guidelines related to the fact that, in most cases, an institutional and legal framework (including environmental and water policies, and planning regulations) were in place for managing the wetlands. Most of these regulations also required stakeholder involvement and promoted the integration of wetland management with river

basin management. Weaker points of these guidelines were mainly related to the lack of public participation in practice (with some exceptions), implementation challenges, lack of cost-benefit analyses, limited enforcement, and lack of human and financial resources.

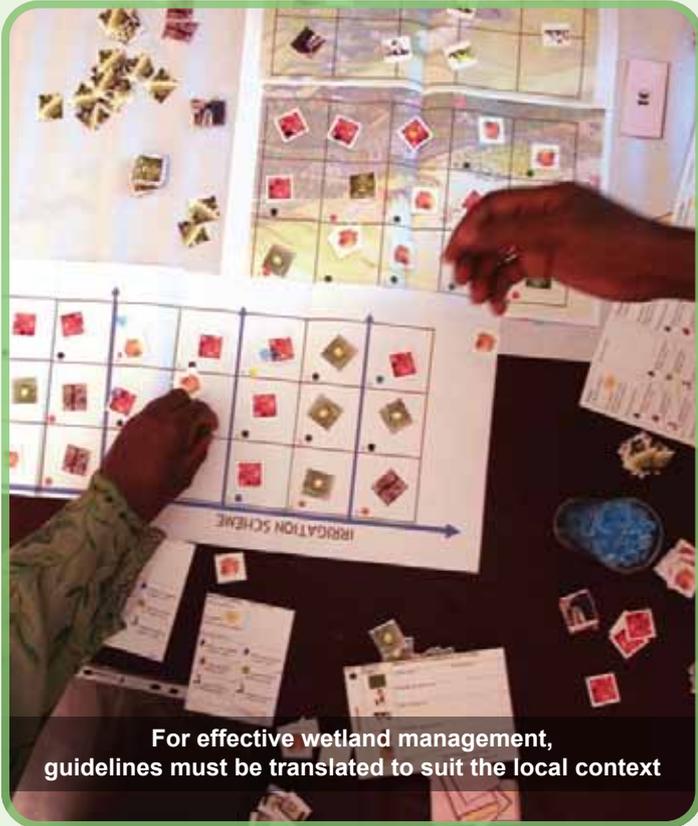
Few management policies are used

Even where national wetland policies were in place, as in Mali and Uganda, they did not seem to be operational and used in management practices. The major reason for this was that relevant legislation and policies were relatively new (and were not fully engrained yet), and managerial bodies lacked human, financial and organizational capacities to actually implement these policies. A discrepancy existed between the official guidance and the actual planning and management practices. The main challenge is in translating existing guidelines into local guidance, taking into account the local context, and to develop capacity at the local level.

A number of conditions need to be in place before any guidance can operate effectively, including an adequate and functioning legal regime, sound administration and flexible policy-making, stakeholder understanding of the aims of the process and its potential benefits, political commitment, institutional capacity for implementation, adequate technical capacity, data and information, financial capacity and public involvement.



Uganda is one of the few countries in Africa to have a national wetlands policy



For effective wetland management, guidelines must be translated to suit the local context

Enhancing adaptive capacity

The institutional and adaptive capacity for wetland management refers to the potential of institutions and actors to adapt to change, such as climate change or population growth. The institutional and adaptive capacity were scored using a standard

set of criteria, developed in cooperation with the 7FP project Twin2Go, for 25 river basins worldwide. The results of this analysis for the Niger Basin are presented in Figure 1.

The scoring represents relative (rather than absolute) strengths and weaknesses of each criterion, based on the perceptions of stakeholders within the basin. The analysis reveals that Mali has a strong enabling environment (legislation, formal institutions, policy for integrated water resources management (IWRM)) and that water is a priority area in both national and local development plans. Participation of different sector representatives exists at all levels of administration. Relative weaknesses are the capacity and instruments to implement wetland management and IWRM, particularly at local government levels.

Poor implementation is widespread

A similar conclusion can be drawn from the other wetland case studies. The enabling environment is relatively well-developed in most cases. The hampering factor for the effective wise use of wetlands is mainly the limited capacity to implement wetland management and IWRM.

The analysis of the case studies suggests that organizations responsible for managing wetlands have difficulty obtaining relevant information pertaining to changes in the wetland and, given existing resource constraints, have very limited capacity to react to any changes that are observed.

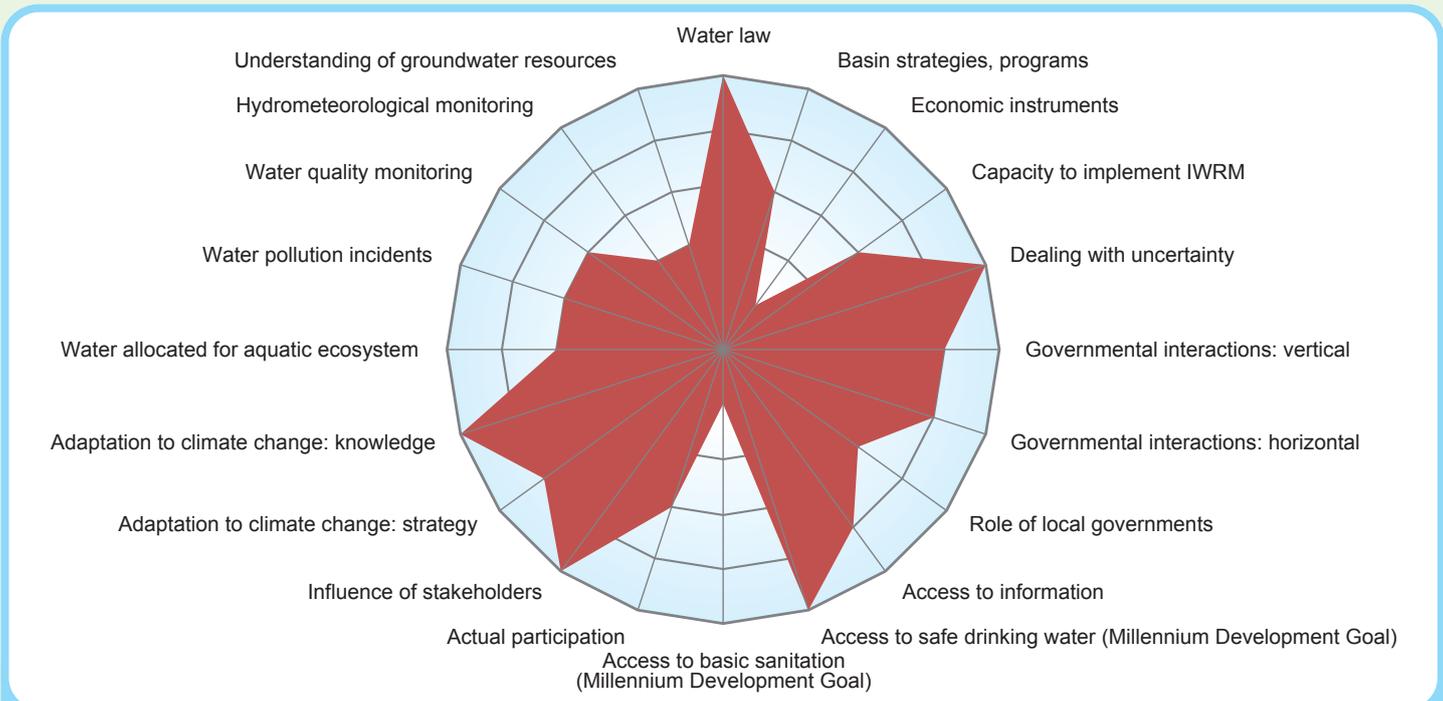


Figure 1: Scores representing the Niger Basin’s institutional and adaptive capacity for Integrated Water Resource Management (Sources: Twin2Go and WETwin)

Local capacity development includes improving the knowledge base, tools and organizational capacity that are targeted to the



It is important to understand how stakeholders value wetlands

requirements of the local context. A need exists for encouraging institutional creativity and bricolage processes, starting from the existing capacity and local institutions to allow for progressive

development efforts build upon locally existing knowledge, context and institutions. Institutional capacity development should not be complementary to wetland management, but should be an integral part of it. Effective solutions to wetland degradation lie in understanding how stakeholders value wetlands, especially those owning or directly utilizing the wetland resources on which they depend.

Overcoming the complex challenges of integration

Practical evidence suggests that integration is difficult and often not fully applied in practice. The research findings suggest that fulfilling the following requirements could help overcome the challenges that hinder effective IWRM:

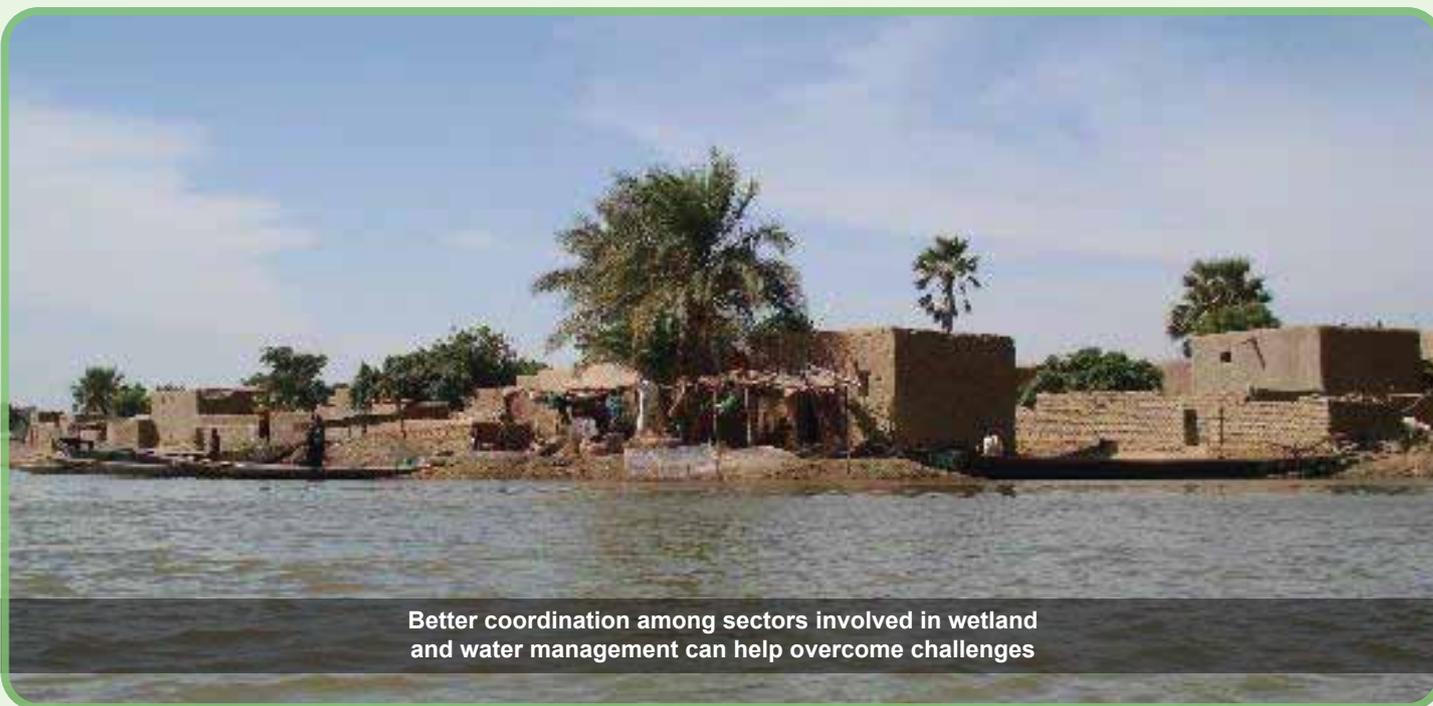
1. A transparent and scientifically based pre-project baseline and good insights into data quality and gaps.
2. A simple approach that can be applied by local planners.
3. Enhanced human, financial and institutional capacity to implement planning and work towards stated targets.
4. Better coordination among sectors and levels involved in wetland and water management, starting from the sectoral plans, river basin and wetland management plans.
5. Improved stakeholder awareness concerning the functions and services of wetlands.
6. Empowerment of the actual wetland users in wetland management, including the better uptake of local knowledge.

Authors: Jan Cools, Elena Ovstrovskaya, Wim Douven, Klaas Schwartz, Bakary Kone, Mori Diallo and Tom D'Haeyer



Wetland users should be involved in managing the resource (by Jan van der Kemp)

strengthening of actions over time. An effective enabling environment fosters adaptation. It is important that capacity



Better coordination among sectors involved in wetland and water management can help overcome challenges

About WETwin

The WETwin project aims to enhance the role of wetlands in integrated water resources management for twinned river basins in the European Union (EU), Africa and South America in support of EU water initiatives. The objective is to improve community service functions while conserving good ecological status.

Partners

VITUKI Environmental and Water Management Research Institute, Hungary (coordinating partner)
 Wetlands International, Mali
 Antea Group, Belgium
 Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, Germany
 WasserCluster Lunz, Austria
 UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education, the Netherlands
 National Water and Sewerage Corporation, Uganda
 International Water Management Institute, South Africa
 Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral, Ecuador

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Factsheet topics

- 1: Lessons learned from a comparative assessment
- 2: Enhancing governance in wetland management
- 3: Devising a Decision Support Framework
- 4: Balancing ecology with human needs in wetlands
- 5: Creating an effective Spatial Data Infrastructure
- 6: Wetlands in a catchment context
- 7: Assessing vulnerability of wetlands to change
- 8: Integrating health, urban planning and wetland management
- 9: Case study: Lobau wetland, Austria
- 10: Case study: Ga-Mampa wetland, South Africa
- 11: Case study: Abras de Mantequilla wetland, Ecuador
- 12: Case study: Gemenc floodplain, Hungary

Contacts

For further information, email:

István Zsuffa: info@wetwin.eu

Tom D'Haeyer: tom.dhaeyer@anteagroup.com

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