

PAGEV MONITORING REPORT

MAY 2006

Work commissioned by	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Asdi)
Project Title	Monitoring, PAGEV
Date and status of Document	10 May 2006 (Draft)
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1 Background

PAGEV is a project for “Improving Water Governance in the Volta River Basin”, implemented by IUCN under its Water and Nature Initiative (WANI), in cooperation with the Governments of Burkina Faso and Ghana. The project is financed by Sida and WANI/DGIS, and supported by GWP/WAWP and IUCN/BRAO.

The overall objective of the Project is to improve water governance in the Volta River Basin through a consensus on key water management principles and institutionalised coordination mechanisms.

PAGEV has four specific objectives:

- Key decision-support information base compiled and shared to inform constructive dialogues and collaboration on water management between Burkina Faso and Ghana.
- Burkina Faso and Ghana jointly develop, implement and learn from pilot IWRM interventions in a selected trans-boundary sub-basin.
- Existing bi-lateral consultations mechanisms between Burkina Faso and Ghana on water management broadened and strengthened through the adoption and implementation of a code of conduct in the management of shared waters.
- Project successfully managed and coordinated, structures of learning supported and lessons made available.

The present report has been prepared under a contract with Sida for external monitoring of PAGEV.

2 Review and monitoring observations

The monitoring consultant took part in the annual PAGEV/Sida meeting and in the meeting of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) in Akosombo, Ghana, and participated as an additional member in the Midterm Review of the Project, which had been commissioned by IUCN. The work involved interviews with key stakeholders at various levels and a study visit to the pilot interventions areas on both sides of the border in the Nabanbé Basin. The detailed programme of the interviews and field visits is presented in the report of the Midterm Review¹.

Although the monitoring consultant took part in many of the discussions within the Review Team, he has not participated in writing the Review Report. The Review Report contains several observations and recommendations that are both relevant and important, and the monitoring consultant has no major differing opinion on any of the points made. The

¹ Mafing Konde: Evaluation à mi-parcours, Mars 2006.

observations and recommendations accounted for in the following text are those of the monitoring consultant alone.

With regard to the performance of PAGEV, a general impression is that the Project has already produced several valuable outputs. At the same time, however, there are some risks and weaknesses related particularly to (1) the pilot interventions and (2) the budgeting and financial reporting system, which need to be analysed and addressed by the Project in the coming months.

In summary, the positive aspects are as follows:

- Valuable facilitation of initiation, establishment and operationalisation of bilateral and basin-wide committees and agreements.
- Concrete action on the ground through pilot interventions in the Nakanbé Basin..
- Valuable facilitation of stakeholder participation at village and local transboundary level.

The risks and weaknesses include:

- Sustainability risks in connection with the pilot interventions.
- Inadequate linkages to and coordination with technical services at provincial and local levels.
- A budgeting and financial reporting system which needs to be improved.

2.1 Assessment of quality and performance

In the following, a number of selected criteria have been used to describe the quality of PAGEV, both in terms of its structure and planning, and its performance. The general impression is that PAGEV scores adequately on most aspects.

2.1.1 National ownership and linkages

Both countries are strongly committed to PAGEV. It is clear that this is a Project looked upon as a valuable support by the two countries and that it has not been driven excessively by the implementing agency or any of its other cooperation partners or by the donors. This has been verified by the interviews made with the national water resource directors and others. It is also shown by the fact that the national directors are Co-Directors of PAGEV, thus ensuring the appropriate linkages at that level.

In Ghana the actual responsibilities for IWRM are a bit fragmented; even if IWRM is the responsibility of the Water Resources Commission, some activities also rest with other actors notably the Water Directorate and the Water Research Institute. This does not mean, however, that there is a lack of higher-level commitment to the Project in Ghana.

While the linkages are good at national level, they are less so at provincial and local levels (see under Section 2.1.5: Development on the ground).

The commitment to the Project measured in terms of actual contribution is as follows. In addition to the national directors of water resources being Co-Directors, the Project Coordinator is assigned from the WRC in Ghana, and one Water Resources Expert from each country is seconded to the PMU. The Coordinator receives salary from Project funds but the Co-Directors and the Water Resources Experts receive only limited additional allowances. In addition to this professional time inputs, there is substantial time input from national staff at all administrative levels. Other contributions include some input of vehicles, hosting of local meetings etc.

In addition to national inputs, support has also been provided by GWP/WAWP in the form of making available their network of experts, providing a course on conflict analysis, and facilitation of and participation in various forums and meeting

2.1.2 Extent and quality of facilitation process

IUCN is looked upon as both an impartial and competent organisation, which may have been important in the initial stages of developing basin-wide and bilateral cooperation.

Cooperation on water resources management and on resolving actual and potential disputes has been going on between Burkina Faso and Ghana for a long time, particularly since there were serious disputes around two decades ago. This cooperation would certainly have taken place also without the existence of PAGEV. However, the Project has had an important role in facilitating communication and cooperation, and has assisted in organising several important meetings, both at the bilateral level with the Joint Technical Committee and a Ministers' meeting between Burkina Faso and Ghana, and at the basin level with the first meeting of the Volta Basin Technical Committee, which coordinates the establishment of the Volta Basin Authority (VBA). The Project has thus had, in spite of its fairly short existence, a tangible and positive impact on bilateral and basin-wide cooperation.

Through the work with the Code of Conduct, a good basis is being created for basin-wide joint water resources management. Although this has been developed by staff from the national services of Burkina Faso and Ghana, the result will have validity for the entire basin. The draft document on the Code of Conduct is planned to be ready in May, and is expected to form a major input to the VBA.

This can be compared to the lack of progress under the GEF project², which has a similar, albeit wider, agenda of facilitating basin cooperation but where nothing much seems to have happened.

In addition to these activities at basin and national levels, the Project is facilitating the setting-up of a transboundary forum at the local community level, an activity which is highly commendable and interesting.

² GEF: Addressing Transboundary Concerns in the Volta River Basin and its Downstream Coastal Area.

2.1.3 Implementation set-up

One experience from other transboundary river basin projects on the continent has been the need for smart implementation mechanisms and procedures.

PAGEV is active at basically four levels: basin/bilateral, national, provincial and local. The overall Project organisation with a Project Management Unit (PMU) strengthened by the national water resources Directors being appointed as Co-Directors of the Project, and with an active and representative PSC for supervision, is an appropriate solution.

The set-up is weaker at the provincial and local levels, particularly so with the lack of appropriate coordination between the Project and the provincial and local administration and its planning and technical services, as was observed during the field visits. At the local level, the Project works through two NGOs, which is a very good idea but which also has its problems, mainly related to the capacity and technical competence of the NGOs. Then, finally, the villagers themselves plan, implement and manage the Project activities, mainly through village committees. Filling gaps of knowledge, capacity and coordination is required at all these levels

The midterm Review report points to some weakness in the organisational functions at the PMU; it is important that this is rectified should it be verified by the Project itself.

2.1.4 Focus

A successful project on joint water resources management needs to be focused in terms of scope, activities and actors.

For a relatively small project such as PAGEV to be both efficient and effective, it is important that staff time and other resources are not spread too thinly over a large number of activities in too many subject areas and at too many intervention levels. In this regard it is clear that the Project is quite well-focused in general terms; it has four objectives and a fairly limited number of activities under each objective, which it seems as if the PMU is able to handle efficiently.

There is, however, one aspect that needs to be pointed to in this regard, namely the satellite imagery component that has been added to the project. This activity, which was not included in the Project document or the inception report, intends to produce land use and ecosystem baseline maps and eventually maps showing the impact of PAGEV. The component is financed and managed separately by VIASAT GeoTechnologies of Canada, which uses the Project as an institutional base.

It is not entirely clear how this activity will contribute to achieving the Project objectives. Monitoring physical changes on the ground, such as land use, erosion, extent of water bodies etc., is to some extent relevant in relation to water resources management, but such changes are long-term and the institutional home for such work should therefore be an established institution rather than a time-bound project. In addition, the possible future outputs of the remote sensing exercise do seem a bit peripheral in relation to the objectives of PAGEV. The knowledge coming out of it is, from the perspective of PAGEV and its objectives, nice

to know rather than useful. It is important that this component is not allowed to take up too much of the PAGEV staff's time.

2.1.5 Development on the ground

In terms of achieving action on the ground, PAGEV has already reached much further than many other transboundary river basin projects on the continent. Pilot interventions are being carried out in eight villages; four in Burkina Faso and four in Ghana.

The pilots are a promising element of the Project; they are designed to provide concrete application of IWRM at that level, and give direct benefits to the people in the selected villages. They would also have direct positive effects on the riverine environment in that the river banks would be restored and protected, and provide a valuable learning process of how to engage and organise stakeholders and water users, and how to implement IWRM approaches at that level. Finally, the establishment of the transboundary joint consultative forum is a pioneering and highly interesting activity which, if successful, would provide an interesting example of stakeholder participation for other joint river basin programmes on the continent. The forum would improve cross-border information and communication, which is important both for peaceful co-existence and for facilitating water resource development on both sides; and provide an opportunity for representatives of the adjacent communities to discuss more direct and practical problems such as security and conflict issues arising from competing demands on a variety of natural resources, in addition to water.

The pilot interventions are implemented through two NGOs; Bissakoupou in Burkina Faso and ZOVFA in Ghana. Eight village committees have been set up, substantial planning and initiation of physical implementation has taken place, and a first step towards establishing the transboundary forum has been taken through the organisation of a meeting in 2005.

There are, however, some rather serious risks related to the pilot interventions. It was observed during the field visit in February that the plans are to a large extent blue-print plans - protection of the river banks through planting of trees is the basic issue, and this seems to be intended to be done in a similar fashion in all villages - and one can wonder if this is really a priority for all villagers in all these villages. For the success and sustainability of the intended outputs it is necessary that the activities are prioritised by the villagers themselves. At the field visit it seemed that sufficient socio-economic surveys and consultation in this particular regard had not been made. Apparently, additional surveys have been carried out since then, but it is essential that both NGO and PAGEV staff keep the dialogue going and adapt the activities to local preferences with regard to e.g. species selection and zoning, rather than pushing through with a pre-designed concept.

Although it seems clear that using river water for irrigation is in fact a clear priority for the villagers, the project staff needs to consider that the pilots could support a variety of activities relating to water resources management, such as the construction of wells for supply of drinking water or minor or supplementary irrigation, rainwater harvesting and improvement of cropping techniques. Such activities are in fact already being taken up to some extent in the project, and may need to be further promoted.

In the setting up of the village committees it is important that there is no exclusion of groups actually living in the village, regardless of who they are. The existence of other relevant committees, such as already established women's committees which exist at least in one of the villages visited and which was engaged among other things in garden irrigation close to the river, should also be considered in this context.

In order to be able to provide a suitable package of interventions to each village, the implementing NGOs need to coordinate to the extent possible with on-going programmes of other NGOs and government agencies active in rural development, forestry, horticulture, water supply, environment etc.. Thus they could draw on surveys and information gathered by others which would help in identifying suitable activities, and they could also promote the direct intervention of the agencies in addition to what PAGEV can provide with its limited budget. Tree planting in itself is a technically complicated thing (seed acquirement, nursery operations, planting, watering etc), and in relation to village development in a socioeconomic context it becomes even more complicated. It is important therefore, that the expertise, as well as resources such as seeds and nurseries, already available with line departments is used, and that the implementing NGOs are active in promoting that relevant activities get directed to the particular villages where PAGEV has their pilot interventions.

Coordination and flow of information needs to be strengthened at several levels. During the field visit it was found that there had been no cooperation between the two NGOs in spite of the fact that they are doing basically the same work in the same area. For instance, it had been difficult for ZOVFA to get hold of plastic bags for the seedlings, something that could have easily been arranged through a contact with their counterpart on the Burkina Faso side where they can be easily bought. This lack of coordination has apparently been addressed lately with the NGOs at least having met with each other.

There has also been insufficient coordination with provincial and local technical services. The utilisation of the technical services from line agencies needs to be increased, as well as information and feed-back from NGOs. In this connection it will be necessary that PAGEV provide support to field travel for the technical service agencies. The matter of coordination with line agencies at provincial and local levels was discussed at the PSC meeting and it was decided to strengthen this coordination with a dedicated focal point. It may also be considered in this context to decentralise to a substantial extent the control and monitoring of the implementing NGOs from PAGEV to the decentralized structures of Government.

In Ghana for instance, there is already an afforestation programme in place, the 'Greening Ghana Initiative', and a Government project for supplying pumps and pipes for riverbank irrigation. One interesting and highly relevant idea brought up at the PSC meeting was to attempt to get funding from the EU Water Facility for a project in the pilot area, which could be jointly developed for that particular purpose.

It is suggested by PAGEV now to organise annual joint workshops between the NGOs/PAGEV and the technical services at provincial and local level.

Already existing decentralised structures should be used rather than setting up new ones. Coordination with anticipated basin and local organisations set up under PAGIRE in Burkina Faso, and with the White Volta Basin Office in Ghana is particularly important in

this regard. In the latter case, the Basin Officer of the White Volta Basin Office is already taking part in the planning of the pilots on the Ghana side. No formal linkages are foreseen between PAGEV and PAGIRE with regard to the village committees and the CLEs³ respectively. Even if they are established at different levels and with different purposes, it could be beneficial to make use of goodwill and motivation created and experience gained at the two different levels.

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It is important that a longer time perspective is applied to the interventions; the activities should not be pushed through too quickly since this would involve the risk that the pilots may actually produce negative results. As an example, setting up, managing and maintaining a nursery is no easy thing, and over-promoting this may put sustainability and the image of the Project in the villages at risk. Substantial and long-term support will probably be needed to support and sustain the village nurseries; including basic and follow-up training for villagers in the actual operations, provision of inputs such as seeds and plastic bags, market analysis and monitoring

Finally, the knowledge base with regard to the actual availability of water in the river needs to be improved. The impression given when talking to villagers during the field visit in Ghana was that the influence of the Bagré Dam was considered positive; the availability of water is more regular than before the dam was constructed. Such basic conceptions, even when positive, should be substantiated. The establishment of required hydrometric stations on the river below the Bagré Dam is therefore essential.

2.1.6 Integration of cross-cutting issues

Poverty alleviation is the underlying main objective of Swedish development assistance and should be actively pursued by the Project. This is being addressed in the general sense that a better management of water resources will improve availability of water in a longer perspective, and through protection and improvement of the environment. In a more specific sense, the pilot interventions are well suited to address the poverty issue since they are located in villages where most people are poor. Creating direct benefits as well as improving livelihoods and the micro-economy in the villages through planting of economically valuable species will probably contribute to poverty alleviation. It is important, however, that the needs of the more marginalised groups in each pilot village are addressed specifically. It is important therefore that proper socioeconomic surveys, which were lacking at the time of the field visits, are carried out and that the results are incorporated in the planning.

The same applies to mainstreaming of gender issues and HIV/Aids; it will be mainly at the village committee level that these issues can be specifically addressed. There are women

³ CLEs: Comités Locaux de l'Eau or Local Water Committees.

members in the village committees, but the exact extent of their participation is not known. There are also, at least in Ghana, women's committees at village level and it may be considered to coordinate the Project activities with these committees. One specific example of addressing the HIV-Aids issue was observed during the field trip, with a poster depicting the fight against aids being displayed at the entrance to a village. This shows that the Project is doing something in this area but again, the extent of the work is not known.

Poverty alleviation and the integration of gender and HIV-Aids issues are specific points in the agreement between IUCN and Sida. They were substantially covered in the Project inception report, but this needs to be followed up also in the reporting. It is suggested, therefore, that they way the cross-cutting issues are being addressed by the Project be treated under a specific heading in future progress reporting from the Project.

2.2 Budget and financial reporting

A summary report of expenditure for 2004 and 2005 was provided in February 2006. According to the report, the Project had used 437 708 Euro, or 32% of the total budgeted funds up to the end of 2005.

An up-dated budget for the entire Project period was presented and discussed at the PSC meeting in March. Some errors in the budget were pointed out, and it was emphasized by the PSC that the budgeting and financial follow-up procedures and presentations need to be improved. A new budget was presented in April 2006 which shows substantial changes; amounts have been shifted between DGIS/WANI and Sida columns as well as between different budget lines.

At the PSC meeting it was decided that an audit be made, which would be presented before and discussed at the next PSC meeting scheduled for July 2006. It is also included in the agreement with Sida that an audit report and management letter shall be submitted to Sida not later than 30 April each year. Awaiting these reports, as well as the management response from IUCN, it is suggested that the PSC meeting will be the point at which the financial outlays of the Project so far as well as the budget be subject to a more in-depth analysis.

Some parts of the summary report of expenditure for 2004 and 2005 were discussed at the Annual Meeting with Sida. It was observed that 6,585 Euro had been spent on contingencies. This cost was for the employment of interns during a period when regular office staff was not available. It was agreed that in the future, any use of the contingency budget line would be subject to prior agreement with Sida.

2.3 Sustainability

The sustainability of Project outputs depends largely on the way it is possible to establish and enhance the linkages as described in Section 2.1.1.

As pointed out above, the spending in relation to budget so far has been low and it is not likely that the Project will spend the budgeted amounts within the agreed Project period. Considering the need to make sure that the interventions made by the Project are sustainable, neither is it desirable that it should. It will most likely then be appropriate with an extension of the Project period. The Project should approach Sida in this regard at the earliest.

There should already now be some forward thinking aiming at preparing for the post-project situation, including what activities should be continued in a new Project phase; what the linkages would be with other basin IWRM activities such as the VBA and the GEF project, and with national programmes such as PAGIRE in Burkina Faso and the on-going IWRM decentralisation programme in Ghana; and what the financing options for a new phase would be.

2.4 *Exchange of experience*

The opportunities for exchange of experience between PAGEV and other similar joint river basin projects have been discussed to a limited extent with the PAGEV stakeholders. Activities that could be relevant would be participation in meetings, and the organisation of study visits and joint training programmes. One interesting similar activity where there is relevant experience which could benefit PAGEV stakeholders would be the cooperation between the Governments of Zimbabwe and Mozambique in the Pungwe Basin. The Pungwe Project, which is just getting finalised, has produced a monograph on river basin conditions, a report on development scenarios and a strategy for joint management, along with capacity building and facilitation of stakeholder participation. This cooperation is presently moving into a new and more development oriented phase which will support investments, further capacity building and deepened stakeholder participation, and efforts to solve critical development issues relating to i.a. pollution and other environmental threats. Similarly, PAGEV would provide an interesting study object for stakeholders from the Pungwe Basin, particularly with regard to the pilot interventions and the local transboundary forum. Due to the present status of both projects, such study visits could be contemplated at the earliest for 2007.

Other river basins which could be contemplated for study visits include basins in West Africa, and the Nile Basin, where maybe particularly the Kagera River could be of particular interest, with a Sida-financed project being under implementation.

3. **Monitoring procedures**

It is suggested that the external monitoring be performed through a combination of study of Project documentation in Sweden, participation in selected Project meetings, and field visits.

3.1 Reports and documents

All relevant reports and documents produced under the Project should be made available by the Project to the monitoring consultant directly by e-mail. This would include the Annual Progress Report and the Completion Report, background documentation and minutes of PSC meetings, and important technical reports.

In relation to the Annual Progress Report one comment should be made. The report for 2005 uses a table format where the progress for each output and activity is presented. Percentages indicating degree of delivery are even given in many cases. This is clear and good, and makes it easy to assess the performance of the Project in relation to its objectives. However, the text section could be more elaborate and relate specifically to each of the outputs, providing more in-depth description and analyses of challenges and opportunities encountered as well as tying the project outputs to actual results.

3.2 Participation in meetings

It is suggested that the monitoring consultant participate in at least one meeting of the PSC annually and preferably also in the annual PAGEV/Sida review meeting. Field visits to the pilot intervention area should be performed at least once a year.