



World Water Day 2007: Coping with water scarcity

Africa faces Growing Water Scarcity

AfDB puts Water at the heart of Africa' Sustainable Development

- 1 African out of 3 lacks access to safe drinking water supply
- 1 African out of 2 lacks access to sanitation

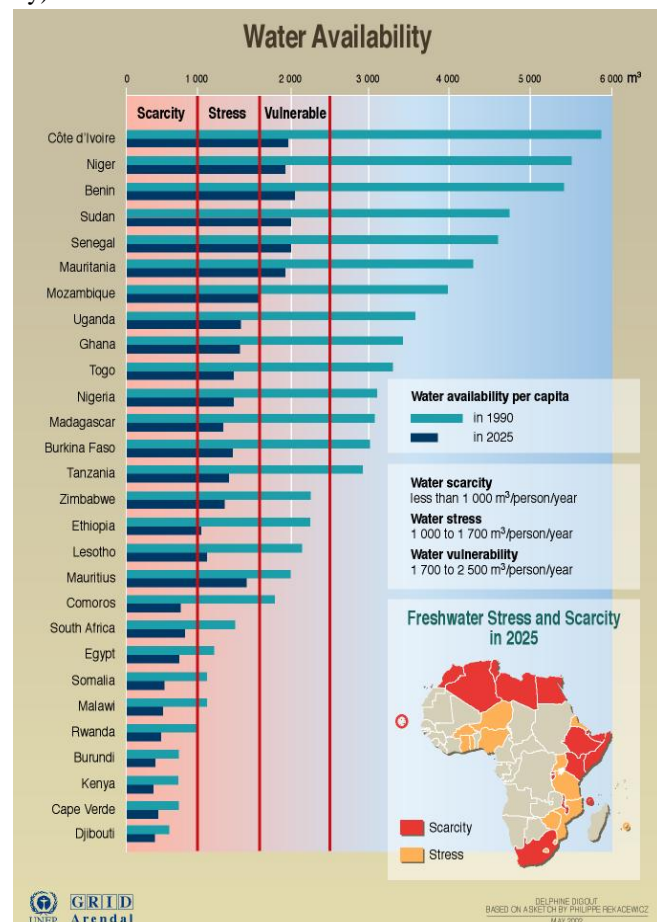
The African Development Bank Group prioritizes its Water and Sanitation operations to quench Africa's Thirst for more investments to the sector

Tunis, 22 March 2007 – Water is critical to Africa's sustainable development. In Africa, water lies at the centre of all life and touches every aspect of human endeavor, from environmental protection to food security, from the empowerment of women and the education of girls to reduction in productivity losses due to malnutrition. Africa suffers from growing water scarcity. While Africa uses only about 4 % of its renewable freshwater resources, water is becoming one of the most critical natural resource issues. Availability of water in Africa is highly variable. Only the humid tropical zones in central and West Africa have abundant water. However, many others already or soon will, face water stress (1700 m³ or less per person annually) or scarcity conditions (1 000 m³ or less per person annually).

Currently, 14 countries in Africa are subject to water stress or water scarcity, with those in northern Africa facing the worst prospects. This situation is getting worse as a consequence of rapid population growth, expanding urbanization, and increased economic development. A report by the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) predicts that by the year 2025, "25 African countries will be subject to water scarcity or water stress" and points out that those countries in Northern Africa will be facing the worst prospects. The North African annual average per capita water availability has dropped from 2,285 m³ in 1955 to 958 m³ in 1990 and is expected to reach 602 m³ by the year 2025¹. To meet the present and future water demands of the sub-region the available options are limited to either long distance water transfers from the southern aquifers to the coastal areas or large scale seawater desalination technology.

Temporal and spatial variability, compounded by unpredictability and climate change, are at the heart of resource insecurity, resulting in vulnerability and a strong impact on economic growth. To mitigate the temporal and spatial variability of the African climate, the challenge is to create an environment that attracts investment in water infrastructure to contain floods, create water storage capacity for flow regulation and make water available for productive use (water supply, food security, energy and environment)

Nevertheless even in the regions where water resources are more abundant, Africa faces investment scarcity.



Source: United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), Addis Ababa ; Global Environment Outlook 2000 (GEO), UNEP, Earthscan, London, 1999.

¹ Water transfer versus desalination in North Africa: sustainability and cost comparison Saad A. Alghariani, Alfateh University, Tripoli, Libya, March 2003

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This explains why the African Development Bank (AfDB) Group, the lead development finance institution on the continent, takes seriously the challenges imposed by the need for huge additional investments in water and sanitation on the continent. The Bank is prepared to face these challenges by sensitizing the international community and African governments on the magnitude of the need to invest in this sector and by mobilizing additional Bank Group resources to Water and Sanitation. The AfDB is also dealing with this challenge through the establishment and hosting of special water - related programs such as Rural Water Supply and Sanitation program, the African Water Facility, the Water Partnership Program, the NEPAD Water and Sanitation program and other bilateral supports.

The attainment of MDGs is very much related to water and it is clear at this moment that many African countries will not meet these goals in terms of poverty, health, education and gender mainly due to water and sanitation backlogs (see box). The AfDB Group's strategy as a response to this situation is to significantly increase water supply and sanitation financing; focus primarily on the poorest 65% of the population living in rural areas; provide some support for peri-urban areas, small and medium towns, focus specifically on urban sanitation, promote trans-boundary water resources management, support the enabling environment to attract more resources, build appropriate partnerships and harmonize its operations.

Under the ongoing AfDB's reforms, the first step in this strategy was the creation in July 2006 of dedicated Water and Sanitation Department to consolidate and enhance the AfDB's leading role in water sector activities in the region. In the last four years, the AfDB's financing in the water supply and sanitation increased considerably to reach over US\$ 330 million per annum between 2003 and 2006. It is expected that the 2007 financing will be 50% more than the year 2006, both in terms of the number of countries supported and the volume of financing. A 70% increase of staffing was allocated in the 2007 Budget to reinforce the capability of the department. The AfDB's Field Offices are strengthened by water sector staff. Moreover, support is received from partners as the Multi-donor Water Partnership Programme (MDWPP), financed by the Netherlands, Canada and Denmark, helping AfDB to develop implementation plans, guidelines and strategies to facilitate the preparation and implementation of water sector programmes and projects.

2007 Africa's Water Challenge in Numbers

- **340 million** people lack access to safe drinking water supply
- **497 million** lack access to adequate sanitation facilities
- **Low water storage capacity** of less than 50m³ per person compared to 3500m³ per person in Europe, and 6000 m³ in USA.
- **In total, only 3.8% of Africa's** total renewable water resources of 5,400 billion m³ are developed for water supply, irrigation and hydropower use.
- **80 trans-boundary water resources** to manage among its 53 countries
- **Total financial investment required** to meet the 2025 African Water Vision targets has been put at about **US\$20 billion per year.**

On the operational side, three main complementary Initiatives underpin the AfDB's strategy in the water sector, namely the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Initiative (RWSSI), the African Water Facility (AWF), and the NEPAD Water and Sanitation programme (NEPAD WSP).

The Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Initiative (RWSSI) supports African countries to reach the target of 80% access to safe water and sanitation in rural areas by 2015. Since 2003, The AfDB Group played a catalytic role by assisting the

Rural Water Supply & Sanitation Initiatives countries

- **14 benefiting countries to date:** Mali, Rwanda, Ghana, Benin, Senegal, Uganda, Madagascar, Ethiopia, Morocco, Chad, Tanzania, Mauritania, Zambia and Niger
- **Projected beneficiary countries in 2007:** Burkina Faso, Kenya, Mali (Second Programme), Mozambique, Nigeria
- **Total financing in 2006 :** US\$ 536 million
- **Expected Total Financing end 2007 :** US\$ 803 million for a total of 19 RWSSI programmes and projects
- **By 2010:** 32 million people will be served with safe drinking water, and that about 31 million people will benefit from proper sanitation facilities in rural areas.

partners in the field to scale-up their existing programmes in a collective effort to achieve the MDGs. In early 2007 AfDB approved 14 RWSS programmes and projects. By the end of 2010, it is anticipated that 32 million people will be served with safe drinking water. In 2006 the RWSSI Trust Fund, supported by contributions from France, Denmark, and the Netherlands, was established to complement existing AfDB resources and provide adequate financing to reach the MDGs. The use of the Trust Fund was initialised in February 2007 to support RWSSI in Niger.

Promoting trans-boundary water resources management and supporting the enabling environment to attract more resources are the main mandates of the [African Water Facility \(AWF\)](http://www.africanwaterfacility.org) (www.africanwaterfacility.org) led by the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) to mobilize resources for water in Africa and hosted by the AfDB since 2004. A total of 14 operational activities comprising projects and strategic regional initiatives were approved for a total investment of about Euro 9.0

million since the commencement of AWF Operations in 2006, implementing national Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM); support to develop national information, knowledge and monitoring systems on the water sector, trans-boundary water resources development initiatives; preparation of water and sanitation programmes, and small scale capital investment projects introducing innovative technologies. The AWF is also taking an active role, under the leadership of AMCOW, to develop national and regional framework on monitoring and evaluation, with all the partners concerned.

Le Groupe de la BAD comprend la Banque africaine de développement (BAD), le Fonds africain de développement (FAD) et le Fonds spécial du Nigeria. Il compte 53 pays membres régionaux et 24 pays membres non régionaux.

Les communiqués de presse sont également disponibles dans le site Web de la BAD : <http://www.afdb.org>

Regarding coordination and harmonization of water sector development activities, the AfDB also supports the NEPAD Water Supply and Sanitation programme.

Finally, sustainable and efficient implementation of the AfDB's Water and Sanitation activities is ensured by reinforced working relationships with major international partners and regional stakeholders. In December 2006, The AfDB hosted the First Dialogue between the United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB) and African Stakeholders to formulate a framework of collaboration between the UNSGAB and African key organizations in support of ongoing African water initiatives and programmes, including preparations for the 2008 International Year of Sanitation. The main outcome of the Dialogue is the design of specific joint actions by UNSGAB and African key institutions to achieve a breakthrough toward achieving the MDGs on water and sanitation in Africa. AfDB also partners with UN-Habitat to support access to water supply and sanitation in urban and peri-urban areas. The World Bank Water and Sanitation programme (WSP) established in 2006 a liaison office for water activities in Tunisia. Partnerships with bilateral donors are continuing and expanding. The AfDB Group knows that all forces joined to face water challenges on the continent. Water is life and the African Development Bank Group understands this and it is turning the tap on for everybody.