

CASE STUDY

IMPLEMENTATION WATER GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENT BLUE DEAL IN ROMANIA AND KENYA

*Johan Remijn**

■ According to the World Resource Institute the world's water systems face formidable threats. More than a billion people currently live in water-scarce regions, and as many as 3.5 billion could experience water scarcity by 2025. Increasing pollution degrades freshwater and coastal aquatic ecosystems. And climate change is poised to shift precipitation patterns and speed glacial melt, altering water supplies and intensifying floods and drought.

Since the 1980s, Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) was implemented (Sustainable Development Goal 6.5), whereby the protection and restoration of water-based ecosystems (Sustainable Development Goal 6.6) has been given a stronger position. Also in the Netherlands concerning IWRM there are still a lot of things to work on. Still sectoral work is key at a number of places and insufficient attention is paid to the organization of the creative process whereby integrated solutions are achieved by integrating water related issues and spatial quality.

Regional Water Authority (RWA) Rijnland participated in the implementation of a number of Blue Deal Government Assessments, for instance in Romania and Kenya. In this case study the lessons learnt concerning the implementation of Water Governance Assessments in Romania and Kenya are exposed.

Governance assessment Jiu Region Romania

Part of the Blue Deal starting up process for an international partnership is a Governance Assessment. There are four regional partnerships formed in Romania. The partnership in the Jiu Region is one of them.

Romania is one of the EU countries with the lowest water availability per capita. Water demand is expected to increase in the future, mostly from irrigation due to the

increasing frequency and magnitude of droughts. At this moment 62% (1,863,392 ha) of the irrigation schemes are not viable.

The partnership between the Dutch RWA (Rijnland, Noorderzijlvest, Limburg, Hunze and AA's) and Jiu Water Basin Administration in Craiova focuses on the problem of desertification in the Craiova region as a result of climate change and an obsolete, economical unviable and malfunctioning irrigation system.

The rehabilitation of drought affected areas, the increase of number of temporary rivers, the expansion of the arid areas in South West of Romania, are issues/topics known not only for Oltenia region but also in other areas of the country. All these situations require some decisions regarding integrated water management in the affected areas.

Overall, the combination of adaptation measures will have to strike a right balance between agricultural productivity and sustainable water management.

In each river basin there are the water management plans but the proposed measures involve agreement and the effective participation of local communities, land owners, state institutions and the administrators of protected areas. In this context the implementation of these plans through the implementation of rehabilitation

* **Johan Remijn**, procesmanager bij hoogheemraadschap van Rijnland.



Desertification in the Craiova Region in Romania, visit DWA September 2018.

measures in certain areas, the projects of rehabilitation/ restoration of wetlands are in deadlock due to the refusal of landowners to cooperate in such projects/activities. This is the reason why a methodology of wetlands recovery, with the involvement of all stakeholders, could be beneficial for the river basin administrations.

Based on this, choices have been made for the interventions to be implemented. The Theory of Change (ToC) is leading.¹ Basis for this are the “Building blocks for good water governance” of the Water Governance Center and the twelve principles of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Four work packages have been developed from the ToC and can be found throughout the program:

- 1** Technical knowledge and capacities: strengthening and developing technical knowledge and capacities in water management
- 2** Institutional: institutional and organizational improvements to achieve good water management
- 3** Relational: cooperating, organizing participation and generating support among the local stakeholders
- 4** Program coordination: activities to implement the partnership adequately (within budget, on time and with the right quality)



Water Governance Assessment in Romania, September 2018.



BLUE DEAL

The Blue Deal agreement (2018) between the water boards and central government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management) aimed at strengthening the international capacity of the Dutch Regional water Authorities to international projects.

The Blue Deal projects have the ambition to reach 20 million people in 40 water catchment areas. The focus is on a better

protection against floods, more access to water and better water quality. At the moment the RWA's boards have set up international partnerships in 11 countries worldwide and a number of partnerships are under construction. These projects are carried out with various other Dutch and foreign organizations. All partnerships are based on the equality of the partners. The collaboration focusing on a long relationship between the partners, till 2030.

Partnerships are the backbone of the Blue Deal program. A partnership is based on cooperation between partners based on a joint agreement. Such a work form is very ambitious because it reaches much further than the work forms that were used historically such as consultation, participation and representation. Working together in partnerships requires commitment and responsibility on both sides.

Lessons learnt in Romania

To identify in which layer (Knowledge and expertise, Institutional or Relational) the biggest challenges occur, on the basis of which interventions can be constructed, each project starts with a Governance Assessment.

The first experiences with performing a governance assessment in Romania (Jiu Water Basin Administration in Craiova) learned that the context in which an assessment is carried out is essential for its success. The existing cultural values play an important role in this. It is therefore not the case that a model that works quite well in the Netherlands can simply be rolled out into a different culture.

Large power distances exist in Romania. This means that for the purpose of a creative workshop, the break up into small groups, which is common in the Dutch approach, is not always appreciated by the management. Working in groups can pose risks for employees who are lower positioned in the organization. As a result, communication cannot go smoothly. A solution can be to focus attention on

senior management instead of a group approach. It is important to investigate what is going on in the rest of the organization.

Another lesson learnt in Romania was that it is important to emphasize that not everything is perfectly arranged in the Netherlands. There was a tendency by the Romania partner in the first stage to rate almost all aspects of the work packages too high. By indicating our own situation on these aspect, the scores were adjusted downwards in many cases.

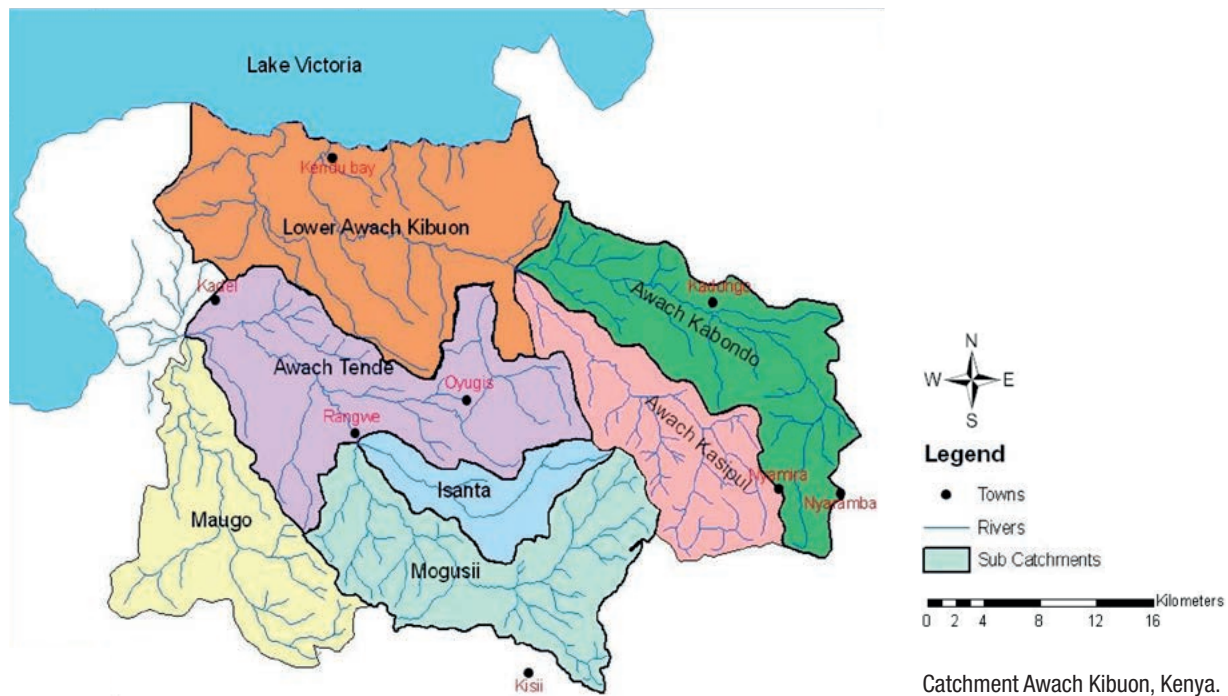
It was also emphasized that this Government Assessment is a self assessment that can be used to determine which interventions could have the most effect on the organization. Intervening on the relational layer may be an effective approach. The relevant stakeholders to be consulted are The National Administration Romanian Waters, the Romanian National Agency of Land Reclamation, large agricultural commercial farms and commercial companies (holdings), Romanian Irrigation and Drainage Water Users Associations, County Council Dolj, Environmental Protection Agency Dolj, University of Craiova Horticulture Faculty, Mayors of localities from the area affected by drought, Research and development Station for plant culture on sand from Dabuleni and NGO's.

Water Governance assessment in Kenya

RWA Rijnland was also involved in a Government Assessment in Kenya. The lessons learnt from



Water Governance assessment carried out by DWA for the partnership with Water Resources Authority Lake Victoria South Catchment Area and Homawasco, Homa Bay Count in Kisumu Kenya in 2019.



Romania were used to organize and plan the water governance assessment in Kenya. In this partnership DWA (RWA Rijnland, De Stichtse Rijnlanden, Aa en Maas en Brabantse Delta) together with Drinking Water Company Dunea and the Dutch Laboratory AQUON worked on a water governance assessment with Water Resource Authority Kenya, District Lake Victoria South and Water chain company Homawasco in Homa Bay.

The Awach Kibuo catchment was selected as a pilot.

Awach Kibuo river water is used for domestic and agricultural purposes. Homa Wasco is abstracting water from the river in Kendu Bay to produce drinking water. The drinking water plant in Kendu Bay was rehabilitated in 2018 which was part of the Waterworx program executed by drinking watercompany Dunea in cooperation with Amref Flying Doctors. The major problems concerning the waterquality of the Awach Kubuo river are high turbidity, nutrients, pesticides and domestic effluents.

High sediment loads are undesirable for activities down stream. Because of the high turbidity the influent water in Kendu Bay has to be treated with chemicals. High sediment loads have also direct deteriorating effects on the fish spawning areas. A trend of prolonged low flows would affect the performance of irrigation schemes and pose risks for the downstream habitats.

Deterioration of the water quality in Lake Victoria would have consequence on the flourishing

commercial fishery providing income and food to a large number of local people. Yet nutrient build-up is increasing in Lake Victoria. A direct effect of eutrophication in Lake Victoria is the spread of the water hyacinth in the Lake and other water bodies in its catchment. Many activities such as fishing, transport and recreation are being hampered and efforts to control its spread have proved largely unsuccessful up to now.

Traditionally, many projects of the Dutch water authorities have focused on the transfer of Dutch technical knowledge and expertise (the content layer). By performing a Water Governance Assessment, more attention is paid to the other work packages, namely the institutional layer and the relational layer. This will in many cases increase the effectiveness of the partnership.

In addition, the Blue Deal is having a 12-year horizon. In the first phase the partnership is build or strengthened. In the second phase plans are made. In the third phase plans are implemented. This Blue Deal approach differs from the traditional approach. It turned out that in Kenya the partners had to get used to this Blue Deal approach. Kenya was focusing on building physical infrastructure. The first phase of the Blue Deal is not focusing on building physical infrastructure.

In the water governance assessment in Kenya the Dutch Team found out solutions could be found in the adoption of a proper Integrated Water Resource



Waterhyacint floating on lake Victoria at the inlet for drinking water in Homa Bay Kenya.

Management (IWRM) approach focusing on empowerment of communities with proven technology, information on opportunities and financial resources to make the best investment decisions in land and water management. Income generating and value adding activities are necessary to provide incentives for adoption. The focus for the Blue Deal Project should therefore in the first stage be more on the institutional layer and not on the content layer. It turned out that this Blue Deal Project approach was not in line with the Kenyan wishes for investments in physical infrastructure. Therefore the Dutch team had to decide not to start the project with Water Resource Authority Lake Victoria South Catchment Area and the other partners.

The Blue Deal water governance assessment turned out to be a useful instrument. In Romania we found out it is important to take into account the local cultural values. Another lesson learnt in Romania was that it is important to relate to the Dutch situation in which we also face challenges.

In Kenya the Blue Deal water governance assessment was helping to expose the Kenyan need for IWRM. The assessment helped the Dutch partners to focus on the right issues to work on in Kenya. A governance assessment can help to discuss the right issues and the right stakeholders. Therefore a water governance assessment can help to prevent that the wrong decisions are made.

1 zie ook publicatie The Blue Deal Water: clean, sufficient and safe water for 20 million people van Emilie Sturm e.a. in Water Governance 02/2018. ■