

Fabien Hountondji is the Acting Coordinator for the Global Water Partnership in Benin which seeks to promote Integrated Water Resource Management for Benin. He shared his views on water management plans for Benin, during the Kigali Forum for Wetlands, which took place from 8 to 12, July 2013.

UNEP-TEEB: *What have you identified as the main information and capacity needs required in order to develop a water management plan for Benin?*

Fabien Hountondji : Developing good plans requires good information and reliable data sources. At the moment in Benin, existing data is scattered and where it is available it is limited to a few specific sectors. What we need is data that can enable inter-sectoral management. In addition we don't have enough people with the knowledge and skills for water management. For example even though we have a couple of specialists trained to analyze and interpret bathymetric data, that is essential for developing a Delta plan, these specialists were trained on old devices and their technical knowledge needs to be upgraded so that they can use the new devices.



“Networking is essential to share best practices and learn from others. We don't always need to import technologies, when there are best practices that are appropriate and can be adapted to a local context”

UNEP-TEEB: *Political commitment is necessary for the adoption and implementation of water management plans. How do you ensure this information reaches policy makers?*

Fabien Hountondji : The development of an integrated management plan for water resources in Benin is lead by the Ministry in charge of water, in collaboration with other key ministries in charge of sanitation, agriculture environment and energy. We see ourselves as merely accompanying this process through advocacy, capacity building and mobilization of the different stakeholders. A National Water Council was set up by the lead ministry and this body ensures that all the important stakeholders are represented.

UNEP-TEEB: *What are your views on the notion that there are various knowledge tools available to countries but that the application of these tools remains a challenge?*

Fabien Hountondji : I think it is important to put an emphasis on capacity building so that all major stakeholders are aware about the need of sustainable water management. In my view we still need to raise awareness, upgrade the existing knowledge, improve available tools and train the right people.

UNEP-TEEB: *What is the main take home message for you after attending this conference on wise use smart plans for wetlands?*

Fabien Hountondji : The theme of this conference was well chosen as we need to be smart about using wetlands. The Forum was a great platform for exchanging ideas and I am happy we have come up with initiatives, which are the outputs of the various brainstorming sessions. The main take home messages for me are that we need capacity building. If you are not informed you can't act. Secondly networking is essential to share best practices and learn from others. We don't always need to import technologies, when there are best practices that are appropriate and can be adapted to a local context. For example the Sahel countries such as Mali and Burkina Faso have faced drought problems and the techniques/technologies they have developed to cope with and be resilient can be shared with the southern, subtropical regions/countries such as Benin now facing diminishing rainfall.