

#4- 2023 POLICY BRIEFS

Structuring Action: **WAIDMAs** (West African Irrigation Development and Management Agencies)

Project: Project ownership and engineering of hydro-agricultural infrastructures

How can the competences of the West African Irrigation Development and Management Agencies (WAIDMAs) be strengthened so that they have the methods and tools they need to fully carry out their role as project owners?

The purpose of WAIDMAs is primarily to mobilise water for the development of rural areas to achieve self-sufficiency in rice. To this end, these organisations have played a central role in the development of water mobilisation and distribution infrastructures as project owners delegated by the State and sometimes as project managers or even construction companies. By strengthening their project ownership skills, they should be able to become major actors in the Sahel Irrigation Initiative and thus make a full contribution to the development objectives for irrigation in the Sahel as set out in the Dakar Declaration of October 2013.



KEY MESSAGES

1/ Analysing the profession of project ownership is complex due to the diversity of the subjects it covers and the variety of possible organisations to carry it out. Efforts are needed to clarify and communicate on the division of responsibilities among WAIDMA services and staff;

2/ Dissatisfaction among WAIDMA personnel has been observed with regard to developments that have been completed or are underway in terms of design, command of the works, and the sharing of skills, responsibilities and technical, administrative, legal and financial experience within the WAIDMAs;

3/ In order for WAIDMAs to exercise their project ownership role effectively, there needs to be: better consultation within and outwith the WAIDMAs in order to design projects according to the needs of the stakeholders; better selection and monitoring of companies, and; effective mobilisation of funds (funding agencies, the State, banks) to ensure that projects run smoothly;

4/ A WAIDMA's degree of autonomy is a factor that influences the diligence and quality with which it carries out its project ownership missions;

5/ Progress could be made by introducing specific tools to assess the WAIDMAs' project ownership performance over and above their indirect performance indicators. Evaluation tools such as the Irrigation of the Future (IoF) tool developed by the World Bank should also be tested at WAIDMA level so that they can adopt it;

6/ With their West African Network (ROA-SAGI), the WAIDMAs should take ownership of all the elements of the action plan resulting from this COSTEA action and continue the project ownership work that they carry out.

ISSUES AT STAKE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ACTION

This project follows on from a pre-identification in 2018 by the WAIDMAs of their needs as project owners, with a refocus on the technical dimensions of performing project ownership. The restructuring of the WAIDMAs, which has sometimes been carried out as a 'forced march' under structural adjustment policies, has deprived them of a large part, if not for some of them all, of their competences and resources, including the competences that help them to perform their role of ownership of projects and programmes in their territories. These competences include engineering skills, resulting in an inability to plan, study and carry out their missions as defined in their public mandates. The WAIDMAs are currently faced with engineering challenges related to technical and economic choices in connection with their developments and the diversification of know-how towards other types of developments (basins, valley bottoms, etc.). They are also faced with challenges in terms of human resources to plan developments, identify new areas of intervention, anticipate programming and feasibility studies, draw up investment programmes and take account of management issues. Finally, they must confront new challenges, such as environmental and climatic issues, and the need to develop participatory approaches at different levels: diagnosis, design and management.

The importance of high-quality project ownership for the effective - and financially efficient - management of the development programmes entrusted to them by governments is evident. However, the WAIDMAs' loss of their engineering competence (see the process described in the diagnostic study carried out by COSTEA for 11 WAIDMAs) has been to the detriment of their ability to carry out this major component of their mandate. The WAIDMAs need to be able to rely on in-house expertise to be able to make the 'right' investment choices with full knowledge of the facts and by weighing up external opinions, whether in terms of development or for the selection of suppliers, consultancy firms and works companies.

Taking into account the national institutional and legal framework, the prerogatives in terms of WAIDMA project ownership and their relations with other rural development actors, the general objective of this WAIDMA project was thus to advance the analysis, share points of view and ultimately open up avenues of action to strengthen project ownership skills with the aim of increasing the WAIDMAs' impact on the optimisation and sustainability of developments.

The specific objective of the project was to analyse the current WAIDMA project ownership missions, to classify these missions according to whether they are specific (not covered by the project) or generic to the WAIDMAs (subject of the project), and to propose a common roadmap (detailed action plan). The latter was intended to strengthen the WAIDMAs' capacities and activities in the field of project ownership extended to the technical management (operation and maintenance) and commercial management (contracting, invoicing and collection) of the water service.

PRESENTATION OF THE METHODOLOGY AND CONTEXTUAL ELEMENTS

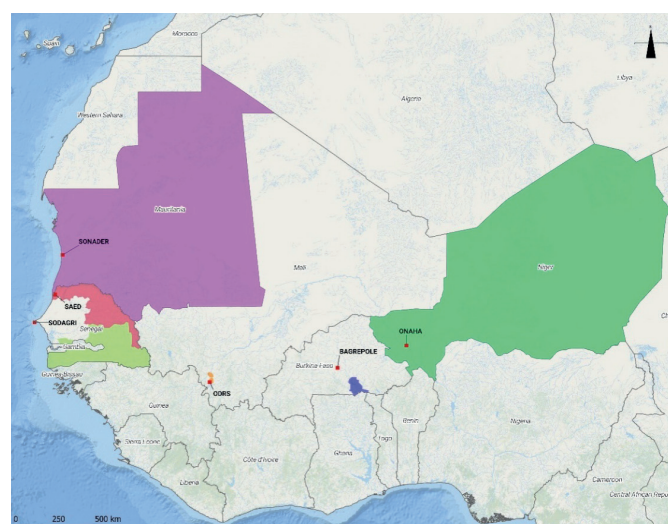
The 'Project ownership and engineering of hydroagricultural infrastructures' study took place over a duration of one year between May 2021 and May 2022. It was carried out in four stages:

- 1) Data collection and documentary review which was integrated into COSTEA's online bibliographical database;
- 2) Diagnoses, analyses and classification of the WAIDMAs' project ownership missions by topic: general management, monitoring and evaluation, implementation-works, upkeep-maintenance, human resources;
- 3) Workshops to share the diagnosis and propose actions;
- 4) Drawing up and quantification of an action plan discussed and shared at a feedback workshop.

Six out of the 12 WAIDMAs were involved in this project: ONAHA (Niger), SONADER (Mauritania), ODRS (Mali), BAGREPOLE (Burkina Faso), SAED (Senegal) and SODAGRI (Senegal). One contributing expert per WAIDMA was integrated into the team formed by the consortium made up of the French regional development agencies (SARs), CACG and SCP. The main role of the contributing experts was to represent their WAIDMA in this project on the theme of project ownership-engineering. They were therefore a source of data on the WAIDMAs and a force for analysis and proposals.

The objective of improving project ownership responds to the main problem identified, namely the lack of sustainability of hydro-agricultural infrastructures.

Zones of intervention of the six WAIDMAs concerned



WAIDMA perimeter

- BAGREPOLE
- ODRS
- ONAHA
- SAED
- SODAGRI
- SONADER

● Location of the WAIDMAs

Sources : CACG_ESRI
 Made : CACG_Juill 2022
 Projection : WG584

The diagnosis of the six WAIDMAs concerned highlighted a number of similarities but also the specific characteristics of the WAIDMAs which could have an impact on their project ownership mission.

Among the similarities identified, the following general points may be recalled:

- Most of the WAIDMAs are under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture, with the exception of BAGREPOLE (Prime Minister);
- The WAIDMAs use practically the same working tools;
- All of the WAIDMAs have well-defined zones of intervention;
- personnel management is handled by the WAIDMAs.

The specificities concern the following points:

- Their legal statuses are not the same which has a significant impact on their financial capacity and autonomy;
- The WAIDMAs are not structured in the same way and have different operating procedures (organisation charts);
- The level of involvement of the various internal services in project ownership activities differs from one WAIDMA to another;
- All of the WAIDMAs hire companies and consultants to carry out works and to monitor and supervise them. Only ONAHA carries out works on its own account, while others have abandoned this aspect of their activities (SAED, for example).

The results of the surveys on targets within the WAIDMAs highlighted strengths and weaknesses in various areas.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT / DEVELOPMENT	
Strengths	All of the WAIDMAs have experience in managing developments, but at different levels. The status and organisation of each WAIDMA also have an impact, which can be positive or negative, on the implementation of project ownership activities by the different WAIDMAs.
Weaknesses	The stumbling blocks common to the various WAIDMAs are the lack of qualified staff, and of financial and material resources to carry out project ownership activities, and staff capacity building. There are also difficulties with external actors such as funding agencies (procurement procedures), companies and consultants (failings in works and studies).
HUMAN RESOURCES / MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E)	
Strengths	ODRS, SONADER and SAED have sufficient experience to ensure the M&E of their project ownership, unlike ONAHA, SODAGRI and BAGREPOLE, which need support in the process of setting up M&E.
Weaknesses	ONAHA, SODAGRI and BAGREPOLE have a greater need in the process of setting up an M&E department, as well as for reinforced staff and the necessary financial resources.
MAINTENANCE	
Strengths	All of the WAIDMAs have a service responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of hydro-agricultural infrastructures.
Weaknesses	For some of the WAIDMAs, such as SODAGRI, the maintenance service is limited to pumping and agricultural equipment, which means that it needs to be restructured to take on the maintenance of hydro-agricultural facilities.

On the basis of this very detailed diagnosis (please refer to the reports), three main stages needed to improve the WAIDMAs' project ownership functions have been defined, as well as the current problems they face at each of these stages:

Improve cross-functionality within the WAIDMAs: project ownership for the development of hydro-agricultural facilities is a WAIDMA responsibility **requiring diverse skills** (technical, administrative, legal, financial) based on experience, shared within the WAIDMA between different staff. Managing interfaces within the WAIDMAs is therefore a crucial factor in improving project ownership. However, the WAIDMAs currently have to:

- deal with a lack of stakeholder mobilisation for each stage and process;
- decompartmentalise activities and improve the flow of information, with the need for a global vision, even though the internal organisational dichotomy between activities for financed projects and public services amplifies this compartmentalisation;
- overcome the lack of financial autonomy, with the WAIDMAs feeling that external partners, including funding agencies, impose conditions that are not always justified from their point of view;
- deal with a certain degree of political interference.

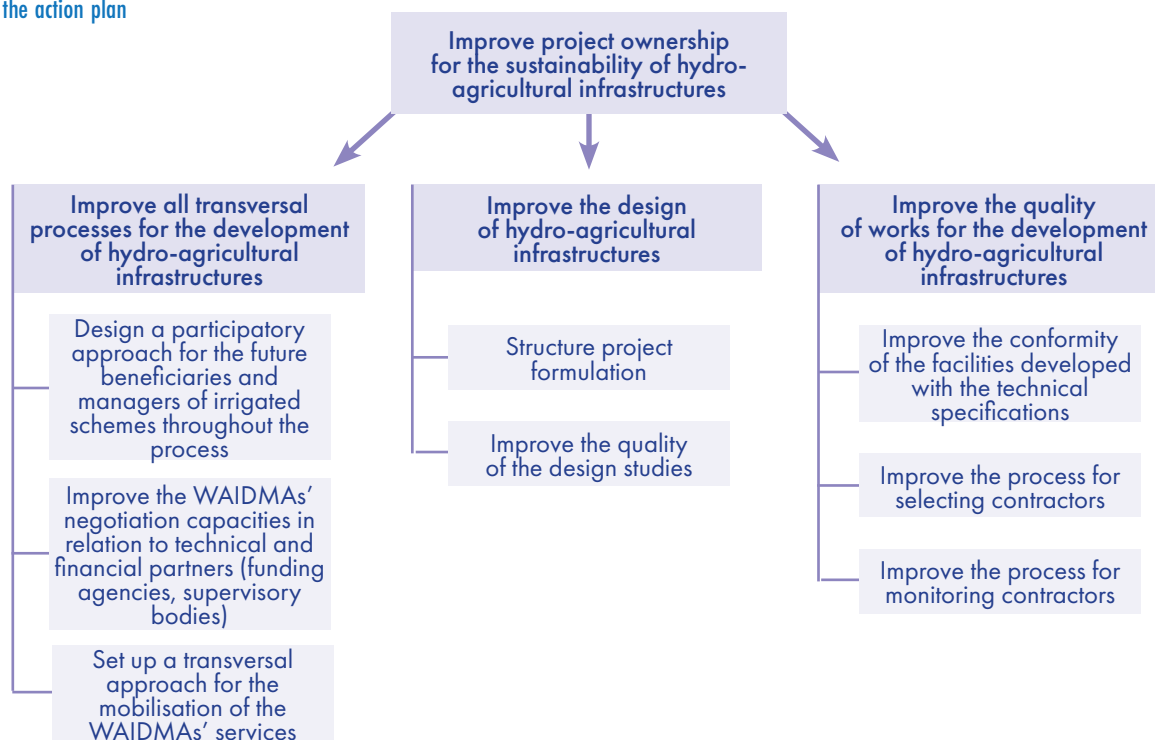
Improve the design phase of developments: identify the need, identify the services required and draw up the programme. The WAIDMAs currently face the following problems:

- specific difficulties at the project formulation stage resulting from a lack of identification of responsibilities, a lack of consultation with stakeholders, and a lack of structuring of the design process in relation to the acceptability and sustainability of the investment;
- a sometimes wait-and-see attitude;
- design errors on the part of the companies in charge of design and construction;
- failure to take account of external factors (e.g. land, economics, sustainability, acceptability);
- difficulties in identifying the need, identifying the services required and drawing up the programme;
- the choice of technical specifications for hydro-agricultural developments;
- the failure of external parties (e.g. consultancy firms) to capitalise on achievements;
- difficulties in following project ownership studies.

Improve the development construction phase: this involves carrying out the works proposed in the previous phase. These activities are performed in collaboration with other WAIDMA collaborators (internal and external), in particular the project manager (referred to as the 'consultancy firm') and the works companies. At this level, the WAIDMAs face the following problems:

- discrepancies between the execution and the specifications;
- difficulties in selecting service providers and companies and in awarding contracts;
- projects operating as PMUs, as imposed by the funding agencies, with a lack of anchoring in the WAIDMAs;

Objectives of the action plan



- a lack of continuity and presence of the project owner in the monitoring of the works;
- difficulties in implementing decisions on the works on site, with complex interfaces.

Improving the exercise of project ownership with a view to ensuring the sustainability of hydro-agricultural developments therefore involves improving their design, improving the cross-cutting processes involved in producing them, and improving the quality of the execution of the works to build them. On the basis of the detailed information gathered during the diagnosis and the consultations that followed, actions have therefore been proposed as the common core of priority actions to be carried out as a result of the reflections of the six WAIDMAs on their project ownership ('technical' section).

The action plan formulated as part of this project to strengthen the WAIDMAs' competences includes 23 actions linked to three main objectives and eight specific objectives. The following illustration presents the main and specific objectives to which this action plan responds.

Once the 23 actions had been formulated, they were quantified and prioritised. One or more monitoring indicators were proposed for each action. All of this information and the detailed action sheets are available in the synthesis report of the study.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY, KEY MESSAGES AND LIMITS OF THE APPROACH

The analyses resulting from the WAIDMA project ownership action have enabled COSTEA to provide the WAIDMAs with a detailed action plan designed to strengthen their competences in the field of project ownership, and also to formulate a number of messages and recommendations. In this sense, they meet COSTEA's objective of aiming to strengthening the economic and social development of irrigated areas by improving the WAIDMAs' project ownership to help make hydro-agricultural developments more sustainable. These messages and recommendations also make it possible to support WAIDMAs through change by proposing innovations, particularly in terms of methods and tools, as shown by some of the actions formulated as part of this project.

The actions proposed in the action plan cover several areas associated with the three main stages necessary to improve the WAIDMAs' project ownership functions, as described previously: the WAIDMAs' resources and skills, the degree of autonomy in procedures and choices, the resources mobilised to monitor, report and build trust between stakeholders, the availability of quality external resources (e.g. companies, suppliers, audit offices), and the socio-economic and political context of the countries concerned.

Prior to the action plan, which was voluntarily limited in scope, many elements and opinions on the subject of project ownership were collected through surveys within the WAIDMAs and then debates within the team, which made it possible to develop six key messages conveyed by COSTEA on this subject:



- 1/ Analysing the profession of **project ownership is complex due to the diversity of the subjects it covers** and the variety of organisations to carry it out. The exact scope of the exercise of project ownership by the individual, the department/service or even the WAIDMA, in relation to the limits of responsibilities, varies from one WAIDMA to another, and is sometimes poorly understood. This project has made it possible to clarify how the six WAIDMAs exercise their competence and responsibility as project owners, the similarities, differences, strengths and weaknesses. Project ownership is complex and is acquired through experience. It needs to be explained and appropriated at all levels within the WAIDMA. The lessons learned from this project should be widely shared within the WAIDMAs. Work should also be undertaken to widely disseminate the results beyond the WAIDMAs.
- 2/ **Dissatisfaction among WAIDMA personnel has been observed with regard to developments that have been completed or are underway** in terms of design, command of the works and the sharing of technical, administrative, legal and financial skills, responsibilities and experience within the WAIDMAs. Managing interfaces within the WAIDMA is a crucial factor to improve project ownership; it is part of the WAIDMAs' roles, from top management to the teams. Managing the competences and human resources of project ownership is a major issue because the effective exercise of project ownership depends to a large extent on experience. Project ownership functions could be improved by setting up a genuine training plan that focuses largely on sharing experience between WAIDMAs and between WAIDMAs and French regional development agencies (SARs). This would be in line with SAED's partnership approaches with CACG/BRL/SCP, the example of which could be replicated with other WAIDMAs.
- 3/ In order for WAIDMAs to exercise their project ownership role effectively, there needs to be: **better consultation within and outwith the WAIDMAs** to adapt projects to stakeholders' needs; **better selection and monitoring of companies**, and; **effective mobilisation of funds** (funding agencies, the State, banks) to ensure that projects run smoothly. It is crucial to ensure an iterative loop for participation and feedback from upstream of the project (expression of need) to downstream (commissioning then operation).
- 4/ **A WAIDMA's degree of autonomy is a factor that influences the diligence and quality** with which it carries out its project ownership missions. The distribution of roles and responsibilities within the WAIDMAs and externally (for example: supervisory body, project ownership assistance, project management control) are crucial factors for success. A perfect knowledge of project ownership tasks and their clear distribution between structures and people are keys to success. Procedures manuals are increasingly used to clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties. They should be able to evolve and make use of the results of this project. Inter WAIDMA exchanges on procedures manuals could be envisaged.
- 5/ Progress could be made by **introducing specific tools to assess the WAIDMAs' project ownership** performance over and above their indirect performance indicators. On this subject, in the continuity of the 'north/south' partnerships

between development agencies and in accordance with the requirements of the supervisory bodies and technical and financial partners, the WAIDMAs have set up monitoring and evaluation units (or people dedicated to do so). They are fairly recent. They propose methods and tools to monitor and evaluate WAIDMA activities and their results. Indicators of progress or of results specialised by topic or by WAIDMA 'function' (for example, project ownership) do not exist as such. One of our project's recommendations, relayed by ROA-SAGI, would be to set up a monitoring system and thematic progress indicators for all WAIDMA projects. The IoF planning and management tool developed by the World Bank would also be worth testing in partnership with WAIDMA staff so that they could adopt it and use it to assess the improvement of their performance.

6/ With their West African Network (ROA-SAGI), the WAIDMAs should take ownership of all the elements of the action plan resulting from this COSTEA action and continue their project ownership work. ROA-SAGI has an important role to play in taking charge of the action plan of this project, lobbying, supporting actions and disseminating results, among others. It is strongly recommended that ROA-SAGI operationalise the thematic groups that it planned to set up further to the WAIDMA workshop of Saly in 2022, which would also make it possible to reach the other WAIDMAs that could unfortunately not be involved in this project ownership project.

Limits of the approach

A number of limits related to this project can, however, be pointed out, in particular the fact that it did not address certain aspects which are also a project ownership responsibility, whether directly or by delegation: water management, the upkeep and maintenance of hydro-agricultural developments, and pricing. These last two subjects are also dealt with by PARIIS. A link between the four WAIDMA projects and the PARIIS studies is necessary, in particular through ROA-SAGI. The WAIDMA project ownership function is also transversal to two of the WAIDMA structuring action projects: land tenure and transfer. The seminar organised by ROA-SAGI in May 2022, bringing together the teams of the four WAIDMA SA projects, provided an opportunity to share the initial results, but only the 'project ownership' project proposed an action plan. Specific work could be carried out between the projects in order to clarify links and coordinate future action plans that could result from the three other projects.

COSTEA OUTPUTS IN RELATION WITH THE STUDY

- Inception report (www.comite-costea.fr/actions/sagi)
- Syntheses and comparative analysis of the project ownership roles of WAIDMAs with a documentary inventory (www.comite-costea.fr/actions/sagi)
- Diagnostic reports (www.comite-costea.fr/actions/sagi)
- Final synthesis and recommendations (www.comite-costea.fr/actions/sagi)
- Comparative analysis of large-scale irrigation management structures in West Africa, Morocco and France (www.comite-costea.fr/actions/sagi)
- Comparative diagnosis of 11 West African Irrigation Development and Management Agencies (AMVS, ANADER, BAGRÉPÔLE, ODRS, ON, ONAHA, OPIB, ORS, SAED, SODAGRI, SONADER) www.comite-costea.fr/production/diagnostic-compare-de-11-societes-damenagement-et-de-gestion-de-lirrigation-en-afrique-de-louest-amvs-anader-bagrepole-odrs-on-onaha-opib-ors-saed-sodagri-sonader
- Documentary database (www.comite-costea.fr/base-documentaire-eau-et-agriculture)