

TRANSBOUNDARY GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT IN SUB SAHARAN AFRICA
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Transboundary water systems cover approximately 61% of Africa's landmass and it is estimated that 77% of the African population lives in these systems which represent 93% of the available surface water in Africa. Thus far, International River Basin Organizations (IRBOs) are being established in order to manage in an optimum manner the scarce water resources. Integrated Water Resources Management is weak in these IRBOs as most often groundwater and the dependency of people from it is neglected. Furthermore, Climate variability is worsening the situation which translates in lowering the already low standard of living of a huge number of rural Sub Sahara African communities.

It is clear that for the development of the African Continent, these systems need to be investigated scientifically and that at a political level, transboundary cooperation for their sound development and overall management need to be established.

ISARM was launched at the 14th Session of the Intergovernmental Council of the International Hydrological Programme of UNESCO in June 2002. Recognising transboundary aquifer systems as an important source of fresh water (particularly under arid and semi-arid climatic conditions) the IHP Council adopted Resolution No. XIV-12. ISARM Africa was initiated in 2002 at the International Workshop on "Managing Shared Aquifer Resources in Africa" (Tripoli, 2-4 June 2002). More than 200 experts of different disciplines from 30 countries and from regional and international organisations and associations attended the meeting. As a result a first TBA system atlas was born. Since then UNESCO has lead initiatives in West and Southern Africa with two new networks being established, ISARM SADC and ISARM West Africa. The Third Conference on Managing Shared Aquifer Resources in Africa, Tripoli 25-27 May 2008, was the latest step for the inventory efforts and for the ISARM Africa network to share and disseminate it work.

The presentation will give the overall picture in sub Sahara Africa and will focus on the ISARM initiatives in West and Southern Africa.