

Mali - Elaboration of the Integrated and Sustainable Development Plan for the Sankarani Basin and its Strategic Environmental Assessment

Context

The Sankarani basin is shared between Guinea and Mali. Most of the basin in Mali is located in the Yanfolila circle. The communes of Baya, Sankarani and Tagandougou, are all located on the edge of the Sélingué dam reservoir. The area has significant economic, environmental and socio-cultural potential, thanks in particular to the presence of fertile land, the diversity of natural, biological and fishery resources, abundant pastures and the existence of tourist sites. The construction of the Sélingué dam and its reservoir (2 billion m³) in 1982, although an infrastructure representing modernity, has generated certain negative impacts such as the relocation of several villages, the destruction of part of the biodiversity of the area, as well as the proliferation of water-borne diseases.

Additional challenges for the area, particularly for the rural communes of Baya, Tagandougou and Sankarani, include sustainable food security, access to drinking water, health care and a healthy living environment in the face of growing demographic pressure, and the lack of employment opportunities for all. One of the stigmas of the multiple pressures and dynamics affecting the area is the gold panning by dredging on the Sankarani River and the banks of the reservoir, which is in full ascent. The abusive and invasive practice of this activity leads to the destruction of the banks and water pollution, with a devastating impact on many of the socio-economic activities along the river.

To face these many challenges and contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the Strategic Framework for Economic Recovery and Sustainable Development in Mali (CREDD 2019-2013) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the communes of Baya, Sankarani and Tagandougou have decided to set up a federating collaboration framework: the *Intercommunalité du Bassin du Sankarani*. With the support of VNG International and the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (NCEA), the three municipalities are currently developing a vision of sustainable development through their Programme for the Integrated and Sustainable Development of the Sankarani Basin (PDIDBS) and its Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).



Location of the Niger basin and Sélingué dam (source: IRD)

This joint and sustainable programme brings together existing and future interventions in the Sankarani Basin, particularly in the three communes, within a framework that takes into account the well-being of the populations, sustainable economic development and the ecological integrity of the area. The mayors and general secretaries of the communes have stressed the importance of their union to face problems that cross administrative boundaries.

The Intercommunalité du Bassin du Sankarani (ICBS)

The ICBS was created in accordance with the laws of decentralisation: the process was approved by the communal councils after consultations with the population, a joint decree was published, and the creation was then acknowledged by the Prefect of Yanfolila. Also, the development of the PDIDBS and its SEA are carried out in partnership with the line ministries, through a specially formed inter-ministerial committee.

The main reasons that motivated the regrouping of the rural communes of Baya, Tagandougou and Sankarani and pushed for the creation of ICBS are:

- The common impact of population displacements to make way for the reservoir and the degradation of natural resources for the local population;
- The membership of the Local Water Committee (CLE) of Sélingué ;
- Similarities in development challenges and plans to address them (i.e. PDSEC);
- Trusteeship of the Yanfolila circle;
- The inhabitants share the same socio-cultural and development area.

In order to maximise the efficiency and impact of municipal planning for economic, social and cultural, as well as environmental development, the ICBS decided to develop the Programme for the Integrated and Sustainable Development of the Sankarani Basin (PDIDBS), and that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) be carried out simultaneously.

This sustainable development programme, the crucible of all existing and future initiatives in the area, is designed, piloted and monitored by ICBS with the financial and technical support of VNG International through its IDEAL project and the NCEA, as well as the participation of all the communities in the area and other stakeholders able to contribute. ICBS is in charge of steering and guiding the entire development process of PDIDBS/SEA to ensure its ownership and sustainability.

The mission of the ICBS Select Committee is to :

- To represent its member communities;
- Carry out the process of developing the ICBSSP;
- Carry out the information and awareness campaign on the SEA planning process;
- Act as an interface between the communities and the technical support team;
- Organise the restitution and accountability sessions with the population;
- Assist in the dissemination and diffusion of socio-economic development solutions and alternatives and the results of the SEA;
- Ensure the effective and representative participation of communities;
- Take ownership of the PDIDBS and SEA and present them to member and neighbouring communities and at the national level;
- Ensure the good functioning of the intercommunality.

Methodological approach

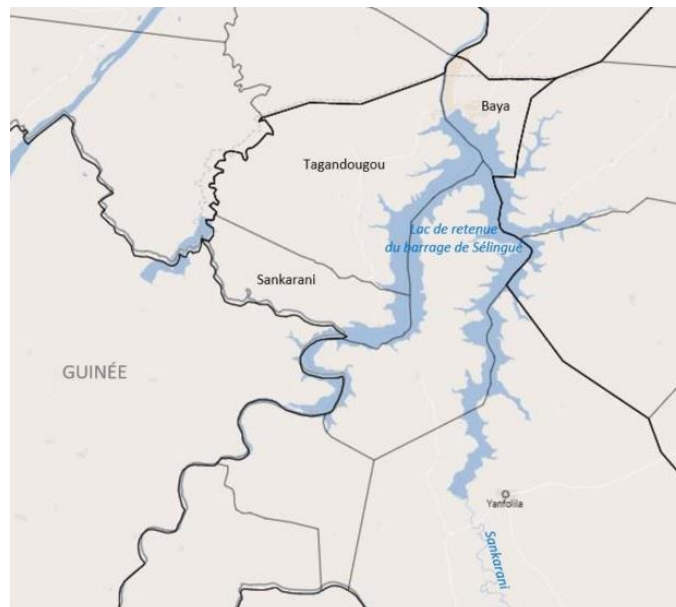
With the support of VNG International and NCEA, a first inventory of priority challenges has been carried out. Training on SEA will be given in the fourth quarter of 2020, targeting ICBS members, the local technical services in charge of the three municipalities, members of the Interministerial Committee, as well as stakeholders identified as relevant.

The golden rule for the development of the PDIDBS and SEA is the participation of all its direct and indirect beneficiaries. All stakeholders must collaborate and/or influence the process. Beyond local stakeholders, participation could be extended to the Cercle de Yanfolila and the Bougouni Region in a second stage.

One of the keys to the success of the PDIDBS/SEA development process and its ownership by ICBS and all stakeholders is the organisation of formal and informal workshops, meetings and forums at village, commune, cercle, regional and national levels. These participatory meetings allow for the exchange of ideas for the sustainability of the approach, as well as its implementation on a large scale.

From September 2020, meetings are planned with the Prefect of Yanfolila, the Governor of Bougouni, the Ministry of the Environment, Sanitation and Sustainable Development, and the Ministry of Energy and Hydraulics.

Building on previous experience in Sourou, the technical partners and the implementation team aim to make the PDIDSBS/SEA development process a pilot example in the development of other programmes in the Sankarani basin.



Location of the communes Baya, Tagandougou and Sankarani (source: OpenStreetMap. Credit: VNG International)

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