



CAMEROON: INTEGRATED FLOOD MANAGEMENT IN RIVER LOGONE FLOOD PLAIN

- 1. Location of the study:** Northern extreme of Cameroon.
- 2. Author(s):** Daniel Sighomnou¹
- 3. Brief description of flood management practice**

The flood plain of Logone (Yaéré) and its impact zone are populated since centuries ago by a multitude of ethnic and cultural communities that lived initially from the exploitation of the natural resources production systems in the flood plains (fisheries, livestock, agriculture), both during the floods and after the recession of the waters. In addition, nomad peasants come from the different countries of the region to have their cattle graze on the plain during the dry season. The population directly concerned by this ecosystem could at present be estimated at some 700,000 inhabitants. A large extension of the plain (8000 km²) is periodically flooded by the overflows of the Logone River.

As with the rest of the Sahel, since the 1970s the region of Lake Chad, of which the Yaéré forms part, has been suffering a persistent drought. The Logone river follows the deficit sequence observed in the rainfall since that year; the reduction of the floods, which follows the same tendency, has as a consequence a reduction of the volume of the overflows or even their total absence during very dry years.

In order to protect the population and the irrigated rice areas along the river, dykes were constructed between 1950 and 1970 on both margins of the Logone river so as to control the floods of the river. These activities continued until 1979, when they were completed on the Cameroon side with the construction of the Maga Storage Dam and the last 20 km of dykes.

Studies undertaken in the 1990s have shown that the absence of floods recorded in the plain area are a result of the combined effects of the drought situation during the last 30 years and of the flood protection works. This has resulted in a reduction of the flooded surfaces in the order of 60%. This is very damaging for the survival of the populations of the plain where the inundated land is very much used, after the flood has recessed, for agriculture and grazing activities, as well as for fisheries.

From the legal and institutional point of view, currently there are no institutions nor administrative services responsible in Cameroon for the management of flood/related problems. However, there are a number of ministries in charge of issues related with the conservation of the natural environment in general and of water resources in particular. This multiplicity of agencies involved in these fields, with sometimes conflicting interests, does not allow the development of a global approach of the questions related to sustainable development of water resources.

A permanent Secretary for the management of natural disasters has been created. It is charged with the organization of protection and mitigation activities in case of catastrophes over the total territory of the country.

4. Key issues

In the context of the drought which affects the Sahelian region since more than 30 years, the accumulated effects of the reduction of the floods of the Logone and the irrigation system and

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protection works have both contributed to affect the traditional flood management practices of the ecological systems of the flood plain.

The flood Plains of the Sahel are very vulnerable ecosystems, in particular when their hydrological regime is affected.

The management of river basins and in general the sustainable management of flood plains are a delicate operation.

5. Relevance to the concept of IFM

The study covers the following aspects of IFM to varying extents:

Water cycle as a whole

Aspect 6 - Effective use of floodwater by maximizing positive aspects of floods

Integration of land and water management

Aspect 2 - Land and water management