

IAH 2024 World Groundwater Congress

*12 Septembre 2024*

# Inducing a dialogue on transboundary cooperation on the Senegal-Mauritanian Aquifer Basin

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**UNIVERSITÉ  
DE GENÈVE**



*with the support of*



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
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**Swiss Agency for Development  
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# **Vision: Water as a source of conflict and a vehicle for cooperation**

**Water is also an instrument of peace.**

**Experience shows that in many situations, rather than causing open conflict, the need to manage water sharing generates cooperation.**

**Disputes over water can be managed diplomatically.**

**Moreover, water sharing can become a field of collaboration in conflict situations.**

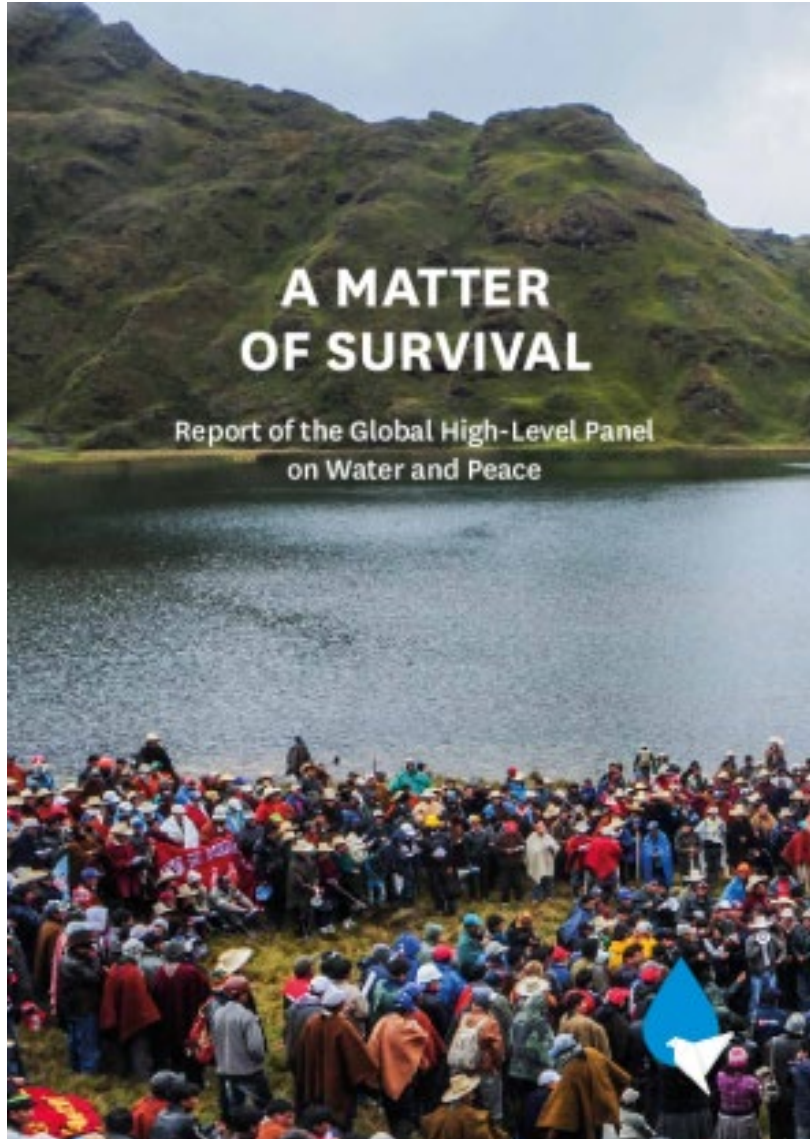
***Blue Peace***

# Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace: 2015-2017



# Water, an asset for peace

## Report Framework



<b>1</b>	THE DRAMA OF WATER
<b>2</b>	INTO THE ABYSS: WATER IN ARMED CONFLICTS
<b>3</b>	AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION: INTERNATIONAL WATER LAW AND TRANSBOUNDARY WATER COOPERATION
<b>4</b>	QUANTITY AND QUALITY: STRENGTHENING OF THE KNOWLEDGE-BASED AND DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING AND COOPERATION FOR SECURITY AND PEACE BUILDING
<b>5</b>	PEOPLE'S DIPLOMACY, INTER-SECTORAL WATER MANAGEMENT AND DECISION MAKING
<b>6</b>	FINANCIAL INNOVATION FOR WATER COOPERATION
<b>7</b>	IN PURSUIT OF AGENCY: NEW MECHANISMS OF HYDRO-DIPLOMACY

## GROUNDWATER MAP

**LEGEND**

Groundwater resources and recharge (mm/a)

- very high (> 300)
- high (100 - 300)
- medium (20 - 100)
- low (2 - 20)
- very low (< 2)

— International border

□ CAPITAL CITY

● Secondary city

Sources: Hydrosheds, BGR Hannover / UNESCO Paris 2008, United Nations Geospatial Information section, Natural earth.  
© GANWA Water Hub 2019



# Importance of groundwater in the SMAB

- Area 331,450 km<sup>2</sup> : 100% Gambia, 41% Guinea Bissau, 14% Mauritania, and 84% Senegal
- Estimated population 11,930,000 (Altchenko & Villholth, 2013)
- SMAB countries are more than 80% dependent on groundwater resources

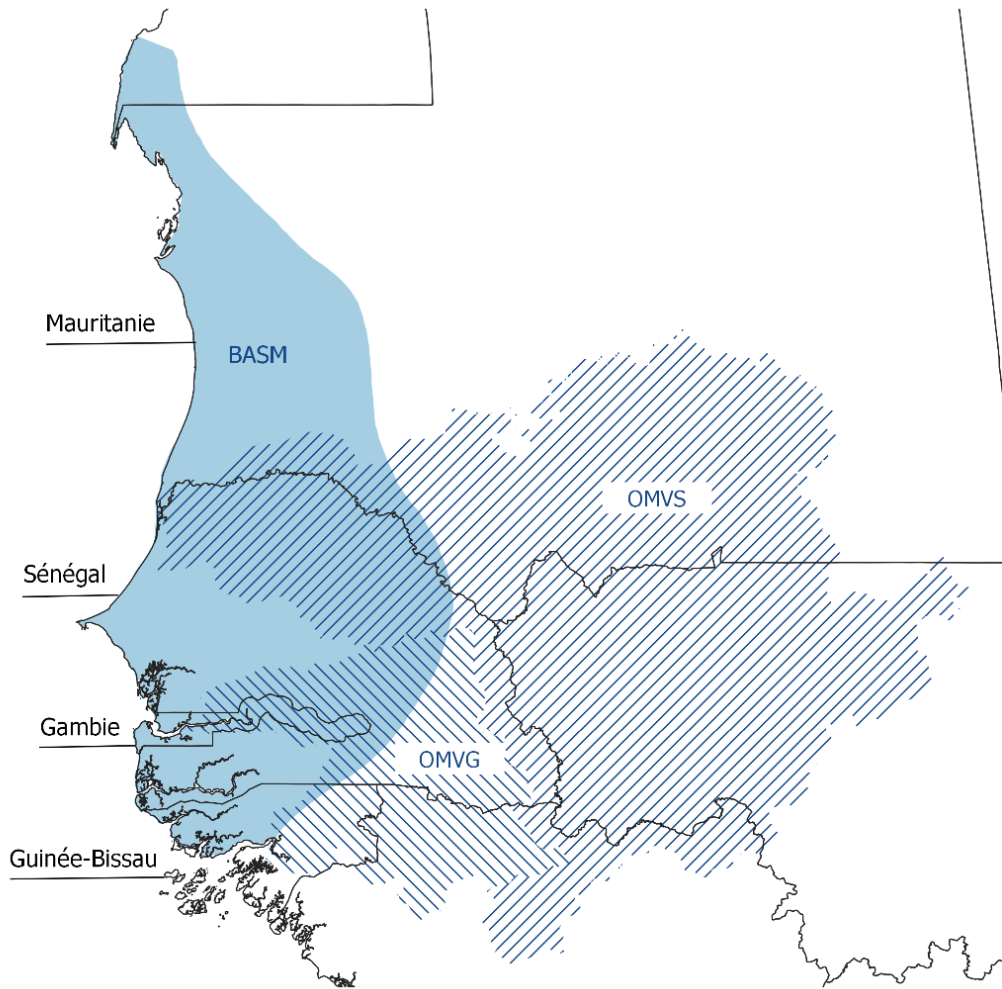
## Domestic extractions:

Source: DGPRES, Euronet

Sector	Guinea-Bissau	Gambia	Senegal	Mauritania
Country	> 80%	100%	84% (including livestock)	> 80%
Urban (%)	Mainly groundwater, though deep boreholes are limited to large cities	100%	50 of the 66 urban centres managed by SONES are supplied from groundwater	Mainly groundwater (except Nouakchott and Rosso, which are situated on the Senegal River)
Rural	~ 100%	100%	~ 100%	~ 100%
Capital City	100%	100%	~ 50%	~ 33%



# SMAB location on 2 major river basin organisations



- Organisation for the Development of the Senegal River: **OMVS**
- Organisation for the Development of the Gambia River: **OMVG**
- Missions addressing:
  - Integrated Water Resources Management
  - Preservation of water and ecosystems
  - Poverty Reduction, Food Security and Territorial Development
  - Climate Change Adaptation
- OMVG & OMVS covers circa 50% of SMAB surface
- Institutional assets for developing a conjunctive surface-groundwater approach



# Genesis of the regional dialogue on SMAB

- Request of support by Senegal to UNECE Convention Secretariat as a joining party to the **1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes** (Helsinki Water Convention)
- Triggered in the frame of the 40th anniversary of the transboundary cooperation between France-Switzerland on the Genevese Aquifer (Nappe du Genevois) in November 2018
  - co-organised between State of Geneva, French local Authorities, the Geneva Water Hub
  - Invitation of Senegal, Mauritania and Brazil to reflect on this experience
  - Colloquium Synthesis on <https://40ansnappegenevois.genevawaterhub.org>



# Political process of the regional dialogue 2019-2021

- **February 2019: Safe space on** initiating dialogue through a roundtable on transboundary collaboration on SMAB
  - State of play of challenges and needs, first discussion on the benefits of strengthening cooperation on SMAB
- **October 2019-March 2020:** Consulting states and joint decision on formation of political process
- **May 2020:** Formalisation of the regional dialogue with RWG
  - Under the mandate of the water ministers of the 4 countries, creation of a Regional Working Group (RWG) supported by consultants
- **Summer 2020:** Validation of RWG deliverable plans
- **Octobre 2020:** 1st RWG meeting and validation of diagnostic studies
- **December 2020 (Dakar):** 2nd RWG meeting to create common vision and project direction
- **January 2021 – September 2021:** design of a regional project and discussion on funding
- **September 2021:** Signing of a Ministerial Declaration on SMAB

Facilitated by:



UNECE



WATER  
CONVENTION



International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre





## 2021 Ministerial Declaration on the SMAB

- Signed in Geneva, September 29, 2021 during 9th MoP of UNECE Water Convention
- Initiates a process of setting up a legal and institutional framework on SMAB
- Validation of a regional transboundary cooperation project on SMAB
- Confers responsibility to OMVG and OMVS to host the secretariat of the RWG and the management of the regional project
- Tasks the RWG with 4 responsibilities:
  1. Ensure cooperation on groundwater through the exchange and sharing of data on the aquifer and its resources;
  2. Lead the implementation of SMAB initiatives, including the negotiation of a legal and institutional framework;
  3. Work for the financing of SMAB-related activities, including promoting the coordination of the various technical and financial partners;
  4. Any other function decided by country representatives.



# Logical framework of the vision / common project

## GLOBAL OBJECTIVE

To promote resilience, sustainable development and stability in the region through strategic, integrated and collaborative management of groundwater resources

## SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. Improving integrated and sustainable management of groundwater resources

2. Strengthen governance for cooperation, protection and equitable and efficient use of resources

3. Strengthen political commitment and develop sustainable financing mechanisms

## RESULTS

1. improving knowledge of the aquifer, its uses and risks ;
2. strengthening the monitoring and evaluation system and data exchange ;
3. strengthening strategic planning

1. strengthening groundwater governance at national level;
2. the establishment of an institutional mechanism for SMAB cooperation;
3. capacity building for the prevention and management of conflicts of use;
4. protection of water quality and reduction of pollution risks

1. information-based mobilization of decision-makers and the public;
2. the definition of financial mechanisms to support the sector and common strategies to develop it

# Key Take Aways

- Vision not only based on concertation on transboundary flows but also creating a community of practise on groundwater management of states facing similar challenges.
- Institutional challenges and innovation of 2 Transboundary Basin Organisations (TBO) cooperating on a shared aquifer basin.
- Importance of applying the principle of subsidiarity: national services mission at the forefront of operations to be supported by TBOs with respect to:
  - Pooling advanced expertise;
  - Leveraging regional projects and funds;
  - Building upon existing intersectoral water usages platforms for data sharing and dialogue;
  - Trigger a levelling up of political and public awareness among countries.
- RWG as nucleon of institutional arrangement faced with challenges of integrating hydrogeological knowledge & skills and coordinating technical and financial partners: OSS, GEF, CIWA, WB, EU, UNESCO
- Safe space and facilitation approaches are in line with the “spirit of the times” when it comes to state representatives' expectations on approach to international cooperation.





**Thank you  
for your kind  
attention**