

HYDROLOGICAL DATA RESCUE PILOT PROJECT IN AFRICA

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Background

The seventh session of the RA I Working Group on Hydrology (Malawi, July 1998), considered the problem that a number of African countries are facing regarding the preservation of historical hydrological data. The meeting noted with concern that valuable historical hydrological data are still being stored on paper by many national Hydrological Services. These data are at a high risk of being lost through destruction by pests, fire and other hazards. WMO has been requested to assist a number of countries in finding a solution to this problem.

In recognition of the importance of such task and the great need for preserving this valuable data to be easily accessible for sustainable water resources development plans at national and regional levels, a hydrological data rescue project has been proposed. This was initiated with a pilot study involving a few countries and implemented within the framework of the Voluntary Co-operation Programme (VCP) of WMO. The project envisages the provision of a PC, a software package for data processing and management, printer, scanner and training for local staff.

Justification

To ensure successful implementation of the project, WMO was seeking to find out which national Hydrological Services in RA I still have a hydrological data archive on paper, the size and type of data they have and to what extent they are interested in transferring the data to an electronic form, and if they need WMO's assistant. For this purpose, In June 1999, the WMO Secretariat circulated a questionnaire to the Hydrological Advisers in thirty-nine countries in RA I. Twenty-three, replies (59%) were received. Based on the replies received, It was clearly indicated that 82% use papers for archiving their data and requested WMO to assist them in rescuing their data.

Objectives

The project was designed to strengthen the human and institutional capacity of National Hydrological Services on the participating countries. It is aimed mainly at preserving and saving their hydrological data and modernizing their database. It was also aimed at enhancing the training capacity in the region that was achieved by using consultants from the region. The consultant for HYDATA, was selected from the Institute for Meteorological Training and Research in Nairobi, Kenya. While the consultant for HYDROM was selected from Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

Output

Eight African countries participated in the project, five anglophone and three francophone. The English speaking countries, namely Ghana, Rwanda, Eritrea, Gambia and Kenya, were provided with HYDAT software and the French speaking countries namely Togo, Chad and Niger were provided with HYDROM software. Each participating country

was provided also with a PC, a software package for data processing and management, printer, scanner. More than eighty nationals were trained in workshops for ten days on applying the suitable software for data management and they had been awarded certificate. The two consultants presented reports on their missions to the countries.

Achievements

The project was successfully implemented as it achieved the following:

- Contributed to strengthen the human and institutional capacity of the National Hydrological Services in eight African countries.
- Contributed to strengthen the capacity of trainers in Africa.
- Contributed in the modernization of data archiving systems in the region.

Indicator of Success

1. The project proved to be cost effective.
2. Utilization of the training capacity in the region
3. Appreciation from participating countries.
4. Strengthen internal co-operation between WMO Programmes.

Future Plane

The WMO Secretariat is planning to carry out the following activities:

- Assess the impact of the project in the participated countries
- Provide more software and training on data management.
- Develop another bigger project to cover other interested countries.