



## CASE STUDY

# Transboundary: Trans-border management group for the conservation of the environment of the Goascorán River, Honduras and El Salvador

## Summary

The Goascorán River basin is shared by Honduras and El Salvador and is of great environmental, economic and geopolitical importance. This case study discusses the establishment and impact of the basin management group that was set up in 2006, to integrate, influence and coordinate sustainable management of the shared basin. Case Studies illustrate experiences gathered with implementing IWRM.

## Background

The Goascorán River basin has a superficial extension of 2.345,5 km<sup>2</sup> and it is shared by Honduras and El Salvador. It is conformed by 36 “sub-basins”, located in the areas of La Unión and Morazán in El Salvador and La Paz, Valle, Comayagua and Francisco Morazán in Honduras. For its natural characteristic and location, this is an area of great environmental, economical and geopolitical importance.

From the socioeconomic point of view, 75% of the population of the basin inhabits the rural area. Because most of them depend economically on agricultural activities, the unemployment during dry season reaches levels of 70%. In Honduras, more than a 60% of its local population is in the indexes of extreme poverty and in the case of El Salvador.

On the other hand, there is a very limited public investment in the region, exemplified through the lack of highways and infrastructure, the limited connection to electric service and drinkable water among others. The supply of water for domestic use and agricultural production is one of the priorities and concerns of the population, since, when considering the projected indexes of population density, the geographical area and the activities that this growth implies, this demand will be unsatisfied in a period not larger than 20 years; due, to the non-existent infrastructure to store and distribute the water resource to the population.

## Actions taken

The location of the Goascorán basin in an important area and the necessity of coordinated efforts to solve the environmental problems, mostly related to water, were some of the elements that motivated the conformation of the Bi-national Management Group. Through

the Bi-national Program of Trans Border Development (financed by the European Union), actions were promoted to strengthen the local capacities and to impel the development of the municipalities and their inhabitants, by means of institutions and NGO's that have presence in the area. Considering the importance of the local participation to achieve the wanted results, some actions were focused in the conformation of organized structures that allow impelling coordinated actions, for the sustainable development of the area through specific programs and projects, which are supported by Inter-Municipal Technical Units UTI's for the strengthening of the existent local organizations.

In 2006, the Management Group of the Bi-national Basin of the Goascorán River (GGBCG) was created as a multi-sector instance to integrate, influence, and coordinate sustainable management of the shared basin and to improve the life conditions of the inhabitants of the region. Its objective is to coordinate actions of bi-national character that can be funded by national and international bodies, through the articulation and participation of different sectors of both countries and the development of processes of incidence for the appropriate use of the basin.

## **Outcomes**

The participative integration of the management group with the different actors facilitates the elaboration of the following documents:

- Strategic Plan,
- Management Plan,
- elaboration of its internal regulation and its statutory setting.

This experience is of great value for IWRM, as the management group establishes a model of work for the population of both countries, in search of an appropriate use of the natural resources in a shared basin.

Through this, the bi-national effort is shown with a single objective, with the active participation of the representatives of diverse sectors in all the levels (local, central government's institutions, civil society, NGO, private company, groups of producers, environmentalist associations, teachers and the representatives of the municipalities of this basin) where the understanding and, mainly, the work of volunteers, constitute the primordial factor of its management.

## **Lessons Learned**

The participation of the facilitating institutions and cooperation agencies facilitates the establishment of the group of basins; however, they should give the leadership from the actions to the local governments and participants of the civil society.

The active involvement of all sectors and strategic participants of the different parts of society facilitates the integration and the adoption of the model of bi-national management in the conservation of the environment of the communities involved.

The environmental education should be developed in strategic sectors of population so that a positive impact is generated. The work with schools, community boards, and water

boards, among others, can generate a disseminating effect in the community.

The support and constant technical accompaniment to the Management Group, as well as the strengthening of its organizational structure generates high coordination capacity, facilitating the obtaining of funding.

The active commitment and involvement of the management group members in the planning and implementation of different activities, allows a constructive criticism evaluation of events, as well as the construction of empathy between the diverse members of the group and its consolidation.

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**Related IWRM Tools**

Basin Management Plans, Transboundary Organisations, Civil Society Organisations

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