



WLE Regional Strategy and Prioritization

Developing a Focal Region Initiative in the Volta and Niger basins

The CGIAR Research Program on Water Land and Ecosystems (WLE) is an ambitious global research program unmatched in its scope and range of partners. It embodies innovative thinking on agriculture, the management of natural resources, and the alleviation of poverty to improve food security and environmental protection. It harnesses specialist skills to solve pressing problems in priority regions, and it processes data on natural resources to provide a truly global picture of the overall health of our natural resources and agricultural production systems.

WLE has three interlinked goals:

- To improve food security and livelihoods of rural communities through sustainable intensification of agriculture;
- To improve the sharing of benefits and risks among users of different ecosystem services through policies that encourage collaborative behaviour and dialogue;
- To strengthen institutional arrangements that cut across sectors and national boundaries, foster equitable and sustained development, improve resource governance and support productive and resilient solutions.

WLE has an imperative to prioritize development outcomes where needs and potential for desired impact are greatest. Our unique program approach is not contained within any single element but rather in how they are combined and prioritized. The program includes five strategic research portfolios (SRPs), which work in basins and regions in an integrated fashion to bring about change. These include: irrigation, rainfed systems, resource recovery and reuse, river basins and information. Cutting across all five is research on ecosystem services and resilience and gender, poverty and institutions. This structure ensures that wider challenges related to managing a range of resources are taken into account and provide policy-makers with options and decision-support systems to understand the implications of various choices.

Additional information about our program is available on our website wle.cgiar.org Please find also our brochure attached.

WLE has identified the Volta and Niger basins as its most promising focal region where it can help meet development potential in West Africa. In this region, WLE is establishing a process to help define research for development strategies on which it will concentrate its resources for achieving enhanced impact. Strong Regional Leadership is key to ensuring integration around coherent problem sets.

Objectives

- Ensure the relevance of WLE research within the regional context, giving active recognition to the role of region-based actors in informing and identifying development priorities;
- Link research outputs and outcomes to relevant development processes in regions and so establish integrated Theories of Change (ToC) at the regional or landscape scale;
- Define the contribution of WLE to broader regional development trajectories and outcomes;
- Define targets where change is expected to come about, who can assist in this process and how;
- Establish a dynamic environment where a wide range of partners are involved in the proposed research for development from the outset, respecting the fluid nature of region-based networks, decision making process and power relationships.

Expected outputs

- Development issues identified through an informed and inclusive region-based process analyzing drivers of change and development outcomes to which WLE can contribute;
- Regional research for development priorities collaboratively identified and agreed;
- WLE research goals oriented towards development priorities;
- Synergies among WLE's strategic research priorities in regions and with other CRPs in common regions;
- A rolling 3-year WLE 'vision' of change;
- Meaningful stakeholder engagement that enables and influences outcomes.

Implementation process

The regional strategy and prioritization process will be led by the WLE Director, who will take overall responsibility and ensure that regional partners are included in the prioritization process. Partners support this process by bringing particular strengths of stakeholder engagement and multi-disciplinary research-for-development into the process.

Consultation Process

WLE's **regional consultation meeting** for the Volta and Niger is to be held in Accra, Ghana, 28-30 May 2013. The meeting involves 3 days of consultation between senior policy advisors and key experts from the basin or region and leaders of WLE Strategic Research Portfolios. This meeting would have four components:

- Map out priority water, land and ecosystems-related development issues from regional expert- and stakeholder perspective ensuring alignment with regional development strategies (i.e. CAADP, ECOWAS) (1 day)
- An ecosystem services and resilience (ESS&R) Group – led session on how to develop an ecosystem services and resilience approach, where key variables, potential thresholds, and disturbance regimes would be identified for the region (1/2 day)

- Identify WLE added value of research within the regions. This will include an assessment of opportunities for low hanging fruit. (1 day)
- Outline a consolidated regional plan of work – where key priorities, potential opportunities and risks would be identified in the regions. (1/2 day)

This strategic consultation aims to clarify policy objectives and crossover with a selection of development challenges that are known to be significant within the region, while recognizing the reality of the complexity of internal and external power dynamics and inter-relationships that our research for development approach demands

Next steps

After the consultation, the WLE Operations Team will summarise outputs and spell out outcomes from the process, namely:

- Regional theories of change;
- Focal region program's impact pathways (at relevant scales), spelling out detailed research for development priorities and expected development outcomes and impacts;
- Convergence of WLE activities with identified stakeholders priorities;
- Proposed WLE research priorities in the regions for 2014 and beyond, identifying timeline.

These will be submitted to the Management Committee for review and approval.

It is expected that the remaining months of 2013 will be used to:

- Lay out the research components of the WLE focal region program (incl. a regional coordination component)
- Identify internal and external partners who could implement those components
- Design and adopt a selection and review process to specify and contract in/out those components and the corresponding funding by early 2014

**WLE Focal Region process design team
April 2013**