



UNESCO-IHP HELP PROGRAM SEMINAR June 2009 – Guadiana Basin, Portugal

STRENGTHENING WATER GOVERNANCE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The 2009 Guadiana UNESCO HELP Seminar

On June 24 to 26 2009, HELP will convene a Seminar inviting international and local participants in the Guadiana River Basin, Portugal. The Seminar will discuss experiences relevant in the Guadiana River and other HELP Basins, focussing on water governance, sustainability, social learning and the role of community knowledge in integrated water resource management (IWRM). This Seminar will support implementation of the third phase of HELP, focussing on innovations to address the challenges of IWRM and improve communication amongst the HELP community.

The UNESCO-IHP HELP Program

HELP is a cross cutting and transdisciplinary initiative led by the International Hydrological Programme (IHP) of UNESCO. HELP is designed to develop and apply scientific research to support IWRM. Through a global network of catchments. HELP is creating a framework for water law and policy experts, water resource managers and water scientists to work together on water-related problems. The objective is to deliver and demonstrate real outcomes for real people in real catchments, locally and globally.

After an initial pilot phase (1999-2004) the HELP principles were operationalised in the second phase (2004-2009). The 'HELP in Action: Local Solutions to Global Water Problems – Lessons from the South' symposium, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, November 2007, captured important lessons in a special volume of Water SA 34(4). This was an important milestone for the development of the third phase of HELP.

But there is now a need to help solve new challenges, such as the nexus between water and energy, climate change, poverty and food security. The third phase of HELP aims to address these new challenges.

About the Guadiana River HELP Basin

The Guadiana River Basin has been involved in the HELP Program since 2004, and was recently accepted as a continuing catchment for the third phase. This basin is the most important water border between Spain (83%) and Portugal (17%) with a total area of 66.800 km². With a sub-humid to dry and semi-arid Mediterranean climate, and highly variable rainfall, it was historically a region of dry-land agriculture. In the 1940's the Alqueva dam was conceived to convert the region to irrigated agriculture and, after completion in 2003, it created the largest reservoir in Europe. Discussions about water use now extend well beyond irrigated agriculture, with greater focus on the potential for tourism development and downstream ecological impacts.

Under Portugal's 2005 National Water Law, the Regional Administrations for River Basins (ARH) were created, establishing a new institutional frame for policy and action. A River Basin Committee was established for the Guadiana to support the river basin planning process and ongoing management.

Key objectives in the Guadiana River HELP Basin are to:

- Contribute to better coordination and dialogue among different water and land use planning and management actors in the HELP basins
- Share experiences in effective stakeholder engagement, social understanding and institutional cooperation towards achieving IWRM aims;
- Scope research on the interaction between upstream and downstream processes as a basis for promotion of sustainable ecosystem services;
- Synthesize knowledge base for policies and decision-making processes, at local and regional (river basin scale) levels to aid appropriate institutional framework leading to change management.

Organizing Committee

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