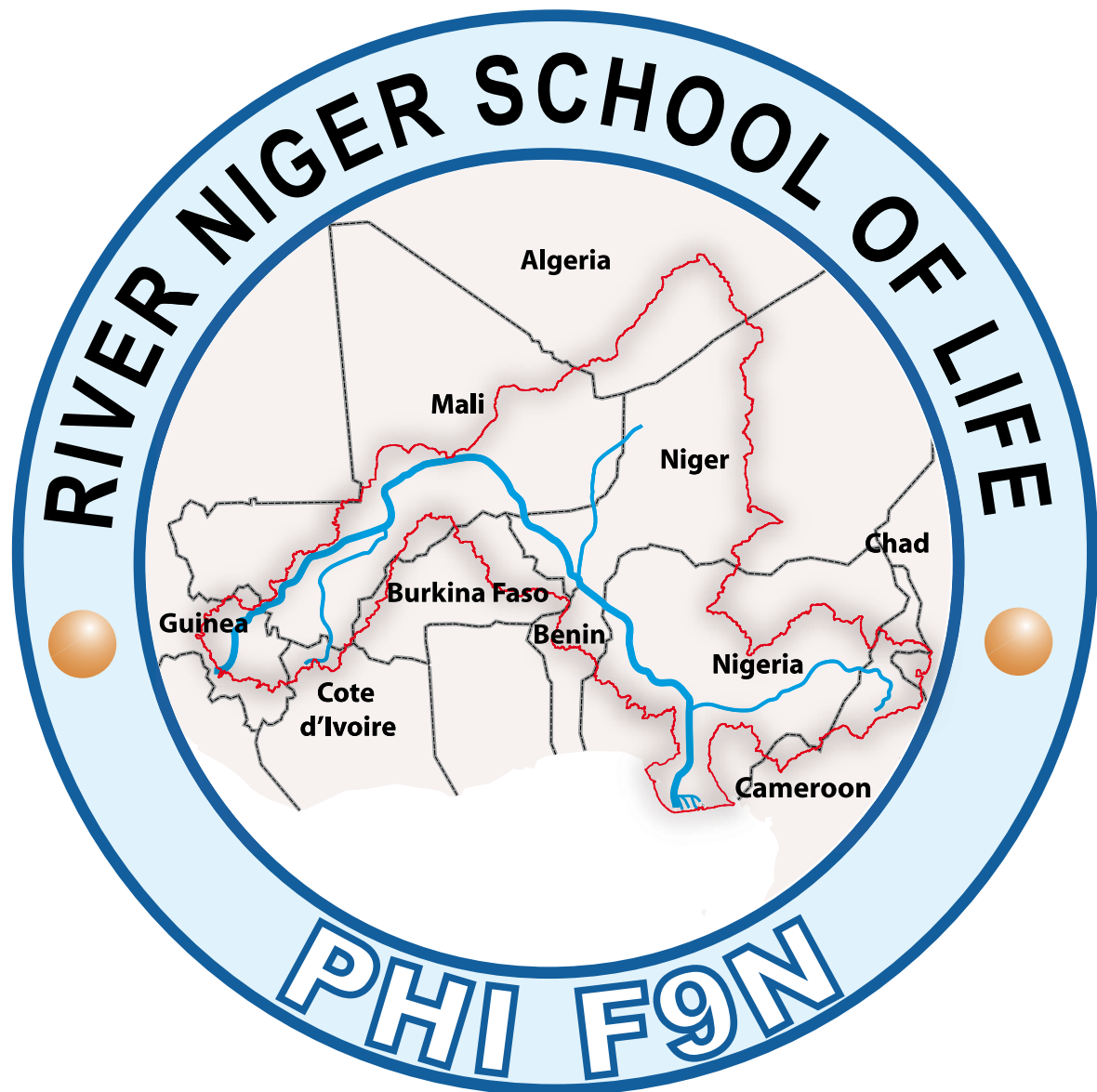


# THE APPEAL OF PROFESSOR HIPPOPOTAMUS



**Niamey, April 2008**





**This Appeal is addressed to the users, civil society  
representatives, technical and financial experts, Ministers  
and Heads of State of countries who share the water  
resources of the River Niger Basin**

**Niamey, April 2008**

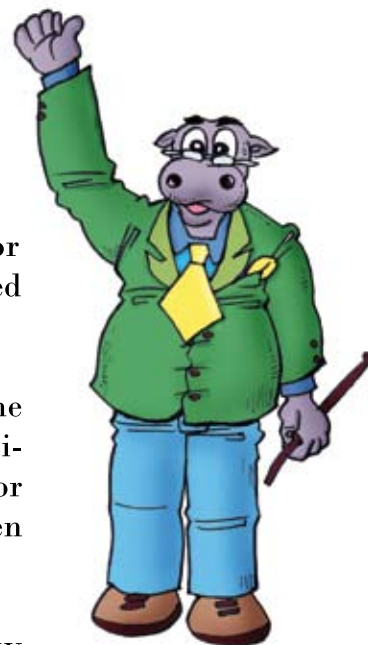
# The River Niger School of Life: the students; a very special class

**D**uring the latest Global Assembly of Wise-persons for Water, Professor emeritus, Hippopotamus, was appointed as standing member of this Assembly.

He seized this opportunity to request the collaboration of the International Secretariat for Water (ISW), in order to participate in the teachers' committee, to organise the final exam for the special class of the River Niger School of Life and then report the results.

Professor Hippopotamus is a direct descendant of a dynasty of "Wise-persons" who, after listening long and hard to his people, and sharing in their daily lives, founded the River Niger School of Life.

This school is attended by local and foreign populations, settled persons and nomads, who today live in an area that concerns nine countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Chad.



**Professor  
Hippopotamus**

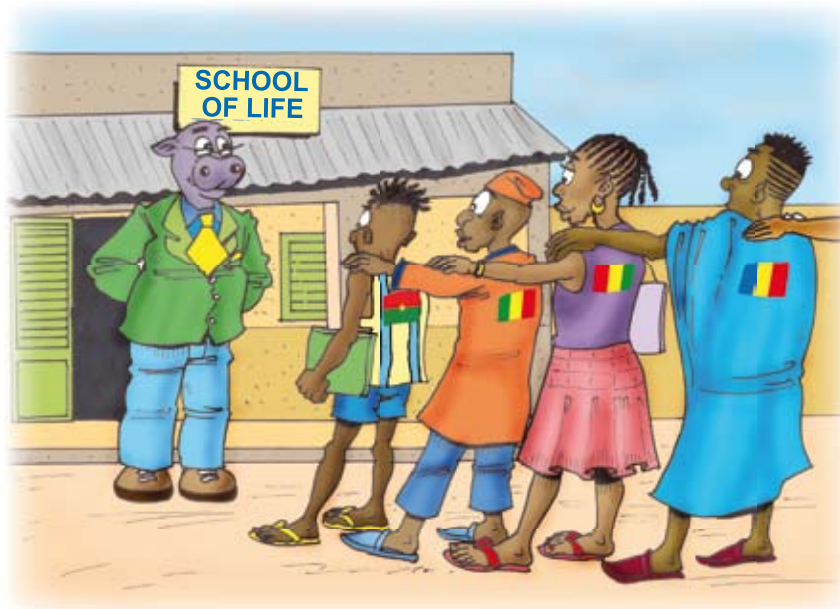


**The 9 students of the special class**



And because all these countries share a common artery of life, the River Niger, on which their development and their future depend, the Professor emeritus, Hippopotamus, felt it was right, at the

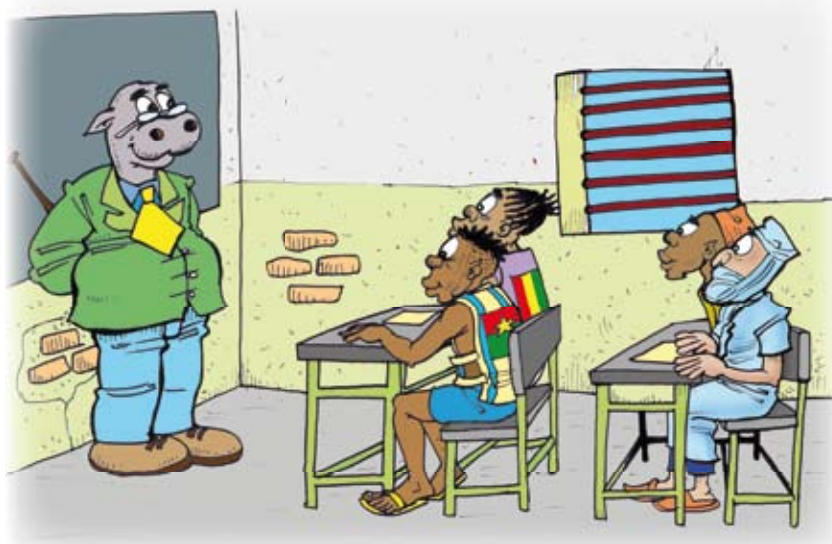
beginning of the 21st Century, to put together a special class, whose programme and lessons would cover the theme of a "Shared Vision".



His first lesson highlights an indisputable verdict: the populations are becoming poorer, the environment is deteriorating and it is now urgent to establish priorities in choosing the measures to be taken to ensure shared management of water resources.

Since May 2002, he has been offering his students the opportunity to share their

knowledge and skills for the benefit of the 110 million persons living in the River Niger basin. These students come from many different backgrounds. They are Government representatives, members of the Niger Basin Authority (NBA) Executive Secretariat, technical partners, financial partners as well as users and civil society representatives.



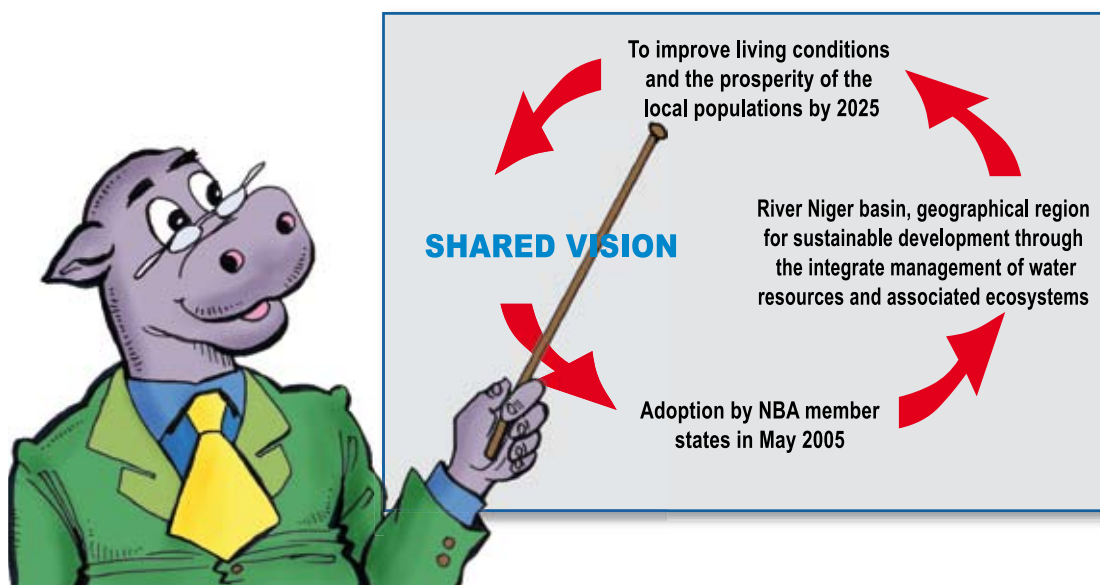
After five years of assiduous and studious schooling, Professor Hippopotamus decided to have his students seat for an exam, so as to evaluate their capacity to jointly implement the Shared Vision Process and thus to

paraphrase President Mamadou TANDJA of the Republic of Niger who declared during the April 2004 Paris Conference: "Let's use pickaxe, spade, wheelbarrow and move into action!".



# Study Notes ...

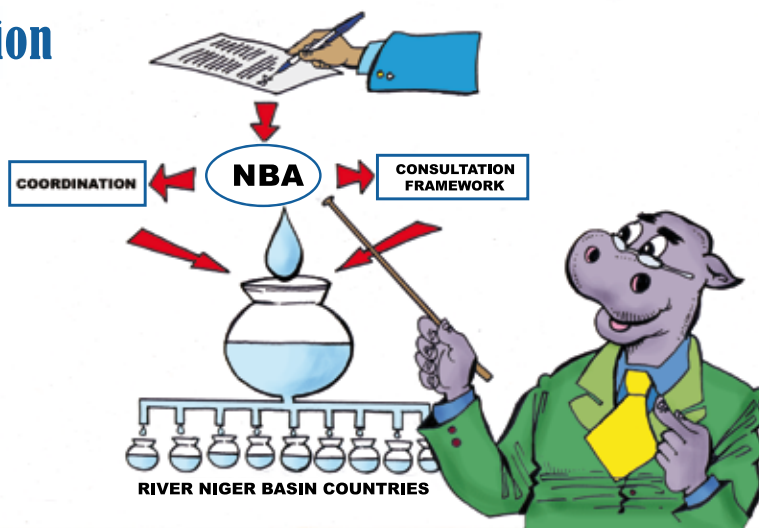
## 1- The Shared Vision Process



The NBA member states adopted the Shared Vision statement in May 2005: "the River Niger basin, a geographical region for sustainable development through the

integrated management of water resources and associated ecosystems, to improve living conditions and the prosperity of the local populations by 2025".

## 2 - The Paris Declaration



In April 2004, the Heads of State and Government signed the Paris Declaration. This is a strong political commitment to set in place fair and shared management of water resources. The states must now systematically consult each other regar-

ding the construction of any infrastructure that will significantly affect water flow of the river and its tributaries and they must strengthen the NBA, so it can effectively fulfil its coordinating role.



### 3- The Cooperation Framework



The partners involved in developing the NBA signed a Cooperation Framework that confirms their willingness to better coordinate their actions. For instance, the NBA will inform all par-

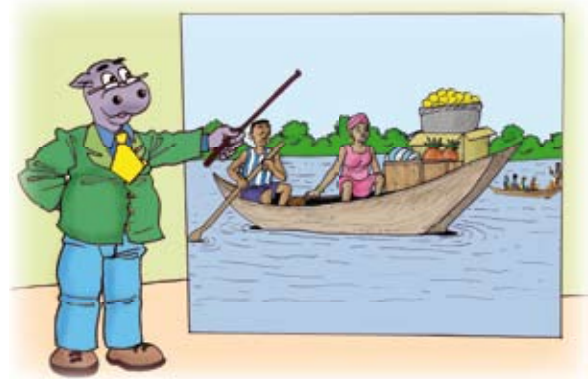
tners in advance of any plans to finance operations that may significantly affect the quantity or quality of water in the river and its tributaries.

### 4- The issue of major infrastructure



Dams are necessary to regulate the river flow and that of its tributaries, making it possible to guarantee the provision of drinking water, ensure agricultural production through irrigation, safeguard fisheries, produce hydropower and offer navigation opportunities while also helping to protect environment.





However, due to the impact of such infrastructure on the local populations and their homes, they must be planned according to a very rigorous and transparent process.

## 5- User participation in decision making

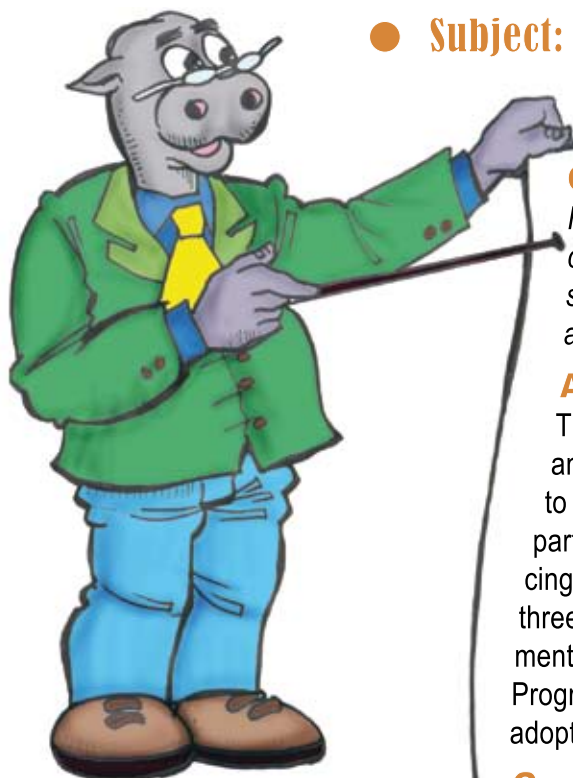


"The basin exists only through the people who live in it". The countries that share the River Niger basin have everything to win from ensuring the participation, support and mobilisation of the populations in translating the Shared Vision Pro-

cess into concrete actions that shall contribute to reducing poverty and improving quality of life. The participation mechanism, officially adopted in July 2007, is an effective means of mobilising users.



# An Exam: questions and answers ...



## ● Subject: Political Will and Financial Support

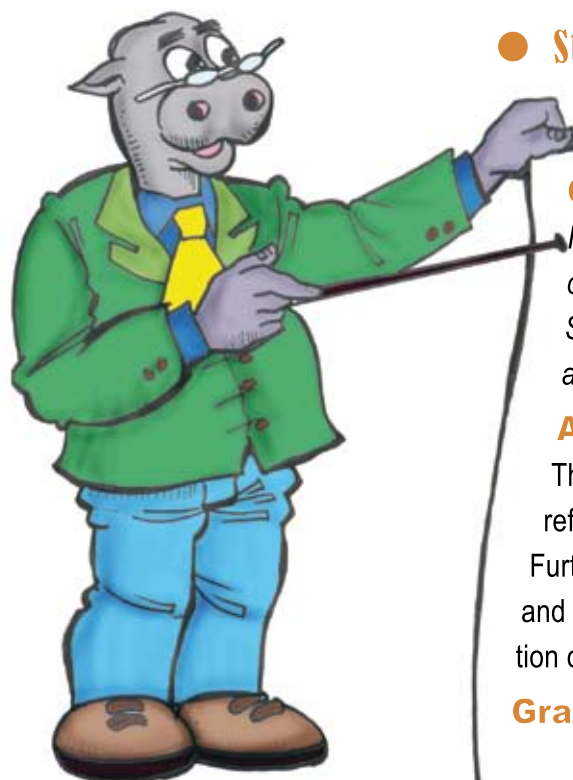
### Question:

*Have the Heads of State coordinated their political efforts and obtained the required financial support to successfully draw up joint plans and actions in the River Niger basin?*

### Answer:

The students have worked very well since 2002 and the activities and coordination efforts have led to the adoption of the Paris Declaration and the partners' Cooperation Framework, as well as financing studies that have resulted in the publishing of three major documents: the Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP), the Investment Programme and the Water Charter which will be adopted in April 2008.

**Grade: 18 out of 20**



## ● Subject: Institutional Reform

### Question:

*Has the NBA carried out the institutional and organisational reforms agreed on by the Heads of State to reach the targeted levels of competence and effectiveness?*

### Answer:

The Executive Secretariat has carried out its reforms. The focal structures are not all set up yet. Further effort is required to maintain, consolidate and develop the skills required for the proper operation of the NBA.

**Grade: 14 out of 20**



● **Subject: Theoretical and practical planning and programming**



**Question:**

*Are the planning and programming tools used to measure the suitability of the different actions envisaged in the Niger basin and the Shared Vision Process appropriate?*

**Answer:**

The Sustainable Development Action Plan and the Investment Programme have been produced through tools that have been in accordance with international standards and correspond to the different contexts of the River Niger basin.

The hydrometric monitoring network set up along the river and the recent programme to combat the silting up of the river are steps in the right direction. We must spend more time getting to grips with the water needs of the ecosystems, in order to guarantee policies that ensure water flow matches the environment's needs.

**Grade: 17 out of 20**

● **Subject: Infrastructure scenarios**



**Question:**

*Have the Ministers chosen the best scenario for the installations proposed by the SDAP?*

**Answer:**

The scenario chosen presents several negative effects (in a context with aggravating factors such as climate change), in particular the risk of substantial loss of humid zones, a drop in water levels downstream, a drop in electricity production etc. One of the other scenarios proposed in the SDAP presented more advantages and guarantees of sustainable development on a basin level.

**Grade: 10 out of 20**



## ● Subject: Impact Studies



### Question:

*What is the quality of the environmental impact studies for the proposed infrastructure projects?*

### Answer:

The quality of impact studies depends on technical, social and anthropological aspects, on the degree of transparency in the process and as well as the process is appropriated by the directly affected populations. These rules must be applied to all projects underway and any planned projects, with a view to holding open and thorough discussions on the downstream impacts and the basin-wide consequences.

Until now, the soundness of guarantees of compensation presented to the tens of thousands of people who will be displaced once construction begins, remains unsubstantiated.

**Grade: 12 out of 20**

## ● Subject: Donors' Cooperation



### Question:

*Do donors adhere to the Cooperation Framework to which several partners are committed?*

### Answer:

In general, cooperation among donors is good. However, some students are taking their time signing up to the classes. Other students who are already enrolled, do not always follow the lessons and lack discipline, which has not permitted the best collaboration.

**Grade: 13 out of 20**



## ● Subject: User Participation in Decision Making



### Question:

*Is user participation effective?*

### Answer:

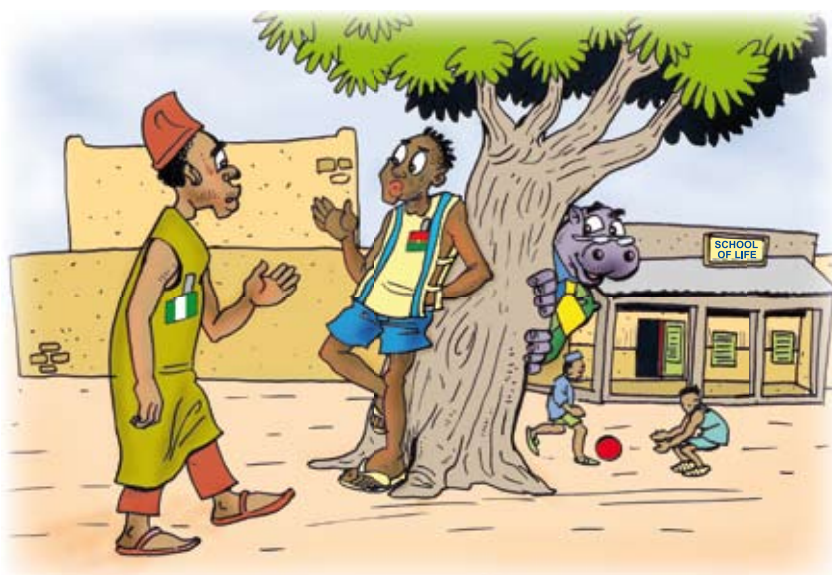
User participation was decided late in the process. Progress has been made and its level varies from one country to the next. National coordination teams are still to be set up in the countries basin's portions and the regional coordination team at the basin level.

**Grade: 12 out of 20**

## School Report

To evaluate his special class, Professor Hippopotamus drew on written answers, but also on conversations

held in the school yard, to help him read between the lines.



## Extract from the reports of the special class of the "River Niger School of Life"

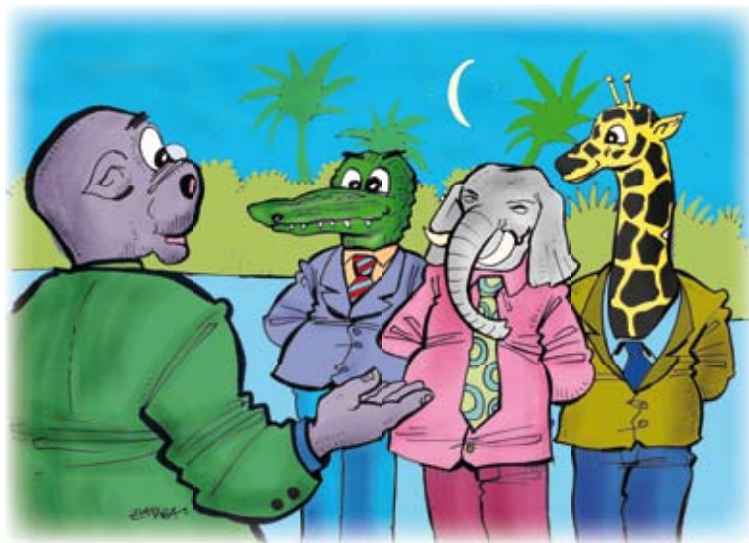
Subjects	Grades	Professor's remarks
Political Will and Financial Support	18/20	Very good work.
Institutional Reform	14/20	On the right track.
Theoretical and practical planning and programming	17/20	Highly satisfactory.
Infrastructure scenarios	10/20	Lesson to be revised collectively.
Impact Studies	12/20	Extra effort required in transparency.
Donors' Cooperation	13/20	Unjustified absences.
User Participation	12/20	Notable progress, must be made a priority!
<b>Comments</b> Passing grade: 12/20 Diligence: 77 %		
<b>General assessment</b> The majority of the students, on an individual basis can graduate to the next level and thus begin contributing to the process. However, on a collective level, the choice of infrastructure scenario should be reviewed in a readjustment session. This should consist of an in-depth reflection on the negative impacts of the scenario and on the compensatory and corrective measures to be taken.		

Date : April 20th 2008

Professor Hippopotamus



# Recommendations ...



After having spent much time since 2002 with the students of the special class, Professor Hippopotamus sets off to have a rest in the middle of his river. During the day, he talks with his peers and at night he questions the stars, which reassure him as to the future of the River Niger School of Life and the next generations which will attend it.



He takes notes and in his personal notebook formulates the recommendations that he will transmit at the right time and place to those who wish to listen. There are six recommendations:





- 1** That the decisions regarding the consolidation and/or construction of new dams (location, size etc.) and those concerning irrigation or hydropower projects be reviewed very soon, by all involved, with regard to their impact on the downstream flow along the rivers.
- 2** That a Water Charter for the River Niger basin be adopted by all the countries involved in the process to implement the Shared Vision and that this should become the reference framework for all projects associated with the human, social, cultural and economic development of this river of life. Poverty alleviation being the objective to be aimed at on a daily basis.
- 3** That there be continued support of the NBA Executive Secretariat so it can acquire the technical, human, legal, economic and socio-political expertise required to oversee and manage the major projects.
- 4** That the donors respect the Cooperation Framework and that information concerning all forms of funding be circulated in a transparent manner for sharing by all.
- 5** That user participation be integrated in the culture of governance at State level and by the technical and financial partners and that it should become a strength and an asset for the future.
- 6** That, depending on need and demand (populations and ecosystems), the rate at which irrigated areas, arable land etc is increased be planned in harmony with current local capacities and skills and those to be developed.



## ... and one last suggestion

If the size of certain water regulating infrastructure were to be revised downwards, this would generate a certain amount of savings. These could be used to help backers and the countries concerned to find innovative solutions such as creating decentralised financing mechanisms for the

benefit of the local economy, the final beneficiaries being individuals, families, traders, fisherfolk, shop keepers, small and medium sized enterprises, villages and municipalities etc. An opportunity that could have an immediate impact on poverty reduction.



Finally, my very  
best wishes go  
with you...

*Professor Hippopotamus,  
Citizen of the River Niger Basin.*

*"School of Life" Cause  
River Niger  
PHI F9N*

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