

## **CASE STUDY. El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras in the Upper Lempa River.**

### **Introduction.**

The upper Lempa River is in the region of Trifinio in the border triangle where Guatemala , Honduras and El Salvador converge . The Lempa born in the southeastern and southwestern Guatemala Honduras , at an approximate elevation of 1,500 meters, but the main route of the Lempa River, including its mouth at the Pacific Ocean, is in El Salvador . The total area of the river basin is approximately 18,240 km<sup>2</sup> , of which 10,215 km<sup>2</sup> ( 56 %) are in El Salvador ; 5,472 km<sup>2</sup> ( 30 % ) in Honduras ; and 2,553 km<sup>2</sup> ( 14%) in Guatemala .

The upper Lempa River , with an area of 3618.50 km<sup>2</sup> and an estimated population of 350.065 inhabitants , is characterized as ecologically fragile ; with increasing pressure to use and exploit their natural resources , making it an area of high vulnerability limiting the development and trade of the countries north of the 3 border corridor. Given this strong dynamics of environmental degradation in the context of the Central American Integration System , Guatemala , El Salvador and Honduras , Trifinio developed and approved the Plan in 1988 , with the aim of promoting comprehensive , harmonious and balanced development of the border region of the three countries . By 1997 , the Treaty for the implementation of the Plan Trifinio subscribe , becoming by this means the Comisión Trinacional del Plan Trifinio ( CTPT ) as the body responsible for coordinating the implementation of Trifinio Plan.

Make the commission 's vice- El Salvador and Guatemala and Appointed as President of Honduras . It is the highest authority of Tri regional. It has administrative, financial and technical autonomy and legal personality and Tri Executive Secretariat that implements programs and trilateral projects.

Initial efforts Trifinio Plan focused on the management of forest resources and until the early 2000s , the focus of the work is incorporated into water management. As part of this emerges between 2007 and 2011 , the initiative of the Mancomunidad Trinacional Fronteriza Lempa River, consisting of 22 municipalities which constitute a complementary platform to CTPT and seeks to promote actions led by local governments .

Overall , subjects in the present socio- environmental agenda Trifinio Region include processes of local flood risk management , landslides and forest fires. Found in the area protected area forests , aquifers and biodiversity, which is highly sensitive to climate variability and change . In recent years , we have generated conflicts associated with the burning of forests and land for cultivation , access and availability of water and especially the potential conflict by pollution " upstream " Lempa against mining and exploration . With the development of the trilateral institutions will have management plans and development of the upper watershed and protected areas , mobilization of international cooperation , the establishment of cooperative agreements and interagency coordination at the level of governments and municipalities. Establishment and operation of the mechanisms for consultation and participation and promotion of innovative financing mechanisms for investment in forests and water

## **Benefits of transboundary water cooperation**

The driven process in the Upper Lempa coordinated by the Comisión Trinacional del Plan Trifinio (CTPT), has led to a number of benefits that territorial governance has strengthened the capacity of local actors and enhanced options economic inclusion and vulnerability reduction. To this we must add the efforts and initiatives of the Mancomunidad Trinacional Fronteriza Río Lempa on Shared Water from the municipal level to complement and develop another set of benefits for the development of the area.

In summary we have economic benefits within the basin: increasing sustainable forestry, increasing the availability of water for agricultural irrigation activities, human consumption, production activities, crafts and tourism. Increased investment and employment through programs for the protection of natural resources and protected area management.

These actions have brought economic benefits beyond the upper Lempa and particularly for El Salvador, the main beneficiary of watershed management: permanent hydroelectric generation. The supply of water for human consumption and productive human and industrial and agricultural production in the central area, paracentral and the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador, El Salvador settlements.

From the perspective of social and political benefits, collaborative management of the Upper Lempa has meant strengthening planning and management capacities of local authorities and has been the strengthened local governance. We have established agreements and cross-border and inter-agency arrangements between national governments and local governments with participation of key stakeholders in the territory. Currently, there is a whole effort in formulating local policies border by the Commonwealth of the Lempa River, including: Shared Waters, Zero Hunger and Indivisible Territory. This has led to a sustained increase social investments in education, health and housing in the municipalities of the region and enhanced resource mobilization for international cooperation.

The environmental benefits as a result of cross-border cooperation have, restoration and protection of landscapes and protected areas in the area. Sustained reduction of forest fires. Reducing vulnerability and environmental degradation through better land management, investments in sanitation and solid waste management. Increasing the capacity of flood control and increased flows and water quality contributing to the protection and conservation of the sources of surface water and groundwater of the middle and lower basin of the Lempa River.

In short, the region represents Trifinio regional geopolitical benefits as a demonstration area for coordination and cooperation across borders. Represents a transboundary replicable model for other areas of Central America, where from agreements between countries have established a functional mechanism for political dialogue at the highest level between the 3 countries that provide the care and reduction of conflicts and tensions around both commercial subject, such as migration and environmental nature.

International cooperation has shown readiness to support this cross-border area and has maintained a constant assessment of their progress in their organizational development and particularly strengthened its planning scheme. Currently it is running the 2010-2020 Plan. This plan is reviewed annually and is subject to adjustment according to the needs of countries and targeting priorities.

## **How were the benefits estimates derived?**

Benefits generated from the cross-border cooperation in the area of the Upper Lempa , have been evaluated from the development of institutions established in the region. La Comisión Trinacional del Plan Trifinio (CTPT) has developed an operational structure coordinated by the Executive Secretary has established a framework for annual planning and finally a Strategic Plan ( 2010-2020) . The Executive Secretariat has National Directorates are their counterparts in each of the countries and with technical and administrative units operationalized actions planned in the territory of each country.

The CTPT has 2 instances active in the implementation of the plans and their evaluation, scheduling benefits and enhancing the scope of these. Counted in each country with a Coordination and Monitoring Committee formed by central government, municipalities and associations or Mancomunidades of the region. This Commission is the central mechanism for the implementation of programs and projects in the area and to report results and evaluate them from the technical and sectoral levels.

The other instance is the Advisory Committee comprised of mayors, governors, social networks , NGOs , community organizations, Tri-National Tourism Chamber , Owners Network of protected areas, among others. This space represents the broad participation meeting platform for the region to analyze developments, strategies and results of the implemented actions. This allows you to adjust participatory evaluation processes and approaches to guide its policy towards increasing impact on the expected results. This space encourages public - private dialogue and strengthens territorial governance in the region.

Complementary to CTPT , la Mancomunidad Trinacional del Río Lempa has a Strategic Plan for 15 years ( 2008-2023 ), another tool to define a vision of territorial development of the region from the perspective of the municipalities. A key to assessing progress in terms of economic, social and environmental indicators in the Mancomunidad element is the establishment of the Land Information System Trinacional. A base line state of social , economic and environmental situation of the Plan includes a mechanism to monitor and track their actions and outcomes assessment .

In both cases it has Labor Report, publications and newsletters which is systematized, described and quantify the actions taken and their beneficiaries. This information is generated and disseminated annually and reports to key stakeholders in the region and the international community, which allows you to monitor the progress in the development of the region.

Finally, each financial institution to support the implementation of Trifinio Plan and Mancomunidad del Río Lempa ( European Union, GIZ, KFW, IADB) establishing a mechanism for monitoring and tracking programs that are coordinated in the case of CTPT by the Executive Secretariat and the Directorates and National Technical Units and the case of the Mancomunidad by the CEO. This allows to identify and make adjustments and reorientations of ensuring the development of the benefits of cross-border cooperation in the Upper Lempa work.

## **How were the benefits assessment's findings communicated?**

Collaborative management of the transboundary basin of the Lempa is a success story in Central America, especially because it has been developed from a legal framework of the countries involved adapting cooperation frameworks and international standards.

The experience of cross-border management of the Upper Lempa has been systematized about 10 years ago and published at least 2 times, once by UNESCO and its program of Potential Conflict to Cooperation Potential (PC CP ) with the support of Global Water Partnership ( GWP ) and another by the Inter- American Development Bank ( IADB). The experience was presented among the success stories at the World Water Forum, held in Kioto, Japan in 2003.

The Trifinio CTPT Plan and the Central American Integration System have maintained a constant open to disclose their experience and progress with the various secretaries of system space for dialogue. This has allowed to disclose the challenges, constraints and lessons learned from the modality and political settlement reached between the 3 countries to management shared basin. However , the highest political level and involved in the experience, the decision makers of the Central American countries have not been able to reproduce and replicate the model of international agreement reached in the Lempa elsewhere.

Memories of Work , newsletters and program proposals and projects and initiatives presented by the Vice-Chairmen of the countries before the International Community have kept the attention of the effort of organizations for technical and financial cooperation. This has led to particularly get support to implement actions and investments to promote sustainable development in the region. What finally derive the effort of the municipalities forming the Mancomunidad Trinacional del Río Lempa have moved decades later assessed the achievements and results of the cooperation mechanism and wanting to take a greater role to ensure the sustainability of the benefits achieved

However we believe that disclosure of the experience has been limited, there is not enough well-designed and targeted efforts to promote this type of experience. Unfortunately the region is required to play this form of management in several existing shared basins in the area. We need to increase new mechanisms for communication and dissemination, sharing their challenges and threats in the other countries that are in conflict processes international waters.

In practice the benefits achieved through cooperation on border management of the Upper Lempa, has led to dismantle border facilitation, trade , immigration and environmental conflicts and their success requires a much more structured strategy for dissemination among stakeholders key region.

**Have the findings of the benefit assessment been useful in strengthening the transboundary water cooperation process? And Key messages and lessons learned for others**

In general the benefits of economic , social and environmental described and obtained through the process of cross-border cooperation Trifinio Plan since its inception in 1997, have finished consolidating the experience and practice promoted the interests of local governments in a share more active , constituting their own space in the Mancomunidad del Río Lempa.

Experience shows the Upper Lempa institutionalized political commitment at the highest level among the three countries, this has enabled the mobilization of resources and support has encouraged the participation of other public sector at local level in the process .

The leadership of the Vice participation of mayors, municipal councils, local development committees , NGOs, international cooperation agencies, social and civic organizations and the support of development banks and international cooperation have led to the revitalization of the area, a marginal and limited development to a region with such dynamics and northern triangle region regional integration process .

The work strategy has involved the promotion of specific agreements for cooperation and coordination between governments, developing their own institutional capacity and management cooperation to mobilize national and international resources . With the political leadership at the level of vice has facilitated the realization of interagency agreements for the implementation of activities in the field of public works, agriculture, tourism, environment and local development. With the creation of mechanisms for participation and inclusion has enjoyed public support and social recognition of the initiative. This gives long-term sustainability.

The main challenges are: the strengthening of regional public institutions to fulfill and implement environmental regulations; effective implementation of interagency agreements between the central and local governments; establishment of sustainable financial mechanisms to ensure investment and support for planned and scheduled among the three countries for sustainable development actions.

Among the lessons learned from the experience are: The development of a model of cooperation that transboundary basins designed based on an agreement governing the international agreements and conventions on international water basins and adapted to their reality principles. The establishment of institutions with a high level of political support at the level of Vice that allows you to coordinate and ensure the participation of the central government sector entities with executive capacity , direct investment and actions in the territory . Achieving inclusive territorial governance mechanisms that have allowed and achieved social support and hence the sustainability of the actions in the territory. The ability to conclude among key actors in a joint and shared vision of development in the medium and long term of the basin and its potential. The tri-national effort to long-term planning in transboundary basin allowing attract domestic and international support for the implementation of the actions agreed by the relevant actors resources. The need to strengthen its outreach and dissemination strategy in the region to validate and replicate the model in shared basins presenting scenarios of tension and conflict

Name: **Raul Artiga**

Title and organization: : **Especialista en Gobernanza Territorial de Cuencas. Subsecretaría de Desarrollo Territorial y Descentralización. Gobierno de El Salvador.**

Address: **Calle Circunvalación No.248. Colonia San Benito. San Salvador, El Salvador.**

Email: [rantiga@presidencia.gob.sv](mailto:rantiga@presidencia.gob.sv)

Phone: **503-25601519**