



West Africa Coastal Areas  
Management Program

KNOWLEDGE SHEET 10C | POLITICAL

# The Governments Role in Developing West Africa's Regional Ocean Sustainably

*Engaging Public Institutions on Sustainable Development of West Africa's Ocean*

**W**est Africa has enormous potential, greater than that of any other African region, for natural gas and oil exports. Net natural gas exports from West Africa are envisaged to grow at a robust average annual rate of 6.5% from 2012 to 2040 (IEO 2016).

- **Taxes, tariffs, export revenues and quota fees from fisheries** in West Africa could make a **key difference** to the region's development, however correct government enforcement is required.
- **Most of the benefit** to West Africa from fishing exports is **generated through the sale of fishing rights to foreign operators** and not from the sale of fish caught (Daniels et al. 2016).
- Investing in **local fishing vessels and companies will more than double the benefit to local economies** than selling fishing licenses would (Daniels et al. 2016).
- **Fish numbers in West Africa have reduced due to overfishing by up to 50%** and that revenue lost from illegal or un-reported fish catches amounts to USD\$ 1.3 billion annually (Africa Progress Panel, 2014).

- There has been a **regional strategy for marine protected areas** (MPAs), which has led to the establishment of a regional network of MPAs in 2007 in West Africa.

The Atlantic Ocean off the coast of West Africa provides economic and social benefits to many people that live along or near the coast. However, the ocean is under threat from increased human activities and accelerated climatic changes. There are enormous economic and thus social benefits to be gained through developing sustainably the Atlantic Ocean off West Africa. There is potential for new legislation and policies to be brought in to aid the management of the fisheries sector in a holistic way and to form part of Marine Protected Areas. Controlling fishing and other human impacts (oil and gas exploration and drilling; tourism; construction; ports etc.) in the marine environment requires urgent government intervention. This applies not only to controlling illegal, unreported and over fishing but also to reduce industrial and urban pollution, monitoring

**In western Africa...**

Cracking down on illegal fishing could help create **300,000 jobs**

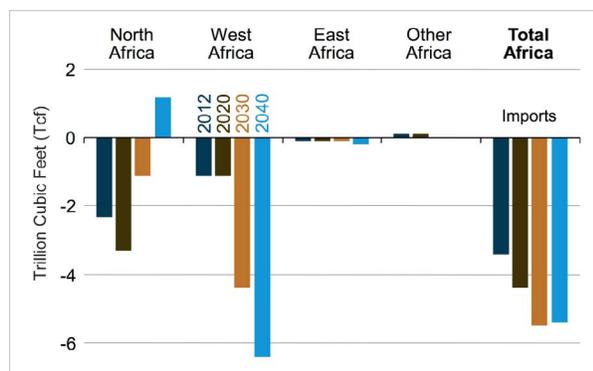
Investing in fisheries could generate **\$3.3 billion**

Selling foreign fishing rights brings just **\$400 million**

Through Government Action, the West African fishing industry can bring greater benefit to the local area. Infographic: Overseas Development Institute

the impacts of infrastructure works, reducing coastal erosion, mangrove destruction and regulating oil and gas explorations and drilling. Examples of best solutions from other areas show how government intervention can make positive changes to current damaging practices and to develop the Ocean in an economically sustainable way.

illegal, unreported and overfishing. It is estimated that West African states could generate as much as USD\$ 3.3 billion and 300,000 jobs, if national fleets are used to catch and export fish as opposed to granting international licenses which generates only \$400 million per year for the entire West African region (FAO, 2014). For example in Senegal, foreign fishing permits were rescinded in Senegal's Exclusive Economic Zone, a 158-square kilometer area of ocean dedicated to commercial fishing. As a result small-scale fishers were able to recover economically. Greater inter-sector cooperation and a holistic approach to fisheries beyond that of the traditional fisheries sector governance and value-chains can be implemented to address the broader issues of land-based habitat and biodiversity loss.



The graph shows net natural gas exports from West Africa indicating robust growth from 2012 to 2040 (different colored bars). Source: International Energy Outlook 2016 (IEO2016)

## Potential Solutions

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) can be used for experimental approaches to design the ideal governance and participation models in the fields of fisheries, tourism and energy, that provide sustainable services to local coastal communities (FCA, 2003). The sustainability of conservation measures depends on the support provided by national level guidelines, policies and legislation.

These policies and legislations should be extended to the fishing sector, where fisheries should be regulated and these regulations should be enforced to deal with

## EXAMPLE OF BEST PRACTICE

A number of MPAs exist in the Mediterranean region however over the years there has been little communication and exchange between them. Therefore a network was set up to improve the effectiveness of these MPAs. The network:

- Promotes the sharing of experiences and good practices amongst managers;
- Suggests solutions to management problems of marine protected areas;
- Improves the capacity of managers;
- Makes the role of marine protected areas known to a wider audience;
- Disseminates messages common to all marine protected areas in the region.

A key lesson learnt from this experience was that the geo-political complexities of the region and its disparate cultures often delayed the proper execution of the agreed commitments. However, management and coordination of all the MPA actions and the engagement of the MPA stakeholders in the area has vastly improved thanks to the implementation of an improved MPA network. The Regional Marine Protected Areas Network in West Africa (RAMPAO – Réseau Régional d'Aires Marine Protégées en Afrique de l'Ouest) can learn from this experience in that most benefactors of the RAMPAO are currently not convinced of the meaning and implementation of the regional MPAs. Motivations differ among actors involved. Fishers, traders and artisans, tourism operators, central authorities, local dignitaries and

associations for nature conservation do not have the same perception of the regional MPA operation (Weigel et al 2011). Therefore an updated effective regional network of MPAs in West Africa with participative management by strong institutions, engagement of all stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the MPAs will aid in contributing to the sustainable development of the region by enhancing natural and cultural diversity.

Governments can take the initiative to mitigate against the effects of climate change in the marine environment off the coast of West Africa, examples have shown that through good governance and coordination poor practices can be halted and greater economic and social welfare can be gained.

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The West Africa Coastal Areas Management Program (WACA) is a convening platform that aims to assist West African countries to sustainably manage their coastal areas and enhance socio-economic resilience to the effects of climate change. The program also seeks to facilitate access to technical expertise and financial resources for participating countries.



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