



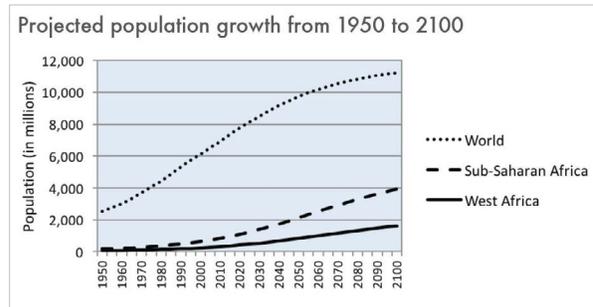
West Africa Coastal Areas Management Program

KNOWLEDGE SHEET 11C | POLITICAL

What role does the Government play in the economic, social and cultural development whilst enhancing the environment?

Engaging Public Institutions in economic, social and cultural developments

- The coastal areas in West Africa make up more than half of the regions GDP (56%).
- West African regional exports amounts to a total GDP of \$734.8 billion (2013). The region's major export commodities are energy products (crude oil, gas and refined petroleum products), fish, natural resources and agricultural products (ECOWAS, 2016).
- West Africa remains one of the strongest economies on the continent, growing by as much as 6.3 percent in 2013 (ECOWAS, 2016).
- West Africa's population is projected to exceed one billion by 2059, with 1 in 10 of the world's population being West African (UN, 2015) (see chart).



Source: United Nations World Population Prospects 2015.

With an increasing population growth in the West African region, coupled with human-induced and natural hazards exacerbated by climate change, the balance of economic, social and cultural elements that are in harmony with the environment, is under threat. West Africa is rich in cultural capital and socio-economic classes which are all reliant on the sustainable functioning of the environment.

Collaboration at local, national and regional scale is essential to respond to a wide range of challenges such as coastal erosion and flooding, overexploitation of natural resources, marine and coastal pollution, rapid urbanization, and unsustainable land use. It is expected that the coastal ecosystems will be further damaged as climate change becomes worse. The loss of economically valuable ecosystems (biodiversity) resources, in addition to, coastal tourist beaches, hotels, fish landing sites and other key areas will undermine local livelihoods, cultural heritages and the national economies.

The national, regional and local governments need to promote alternative livelihoods, enforce fishing quotas, regulate coastal activities and promote blue-green infrastructures (mangroves restoration, endemic plants

in lagoons, stabilizing plants on dune systems etc). Governments can take action to assist its constituents through negotiated agreements and networks that support protected areas with the goal to achieve a balance between economic, social and cultural developments that can co-exist in harmony with the environment.

Challenges

The challenges listed all threaten the services offered by coastal ecosystems putting at risk coastal communities. The following aspects need to be addressed by local and national governments:

- Climate change adaptation and mitigation measures
- Unsustainable infrastructure development
- The lack of land planning
- Inadequate management of natural habitats and resources
- The lack of enforcement of fishing restrictions
- Uncontrolled freshwater and marine pollution

Furthermore, there is a disconnect between local economics and national interests which makes it hard for local economies to grow without the support and implementation of policies and legislation from national governments.

Human induced activities are also affecting the interconnection of economic, social and cultural development with that of environmental protection. For example, sand mining, deep-sea ports, damming of rivers and climate change are all currently impacting on the economic, social and cultural heritage of many areas. For example, 20 years ago, the town of Fuvemeh in Ghana, was a prospering community of 2,500 people, supported by fishing and coconut plantations which is all now completely underwater.

Potential Solutions

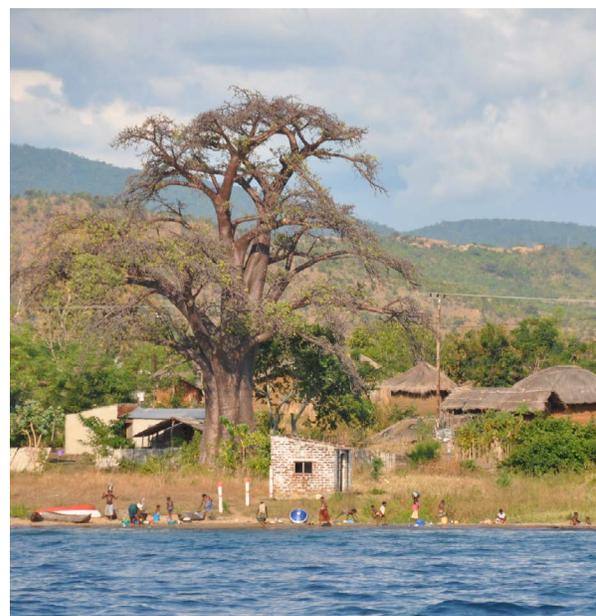
The governments of West African countries could work together to formulate integrated water and coastal management plans as well as enhancing the networks of marine and coastal protected areas. The governments should also work to promote alternative livelihoods that can tap into the rich cultural backgrounds of each region and promote the different cultures of the region to further drive tourism, for example: local crafts, traditional arts,

eco-tourism etc. should all be promoted. Alternative socio-economic plans and roadmaps should be developed that are based on local experiences and needs in a bottom-up demand driven fashion.

Any new national investment project, tourism investment, infrastructure facility at the coastal region can assess the environmental impacts with a participatory approach in human-centered stakeholder engagement charrettes that identify specific activities that benefit the economic, social and cultural development arenas.

A number of further implemental solutions that local and national governments can introduce include:

- Economic, social and cultural studies on the potential relocation of communities in response to rising sea levels and intensified coastal storms
- Agriculture diversification
- Improve efficiency of food preservation and storage
- Innovative financing mechanisms to enhance the economic and thus the social and cultural development in the region
- Government financing for micro-credits to local coastal businesses to allow them to grow sustainability and to create jobs in the local communities
- Government facilitation to aid communities to create funds or crowd funding opportunities for local business
- National promotion of blue-green infrastructures (building with nature to provide an ecological framework for social, economic, cultural and environmental health of the surroundings)



BEST PRACTICE

Regional and local governments working together to take forward agreed coastal zone management priorities (United Kingdom)

Local Area Agreements (LAAs) were set in place to delegate central government decision making to local coastal communities. It has been found that most LAAs were managed effectively and an independent evaluation showed that they successfully achieved many of the goals set out. Regional authorities, partners and Governmental Organisations have largely

welcomed the initiative. If local partnerships and the central government are in broad agreement regarding priorities then the central government policy objectives can be achieved via goals related to local vision at community level. The LAAs have also increased the understanding of the roles of local partnerships and Government Organizations.

REFERENCES

- United Nations. 2015. *World Population Prospects*. https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/publications/files/key_findings_wpp_2015.pdf
- Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). 2016. <http://www.ecowas.int/about-ecowas/basic-information/>

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.



West Africa Coastal Areas
Management Program

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