INTEGRATING COASTAL ISSUES INTO NATIONAL ADAPTATION PLANS: LESSONS FROM WEST AFRICA
SUMMARY

The coastal zone of West Africa is rich in natural resources and contributes to about 57% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the region. However, the zone is under threat from the effects of climate change coupled with human activities and the lack of integration of coastal issues in national adaptation planning (NAP) in the region. This contributes to a decline in economic growth, food security and human security. As part of ongoing efforts to help the region better prepare for the impact of climate change in the region, the West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change (WA BiCC) program, in collaboration with the NAP Global Network organized a learning workshop on NAP. The objective of the workshop which brought together participants from six West African countries was to share information and review opportunities related to integrating coastal issues into national adaptation planning. The workshop was the first step toward information sharing and review of best practices. This collaborative group will work together over the next two years to ensure a functioning network is established.

THE VALUE OF COASTAL ZONES IN WEST AFRICA

The coastal areas of West Africa present an enabling environment for the development of important economic industries including fishing, farming, mining, lumbering, trade, ports and tourism. Cumulatively, this land–sea interface is estimated to host about 70% of the industries in the region. The expanding scale and breadth of industrial growth has driven the expansion of the most important political and economic coastal cities in the region. The fishing industry generates over 1.85 million metric tons per annum, accounting for over $600 million in exports, with an estimated wholesale value of US$2.5 billion. Fisheries contribute to about 50% of mean animal protein consumption in the region. This growth has attracted immigrants from inland areas as well as neighboring countries looking for employment opportunities, which has led to the concentration of about 35% of the West African population along the coast.
THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ACROSS COASTAL WEST AFRICA

Against this backdrop, the impacts of climate change on the urban economic drivers, as well as on the more traditional rural coastal communities who derive their livelihoods largely from coastal resources are significant. Impacts such as sea level rise, flooding, rapid soil erosion leading to the loss of lands, threats to human safety and security, coupled with food security challenges increase yearly in the region. Climate change thus represents one of the greatest challenges to development, and is forecast to slow economic growth, reduce food security as well as impact rural livelihoods of the vulnerable poor across coastal West Africa.

These climate change effects are compounded by non-climatic stressors in and around the region. For instance, the depletion of over 30% of mangrove forests has led to tidal surges, exacerbating coastal erosion. These waves wash away local fishing boats, decimating the livelihoods they generate, and affecting communities negatively. Today it is estimated that coastal erosion has slowed down economic growth by up to 5% in the region.

Furthermore, mangrove loss and degradation has led to the reduction in fish spawning grounds, intensifying pressures on available fish stocks. Climate change is now anticipated to reduce fish landings in the region by up to 26% on account of variations in pollution levels and migration in fish breeding centers, leading to reduced food security in the region.

The increasing variability in climatic patterns has caused real harm to the population, communities, and large as well as small industries along the coast. One example, from August 2017, estimates damage resulting from unpredictable and prolonged monsoon rains resulted in losses of up to $30 million (physical damage to health and education facilities, industrial, transport and housing facilities) to the economy of Sierra Leone, 1,000 lives were lost and over 6,000 people were affected.

In Guinea, overnight rains led to the loss of ten lives in Conakry and prolonged flooding affected 3,274 people around the same period. Similarly, in 2016, heavy rains claimed the lives of 16 people and flooded crucial infrastructure in Côte d’Ivoire.
EFFORTS AND CHALLENGES TO CURB CLIMATE CHANGE IN COASTAL WEST AFRICA

Climate change threatens economic development of the region by its impact on coastal investments and economic opportunities such as ports, commercial buildings, residential areas, livelihoods and food security. Countries across West Africa are acting to adapt to climate variability and climate change. However, these efforts are constrained by the increasing vulnerability of this region and are compounded by their inability to cope with present and projected climate change scenarios, due to various institutional and technical deficiencies.

The National Adaptation Plan presents an opportunity to address some of these deficiencies, as well as to ensure the effective integration of adaptation into national planning and budgeting across the region. NAP was established under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Engaging with the NAP process is a response to international climate change commitments. It highlights national needs in the management of climate change in the medium to long term future and enables integration of this new factor directly into development planning across all relevant sectors. A well-executed NAP will effectively identify opportunities for making development initiatives more climate resilient, and thereby enhance the abilities of countries, and the region, to respond and adapt to climate change impacts.

THE WA BiCC INTERVENTION: WHAT WAS DONE AND WHO WAS INVOLVED?

In spite of the economic, ecological and social importance of the coastal areas of these countries, there was a relative lack of integration of coastal issues as a whole, beyond traditional sector assessments.

To support countries in the region to strengthen their NAP processes, WA BiCC recently organized a “Regional Technical Workshop on Integrating Coastal Issues into National Adaptation Planning: Lessons and Opportunities from Six West African Countries”. This workshop was co-organized with the NAP Global Network and hosted by the Ministry for the Environment and Forest Resources of Togo. Prior to the workshop, WA BiCC completed a literature review and country consultations of six focal countries (Togo, Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Liberia) to assess to what extent the focal coastal countries were or were not integrating coastal issues into their NAPs, the challenges influencing the integration of coastal issues, and how these could be addressed in the short, medium and long term under the framework of the NAP process.

The workshop brought together over 45 experts from these six West African countries, as well as representatives from regional and international organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Mano River Union (MRU), the Abidjan Convention, and the Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN) of Columbia University.

Each of the countries shared their experiences through presentations on how they were approaching the integration of coastal issues into the NAP process. Participants learned from the experience of Senegal, whose representatives were invited to share lessons and experiences on the development of a NAP dedicated to the fisheries sector that was adapted and developed at the local level. Participants gained valuable information and insights, and made important recommendations on how the six countries could work together to improve the NAP process in their respective countries, and regionally.
KEY LESSONS LEARNED

Major coastal problems facing the six countries:

• All countries face almost similar coastal issues. However, the intensities vary, but the most common ones are pollution due to disposal of various types of waste, the degradation and destruction of coastal ecosystems and mangroves.

• Coastal erosion is exacerbated by the destruction of coastal ecosystems by rising sea levels, loss of land and sea water intrusion on agricultural lands, deterioration and loss of infrastructure (roads, houses, schools, health facilities, cemeteries, etc.) as well as high winds.

• Poor knowledge on climate change impacts, lack of adequate systems for early warning and prevention of disaster risks; low levels of endogenous response capacity among people affected by climate change and the inability of the State to reduce climate vulnerability.

• Uncontrolled immigration to urban coastal areas and urbanization.

Knowledge of NAPs:

• With the exception of Togo, all five countries are at the initial stages of the process and are not very conversant with the methodology for developing NAPs prescribed by the Least Developed Country Experts Group (LDCEG).

• NAP is a multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral process. However, this international policy process seemed to be confined to one focal point in the majority of these six countries.

• As a consultative process, sharing experience among countries and learning best practices in the development and implementation of NAP is a very important factor.

• The vertical integration of sectors and institutions in the NAP processes is weak amongst these countries.

• Climate impacts occur at the local level, hence creating space for local level adaptation plans within the NAP process is essential.

The level of inclusion of coastal issues in NAP processes:

• In all six countries, the NAP processes focus mainly on solutions for addressing coastal erosion but WA BiCC encourages them to incorporate in their priorities other significant coastal issues. These include Integrated Coastal Zone Management to promote mangrove restoration, management, and sustainable use, watershed management, forest and wildlife conservation and sustainable use, protection against flooding, and better governance, amongst others.

• Focus on the sustainable management of coastal ecosystems is weak; the incorporation of environmental and social impact studies, as well as the management of coastal areas and other sectors, less visible.

Next steps:

Based on lessons learned, WA BiCC, in collaboration with the NAP Global Network and the six countries will collaborate on the following activities over the next two years:

• Support countries to develop NAP development frameworks.

• Support meteorological agencies in these countries through various capacity building activities to effectively collect and generate climate information for adaptation planning.

• Support countries in the development of the NAP framework “using climate change adaptation planning lens”, through the development of rapid vulnerability assessment methodologies for the region.
ABOUT WA BiCC

The West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change (WA BiCC) program is a five-year learning program funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Although regional in scope, WA BiCC works in targeted geographical areas, or ‘Learning Landscapes’, to generate knowledge that informs local, national and regional practices addressing critical climate change and biodiversity challenges in West Africa. By working with core regional partners -- the Economic Community of West African States, the Mano River Union and the Abidjan Convention -- alongside national and sub-national institutions and local communities, WA BiCC strives to increase the capacity of institutions at all levels to achieve its three core goals: combating wildlife trafficking; increasing coastal resilience to climate change; and reducing deforestation, forest degradation and biodiversity loss.

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