Strengthening Climate Change Resilience in the Fresco Coastal Landscape, Côte d’Ivoire

The Fresco coastal landscape includes the Fresco Lagoon and the Bolo and Niouniourou rivers which feed the lagoon with fresh water. Known locally as Koyiri, the lagoon lies in the administrative region of Gbokle. It has been classified as a Ramsar Site due to its rich biodiversity, including several endangered species like the manatee and African grey parrot. The lagoon is bordered by mangroves and serves as an important breeding ground for several fish species which the local communities depend on.

In recent years, however, the lagoon’s natural resources have been put at risk. A Vulnerability Assessment carried out in 2018 reveals that extreme events (sea level rise, severe storms, storm surges, sea surface temperature changes, prolonged droughts, and extreme precipitation) are the main indicators of climate change impacts on the Fresco lagoon landscape, depending on the community. Forests and mangroves are in rapid decline, as most wood species are cut for export and for firewood. The forest ecosystems, including mangroves, are degraded by 60-70% compared to the level in the ‘90s. The area covered by mangrove between the towns of Fresco and Grand Lahou, another lagoon-centered town 62 kilometres to the east, has fallen sharply from 15,000 hectares to around 6,000 hectares, and the mangroves are being replaced over time by grasses and shrubs. In addition to these risks, there has been a decline in productivity of fisheries, which in turn increased poverty among these local communities with women and children being the most affected.

These declines are directly related to how communities manage and use ecosystem services.

**PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

To protect the ecosystem in this region and improve local livelihoods through sustainable income generation, WA BiCC is providing urgent support to help catalyse the restoration of Fresco’s mangrove and upland forests and biodiversity. Fundamental to this work is that government authorities, NGOs and development partners need to work with local communities to implement different approaches to conserving and sustainably managing mangrove and upland forests and biodiversity.
Towards these ends, USAID, through the West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change (WA BiCC) Program, issued a grant to IMPACTUM that will contribute to the following objectives:

- Enhance the application of national policies, programs, and strategies on climate change at the local level
- Promote sustainable livelihood activities by ensuring that local development policies take account of climate change and its implications on human life and the environment
- Sensitize, inform and consult local communities on risk management and the best approach to manage the connectivity issue between the lagoon and the ocean
- Support local communities in their efforts to implement the action plan to manage risks and manage the Fresco connectivity, and
- Encourage learning and sharing of best practices that strengthen coastal resilience in the Fresco coastal landscape and beyond;

ABOUT WA BICC

WA BiCC is a five-year program funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) that aims to improve conservation and climate-resilient, low-emissions growth across West Africa. Although regional in scope and design, WA BiCC focuses on targeted geographical areas within the region to improve governance and policy over critical natural and human systems. By working through the core regional partners, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Mano River Union (MRU) and the Abidjan Convention, and with targeted sub-national institutions, WA BiCC increases the capacity of institutions at all levels to address the three core WA BiCC components. These are 1) combating wildlife trafficking; 2) increasing coastal resilience to climate change and 3) reducing deforestation, forest degradation, and biodiversity loss.

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