Africa Region . Number 77. June 2002

Findings Infobriefs reports on Good Practice in ongoing operational, economic and sector work carried out by the World Bank and its member governments in the Africa Region. It is published monthly by the Knowledge and Learning Center on behalf of the Region. The views expressed in Findings are those of the author/s and should not be attributed to the World Bank Group.

Ghana: Coastal Wetlands Management

The objectives of this project (1993-99) were to maintain the ecological integrity of five key coastal wetland areas by involving the people who derive their livelihood from these ecosystems in the planning and implementation of management programs; to identify and monitor the common resources that benefit the human and bird populations in the wetlands, and manage them without unduly restricting the options of people to derive benefit from the resources. It would also develop capabilities at government and community level for implementing the program. This project was implemented with the assistance of a Global Environmental Trust Fund grant.

Impact on the ground

- Despite a late start, the Community Investment Support Fund was 99 percent disbursed within two years. By October 1999, 72 micro-enterprise groups comprising 1,706 individuals (1,001 women and 705 men) had received credit disbursements totaling about Cedis 992 million (approximately $397,000 of the total $400,000) for developing such activities as farming, fishing, agro-processing, cottage industries, and mixed activities of commercial farming/fishing, including marketing of their produce.

- Economic activities were linked with biodiversity activities. Approximately 40 acres of tree plantations and woodlots at different sites have been established, five community task forces were formed to protect breeding marine turtles, their nests and habitats, and over 10 km of choked river channels and creeks have been cleared to improve water transport, fisheries and crop production within the Songor site.

- Site Management Committees formed under the project ensured broad-based representation of all principal stakeholders and management by consensus.

- In terms of capacity building, the project helped to improve the technical and organizational capabilities of the community trade associations, especially women’s groups. The enhanced credibility of the associations within their districts has enhanced their ability to make an impact on wetland conservation.

- Community development activities and infrastructure under the project mostly involved the construction of latrines—KVIP units, septic units and the central waste disposal systems. In all locations, the community chiefs and elders provided the land for constructing the facilities. Initially, communities mobilized labor estimated to cost $30,000, increasing to $919,000. Thirty percent of wetlands communities have passed bylaws to control sanitation.

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Institutionally, the Wildlife Department evolved from being a unit with little experience in wetland management to one with considerably enhanced capacity for community-based management.

- The Environmental Protection Agency, through its newly-developed capacity is now able to develop environmental policies and programs, monitor environmental problems, and advise the government at national and local levels.
- A wetlands strategy was formulated — "Managing Ghana's Wetlands: A National Wetlands Conservation Strategy" was published by the Ministry of Lands and Forestry.
- The five sites, totaling about 1,685 km² have been surveyed and the maps updated and certified by the Survey Department.
- Ecological and socioeconomic baseline studies were completed for the three wetland sites of Muni-Pomadze, Densu Delta and Sakumo lagoon in 1994; similar studies were also completed for the larger sites of Songor and Keta in 1998. The reports were presented to communities at three sites both to sensitize them and to get feedback regarding the proposed interventions.
- A computerized database helps to administer and technically coordinate the monitoring program.
- Good results were shown in protecting water quality and resident bird populations on the project sites. A 1999 report indicated that at the Keta site, the number of waders increased from about 31,400 in 1986 to 96,661 in 1998, and terns at the Densu delta site increased from 4,900 in 1986 to 23,184 in 1998.
- An innovative aspect involved collaboration with Panbros Salt, a private salt processing company, to manage its operations so that certain locations critical for migratory bird roosting and nesting were left untouched, and to ensure that fishing lagoons are reserved for the local population.
- There was a strong and effective public awareness campaign and the Wildlife Department collaborated with the Ghana Wildlife Society to carry this out. This campaign resulted in, among other things, mobilization of groups for clean-up activities and groups to patrol, arrest and prosecute environmental offenders within the wetland sites.

**Lessons learned**

- Measures to access social development outcomes need to be put in place during project implementation so that feedback can benefit the project.
- The sustainability of an operation depends on close and long-term collaboration across the range of stakeholders.
- Donors should focus on working directly with committed NGOs for field-based activities while limiting central government agency initiatives to a clearly-defined policy agenda, handled through a different mechanism.
- In the context of capacity built, it would seem useful to encourage an NGO such as the Ghana Wildlife Society to submit a project concept that would require a small GEF grant ($1 million). Since the scope of activities would be smaller than those covered by the present project, this could be implemented independently by the NGO.
- Appropriate capacity building of environmental agency staff should precede new initiatives.
- While the short-term is likely to yield modest results, particularly in countries where appropriate management or systems did not exist, it is critical that support be continued to core activities so as to ensure long-term results.

*This Infobrief has been excerpted, with minor editorial changes, from the Implementation Completion Report no. 20663 GH. The Task Team Leader was Patience Mensah and Lucie Tran was the primary author of the ICR. For more information, please e-mail Pmensah@worldbank.org*