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WORKSHOP ON MANGROVES IN WEST AFRICA

A REPORT BY GEPADG / CHEC GAMBIA

DATE: 25th – 27th JUNE 2013 VENUE: GUNJUR BEACH



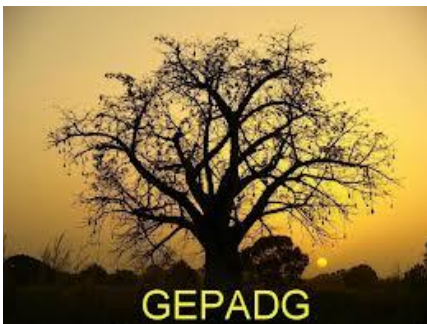
MANGROVE

BACKGROUND

Existing artisanal livelihoods and development activities destroy mangrove ecosystems. Women, who smoke fish or collect oysters cut mangrove wood, partly destroy the asset on which they depend. Shrimp aquaculture provides a new threat, in addition to fuel-wood extraction. Significant chunks of Nigeria's mangroves are affected by toxicity from crude oil spillages. Other threats to West African mangroves include logging, clearance for oil pipes, seismic lines and roads, salt production, urban development and settlement, and the spread of nypa palm. By improving mangrove ecosystem management the project will help women and men dependent on mangroves develop more sustainable livelihoods.

Mangroves occur in 19 West African countries from Mauritania in the north to Angola in the South (UNEP-WCMC, 2006b). Nigeria has the largest area of mangroves in the region (7386 km²), 22% of all African mangroves. Other Commonwealth countries have shorter shorelines with Cameroon having 1957km² of mangroves, Sierra Leone 1052, Gambia 581, and Ghana 137. CHEC's members in Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Gambia and the Fisherfolk Livelihoods Case Studies in the Commonwealth Fisheries Programme have highlighted the problem and the practical work of CHEC Gambia in mangrove conservations how some of the answers.

An application for a meeting of a small group of West African experts in mangrove governance to the Commonwealth Foundation was approved in 2012. This workshop should bring together participants from affected communities to outline future strategies for the future governance and management of mangrove ecosystems to sustain natural coastal



GUNJUR ENVIRONMENTAL

**PROTECTION AND
DEVELOPMENT**

GROUP

Founded in 1992



defences, inshore fisheries, wildlife and ecotourism while maintaining sustainable livelihoods for growing coastal populations. Preparation was done by CHEC Gambia, under the leadership of Mr Badara Bajo, and Gunjur Environment Protection and Development Group (GEPDG who are committed to protecting the Bolong Fenyon a community wildlife reserve that is a unique wetland area). The workshop took place 25th to 27th June 2013.

OPENING CEREMONY

The workshop commenced at 9:30 am with opening remarks given by Hon President Levi Oguike of the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council, UK. He mentioned that the workshop was sponsored by the Commonwealth Foundation in conjunction with CHEC Gambia. He then introduced the international delegates for the conference from the various West African countries: Dr. Ndongo Din & Ngo Massou Vanessa from Cameroon; Samuel Dotse and Ruby Mensah from Ghana; Titilope Akosa and Chris Anekwe from Nigeria. The president further asserted that from his observation that though Gunjur is a coastal community it does not receive enough rainfall and its lagoons are gradually drying up. He mentioned that in Maiduguri at North-Eastern Nigeria there used to be 2 months of rain until the community took it up to plant trees and today the story has changed. That community now receives about 10 months of rain in a year and the same can happen to Gunjur after the experience that will be gained from this workshop. The president also welcomed the British High Commissioner and all present including the chief of Gunjur. He also commended Badara, the director of CHEC- Gambia for the organisation of the conference.

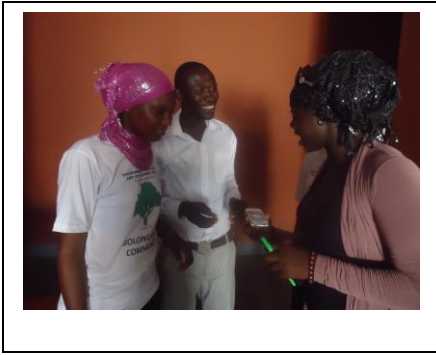
Next was the welcome address given by the director of GEPADG, Badara Bajo, CHEC-Gambia. He advised that participants should focus on the lessons of the workshop and share with others in the community. He mentioned that the aim of the workshop is to target the youth on conservation of the mangrove ecosystem in order for all to live in a healthy environment. Lastly, he mentioned that the problem of mangrove is a challenge and beckons on all to come out with useful recommendations in order to make Gunjur a better community.

This was followed by the community chief of Kombo South District, who mentioned that the level of deforestation in the country is alarming and therefore the need to tackle the issue of mangroves since that's all they have. He further asserted that though mangroves have so many important values, as well as creating socio-economic stability for people, if not properly managed could be detrimental to all. Finally, he thanked the organisers of the workshop and welcomed all the international guests who have come to make the programme a success.

Next was the governor, Fatou T. Sangyang, of the West Coast region of the Gambia. She thanked all delegates for making it to the workshop. Though she outlined the importance of mangroves, she stated that this three day programme will help the Gambia to know the situation of the other West African states and how best to tackle the issue of mangrove preservation.



Hon Levi Oguike



The workshop was graced by a representative of the British High Commissioner, Ian Teale, who attested to the importance of mangroves for saving lots of lives especially people who live near the coast. He however emphasized that over exploitation of the mangrove can lead to migration to cities which could compound the challenges being faced in urban areas.

The final goodwill message was received by a representative for the minister of Environment, Forestry and Parks, Bubakar Zaidjallow, who mentioned that sustainable management of mangrove is important through the Ramsar convention. He further mentioned that mangroves have reduced over the years due to illegal felling of trees. He finally mentioned that since 1997, the president of 'The Gambia' have gazetted eight sites for forest conservation and trying to add 2 more. After all good will messages received, the CHEC – UK president appealed to the British High Commissioner to help GEPADG get a vehicle to prevent poaching in their 320 hectare forest reserve and declared the workshop open.

DAY 1: 1ST PLENARY SESSION

1st PRESENTATION BY THE DIRECTOR OF WABSA, LAMIN JABARTE, ON MANGROVE TRAINING IN GAMBIA

Mr Jabarte stated that the mangroves cover 67, 800 ha of land in Gambia which serve as a habitat to lots of birds and other animal species. However, mangroves are drying up especially in the northern part of the Gambia which informed his formation of green clubs at schools to create awareness on its preservation and the ecosystem at large. Initiatives being taken by WABSA on mangroves include education and awareness creation for the community. Women are also engaged in vegetable gardening and other productive ventures in order not to over utilize the resources of the mangroves. One important passage made was that scientifically it has been proven that the best honey is gotten from mangroves. He further outlined that though Gambia has 6 species, latest discovery shows an emerging flower believed to be a 7th specie of mangroves in the Gambia. One other thing deemed alarming is the location of mechanic shops around mangroves causing not just oil spills but chemical spills leading to the destruction of the mangroves. On best practices, he advised on a 1metre interval during planting and sites analysis.



2nd PRESENTATION BY DR NDONGO DIN ON MANGROVES IN CAMEROON

The presenter made it clear that mangrove in Cameroon is a forest and also an ecosystem. He mentioned that Cameroon has all the 7 mangrove species of Africa but the most common ones are the red and black with trees being 100cm long accompanied by good soil conditions. Emphasis was made on a particular kind of fish (*Periophtamus papilio*) associated with the mangroves in the river and as such destruction to these mangroves also means the disappearance of

this fish species. Focus was centred on the disappearance of mangroves in Cameroon with natural (coastal erosion) and anthropogenic factors identified as the main causes. However of the human causes, forest activities, urbanization, industrial discharges and sand winning were identified as major forms of destruction to mangroves in Cameroon. The speaker also acknowledged the reduction of areas covered by mangroves from 2400km² to 2000km² which is a wakeup call for preservation of the mangroves. On mangroves conservation, mention was made to zero destruction of mangroves in Cameroon, ratification of the Ramsar convention and a national park for mangrove conservation. Additionally, he mentioned that NGO's such as the Cameroon Mangrove Network are also working to preserve mangroves in Cameroon.

2nd PLENARY SESSION

1st PRESENTATION BY SAMUEL DOTSE ON MANGROVES IN GHANA

The speaker mentioned that mangroves in Ghana are located in the six major Ramsar sites of International importance. Though Ghana has six main types, the most common ones are the red (rhizophora) and the black (avicennia). He mentioned that mangroves do not only provide socio-economic value but also high nutritional value. Human intrusion such as urbanization and population growth was identified as the major causes of mangroves destruction in Ghana. He mentioned that there are laws put in place by the government on protection of the ecosystem as well as mangroves. Finally, added that Ghana is also a signatory to the Ramsar Convention on the protection of wetlands.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS MADE ON THE THREE PRESENTATIONS

Questions that arose were on good methodologies, best practices, challenges for growing and preservation of mangroves as well as policies and laws governing mangroves. Secondly, other striking questions were on the exploration of oil in mangrove sites as well as other alternatives livelihood support for people who wholly depend on the mangroves to survive.

On best practices and good methodologies, it was advised that planting should mostly be done in swampy areas, carrying out of site analysis, seeking of experts' advice and indigenous knowledge as well as enforcement of community by-laws. Challenges outlined to be mostly faced include over utilization of mangrove resources, salt intrusion and deforestation. On policies and laws, it was suggested for community to set up their own governing laws as well as enforcement of government laws on mangrove and ecosystem protection.



DAY 2: 3rd PLENARY SESSION

4th PRESENTATION: OVER VIEW OF MANGROVES IN WEST AFRICA BY TITILOPE AKOSA

The presenter alerted the audience that the word mangrove was derived from 'mangue' which is a combination of Gambian, Guinea and Senegalese language. She asserted that over the years, lots of pressures have been put on the mangroves but the most alarming is oil spillage leading to water acing causing destruction to the mangroves. One interesting point that was emphasized was the fact that though there are laws on forestry to mainly protect forests, there is no particular law on protection of mangroves. Finally, the presenter also stated that seeking of indigenous knowledge from the local people and handling of gender issues is very important if mangroves need to be preserved.

5th PRESENTATION BY CHRIS ANEKWE ON MANGROVE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A WAY FORWARD FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY ADAPTATION IN AFRICA

The presenter mentioned that Nigeria's mangrove places 4th globally in the world but 1st in Africa. He further mentioned that Nigeria is the only West African country which has all the 8 mangrove species. He again mentioned that except for traditional uses mangrove species are not currently commercially utilized in Nigeria. Ownership of mangrove in Nigeria is by the community and there is the need to protect mangrove forest.

SYNDICATE SESSIONS WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS

The syndicate sessions was in two groups and after thorough discussions, both groups came out with general problems, recommendations, best practices, conservation and expectations of the workshop and on mangroves.



Delegates



Problems outlined on mangroves were as follows:

- Deforestation and farming purposes
- Salt intrusion and illegal dumping
- Urbanization inadequate awareness
- Over harvesting of mangrove resources and usage of wrong fishing gears
- Natural hazards such as soil erosion

Conservation Measures were as follows:

- Enforcement of laws and policies
- Training and capacity building programmes
- Reforestation programmes and establishment of national parks.

Expectations on workshop were as follows:

- Information dissemination and attitudinal change
- Organization of workshops
- Provision of funding for mangrove activities

Best practices approved by both groups were:

- Application of best methods (spacing and timing) and techniques
- Application of best indigenous knowledge
- Enforcement of community by-laws
- Monitoring and evaluation

Recommendations:

- Establishment of research centres in regional/national West African countries
- Eco-tourism between West African countries
- Conduction of Environmental Social Impact Assessment (E.S.I.A)
- Policy advocacy and capacity building on mangroves
- Reforestation of mangrove ecosystem and awareness creation

The vote of thanks for the programme was made by the Director of CHEC Gambia, Badara Bajo. He thanked all for making it and emphasized that lessons learnt should be put to use by the Gunjur community in order to make it very resilient against climate change.

Day 3: Field trips were made to the Bolongfenyo Community Wildlife Reserve, the GEPADG- CHEC Gambian office and tourist sites such as the snake farm.

Day 4: Departure of all international participants

(Rapporteurs: **Ruby Mensah & Vanessa Ngo Massou**)



EXCERPT FROM COMMUNIQUE
ISSUED AT THE END OF 3 DAY COMMONWEALTH WEST AFRICAN REGIONAL WORKSHOP
ON MANGROVES
HELD FROM 25th to 27th of JUNE 2013 AT GUNJUR BEACH, GAMBIA

The workshop noted among other things that;

- There is less awareness about mangroves and its importance in ecosystem services across the West African region.
- African mangroves have been increasingly disappearing at an alarming rate
- Laws and policies in West Africa address the environment and biodiversity generally without specific policies targeted at preservation and sustainable management of mangrove ecosystems.
- Human and Natural hazards such as , petroleum exploration, coastal erosion, exploitation of mangroves products for livelihood survival, construction and other usage are the major causes of mangrove depletion.
- Gender roles in relation to mangrove issues differ from country to country in West Africa as a result of differentiated uses by men and women and gender roles in the countries.
- There is need to strike the right balance between mangrove preservation, oil exploration and other issues which contribute to the destruction of mangroves in West Africa
- There is need to urgently halt the rapid depletion of mangroves across West Africa to address the impacts of climate change.
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RECOMMENDATIONS

It is hereby recommended that;

1. In-depth research should be carried out at country level to provide evidenced based analysis on the status of mangroves in West African countries for policy directions at country level.
2. A synthesis report on the state of mangroves in West Africa should be prepared from the country reports to engage policy makers during the Commonwealth Head of Governments meeting (CHOGM) in Sri-Lanka in November 2013
3. All relevant stakeholders, government, NGOs and community based organizations should embark on awareness, education and sensitization in the print, electronic and social media on the importance of mangroves.
4. Policy advocacy targeting specific laws and policies on mangroves should be embarked upon in all West African countries.
5. Preservation of mangroves ecosystem should be pursued simultaneously with other tree planting initiatives.
6. Gender issues should be addressed in finding solutions to mangrove depletion in West Africa. Women should be empowered to take responsibility for mangrove conservation and be educated on the need to stop the cutting of mangroves for fuel wood.
7. Women should be included in all initiatives to preserve mangroves and their ' traditional role in environmental management and their knowledge should be leveraged upon in finding sustainable solutions to mangrove depletion
8. Continuous empowerment and capacity building programs should be implemented at local, national and regional levels on mangroves.
9. Indigenous/local knowledge on mangrove conservation, regeneration and planting should be integrated with scientific knowledge to address mangrove depletion.
10. A West African research centre dedicated to the generation of data and knowledge on mangroves should be established

11. The challenges of land use and ownership with respect to mangroves should be resolved with mangroves dependent communities to ensure sustainable management and conservation of mangroves across West Africa.
12. Governments across West Africa should demonstrate political will by committing funds to the conservation and sustainable development of mangroves.

CONCLUSIONS

The workshop provided a very good platform for knowledge sharing on best practices on mangrove ecosystems across the West African Region and this workshop should be scaled up to bring more stakeholders input into the process of raising critical awareness about the importance of mangroves

SIGNED BY

Hon Levi Oguike- President CHEC International, UK
Mr Badara Bajo- Director GEDPADG/CHEC Gambia

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