Evaluation overview

Soft solutions and monitoring of coastal risks in Benin, Senegal and Togo

Countries: **Benin, Senegal and Togo**

Topic: **Integrated management and resilience of coastal and marine areas**

Assessed by: **Biotope**
Date of evaluation: **June 2024**

Key FFEM support data

Project name: Soft solutions and monitoring of coastal risks in Benin, Senegal and Togo, WACA FFEM

Project number: CZZ 2221

Amount financed by the FFEM: €1,277,000

Project grant date: End of 2018

Duration: 5 years

Context

As of today, over 30% of West Africa's total population - and 50% of its urban population - is located in the coastal strip of 11 countries running from Mauritania to Benin, and could, according to some projections, increase from its 2020 population of 36 million inhabitants to over 80 million by 2050. In response to the growing needs for management of coastal risks, such as erosion and coastal flooding, 11 West African countries, under the auspices of the UEMOA, in 2011 created the West African Coastal Observation Mission (WACOM) led by the Dakar Ecological Monitoring Centre (CSE). In 2015 the World Bank launched the WACA ResIP programme, in collaboration with France which, following COP21 in 2016, strengthened its commitment by supporting the project through various institutions and a contribution from the FFEM. In 2021 the WACOM became the West African Regional Coastal Observatory (ORLOA), extending its activities to 12 countries and enhancing its missions to include generating and disseminating data, as well as improving governance structures and setting up a regional alert network to optimise management of the West African coast.

Participants and operating methods

In its role as ORLOA coordinator, the CSE provided project management and benefited from technical assistance from the IUCN until 2022. 21 partners have collaborated (environment departments, PRCM,

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RAMPAO, DAMCP, MPA committees, universities…) and 13 partnership conventions have been signed. The project benefitted from support from French institutions such as France's Coastal Protection Agency (CDL).

Aims

The main objective of the project was the monitoring and management of coastal risks in West Africa and the promotion of "soft solutions" for preventing and protecting against these risks, through the consolidation of a regional cooperation mechanism for generating and disseminating information and implementing pilot experiences.

Specific objectives:

- 1. The observation mechanism for the West African coast has effective coordination.
- 2. Knowledge of the coast and coastal risks is improved, and the competences of the national coastal management authorities are strengthened.
- 3. Pilot actions for promoting and implementing "soft solutions" are undertaken in Benin, Senegal and Togo.
- 4. Information on the evolution of coastal risks is made available to managers and decision-makers of the West African coastlines.

Relevance

The project addresses a significant issue for West African countries, particularly Senegal, Togo and Benin, through the practical implementation of soft solutions on pilot sites exposed to coastal risks and the consolidation of a regional observation and management mechanisms.

Coherence

The intervention logic, relying on the WACOM then ORLOA via the CSE, was perfectly suited to bringing together actors at regional scale and create the conditions for embedding these actions long-term. For actions on the ground, local managers were identified for each of the pilot sites connected with their mission (Senegal's MPA committees, and the Cap Sud-Est and the Corde NGOs). Support from certain French institutions such as the Coastal Protection Agency and the Cerema, in particular through involvement of the French Ministry of Ecological Transition and Territorial Cohesion enhanced the activity's coherence.

Effectiveness

All the actions planned by the project were implemented or adapted to contribute to achieving the project goals. On the Saint Louis MPA, installing palings based on *Typha* (Typhavelles) and re-foresting with casuarinas created a protective dune system. On other sites, solutions such as Maltais Savard spikes or the restoration of mangroves were tested despite some internal and external difficulties.

Efficiency

Institutionally, following an initial implementation phase and looking beyond the difficulties related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the operating mode of the project enabled efficient project actions and partner involvement. For soft solutions implementation, some administrative issues in the delivery of funds and some budgetary constraints limited the efficiency of some actions.

Impact

The project encouraged the integration of soft solutions into coastal protection policies at regional and national scale. On the Saint Louis MPA, the solutions encouraged the recovery of natural habitats and areas exploited by growers. Elsewhere, the impact of soft solutions merits long-term commitment to better evaluate the projects. Populations were able to benefit directly from project activities, whether through direct financing, or through spin-offs from the setting-up of revenue-earning activities. In Togo, the project has financed some twenty fish smokeries (Chorkor ovens), managed individually.

Viability/sustainability

Reliance on the ORLOA, the CSE and legitimate regional and local actors enabled continuity of activities beyond the project. The continuation of activities remains intrinsically linked to available economic resources, with the prospect of a new project benefiting from an FFEM contribution to ensure the continuity of actions undertaken.

Added value of FFEM support

FFEM support contributed significantly to promoting the importance of soft solutions as effective complementary methods for tackling coastal risks locally on pilot sites, but also and most importantly at regional and national level in project countries through the CSE and ORLOA and interaction with the WACA ResIP.

Recommendations & learnings

For the next planned action as part of the RETCAO project, the evaluation recommends focusing efforts on both soft and nature-based solutions, while avoiding the dispersal of fund allocation to peripheral activities and ensuring that institutional activities are kept in line with this approach. Relocalisation challenges appear to be too complex to be considered within this type of project. Recommendations include dedicated field expertise within the project team, in-depth diagnostics in the initial phase, ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and traceability within the decision-making process regarding the technical choices undertaken.

More generally, for the implementation of soft solutions to combat coastal erosion and flooding, it is critical to plan a cross-cutting and complementary combination of solutions in order to understand the whole risk over the long term. The production of accurate initial diagnostics, re-evaluated regularly, is a major step in underpinning the selection and success of solutions. In addition, soft solutions generally require planning for regular maintenance of the works, which has to be achievable for those responsible for their implementation. In the same way, sedimentary monitoring has to be considered over different timescales, from the simplest to the most complex. Specifically, for some solutions such as reforestation it is essential to consider a variety of plant species in relation to the tiering of greenery over the toposequence. These reforestations require the use of known or previously-tested protocols and monitoring of the growth, and death, of plants to adapt them. Palings, which have demonstrated their effectiveness on the Saint-Louis MPA in Senegal, remain effective solutions only when local conditions (exposure to wind, grain sizes) are favourable. Maltais Savard spikes need monitoring and regular maintenance in view of their vulnerability to strong surges, and regional inventory and experience feedback is recommended for this solution.