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Advancing knowledge: a key element of the World Bank's integrated coastal management strategic agenda in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract

Advancing knowledge in integrated coastal management (ICM) is a key element of the ICM Strategic Agenda of the World Bank in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Advancing knowledge encompasses both the transfer of information and skills as well as the sharing of information and synthesis of local knowledge to support decision-making processes in client countries. Facilitating access to knowledge, generating new information and knowledge are key to empowerment. A key goal of development is empowering people to manage their own destinies. The World Bank is committed to this goal and makes concerted efforts to make information accessible and to promote knowledge in a variety of disciplines through a mix of modalities. The aim of this paper is to discuss select interventions supported by the Bank to promote ICM in SSA, the context within which they are implemented and emerging lessons from the experience. © 2000 Published by Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

The coastal areas all over the world are in crisis, mainly through over-exploitation of the resource base. The situation is no different in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), where heavy concentrations of human settlements are placing increasing pressures on an already stressed ecosystem. Significant areas of the coastal zone of Africa, are polluted from local or upland sources, fishery resources are overfished and depleted, coral reefs and mangroves are threatened or being destroyed and the fragile coastal habitat

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which is the source of a rich variety of marine and coastal species, is being transformed by developmental activities. Increased resource use conflicts are posing challenges to coastal nations and to the social and economic well-being of coastal communities. Environmentally sound responses are needed if the threats to coastal communities and habitat through global climate change and sea-level rise are to be minimized.

The World Bank's over-arching goal in Africa is poverty reduction through environmentally and socially sustainable development. The Bank's Environmentally Sustainable Development Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa [1] emphasizes that more than any other region of the world, SSA relies on its environmental base from both an economic and social perspective. The resource base is at risk for a number of interdependent issues. In the coastal areas, heavy dependence on the marine and coastal resources, extreme poverty among coastal communities and in-migration to coastal areas combine to place heavy pressures on coastal ecosystems. Degraded coastal and marine ecosystems result in lower productivity, lower incomes and poor health in coastal communities. Rapid population growth and the significant increase of HIV and AIDS in coastal communities are other dimensions which add to the complex web of interlinked problems in the coastal areas of SSA, making sustainable development in these areas a challenge of daunting proportions.

Integrated coastal management (ICM) is recognized by the international community and by many coastal nations as an appropriate policy process to balance the conservation of the valuable ecosystem with the development of economic activities dependent on these resources and areas. The World Bank's commitment to ICM is evidenced by the development of comprehensive guidelines outlining: (a) the main issues in coastal zone management; (b) the principles of an integrated approach; and (c) detailed guidelines for the development of integrated programs to manage key issues. In the Africa region, a framework for ICM: "Africa: A Framework for Integrated Coastal Zone Management" was developed in 1994 [2], setting forth a logical progression in the evolution of ICM programs from problem identification and planning through coastal management plan adoption to implementation and investment projects. Building on this framework as well as the Environmentally Sustainable Development Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa, the region has prepared a strategic agenda for ICM, which identifies key areas for Bank intervention over the short-to-medium term. This strategy: "Integrated Coastal Management in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Strategic Agenda" is being discussed with the Bank's partners in the international community as well as with potential clients in SSA, to develop a joint plan for collaboration [3]. One of the central themes of the strategy is advancing knowledge in ICM, through partnerships, networking, information sharing and promoting targeted training and capacity building in the region. The objective of this paper is to outline some of the pilot approaches that the Bank has initiated to advance knowledge in ICM in different sub-regions in SSA and to draw emerging lessons.

The paper briefly outlines the crisis in the coastal areas in SSA and key elements of the Bank's strategic agenda in ICM. Emphasizing the value of advancing knowledge through targeted training, information sharing and the synthesis of knowledge in promoting ICM, the paper discusses pilot approaches supported by the Bank to developing local capacity. The paper concludes with an assessment of emerging

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