

FINAL REPORT
ESSEI LAGOON ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION AND CONSERVATION
PROJECT

No: SGP-01-10-005



Implemented by
CRISIS ACTIONS SOLUTIONS ORGANISATION (CASOLS)

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Cover Photo: Essei lagoon, Bakaano

Photo Credit: Richard Adupong

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CASOLS	Crisis Actions Solutions
CRC	Coastal Resources Centre
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FoN	Friends of the Nation
JHS	Junior High School
MCE	Metropolitan Chief Executive
NGO	Non-governmental organization
SDA	Shama District Assembly
SHS	Senior High School
SNV	Netherlands Development Agency
STMA	Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly
WR	Western Region
YWC	Youth-In-Wetlands Club

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report describes key activities implemented under the Essei lagoon ecological restoration and conservation project, its outcomes and lesson learnt. The project was funded by the Coastal Resource Center-Ghana. It spanned from August to November 2010. It was implemented in Bakaano and Bakaekyir communities in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly (STMA) where the Essei lagoon is located.

The project involved sensitizing residents of Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis particularly; Bakaano and Bakakyire on the ecological, social and economic values of the Essei lagoon and the need for conservation. This was aimed at halting the rapid degradation of the lagoon.

2.0 BACKGROUND

Like many wetlands, the Essei Lagoon (located in Bakaano-STMA) is threatened by localized pollution emanating from operation of auto-mechanic and carpentry workshops along its upstream banks. These activities churn out tones of inorganic and organic wastes on daily basis into the lagoon. The lagoon is used as defecating site by operators of these workshops. Chemicals comprising heavy metals are also emptied into the lagoon. Sawn dusts are also dumped directly into the lagoon. As compared to the downstream section, the upstream sections of the lagoon show deep green colours, indicating high eutrophication levels in the shallow waters. Due to these activities, the size of the lagoon has reduced over the years and the natural ecology is disrupted. Moreover, at the slightest downpour, the lagoon overflows its banks causing regular flooding in the upstream communities.

The *Essei Lagoon Ecological Restoration and Conservation Project* was aimed at conserving the Essei lagoon and its biodiversity. Specifically the project sought to create awareness on the ecological functions and social and economic values of Essei lagoon as well as to protect the lagoon from pollution. Key activities included organizing one community durbar, mounting of four billboards, production and distribution of 100 educational leaflets on wetlands, formation of 3 Youth-In-Wetlands Clubs (YWC), production of 60 T-shirts for YWC members and organizing one communal clean up.

3.0 MAJOR OUTCOMES AND ACTIVITIES

Within the framework of the project, almost all the scheduled activities have been completed. The following is a presentation of the status of the activities and outputs at the time of winding up the project.

3.1 Increased knowledge through awareness creation

This outcome has been achieved through the following activities.

3.1.2 Engagements with major stakeholders

There were engagements with community leaders and members, basic schools (Aggrey Memorial, Gyandu M/A JHS and Salvation Army schools) around the project site as well as other key stakeholders such as mechanics and carpenters around the lagoon for the successful implementation of the project.

An informal interview with the stakeholders revealed their happiness about the formation of YWC as a key outcome of the project. According to them, the YWC would further promote the educational campaign of the project and lead to attitudinal change in the way people degrade the Esseï lagoon.

3.1.3 Production of 400 educational materials

400 (as against the original proposal of 100 copies) educational leaflets/brochures on wetlands / mangroves were produced and distributed to members of YWC (Aggrey Memorial, Gyandu M/A JHS and Salvation Army schools). Other pupils/students in basic and second cycle schools (such as St. Johns Senior High School) as well as the general public were given copies of the brochure at the community durbar held on 10/10/10.

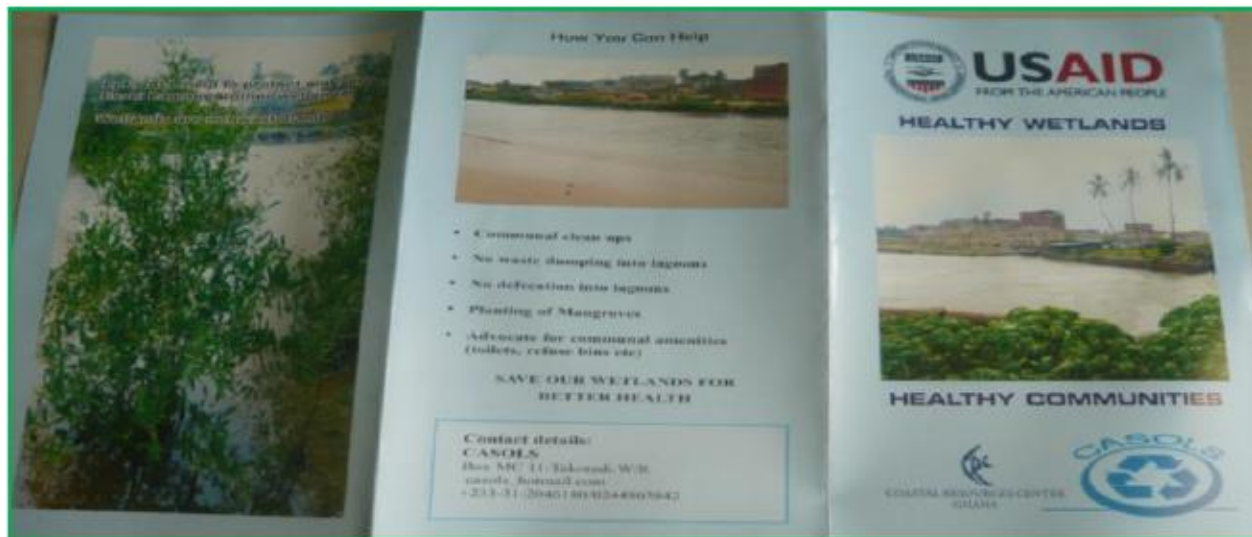


Figure 1 Back page of the educational leaflet on the values of wetlands

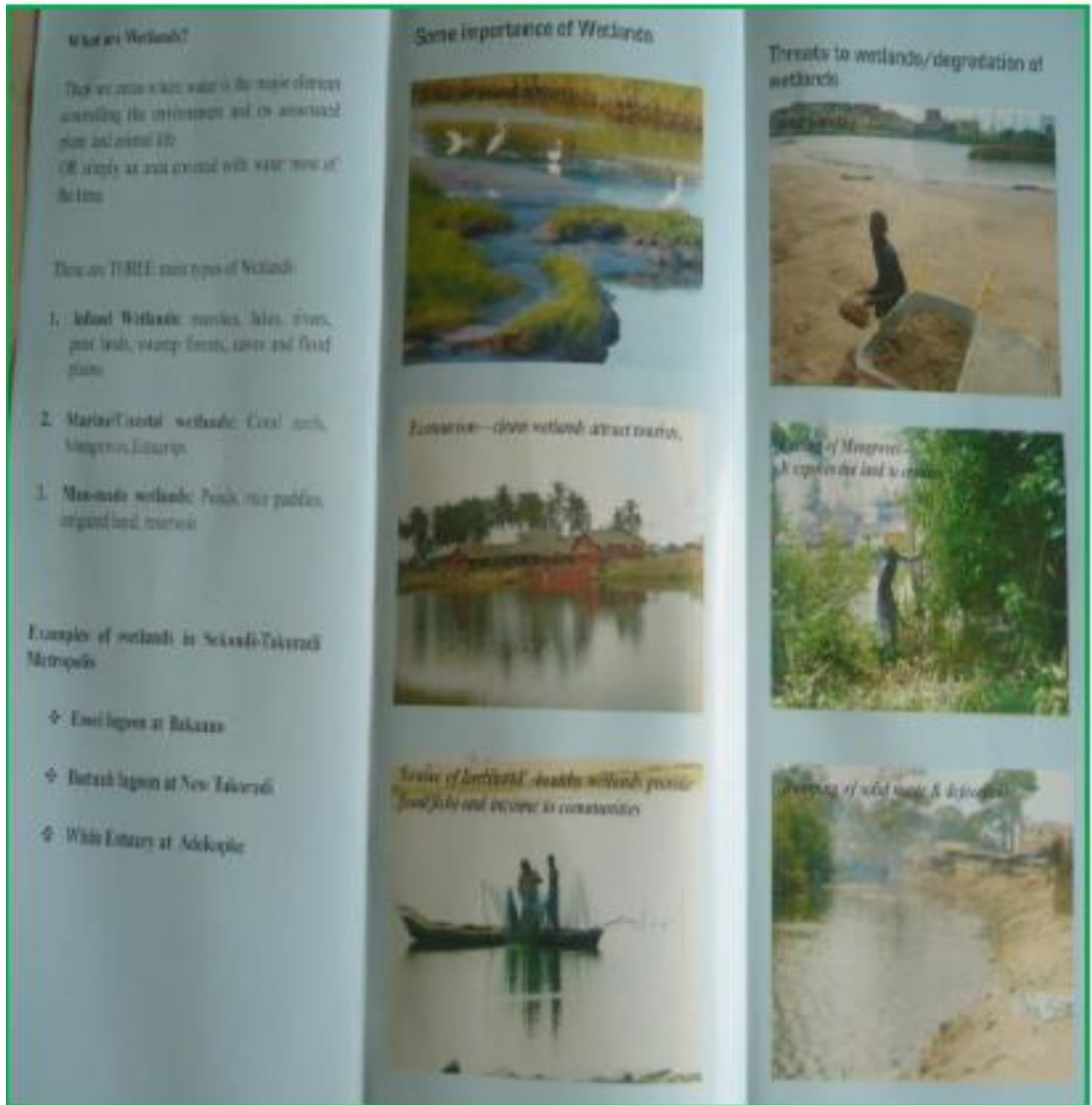


Figure 2 Inside pages of the educational leaflet

3.1.4 Production of 100 T-shirts

100 T-shirts for the YWC (i.e. 40 extra T-shirts) were produced and given to the club members and their lead teachers. As planned, they are to be worn on each program that involves the club. Subsequently, all members of YWC wore the t-shirts during the mangrove conservation festival held on 10/10/10.



Figure 3 Front view of YWC T-shirt



Figure 4 Back view of YWC T-shirt

3.1.5 Mounting of four front and back billboards /signpost

Four communicative billboards/sign posts with clear messages on the importance of Essei Lagoon and the need for its preservation were strategically mounted at both sides of the lagoon on 8th October, 2010.



Figure 5 One of the 4 billboards located at the east of Essei Lagoon

3.2 Capacity of YWC built on values of wetlands and mangroves

This was accomplished through the formation and training of YWC members on the values and importance of wetlands and mangroves.

3.2.1 Formation of YWC in three basic schools

Three Youth-In-Wetlands Clubs (YWC) were formed in 3 basic schools around the Essei lagoon; namely, Aggrey Memorial, Gyadu JHS and Salvation Army schools. The Metro Directorate of Education gave its support and formal approval in the formation exercise. Each school has at least 25 members in the club with the number increasing each day. Pupils were asked to join the club voluntarily. Also, there is a lead/focal teacher in each school.



Figure 6 Members of YWC from the three basic schools

YWC members were tasked to ensure cleanliness in their environment particularly the surroundings of Esseï lagoon and engage in activities relating to wetlands, mangrove conservation as well as general sanitation related activities. Cleaning tools (3 wheel barrows, 3 rakes, 3 holes and 3 dustbins) given to each club were to aid cleaning activities. The club planned to meet every fortnight to briefly discuss general issues pertaining to good sanitary conditions.

3.2.2 Training of YWC

A training session in collaboration with the Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission was conducted on Friday, 1st October, 2010 for members of the YWC. The Wildlife division was full of praise for the formation of YWC and appreciated the level of knowledge on wetlands gained by the club members; most of whom were girls. The training was facilitated by Mrs. Exorm Amertordo, an Assistant Wildlife Officer at Takoradi Wildlife Division.

The Wildlife Officer touched on wetlands and mangroves (definitions, types, importance, threats etc) and the need for their conservation.




Figure 7 Mrs. Exorm Amertordo of Wildlife Division interacting with members of YWC during the training

3.3 Surroundings of Essei lagoon cleaned

This has been achieved through the following activities

3.3.1 Community sensitization durbar and clean up exercise /

The community sensitization durbar and clean up exercise coincided with the international event  (for mangrove planting to reduce carbon emissions) and was jointly held with CRC-Ghana on 10th October, 2010. The durbar was named ‘‘Mangrove conservation festival’’. It involved two main sessions; morning (which witnessed cleaning the surroundings of the Essei lagoon and planting of mangroves amidst brass band music) and evening (festival-launching of YWC and film show/documentary)

- ❖ **The morning session:** The session involved cleaning the surroundings of the Essei lagoon and planting of mangroves by members of YWC, staff of CASOLS, FoN, CRC-Ghana and community members. Zoomlion Ghana, a waste management company, provided the cleaning tools for the exercise.



Figure 8 People getting ready to clean



Figure 9 Cleaning by staff of CASOLS, FoN and CRC



Figure 10 Cleaning by some members of YWC

- ❖ **Evening session:** The session witnessed a community durbar/festival with live band music and ended with a documentary on wetlands/mangroves. Attendance were over 300 and comprised members of YWC, Community members, Assembly members, staff of CASOLS, CRC-Ghana, FoN, officials of Zoomlion and Waste Management Department of STMA, EPA, SNV, youth groups, community champions, students from SHS among others.



Figure 11 A section of participants at the festival/durbar



Figure 12 A section of participants at the festival/durbar

There were brief speeches on wetlands conservation by the Western Regional Director of EPA – Ms. Irene Heathcote; Assembly member of Bakaano Jim Amo; Deputy Programme Director of CRC-Ghana-Kofi Agbogah; Programme Coordinator of CASOLS-Adupong Richard and the Metropolitan Chief Executive of STMA-Hon. Kobina Pra Annan



Figure 13 Ms. Irene Heathcote of EPA delivering her speech at the festival

The MCE for Sekondi-Takoradi, Hon. Kobina Pra Annan formally launched the Youth-in-Wetlands Clubs and called on the members to be ambassadors of wetlands conservation.



Figure 14 MCE launching the YWC: with him were Assembly member of Bakaano & Deputy Director-CRC



Figure 15 Members of YWC listening to the MCE during the launch

CASOLS, as part of the project purchased cleaning tools (wheel-borrows, rakes, holes and dustbins) and were presented to each school by the MCE. Additionally, each school received a certificate.



Figure 16 MCE presenting certificate to the focal teacher of Aggrey Memorial School YWC



Figure 17MCE presenting cleaning tools to the focal teacher of Gyandu JHS YWC



Figure 18 MCE (middle) & Assembly member of Bakaano with Salvation Army School YWC



Figure 19 Some members of YWC



Figure 20 MCE presenting certificate to Salvation Army School YWC

There was an interesting film show/documentary on wetlands/mangroves during the evening session (from 6-7:45pm)



Figure 21 Community members watching documentary on wetlands/mangroves



Figure 22 YWC & other participant watching documentary on wetlands/mangroves

The documentaries further broaden the knowledge base of the general public on wetlands and mangroves

A publication of the festival was on October 16, 2010 edition of Daily Graphic.

4.0 Extra-Ordinary Activity

CASOLS, during the project cycle engaged YWC members in Aggrey Memorial and Gyandu Junior High Schools in ‘Draw Our Coast’ art competition organized by CRC/FoN on 26th November, 2010. The competition involved 7 schools (3 SHS and 4 JHS) from STMA, SDA and Ahanta West Districts.

5.0 Sustainability

This CRC-Ghana funded project recommends sustainability from the following perspective.

- Most of the stakeholders are aware of the ecological importance of the Essei lagoon and are prepared to conserve it.

- The school clubs through their activities will always remind stakeholders of the need to conserve the lagoon.

6.0 Lessons Learnt

- Before the project, most community members did not care about the lagoon.
- The production and distribution of more educational materials is essential to sensitizing and addressing the poor attitude of residents towards the degradation of the Essei lagoon.
- Some community members have the desire and the willingness to engage in communal clean-up exercises to improve the condition of the lagoon.
- Members of the YWC will transfer the knowledge gained to their peers and relatives.

7.0 Specific Challenges

There were bureaucratic delays in seeking permission from the Metro Directorate of Education to engage the basic schools around the project site.

The formation of the YWC was delayed with the long vocation of the basic schools. Members of YWC were restricted to 25 per school for the start, due to the budget line in relation to the activities of the club.

Some residents around the project site believe that general issues about sanitation should be dealt with by Zoomlion Ghana, a waste management company as they have been contracted by the Metropolitan Assembly to clean the areas.

8.0 Conclusion/Recommendation

The engagement with YWC should be continued to ensure the strengthening and sustainability of the club for conservation of wetlands. Again, using school children as agents of change is supreme in changing the attitude of the adult population. Consequently, any attempt to improve wetlands within and outside the STMA should involve basic schools around the wetland.

An intensive and continuous sensitization on importance of wetlands and aggressive campaign on attitudinal change is paramount to improving the poor sanitary condition around the Essei lagoon.