



ECOWAS COMMISSION

**Review Report on
Progress towards Sustainable Development in
West Africa¹
Summary for Policy Makers**



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¹ Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

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Review Report on Progress towards Sustainable Development in West Africa

Summary for Policy Makers

This Review Report for the West Africa Sub-region was commissioned by ECOWAS, ECA and AfDB to provide an input for the African Review Report for Rio+20. The overall objective of this consultancy is to produce a well-informed Review Report on progress towards sustainable development in the West Africa sub-region, taking into account the specific objectives enumerated below.

The specific objectives include

1. To provide well-articulated documentation of progress in the implementation of A21 and JPOI commitments, clear understanding of the constraints and challenges and well-informed recommendations to enhance implementation progress;
2. To increase understanding and appreciation of the new and emerging challenges to advancing West Africa's sustainable development agenda and well-informed action oriented recommendations to effectively addressing the challenges;
3. To enhance understanding and appreciation of the institutional and strategic frameworks necessary to effectively operationalize sustainable development in West Africa;
4. To provide a clear understanding and appreciation of the prospects and challenges for West Africa towards a transformation to a green economy in order to contribute to the realization of its sustainable development and poverty eradication goals;
5. To clearly articulate West Africa's concerns and priorities in regard to the implementation of sustainable development commitments; and
6. To provide well-informed, action-oriented recommendation and way forward to advance West Africa's sustainable development Agenda.

Following the poor development performance of most countries in the 1970s and 1980s, many countries began to develop and implement Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) in the early part of the 1980s through the 1990s and Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) from 1999 supported by the World Bank and IMF. The shift to PRSs occurred as a result of the negative impacts of many adjustment programmes on the poor. Furthermore, there was a correlation between adjustment programmes and growing poverty, inequality and environmental degradation.

The Rio Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 urged countries to develop National Strategies for Sustainable Development (NSSD) to ensure that countries achieve sustainable development. In 2002, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) recommended that countries could formulate NSSDs as PRSs that integrate the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development. Alternatively countries that were formulating PRSs were to ensure that social, economic and environment concerns were appropriately addressed to achieve sustainable development.

To effectively review the performance of West African countries in terms of sustainable development, it is important to review the policies, strategies and programs undertaken by the countries and the extent to which sustainable development principles are incorporated in them. It is also instructive to evaluate institutional frameworks that have supported the efforts at sustainable development. The foregoing reviews the strategies undertaken and the extent to which they incorporate the principles of sustainable development.

Priority Sustainable Development Issues

The main priority sustainable development issues for the sub-region converge on ensuring the wellbeing of the people in terms of eradicating poverty in the long term. Countries' NSSDs contain priority issues on the 3 pillars of sustainable development. The prioritized ones include growth and development, utilities, education, health and employment, natural resources exploitation and climate change.

Two generations of PRS were recognized. The second generation of PRSs showed significant improvements over the first ones in the formulation of sustainable development strategies. The key sustainable development issues included country ownership and commitment; integrated economic, social and environmental objectives across sectors, territories and generations; broad and effective participation and partnerships; capacity development and enabling environment and means of implementation.

The analysis showed that the most difficult aspect of formulating sustainable development strategies but most important was integration of the three pillars. Many countries employed Cross Sectoral Planning Groups (CSPGs) to undertake the harmonization. These CSPGs were different from Sustainable Development Committees (SDCs) and an indication that the integration was not probably done. The CSPGs have not been trained in the concept of sustainable development and its integration.

A model integration was proposed. This includes sectoral planning groups forming the sustainable development committees. These sectoral groups will be key in developing sectoral strategies. While sectoral strategy is being formulated, the group will trace all the linkages of policies, projects and programs on other sectors and anticipation of other related sectors' strategy on the particular sector. These are then identified and this will be done for all sectors. All sectoral strategies have the inter linkages identified. When all sectoral strategies are sent to the Planning Commission or Unit, it is these CSPGs or SDCs from the various sectors that will do the integration.

Many countries owned the process of NSSD formulation and involved broad participation. Effective participation was a challenge but planning units are learning and improving the situation. The major issue that needs to be addressed is the development of Long Term Development Strategies (LTDS). Monitoring and evaluation are key to the success of strategies. Countries used different sets of indicators to monitor all the pillars of sustainable development depending on countries own needs and capacities. Almost all the indicators used were selected from the sustainable development indicators. One monitoring tool that was absent was the need to monitor expenditures on projects and programs. This is a major problem not only for strategy monitoring but for all activities in the sub-region.

Challenges facing countries in ensuring sustainable development strategies include resources constraints, the challenge of meeting sectoral development priorities, capacity building for

sustainable development, particularly in terms of integrating environment and natural resources management concerns, strengthening the capacity of local government to improve service delivery and sustainable local-level planning as well as putting in place a coherent and clearly identified sustainability Research and Development programme.

Sustainable development strategy processes need to be recognized as learning processes, in which information about progress towards sustainability or otherwise is used constructively to revise the mechanism and the means to realizing objectives. In this regard, they should embody mechanisms for monitoring, follow-up, evaluation and feedback, including setting realistic and flexible targets.

In order to properly address priority sustainable development issues that ensures interlinkages of the three pillars, there is the need for countries to be assisted to develop and implement sustainable development strategies, especially long term ones that embody the key characteristics of NSSDs. Planning institutions should be staffed with capable people and be independent from the political process. It is important to build their capacities. NSSDs should be integrated into budgetary processes to generate the budget support required. In this regard the leadership role of Ministries/Agencies responsible for planning and finance in strategy development and implementation should be enhanced. Synergies from the sectoral levels should be built during strategy development to ensure a balanced integration of the different dimensions of sustainable development while implementation should be decentralized to sub-national levels, build the capacity and adequately resource local level implementing agencies for effective implementation. Platforms should be created for learning groups on the development of NSSDs by regional and sub-regional institutions

Institutional Frameworks

Institutional frameworks, laws, regulations, conventions, customs and practices are essential for efficient working of sustainable development strategies. Regional, sub-regional and national institutions are important to achieving sustainable development. In terms of sustainable development, national institutions are paramount. ECA/ECOWAS/AfDB through their mandates (workshops, publications, roundtable conferences, funding, etc.) have been assisting countries in the various pillars of sustainable development.

Following recommendations from Rio and WSSD, most countries have put in place various forms of institutions and strengthened others to assist in formulating sustainable development strategies. More specifically, countries have either put in place National Committees for Sustainable Development (NCSDs) to mainly assist in integrating economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. They are also to monitor and evaluate the progress in the implementation of sustainable development.

Representation on NCSDs is broad-based, however, representation from the social sector related ministries such as trade unions, parliamentarians, indigenous people, farmers, women and youth groups are absent. Almost all countries in the sub-region have decentralized local government administration but not NCSDs. The non availability of NCSDs at the local level makes it difficult to involve local entities in the implementation of sustainable development agenda.

Integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development through horizontal (different sectors) and vertical (different levels) linkages is a key function of NCSDs. Countries use

different combinations of tools and approaches to achieve integration. Although these institutions have the legal mandate for the formulation and implementation of sustainable development most of them are functioning poorly due to various challenges.

The challenges include institutional, technical and financial constraints, human capacity, poor governance, political and policy inconsistencies, low level of awareness amongst the populace and even policy makers, lack of harmony between national and sub-regional policies, inability to monitor and evaluate the process with the view to learning lessons, poor commitments of donors to meeting their development assistance pledges, insufficient understanding of the concept of sustainable development and integration tool by different stakeholders, insufficient synergy and communication between the different Ministries, Departments and Agencies, political. These challenges are crucial to the formulation and implementation of NSSD and need to be addressed for process effectiveness.

To overcome these challenges the following recommendations have been suggested. UNECA, ECOWAS, AfDB and other partners should collaborate and coordinate actions to assist countries in strengthening and resourcing NCSDs to enable them assist in formulating, implementing and monitoring NSSDs. This should include use and application of integrative approaches and tools and the identification and establishment of innovative financing mechanisms to supplement government and donor funds. They should also promote the organization of NCSD fora for experience sharing, information exchange and networking.

There is the need to establish centers of excellence for training officials in sustainable development. Planning institutions should be staffed with capable people and be independent from the political process. To ensure continuity of plans, membership of Planning Units or Commissions should include identifiable political parties. In view of the need to integrate the NSSD into budget processes to generate the budget support required, the leadership role of Ministries/agencies responsible for planning and finance in strategy development and implementation should be enhanced. NCSDs should ensure a balanced integration of the different dimensions of sustainable development in NSSDs by building synergies from the sectoral levels during strategy development. NCSDs should also facilitate the decentralization of implementation of NSSDs to sub-national.

Progress Made in Sustainable Development

In the implementation of sustainable development agenda, countries have taken several policies, strategies and programs. There have been some progress, challenges and constraints. Some achievements have been made, especially in the economic front but they are not significant enough to affect the livelihood of many people.

The assessment of the economic, social and environment pillars of sustainable development shows that the sub-region has done quite well in resuscitating the growth of the economies. The Economies of many West African countries has picked up since the 1990s. Over the past 20 years (1990-2010), all West African countries have made overall modest positive average annual real growth rate in GDP. Average annual real GDP growth rate is around 5% for the sub-region. Savings in the sub-region over the past two decades has on average reduced which has had significant impact on investment. Gross Domestic Savings (GDS) as proportion of GDP that

averaged 4.7 per cent between 1990 and 2000 for the sub-region reduced to 1 per cent between 2000 and 2010.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has over the years been seen as a potent tool for economic growth in the sub region. As a result many governments have implemented policies geared towards attracting FDI. Consequently, FDI to the sub-region has increased over the past two decades. FDI as a ratio of GDP has averaged about 3.7 per cent for the period 1990-2010. However, FDI in the sub region has mainly been in the exploitation of the natural resources of the Sub region with very little focus on adding value to the resources and thereby providing little employment and incomes for majority of the citizens. Despite the fact that prices of mineral resources, especially gold, has averagely been increasing for the past two decades, countries have not benefitted much from it. Exploitation of mineral resources in the sub-region is so capital intensive that most of the benefits go to foreign companies that exploit.

Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) has almost stagnated at the 1990s and has even seen a slight decrease in the 2000s. ODA as a proportion of GDP averaged about 0.3 for the period 1990 to 2000. The Adjustment programmes that have been implemented over the past three decades did not succeed in improving the balance of payment problem that confronts the sub region but rather worsened the situation. External debt continues to be a major challenge that confronts countries in the West Africa sub region largely as a result of the negative trade balance, fiscal indiscipline that has resulted in huge budget overruns and the inability of many governments to mobilize revenue from internal sources.

Structural transformation meant to improve the quality of life of the people by increasing productivity in agriculture, transferring labor force to higher earning sectors of manufacturing and services has not taken place in the region. Although on average, West African economies are composed of GDP with a higher proportion of services (43 per cent), followed by industry (21 per cent) and agriculture (34 per cent) that theoretically suggests that the sub region is moving in the right direction, the analysis does not suggest the right transformation. The manufacturing sub sector of the industrial sector which is an important component of the transformational process is very small accounting for only about 4 percent of GDP.

The shrinking of the agriculture sector accompanied by a decrease or at best a stagnation of the manufacturing sector suggests a pseudo transformational process that needs to be well assessed, in terms of its overall impact on growth and poverty. Despite the good growth of GDP and few other indicators, the gains made are quite fragile due to weak domestic savings and the vulnerability of the sub-region to external shocks. This is also due to the lack of infusion of resources into agriculture modernization and the development of the agriculture value chain.

The social pillar of sustainable development addresses the issue of social well-being and quality of life. This is addressed through the social and human development indicators such as infant mortality, life expectancy at birth, maternal mortality, TB prevalence rate, reported cases of malaria, population growth rate, total fertility rate, rate of urbanization, poverty, access to improved sanitation and water, enrolment ratios and unemployment.

There is some reduction in total fertility rates over the past decades in almost all West African countries indicating that overall impact of population control measures is positive though marginal. All West African countries had total fertility rates of more than five children per woman in 1990s. Infant mortality rates appears to be generally improving, especially for countries with better social and economic conditions, free of conflict and drought conditions, and

relatively free from the scourges of HIV, malaria and Tuberculosis (TB) though the rates are high for some countries.

Life expectancy over the past decade has generally been increasing for all the countries apart from Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire where some marginal fluctuation was observed. The general increase in life expectancy is good. However, life expectancy of some countries such as Mali, Sierra Leone, Niger and Guinea Bissau that has never exceeded 50 years over the past decade is worrying. Worsening social and economic conditions and the grave impacts of malaria, HIV/AIDS and related diseases accounts for the observed life expectancy at birth in the sub region. In all situations, regardless of the level of survival, females enjoyed higher life expectancy than males. Available data on Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) that gives a general idea about the state of maternal health and the health of women in general indicates that MMR are high and progress made in this area is mixed. While some countries are making progress other are retrogressing.

While enrolment rates in the primary schools are increasing and the official illiteracy rates are reducing, the functional literacy rate is quite low. The quality of education, especially at the basic level is quite low. A more serious issue is the abysmally low level of the quality of basic education at the public schools level. This is widespread throughout the region. On the other hand female education, especially at the pre-tertiary levels, has improved though a lot still needs to be done.

The proportion of the population with access to improved sanitation indicates that in 1995 is quite low averaging less than 50 percent. However, many countries have improved on the percentage of the population with access to sanitation, except Nigeria which has witnessed a deterioration of the sanitation situation. Access to improved water source has also increased marginally over the past two decades.

Malaria has been and continues to be one of the most prevalent diseases in the sub region that has claimed many lives. In spite of the various efforts that are being made to combat malaria, reported cases of malaria are quite high in all the countries apart from Cape Verde. Incidence of Tuberculosis has generally been increasing since 1990 for all the countries with the exception of Cape Verde and Ghana. Progress on the MDGs indicates that between 2001 and 2007 the proportion of people living with HIV/AIDS in West Africa have declined marginally from 1.9% to 1.8%. Access to antiretroviral drugs has improved between 2006-2007 from an initial level of 22% with an average annual absolute progress of 5.1% and an annual relative progress of 6%.

Poverty and income inequality are widespread and remain a serious threat to the development of West Africa. Available information on poverty suggests that poverty has reduced since 1990 though the reduction is marginal for many countries. Urban poverty is a major problem in Africa. Rapid urbanization in Africa is accompanied with urban poverty. Urban poverty in Africa is increasing. Increasing urban poverty is associated with rapid growth of slums, poor housing and sanitary conditions and high pressure on urban-based social services (water, education, electricity, transport, etc.).

Youth and graduate unemployment is a major challenge to most governments while productivity remains stagnant and the informal sector is horizontally expanding especially in the retail and wholesale of imported goods with no value addition. There is a positive correlation between unemployment and poverty since increasing levels of unemployment and underemployment leads to reducing incomes and consequently increasing poverty. Data on unemployment in the

region is unavailable. However, available data for a few countries in the sub region as well as realistic situations in the countries suggest that unemployment has increased over the past two decade for many of the countries and varies among countries. Available unemployment data also shows that females are not only disproportionately worse off than men in most countries in terms of employment but also can mostly be found at the lower ranks at workplace and in the informal sector where conditions are below labor standards. A major factor affecting employment opportunities in most countries is the population growth which is higher than employment growth. Increased rural unemployment and poverty implies that rural farmers cannot afford improved agricultural technologies and therefore cultivate marginal lands leading to increase in land degradation and reduced fallow periods.

Environmental sustainability deals with the maintenance of the integrity of different environmental media and systems to ensure that their functions and beneficial uses are upheld for present and future generations. The sub-region has seen negative environmental impacts in air pollution, degraded land, forest cover, water pollution, among others. Many of the lands in the sub-region have undergone soil degradation since the 1960s. There has been damage of the soil structure, depletion of nutrients and increase in the susceptibility to erosion largely as a result of mining, deforestation, the slash and burn cum plough and harrow methods of agriculture, the use of inappropriate equipment and technologies, increasing application of chemicals and commercial mono-specific plantations and inefficient irrigation systems.

West Africa is experiencing the impact of climate change in terms of climatic variability and extreme events such as floods or droughts. Air pollution is a problem in the sub-region. Pollutants from carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, sulphur dioxide, suspended particles are significant. Women and young children are particularly exposed to high levels of indoor air pollution for several hours each day, increasing the risk of acute respiratory infections, which is one of the leading causes of infant and child mortality in the sub-region.

Prolonged land degradation in West Africa's drylands is leading to intensifying desertification which has serious linkage with poverty, migration and food security. This is also leading to biodiversity loss to the region. West Africa has rich and varied biological resources on which its social and economic systems are based. The humid tropical forests of equatorial West Africa are among the most productive ecosystems in the world. However, West Africa's biodiversity is under threat from natural habitat loss, loss of species or subspecies, invasion by alien species and lack of recognition of indigenous knowledge and property rights.

West Africa is generally endowed with abundant freshwater resources such as big rivers, large lakes, vast wetlands and limited but widespread groundwater. In addition, the West African coastal zone supports a diversity of habitats and resources, encompassing mangroves, rocky shores, sandy beaches, deltas, estuaries and coastal wetlands, coral reefs and lagoons. These ecosystems do not only contribute significantly to the livelihoods of coastal communities and to national economies - fishing, agricultural activities, tourism, oil and mineral mining and infrastructure development but also have intrinsic value including shoreline stability, beach enrichment, nutrient generation, recycling and moderation of pollution. Coastal areas in West Africa are experiencing rapid population growth due to the diverse and attractive resources of the coastal and marine environments. Unfortunately these water bodies, coastal and marine environment are being depleted due to poor waste management, agricultural and industrial discharges.

Despite this good performance, the well-being of the population and the environmental health is seriously threatened. The economic aspect is not being maximized while the social sector has serious challenges. The environmental balance is on the negative. On the whole, the development pattern of the economies is not on a sustainable development path. This is due to the fact that a balanced integration of the pillars in our strategies is not done. Furthermore, the formulation of short term rather than long term strategies has been a major constraint to sustainable development.

A number of issues should be dealt with in order to ensure proper outcome in the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development. These include treating all the three dimensions of sustainable development as equally important. However, it is important to identify leading sectors of the economy to propagate the transformation and modernization of the economy to achieve sustainable development. This in many countries would hinge on agriculture and manufacturing.

There is the need to take an inter-sectoral approach in dealing with identified challenges by identifying all interested stakeholders and involving them in the planning, policy-making, programming and implementation and monitoring. It is important to make efforts to properly implement policies, programmes, strategies and related instruments after they are adopted and also monitor and evaluate them. It is important to establish and build institutions for implementation, monitoring and evaluation. These institutions will help to set up coordination mechanisms to reduce duplication of effort and creating beneficial linkages.

Education is the backbone of any economy so every effort must be done to ensure quality education. In addition to other measures, it is urgent to enhance education through the provision of classrooms, ensuring free basic education, improving the working conditions and wages of teachers and ensuring that they teach, reviewing teaching programmes and adapting them to development needs, equipping graduates with practical knowledge, orientating research to the developmental needs of countries as well as introducing children to early employment to enable them obtain work ethics. To ensure these, children should be given quality and more nutritious local foods through school feeding program.

Modernizing agriculture through the value chain approach to promote manufacturing should be the way of transforming the economy. Modernizing Agriculture should ensure building the nutrient base of the soils with minimum agro-chemicals and technologies that minimally disturb the soil. This should also ensure that environmental degradation is reduced to the minimum. Proper and adequate nutrition that will ensure the well-being of citizens and reduce the proliferation of ill-health through acquired eating of foreign foods should be made a priority educating every citizen

Transition to a Green Economy

UNEP's working definition of a green economy is used to analyze this issue. UNEP defines a green economy as *A system of economic activities related to the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services that result in improved human wellbeing over the long term, while not exposing future generations to significant environmental risks and ecological scarcities.* The transition to a green economy encompasses undertaking green policies, strategies

and programs in all sectors of the economy. In the end, a green economy is a sustainably developed economy.

Energy

West Africa is rich not only in non-renewable resources such as –minerals and renewable resources such as forests but also natural fuels such as wind, water and solar. Energy is a critical input to the process of West Africa’s development. However, the sub region has huge energy infrastructural and supply deficits that will require massive investment. Renewable energy resources such as wind, water and sun abounds in the region and offers a great opportunity for the sub-region to bridge its energy supply gap.

Forestry

Majority of the population in ECOWAS countries live in rural areas and depend on the forest for both traditional and non-traditional forest product for their livelihoods, and therefore the maintenance of this resource is very important for sustainable livelihood and development. Unfortunately, forests are being degraded at a rapid rate because of over-harvesting and pressure from other land uses, including agriculture.

Transition to a green economy will require the intensification of current programmes and assessment of the value of forest products to enable economic pricing of forest resources. Incentives aimed at enhancing the development of woodlots will serve the dual purpose of providing forest products for rural communities as well as carbon sequestration. Public investment to restore, maintain and enhance the stock of forestry through subsidized loans and incentives for the private sector as well as partnerships with the private financial sector can also facilitate the transition.

Fisheries

Many ECOWAS countries share the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem (GCLME) belt which is very rich in fisheries resources. In addition, several water bodies –lakes, rivers, streams, and wetlands can be found in the sub region. These resources provide significant economic benefits such as fisheries which is an important source of protein for people in the region. One problem that confronts ECOWAS countries today, especially, countries within the GCLME belt is the unprecedented degradation, pollution and over-exploitation of resources that has significant implications on livelihoods at the micro level and sustainable development of these nations at the macro level. Economic activities, such as mangrove/timber exploitation, mineral extraction, agriculture, manufacturing, hunting, fishing and other productive and consumptive livelihood activities have led to negative impacts on water bodies including marine ecosystem and related aquatic resources, wetlands, fisheries and general biodiversity, thus also affecting the fishing industry.

Greening the economy in the context of fisheries in the sub-region will require the intensification of these programmes as well as combating living resource depletion and coastal area degradation which has led to unsustainable fisheries. This will require also strengthened capacities for integrated and in the area of aquaculture development as well as the education of coastal

communities on sustainable fishing. Development and enforcement of rules pertaining to sustainable fisheries management will also help in the transition to green economy.

Transport

It is generally accepted that efficient transport impacts on the economy through access to places by consumers where they can engage in income generation activities and as an intermediary input or compliment to the production process. One estimate by the AfDB (1994) shows that road transport in Africa which is inefficient in terms of time and energy consumption compared to other transport modes like rail, water and air transports handles about 97% and 94% of road passenger and freight transport respectively. In addition, majority of inhabitants use private cars which are more energy inefficient in terms of passenger- kilometers covered than buses due to the poor development of rapid mass transport in urban and other areas.

Greening the economy in terms of transport will require the adoption of an integrated transport planning that takes into consideration diverse policy objectives in the provision of public transport facilities, road infrastructure, fuel pricing and environmental quality management and monitoring should be taken more seriously by ECOWAS countries. The introduction of biofuels could also have the trio advantage of decreasing foreign exchange through reduced importation of crude oil, creating employment and reducing environmental degradation degradation – though care needs to be taken to ensure that production of biofuels does not negatively affect food prices and security. All these will require substantial capital investment and capacity development.

Agricultural Land use and Management

The agricultural sector can be considered as the main sector that holds the key to the growth, development and transformation of many ECOWAS countries. Estimates by the World Bank indicate that agriculture provides about 70 percent of employment, the largest contributor to GDP and the largest source of foreign exchange with the exception of a few oil producing countries such as Nigeria. Agricultural practices in the region is mainly subsistence that employs primitive tools such as the hoe and cutlass with low productivity that makes it difficult for many rural communities to be self sufficient in food. Added to that, poor farming practices such as ‘slash and burn’ has led to land degradation, soil quality depletion and biodiversity loss. A major challenge that confronts ECOWAS countries is climate change which has the potential to deepen ecosystem degradation and seriously reduce productivity in rain-fed agriculture which is a characteristic of agriculture in the sub-region. The exploitation of natural resources, particularly mineral resources poses serious land degradation problems which has serious implications on food security.

A transition to green economy implies undertaking sustainable agriculture is an effective strategy for improving food security and reducing poverty in that it promotes the production of ample food without depleting the earth’s resources or polluting its environment. This can be done through the provision of agricultural infrastructure including, access to inputs and credit for poor rural farmers and reform of the land tenure systems. It will also demand the provision of research, extension services and marketing.

The initial cost of investment in the transition to green economy in certain sectors of the economy appear to be beyond the reach of many ECOWAS countries but it is a necessity.

Commitment to a transformation to a green economy includes enforcement of laws, regulations, mobilizing resources for investments, strengthening the human resource base and embarking on effective research and development efforts. A shift to a green growth path in areas such as energy and transportation requires major structural changes in systems dependent on infrastructure, technology and financial assistance, which are beyond the reach of many ECOWAS countries and the support of the international community is needed.

New and Emerging Issues

Since the Rio Conference, a number of challenges that impact on sustainable development in West Africa have been intensified. Most of these challenges are not new but there exist substantial evidence to suggest that the intensity of their impacts have increased and therefore pose fundamental challenges to the sustainable development of the sub-region. These issues include climate change, desertification, coastal erosion, energy crisis, water scarcity, lack of transparency in the management of mineral/oil resources, biodiversity and ecosystem loss, food insecurity, poor quality of education, graduate and youth unemployment, globalization, urbanization.

Of these challenges, those that can be considered new since Rio are climate change, desertification, globalization, water scarcity, relevance of education to development needs and graduate unemployment. One important observation is that none of these challenges stand alone. Almost all these issues have been discussed above. Another issue that needs to be highlighted is the lack of transparency in the exploitation of natural resources that has led to rampant social conflict in resource rich countries. The widespread discontent in mining communities is the result of their total or partial alienation from actively taking part in decisions affecting them.

Challenges and recommendations have been made under all the chapters discussed. Countries in the sub-region need to take a long term view of development and incorporate all these issues into their sustainable development strategies. By undertaking an integrated approach to development, most of these challenges will be addressed and sustainable development achieved.