



# Institute for Environment and Sanitation Studies

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## DEVELOPING COASTAL TOURISM SUSTAINABLY IN GHANA: THE WAY FORWARD

Tourism has been identified as one of the key sectors of the Ghanaian economy. In line with this a number of interventions have been laid out by the Government of Ghana to develop and promote the country’s ecological, cultural and historical heritage. As a result of direct and indirect investments into the sector, Ghana’s international tourist arrivals increased from the recorded figures of 286,600 in 1995 to 583,821 in 2004, registering 104.1% increase, at an average annual growth rate of 8.0 percent during the period. International tourist receipt increased from 233.2 million US dollars in 1995 to 694.4 million US dollars in 2004, registering 197.8% increase, at an average annual growth rate 113%. Tourism features prominently the Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA) Medium Term Development Plan 2010 – 2013 (GOG 2010). The policy aims at:

- Diversifying and expanding the tourism industry for revenue generation.
- Promoting domestic tourism to foster national cohesion as well as redistribution of income.
- Promoting sustainable and responsible tourism in such a way to preserve historical, cultural and natural heritage.

Coastal zones are transitional areas between the land and sea and include some of the richest and most fragile ecosystems on earth. In recent times they have come under intense pressure from indirect and direct human-induced pressures such as urbanization and tourism. Among the features that characterise tourism along the coast from other areas is the significance of the natural resources -sun, sea and sand. However coastal tourism development has both positive and negative environmental and socioeconomic impacts (Table 1). It also often involves mass tourism development (and sometimes enclave tourism). Since coastal zones sustain a wide variety of livelihoods (traders, fishers, agriculturalists, etc.). It is particularly important to minimise the costs of tourism development (through careful planning) and ensure they are outweighed by greater benefits.



*Sun, sea and sand– important components of coastal tourism*

*Table 1: Some impacts of tourism development*

Impacts	Environmental	Socio-economic
<i>Positive</i>	Conservation of ecological sites	Employment and income for local people
	Improvement of environmental quality	Increase in foreign exchange earnings
	Improvement of infrastructure	Conservation of cultural heritage
<i>Negative</i>	Compaction of the sand dune system	Commercialization and commodification of local culture
	Noise and dust pollution	Irritation due to tourist behaviour
	Pollution of marine and freshwater resources	Worsening of social problems such as crime and prostitution
	Littering	Economic and employment distortions
	Ecological Disruption	Overcrowding and resource use conflicts

Despite its associated problems, coastal tourism presents an important opportunity for poverty alleviation, conservation and rural development. However it must be developed sustainably. Sustainable tourism development is premised on the involvement of all stakeholders in the tourism sector. It meets the needs of tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. When tourism is sustainably developed there is a higher level of satisfaction among all stakeholders which prevents tensions and conflicts between local residents and tourism developers.



*The Coastal zone sustains a wide variety of livelihoods*



*The Cape coast castle*

### What has to be done

**First:** Sustainable coastal tourism development and Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) must be seen as two strongly interlinked processes. Coastal tourism can be enhanced by ICZM, which can deal with the conflicts between coastal tourism and other marine and terrestrial sectors and increase the cooperation between coastal tourism and other marine and terrestrial sectors.

Hence Ghana needs an effective Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) plan if it is to develop coastal tourism sustainably. An ICZM plan will help the country maximize the positive benefits of coastal tourism and minimize the negative impacts.

**Second:** A better coordination of the existing governmental bodies that deal with coastal management is vital. This will lead to a more effective dissemination of the existing information on coastal issues such as coastal tourism.

**Third:** An effective environmental education strategy that targets both tourist developers as well as hosts.

### By who?

- Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) dealing with tourism and coastal issues (eg., Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Environment Science and Technology, Ghana Tourist Board, Ghana Tourism Federation, Town and Country Planning).
- NGOs
- CSOs
- Local communities (including traditional leaders)
- Private sector
- Tourists

### References and Further Reading

- Hall, C. M. (2010) Crisis events in tourism: subjects of crisis in tourism *Current Issues in Tourism* 13 (5), 401 -417.
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- Tweneboah, E. and Asiedu, B. A. 2009. Some perspectives of hosts and guests on coastal tourism development in two destinations in Ghana. *Ghana Journal of Geography* 1 (31-65).
- UNEP (2009) Sustainable Coastal Tourism - An integrated planning and management approach [http://www.unep.org/pdf/DTIE\\_PDFS/DTIx1091xPA-SustainableCoastalTourism-Planning.pdf](http://www.unep.org/pdf/DTIE_PDFS/DTIx1091xPA-SustainableCoastalTourism-Planning.pdf)

### Useful Website

Ministry of Tourism: <http://www.touringghana.com/default.asp>

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