

GENDER AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT OF THE WEIJA LAKE AND ITS ENVIRONS

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2003

ABSTRACT

The Weija Lake is an important water resource for agriculture and fishing for the people living around the lake. However, due to increases in agricultural, industrial activities and the general expansion of Accra in terms of urbanization, there has been great demand on both the water and land resources of the Weija Lake and its environs. This has consequently led to the degradation of the land and water resources.

The research undertaken was aimed at determining the knowledge base of women in the environs of the Weija Lake about the causes of degradation of resources of the Weija Lake and how gender is integrated into the natural resource management of the area for sustainable development.

Water and benthic samples from various communities in the environs of the lake were assessed over a six month period. A socio-economic survey which took the form of questionnaires, informal interviews and general observation aimed at assessing how gender could be integrated into natural resource management was undertaken. It also looked at the activities of women in the study area that impacted negatively on the environment and how well informed the people in the study area were about degradation and natural resource management.

The study however showed that most of the physico-chemical parameters of water measured were within acceptable WHO limits for contact. Turbidity, suspended solids, nitrate concentration and

phosphate concentration were generally high. The values ranged from 14.5 to 31 NTU, 14.2 to 33mg/l, 0.3 to 2.6 mg/l and 0.04 to 1.74mg/l respectively. The quality of the water was however poor and unsafe for direct consumption. The actual Total Coliform also ranged from 100 to 5000 counts/100ml, whilst the Faecal Coliform also ranged from 0 to 100 counts/100ml.

Phytoplankton species identified belonged to four major groups, blue-green algae, green algae, diatoms and flagellates. The blue-green algae were the most dominant species and accounted for 81.2% of the total phytoplankton in the area. On the other hand, there were visible signs of land degradation in the area accounting for the siltation of the Densu River which ended up in the Weija Lake. The socio-economic survey revealed that most of the farmlands have been destroyed by sand winners, thus causing farmers to farm near or on the riverbed. Most of the women had resorted to trading because of the scarcity of farmlands.

Generally, the study revealed that access and control of natural resources by women in the Weija Lake and its environs was very limiting. Suggested recommendations included increasing awareness creation about the increased degradation of the Densu River and increasing the productivity of women to engage in environmental friendly activities.

SUPERVISOR

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