

# **ECOWAS Regional Cooperation for the Environment, with a Special Focus on Cabo Verde's Renewable Energy Strategy**

by

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## **Abstract**

It is becoming abundantly evident that global threats and challenges require global responses. Although Africa's contribution to global environmental problems is comparatively little compared to those of other continents, African countries are compelled to take an increasingly active part to fight against such problems as a collective international effort. Africa is among the most vulnerable and the one which is least prepared to face the negative environmental impacts. Consequently, member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are looking to incorporate environmental protection policies into their planning. This leads us to probe the following major research question in this paper: Why are ECOWAS member states looking to incorporate environmental protection policies into their planning? In order to provide an answer to this question, we employ the theory of Prisoner's Dilemma (PD), qualitative methodology, and the explanatory case study design to systematically analyze relevant primary and secondary data on the topic. While ECOWAS is treated as the unit of analysis in order to highlight why environmental issues in the region are being looked at in order to develop a common position to address them, Cabo Verde, the only island state in the ECOWAS region where an interesting initiative is taking place in the area of renewable energy, is examined as a case study.

## **Introduction**

The world is confronted with huge and increasing challenges to achieve a sustainable development and, due to several different reasons, the least developed countries, the landlocked developing countries, the small island developing states and the African countries are the ones which will face the greatest difficulties to achieve such development.

The West African region, as represented by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), is home to over 335 million people (2015 estimate), representing approximately one-third of Africa South of the Sahara's total population. Severe poverty is endemic in the region. The majority of the poor lives in rural areas and depends primarily on agricultural production, but increasing numbers are moving to urban areas (ECOWAS Outlook 2015).

Among the ECOWAS member states, there are considerable differences in the levels of poverty, population sizes, and other characteristics. For instance, population sizes range from 539,000 for Cabo Verde to 177,156,000 for Nigeria, while gross domestic product (GDP) per capita ranges from USD 800 in Niger to USD 4,400 in Cabo Verde (ECOWAS Outlook 2015).

The ECOWAS has been confronted with some serious environmental challenges, namely desertification, soil erosion, wetland degradation, agricultural pests and disease, deforestation, floods, droughts, rising sea-levels, among others (Mabogunje 1995). Most of the 15 member states that belong to the ECOWAS are failing to properly address this issue, either by not putting in place essential and urgent policy measures or by not cooperating together as a region to solve the problems (Ogwezzu 2014).

Sustainable development is for what all countries in world are striving. For this to occur, environmental management and risk mitigation are necessary, so that people can benefit from goods and services that derive from nature. Protecting the environment is becoming a pressing issue, particularly for countries in Africa South of the Sahara. According to some specialists, these countries will be among the hardest hit in the world in terms of climate change impacts (*The Guardian* 2015).

It is being proved that environmental issues are best dealt with when analyzed within the context of a region or group than when examined by a single country. Nowadays, it is impossible to separate the environment from sustainable economic development. Poverty, for example, is both a cause and consequence of environmental degradation, since when poverty rate is very high there is more pressure on nature by over exploitation of natural resource. For instance, in West African countries, there is a huge population living from subsistence agriculture, using charcoal and firewood for domestic energy, or in the case of countries like Cabo Verde, living from revenues from illegal sand and gravel mining for construction, all of them with a huge environmental impact.

The great diversity among African countries, as is the case in the ECOWAS, contributes to an intricate selection of environmental vulnerabilities that characterizes the region. The member states are confronted with similar problems but have their own degree of characteristics and vulnerabilities. Notwithstanding this fact, since the threats and challenges for the member states are connected, there is a need for integrated solutions.

According to the Vulnerability Profile West Africa (ECOWAS 2005), vulnerability to environmental hazards and degradation in West Africa poses a substantial challenge to the poor, who are more dependent on environmental resources, and to efforts to reduce poverty. Also, as Bossuyt (2016) points out, the ECOWAS region ranks low on all human development indicators. Thirteen ECOWAS countries are classified in the low Human Development category and 60% of the population is estimated to live on less than one dollar a day. This is compounded by the demographic growth, rapid urbanization, massive youth unemployment and environmental degradation (Aning and Atta-Asamoah 2011).

The objective of this paper is to analyze the environmental issues confronting West Africa and why the ECOWAS member states are looking to incorporate environmental protection policies into their planning. Thus, the straightforward, major research question examined in this paper is as follows: Why are ECOWAS member states looking to incorporate environmental protection policies into their planning? In order to delineate and answer to this question, we utilize the theory of Prisoner's Dilemma (PD), qualitative methodology, and the explanatory case study design to systematically analyze relevant primary and secondary data on the subject. While ECOWAS serves as our unit of analysis in order to pinpoint why environmental issues in the region are being looked at in order to develop a common position to address them, Cabo Verde, the only island state in the ECOWAS region where an interesting initiative is taking place in the area of renewable energy, is examined as a case study. In essence, the study encompasses both macro and micro level analyses. The inquiry is also deductive in nature as it allows us to move from the general to the specific.

The ECOWAS Treaty highly recognizes the harmonization and coordination of policies on environmental protection (ECOWAS 1993) and the Prisoner's Dilemma is a very useful tool for strategic decision-making. For instance, each ECOWAS country has the sovereignty to make its own strategic decisions that will lead to a positive outcome for the country. However, in this globalized world, most of the issues—political, military, economic and environmental—are related and internationally coordinated (practices and regulations). Prisoner's Dilemma is therefore important for our paper because it emphasizes the recognition of the need to build cooperation among countries or regions.

Environmental protection and management are so vital to the people and prosperity of the ECOWAS region that the member states are left with two alternatives for their sustainable development: (1) to incorporate environmental protection policies into their planning or (2) not to incorporate environmental protection policies into their planning. It is our position in this paper that the second alternative is not justifiable for reasons that will become evident as the analysis of the data collected for this paper unfolds.

## **Theoretical Framework, Research Methodology and Design**

Environmental issues can be connected to the principles of Prisoner's Dilemma Theory. The model facilitates analysis of an important systematic constraint in international cooperation identified by realist political theory that contributes to an understanding of international institutions, and draws attention to a number of potentially interesting research problems concerning international collaboration (Bangura and Sinclair 2012).

Environmental challenges can also be connected to the Prisoner's Dilemma game of resource allocation, especially in states or regions where environmental problems and their solutions call for inter-temporal choices: for example, to consume now at the expense of environmental degradation, or to postpone consumption in the quest for environmental balance when the problem has been detected (Musonda 1994). To illustrate this, we can use the example of managing water resource systems that usually involves lots of conflicts. Two countries fishing in the same water can lead the lake to be overfished. The suggestion is to embrace sustainable fishing practices and respect the ecological balance in the lake's ecosystem. One of the countries can decide not to fish or both of the countries can decide to fish sustainably. The outcome that either country receives by pursuing its policy depends on the choice the other country makes.

If both countries adopt the new practices, they will each have the same profit (30% less the current profit); if they do not agree to adopt the practices, they will each receive 50% of the usual profit. If only one country decides to adopt the new practices, it will be penalized and receive less than 20% of the usual profit while the other that does not adopt will receive almost 100% of the usual profit. Therefore, the examples illustrate the conflict of individual maximization compared to bilateral maximization (Musonda 1994). In essence, Prisoner's Dilemma is a non-zero-sum game in which two players can choose to either betray (defect) or cooperate with the other player. If both players cooperate, a mutually beneficial outcome is achieved; if one player defects while the other cooperates, the defector receives the best available outcome and the cooperating player receives the worst possible outcome (Rapoport 1974:17; Bangura and Sinclair 2012).

Also, according to Stein (2008), states may also establish institutions in order to reduce the governance costs associated with autonomous decision-making. The costs of organizing 'coalitions of the willing' for every specific problem and circumstance are quite high. Just as firms find it more efficient to take external arm's length transactions and internalize them within a corporate governance structure, so too do states find that transaction costs can be reduced by establishing international institutions.

The issues analyzed in this paper are undergirded by six major concepts. These concepts are defined as follows:

- *Environmental Preservation* is the strict setting aside of natural resources to prevent the use or contact by humans or by human intervention. Environmental preservation is different from conservation; conservation allows for sustainable development, whereas preservation is complete restriction (www.tpchd.org).
- *Climate Change* is a global environmental problem and while a developing continent like Africa has not contributed greatly to climate change, it will certainly be among those areas first affected by the impacts of climate change (Pongo 2008; Mwambazambi 2010).
- *Sustainable Development* is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland Report 1987).
- *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) are a set of 17 global objectives to end poverty, fight against inequality and injustice, and face up to climate change. Adopted in 2015, they replace the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDG) adopted in 2000 (United Nations 2015).
- *Vulnerability* is the inherent susceptibility of a country to harm from exposure to exogenous or endogenous risks (UNDESA 2015).
- *Resilience* is the ability or capacity of a country or a population to withstand, adapt to, or recover from, exposure to the negative effects of shocks (UNDESA 2015).

Based on the preceding concepts, the fundamental argument supported in this paper is that West Africa's natural resources are considerable but poorly distributed, insufficiently known and under-developed. They therefore need to be well managed and shared to support the wellbeing of the region (IUCN n.d.).

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, qualitative methodology and the explanatory case study design are employed to augment the Prisoner's Dilemma Theory in grounding the empirical analysis in this paper. In the case of the present paper, the best research method was dictated by our research question. In the attempt to answer the question about why are ECOWAS member states are looking to incorporate environmental protection policies into their planning, qualitative methodology was determined as the method that can most effectively and efficiently answer the question. Since the aim of qualitative research is to develop concepts that can help us understand social phenomena in natural settings, placing emphasis on the meanings, experiences and views of the participants (Mays 1995), it is a good choice to analyze and explain the case study of an ECOWAS member, Cape Verde, and its interesting experience in the area of renewable energy.

In this context, we use the qualitative approach augmented by primary sources, books, articles, ECOWAS official documents, Cabo Verde Official documents on renewable energy, among other sources for data in order to better understand the case of Cabo Verde. Only by analyzing multiple documents is it possible to obtain the various viewpoints necessary to acquire a more comprehensive picture of the many factors impacting decision-making (Bangura and Sinclair 2012).

Indeed, decision making is a complex process since an outcome can have major consequences to the stakeholders. Qualitative decision is more subjective not just because it is based on the numerical statistical data but also based on other associated factors that may have some or major influence on the collected data. Therefore, we have a more in-depth evaluation of information taking into account all possible factors that affect a given scenario than just the numerical data value to reach a decision.

The current Paper examines the pressing issues regarding environmental challenges in ECOWAS and the regional efforts to mitigate these challenges. The Paper also reviews some of the actions that are being taken by one member state, Cabo Verde, and provides examples of measures that could be applicable at the regional level. Yin defines the case study research method “as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (Yin 1984:23). The explanatory case study design used in this paper helped in the examination of the data to explain how Cabo Verde as a SIDS country, and in the scope of ECOWAS, has been participating and contributing to regional initiatives to cope with the environmental challenges faced by the region.

## **Partnership for Development**

Global threats require global cooperation. Although Africa’s contribution to the pollutants and troubles is globally very low, it is, however, among the most vulnerable regions to these phenomena. Thus, Africa is compelled to take an increasingly active part in international efforts to fight against these global threats (IUCN n.d.).

All countries, big and small, rich and poor, are responsible for the protection of the Planet, and international development partners are important actors in this process so that, with their support, the most vulnerable and poor countries can achieve a sustainable development. Small island developing states (SIDS), due to their special nature (small land size, high species diversity and richness, location in areas prone to natural disasters, weak institutional capacity to cope with the new and growing environmental hazards and menaces, inter alia.), should receive a special attention by the international community, a fact that has been agreed upon in practically all international conferences and summits. However, what has been done so far does not reflect that understanding.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) adopted in 1992 affirms that the developed countries should provide technical assistance to the developing countries. However, the major issue has been how to realize the technical and financial assistance. For instance, the Paris Agreement signed at COP21 in 2015 defines adequate support to developing nations by providing 100 billion US dollars to the developing countries in 2020. Therefore, all developing nations are called upon to continue to engage in the process of mitigation and also put focus on adaptation opportunities ([www.unfccc.com](http://www.unfccc.com)).

One of the areas that have seen some fruitful cooperation is the sector of renewable energy. According to the *Renewable Energy in West Africa: Status, Experiences and Trends*, a report jointly produced by the ECOWAS Regional Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE), the Canary Islands Institute of Technology (ITC) and *Casa África* (2012), West Africa being a neighbor region to Spain is also a priority in its foreign policy for Africa. Spain fosters close links with the ECOWAS. Furthermore, in the last few years, ECOWAS has resolutely supported regional policies to develop clean energy and energy efficiency, with the strong support of Spain through the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) (Vilar 2012).

At the regional level, important cooperation is taking place. ECOWAS and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) are two institutions, each with its policies, and a common objective. Although they did not write a single common document, the two intergovernmental organizations have formulated very close compatible policies, with the ECOWAS environmental policy being considered as having been developed on the same foundation as the UEMOA environmental policy (IUCN n.d.). Even though they are two policies, their vision, goals and means of action converge. Within the purview of the development of these policies, the two organizations coordinated their initiatives closely to come up with convergent documents to facilitate their coordinated implementation at the regional level. This is a good example of intervention based on continuity and a structured partnership that minimizes duplication and promotes interdisciplinary.

It is also imperative to emphasize the importance of the principle of cooperation especially between the three strategic partners of ECOWAS/UEMOA/CILSS—Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel, but also with organizations of the water basin. It is the same with the principle of integrating ECOWAS' initiatives in those of the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in its environment component (IUCN n.d.).

Despite all the partnerships and cooperation that have been made, many more are needed so that developing countries, in general, and small island developing states, in particular, can reach a sustainable development. In this context, the international cooperation, including South-South cooperation, is vital.

## **African Regional Cooperation for Environment and Sustainable Development**

The Club of Rome raised considerable public attention with its report titled *Limits to Growth* (1972), which predicted that economic growth could not continue indefinitely because of the limited availability of natural resources. This public concern increased through the next decades with the implementation of several initiatives to protect the environment (Donella et al 1972).

Climate change is one of the gravest challenges Africa is facing and African leaders are also aware of its critical importance for the continent, since it appeared in the *Global Agenda* at the beginning of the 1980's. In response to these challenges, ministers responsible for environmental issues met for the first time at the Africa Ministerial Conference in 1985, in Cairo, and in 2009 a Conference of Heads of State on climate change was established by the African Union (ClimDev Africa 2015).

West African countries, as an integral part of the African region, share the vision and objectives of the African Union. ECOWAS and UEMOA, the two regional integration organizations charged with promoting cooperation and economic integration in West Africa, developed harmonized and coordinated environmental policies to protect the environment. Each organization adopted in 2008 an environmental policy (Supplemental Act No. 01/2008/CCEG/UEMOA; Supplemental Act A/SA 4/12/8 ECOWAS).

Cabo Verde is no exception to what is happening globally and, similar to other parts of the world, the fragile ecosystem in Cabo Verde is facing many challenges. Cabo Verde as a SIDS country, but also in the scope of ECOWAS, has been participating and contributing to regional initiatives to cope with the challenges faced by the region. The following section addresses the specific case of Cabo Verde, the only island country within the ECOWAS.

### **Cabo Verde: The Case of Renewable Energy**

After analyzing the pressing issues regarding environmental challenges in ECOWAS and the regional efforts to mitigate these challenges, this section reviews some of the actions that are being taken by one-member state, Cabo Verde, and provide examples of measures that could be applicable at regional level. To begin with, the West African region has a huge potential on renewable energy resources which could be used to provide sustainable domestic and industrial energy. The ECOWAS region faces many challenges of energy access and energy security. To simultaneously address these challenges, in order to shape the regional energy situation, urgent investments is being made on sustainable energy infrastructure and services, as well as to put in place policy frameworks in the ECOWAS member countries (ECREEE 2012).



Based in Cabo Verde, ECREEE was established in 2010 and has now become a regionally and internationally highly appreciated platform for the promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency in West Africa. The Centre focuses on policy development, capacity building, awareness raising, technology transfer, pilot projects, and the attraction of investment (Vilar 2012). ECREEE's strategic goals of ECOWAS Vision 2020 foresee (a) 'A region that anchors its development on sustainable development, including agricultural and mineral resource development strategy' and (b) 'A region that conserves its environment and resources, promotes modes of equitable and sustainable development in economic, social and environmental fields' (ECREEE 2012).

According Mahama Kappiah, Executive Director of the Centre, regarding the adoption of regional policies on renewable energy, the ECOWAS region is on track to become the second regional organization, after the European Union, to adopt regional green energy policies. The targets contained in these landmark policies are cost-effective, feasible, and fully in line with the findings of the Global Energy Assessment and the SE4ALL Initiative, which was presented at Rio+20 by the UN Secretary-General (Vilar 2012). Cabo Verde as part of this regional effort to protect the environment is working to promote a sustainable development through areas like renewable energy, management of ocean and seas, as well as partnership for development.

The negative ecological, social and economic impacts of climate change are already a reality which requires urgent measures, including transition to zero carbon energy sources to boost their development. The ECOWAS Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Status Report published on November 10, 2014 concludes that renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies have rapidly become cost-effective solutions for overcoming the diverse energy challenges facing the ECOWAS region.

With the support of ECREE, all 15 ECOWAS members have started an ambitious process of developing three action-oriented national plans to contribute to the regional policies and targets in the scope of the ECOWAS Renewable Energy Policy (EREP) and the ECOWAS Energy Efficiency Policy (EEEP), including measures to be implemented at regional and national levels, and that represent the ECOWAS contribution to the achievement of the sustainable energy for All (SE4ALL): National Renewable Energy Action Plan (PNAER), National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (PNAEE), and Sustainable Energy for All Action Agenda (AA SE4ALL). Cabo Verde adopted the plans in 2015. The plans ensured coherence with energy policies and are taking advantage of synergies with the initiatives of the region in their implementation (Government of Cabo Verde 2015).

Cabo Verde is a country with limited natural resources and a small domestic market, so the commitment to renewable energy is considered a structuring factor for the country. In the context of the country, the use of endogenous sources will allow, on the one hand, greater energy independence and, on the other hand, access to energy at competitive costs for families and companies (Government of Cabo Verde 2015).

Cabo Verde, like all other ECOWAS member states, has a number of renewable energy sources. However, paradoxically, the gross energy consumption (energy supply) is based on imported petroleum products, thereby consuming considerable financial resources that could be used for other development purposes (see Table 1).

Table 1: Cabo Verde's Gross Energy Consumption (in tons)

<b>Gross Energy Consumption (toe)</b>									
<b>Year</b>	<b>GPL</b>	<b>Kerosene</b>	<b>Gasoline</b>	<b>Gasoil</b>	<b>Fuel oil</b>	<b>JET A1</b>	<b>Wind</b>	<b>Solar</b>	<b>Wood</b>
<b>2005</b>	11.458	1.115	7.231	86.317	33.374	34.546	555	0	30.593
<b>2006</b>	11.369	965	7.346	101.953	36.448	26.015	640	0	30.577
<b>2007</b>	11.493	875	7.397	83.532	35.100	16.229	591	0	30.552
<b>2008</b>	11.688	776	7.561	77.112	47.184	17.354	474	0	30.516
<b>2009</b>	11.992	648	7.618	74.213	51.492	15.553	401	0	30.471
<b>2010</b>	11.526	648	7.548	80.561	53.638	16.830	171	181	30.431
<b>2011</b>	11.693	645	7.545	85.203	55.067	19.641	1.342	770	31.184
<b>2012</b>	11.464	533	7.144	78.180	49.359	19.442	5.280	642	31.936
<b>2013</b>	11.543	492	7.233	69.211	52.931	17.939	6.521	626	32.688
<b>2014</b>	11.751	459	7.577	67.722	54.425	15.331	5.648	432	32.541
<b>2015</b>	12.222	374	7.998	68.726	54.052	14.211	6.779	534	32.605

Source: Generated by the National Directorate of Energy, Industry and Commerce (DNEIC), 2015

Primary energy sources consumed in Cabo Verde (in 2015) are all renewable energy sources: wind, solar and wood biomass. However, they represent less than 20% of the total Gross energy consumption (see Figure 1).

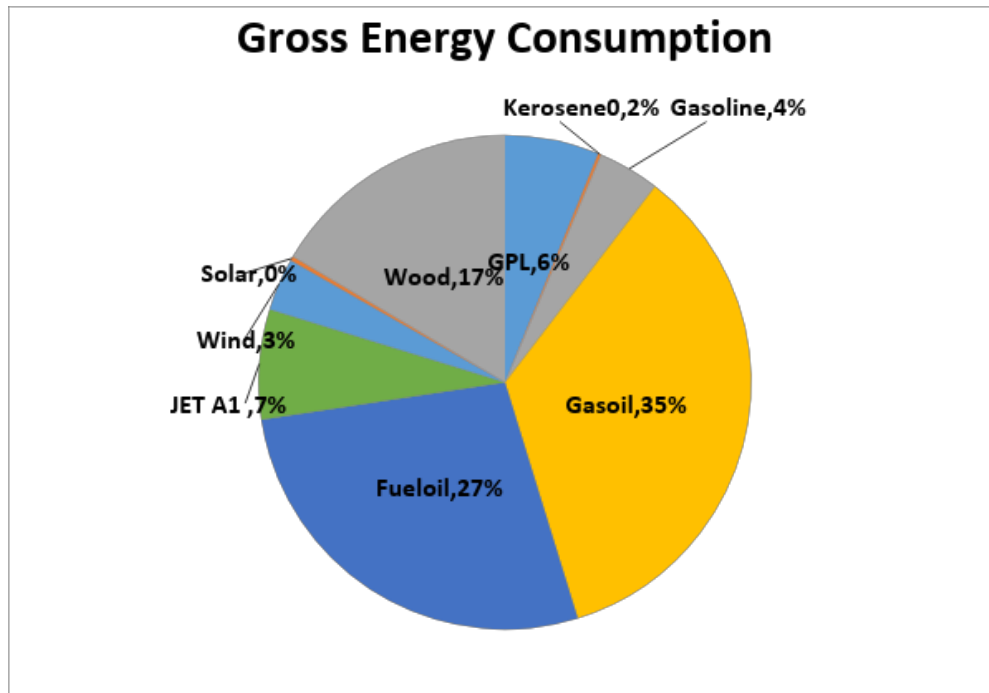


Figure 1: Cabo Verde Gross Energy Consumption

Source: Generated by the National Directorate of Energy, Industry and Commerce (DNEIC), 2015

Renewable energy was adopted in Cabo Verde in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century mainly for water pumping using mechanical windmill. But the use of wind energy for power production became a reality with three Wind Park of a total of a 1.8 MW in the three main islands of Sal, Sao Vicente, and Santiago (Government of Cabo Verde 2015).

In 2012, four Wind Park of a total of 25.5 MW (in the two main islands of Sao Vicente and Santiago and in the touristic islands of Sal and Boavista), one of the first in Africa, combined of two solar parks (7 MW in Sal and Santiago islands) increased the share of renewable energy production from 1.2 % in 2010 to as high as almost 25% in 2013 (see Figure 2.). This investment will save about 500 000 tCO<sub>2</sub> up to 2020 (Government of Cabo Verde 2015).

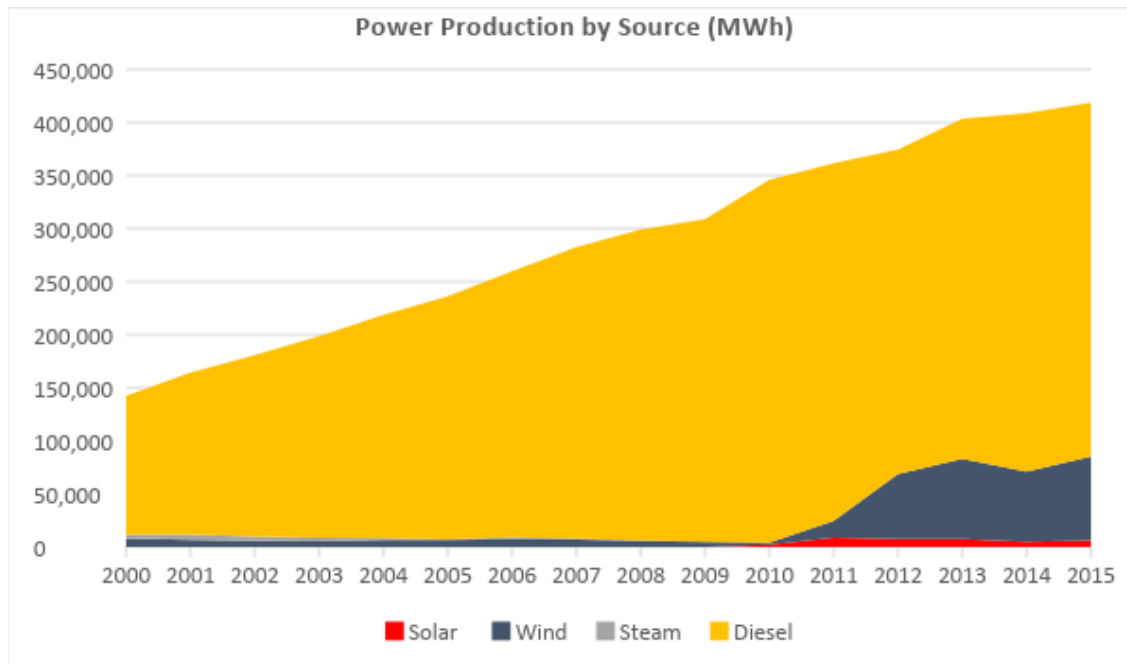


Figure 2: Cabo Verde Power Production by Source (MWh)

Source: Generated by the National Directorate of Energy, Industry and Commerce (DNEIC), 2015

Electrification rate in Cabo Verde reaches currently more than 90% of the population and electricity consumption has grown by a rate of 7.5 % since 2000, although the rate decreases to less than 4% in the last five years. The success of this early experience in renewable energy penetration leads to a strong policy to support renewable energy and a target of 50% penetration in the power sector by 2020. Later, the government increased the target to 100% renewable energy penetration by 2020 adopted in the National Renewable Energy Action Plan (PNAER) (Government of Cabo Verde 2015).

Clearly, access to sustainable energy is a catalyst for creating conditions for the development of income-generating activities and a tool to combat poverty. As a result, Cabo Verde's goal of achieving 100% national energy coverage in 2017 and becoming a 100% renewable country will contribute to economic and social development and the consequent eradication or reduction of poverty. In this trajectory, the balance with the environment has to be maintained to guarantee the minimum conditions of habitability of the islands. As a tourist destination, this being the driving force of the economy, Cabo Verde also cannot afford not to protect its fragile ecosystem (Government of Cabo Verde 2015).

This ambitious goal also presents an opportunity for a profound transformation of the energy sector, involving changes in technologies and the use of innovation. The potential for innovation that Cabo Verde faces opens up opportunities for the export of high-value added knowledge and services in the renewable energy and energy efficiency sectors to a number of international markets, with emphasis on small island states.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Economic growth, while crucial for the development of a country, can cause environmental degradation as a result of unsustainable management and increase in the demand for resources. Coordinated actions to address pollution, overfishing, marine biodiversity, loss of and degradation of ecosystems, and other negative impacts that compromise the health and the wealth of the oceans are necessary at national, regional and international levels. To mitigate these challenges and achieve a sustainable development, environmental policy should be implemented around the following domains: (a) environmental behavior, (b) institutional capacity building, (c) partnership for financing development, and (d) follow-up on the implementation of the policies.

It is critical to ECOWAS member states to shift their behavior towards environmental issues, by realizing that change of behavior at the national level can lead to changes in sustainability at regional and global levels. Small action taken by single members like promotion of the use of renewable energy and sustainable management of their seas will lead to positive global outcomes.

The West African countries need technical cooperation and human resource training to achieve their sustainable development, and the answers to many of their challenges can be found in universities, research centers, and technology and innovation centers. Strengthening the institutional capacity of authorities working with environmental issues and enhancing the scientific capacity in these countries will generate local knowledge, and these people will be able to act as intermediaries among scientists, policy makers, and practitioners, and also help present environmental information in a format that decision-makers can decide upon (*The Guardian* 2015).

The majority of ECOWAS countries rely heavily on domestic and international capital markets to meet fiscal deficits and fund development while others are heavily aid dependent. Despite these differences, most share a number of key challenges when it comes to financing for development. Thus, applying the same principles explored by SIDS countries, one opportunity is to explore new debt relief initiatives that can tackle some of ECOWAS countries' major financing for development challenges.

For instance, debt swaps could help to both relieve debt and invest in sustainable development, including biodiversity conservation, the sustainable use of ocean resources, and climate change adaptation. There is also a need to invest in building resilience to environmental vulnerabilities, as well as social and economic vulnerabilities, since they are all linked to poverty reduction.

The establishment of a continuous periodic internal and external monitoring and evaluation in ECOWAS should be a priority. Internally, a consultation and coordination mechanism for environmental policies and initiatives should be developed: for instance, the implementation of the mandates of the ECOWAS Conference of Ministers in charge of the environment and high-level expert meetings. At external level, the evaluation shall be to assign independent experts to periodically evaluate the implementation of the environmental policy (IUCN n.d.).

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