

COASTAL SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPES PROJECT (CSLP)

Awareness Creation and Capacity Building



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For more information contact:

Coastal Sustainable Landscapes Project

Plot 18, Quashigah Avenue, Anaji-Takoradi.

Postal Box MC 3407, Takoradi, Ghana

Email: info@cslp-gh.org

Tel: +233 (0) 31 229 7824

Steven Dennison (PhD)

Project Director

director@cslp-gh.org

+233 (0) 263982961

Adam Welti

Africa and Middle East Program

Forest Service

International Programs

Office of the Chief

p: 202-644-4568

c: 202-617-8560

adamjwelts@fs.fed.us

1 Thomas Circle NW, Suite 400

Washington, DC 20005

www.fs.fed.us

Compiled by: Richard Adupong, Steve Dennison, Gloria Otoo, Adam Welti and Emmanuel Ntiri

Cover photo: Students on an awareness creation procession on World Environment Day.

Credit: Richard Adupong, CSLP.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CC	Climate Change
CCC	Climate Change Club
CSA	Climate Smart Agriculture
CSLP	Coastal Sustainable Landscapes Project
D/A	District Assembly
DoFA	Department of Food and Agriculture
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FC	Forestry Commission
FSD	Forest Service Division
GAW	Greater Amanzule Wetland
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoG	Government of Ghana
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
JHS	Junior High School
LUSPA	Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority
M/A	Municipal Assembly
MMDAs	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies
SHEP	School Health and Environment Program
SHS	Senior High School
STMA	Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly
ToT	Trainer of Trainers
UCC	University of Cape Coast
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USFS	United States Forest Service
WD	Wildlife Division
WED	World Environment Day
WRCF	Western Regional Coastal Foundation

1. Background and Introduction

The Ghana Coastal Sustainable Landscapes Project (CSLP) is a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Feed the Future initiative and a U.S. Forest Service-managed intervention being implemented in the six coastal districts¹ of Ghana's Western Region. The project, originally a three-year project (2013-2016) funded with USAID Climate Change monies, was extended initially for another three years through September 2019² with Feed the Future funding, based on successes achieved within the initial phase. It worked to promote low emissions development in Ghana's Western Region by strengthening community-based natural resource management and monitoring, and improving livelihoods in farming and fishing communities.

The project's second phase, under the U.S. government's Feed the Future Initiative, had a specific objective to reduce poverty and increase resiliency in the target communities through improved natural resource management, livelihood diversification, value chain development, and ecosystem conservation and restoration. The project interventions covered 43 core coastal communities with smallholder farmers and fisher folks as the main beneficiaries. In total, project actions of one sort or another had reached more than 82 communities as of early June 2018.

The interventions of the CSLP were guided by two main outcomes: (i) increased incomes from livelihood diversification and, (ii) improved environment and natural resource management. Specific activities included agroforestry and forestry best practices, short- and medium-term livelihood improvement activities (e.g. beekeeping, climate smart agricultural, CSA, vegetable production), on-farm tree planting of commercial and agroforestry species and management of greening areas / urban greeneries. Others included wetland/mangrove conservation, spatial planning, Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) and youth engagement (via formation of environmental clubs in public schools).

The CSLP used in-field consultations, targeted trainings, strategic capacity building, detailed technical assistance, and participation in institutional/policy level discussions and workshops based on field-level experience to achieve project objectives.

¹ Shama, STMA, Ahanta West, Nzema East, Ellembelle and Jomoro Metropolitan/Municipal/District Assemblies (MMDAs)

² This was subsequently reduced to only two years, to September 2018, due to lack of financial resources in USAID/Ghana's budget

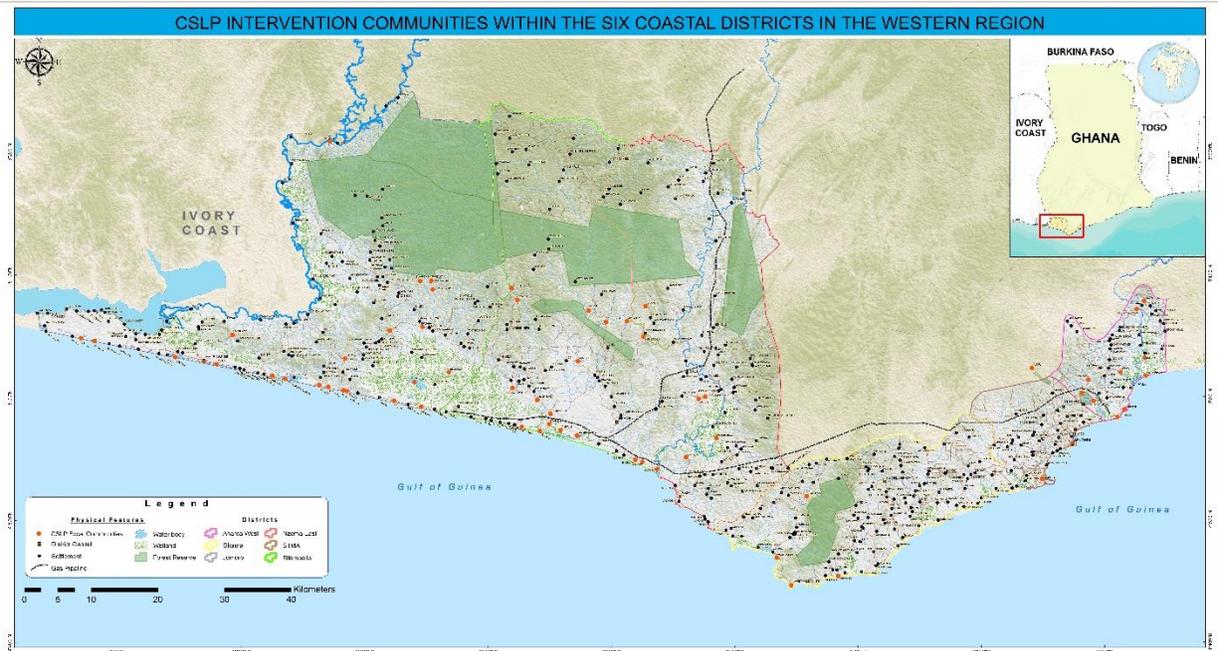


Figure 1: Map of CSLP intervention communities

2. Methodology

The CSLP its quest to raise and enhance awareness on various environmental issues (e.g. indiscriminate cutting of trees including mangroves, poor sanitation, bad farming practices, poor savings culture), employed several targeted approaches to change behaviors, practices and knowledge as well as get stakeholder buy-in, commitment and support to achieve desired result. Some methodologies were modified with time, based on lessons and experience from the field. Key among the strategies used by the CSLP are detailed in the session below.

2.1. Information, Education and Communication (IEC) Materials

In consort with a various awareness creation events by the CSLP and partners, several communication and awareness-raising items were developed and produced. The materials include calendars, newsletters, polo and T-shirts, brochures, fact sheets and posters. These were distributed to relevant CSLP stakeholders including government officials, community members and traditional leaders based on the content and need for the information provided in the material. For instance, facts sheets and climate change brochures were distributed at events such as community meetings, workshops, and international day celebrations and also shared with visiting specialists/dignitaries. All IEC materials followed standard USAID branding rules and clearly noted the management role of the USFS-IP and the financial support of American People through USAID.

2.2. Trainings

The CSLP spent significant amount of effort to offer basic awareness trainings on environment, natural resource management and food security to various Community Based Organizations (CBOs, e.g. CREMA), youth groups and GoG institutions. For instance, the CSLP used its simplified climate change brochures, which had about 80% of its content in photos, to offer basic awareness trainings for Village Savings and Loan Association members, district assembly officials and Climate Change Club (CCC) members in schools. Similarly, the CSLP also collaborated with the UKaid-funded Western Regional Coastal Foundation (WRCF) to scale up climate change awareness / education using the CSLP's simplified Climate Change (CC) brochure. The two projects collaborated and printed 5,000 copies of the brochure which was subsequently used to train stakeholder groups in 100 communities within the six coastal districts of the Western Region. Awareness trainings on inappropriate farming practices and its impact on the environment and local livelihoods were conducted for more than 800 food crop farmers. As a result, several farmers joined the CSLP promotion of climate smart agriculture practices and later saw the establishment of 18 farmer enterprise groups of 170 active members. In the initial stages of the project, sixty-two (62) government officials drawn from all six coastal districts (mainly from the Development Planning Coordinating Unit-DPCU) were offered basic training on climate change. This led to better understanding of CC issues and subsequently in the assemblies planning and reporting on issues pertaining to the environment and climate change. With time, the CSLP became the hub for all the six coastal district assemblies for CC information and as summed up by an Economic Development Officer in the Jomoro Municipality as **“if you are looking for information on climate change in the Western Region, better go to the CSLP.”**

2.3. Video shows at night.

The CSLP realized from interaction with key informants that in some communities, announcements for people to participate in awareness creation events, particularly meetings, yields very low attendance. As such, the CSLP decided to use videos to draw people out to enable it share lessons and experiences on some environmental issues. Evidently, the video shows attracted lots of people at all times in the local communities buttressing the fact that there is a wide global acceptance on the impacts of visuals. Videos from the internet (mainly YouTube) were downloaded and blended with some local videos from areas in the coastal districts. These were merged into a less than 30-minute videos on two fronts. One on climate change and the other wetland/mangroves resources and livelihoods. The climate change video was shown to the 18 initial dry upland forest communities of CSLP while the wetland/mangrove values video was shown in the twenty-four (24) Greater Amanzule Wetland (GAW) communities. Though, the videos were shown in the night, attendance in all communities was massive and highly encouraging. An estimated 4,000 people watched the shows from the 18 agrarian communities while over 5,500 participants are estimated to have watched from the twenty-four GAW communities.



Figure 2: Video show at night in a community

The event usually started with popular local Ghanaian music as a means to attract more audience. This was followed by popular excerpts from local comedy movies paused mid-way to make way for the educational video on climate change or wetlands and mangroves. As the viewers were eager to enjoy more comedy series, they waited for the conclusion of the main comedy video and discussions. During airing of the videos, there were pauses from time to time to allow for discussions as well as questions and answers from the audience. At the end of the event, community members were given the opportunity to discuss lessons learned and what they will do differently. In the GAW for instance, a member of the Community Conservation Committee (CCC) was coached to do the commentary on the video. At the end of the wetland video, short discussion was facilitated by another CCC member, taking lessons from the video, comparing to the local community setting and drawing conclusions on what to be done in the community to follow on. These events attracted more people including many who would ordinarily have not attended awareness programs on wetlands and/or climate change.

2.4. Climate Change Clubs

As a behavioral change project, the CSLP targeted youth, to help in awareness creation and to promote positive attitudinal change. As such, youth in Junior High Schools (JHS) and Senior High Schools (SHS) in some of the project intervention communities across the coastal Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) of Ghana's Western Region were targeted for the formation of environmental clubs (nicknamed Climate Change Clubs-CCCs). Where there were existing science or environmental clubs the CSLP supported their activities and added a climate change awareness focus. In the formation of CCCs, approvals were sought from the various district directorates of education and an effective cooperation model was established with the Ghana Education Service (GES) to engage the schools. Members of the CCCs were educated on diverse environmental topics and positioned to serve as agents of change and disseminators of information in their communities and as such serve as environmental ambassadors. A total of 20 CCCs had been formed in selected Junior High Schools in the

2.5. International Day Celebrations

The CSLP as part of its communications strategy, commemorated two key thematic days of both international and local significance and of relation to a healthy environment. These are World Environment Day Celebration which is annually led by the United Nations Environment Program and World Wetlands Day Celebration led by the Ramsar Secretariat and supported by United Nations Habitat.

2.5.1. World Environment Day Celebration

World Environment Day (WED), celebrated every year on June 5 and initiated by the United Nations Environment Program's (UNEP) was used as an avenue for encouraging worldwide awareness and action for the environment. The CSLP has over the period, held four successful celebrations in four districts. Four schools have led celebrations of World Environment Day from 2015 to 2018. In 2015, Adusuazo D/A JHS in Jomoro Municipal led the event and was supported by Asonti M/A JHS from Nzema East. In 2016, attention moved to the Shama district and the event was championed by the Komfueku D/A JHS. Then in 2017, the celebration was held in Ahanta West Municipal by Akwidaa SDA JHS and Cape Three Points schools. June 5, 2018 witnessed another celebration at the Western Region capital. This was facilitated by students of Kow Nketsia A.M.E Zion JHS at Nkotompo in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis.



Figure 4: Drama by students at WED celebration

During these celebrations, the host school embarked on awareness creation/enhancing procession holding placards (amidst brass band music) and also held a mini durbar; usually chaired by the community chief. The durbar records Educative-Entertainment (EE) drama, cultural display and poetry recitals focused on the theme and performed by the students. WED celebrations by the CSLP were always marked in partnership with government agencies, local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), traditional leaders and communities. Key among the GoG agencies are the GES, MMDAs, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Wildlife Division (WD) and Forest Service Division (FSD) of the Forestry Commission (FC) and the Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority (LUSPA). The celebrations always witnessed good reportage from various media outlets: the print, online, radio and TV and these were well documented by the CSLP team.

2.5.2. World Wetlands Day Celebration

Wetlands are vital ecosystems that provide ecological, social and economic services. However public apathy and haphazard development on wetlands in the six coastal districts of Ghana's Western Region deprives residents of the values of wetlands and its associated mangroves. For instance, the mangroves ecosystem in the region are under serious threat due to the conversion of this resource to other land uses such as industrial, agricultural and residential purposes. Indiscriminate cutting of mangroves for fuel and for charcoal production is also a growing practice among resource users in communities fringing mangrove ecosystems.

To reverse such a negative trend, a number of wetland and mangrove management actions (including awareness creation) were done by the CSLP. The CSLP and its sub-grantee, Hen Mpoano, used the occasion of World Wetlands Day, celebrated on February 2 each year to enhance awareness on wetlands and mangroves. The project celebrated the event once, in 2018. The day was aimed at raising global awareness about the value of wetlands for humanity. The 2018 Wetlands Day was therefore taken advantage of to create awareness on the Greater Amanzule Wetland (GAW) in the southwest of Ghana. The GAW is biologically rich and diverse system comprising tropical/terrestrial forests, swamp forests and mangrove forests covering approximately 50,000 hectares of land and water area. Despite its richness in biological diversity and as a coastal wetland, directly supporting livelihoods of thousands of fishers and farmers, the area has no formal conservation or protection status. It had been managed through indigenous customary practices but such customs are breaking down and thereby exposing the wetland to several threats especially with the recent oil and gas developments in the area.

In addition to the GAW, the CSLP also maintained diverse management action on selected wetlands in Shama and Ahanta West Districts of the Western Region. The project also collaborated with the University of Cape Coast (UCC) Centre for Coastal Management in a wetland /mangrove monitoring effort in two communities: Yabiw in the Shama District and Akwidaa in the Ahanta West District. The restoration and awareness creation activities were led by school clubs. Other efforts of mangrove management were carried out in partnership with the WD of FC and the Community Resource

Management Areas (CREMAs); specifically, the Cape Three Points-Princess Town CREMA in Ahanta West District.

2.6. Field Day with Media Personnel (CSLP Media Day)

The media plays a pivotal role in the dissemination of information and are actors of change. Knowing this, the CSLP instituted an annual field-based event, called *the CSLP Annual Media Day* and was organized for Media personnel and GoG staff. The media day offered participants an opportunity to interact first hand with project beneficiaries and to learn about experiences on CSLP interventions, their challenges and the benefits. Two communities were visited each year. The platform offered participants the opportunity to witness and verify key project interventions. Media outlets to the event included members of the print, television (TV), radio and internet media. The event generated several positive media reports and were well documented by the CSLP. It also offered the media, a better understanding of the project interventions and guided their reportage on the CSLP.



Figure 5: Director of CSLP, Dr. Steve Dennison, addressing the media

2.7. Video Documentary

The project produced a video documentary of all CSLP activities for its first phase. The 25 minutes documentary covered all aspects of the project interventions and was screened on national television and other online platforms. In addition, the CSLP and another USAID-funded project, Resiliency in Northern Ghana (USAID/RING) jointly produced a 10-minute documentary on Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) and co-facilitated the organization of the first USAID/Ghana VSLA Summit. These documentaries highlighted the impacts of the project intervention and its screening on national television and other platforms reached other farmers in non-project intervention regions and communities.



Figure 6: Asonti MA JHS Climate Change Club member interviewed as part of CSLP video documentary production

2.8. Farmers Day Celebration

In Ghana, the national Farmers Day is commemorated on the first Friday of every December, to among several reasons, honor gallant farmers and fishers throughout the country. The day is celebrated at both national regional and district levels. From 2015, the CSLP joined government stakeholders in five districts to celebrate the event. In all instances, the CSLP used the occasion to honour project champions who excelled during the reporting/fiscal year and took advantage of such great gatherings of farmers to enhance awareness on key food security issues through short speeches and exhibitions. The awards were given to encourage and motivate more farmers to among others, adopt good agricultural practices. Exhibitions mounted by the CSLP at such gatherings attracted several participants including top government officials and traditional leaders. In 2016, the celebration by the Nzema East Municipality witnessed a 15-minute drama by students and members of the CSLP-facilitated Climate Change Club at Asonti Municipal Assembly Junior High School. The drama highlighted appropriate behaviors for better agricultural gains and the importance of the farmers' day.

For the five districts that the CSLP joined such celebrations, senior government officials such as the Municipal/ District Chief Executives of the assemblies and the Directors of the Department of Food and

Agriculture (DoFA), have applauded the contribution of USAID through the CSLP interventions in their speeches.



Figure 7: Director of CSLP presenting award to Mrs. Cecilia Tandoh of Nzema East Municipality as Best female farmer into organic vegetable production

2.9. Partnerships and Collaboration

The CSLP strongly believed in achieving greater results through effective partnership and collaboration and used available avenues to raise and enhance awareness. Strong partnerships were built with Government of Ghana institution, traditional leaders, Non-governmental Organization (NGOs) and CBOs. For instance, the CSLP in collaboration with the WD of FC enhanced the capacity of the Cape Three Points-Princess Town Community Resources Management Areas (CREMA) to better serve as local managers of natural resources. The CREMAs are organized under the auspices of the WD and have the role of organizing communities to support natural resources management, particularly wildlife. The two institutions conducted series of trainings for 20 Community Resources Management Committees (CRMCS) of the Cape Three Points CREMA. Such trainings led to better management of wetlands in communities, prevention of poaching and logging in the Cape Three Points Forest, which is a Globally Significant Biodiversity Area (GSBA).

3. Results, Findings and Discussions

Through the video presentations on key environmental issues, many people reported to the CSLP and its partners, e.g. Hen Mpoano, of halting bad practices such as indiscriminate cutting of trees (including mangroves), adoption of good farming practices and improved sanitation methods.

Trainings organized by the CSLP and WD of FC for CREMA executives and members also yielded very significant results. After one of such trainings which sought to promote better understanding among CREMA members on their constitution and its relation to wetland conservation and management, the community of Cape Three Points decided to clean their wetland area of garbage and also to stop open defecation in the area. In the community of Ketakor, members became newly interested in learning to establish a mangrove nursery for restoring the degraded mangrove. As a result, members of that group completed a study tour to Ankobra Community Conservation Committee mangrove nursery and subsequently replanted mangroves in their degraded mangrove areas.



Figure 8: Illegal logging in the Cape Three Points forest

Another unique outcome of the events with the CREMA was that for the first time in the history of the CREMA, they were able to cause the arrest of deviants who were felling trees in the Cape Three Forest, a Globally Significant Biodiversity Area (GSBA). The communities had for time immemorial reported and complained of massive illegal logging activities in the forest. The CRMCs blamed officials of FSD for not helping to address the situation as their calls on them have not yielded any result. Below were some comments on the illegal activities by some CRMC members:

- *When we see illegal activities in the forest, we call officials of the FSD but no one comes over to check the activities*
- *When you question the chain-saw operators, they tell you they have approval from the authorities (i.e. FSD).*
- *The FSD and other government institutions do not care about the forest and hence do not support the CREMA to do what we are mandated to do. You call on them and no one follows-up. Even if you, the concerned CREMA member is not careful and vigilant, the officials will mention your name/expose you to the chain-saw operators and those bad people will harm you.*
- *Some local people also lead the chain-saw operators and when you (as a CREMA executive) questions their activity, they turn to be your enemy. Most of us are at loggerheads because of the illegal logging in the forest. It is really affecting how we cooperate as local managers of natural resources.*

CREMA members in the community of Akatakya succeeded in causing the arrest of one person engaged in the illegal logging activity in the Cape Three Points forest; three accomplices however managed to abscond. The culprit was granted bail at the Agona Nkwanta Police Station as investigations proceeded. A motorbike belonging to the offenders and some of the lumber were seized by the CREMA members and sent to the Police Station. The members also informed one of the Forest Guards (a staff of the FSD) of their action. This brought great excitement to most of the CREMA members and they applauded the CSLP for letting them realize they have the "power" to effectively manage their natural resources. Currently, the members are working to halt poaching in the forest.

Similarly, joint efforts by the EPA, GES, WD of FC and the CSLP at promoting educational campaigns in public schools proved very effective. The four institutions conducted a Trainer of Trainers (ToT) on sanitation for 110 teachers from 74 schools across 4 districts, followed up on an initial 14 schools with 976 students (466 were girls) benefitting from training by the trainees and developed monitoring and reporting guidelines/templates for similar engagements. A similar intervention in one district reached 1,055 students. Monitoring after the trainings led to a number of actions that the students resolved to carry out. Some of these included tree planting and better management of waste through reuse of item, recycling, responsible disposal and clean-up. In the fishing communities, students trained are sensitizing the adult population on the negative impact of illegal fishing methods that are rampant in the coastal communities and contributing to lower fish stock.



Figure 9: Bag made from used sachet water plastic bag by students of Hopes & Dreams School, Ahanta West Municipality

4. Observations, Challenges and Lessons Learned

The CSLP became a household name due to the intensive awareness created in the communities. The methods employed proved very effective and helped to achieve meaningful results.

Youth engagement through school clubs was instrumental in creating more enthusiastic environmental ambassadors. Effective involvement of the youth (regarded as the future leaders) in addressing issues about the future is a necessity and not a misplaced priority. Over the period, the CSLP noted that, strengthening of existing environmental clubs and formation of new clubs where necessary was essential for more youth to efficiently serve as environmental ambassadors. Peer-to-peer learning and experience sharing is greatly enhanced when people of similar background are in a group.

Similarly, using local CBOs and building their capacity based on need assessment is key to promoting sustainability of interventions. If there are existing CBOs, such as the CREMA, efforts should be made to empower and strengthen their operations. Such groups know their area/jurisdiction better and can play effective role if well positioned. In addition, champions should be developed out of such groups to move forward project goals and objectives.

The use of the national farmers' day gathering provided another great lesson of reaching other farmers in non-project intervention communities. Such farmers were eager to practice good agricultural concepts

explained by CSLP farmers at the project exhibition. In the five districts where, the CSLP participated in the events, responses received from farmers with regards to the project interventions points to a larger interest amongst farmers beyond the current reach of CSLP.

Nonetheless, it is imperative for any methodology to be reviewed and revised where necessary. On the video presentations at night, it started with the CSLP team facilitating the sessions in the initial stages. However, the team learned to coached local community members (from each community) to lead the facilitation and this approach proved highly effective as the viewers/audience happily related to such a facilitator (their-own) and shared key and sensitive information. Equally worth noting is the fact that the use of local comedy movies was very influential in attracting more viewers. It helped to attract more audience and ensured that viewers stayed till the end of the main videos (on climate change and wetlands/mangroves) and actively joined discussions at the end of the program. As noted earlier, viewers were keen to watch more of such comedy excerpts or see the concluding part of the local drama and waited patiently till the video and discussions ended. The choice of using video presentation, proved very effective for the CSLP and yielded positive results and reechoes the need to use appropriate methods for specific activities. Naturally, the number of residents reached in each of the communities would have been difficult to achieve using other forms of community engagements. As the CSLP aimed to impact positively on local behaviors, practices and knowledge, it was prudent to reach more people of all ages and gender. As such, such video presentations should be used to alert stakeholders in a project's zone of influence of critical environmental issues or other issues that the project seeks to influence stakeholder behavior.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Awareness creation is essential in any behavioral change project. As other programs and stakeholders may have similar goals and objectives on the issue at stake, it is extremely necessary to actively involve key stakeholders in awareness creation to avoid duplication of efforts. The CSLP observed and found that project beneficiaries were adopting best practices and that their behaviors were changing. Likewise, that the lack of technical know-how and alternative options available to farmers is a driver in the many things that farmers do that can cause harm to their environment. In communities close to wetlands, some community members voluntarily embark on mangrove re-planting and led campaigns against indiscriminate cutting of mangroves and other trees. This demonstrates that when farmers and fisher folk are provided the basic and necessary knowledge on natural resources they will decide to support the sustainable management of such resources and make more decisions that are appropriate to the conservation of those resources.

It is recommended that projects identify and actively involve stakeholders in awareness creation, share activities and work plans and work together to accomplish shared goals and objectives. In doing so, strategies and methodologies should be assessed for their relevance, impact and sustainability. Additionally, projects must recognize that gaining integrity and respect of stakeholders is important for success in creating awareness and building capacity. Lastly, it be recognized that attitudinal change takes time and calls for the use of effective methods (and modification in methodology) to achieve desired impact.