



Benin

WETLANDS ARE VITAL TO HUMANS AND ANIMALS

The wetlands in the south of Benin are a source of clean water, food security and provide an income for millions of local inhabitants. However, rapid population growth has placed these wetlands under huge pressure. Partner organisations of IUCN NL are protecting the wetlands via locally managed nature conservation areas, encouraging sustainable agriculture and fishery, and lobbying national government.

RELIABLE PARTNER IN BENIN

For more than 20 years, IUCN NL has been active in the deltas of the Ouémé and Mono rivers. Thanks to the efforts of IUCN NL, these wetland areas in southern Benin have been labelled UNESCO Biosphere Reserves, an international recognition of the remarkable nature in these areas.

We have been at the forefront of numerous nature conservation initiatives and the establishment of local nature conservation organisations. Our local partners identify the problems they wish to tackle, and we help them professionalise their activities, and work closely together on various projects including species protection, environmental education, mangrove restoration projects and influencing government policy.

OUÉMÉ DELTA UNDER PRESSURE

The Ouémé delta consists of a series of massive floodplains. It is a productive ecosystem and at the same time of national importance for the fishing industry. The huge growth in the demand for fish and the absence of alternative sources of income for fishermen have led to decades of overfishing in the area. The rapid expansion of towns and villages

and the construction of roads in the delta are leading to the destruction of large areas of floodplain. This in turn has led to the loss of spawning grounds for fish, agricultural land and the natural capacity of the floodplains to store water in the rainy season.

Together with local partners, we are working to improve law enforcement against illegal and destructive fishing techniques. We are also entering into agreements with fishermen to prevent them fishing in the spawning grounds, and to set aside demarcated areas for nature conservation. We are also developing alternative sources of income such as ecotourism and the production of soy milk and cheese by women.

“IUCN NL plays an important role in facilitating dialogue between local NGOs and businesses. By making businesses aware that they too are dependent on products and services supplied by nature, they work towards shared responsibility.”

Jan Kamstra, expert Benin at IUCN NL

SAND EXTRACTION IN THE MONO DELTA

The Mono delta is a mosaic of lakes, wetlands, gallery forest, mangrove swamps and beaches. In this area, the vast majority of people earn their living from agriculture and fishery. Population growth and the lack of alternatives mean that here, too, local residents are overusing the natural resources.

Rapid urbanisation has hugely increased the demand for sand. The extraction of sand has therefore become an important source of income for the locals. However, the uncontrolled nature of the extraction process has led to a whole raft of social and environmental problems. Accidents happen often - many involving children - and what is left behind is a lunar landscape. Together with local partner organisations, IUCN NL has successfully called for improved government planning and control.

Example of our work

Involving businesses in wetland conservation

Until recently, there was very little contact between our local partners and businesses. Growing international awareness among businesses about taking responsibility for society and the environment is now creating new opportunities. Over the past few years, our partners have been organising meetings with businesses, aimed at joining forces to preserve ecosystem services. Together, they are examining the dependency of companies on products and services provided by nature, such as the use of water or agricultural projects that require healthy soils. They are also considering the possible impact of climate change on businesses. The meetings have resulted in greater mutual understanding and trust.

More and more businesses are investigating how they can reduce their impact. Some pioneering companies have started financing activities such as mangrove restoration, protection for hippos and sea turtles, and the planting of trees.

More examples of our work

More IUCN NL in Benin

- Together with local partners, we are working on mangrove management, and are supporting a nature restoration programme that aims to re-establish estuarine dynamics in the Mono delta.
- We are calling for coastal and marine areas to be given protected status so that threatened marine animals including humpback whales, dolphins and various species of turtle are better protected.

COLLABORATING WITH IUCN NL

Do you want to help IUCN NL bring about sustainable wetland management in Benin? Visit our [website](#) for detailed information and more example projects or contact our expert [Jan Kamstra](#).