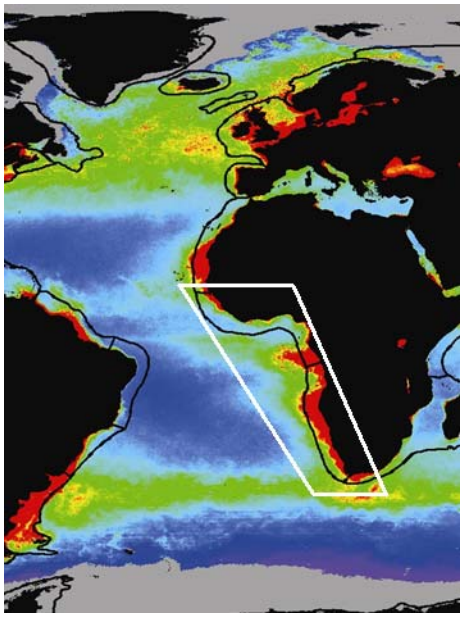
West Africa Fisheries Protection

Two GEF supported projects to assess and manage the marine resources of West Africa are promoting actions to protect and sustain fishery resources. From Guinea Bissau off the NW coast of Africa to Capetown at the southern end of Africa, efforts are underway to protect and manage the 2.0 million metric tons of fish caught annually by fishermen from 16 coastal countries fishing highly productive waters of the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem along with fishermen from 3 countries--Angola, Namibia and South Africa—-fishing waters of the Benguela Current LME. Angola is leading the way to protect and sustain the fishery resources important to the community-based artisanal fisheries of Angola and other countries in West Africa.



Boundaries of the Guinea Current and Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystems. The color-enhanced image depicts a shaded gradient of primary productivity from a high of 450g Cm^2yr^1 in red to less than 45g Cm^2yr^1 in purple. The global map of average primary productivity and the boundaries of the 64 LMEs of the world is available at www.edc.uri.edu/lme and at www.lme.noaa.gov. From model developed by M. Behrenfeld and P.G. Falkowski (Limnol.Oceangr.42(1): 1997, 1-20)

The history of industrial fisheries off Angola has been one of domination by distant water fleets with little concern for artisanal fishers nor the control of the Governments of the countries bordering the rich fishery resources of the Guinea Current LME and Benguela Current LME. Testimony to that era can be seen in the rusting hulks of abandoned Soviet trawlers in the harbor in Luanda, Angola. Angola has been a participant in both the Benguela Current and the Guinea Current LME Projects. The Benguela Project, longer in the operational phase, has emphasized providing scientific underpinnings needed for living marine resource management. Early in the project Angola was consumed with addressing internal conflict. However, Angola was very active in the planning phase for the GCLME where the precautionary principle and the industrial-artisanal fisheries interactions were stressed. One of the important outcomes of the pioneering Gulf of Guinea LME Project was the Accra Declaration by the Ministers of the six involved states—a Declaration in which they adopted the precautionary principle and, based on information produced during this first phase of what is now the Guinea Current LME project, agreed to halt further licensing of distant water industrial fleets except for tuna vessels.

Recently, Angola has turned its attention to management of its fishery resources utilizing the principles in the LME approach. First, on the advice of its scientists, the Ministry of Fisheries placed a moratorium on horse mackerel industrial catches to allow the stock to recover. Next under the leadership of the Minister of Fisheries Angola refused to sign an agreement allowing the EU to fish off Angola. As some offshore resources are beyond the present capability of Angola fishers to harvest, agreements were negotiated to allow Spanish vessels with 51 % Angolan ownership and 49% Spanish ownership to fish under strict Angolan regulatory control and monitoring. This both puts the activity and monitoring of those vessels under Angolan control, and sets the stage for future expansion of Angolan interests.