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# Local to regional polycentric levels of governance of the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem



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### ABSTRACT

Building trust across diverse groups and nations requires long-term commitment and time, as the Gulf of Guinea Large Marine Ecosystem (GOGLME) and the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem (GCLME) projects demonstrated over two decades while establishing trust and partnerships among 16 western African countries along the coast of the GCLME leading to the GCLME project successfully establishing the Interim Guinea Current Commission (IGCC). Regional Activity Centers of Capacity for Productivity, Fisheries, Environment, Information Management and Pollution Monitoring created by the GCLME Project effectively connected international development goals with implementation efforts on the ground at regional and local scales. The active involvement of the Regional Coordination Unit (RCU) and key Ministers from various countries was critical to achieving the genuine commitment in the region to pursue transboundary regional ocean governance at the GCLME level. The 16 countries at a ministerial meeting in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire declared their intent to replace the Interim Guinea Current Commission (IGCC) with a permanent Commission serving as a mechanism for coordination

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and agreement on resource use among these countries embracing the LME modules from local to regional polycentric levels of governance, consistent with the benefits of an ecosystem-based approach to assessment and management of GCLME goods and services.

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## 1. Introduction

The Gulf of Guinea Large Marine Ecosystem (GOGLME) Project focused on a sub unit of the Guinea Current LME (GCLME) (Fig. 1) for the Global Environment Facility's (GEF) Pilot LME Program. The Project, with an agreement with the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for technical assistance, began in 1995 with five (later six) countries in the Gulf of Guinea (GOG). From this we have arrived at the point today where GEF supported LME projects not only circle Africa but are found throughout the world. The countries at the end of the pilot phase in 1998 not only supported a continuation but also an extension to the other countries located along the coast of the entire Guinea Current LME (GCLME). In 2001 the 12 month Planning Grant for the GCLME began, followed in August of 2004 with the funding of the full project. The support for the project continued to be strong, as evidenced by the adoption by all 16 countries of the priorities for future intervention listed in the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) in 2006 (Anon, 2006)) followed by the establishment of the Interim Guinea Current Commission (IGCC). In 2008 the Ministers signed a Strategic Action Plan (SAP) (Anon, 2008) for recovering depleted resources and sustaining GCLME goods and services (Anon, 2008). Scheduled to end in 2010, the project was extended to 2012 after a year hiatus and the resignation of Professor Chidi Ibe who had headed the Regional Coordination Unit (RCU) since 1995. It restarted with the Regional Coordination Unit (RCU) headed by Dr. Stephen Donkor. Despite the hiatus, the countries in 2010 renewed their commitment to the IGCC and in 2012



**Fig. 1.** The Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem (GCLME). The Pilot Gulf of Guinea Large Marine Ecosystem Project covered the sub area from Cote d'Ivoire through Cameroon.

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