

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF MET-OCEAN INFORMATION AND SERVICES IN AFRICA

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Africa, like other parts of the world, is subjected to marine related hazards. Several events might frequently occur like inundations, coastal flooding and storm surge. The coastal zones are the most affected by these disasters and constitute therefore the most vulnerable areas. Africa is also experiencing a steady migration of population to the coastal areas in search of improved livelihoods and economic opportunities. Integrated management of marine and coastal resources, as well as reduction of the risks of ocean related hazards, based on sound scientific knowledge, are essential and contribute to poverty alleviation and sustainable development in Africa. Access to reliable and up-to-date Met-ocean data is crucial for this process.

The shortage of oceanographic and meteorological data and information has been, and continues to be, a major constraint to sustainable development in coastal and marine areas in Africa in recent years. An increasing number of initiatives, supported by national governments and international partners, to address coastal and marine management in an integrated manner has been launched in recent years to fill information gaps needed to improve management decision making and prevent against natural hazards. Most of these initiatives were conducted in the framework of Large Marine Ecosystems programmes (LMEs).

The accessibility to Met-ocean data has been another constraint to the use of data by a wider community. This is due to the combined effect of several factors, such as the scattering of data in various institutions, the wide variety of data formats and metadata formats that are prevalent and the limited information and communication technology infrastructure in the African countries. To overcome this problem the UNESCO/IOC-IODE programme has launched an innovative strategic approach called the ODIN (Ocean Data and Information Network) which was used in Africa from 1997. This strategy aims at strengthening a pan African network of National Oceanographic Data Centres (NODCs), as a sustained mechanism for the implementation of best practices in managing marine data and information for the benefit of the marine and coastal management.
