

Scientists work to improve water quality in Ghana

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Scientists at the University of Liverpool are working with Ghanaian villagers and scientists to improve water quality and wildlife stocks.

Ghana's large and growing population relies on wetlands for food and water and so experts at the University's Institute for Sustainable Water, Integrated Management and Ecosystem Research (SWIMMER) have launched a research and training project near Accra, in Southern Ghana, to prevent continued environmental decline through pollution and over-use of river based resources.

In recent years Ghana, a relatively poor area of Africa, has seen a decline in freshwater fish, insects and plants, as well as a decline in the quality and quantity of drinking water as a result of river pollution.

Researchers, in collaboration with the University of Ghana and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), conducted a survey amongst the elders of the Accra tribes to understand how they used the rivers and wildlife and how they would like the area to be improved. The team have also completed chemical and biological assessments of rivers in the area and will use this information to train water and wildlife experts in the 'Ecosystem Approach' – a methodology implemented as part of the UK's Darwin Initiative to communicate key environmental issues to all agencies involved in the management of land.

Dr Rick Leah, project manager, said: "Ghanaian scientists who are trained in using the 'Ecosystem Approach' will in turn train scientists

from Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Togo and Benin to help harmonise environmental efforts in the region. Training for local stakeholders will also help enhance public awareness of aquatic systems.

"The aim of the project is to make local authorities and local people aware of the resources they currently have and how they should protect them in future. We have set up an interactive website where collaborators in the project, such as the Centre for African Wetlands and Ghana Wildlife Society, can log on and discuss problems they have faced and download teaching tools for researchers and school children."

Source: University of Liverpool

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