



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Take a look at West Africa now, USAID backed atlases show dynamic new landscape changes

New interactive learning workshop will empower seven more West African countries

Accra, GHANA - The landscapes of West Africa are drastically changing as a result of human activity and climate change. Over the past 30 years, the Sahel and West African region have faced significant climatic disturbances due to devastating droughts and floods. Now, the area is plagued with land degradation and deforestation and a new USAID-funded project shows new dynamic images like never before. The project, an atlas titled, “Landscapes of West Africa - A Window on a Changing World”, vividly shows remarkable and subtle changes in 24 classes of land use and land cover (LULC) using satellite images collected in a time series from the mid-60’s, 1975, 2000 and 2013.

USAID/West Africa along with partners, Comité Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel (CILSS-The Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel) and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) documented nearly 50 years of dynamic change in LULC across the region. Now the dynamic results of this great effort are available for the masses for free, [online](#).

On September 27th- 28th in Accra, Ghana, a second LULC learning workshop for technical experts and officials will be held with seven more participating countries – Ghana, the Gambia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Togo and Benin. This second workshop aims to stimulate discussion and actions that will underpin the longevity of the LULC program regarding the following topics: i) Sustainability - How the LULC data will be updated and maintained in the long run; ii) Compliance with international agreements - How the LULC data and products meet the needs of participating countries in honoring their commitments under their nationally-determined contributions under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change; iii) Support for regional initiatives - How LULC mapping and updates improve the effectiveness of national and regional programs such as the regional Food and Nutritional Security (FNS) program and the Food Crisis Prevention Network; and iv) Capacity development - How LULC products should be integrated into formal education - primary, secondary and university curricula - and advance academic research and extension under such initiatives as the UN-Climate Change Learn program.

The first interactive learning workshop and launch was held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso in July. The launch informed West African decision-makers, technical and financial partners in four countries – Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali and Chad – about how the atlas’ time-series maps could be used as environmental monitoring tools and how decision-makers could use the information in action plans to address the region’s environmental challenges.

The third and final session will be held in Dakar in November, and will explore a similar learning agenda as in Accra, but with the last cluster of participating countries – Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Senegal, Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea and Mauritania.

All West Africa LULC products are available to the public for download at no charge from the project’s website. Data and products acquired through the West Africa Land Use Dynamics project website have no restrictions on subsequent use, sale, or redistribution. To take a closer look at the landscapes of West Africa and of the challenges confronting its people and of positive lessons in improved resource management and to download tools and data, please visit <https://eros.usgs.gov/westafrica/>.

For more information, please contact:

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CILSS is an intergovernmental organization composed of 13 countries, namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, Cote d’Ivoire, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Togo. In organizational terms, CILSS is composed of three (3) centres of operations: the Executive Secretariat, based in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso; The AGRHYMET Regional Centre based in Niamey, Niger; The Sahel Institute, based in Bamako, Mali. Its mandate is to seek to assure food security and to combat the effects of drought and desertification for a new ecological balance in the Sahel. For more information, please visit the website: www.cilss.int

The USAID/West Africa regional mission’s goal is to promote social and economic well-being advanced by West Africans. Spanning 21 countries, USAID/West Africa designs and implements programs with West African partners to strengthen systems of non-violent conflict management, support economic growth, and expand quality health services. The American people, through USAID, provide economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries worldwide. For more information, please visit the website: <http://www.usaid.gov/west-africa-regional>

USGS has evolved over the ensuing 125 years, matching its talent and knowledge to the progress of science and technology. USGS is the sole science agency for the Department of the Interior of USA. It is sought out by thousands of partners and customers for its natural science expertise and its vast earth and biological data holdings. As the Nation’s largest water, earth, and biological science and civilian mapping agency, USGS collects, monitors, analyzes, and provides science about natural resource conditions, issues, and problems. For more information, please visit the website : www.usgs.gov