

When the Sea Becomes Your Backdrop!

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Source: Centre for Coastal Management – CiCADD Team, 2025

How did it begin?

We took a trip along the coast to document success stories. We found something else: backyards eaten by waves, households living on the edge, and whole lives made precarious because of engineering decisions that didn't follow the shore all the way down. Members of the communities visited shared how quickly their homes eroded after the construction of sea defence structures in the neighbourhood. This is the report of what we saw and heard — told as much by broken clay pots and torn nets as by words.

Area 1 — Volta Region (Downdrift of Blekusu Sea Defence)

Communities: Agavedzi, Salakope/Amutinu, Adina

What did we see?

From the front view, houses stand. Paint, curtains, a front stoop — but pass through the doorway, and the backyard is gone. The sea has taken yards, back walls hang over the surf, and household items lie where sand once was!



A section of a family house eroded by the sea

A section of a hotel eroded by the sea

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What was the cause?

In an effort to fix one vulnerable section of the coastline, a sea defence structure was constructed. However, it intensified erosion rates, ultimately compromising the safety of neighbouring communities that had previously experienced moderate, gradual erosion.

Who is affected?

Mostly poor artisanal fishers. No lands. No alternative livelihoods. No cash to buy a new future. For many, the coast is both workplace and home — losing one is losing both.

“The front door looks the same, but our backyard is floating away. Where will my children play tomorrow?” — a mother in Agavedzi.

Quick facts..

- Sea-defence constructed at Blekusu; downdrift sites show severe erosion.
- House backwalls eroded; yards were lost entirely in many households.
- Primary livelihood: artisanal fishing — low assets, no lands.

How does this feel?

Loss of safety, uncertainty about the next season, and the daily calculation of risk when waves come in. Pride meets fear and anxiety!

Area 2 — Greater Accra (Downdrift of the Glefe Sea Defence)

Communities: Shiabu, Chemuna

We expected to document adaptation and resilience. Instead, we recorded quiet desperation: eroded compound walls, nets ruined in salt spray, and elders who can’t rebuild. The stories repeat — different faces, same harm down the coast.

“They built it to protect some of us — but look what happened to the next community down. We lost our backyard and our store of smoked fish.” — a Fisher, Chemuna.

How bad does this look?

Across both areas, we met women who cook on the edge of collapsing sand, children playing dangerously near undercut foundations, and fishermen who measure success in nets returned with fewer fish and heavier debts.

Why does it matter?

When coastal infrastructure is designed without acknowledging downdrift impacts, protection becomes displacement. This is a justice issue: communities with the least resources are bearing the cost of protecting wealthier or more politically connected areas.

What can readers do?

- Share this post to raise awareness.
- Contact local NGOs or coastal management authorities and ask for inclusive impact assessments.
- Support community-led relocation funds and livelihood diversification programs.

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