

Workshop by Salata Institute Faculty Research Cluster on Climate Adaptation in the Gulf of Guinea, December 4-5, 2025

Theme: Dynamic Coasts: West Africans Confronting, Adapting and Surviving Rapid Change.

Venue: Harvard Kennedy School, Belfer Center for Science & International Affairs – Rm B322

Day 1: December 4, 2025

8:30 AM – 9:15 AM

Registration and Breakfast

9:15 AM – 9:25 AM

Opening Remarks

Speaker: [Emmanuel Akyeampong](#) (FAS, Harvard)

9:30 AM – 10:30 AM

Keynote Speaker Address

Speaker: [Galen Newman](#) (Texas A&M University College of Architecture)

Title: “Mitigating the Urban Periculum: Design Strategies for Strengthening Flood Resilience.”

10:30 AM – 10:45 AM

Break

10:45 AM – 12:15 PM

Panel 1. Adapting Landscapes with Social Design

Moderator: [Gareth Doherty](#) (GSD, Harvard)

Description:

Supriya Ambwani will analyze how communities and governments are currently responding on the ground, including some unintended results of these efforts. Dr. Rawan Alsaffar will shift the focus to urban forestry initiatives in four African cities, while Professor Gabriel Arboleda will offer a critical, ethnoarchitectural, perspective—underscoring the importance of stakeholder-driven processes that foreground community voices and experiences in social design practice. Professor Tunji Adejumo will argue for the critical role of Indigenous Knowledge in landscape architectural design processes.

Panelists:

[Supriya Ambwani](#) (GSD, Harvard), “Visible Physical Coastal Interventions in the Gulf of Guinea.”

[Rawan Alsaffar](#) (GSD, Harvard), “Holy Places & Shaded Spaces: Urban Forestry Proposals in Four African Cities.”

[Gabriel Arboleda](#) (Amherst College), “An Ethnoarchitectural Approach to Climate-Driven Disaster Reconstruction.”

[Olatunji Adejumo](#), (UNILAG), “Amphibious Architecture and Liquid Urbanism: Coastal Lagos Re-Imagined.”

Discussant:

[Galen Newman](#) (Texas A&M University)

12:15 PM – 1:15 PM

Lunch

1:15 pm-2:15 PM

Keynote Speaker Address

Speaker: [Ian Bolliger](#) (Principal Quantitative Engineer at Reask)

Title: “Designing for Divergent Risks: Sea Level Rise and Tropical Cyclones in Coastal Adaptation.”

2:15 PM-2:30 PM

Break

2:30 PM – 4:00 PM

Panel 2. Climate Change, Sea Level Rise and the Gulf of Guinea: Lessons from the Past, Adjusting to an Uncertain Future

Moderator: [Jerry Mitrovica](#) (EPS, Harvard)

Description:

This science panel will examine climate changes as reflected in evolving sea level, coastal environments and rainfall patterns, and discuss possible adaptation strategies within a progressively warming West Africa.

Panelists:

[Jerry Mitrovica](#) (EPS, Harvard), “Probabilistic reconstructions and projections of sea level across the Gulf of Guinea.”

[John Kusimi](#) (University of Ghana), “Coastal processes, impacts and adaptation strategies across West African coastlines.”

[Anna Lea Albright](#) (EPS, Harvard), “Evolving rainfall patterns across West Africa.”

[Peter Huybers](#) (EPS, Harvard), “Adapting cocoa cultivation to changes in rainfall.”

Discussant:

[Ian Bolliger](#) (Principal Quantitative Engineer at Reask)

4:00 PM – 4:15 PM

Break

4:15 PM – 5:45 PM

Panel 3. Responses to Declining Fish Stocks in the Gulf of Guinea: Mitigation and Adaptation

Moderator: [Robert Paarlberg](#) (HKS, Harvard)

Description:

This panel will confront the declining catch of small pelagic fish offshore in the Gulf of Guinea, caused by overfishing but worsened by ocean warming—which drives fish beyond the reach of traditional hand-thrown nets from artisanal canoes. Particular attention will be paid to responses by Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire.

Panelists:

Robert Paarlberg (HKS, Harvard), “Ghana’s Experiment with Closed Seasons as a Response to a Declining Fish Catch.”

Kadio Valere Angaman (Salata Institute Postdoc, UFHB) and Tite Beke (UFHB), “Towards Sustainable Fisheries: Côte d’Ivoire’s Policy Response to Declining Fish Stocks.”

Emmanuel Akyeampong (FAS, Harvard), “Science, Indigenous Knowledge, and the Economics of the Closed Fishing Season in Ghana.”

Discussant:

Christopher Golden (HSPH, Harvard)

6:00 PM

Dinner

Day 2: December 5, 2025

8:30 AM – 9:00 AM

Breakfast

9:00 AM – 9:10 AM

Welcome Remarks

Speaker: **James Stock (Faculty Director, Salata Institute)**

9:15 AM – 10:45 AM

Panel 4. Climate Adaptation meets Blue Economy: Reimagining Coastal Development

Moderator: **Emmanuel Akyeampong (FAS, Harvard)**

Description:

The coast of the Gulf of Guinea has experienced severe erosion over the last several decades. In areas like the Keta district in southeast Ghana, erosion dates to the early 20th century. About 10 percent of global populations live within 5 kilometers of a shoreline with Africa having the highest rate of settlement (67 percent) of any continent. African governments do not have the financial resources to protect entire coastlines. Climate adaptation must attract private capital. This panel explores how climate adaptation together with current enthusiasm about the blue economy can inform new models of coastal development and tap into new sources of finance.

Panelists:

Robert Paarlberg (HKS, Harvard), “A Population Rush to an Endangered Coast.”

Olatunji Adejumo (UNILAG), “Bridging Blue Economy Developmental Gap in Lagos Sand Barrier Coast.”

Kwasi Appeaning Addo (University of Ghana), “Challenges and Opportunities for the Blue Economy in Ghana.”

Tite Beke (UFHB) and Kadio Angaman (Salata Institute Postdoc, UFHB), “Coastal Protection and Economic Analysis: Case of Port-Bouet and Azuretti in Côte d’Ivoire.”

Discussant:

Peter Tufano (HBS, Harvard)

10:45 AM – 11:00 AM.

Break.

11:00 AM – 12: 30 PM

Panel 5. Emotional and Mental Health in an Age of Climate Disruption

Moderator: [Daniel Agbiboa](#) (FAS, Harvard)

Description:

This panel examines the emotional and mental health dimensions of climate change and environmental degradation across West Africa's coastal zones. Bringing together scholars from multiple disciplines, we explore how cyclical disasters—such as flooding, erosion, and displacement—reshape the psychic, affective, and communal landscapes of vulnerable populations. Through grounded case studies from Ghana and Nigeria, as well as broader theoretical and empirical reflections, the panel interrogates how climate precarity generates not only material loss but also affective strain, community stress, and emergent forms of endurance and refusal.

Panelists:

[Daniel Agbiboa](#) (FAS, Harvard), “Haunted Futures: The Affective Politics of Climate Urbanism in Lagos.”

[Jennifer Ashilevi](#) (HSPH, Harvard), “After the Water Recedes: Exploring the Mental Health Burden of Climate Disasters across Generations in West Africa.”

[Samuel Adjorlolo](#) (University of Ghana), “Bridging the Gaps: Mental Health Support and Institutional Response to Climate Disasters in West Africa.”

[Emmanuel Akyeampong](#) (FAS, Harvard) and [Adolphus Opara](#) (Adolphus Opara Photography), “A Visual Approach to Allostatic Load: Community Responses to Cyclical Climate Disasters.”

Discussant:

[Giuseppe Raviola](#), (HMS, Massachusetts General Hospital)

12:30 PM – 1:15 PM

Lunch

1:15 PM - 2:15 PM

Panel 6: Photography, video interviews/documentary, maps, satellite images: the place and role of the visual in our project.

Presenters: [Adolphus Opara](#) (Adolphus Opara Photography), [Supriya Ambwani](#) (HGSD), [Gareth Doherty](#) (HGSD)

2:15 PM – 2:30 PM

Break

2:30 PM – 4:00 PM

Panel 7. Vulnerability assessment of coastal communities to climate change and adaptation strategies along the Gulf of Guinea

Moderator: [John Kusimi](#) (University of Ghana)

Description:

Sea-level rise in the Gulf of Guinea due to climate change is expected to continue till mid 21st century with expected worse impacts on vulnerable localities along the coast. Adapting to these climate related coastal hazards has become inevitable for coastal communities in West African countries which are among the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. This panel

examines the impacts and vulnerability of coastal communities to coastal erosion, flooding and the adaptation mechanisms needed to minimize the impacts of climate change along the coastal communities of Abidjan, Accra and Lagos.

Panelists:

Michael Kwame-Biney (University of Ghana), “Assessing Coastal Vulnerability along the Eastern Coast of Ghana: A Multi-Hazard Geospatial Assessment.”

Oluwasegun Babatunde Esan (UNILAG), “Shoreline Dynamics along the Nigerian Coastline (1944-2025): A DSAS-Based Assessment of Erosion and Accretion Trends.”

Nadi Paul Dangui (UFHB) and **Supriya Ambwani (HGSD)**, “Monitoring Sedimentary Dynamics of the Ivory Coast Coastline in the Context of Climate Change.”

Discussant:

Jerry Mitrovica (FAS, Harvard)