The Impacts of Sea Level Rise on Senegal: Tourism and Agriculture

The West African country of Senegal lies south of Mauritania and surrounds the country of Gambia. The coast of Senegal could potentially face sea level rise that may lead to erosion. Millions of people live on the Atlantic Coast, particularly in the city of Dakar, where over 2 million live. Ninety percent of the country's business is based out of Dakar's metropolitan region, and if this area experiences changes in the physical landscape, impacts could be felt on the human population and particularly in Senegal's economy. A major source of income for Senegal is derived from tourism. Hotels on the coast make up approximately 20-30% of the multi-million dollar buildings located near the beach. Rising sea levels could place these buildings in peril.

Another issue of concern is saltwater intrusion into wetlands. The Senegal River delta is home to agriculture, however, high tides could deposit salt, which would affect the land's arability. A dam has been constructed to help prevent this from occurring, but as a result, sediments cannot travel downstream to be deposited on the delta. Lacking replacement deposits, erosion will occur at the mouth of the river as sediments are washed away.

As a way to combat these problems, scientists are suggesting that all new buildings be constructed farther away from the shore, however, a solution the issue of saltwater intrusion has yet to be reached and agreed upon.

Source:
Dennis K C. SENEGAL: Senegal’s Shoreline Is Already Receding and Salinity Threatens Wetlands, Climate Alert 1995; 8 (2).