

Adapting environmental management systems for African ports

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Abstract

Globally sustainable environmental practices in ports have been linked to socio-economic benefits. While African ports are increasingly acknowledging environmental issues and starting to address these in environmental policy, many are still struggling with effective implementation of sound environmental management practices. Multiple factors have been identified as potentially contributing to these challenges including institutional limitations, financial constraints, and limited human and technical capacity. In this paper, we propose an EMS framework for African ports, based on international best practice, but customised to specific continental challenges, and taking guidance from integrated coastal management (ICM) best practice recognising that coastal systems are the broader domain within which ports are spatially situated. The Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) model provides the adaptive management structure for the proposed EMS framework. We consider this framework as a logical and structured method to initiate the implementation of EMS in African ports more effectively, compatible with international standards such as ISO 14001. Unpacking each of the key components and elements within the PDCA model, together with motivation for their inclusion, provides greater transparency to port managers who ultimately have to understand and implement EMS processes.