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SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROJECT (SFMP) GHANA FISHERIES GENDER ANALYSIS



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Cover photo: Men and women are active at the fish-landing site in Axim. (Credit: Elin Torell/CRC)

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ACRONYMS

ADS	Automated Directives System
CEWEFIA	Central and Western Region Fishmongers Improvement Association
CR	Central Region
CRC	Coastal Resources Center, Graduate School of Oceanography, University of Rhode Island
CLaT	Child Labor and Trafficking
DAA	Development Action Association
FC	Fisheries Commission
FoN	Friends of Nation
GNCFC	Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council
GNFA	Ghana National Fishermen Association
ILO	International Labor Organization
NAFPTA	Ghana National Fish Processors and Traders Association
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SFMP	Sustainable Fisheries Management Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WR	Western Region

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INTRODUCTION

The SFMP supports the Government of Ghana’s fisheries development policies and objectives and squarely aims to assist the country to end overfishing and rebuild targeted fish stocks. Adoption of sustainable fishing practices and reduced exploitation to end overfishing is the only way Ghana can maintain the sustainability of its marine fisheries in order to increase its wild-caught local marine food fish supply and bring greater profitability to the fishery—which in turn has the potential to benefit two million men and women indirectly.

The SFMP will develop nested governance arrangements and management plans for fishery management units at three ecosystem scales, utilizing adaptive co-management approaches tailored to each unit. Civil society engagement will be crucial in this process. The SFMP will undertake stakeholder engagement in order to build consensus, involving men and women engaged in the fisheries sector at national and local level. The SFMP will also provide communities with diversified livelihoods, including ways to obtain greater profitability from fisheries value chains. Particular emphasis is placed on more efficient and profitable fish smokers that have potential for significant scale-up. This element places a strong focus on women and youth and utilizes local partners whose missions address the needs of these target groups. In the larger coastal fishing communities of the Central Region (CR), where child labor and trafficking is prevalent, the SFMP will target at-risk households with a strong communications initiative and will make these communities the priority beneficiaries of livelihood interventions.

Gender will be mainstreamed throughout all project activities. As key players in the fisheries value chain, women will be targeted for the improved fish smokers. Because women fish processors are large consumers of fuelwood, of which mangrove is preferred, we expect that women will play a critical role in promoting sustainability of this supply. The SFMP will also ensure that the interests of both women and men are represented in co-management. Because many women in Ghana own fishing vessels and finance fishing trips, they have the potential to wield considerable power over fishing decisions and influence changes in behavior that could have a positive impact on the fishery. The end goal will be to make co-management systems more efficient and relevant—articulating the realities is a prerequisite to any change in response to those realities and/or changing the realities themselves. If we can better understand both men and women’s roles—direct or indirect—in fisheries and fisheries-related areas of their lives, we may better identify solutions to food insecurity.

As a basis for the gender mainstreaming activities, the SFMP project conducted a detailed gender analysis focusing on the fisheries sector and value chain. The gender analysis will form the basis for a gender strategy and subsequent implementation of gender mainstreaming activities. This gender analysis report will begin by providing an overview of what a gender analysis is and the methods used. Thereafter it will provide an overview of women’s and men’s roles in the fisheries sector, explaining the barriers and bridges to women’s participation in fisheries management and value chain improvement. The report will explain the associations and groups that are working to strengthen women in fisheries in Ghana as well as the role of gender in fisheries policy documents. It will end with some recommendations for how to strengthen gender representation in fisheries management.

What is a gender analysis

“Fishing and aquaculture are usually pictured as occupations or recreations of men hauling nets and lines in dangerous seas, piloting fishing boats, constructing fish ponds and cages and negotiating with fish traders and fisheries officials. Throughout the world, what these pictures miss are the contributions and roles of women, youths and even children. Studies and closer observation of fisheries and communities are starting to put together descriptions, stories and hard statistics on the contributions of these other segments of our societies. The invisible groups, in fact, may contribute more economically than the traditionally recognized fishers.” (Williams, M.J., et al., 2004).

A gender analysis can help us fully understand the gender dynamics of the fisheries sector, avoiding the pitfall of thinking that fisheries involve only men. A gender analysis is an analytic, social science tool that is used to identify, understand, and explain gaps between males and females that exist in households, communities, and countries, and the relevance of gender norms and power relations in a specific context (USAID ADS 205). They investigate the differences between men and women as well as why the differences exist. It is also important to ask “so what”—why are the gender differences relevant to the project’s goals and objectives. Gender analyses outline options for how to strengthen a gender perspective and identify to what extent project interventions challenge or reinforce barriers to gender equality (UNDP 2006). Gender analyses commonly ask the following questions:

1. What are the gender roles, including inequities that might be hidden below the surface?
2. What are the complex reasons behind the gender disparities?
3. What are the effects of gender disparities (UNDP 2006)?

Goal of the Ghana fisheries gender analysis

The gender analysis presented in this report aims to understand the gender roles in the fisheries value chain and fisheries management in the Western and Central Regions of Ghana, with the end goal of informing the development of a gender strategy and a manual for gender mainstreaming. Following Diamond (2006) we strived to investigate the following aspects of gender dynamics:

- **Gender division of labor and income:** How do the roles and livelihoods opportunities of men and women differ? For example, in many places men fish offshore while women tend to engage in inter-tidal gleaning, marketing, and processing fish.
- **Gendered access to decision-making (representation and advocacy):** Do women and men participate in fisheries management decision making and are their interests adequately represented? It is sometimes assumed that women’s interests are the same as men’s or that women do not have a stake in fisheries management since they do not go out on fishing vessels.
- **Gendered access to markets, market information, and trade:** Who is able to access markets, and who dominates the trade sector? Women may dominate the fish marketing sector, but a deeper analysis might find that literacy and mobility issues hamper women’s access to domestic and international market information.

METHODS

The assessment is based on rapid and cost effective methods that match the scope of the gender analysis activities. The gender analysis is based on primary and secondary data. The team conducted a literature review of gender and fisheries in Ghana. The involvement of women in the fisheries value chain in the Central and Western Regions of Ghana is relatively well researched (see list of references) with a number of research studies conducted in the 1990s and mid-2000s. Primary data was collected through focus group discussions with women fish processors and traders as well as fishermen in Elmina, Apam, and Winneba (Central Region) and Axim (Western Region). Appendix 1 provides a list of sites and groups visited, and Appendix 2 includes the focus group questionnaire. The assessment team also visited fish landing sites and fish processing areas, where we observed the behaviors and roles of men, women, and children. Key informant interviews were conducted with the leader of CEWEFIA, a former canoe owner, the chief fisherman from Axim, the National Best Fisherman and the chief fisherman of Apam, the *konkohen* (head of the fish sellers and processing group) at Winneba, and staff of Friends of the Nation, which is working on the Child Labor and Trafficking (CLaT) component of the SFMP.



Women participate in a focus group in Axim. (Credit: Elin Torell, CRC)

OVERVIEW OF MEN'S AND WOMEN'S ROLES IN THE FISHERIES SECTOR

There is a symbiotic relationship between men and women in the Ghanaian fisheries industry. Figure 1 illustrates the division of labor between men and women. Mainly, men fish and women do the marketing and processing. However, the roles are more complex. While fishing, the men form a crew of captain (locally referred to as “bowzen”) and fishermen. When they are not fishing, they normally mend their fishing nets nearby the fish landing site.

According to key informants, there are a couple of female fishers in the Central Region. These women fish in smaller water bodies, at the edges of lagoons, and in estuaries, where they collect oysters, crabs, and other fish species. Tradition and myths exclude women from going to sea to fish. Otherwise, women are engaged in every single step of the value chain. A number of women own fishing canoes/boats, and women normally finance fishing trips by providing money for fuel.¹ Some women also pay for maintenance and repairs of boats and nets. These are roles that provide women with some influence in the fisheries sector.

A few men are engaged in buying, selling, and processing fish. Men primarily buy fish at the shore and sell them to restaurants and hotels or to the international market. According to the focus group discussion in Axim, approximately 5% of the individuals involved in buying and selling fish are men. In Apam, it was found that three of the fish smokers are men who also sell their fish on the market. Both men and women act as fish carriers. The men carry the fish from the canoe to the shoreline while the women carry it from the shoreline to be processed or sold. Men are mostly involved in lifting and switching heavy fish trays. At the processing sites, women lead fish processing with assistance from family members and hired (female) laborers.

Women and the few male fish marketers and processors start their “careers” as helpers or laborers, working for their mother, aunt, or sometimes someone outside their family. In the case of the male fish processors, their careers started by helping their mothers smoke fish. In the best-case scenario, a woman will grow from a helper to market her own fish. However, the ability to obtain and sell fish is dependent on the ability to invest in the fishing business of a fisherman, getting fish from a husband/son, or accessing credit to buy fish. In some families, the wife invests in her husband’s fishing business to secure her position as the sole buyer/distributing agent of his fish. A woman’s opportunities in the fishing economy are limited if she does not have a husband or does not belong to a matrilineage. Women born into poor families, and who do not have husbands who can support them, are the poorest in the fishing communities, and they may be stuck as laborers for their entire working life. Women who can save a small capital or access credit can buy their own processing equipment and/or finance fishing trips. Over time, they can start to build up more capital and grow the number of fishermen for whom they are financing trips. A small number of women are able to cross the gender-defined division between fishing and marketing by investing in fishing equipment and boats run by male family members or an outside captain and crew. Women can also inherit canoes and other equipment from their aunts or mothers.

¹ Traditionally, women provide money for fuel because they are the ones who turn fish into its monetary value (Britwum 2009).


Step	Location	Role in the system	Sex
	Fishing Community	Canoe owner (deciding when and how to fish)	Mostly men
		Fishing financier (pays for fuel and maintenance)	Mostly women
	Canoe	Fishing and maintaining equipment	Men
		Carriers	Mostly men
	Beach	Fish buyers	Men and women
		Carriers	Mostly women
	Fish processing compound	Fish processing (business owner and helpers)	Mostly women
	Transportation to market	Drivers and mates	Men
	Marketing town	Middlemen	Men and women
	The fish market	Wholesaler	Men and women
Retailer (distribution)		Men and women	
Marketing Destination	Consumers	Men and women	

Figure 1: Activities and roles in the chain of production, processing and distribution of fish

Fishermen also differ in economic status, and there are two general categories of fishermen—capitalist fishermen who own boats and equipment, and working fishermen who are laborers on the canoes. Capitalist fishermen who go fishing earn income from their labor of catching fish as well as the owner’s share. As with female processors, working fishermen can rise to become capitalist fishermen if they can save enough capital. In some instances a husband and wife may collaborate to save and buy a boat or equipment. There are both young and old canoe owners and, according to both men and women, age does not matter when it comes to how powerful you are. It is more about the connections and assets that you have.

The fishing ports in the larger coastal community

Fishing drives the economy of the coastal communities in the Central and Western Regions. At the fish landing sites, fisheries are the most important livelihood, along with petty trade. Travel to the fishing ports allowed researchers to see that each fishing community is adjacent to an agricultural community. According to key informants, each community depends to some degree on the other, as the farmers bring their agricultural produce to the fishing ports to sell or barter for fish. The two communities usually have different ethnic compositions, with those involved in fishing, marketing, or processing of Fante and Ewe ethnicity, and those who reside and work inland from the beach of different ethnicities, most commonly Nzema (Snyder 2010). Men and women living and working at the fishing ports have limited access to land tenure and productive resources away from the beach. This means that diversifying livelihoods into agriculture or other areas that require access to land may be difficult.

Who governs the fish landing sites?

The most influential woman at a fish landing site is the *konkohen*—the queen fishmonger. She may not necessarily have to be the wife of the chief fisherman, but should be old enough in the trade to understand the nitty-gritty of affairs relative to women in the industry. The *konkohen* is different from the Queen Mother, who is the co-ruler in the traditional political system. The Queen Mother has joint responsibility with the Chief to run community affairs, focusing mostly on areas such as housing, healthcare, transportation, and employment (Mensah *et al.* 2014). However, among the fish processors and traders, a particularly successful and powerful *konkohen* can sometimes undermine the authority of the Queen Mother (Snyder 2010).

The *konkohen* is the one who sets the price of the fish. Depending on supply and demand, the fish price may change from day to day, especially at landing sites that are closer to urban centers, such as Accra and Cape Coast. This traditional power has been challenged in recent times (though it is still widely recognized and respected). With politics entering fisheries, legitimate structures are sometimes pushed aside and their function seems to be fading out. Some fishermen disapprove of the *konkohen*, because she does not provide financial assistance to pay for broken gear. Also, some young men (often referred to as service boys) have taken it upon themselves to meet approaching canoes to buy fish from the fishermen even before they get to shore. With virtually no fish to bargain for and having to buy from “secondary” fishermen, the *konkohen* becomes powerless to set the price of fish.

The *konkohen*, like the Queen Mother, also plays the role of an arbitrator for the women fish processors. According to the *konkohen* at Winneba, this role is even more relevant today than setting the price of fish, as some women buy fish at higher prices, especially in the lean season. In some communities, the position of the *konkohen* is inherited, and the skill is learnt from a mother, aunty, or elder sister. In other communities it is an honorary title bestowed by either the chief fisherman alone or the chief fisherman and the village chief and presented to the women for approval (GIFT 2012).

The chief fisherman is the head of all fishing activities, managing the beach and landing sites. He is an influential opinion leader and holds a lot of power in the fishing community. The chief fisherman collaborates with the local chiefs and sometimes engages in broader community affairs. At Apam for instance, the chief fisherman has led the construction of a meeting center and office for the community. The chief fishermen participate in boat owners associations and

oversee the implementation of nationally mandated fisheries rules, including the ban on fishing with dynamite and poison. The chief fisherman (and his elders) is delegated to see to it that local norms are followed. Traditionally, one cannot fish on just any day. Fishing is part of the cultural life of the community. Local traditional culture is rooted deeply in deity worship and spiritual beliefs. Tuesdays traditionally are observed as non-fishing days in the Central and Western Regions.

The Fisheries Commission as the oversight body for regulating fisheries activities is the state agency with the legal authority in charge of policy and enforcement processes.

Families as a working unit

Families often work together in the fishing industry. As long as the wife is a fish monger, fishermen tend to give or sell their catch to their wives. However, if a non-relative contract partner financed the fishing trip, they might be obligated to sell the fish to that person instead.² A man has some flexibility to refuse their wives' access to fish, and women cannot expect to receive fish for free. To guarantee a share of the catch, women have to pay the going rate for fresh fish or provide fuel for the fishing trip. This strengthens men's position in the economic relationship with their wives (Britwum 2009). The system can be complex, because fishermen often have multiple wives, and there are circumstances where, for example, the first wife stays at home watching the children, and the second (and/or third) wife works as fish mongers and processors. In this situation, the first wife will not get any direct income from fishing and the younger wives will be better off financially.

One reason why fishermen give their catches to their wives (or mother, if they are not married) is that fishermen do not give "chop money" (housekeeping money) to their wives. They believe that women should use the profit from fish sales as housekeeping money. In general, husbands and wives have split economies, and few fishermen pay for household needs and school fees. However, husbands and wives often act as sources of credit for each other. The mutual credit relationship makes marriage important for the ability of both men and women to make a living out of fishing (Overa 1993). Biological children take part in the business as a way to train them to take over from the adults in the future.

Children's involvement in the fisheries sector

Child labor and trafficking

Children's participation in work that does not affect their health and personal development or interfere with their schooling is generally regarded as being something positive in Ghana. This may include activities such as assisting their parents in the house, helping in a family business or earning some pocket money outside school hours and during school holidays. In principal, these kinds of activities contribute to children's development and to the welfare of their families; they provide them with skills and experience, and they help to prepare them to be productive members of society during their adult life.

² When a canoe reaches the shore, the catch is divided into *birefi* (shares of fish). The boat owner gets half of the catch, although this may split up further if different individuals own the boat, motor, and nets. The crew gets the other half split into equal shares.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) defines “Child Labor” as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development, and child trafficking as taking children out of their protective environment and preying on their vulnerability for the purpose of exploitation. The ILO estimates that agriculture (including farming, fishing, aquaculture, forestry, and livestock) is the largest employer of child labor in Africa, and Ghana is no exception.

Ghana’s fishing industry comprises coastal fishing, which occurs in the Gulf of Guinea along the coast spanning the Central, Western, Volta, and Greater Accra regions of Ghana; and inland fishing, which takes place along the Volta river covering parts of the Brong, Ahafo, Northern, and Volta regions of the country. According to the Ghana Child Labor Survey Report (2003), over 49,000 children are involved in fishing in Ghana: 87% boys 13% girls. Many trafficked children end up in the fishing industry.



Boys work informally on fishing boats diving, bailing water, carrying gear, etc. (Credit: Carol McCarthy, CRC)

From a scoping exercise conducted by Friends of the Nation on Child labor and Trafficking in the Central Region, endemic poverty in the region was identified as a strong cause of the prevalence of the problem in the region. Broken homes with single female headed households were found to be the most vulnerable families. These children are sold to their masters at rates as low as GHC 50.00, with the mothers of these children hoping to receive more remuneration annually, which never happens. The field officers of the scoping exercise spoke to one woman whose child had been taken by a master to Yeji for four years and had not been heard from since. They also saw one victim of child trafficking who had been rescued.

Coastal fishing communities in the Central Region, such as Senya-Breku, Winneba, Apam, Moree, and Elmina are the epicenters of child labor and trafficking. Both boys and girls are involved in the fishing industry. The children take part in several activities, such as diving, bailing water from canoes, carrying outboard motors and anchors, mending nets, and post-harvest marketing of fish. In Elmina, the scoping exercise indicated that children of both genders are sexually exploited and/or assaulted. Many of these children suffer harm from a number of fishing related hazards that often go unreported. These include drowning, battery by adults, bodily injury, emotional trauma, deafness, and rape. Some children are also used for ritual purposes.

Non-trafficked, local children also work in the fishing industry. Girls help their mothers and aunts with simple tasks related to processing and sales, including cleaning, scaling fish, and arranging fish on platforms for processing. Although the Ghana Children's Act prohibits children under age 18 to go to sea,³ boys as young as 12-13 sometimes become crew members on fishing boats. At Apam, the chief fisherman admitted that boys over 12 years assist in fishing, misinterpreting this as legal. It becomes worrisome when an influential leader is misinformed. Even younger boys help clean the boats at the end of the day. They also come out on fishing trips, where they help bail water. By helping their parents and relatives, the children in essence become apprentices, learning the trade as they grow up. Smaller children are not paid for their labor, but they do receive some compensation when they become teenagers and take on more responsibility. It is important to note that girls who drop out of school to work in the fish marketing and processing sector are more vulnerable to early marriage and teenage pregnancy.

None of the focus group respondents or key informants acknowledged that children were trafficked out of their communities for child labor. In Winneba, the focus group respondents mentioned some families giving out their children in exchange for meagre sums. They stated that children are trafficked to other fishing communities, such as Yeji. The boys fish while the girls serve as maids helping with household chores and fish smoking. Respondents differed in their opinions about children's roles and responsibilities. Some respondents maintained that local children attend school and help out with various tasks after school and during school vacations. Other respondents stated that children as young as six to eight years old work in the fisheries sector. It appears that children from migrant families are more likely than local children to help out full time in the fishing industry. During our walk around the Elmina and Axim villages, it was obvious that many children were helping out or working in the villages. We observed children selling water and food items, carrying firewood and fresh fish, babysitting, etc.

Matrilineal inheritance in fishing communities

Most of the communities in the Western and Central Regions are matrilineal in lineage, although we found that in Elmina, people from the Ewes clan are patrilineal. This means that when a fisherman dies his fishing equipment and other assets are transferred to his children. Likewise, the chief fisherman and *konkohen* positions are inherited by children or siblings with good arbitration skills. Children are groomed to occupy the positions in future. However, focus group interviewees mentioned that in cases in which a relative or a nephew was living with the

³ According to the Ghana Children's Act the minimum age for light work is 13 years. The minimum age for child labor is 15 years. However, fishing (going to sea) is considered hazardous employment, for which the minimum age is 18.

fisherman and was supportive, some of the inheritance might be transferred to him. Elmina also has people from the Fante or Akan clan, which is matrilineal. When a fisherman in a matrilineal system dies, his assets are transferred to his nephews and nieces. Being matrilineal does not mean that women automatically have power over men. Positions of authority, including the role of chief fisherman,⁴ are mainly available to men even though they are accessed through the female line. The traditional inheritance system in matrilineal clans denies wives and children access to men's property, unless given as a gift. A law passed in 1986 provides protection for surviving wives and children, but it is not clear to what extent the law is followed.

Migration and its impacts on gender roles

Fishermen in Ghana move along the coast to where fish is most abundant at any given time of the year. Some fishermen come with their own canoe and might hire a local crew, whereas others migrate to work as crew on local fishing vessels. Migration is seasonal and fishermen tend to spend at least part of the year at their home base. Migrants are generally well accepted in the local fishing village as long as they pay their respects to the chief fisherman, including paying a fishing fee or providing the chief with a “beach drink.” If the family does not accompany a fisherman, he has to rely on a local woman to be his business manager. The manager or “fish mother” helps the fisherman with everything from finding accommodation and introducing him to the chief fisherman to advancing money for fuel or gear repairs. The fisherman in turn sells his catch to the local fish mother.

Some fishermen migrate together with their families. In those cases, the wife acts as his business associate or partner—being the person who receives the catch for processing and sales when he reaches the shore. However, the wives also depend on the local fish mother, because as foreigners, they need local support. The wives of the migrants often provide assistance to the processors in the community until they become well established.



Migrant women and their children tend to work and sleep at the fish processing sites. (Credit: Elin Torell. CRC)

⁴ The position of chief fisherman is an elected position in some communities and a hereditary position in others.

Sometimes fishermen are caught between the loyalty to their wives' business interests and the access to local credit and support provided by the local hostess (Odotei 1992). If the fisherman borrows money from the fish mother, he might not be able to hand over any of the catch to his wife. In those cases, the wives might be able to get a small income by carrying fish from the canoes to the point of sale on the beach

Migrating fishermen who do not have family and friends to stay with, reside with the rest of the boat crew in housing built for the migrants or in temporary shelters on the beach. Accompanying wives and children stay together with other women processors and fish marketers in temporary shelters set up by the processing site. Women living alone in temporary shelters are vulnerable to abuse and prostitution. Women traveling alone lose the support system and help provided by their kinsmen at home. As a result, many of them bring their daughters and other female relatives with them. No female migrant is too young to help out and from the age of eight, girls engage in fish processing, hawking, and taking care of younger siblings.

Men's and women's control over fisheries inputs and income

In focus group and key informant interviews, respondents maintained that men control fisheries inputs (boats, engines, nets) and decisions about when, where, and how to fish. Women, on the other hand, control and make decisions regarding post-harvest activities (where to sell, how to market, how to process, etc.). However, the gender roles are not that straight forward, and there are instances where women have some influence over the traditionally male sphere of fisheries management.

One way that women can exert control is through boat ownership. Boat owners have significant influence in the fisheries sector, as they can dictate when and where a boat fishes. The boat owner will also decide who should captain and crew the vessel. Women comprise a minority of boat owners. These women have the potential to have significant influence, at least when it comes to the operation of their own vessels. The boat owners are organized in associations, and key informants stated that both men and women hold important positions in these associations.

Women who inherit or are able to buy canoes often let their husbands or male relatives operate the boats. When that happens, the male boat operator is likely the person who makes the majority of decisions regarding where to fish and what gear to use. However, key informants mentioned that sometimes women choose to hire outsiders to run the boats. The reason is that it is more difficult to control male family members. Outside hires are more likely to follow the boat owner's orders.

Both male and female focus group respondents stated that women control all the income from fisheries, because they are in charge of covering all domestic needs, including putting food on the table and caring for children's needs. However, according to Britwum (2009) selling fish does not give women control over the income. Rather, the amount a woman gets is dependent on her husband's discretion. It is clear that husbands and wives are economically dependent on each other, and a large portion of the return from fish sales is turned back into fisheries inputs such as fuel and fishing equipment.

Women's influence in fisheries management

Since women are dependent on the fisheries for their livelihoods and for their families' upkeep, any fisheries management effort that has an impact on the economic environment of the fisheries

sector will directly affect women. Hence, there is an incentive for women to be active agents of change in the fisheries sector. Because of their economic influence, fish traders have greater economic and political power than women in general do in Ghana (Overa 1998).

There was great debate during focus group discussions regarding the influence that women have in fisheries management. Through boat ownership and funding fishing trips, some maintained that women are able to dictate the fisheries methods used by the fishermen who are indebted to or employed by them. Our literature review also found multiple examples in which women have been influential in past fisheries management. For example in Cape Coast, women fish traders are said to have boycotted fish caught with small mesh nets and dynamite. Fish traders have also been known to refuse buying fish on Tuesday, which is a resting day. There are other examples in which women processors promoted increasing fishing effort. In Cape Coast, women supported migrant fishermen, who local fishermen ran out of town with the rationale that they were putting too much pressure on local resources. Fish traders have also promoted using unsustainable gears, taking the stance that “the best fishing net is the net which catches the most fish” (Walker 2002).

Some male focus group respondents questioned women’s power to demand that men do not dynamite fish. They maintained that if they bring “bad fish from the sea,” some women are always willing to buy their catch. Others stated that women have influence because they can team up and decide not to buy certain fish or warn them against illegal practices. Female focus group respondents said that women are very influential when it comes to decision-making in fisheries. They said that they are more vocal and get involved in many activities, both in the household and in the community, whereas men are more interested in playing cards and relaxing when they are back from fishing.

How are men and women organized in the fishing sector?

Boat and canoe owners are organized into associations including: boat owners associations, canoe owners associations, inshore fishing association, Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council (GNCFC) and the Ghana National Fishermen Association (GNFA). These associations are open to female and male boat owners with no restriction on women holding positions of authority. The associations were formed as a vehicle to receive government support and increase the welfare of the group members. The membership helps to increase the negotiating power when purchasing equipment, because the group can demand a better price than when an individual bargains on his or her own. Key informants maintained that the boat owners association has the power (at least informally) to exclude individuals from fishing, if they, for example, break local fishing rules. Focus group members stated that the associations are strong and well structured, but that the leadership could be strengthened in some cases.

Female processors and marketers are organized into associations and groups depending on their role in the fishing industry. Typically, each village has a fish marketing association, led by the chief fish trader (*konkohen*). There are also regional groups, such as the Central and Western Fishmongers Improvement Association (CEWEFIA) and the Development Action Association (DAA).

The recently created Ghana National Women Fish processors and Traders Association has generated momentum to strengthen community level organizations. The national association’s goal is to improve the voice of women fishmongers and processors. The hope is to allow women to contribute to the management of the fisheries sector. The local fishmongers and processors

associations focus more on social needs. They enable women to access microloans and help during times of bereavement and other social welfare issues. The associations can also mediate when there is a conflict between fish traders or between traders and fishermen. Similar to the boat owners associations, focus group respondents also mentioned that the associations help strengthen the women's negotiating power when they purchase goods and equipment for fish processing. Through the focus groups, we also learned that the associations are not strong, and that the members need to become more committed.

The organization of men and women in the fisheries sector is not new. The Cape Coast Fish Traders Association for example, was established before 1900 (Walker 2002). There are records of organized groups of fish traders involved in disputes over marine resources reaching as far back as 1907. It is suggested that fish traders worked in groups to achieve economic goals and that they played an important role in introducing new technologies, such as modern nets and motorized canoes.

Gender in national fisheries management

According to the Fisheries Commission, gender is a crosscutting theme in Ghanaian fisheries management. Gender equity is one of the national development priorities and general principles that guide the National Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy. However, the policy makes no mention of actions targeted at ensuring gender equity. One of the four policy areas is on value addition and promotion. The policy looks at fish preservation and processing but does not examine the roles or needs of women; neither does it take into consideration the effect of the policy actions on women. The Fisheries Act, 2002, and the 2014 amendments to the Act do not include gender equity. The Fisheries Act focuses solely on capture fisheries.

There is a trend to increase the gender sensitivity at the national government level. The Minister of Fisheries is a woman and her spearheading the formation of the Ghana National Fish Processors and Traders Association (NAFPTA) is an indication that there are efforts to increase women's voice in the fisheries management process. Nevertheless, the current fisheries policy and the fisheries and aquaculture sector development plan 2011-2016 focus primarily on capture fisheries and traditionally male roles. Even the policy target to promote value addition in the fisheries sector and improve livelihoods in fishing communities focuses more on diversifying the species caught by fishermen than creating value chain improvements for women involved in processing and marketing fish.

To address some of these challenges, the NAFPTA, with the help of the Fisheries Commission, has put together an action plan. Women are calling for a policy dialogue on the review of the policy to be gender responsive. The Association is pushing for inclusion of at least one woman on each of the Landing Beach Committees. These are the committees responsible for managing pre-mix fuel sales and distribution. With this in place, they would likely be successful in their lobby for a percentage of profit accruing from the sale of pre-mix fuel.



The fact that Ghana's Minister of Fisheries is a woman, the Hon. Sherry Avyithey, far left, may increase the visibility of gender in the national fisheries dialogue.
(Credit: SFMP staff)

Barriers and bridges to equitable gender representation in fisheries management

As described above, men and women have clearly defined roles in the Ghanaian fisheries sector, with men engaging in capture fisheries and women working in marketing and sales. Women's participation in capture fisheries is prohibited by cultural rules. However, there are no complete barriers, and female canoe owners in particular have the possibility of influencing fisheries management directly by dictating rules for their own vessels and indirectly through participating in the canoe and boat owners' associations. The Canoe Owners Association could be one entry point for engaging both men and women in the fisheries management process. Another obvious entry point is the Ghana National Women Fish Processors and Traders Association and local fish traders and marketing associations. Having them at the table could improve women's status and participation in the fishing industry, because they can gather information and promote the needs and interests of fish processors and traders.

The most marginalized groups are the men and women who do not own fisheries-related assets, such as boats, engines, nets, or even processing equipment. The laborers in the fishing industry seem to be poorly organized and lacking a voice in fisheries management. Contributing to their marginalization is that many are temporary or long-term migrants without access to secure land tenure. Many men and women also lack access to savings and micro credit. This reduces their opportunities to move into other livelihoods during lean fishing periods—and might indirectly contribute to the use of unsustainable fishing methods.

The national government's fisheries management and policy focuses on capture fisheries and hence, male interests. However, as stated above, there seems to be a growing recognition that fisheries management must involve the whole value chain and include the interests of both men and women. We learned from the Fisheries Commission that the Ghana Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection is in the process of developing a national gender policy, and the commission has contributed materials from the fisheries sector. The Fisheries Commission also participates in the National Gender Forum. However, to fully mainstream gender, the Fisheries Commission also needs to better integrate gender into its own mission and activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommendations for increasing the productivity and empowerment of women who are engaged in fisheries.

Recommended training and value chain improvements:

1. Provide traders and processors basic training in business management and bookkeeping. This can help maximize profit and secure access to savings and credit. Improving business management skills could also increase women's monetary contribution to the family and community.
2. Strengthen the national, regional, and local women fish traders associations to secure more market services and engage in the broader fisheries dialogue.
3. Provide training in post-catch handling, drying, and selling, including
 - a. Training on the importance of quality control standards and grading, personal hygiene and hygienic handling of fresh and processed fish, and the necessity of working in processing "groups" for economies of scale
 - b. Modern technologies for more efficient drying or smoking.
4. Provide access to ice and cold storage facilities to reduce post-harvest loss and allow for the storage of fish to be processed during the lean season.
5. Improve women's access to credit, savings, and financial services to purchase equipment and expand marketing and processing micro-enterprises. This may reduce women's economic vulnerability and improve their social status.
6. Work with women to market their fish to upscale shopping malls and to the international export market. To reach these markets, women need products that are of consistent and good quality. A brand name and/or product standard certification would also help.

Enhancing women's engagement in fisheries management

1. Develop short and medium-term action plans for improving women's working conditions, diversification possibilities, life conditions, and engagement in fisheries management.
2. Address the root causes to women's lack of engagement in fisheries management. Women's engagement in fisheries conservation activities would be improved if livelihood, literacy, leadership, and representation issues were addressed.
3. Work with men to benefit women. Provide gender training to men involved in fisheries management to help them understand the importance of including the voices of both men and women in the management process.
4. Lobby for the interests of men and women in the national fisheries dialogue. Develop a gender equity policy and/or strategy for the fisheries sector. It is not enough to

mainstream fisheries into the gender ministry—gender also needs to be mainstreamed into the fisheries ministry.

5. Engage fish trader and processor associations in fisheries management—consider them allies that can help enforce fisheries rules (e.g. bans on dynamite and poison fishing). If the processors and traders unite against buying illegally caught fish, they can have significant influence.
6. Improve the collection of gendered information—including statistics. Track how women, men, and children work and interact in the fisheries sector. Collect data to assess impacts and outcomes in addition to outputs.
7. Engage those without a voice in the fisheries sector—help organize the laborers (fishermen, carriers, and processors) without assets to have a say in fisheries management.
8. Use existing fisheries extension networks to reach women. Provide gender training to extension officers and discuss the value of engaging both women and men in the fisheries management process.
9. Expand representation of women on fisheries related committees. Work with women boat owners to ensure that they participate and have a voice on boat owners committees.

A final recommendation is that both men and women, including influential leaders, should be made aware of the burden placed on boys and girls who end up working in or helping out on the fringes of the fisheries sector. Single mothers, who are most likely to traffic their children, could be targeted for livelihoods interventions to improve their incomes and reduce the risk that they send their children away.

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ANNEX 1: COMMUNITIES VISITED

Regions/communities visited	Focus groups	Key informants interviewed
Central region: Elmina, Apam, and Winneba	Fish processors, Fish traders and Fishermen	Leader of CEWEFIA, Chief Fisherman of Axim, the National Best Fisherman and the Chief fisherman of Apam
Western Region: Apam	Fish processors, Fish Traders	Konkohen (head of the fish sellers and processing group) at Winneba, Staff of Friends of the Nation working on Child labour and Trafficking, Fisheries Commission Gender Person.

APPENDIX 2: FOCUS GROUP AND KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

How are women and men engaged in the fisheries sector? (<i>Who does what and why</i>)	
How do families work together in fisheries? (<i>How do people work together?</i>)	
Is this village matrilineal or patrilineal? (<i>How does ownership transfer from one generation to the next?</i>)	
How do migrants connect to the fishing industry when they fish in a new place? (<i>Do families migrate as a unit?</i>)	
How do women's and men's power and influence depend on age, socio-economic level, etc. (<i>Who are strong and who are weak</i>)	
Who makes decisions in the fisheries sector? (<i>When to fish, how to sell and process fish, and how to manage fisheries</i>)	
Who controls fisheries inputs (boats, nets) and processing equipment (smokers, drying racks)	
Who control the income from fisheries?	
Are there any social norms, customs, and barriers for women in the fisheries sector and fisheries management?	
How are men and women organized in the fishing sector? <i>List associations</i>	

<p>What are the goals of associations and other women's and men's groups that exist within the fishing sector?</p> <p><i>How strong are the groups?</i></p> <p><i>What can we do to strengthen the groups?</i></p>	
<p>Do children help out in the fisheries industry? If so, do you pay them?</p>	

Policy and gender integration questions

<p>How is gender integrated into the fisheries policy and strategy</p>	
<p>How can we integrate gender into the project implementation?</p>	
<p>How can women become more involved in fisheries management?</p>	