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SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROJECT (SFMP) MAIDEN MEETING OF WESTERN REGION FISHERIES WORKING GROUP (W/R-FWG)



MAY 2015



Hen Mpoano



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Cover photo: Participants engaged in discussions at the maiden meeting (Credit: Theophilus Boachie-Yiadom)

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ACRONYMS

CLaT	Child Labour and Trafficking
FC	Fisheries Commission
FoN	Friends of the Nation
FWG	Fisheries Working Group
GMA	Ghana Maritime Authority
HM	Hen Mpoano
ICFG	Integrated Fisheries and Coastal Management Project
SFMP	Sustainable Fisheries Management Project
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WR	Western Region

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INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday May 12, 2015, the members of the Western Regional Fisheries Working Group met at the Conference Room of the Fisheries Commission, Takoradi. This meeting sought to ensure a continued support for the Western Region Fisheries Working Group (W/R FWG).

The W/R FWG was formed during the previous USAID supported 'Integrated Coastal Fisheries Governance (ICFG) Initiative' to serve an advisory role to the region's Fisheries Directorate.

Having chalked some successes with its mandate during the ICFG era, the Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) deemed it fit to continue supporting the group.

METHODOLOGY

The meeting used a mixture of methods including power-point presentations, experience sharing, interactive discussions, as well as question and answer segments. Both English and the local dialect (Fante) were used throughout the meeting to ensure active participation of all participants.

DETAILED SESSION

The three-hour meeting started at 10:00 am and ended at 1:00 pm. The meeting started with an opening prayer by Mr. J.K. Ansah. A round of self-introduction followed, for new participants to familiarize with the members of the FWG. Afterwards, participants were informed of purpose for the meeting.

Purpose of meeting by Donkris Mevuta

Mr. Mevuta, began his remarks by appreciating participants for making time to attend the meeting. He gave a brief overview to the formation of the FWG. He informed that the group was inaugurated in January 2011 by Hon. Mike Acheampong, the then Chairman of the Fisheries Commission (FC). The FWG was mandated to provide an advisory role to the Regional Directorate of the Fisheries Commission by advising the Director on pertinent issues.

He recalled how members of the FWG, led by the Chairman, Mr. Danny Kirk-Mensah, participated in several dialogue meetings, where they made relevant contributions. Mr. Mevuta again noted that there were, however, challenges about the sustainability of the group in case of exit of the ICFG initiative. To mitigate this challenge, he recalled how the Fisheries Commission, Friends of the Nation (FoN) and Hen Mpoano (HM) assisted the group to have three more successive meetings even after the exit of the ICFG initiative. By this, he added that, the FWG concept has been sustained over the years, and currently poised to continue the dialogue on the new SFMP.

Mr. Mevuta informed participants that as it stands in the current FWG, some member organisations have their representation reduced whereas that of others has increased. He added that the SFMP contributes to Government of Ghana's fisheries actions by contributing to rebuilding stocks of certain fish species and therefore a FWG in Central Region (C/R) will be established. To this effect, he noted that some members of the W/R FWG will assist the formation of the C/R FWG.



Figure 1 Mr. Donkris Mevuta explaining purpose of the meeting to participants

Introduction to SFMP by Mr. Kofi Agbogah

Mr. Abgogah, having introduced his organisation and explained how it became part of the SFMP, noted that there are nine implementing partners on board the SFMP with the Coastal Resources Centre of the University of Rhode Island (CRC-URI) being the key implementing partner. He noted that the project is being funded by the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). He explained the main objective of the SFMP as 'to rebuild Ghana's marine fisheries stocks and catches through the adoption of responsible fishing practices. He hinted that the past ICFG initiative was a learning process which success led to the inception of the SFMP. The main purpose of the SFMP is to reverse the trend of decline in Ghana's fisheries, he added.

Mr. Agbogah further described the geographic focus of the project and explained that some interventions will be at the National level, while others will be at the regional and community levels. He elaborated that for the management of small pelagic stocks, the focus will be a national scale. For demersals, the focus will be on W/R, while community based plans will then be on the Pra and Ankobra estuaries.



Figure 2 Mr. Kofi Agbogah introducing the SFMP to participants

State of Ghana's Fisheries by Mr. Alex Sabah

Mr. Alex Sabah, the Western Regional director of the Fisheries Commission indicated that Ghana's fisheries is in a critical condition, therefore needs collaborative approach in managing the resource and reversing the dwindling trend. He noted that the FWG has been very helpful to the Fisheries Commission since the last 4 years. He added that the members have been very active and have drawn attention of the FC to a lot of illegalities, and have advised the Commission on several occasions which yielded better results. This, he indicated, is a very good collaboration between resource users and state regulators. He however pointed out that there is the challenge of finding some of the members of the group being involved in illegalities and therefore may have to be advised to desist from the acts or be expelled from the group.

Comments from participants

Nii Botchway (Ghana Inshore Fishers Association)

We as fishermen need some scientific information which will inform us as to when and when not to fish the *Sardinella species*. We are always of the view that if we decide not to fish them, the fish will end up being fished somewhere anyway.

Nana Kwesi Bin (Traditional Authority - Axim)

I think this SFMP is a very good project and I believe through a gradual process, as has been noted by the resource persons, we can help bring back the *Sardinella*, so I crave the indulgence of everyone here to support this project for posterity.

Thomas Suapim (Chairman - W/R Fish Processors & Traders Association - Shama)

Most of the fish processors suffer a lot of aftermath effects on their hands anytime they smoke fish caught with dynamite. In addition, although fish caught with chemicals may look

very fresh when smoked anew, they tend to lose their beauty and good taste after a few hours. We learnt the Fisheries Commission has Fish Testing Devices, yet they do not utilise this at our beaches. I want to use this opportunity to encourage the project to consider some of these interventions.

Emelia Abaka-Edu (National Vice President - Ghana Fish Processors & Traders Association)

I was privileged to partake in the study tour organized by the ICFG Initiative to Tanzania. Over there, it was all the fishermen who agreed to stop dynamite fishing; and they received a lot of training such that even a child could identify fish caught by dynamite and report to the appropriate authorities without nepotism. This is possible here in Ghana; and this project may consider building capacity of the local populace to identify fish caught with chemicals.

Lance Corporal Agyemang Opambour (Marine Unit of the Ghana Police Service)

From previous interactions on the ICFG project, I learnt that fishermen use various strategies to make fish caught with chemicals look fresh. For instance, some fishermen dissolve "cow dung" and use it to wash the fish, freeze it with ice before they land. With this strategy, the fish does not break easily as it would have, when fished with chemicals. The chemical testing device is therefore a good initiative to implement.



Figure 3 Thomas Suapim



Figure 4 Mrs. Emelia Abaka-Edu



Figure 5 Nana Kwesi Bin



Figure 6 L/Cpl Agyemang Opambour

Strengthening enabling conditions for marine governance by Kwadwo Kyei Yamoah

Mr. Yamoah informed that as part of the SFMP activities, FoN will be engaging a lot of grassroots stakeholders to ensure they are part of every process relevant to the project. He specified some activities to include, but not limited to:

- Legislative reforms for co-management
- Stakeholder caucuses and hearings at some selected major landing sites (Tema, Elmina, Axim and Sekondi)
- Strengthening law enforcement

He talked briefly about the milestones and expected output of all the activities. He added that the FWG should be in a good position to make inputs into the outcomes of the participatory consultations and regional discussions. The group was advised that there should be some representatives, who would present consensus reached by the group on pertinent issues at national fisheries dialogue platforms that will be organized in the course of the year. Again, he informed participants about the projects interest in reducing Child Labour and Trafficking (CLaT) in fisheries.



Figure 7 Mr. Yamoah presenting on enabling conditions for marine governance



Figure 8 Ms. Pat Klinogo making her submissions

After this presentation, questions and comments were allowed, upon which deliberations were done to clarify all notions. This aided Mr. Yamoah in soliciting proposals to inform the new membership of the FWG.

PROPOSED MEMBERSHIP AND PROPOSALS

On membership, the group noted that the inclusion of the GMA will go a long way to support the work of the FWG. They added that the membership is okay as it stands now.

CONCLUSION

Before the meeting ended, Mr. Nii Botchway made a submission for the Fisheries Commission to modernize the inshore fisheries register since most of their vessels are not as big as some artisanal canoes. The participants were also informed of illegal construction of new vessels at Ngyeresia beach which needs to be discouraged. The FWG also showed strong interest in collaborating to deal with CLaT. The meeting ended with a closing prayer said by Lance Corporal Agyemang Opambour of the Marine Unit of the Ghana Police Service.