



Success Story

Marine Police Training/Ghana



CRC photos

Marine Police officers and Ghana navy personnel talk with a fishing community along the waterfront in Ghana's Western Region.

Police Gain Abilities, Communities' Trust

Off the coast of Ghana, the waters are troubled, and those troubles have long-since come ashore in this West African nation. The once self-sufficient fisheries sector is in crisis and in danger of collapse due to overfishing in an unregulated or "open-access" environment. The crisis threatens the livelihoods of thousands of fishermen and women and many others in related occupations. The impacts do not end there. Such a collapse compromises the food security and very survival of Ghanaians.

To prevent such dire consequences, Ghana began reforming its fisheries regulations in 2010 to put teeth into a Fisheries Act passed in 2002. At the same time, the nation re-established the Ghana Police Service Marine Unit (GPSMU) to enforce the new regulations and help the Ghana navy police the seas. The re-launch of the inadequately trained police force did not go well, and unhappy fishermen took to the streets to protest.

But things would soon turn around, and the Marine Police Unit (MPU) would become a true success story for Ghana's fisheries and sustainable ecosystems objectives. That shift began when the Hen Mpoano initiative partnered with the Fisheries Commission and the Ghana Police Service to support the training of the new MPU officers, partly based on the ecological mandates of the Fisheries Regulations. Hen Mpoano (Our Coast) is the local name of the United States Agency for International Development-funded Integrated Coastal and Fisheries Governance program. The Coastal Resources Center (CRC) at the University of Rhode Island's Graduate School of Oceanography managed the five-year program, which ended in January 2014.

First and foremost, the officers needed support and training to gain the skills and knowledge to do their jobs effectively and help change the culture and attitudes regarding law enforcement.

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COASTAL RESOURCES CENTER



Left, officers examine lights used to conduct just one of several methods of illegal fishing.

Below, an officer graduates from a Hen Mpoano training program.



By the numbers

- Dozens of Marine Police officers visited 70 communities in Ghana's Western Region as part of their training
- In the first half of 2011, 36 fisheries violations were recorded
- 16 of those went to court, resulting in five convictions
- In 2012-'13, a total of 38 violations were recorded, and 37 were successfully prosecuted

"In the existing culture laws, and regulations were routinely flouted, and corruption, favoritism and a lack of professionalism left communities with little faith in the police or other authorities," said Donald Robadue, coastal manager and Ghana project leader with CRC. Hen Mpoano assisted the newly formed police unit to educate and sensitize local people to the need for enforcement by engaging people in communities, churches, market places and other public gatherings. This helped fishing communities to appreciate the need to commit to compliance with the laws.

In 2011 the first police training took place during a multiple-day workshop with 25 officers gaining new abilities, guidelines for ethical conduct, pride in their mission and confidence. In fall 2012 a second workshop was held to review new fisheries cases, and to identify the roles of various institutions in ensuring successful prosecutions.

To help build an effective marine police force that the communities would respect, Hen Mpoano coordinated marine police visits to 70 communities. Working closely with fisherman,

traditional leaders and all segments of the affected communities was integral to the success of the initiative. To build on the momentum Hen Mpoano Executive Director Kofi Agbognah led an effort to set up a toll-free phone line to allow anyone to report illegal fishing cases. "The calls are reported to one agency and shared with all partners, just one example of the collaboration and cooperation that were hallmarks of the effort," he said.

The number of arrests of fisheries violations shot up dramatically in the Western Region. In the first half of 2011, a total of 36 fisheries violations were recorded. Out of these, 16 had been sent to court, with 5 convictions while 11 cases were on-going as of the end of December 2011. The numbers would improve further after Hen Mpoano successfully advocated for the creation of a regional environmental court system for fisheries offenses. Navy, Marine and Judicial Police, Air Force, Attorney-General's department and judges were trained and by the conclusion of Hen Mpoano, 38 infractions had been recorded, and 37 were successfully prosecuted.