

Our Coast Newsletter

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Coastal Resources Center, University of Rhode Island



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Fisheries Working Group

The Hen Mpoano Initiative has facilitated the formation and piloting of a Fisheries Working Group (FWG), whose role is only advisory, to assist the Fisheries Commission in the management/governance of fisheries in the Western Region. The 11-member group was inaugurated at the GNAT Hall in Takoradi on June 7, 2011 by the Chairman of the Fisheries Commission, Hon. Mike Akyeampong, at a well-attended ceremony. The occasion was used to recognize, introduce, empower and legitimize the group and its activities.

The function was attended by representatives of the fishing groups (artisanal, industrial, semi industrial, fishmongers and service centers), and the regulatory agencies (Navy, Police, Attorney General's Department and EPA).

Activities of the group has so far included:

- The drawing of an action plan for activities for 2011
- Held a press conference to educate the fishermen and the general public on the fisheries laws (Act 652 of 2002 and LI 1968 of 2010)

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Mapping exercise at Famanye

Spatial Planning- Shama District leads the way

Although Anlo Beach, a fishing community in the Shama District on the eastern side of the Pra River estuary, is faced with annual flooding of the river, sea level rise due to the evolving impacts of climate change, and has a rapidly eroding shoreline; several attempts over the years by the District Assembly to facilitate their relocation to an area earmarked for that sole purpose has been met with great resistance by the leadership of the community. However, as the Hen Mpoano facilitated participatory land use mapping in Shama District unfolded, and the field teams engaged a cross section of the community folks in mapping of spatial features and 'visioning' for future land uses; issues critical to land use planning and management were identified and discussed with separate stakeholder groups in the community, such as chiefs and elders, elderly women, and elderly men and youth.

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HIGHLIGHTS

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Biribireba Radio Campaign

Radio and community drama is one of the main mediums the Hen Mpoano Initiative would use to reach its target audiences this year. Relative to this, Media Impact, a New York based international NGO specialized in the application of the Entertainment-Education module, has been brought on board. Since January, they have been working together with the communications team to develop the serial radio drama which would be called *Biribireba*.

A radio magazine show and a comprehensive awareness and engagement campaign has also been developed. Employing Media Impact's well-touted "My Community" approach, the Biribireba radio campaign is aimed at informing constituents, increasing knowledge, and in the long run at changing attitudes and behaviours towards sustainable fisheries and ecosystem management in the western coastal region.

Diversified Livelihood Initiatives and Sea Turtle Conservation

Ghana has at least five species of sea turtles in its waters and nesting on its beaches. This is beneficial to tourism and of course has a great effect on aquatic biodiversity. Unfortunately, many fishermen are unaware of the importance of the magnificent creatures. They often catch them at sea on purpose or by accident and bring them ashore alive to be cut and sold at the local market as a much sought after delicacy. Hen Mpoano is committed to putting an end to this trend. We are currently partnering with hoteliers that run eco-lodgings, local artisans, and Ghana Wildlife Society/Division to come up with a multi sectoral solution that will stop this destruction. One approach would be through an Entertainment-Education radio drama. This would address the educational issue with the aim to change the behaviour of fisherfolks over time. Another approach is to support local artisans in crafting life-like images of sea turtles to sell to tourists at the various eco-lodges and beyond. The aim is to prove to fishermen that there are other profitable ways of interacting with sea turtles. Hen Mpoano has held a series of workshops with the different stakeholder groups where all these pertinent issues were discussed and solutions sought. The next meeting relative to this is scheduled for July.



The freed turtles make their way back home

The story of Biribireba is both humorous and inspiring. It builds upon a long tradition of story telling in which the eight core characters represent ordinary fisherfolks whose lives evolve over the course of the drama. It will consist of twenty-four 12-minute episodes that will run together with a 1-hour magazine show over the course of 6 months starting in September. Stay tuned!



Turtles Released: A success story

On the 12th of May 2011, a driver named Issah on his normal duties noticed a taxi parked on the narrow road by the Dixcove Landing beach. What drew his attention was the way a man stepped up from the beach and glanced furtively around as if watching to see who was looking at the taxi. Just then, three men approached the taxi, carrying between them four turtles of various sizes. They loaded up the taxi and it sped off after being boarded by a man and a woman. Issah followed the taxi with the intention of reporting it to the police at Agona, as he rightly suspected that it was on its way to the Agona market. At the police station, he met a very helpful corporal, Daniel Letsuvi who accompanied him to trace the taxi, but to no avail. Having taken down the number of the taxi, they proceeded to the taxi station where they were furnished with the driver's identity. With very little they could do at this point, they exchanged numbers and parted ways.

An hour later, Issah received a call that the taxi driver had been accosted. The taxi driver was escorted to where he had taken the occupants of the taxi; and there, four turtles, which were still alive, were found unattended. They were retrieved and turned over to Issah who had travelled some 50 km to pick them up. The driver signed a bond of good behaviour to henceforth desist from transporting endangered creatures, and after this harrowing experience has promised to be an ambassador of turtle conservation in the area and to preach this to fellow residents. Issah then reunited the turtles with the sea at Akwidade. Issah as well as Corporal Letsuvi need to be commended for their efforts to bring about this happy ending.

Population, Health & Environment Initiatives: Isaac's story

“Because of my involvement in the project, my friends now call me ‘pastor’. But that is not a bad nickname- I even like it.” These are the words of Isaac Aino, a Youth Peer Educator (YPE) of Hen Mpoano’s Population- Health- Environment (PHE) pilot project. Isaac lives and operates as a YPE in Shama-Bentsir, one of the four pilot communities in the Shama District.

Population growth, health issues and unsustainable resource utilization accelerate the destruction of ecosystems which are the source of communities livelihoods. This often deepens poverty and environmental degradation. Malnutrition, inadequate water and sanitation services, malaria and other health issues coupled with

poor incomes, push communities to exploit natural resources unsustainably. In the coastal communities, large populations struggling with low fish catches and low incomes levels results in a vicious cycle of over exploitation of marine resources through unsustainable methods such as light fishing, monofilament or undersized mesh nets, chemical fishing, and cutting of mangroves for fuel woods for smoking fish and for domestic use.

Isaac says that the training he and his colleague YPE's received from Central and Western Fishmongers Improvement Association (CEWEFIA) in order to function in engaging other youths and adults in matters of sexuality, family planning and

environmental protection has brought him respect in the community. “Because of regular information I receive at CEWFIA meetings, I learn new things everyday which I pass on to my peers. No wonder they call me pastor,” Isaac remarked. Shama district is grappling with issues such as high population, teenage pregnancy, and sea level rise. These problems are both nature and human induced. It is therefore very laudable that Isaac and some of his friends have volunteered to be part of this project to help educate their peers and others in the community and also provide assistance in family planning and health services. USAID, through its BALANCED project, supports this initiative and it forms part of their network of PHE initiatives worldwide. Involving dedicated youth such as Isaac goes a long way in ensuring its sustainability.

Profile of Mrs. Victoria Koomson: CEWEFIA Executive Director

Auntie Vic, as Victoria Churchill Koomson is popularly called, is a household name in the fishing communities of Elmina and Sekondi. Her strong resolve to help the defenseless women who sold her fish in the mid to late 80's has materialized into the progressive NGO-CEWEFIA to which she is the Executive Director.

Born in Sekondi, she trained as a teacher in Kumasi and taught for 14 years in Cape Coast, but was gingered to start helping women in Sekondi as far back as 1990 when she saw the poor state they were in while marketing their fish at the railway lines. Auntie Vic revolutionized the lives of these 200 women. She helped them to build new homes, brought them water and electricity, provided bathroom and toilet facilities, and most importantly assisted them to construct improved environmentally friendly ovens. Vis a vis this, she served as the Assembly woman from 1988 to 1993.

Now, Auntie Vic and CEWEFIA have turned its attention to the four communities where the Hen Mpoano’s PHE intervention initiatives are being piloted. Family planning and adolescent reproductive health are some of the challenges being taken on by the Youth Peer Educators involved in the project. Auntie Vic herself never misses an opportunity to engage in awareness creation and education drive on environmental cleanliness. She is positive that she would eventually see changes and that people would live in cleaner communities. ‘Change is what I want to see, and this is what motivates me’, she reiterates.

Victoria Koomson’s work has been recognized on several fronts, most notably by Ashoka. But according to her, she is honoured daily when people recognize her for her work and support the vulnerable women of the Central and Western Region of Ghana for the past 25 years.



Isaac with colleague YPEs



Mrs. Victoria Koomson

Cape Three Points Forest Conservation Programs

The Cape Three Points Forest, recognized as the last remaining coastal rainforest in West Africa, is receiving attention at last. The reserve has in recent times come under serious threats including encroachment, illegal small-scale mining and artisanal logging activities, charcoal production, and poaching of the five primate species that are found there.

It is a relatively small forest reserve of 5112 hectares and since 1999 has been recognized as a Globally Significant Biodiversity Area (GSBA) and an Important Bird Area (IBA). It has been designated as a GSBA because the forest has an exceptionally high level of biological diversity, especially in flora. Florestically, the forest reserve is the second most diverse in Ghana.

The forest is managed by the Forest Service Department of the Forestry Commission and the Wildlife Division of the same Commission which has been instrumental in setting up Community Resource Management Association (CREMA) for the peripheral areas. However, the forest remains under threat from human activities.

The Hen Mpoano Initiative has held a series of consultative meetings to renew conservation efforts that have been dormant of late and to assist the Forest Services department to develop an action plan that further promotes co-management of the Reserve with local communities under the existing CREMA. The next steps are to create exchange visits for community members to visit other CREMAs elsewhere in Ghana and to establish community patrol groups. The Hen

Mpoano Initiative is collaborating closely with the Wildlife Division, the NGO Conservation Foundation, and the West African Primate Conservation Action (WAPCA) in developing further conservation, education, and monitoring actions in the coming months in order to gradually reinforce the biological integrity of this important biodiversity conservation site. Plans are to link the Cape Three Points Forest Reserve Landscape with coastal wetlands and a possible marine protected area in the seascape to the east and west of Cape Three Points.

Spatial planning continued

Subsequently, the community's leadership informed the then, District Chief Executive, Hon. Emelia Arthur at her visit to the community on February 2 2011 of their willingness and readiness to urgently relocate. They unambiguously attributed their intention to the wave of awareness created by the participatory land use mapping exercises. Without doubt, the Chief Executive was dumbfounded by this unexpected change of heart. She made mention of it at a stakeholders meeting at the District Conference Hall on April 7th, and urged all stakeholders to recognize how mapping of spatial information can enhance understanding of landscape vulnerability and risk to potential impacts of climate change at the local level as well as facilitate informed decision making on land use.

Arising out of this exercise is an issues profile of the district's land use problems and a working group within the assembly to take the issues and apply adequate interventions as well as turn attention on to the other local areas, with hopefully more of such impact stories to report. The Department of Geography and Regional Development of the University of Cape Coast is a collaborator in this exercise.

School Education Program

The Hen Mpoano and WAPCA schools Cape Three Points Forest Reserve conservation education program has taken off in full swing. The program involves ten schools from the fringe communities of Princesstown and Cape Three Points. It includes a film screening and sensitization exercise for the ten schools during which the contests will be launched. The contests are a logo and slogan competition, as well as a debate and drama on the importance and relevance of the reserve.

A logo and a slogan, in a local dialect, will be chosen to represent the reserve. Branded t-shirts, books, and sport equipment are some of the prizes on offer. Participating students will also be taken on an excursion to the Ankasa Forest Reserve. These schools' education program is part of a larger intervention in the Cape Three Points area that seeks to involve to the largest extent possible, the inhabitants of communities housed around the reserve to ensure that it is sustainably managed beyond the Hen Mpoano/WAPCA programs.



Map of the Cape Three Points Area

Phase I Small Grants Program

During its first year of operations, the Hen Mpoano initiative piloted a Small Grants scheme to test the viability and develop partnership with NGO's working within the six coastal districts. Sixteen organizations benefitted. So far, thirteen have completed their projects. The rest are working towards the completion of their projects. The three projects which fall under the livelihood program have succeeded in providing beneficiaries with enhanced livelihood schemes.

In the area of food security, twenty households were trained in improved household poultry management and also supplied with a total of 200 fowls to help them increase their income and also improve their nutritional status. Furthermore, thirty other

women were also supported in their livelihood activities through the rehabilitation of their stall to enable them to smoke and sell fish throughout the year. The skills training in Batik Tie and Dye benefitted 20 young mothers who are expected to engage themselves in small scale business activities.

Under ecotourism, the grant provided support for the training of 75 tour guides in the west coast tourist destination area. The conservation program has earmarked three major areas for expanded support in the Ahanta Amanzuri wetlands. At the pilot phase, general awareness has been created and the enabling condition for community support now exists. A permanent committee at Butre has been established to

implement a community bylaw for the protection of the mangrove forest here.

Challenges, Constraints and Measures Adopted

One of the main constraints in the implementation of the small grants is low capacity of recipients in the areas of proposal writing, project management, report writing and accounting. To address these issues, three training sessions were organized for them. So far, there have been some improvements, but more need to be done to ensure effectiveness of operations in the second round of grants.

Lessons learned

There have been some lessons learned during the first year of the Small Grant Program. Firstly, some of the grantees have not been able to engage in their own activities due to the inability of the service provider to sell the cloth in order to make money available to the trainees. The domestic chickens project has been satisfactory as a livelihood and food security project. In addition to the above, some of the coaches assigned to projects adopted a care-free attitude to their assignments. This means that the second year grants will train them more adequately for the tasks to be performed.

Fisheries Working Group continued

- Participated in district level forums on compliance with and enforcement of the fisheries laws in all the 6 coastal districts of the Western Region
- Held a series of meetings to deliberate on a cocktail of issues affecting the fisheries sector

The FWG meets quarterly to discuss issues and advise the Director of Fisheries Commission on necessary actions. Between July and October, selected members of this group would join some fisherfolks/community leaders, regional and district officials etc. to undertake study trips to Tanzania (on Marine Protected Areas), the teams will share their experiences with fishermen and coastal communities in the districts.

Members of the Fisheries Working Group (FWG) are:

- Lt (Gn) VICTOR FIANKO -Western Naval Command Representative
- Mr. KWODWO OPOKU- EPA Representative
- Mr. JOHN ASARE NAAMI- Ghana Police Service Representative
- Lawyer PAT KLINOGO- Attorney General's Department Representative
- Mr. DANNY KIRK MENSAH- Ghana Industrial Trawlers Association (Chairman)
- NANA ADAM EDUAFO- Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council
- Mr. JOHN D. ESHUN- Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council
- Mad. EMELIA ABAKAH-EDU- Fishmongers/Processors Representative
- Mad. CECILIA AMOAH- Fishmongers/Processors Representative
- Mr. JOHN KNOX TAWIAH- W/R Coop. Fishermen Service Center Union
- Mr. EMMANUEL BOTCHWAY- Ghana Inshore Fisheries Association
- Mr. ALEX SABAH - Fisheries Commission (Ex-Officio)



Grace, a grant recipient proudly displays her coop

"You shall not pollute the land in which you live....You shall not defile the land in which you live, in which I also dwell: for I the LORD dwell among the Israelites". (The Holy Bible)

Events corner

350.org Mangrove Conservation Festival

The Hen Mpoano Initiative joined thousands of people all over the world to celebrate the 10-10-10 Climate Change event in recognition of the need to reduce carbon emissions. School children, community members, and partners were rallied to clean up the mangroves at the Essei Lagoon at Sekondi. School children in the area also contributed by planting mangroves and writing essays and poems about the importance of the mangroves. Hen Mpoano is looking at continuing the work on awareness creation of the carbon reduction potential of mangroves by holding an even bigger event this year.

High School Drawing Competition

This activity was carried out in the month of November 2010 and involved four junior high schools and three senior high schools drawn from Shama, STMA and the Ahanta-West Districts. Participating students were asked to produce artworks depicting their observation of what our coast represents presently and what they perceive it could be in ten years to

come, based upon the present observation.

The winning piece as well as the best five art works were displayed on the Hen Mpoano 2011 calendar.



A cross section of the students inspect the exhibited artworks



Muslim participants in a break out session

"But seek, through that which Allah has given you, the home of the Hereafter; and (yet), do not forget your share of the world. And do good as Allah has done good to you. And desire not corruption in the land. Indeed, Allah does not like corrupters". (The Holy Quran)

Launch of Our Coast Publication

The long awaited launch of the Our Coast Publication came off in Accra and Takoradi on March 3 and 4 respectively. In attendance at both events were representatives of Hen Mpoano partner organizations, heads of governmental institutions', MPs, traditional leaders, chief fishermen, and community members.

The launch received wide media coverage from both print and electronic media, and was an opportunity to present this inspiring document which details the one-year efforts of the Hen Mpoano research activities to the key stakeholders in the region and beyond.



A first glance through the publication at the launch

Interfaith Alliance Alliance for Coastal Resource Management

The Hen Mpoano Initiative identified early on that religion in all the various forms plays a major role in the daily lives of fisherfolk and regular resource users. Due to this, the implementation of a project is proposed whereby the capacities of various religious leaders across the six coastal districts could be built in environmental stewardship and sustainable resource management for onward impartation to members of their religious institutions.

To this effect, a total of 30 leaders drawn from the Muslim and Christian faiths were brought together in a two-day trainer of trainers' workshop in June this year, at the St Kizito Retreat Center at Apowa.

This workshop was carried out in partnership with A Rocha-Ghana, a faith-based conservation NGO which is now tasked with working with the Hen Mpoano's core team and various identifiable religious institutions across the western coastal region to ensure that the message of environmental stewardship and sustainable resource use reaches every believer in the communities..

Events corner cont'd

World Meteo Day 2011

The Hen Mpoano Initiative for the first time teamed up with the Meteorological Service of the Western Region to observe this year's World Meteorological Day which was under the theme 'Climate For You,' highlighting the issues which should be of importance to the inhabitants of the coastal community of Shama. It was marked with a tree planting exercise at the Shama Youth Center signifying the importance of contributing to help prevent this important structure from being lost to soil erosion.

The most significant aspect of the day's activities however was the community drama put together by the Initiative's communications team, which drew a huge crowd. The essence of the drama was to tell the story of the probable impacts of climate change on coastal communities, and Shama in particular. The drama which was enacted in the local dialect also touched on salient points such as family planning, illegal fishing, and destruction of mangroves. The program was ended with a formal event where key stakeholders spoke to the relevance of observing the day.

Additions to the Hen Mpoano team

- Felix Nani, a Wildlife Officer has been seconded by the Ghana wildlife Division to work with the Initiative in its conservation activities in the target districts.
- Shoshana Court, a Project Officer of SustainaMetrix and PCI Media Impact has joined the communications team since the beginning of this year. She works specifically on the development of the radio drama serial, as well as on turtle conservation initiatives .
- 3 US Peace Corps Volunteers have been brought on board. They are Sarah Carboe, Leslie Lucas and Jacob McCommons. They would be working in target communities as a business advisor, health volunteer and a conservation volunteer respectively.

World Environment Day (WED 2011)

The World Environment Day Celebrations for this year was under the theme 'Forests-Nature at your Service.' Given this, the Hen Mpoano Initiative decided to have a marathon, a community theatre, and a short ceremony all around the Cape Three Points Forest Reserve area to draw attention to the importance of the biodiversity-rich reserve. The event was held on Saturday, the 4th of June instead of the statutory June 5th.

The 15-km marathon was the highlight of the day; with a total of 239 people participating in the three different categories from communities such as Princesstown, Akatakyie, Abaasi, Agona, Akwidae, Cape Three Points, and Sekondi-Takoradi. The route was mapped from Akwidae to Cape Three Points and the ceremony itself was at the New Akwidae School Park. Partner organizations such as Forestry Commission, RC, OGSFORD, and WAPCA provided in-kind support.

OGSFORD produced and coordinated the performance of the humorous theatre piece which spoke to the importance and relevance of the reserve to the communities housing it. Trophies and books were presented to deserving winners of the marathon at the end of the event. The Initiative is continuing its awareness creation on the conservation of the Cape Three Points Forest Reserve through the WAPCA-facilitated schools education program.



Community members observe the drama



Under 14 category participants at the start

Platform for Coastal Communities (PCC)

The exploitation of natural resources for the 'development' of a nation has brought about severe hardship on host communities. In the wake of the new oil discovery offshore the coast of the Western Region of Ghana, comes a mixture of hope and gloom for the people of the Region, especially in the six coastal districts. Coupled with this is the perceived slow pace of development of the Western Region, though it contributes about 30% of the country's GDP.

Among actions to avert potential disadvantages that may come with the exploitation of the oil has been the formation of the Platform for Coastal Communities (PCC) of the Western Region. The platform which was formed with the support of the Hen Mpoano Initiative is made up of civil society groupings including traditional leaders, youth and student organizations, and academia. It among others seeks to:

- Work to promote responsible governance of our natural resources
- Act as a voice to speak for the coastal communities in the Western Region to benefit from its natural resources in terms of development
- Protect and develop our natural resources for future generations
- Position the people of the Western Region to benefit from the opportunities available in the sector and
- Facilitate and monitor to ensure transparency and accountability in the generation and use of natural resource revenue in the country.

PCC is currently establishing decentralized structures for smooth operation in its areas of operation. It has the General Council as its highest decision making body. An eleven member steering committee chaired by Awulae Annor Adjaye III, Paramount Chief of the Western

Nzema traditional Area, has been appointed to oversee the running of the platform. It also has five zonal secretariats in all parts of the six coastal districts which among others provides a forum for members to develop strategies for influencing policies and programs in their localities. It is also undertaking a membership registration drive to get more people involved in the work of the platform. Interested people can call the following to register as it is still ongoing: **0244758769 or 031-2046181.**

It is envisaged that through the work of the platform, responsible exploitation of natural resources for a sustainable socio-economic wellbeing of the people in the coastal communities of the Western Region in particular, and the country in general would be ensured and the rich western coast of Ghana will be protected.

New Publications:

The *Our Coast* publication, and the Hen Mpoano Mid Term Report has been added to the Initiative library

E-resources

- All technical documents and other publications can be accessed via the CRC-URI website at www.crc.uri.edu
- The Initiative Facebook page Hen Mpoano-Our Coast is a public page which can be accessed by 'liking' it.
- You can also follow developments via twitter on CRC_Ghana

Upcoming Events

Upcoming events include the Summer Climate Change Sandwich Course at UCC and the 350.org 2011 event in August and September respectively.

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