



# SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROJECT (SFMP)

## Volta Region Traditional Leaders' Engagement on Implementation on National Fisheries Management Plan



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## **ACRONYMS**

GNCFC	Ghana National Canoe Fishermen’s Council
SFMP	Sustainable Fisheries Management Project
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
GFMP	Ghana Fisheries Management Plan
FoN	Friends of the Nation
MPs	Members of Parliament
MPAs	Marine Protected Areas

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Traditional Authorities (Including paramount chiefs, local chiefs, Queen Mothers, etc) in our coastal communities are very important institutions for local governance and can play key roles in promoting fisheries compliance and behavioral change in CLaT practices. In the past, before central government takeover, Ghana's fisheries were regulated effectively by Traditional and customary bye-laws and norms. These norms worked very well till the intrusion and gradual takeover of Government. At present Ghana's marine fisheries is in crisis and near collapse. The government in an attempt to address the decline has enacted several laws and introduced a National Fisheries Management Plan (NFMP) which proposes implementation of Close Season, Marine Protected areas, Co-management, additional holidays, etc.

However, the Traditional leaders along the coast have not been engagement on the NFMP, for them to appreciate the content so that they could support the implementation. Especially the support of Traditional Leaders is very crucial for the implementation of the additional fishing holidays. Therefore, the need to engage traditional leaders on the National Fisheries Management Plan (NFMP) has been stressed by stakeholders.

In responds to the demand, FoN facilitated a meeting with the traditional leaders in the coastal areas of the Volta region on the National Fisheries Management Plan to enable the Chiefs to understand the content of the plan and also to support them to develop local plans to support the implementation of the NFMP.

The meeting was held on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2017 and a total of 61 Traditional leaders comprising of 51 Chiefs and 10 Queen mothers from the coastal areas of the Volta Region participated in a meeting.

The meeting created the platform to discuss the role of Traditional Leaders in fisheries resource management. The meeting provided the platform to share the content of the NFMP with the traditional and copies of the NFMP were given to them. About 98% of the traditional leaders said the meeting was the first time they heard about the NFMP and its content.

The meeting also created the platform for representatives from the Fisheries Commission to interact with the chiefs and share government's plans for the implementation of the NFMP.

The meeting provided the opportunity for the traditional leaders to discuss their role and responsibilities for the implementation of the NFMP and also for responsible fishing.

At both meetings the traditional leaders agreed to form smaller working groups to refine the roles discussed and explore the drafting of a traditional leaders' Charter on Fisheries to provide the guiding principles for promoting Traditional leaders' effective participation in fisheries governance. The traditional leaders also stressed on their readiness to support fisheries governance. They strongly recommended the urgent need for Fisheries Commission to engage all traditional leaders in fishing communities to harness their influence to improve fisheries governance at the local levels.

## **SECTION 1: BACKGROUND**

The Ghana Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) with support from USAID is being implemented for a 5- year period from 2014 to 2019. The key objective of the project is to contribute to the rebuilding of marine fisheries stock (small pelagics) and catches through adoption of responsible fishing practices.

The SFMP places emphasis on working with stakeholders to improve fisheries management and governance. Consequently, traditional leaders in each of the four Coastal Regions of Ghana were identified as key partners for improved fisheries governance at the regional scale.

It is in respect of this that Friends of the Nation (FoN) under the auspices of the SFMP, organized a meeting with Traditional Authorities Volta Region to explore customary and traditional approaches to improve fisheries governance.

### **1.1 Meeting Objectives**

The objectives of the meeting were to:

- To share and discuss fisheries governance and make recommendation to Fisheries Commission.
- To share SFMP year 4 work plan and activities with stakeholders and solicit for their support.

## **SECTION 2: OPENING REMARKS**

The Executive Director Mr. Donkris Mevuta in his opening remarks gave a brief about the SFMP project. He said it was a five- year project supported by USAID which currently is in the 4<sup>th</sup> year running.

He revealed that SFMP partners over the past 3 years have been meeting stakeholders and allied institutions to discuss ways of addressing the challenges in the fisheries sector to help rebuild the fisheries resources which was fast dwindling.

Mr. Mevuta noted that in time past, Traditional leaders who were the custodians of the land played vital oversight roles in fisheries management. He said, the respect accorded Traditional Authority and the fear of the consequences of breaking traditional rules were deterrent enough to ensure that fishermen practiced sustainable fishing within acceptable norms.

He, however, observed that the delegation of such roles to the chief fishermen was partly responsible for the whittling-down of the relevance, myth and significance of certain customary practices such as the establishment of no fishing days in the respective Traditional jurisdictions of Chiefs in the management of natural resources including fisheries.

Mr. Mevuta intimated, that the previous focus has been on engaging chief fishermen to practice responsible fishing. He believed the time was now ripe to meet with the Chiefs to explore ways by which the traditional roles played by Chiefs can be revived in ensuring that Ghana's fisheries resources were well managed. He further commended the chiefs for their tremendous efforts in curbing child labor.



Figure 1. Mr. Donkris Mevuta addressing the Chiefs and Queen Mothers.

### **SECTION 3: STATEMENT BY THE VOLTA REGION FISHERIES DIRECTOR**

Mr. Christian Nii Aponsah, the Regional Director of Fisheries, on his part gave an expose on the illegalities (light fishing, Saiko fishing, use of chemicals, dynamite, use of small mesh size net in the marines etc.) in the fisheries sector.

He said efforts were being made to reverse these illegalities by encouraging fishermen to voluntarily comply with the fisheries regulations, strengthening the capacity of the Fisheries Enforcement Unit (FEU) to enforce compliance, implementing close seasons, and adoption of collaborative fisheries management practices in the fishing communities.

Mr. Aponsah also talked about the canoe registration exercise which ended in October was meant to cap and regulate the number of canoes entering Ghana's maritime waters there by achieving capacity reduction. He commended Friends of the Nation (FoN), and the SFMP partners with the support of USAID in helping with stakeholder sensitization on the content of the NFMP.





**Figure 2. Mr. Christian Nii Aponsah, Regional Director of Fisheries Commission, addressing the gathering.**

#### **SECTION 4: STATEMENT BY TORGBI ADDO VIII, FIAGA OF KLIKO AND PRESIDENT OF ANLO TRADITIONAL COUNCIL.**

Torgbi thanked FoN and USAID for such an innovative engagement. He said the Volta Region House of Chiefs was aware of the illegal fishing activities by fisherfolks and expressed grave concern about the development. Torgbi challenged his colleague chiefs to invent Traditional methods and customs in managing the Country's fisheries resources. He wished participants fruitful deliberations.



Figure 3. Torgbi Addo VIII, Fiaga of Kliko, giving a statement on illegal fishing

## **SECTION 5: PRESENTATION ON THE STATE OF GHANA'S FISHERIES AND THE NATIONAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PLAN BY THE DIRECTOR OF HEN MPOANO, MR. KOFI AGBOGAH**

Mr. Agbogah stated in his presentation that fisheries governance was a collective responsibility involving traditional authorities. He said NGO's and Government agencies used to be at loggerheads with each other but were now partners in educating and sensitizing the population on the State of Ghana's fisheries.

He said one of the key issues that require urgent attention was the ever-increasing number of fishing fleet within Ghana's waters. Mr. Agbogah noted that this situation has created an unhealthy competition where each fisherman is racing to catch the last fish. He said about 14000 new canoes/fishing vessels are built each year and can fish without license contrary to section 52, 53, and 54 of the fisheries Act 625. He asserted that Ghana's fisheries were in crises.

Moreover, Premix fuel subsidies, and inappropriate fishing practices under the “sea never dry” mantra was also highlighted by the director of Hen Mpoano as a key variable in encouraging the increase in the number of fishing boats in Ghana’s coastal waters. He noted that proceeds from premix fuel subsidies usually end up in private pocket which otherwise should have been used to benefit the entire community. He said this was a wakeup call on traditional authorities to demand greater accountability and transparency in the entire fisheries industry value chain.

Mr. Agbogah stated that Government subsidies for now was not the panacea to challenges in the fisheries sector but rather, an urgent need to review the policy of premix fuel subsidy.

Mr. Agbogah further averred that majority of fishermen were involved in illegality such as pair trawling, Saiko fishing, use of chemicals, and light fishing but to name a few. He noted that Saiko fishing has not been captured in the fisheries regulations.

Touching on the National Fisheries Management Plan, he said the plan aimed to introduce the following;

- Close seasons for trawlers
- Close fishing zones
- Collaborative management
- Building constituencies and political will to enforce the fisheries regulations



**Figure 4. Director of Hen Mpoano, Mr. Kofi Agbogah giving a presentation on the state of Ghana's fisheries.**

### **5.1 Questions/comments on presentation.**

The Dufia of Tegbi, Torgbi Gawu V expressed joy with the organization of the program which he noted was the first of its kind in the Volta Region. He expressed deep concern and noted that if the facts contained within the presentation was anything to go by, then the future of Ghana's fisheries were bleak. Torgbi Gawu V suggested a meeting between the Chiefs and the Chief fishermen to dialogue and fashion out strategies to help rebuild the fish stock.

Torgbi Zewu IV, Dufia of Anloga, demanded to know if the Fisheries Commission has done any economic impact analysis of the observance of the closed fishing season and if there were opportunities for alternative livelihoods during the close season?

On his part, Torgbi James Ocloo V, Dufia of Keta noted that fishermen in the Volta Region still complain about pair trawling despite government claim that the practice was banned (Mr. Kofi Agbogah asked for evidence). Torgbi also enquired about how light fishing could be stopped. (Fisheries Commission responded that there was only one staff in Keta which was a

constraint in enforcing the law. Mr. Nii Aponsah urged the community to adopt collaborative management).

Contributing to the discussion the Dusifiaga of Anlo, Torgbi Gbordzor II, recommended that the Chiefs and Chief fishermen should provide more information and education on the close season. Again, Torgbi Gbordzor enquired about the number of canoes permitted to be in one community.

Torgbi Kpemini Gawu V of Whuti disclosed that the canoe registration exercise was not carried out in his community. Consequently, no canoe in his area (Whuti) has been registered and enquired if there was a window of opportunity for his subjects to register their canoes. (Mr. Aponsah explained that the canoe registration exercise was concluded in October 2017 and that during the period, the Fisheries Commission used the O/B Van to educate the people before the canoe registration exercise commenced.

## **5.2 Presentation on SFMP by Mr. Kwadwo Kyei Yamoah**

Mr. Kyei Yamoah started his presentation by informing the participants that the five-year SFMP project was being supported by the USAID. He proceeded to announce the objective of the meeting and followed-up to give a presentation on the overview of the SFMP. He said the objective of the SFMP was to;

- Rebuild marine fisheries stock; He explained that, years of open access and increased fishing effort was responsible for the near-collapse of Ghana's marine fisheries. He said the SFMP project was poised to reverse this trend by encouraging the rebuilding of marine fisheries stock.
- Adopt Sustainable Fishing Methods; Mr. Yamoah noted many fisherfolks continue to use bad methods of fishing contrary to the provisions of the Fisheries Regulations. He indicated that if fisherfolks were allowed to continue illegal fishing, the fishing industry would collapse. Mr. Yamoah emphasized the need for fishermen to change the "sea never dry" mantra and adopt sustainable fishing methods which was doable as such methods have been successful in Countries like Ivory Coast and the Gambia. He said in this regard, SFMP aimed at managing the activities of fisherfolks by truncating all forms of illegal fishing.
- Bring profitability to the fishery; Profitability as Mr. Yamoah noted was not about the volumes or tons of fish catch per each fisherman but rather, profitability depended on good value addition to the fish catch. He cited a situation where both Ghana and Iceland catch the same tons of fish annually but Iceland adds-value to the fish and realizes 17 million dollars whereas Ghana makes only 1 million dollars. He therefore impressed upon the women fish traders to consider the importance of value addition.



**Figure 5. Mr. Kwadwo Kyei Yamoah giving a presentation on the overview of the SFMP**

### **5.3 Open discussion on Mr. Kwadwo Kyei Yamoah's Presentation**

Torgbi Dovo V, Dufia of Adafianu, said it was important traditional authorities had representation to the Fisheries Working Group (FWG). This was supported by Torgbi Addo VIII, who suggested that the composition of the Fisheries Working Group should be made of 4 chiefs from Keta Municipality and 4 from the Ketu South Municipality with Torgbi Sri III being the head.

## **SECTION 6: PRESENTATION ON THE GHANA FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PLAN- BY MR. KWADWO KYEI YAMOA**

He started his presentation by explaining the goal of the Ghana Fisheries Management Plan (GFMP) which he indicated was relative to rebuilding fish stock to enhance the socio-economic conditions of fishing communities. Mr. Yamoah said, in achieving this goal the Fisheries Commission was mandated under section 42 (1) of the Fisheries Act of 2002 (Act 625) to institute measures to ensure sustainable exploitation of Ghana's fisheries resources.

He subsequently touched on some key issues in the fisheries sector which required urgent attention. These included;

- Excessive fishing effort exerted in all fisheries.
- Weak enforcement of the Fisheries Regulations.
- No identification of sensitive marine areas or designated Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).
- Lack of internal structures to certify fish for export.

In addressing some of the key issues raised especially relative to artisanal fishing, Mr. Yamoah said the GFMP recommended the registration of all active canoes and further cap the number of new entries into the fishing industry. He said this was critical in reducing the excessive fishing effort exerted in all fisheries. He advised the participants to put the registration numbers on their canoes and not keep them at home.

Mr. Yamoah also mentioned and emphasized on the increase in the Traditional fishing holiday from 1 to 2 days per week. He however admitted that since Traditional fishing holiday varied from coastal region to the other, there was the need for consensus building on which day to choose as an additional fishing holiday. A Chief Fisherman, Torgbi Yaovi Gada noted that the Western, Central and Greater Accra Regions Traditionally observe Tuesdays as fishing holidays. He continued by indicating that in the Volta Region however, different days were observed by their respective coastal communities as fishing holidays. Be that as it may, the Volta marine Region has resolved to adopt Saturdays and Sundays as fishing holidays.

He further explained that for fishing trawlers, the GFMP proposes the following management measures in addressing the key issues highlighted. These included;

- The reduction in fishing days through the observation of close seasons (1-2 months up to 4 months in a year)
- Controlling the number and capacity of vessels (deletion of inactive boats)
- Introduction of bycatch mitigation measures
- Develop a data collection regime
- Undertake stock assessments survey
- Collaboration with Universities
- Designation of close areas e.g. MPAs

Contributing to the discussion, Supt. Jordan Quaye observed that the Ghana Police lacked absolute knowledge in the Fisheries Regulations. Again, he said it has been a tradition never to prosecute fishermen and for this reason there was too many interferences from politicians and chiefs anytime a fisherman was arrested for committing one infraction or the other.



Figure 6. A cross section of participants contributing to the discussions.

## SECTION 7: RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made by participants

- Participants recommended that the Fisheries Commission engage all Chiefs and their local Traditional areas on the National Fisheries Management Plan to enable the Chiefs to develop local community plans to support the implementation of the NFMP.
- Participants at the meeting concluded that there was the need for the formation of a Working Group to draft strategies to explore traditional and customary approaches to promote sustainable fisheries management in the area.
- The Participants also recommended that more education on the close season and canoe registration should be jointly conducted by both Chiefs and Chief Fishermen with support of the Fisheries Commission.
- It was also recommended that 4 Chiefs each from Keta and Ketu South Municipality headed by Torgbi Sri III should be included in the membership of the FWG.

## SECTION 8: CONCLUSION

The meeting was successful as participants contributed to the discussions and made recommendations.



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Sample citation format for various types of references

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