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SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROJECT (SFMP)

Fisheries Working Group Quarterly Regional Coordination meetings with SFMP Partners



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Friends of the Nation

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Cover photo: A picture of participants at a meeting with MOFAD that discussed the August closed season. (Credit – K.K. Yamoah, FoN)

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ACRONYMS

CoP	Chief of Party
CPUE	Catch Per Unit Effort
EEZ	Economic Exclusive Zone
EU	European Union
FiC	Fisheries Commission
FoN	Friends of the Nation
FSSD	Fisheries Scientific Survey Department
FWG	Fisheries Working Group
GIFA	Ghana Inshore Fisheries Association
GITA	Ghana Industrial Trawlers Association
GNCFC	Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council
ICCAT	<i>International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas</i>
IEZ	Inshore Exclusive Zone
IUU	Illegal Unreported and Unregulated
LBCs	Landing Beach Committees
MMDAs	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies
MOFAD	Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development
MT	Metric Tonnes
NAFPTA	National Fish Processors and Trader Association
NFMP	National Marine Fisheries Management Plan
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
SFMP	Sustainable Fisheries Management Project
STWG	Scientific and Technical Working Group
URI	University of Rhode Island
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The goal of the five-year USAID-Ghana SFMP being implemented from 2014 to 2019 is to contribute rebuild targeted marine fisheries stocks (especially Small Pelagics) through the adoption of sustainable fishing practices. With a focus on small pelagic fisheries management along the entire coastal stretch of Ghana, the SFMP seeks to contribute to rebuild Small Pelagics fishery, which is near collapse. More than 100,000 metric tons of high quality low-cost animal protein that was traditionally available to poor and vulnerable coastal and inland households has been lost.

Ghana's small pelagic fishery is on the edge of collapse. Weak governance, overcapacity and an open-access fishery that allows overfishing from an increasing number of boats and fishermen contribute to the crisis. At risk are not only the livelihoods of more than 130,000 Ghanaians engaged in the fishery sector but also the food security of the nation and the sub-region. Business as usual means empty nets for fishing communities and empty plates for consumers. Stakeholders have continuously recommended that urgent and bold actions are needed to reverse this decline. Because other nations have confronted similar crisis with bold and radical management actions and were able to rebuild their fisheries into healthy and vibrant resources that now provide more jobs, food and profits than they did before their decline.

Stakeholders concluded that Ghana can do it, too and in few years, fish yields could increase and profitability could return for those who earn their living from the small pelagics. The road map however, includes implementation of fisheries management measure informed by the best scientific information available.

In line with this, the Scientific and Technical Working Group (STWG)¹ catalysed by the SFMP project conducted fish stock assess for the years 2015, 2016 and early 2018. From the assessments, STWG concluded that current fishing efforts in Ghana is well beyond the level of sustainability for the small pelagic stocks. Therefore, in the absence of effort control measures, stocks will continue to decline with diminishing economic returns, leading to further deterioration of social conditions in fishing communities. The STWG explained that it is common for small pelagic species (forage species) to be more prone to rapid collapse than other types of marine fishes due in part to their rank in the food web and their response to environmental conditions. The collapse of the pelagic stocks therefore is expected to have a domino effect on both higher and lower trophic species; because the small pelagic species occupy a very special position in food webs, ensuring energy transfer between species at lower and higher levels, while forming a narrow range of species richness.

The STWG recommended that in order to rebuild the small pelagic stocks and increase annual landings, Fisheries Commission (FiC) needs to implement fully the management measures called for in the National Marine Fisheries Management Plan (NFMP 2015-2019).

In addition, the STWG recommended a one-month closure on all fishing fleets (canoes, inshore and industrial fisheries - except tuna) for the month of August. The STWG explained that August was

¹ *Scientific and technical Working Group (STWG) has the overarching mission to provide science-based management advice, which assures long-term sustainability of marine fisheries, based on the best available scientific information. Members of the STWG include representatives of MOFAD & FC (FSSD, MSC, FEU, Marine), USAID/SMFP, Ghana Industrial Trawlers' Association, Ghana Inshore Fishers Association, Ghana Canoe Fishermen Association, National Fish Processors and Traders Association, Hen Mpoano, Friends of the Nation, etc.*

selected as the month to yield the most return for rebuilding small pelagic resources because August coincided with the peak spawning period which allows the brood stock to reproduce and juveniles to survive and replace the lost biomass.

Following the recommendations by the STWG, The Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (MOFAD) and the Fisheries Commission (FC) declared closed Season for all fleets including artisanal fisheries (except tuna fleets) for the month of August 2018 to start from the August 4th to September 4th 2018. An official declaration of the Closed season was made on 13th July 2018 by the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development at a press conference held in Accra.

However, after the announcement stakeholder expressed concerns of low stakeholder consultations, short notice to fisher folks and low appreciation of the purpose and the anticipated benefits of the closed season.

In response to this, SFMP, Far Ban Bo funded by EU and other projects agreed to provide support to MOFAD & FC to engage stakeholders on the August 2018 Closed season.

However, closed season for all fleets was not envisaged in the SFMP year 4 work plan, therefore upon the recommendation of the SFMP CoP and the Far ban Bo Project, FoN skewed its Fisheries Working Groups (FWG) Regional coordination meetings under SFMP and other activities under the Far Ban Bo Project to support this Closed Season Agenda.

Under the auspices of SFMP and The Far Ban Bo Project, FoN provided platforms for MOFAD and Fisheries Commission to engage with the stakeholders to gain their support for the implementation of the Closed Season.

This report, covers the stakeholders' consultations and engagements held in relation of the closed season and narrates the content and the key outputs.

1.1 Closed Season for all Fleets (with the exception of Tuna)

The Closed Season declaration for all fleets (with the exception of Tuna) by MOFAD was a commendable step, because fisheries have long been a pillar of Ghana's economy. The sector generates revenue each year and contributes to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Additionally, fish is a major source of animal protein also especially small pelagics (sardines, anchovies and mackerel) called 'the people's fish', make up 80% of the total marine catch in Ghana and are primarily caught by canoe fishermen. The small pelagics sector directly or indirectly employs about 2.7 million people, 10% of Ghana's population.

In spite of the significance of the sector, over-exploitation continues to threaten the productivity and sustainability of the country's fishery. Small pelagic fish stocks are predicted to totally collapse without urgent action jeopardizing the livelihoods welfare of 2.7 million people and the food security of many more.

The Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (MOFAD) and the Fisheries Commission (FiC), as part of measures to regenerate Ghana's fast depleting fish stocks, declared closed Season for all fleets including artisanal fisheries (except tuna fleets) starting in the month of August 2018.

Informed by the STWG stock Assessment and recommendations, MOFAD concluded that without immediate action by the government, small pelagic stocks could collapse in as early as three (3) to five (5) years from 2018. MOFAD therefore endorsed and declared the Closed Season for August 2018 in the interest of Ghanaian fishers, particularly the artisanal fishermen, who are experiencing low catches in recent year. MOFAD explained that the closed season was in accordance with sections 76(3) and 84 of the Fisheries Act, 2002(Act 625), had an objective helping to reduce the excessive pressure and over exploitation of fish stocks.

The Closed season was scheduled to start from 6th August, 2018 and end on 4th September, 2018.

Under the auspices of SFMP and the Far Ban Bo Project, FoN organize orientation trainings for fisheries commission (zonal and regional officers) on the closed season to guide them to better communicate and engage local fisher folks to support the Closed Season.

FoN also provided platforms for MOFAD and Fisheries Commission to engage with the following stakeholders to gain their support for the implementation of the Closed Season;

- Fisher folks and Fisher Association leaders,
- Traditional leaders (coastal Paramount Chiefs and Queen mothers)
- Coastal Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies
- Fisheries Prosecutors, enforcement agencies and Judiciary (High & Circuit Court Judges)
- Media organizations and selected Journalist.

1.2 Objective of the Meetings

1. To communicate the importance of the closed season and its benefits to the fishers and Ghana as a whole.
2. To stimulate public dialogue on government's efforts to replenish the fish.
3. To inform fishers and key stakeholders to understand, accept and support the Closed Season

1.3 Participation

In all a total of 385 (293 males and 92 females) were engaged directly at the various meeting platforms created, stakeholders engaged included:

1. FiC National and regional Directors and zonal staff.
2. Traditional Leaders from the coastal areas.
3. District Assemblies Heads, Departments Heads and Agencies.
4. Prosecutors, Judiciary and Enforcement Agencies (Marine Police, Navy, etc).

5. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).
6. Fisher folk's associations: GNCFC, NAFPTA, GITA, GIFA, etc.
7. Snr Officials of MOFAD.
8. Media personnel, journalists and pressmen.

The table 1 below shows the date of the Meeting, the venue, the number of participants engaged at each of the meetings.

Table 1. Summary of details of capacity enhancement workshops.

DATE	Meeting	VENUE	Total Participants
17 th July 2018	1. Meeting with Fisheries Zonal Officers on the Closed Season.	Ampomaah Hotel, East Legon, Accra	50
24 th July 2018	2. Meeting with Coastal Traditional leaders on the Closed Season	Ange hill, Hotel, East Legon, Accra	48
25 th July 2018	3. Meeting with Greater Accra and Volta Region Fisheries Prosecutors, Judges, etc. on the Closed Season.	Law Court Complex, Accra.	66
30 th July 2018	4. Meeting with Central and Western Region Fisheries Prosecutors, Judges, etc. on the Closed Season.	Pempamsie Hotel, Cape Coast.	23
31 st July 2018	5. Meeting with coastal MMDAs and Agencies on Fisheries Management and close season on the Closed Season.	Pempamsie Hotel, Cape Coast.	101
4 th August 2018	6. Meeting with Fisher folks leaders; GNCFC, NAFPTA, etc.	Ampomaah Hotel, East Legon, Accra	97
TOTALS			385

1.4 Media Platforms

Various national and local media platforms were used to create awareness of the fisheries sector governance and to discuss and explain the purpose of the Closed Season. More than half of Ghanaian population were engaged and informed through the media platforms across the entire nation. After about a week, of the declaration of the Closed season, the entire media landscape was supersaturated with the closed season discussions. This generated lots of discussions and debate among Ghanaian whether to closed season for fishing in August or not. These media platforms were supported by MOFAD, SFMP, Far Ban Bo Project and other fisheries-interest groups/ media houses. The media discussion platforms were used to reach many other stakeholders who were not directly engaged in the formal meetings.

SECTION 2: DETAILED MEETING SESSIONS

At all the meetings, participatory approach was adopted for the engagement meetings; interactive power point presentations were used to share information on CLaT with simple charts, pictures and materials to ensure that participants appreciated the sessions. In general, the meetings had the following sessions:

Opening Session

This session was used to prepare participants to understand the purpose of the Closed Season, also key official from the MOFAD and Fisheries Commission made statements on background for the Closed Season and the expected roles of stakeholders.

Information Sharing Sessions

This session was used to provide detail information on the closed season to the participants. Power point presentations with pictures, simple charts and figures were used to explain the need for the closed season and the expected gains of the successful implementation of the closed season.

Specific presentations made included;

- The STWG fish stock assessment reports and The STWG recommendation for closed season for all fleets (with the exception of Tuna).
- The ecological Justification for the Closed season implementation.
- Enforcement and compliance strategies for the Closed season.

Open forum

This session was used to provide the platform for participants to discuss the presentations made as ask questions and seek clarification on Closed Season. At the open forum platforms were created for participants to make recommendation to guide the successful implementation of the Closed season.

2.1 Opening Sessions

At the meetings Snr Officers of MOFAD & FiC gave statements at the opening sessions, these statements informed participants of the purpose of the closed season and the need for stakeholders to support the implementation. Snr Officers of MOFAD & FiC who made statements included the Deputy Minister of MOFAD, the Chief Director of MOFAD, Head of Marine Fisheries, Head of MCS, Chairman of the Closed Season Committee, Regional Directors, the Public Relation Officer of MOFAD, etc,

In general, the statements explained that though there were some concerns about the August 2018 Closed season, the Ministry have to go ahead with the closure to rebuild the small pelagic fisheries and save it from total collapse. The statements also explained the following points:

- Total landings of the people's fish (small pelagic fish) in Ghana have decreased 86% from 138,955 metric tons (MT) in 1996 to 19,608MT in 2016. already, it has become common for fishermen to go to sea and return with no catch at all.
- When fish come together to spawn [breed] in August, fishermen encircle whole groups of breeding mother fish and catch them. One pregnant mother fish has the potential to drop 25,000 to over 90,000 eggs so there has been the urgent need to protect the pregnant mother fishes to allow them to lay their eggs.
- The Ghana Fisheries Science and Technical Working Group (STWG) have predicted that without immediate actions the small pelagic fishery could completely collapse by 2020.
- The Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development and the Ghana Fisheries Commission are working with fishers and other stakeholders to implement actions to avert the disaster. However, the most important immediate sustainable fisheries management action is implementation of a closed season for all fleets (except tuna that is regulated separately) to protect breeding mother fish and combating IUU fishing.
- The implementation of the NFMP and the closed season for all fleets combined with a new emphasis on stamping out illegal fishing, particularly fishing that is most damaging to small pelagic stocks will contribute to saving the peoples fish and protect the fishing livelihood.

- It is expected if the Closed season and other measure are implemented successfully the stock of ‘the people’s fish’ will recover, and landings will increase from the yearly landing of 19,608 metric tons recorded in 2016 to 90,000 metric tons per year by 2030 with an estimated value of GH¢270 million.

At the meetings, the Snr Officers of MOFAD & FiC concluded their statements by explaining that fisher folks were expected to go through some shocks during the August 2018 closed season but they would regain and make more profit in the future to compensate for the immediate shocks anticipated.



Figure 1. A picture with Deputy Minister (MOFAD) sharing information with participants at Opening sessions of one of the Closed Season meeting with stakeholders

2.2 Presentation on the STWG fish stock assessments and recommendation for Closed season for all fleets.

The presentation on the STWG fish stock assessments and recommendation for Closed Season for all fleets was made by Prof. Kobina Yankson, the chairman of the STWG. Prof Yankson in his presentation explained that the goal of the Scientific and Technical Working Group (STWG) is review the status of the pelagic and demersal fish stocks, discuss the results and provide input and recommendations for policy actions. He continued that the STWG stock assessment findings indicated that the Small pelagic fishery was near collapse and needed radical management actions to rebuild the stocks.

He showed the graphs in Fig 2 & 3 below and explained that the number of canoes have increased exponentially from 1990 to 2016 however, the landings of the small pelagics fish has decreases drastically for the same period. He noted that fishing effort had increased but fish catches had decreased, he said this was a clear indication of a collapsing fishery.

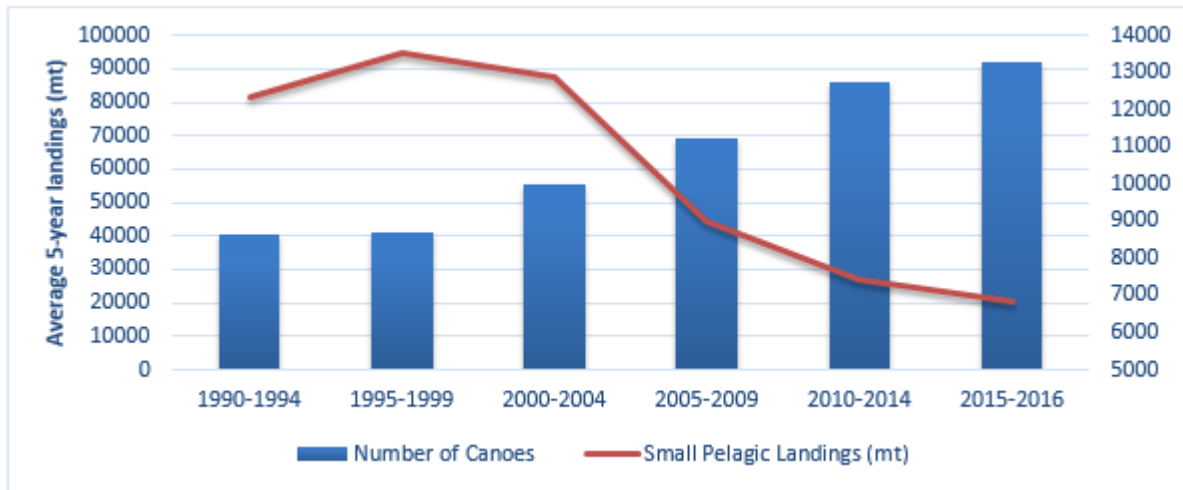


Figure 2. Landings of small pelagic stocks (Sardinellas, Anchovies and Mackerel) in orange and effort in number of canoes targeting small pelagics from 1990 to 2016 in Ghana.

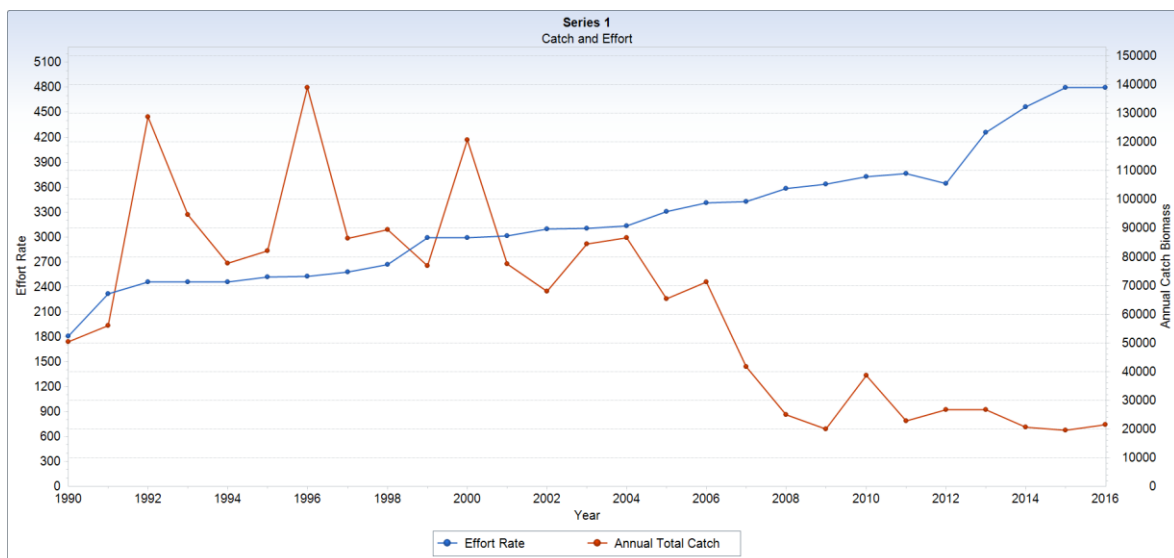


Figure 3. Total landings of small pelagic stocks (Sardinella, Anchovies and Mackerel) in red and effort in number of canoes targeting small pelagics from 1990 to 2016 in Ghana.

He explained that a combination of factors has resulted in the current crisis in the fishery sector. First, the artisanal fishery is open access, and the number of canoes has increased dramatically in the past two decades; entry into the fishery also has been encouraged by government subsidies to the canoe sector; and the number of active semi-industrial vessels now has doubled since the 1990s. He explained further that as fish catches have started to decline, the frequency of illegal fishing practices has increased; (Use of fine mesh nets, light fishing and other illegal fishing are rampant), and law enforcement has been unable to control these illegal activities.

He explained that Ghana had relied on only a few measures to control fishing effort, with mesh size and bans of certain gear and species. He noted that even if all fishermen complied with the laws and the management measures, they were still insufficient to regain the ecological and economic health of the fishery sector. He stressed that reversing the trend of stock depletion to support the socio-economic lives of present and future generations requires bold and immediate management actions.

He concluded that the STWG recommended the closed season for 3 months from the months of July to September but the month of August is the peak spawning period.



Figure 4. Prof. K. Yankson, Chairman of the STWG, Presenting the STWG recommendation for the August Closed Season at the Meetings with the Fisheries Prosecutors and Judges.

2.3 Presentation on the Ecological Justification for the Closed season implementation

The Presentation on the ecological justification for the closed season implementation was made by Mr. Emmanuel Dovlo, from the Fisheries Commission FSSD and also a member of the Closed Season Committee. In the presentation, he explained that the small pelagic fish (sardinella) commonly referred to as “herrings” are the “people’s fish”. He noted that the small pelagic fisheries were at a critically low level and close to depletion. He noted that there has been the urgent for actions to contribute to recover the small pelagic fish and rejuvenate the livelihoods of some 10% of the Ghanaian population that depend on fisheries (value chain); and sustenance.

He showed the graph in Figure 5 below and explained that the small pelagic fish stocks are mainly available for Ghanaian fishermen in Ghana EEZ. He indicated that the small pelagic stocks move from west from the Ivorian waters through Ghana to the east to Togo and return back and therefore over 95% of the Stock are available for Ghanaian fishermen. He noted that the small pelagic fish were however near collapse and if not rebuilt would lead to the collapse of the artisanal fisheries in Ghana. He explained that about 70% of Ghana’s fisheries is in danger and urgent measures including closed season for all fleets (except tuna) were necessary.

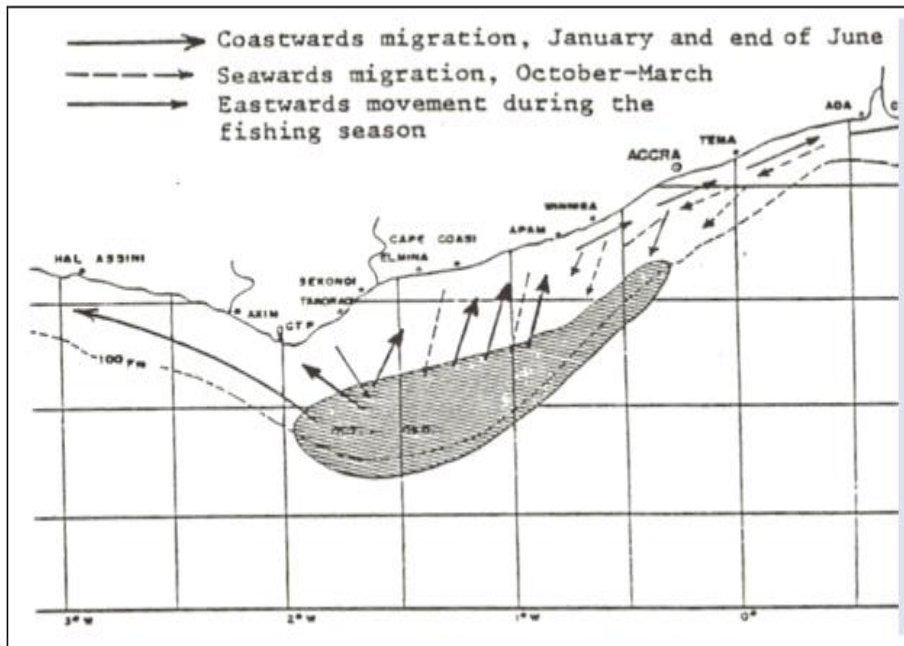


Figure 5. A graph showing the movement of small pelagic fish during the major upwelling period

He stressed that economically and scientifically, it was not prudent for fishermen to fish in month of August in Ghana’s marine waters. He explained that fish breed in the month of August and the seasonal natural phenomenon known as “upwelling” also peaks in the month August. He said this provides appropriate conditions for fish to breed and thrive and therefore the fish become pregnant in August, lay eggs in abundance and hatch, there has been the urgent need allow the fish to spawn during that period to ensure maximum returns. He noted that fishers themselves testify that they do not have bumper catches anymore and some fishermen come back with no fish in most case. He advised that fishers themselves need to be willing to contribute to efforts to protect their own industry and their only source of livelihood. He explained that fishers testify that fish (pelagic) caught mainly in August are oily when smoked indicating the presence of eggs in abundance. He said scientific evidences also supported the closure of the fishing in the Month of August. He concluded that without such measures fishers will invest more and more resources year-in year-out yet harvest a constantly decreasing catch and make losses.



Figure 6. Mr. Emmanuel Dovlo making his presentation at one of the meetings on the Closed Season

2.4 Presentation on the Enforcement and compliance strategies for the Closed season

This presentation was made by Mr. Godfrey Tsibu, the Head of the Monitoring Control and Surveillance (MCS) Unit of the fisheries commission. In the presentation, he explained that high compliance for the closed season will ensure its success. However, he noted that measures had been made to increase deterrence actions. He explained that such deterrence actions included, beach combing by the Fisheries Enforcement Unit (FEU) and increased sea patrols. He added that other security operations were scheduled be conducted before during and after the closed season to ensure high compliance and also reduction in the use of illegal fishing gears.

He encouraged stakeholders to support the implementation of the closed season by convincing the fisher folks to comply with the closed season to ensure that their own livelihood is protected for total collapse.

He indicated that recalcitrant fisher who violate the closed season should be reported to the FEU for the necessary prosecution process as stipulated in the fisheries Act 625.

Mr Tsibu explained that the Fisheries Act, 2002 Act 625 in section 84 makes the following legal provisions for the Closed season.

“Fisheries Act, 2002 Act 625 section 84.

(1) The Commission may by notice in the Gazette declare closed seasons, including their duration, for fishing in specified areas of the coastal waters or the riverine system.

(2) A declaration made under subsection (1) shall be given all reasonable publicity and, where possible, shall be given in advance of the closed season.

(3) A closed season declared by any international body of which Ghana is a member shall be regarded as a closed season declared under this Act.

(4) A person who engages in fishing during a closed season declared in accordance with this section commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of not less than

(a) \$500,000 and not more than \$2 million in respect of a local industrial or semi-industrial vessel or a foreign fishing vessel; or

(b) 100 penalty units and not more than 500 penalty units in any other case.

and in addition, any catch, fishing gear or vessel or any combination of them used in the commission of the offence may be forfeited to the State.”



Figure 7. Mr. Tsibu, sharing information on Closed Season at the meeting with the Judges



Figure 8. Minister of MOFAD Declaring the Closed Season at the press conference.



Figure 9. Audience at the Press conference for the Declaration of the Closed Season.



Figure 10. Mr Kyei Yamoah of FoN, engaging the media on the closed season

2.5 Media Platforms

In addition to the formal meetings, media platforms were used to sensitize and inform several thousands of people about the Closed Season. A strategic communication plan was designed and used to engage the following regional and National media houses;

- **Volta Region:** Jubilee FM-Keta, Light FM - Aflao, Radio Hodge-Anloga, etc
- **Central Region:** Radio Central-Cape-Coast, Okoroko FM-Cape-Coast, Ahomka FM- Elmina, Brenya FM-Elmina, Radio Peace-Winneba, ATL-Cape-Coast, etc.
- **Western Region:** Radio 360 –Takoradi, Sky FM –Fijai, Twin-City(GBC)-Sekondi, Ahanta Radio- Ahanta West, Ankobra Radio-Axim, etc.
- **Greater Accra:** 31 media house from Greater Accra (indicated below table 1) were also used to share information on the closed season;

Table 2. List of media houses from Greater Accra and national level used for the closed season information sharing.

Television Stations	Radio / FM stations	Print and Online Platforms
1. Joy News	12. Joy FM	22. Daily Heritage News paper
2. Adom TV	13. Adom FM	23. BTA
3. UTV	14. Peace FM	24. Daily Graphic News paper
4. GBC 24	15. Obono FM	25. Ghanaian Time News paper
5. GH One TV	16. Tatano Fm	26. BFNT News paper
6. Net 2 TV	17. Radio Ghana	27. Daily Guide News paper
7. Atinka TV	18. STAR FM	28. Ghana News Agency
8. TV Africa	19. Oman FM	29. Ghana Web
9. TV 3	20. Atinka FM	30. GhanaDistricts.Com
10. Metro TV	21. CITI FM	31. ISD
11. CITI TV		

Table 3. Key Question and Responses.

Questions	Responses
What is Closed season?	<p>Closed Season is basically referred to as a biological resting period for fish, where fishing fleets don't fish to allow gravid fishes (Pregnant/ mother fish) to spawn and also protect the eggs. This is an important period for conservation of the fish stock to ensure that more fish can be reproduced and be available for fishers in the future. Especially in the case of Ghana, Closed season for all fleets (except Tuna) is been implemented together with other measures to ensure the protection of the fishing livelihood and secure it from total collapse.</p>
Is it legal for government to implement closed season, and is Closed Season backed by law?	<p>The Fisheries Act, 2002 Act 625 provides the legal mandate and Authority for closed season in Ghana.</p> <p>Section 84 of the Fisheries Act of 2002 Act 625 makes specific legal provisions for the Closed season</p> <p>and prescribes in section 84 (1) that <i>“The Commission may by notice in the Gazette declare closed seasons, including their duration, for fishing in specified areas of the coastal waters or the riverine system.”</i></p>
Why is the small pelagic the main target for the Closed Season?	<p>There has been the urgent need to target the small pelagic stocks (sardinella) is commonly referred to as “the “people’s fish” and the mainstay of our local fishermen (artisanal fishing sector).</p> <p>Because the small pelagic resources, particularly sardinella, are on the verge of collapse. Annual landings have been in decline for more than a decade as fishing effort has increased. Recent landings have been the lowest level ever since recorded landings in Ghana. This drastic decline in landings is due primarily to overfishing and overcapacity of the fishing fleet.</p> <p>Targeting the small pelagics and rebuilding it is to ensure sustainable fish food and nutrition security as well as guarantee income and livelihoods of fishers. And prevent the huge security crisis that will arise if the artisanal fishing sector collapses (mass unemployment, high incidence of poverty, increased social vices, etc.</p>

Questions	Responses
Why is the close season been implementing in 2018 and what will the closed season address?	The Closed season have an objective of helping to reduce the excessive pressure and over exploitation of fish stocks as part of measures to regenerate Ghana's fast depleting small pelagic fish stocks. The closed Season will allow gravid fishes (Pregnant/ mother fish) to spawn and also protect the eggs so that more fish will be available to keep reproducing. `
Why the selection of the month of August and not any other month?	The Ministry commissioned a study to look at the appropriate month that is scientifically supported i.e. a period in which when fishing ceases will lead to the replenishment of stocks considering their spawning period and it was established that the annual peak for reproduction of majority of pelagics is in August and the abundance of food (plankton) available for adult and juvenile fish also peaks in August which enhances survival and viability of juvenile fish. The supply of high landings in August also reduces the price of the product while at the same time negatively impacting the highest potential reproductive stock during the entire year therefore the month of August was selected to achieve the biologically optima positive impact when closed. The month of August was also concurred by the STWG as the biologically significant period to achieve optimal recruitment.
Will the August 2018 closed season affect all fishers affected?	The August 2018 Closed season will affect all marine fishing fleets with the exception of Tuna fleets. So August 2018 Closed season affects; industrial trawlers, inshore, hook & line and all other artisanal fishers are will be affected.
Why is Tuna not part of this closed season?	Tuna fleets are managed by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) that is responsible for the conservation of tunas and tuna-like species in the Atlantic Ocean and adjacent seas which includes tuna in Ghana waters. ICCAT conducts full assessment of Tuna, tuna-like species and pelagic sharks fished in the ICCAT Convention area and provide management measures.
Why is the freshwater sector not part of the Closed Season?	The actual purpose of the closed season is to protect the small pelagic fish in the marine waters, which is almost collapsed. So the fresh water is not part of the closed season.
Why is the closed season not done Region by Region, or limited to a	The purpose of the closed season is to protect all the pregnant fish (gravid fish) in the month of August. Therefore, if the closure is done Region by Region at different times or limited to a

Questions	Responses
select number of fleet in a timely interval?	<p>select number of fleet and gear types, the incidence of high by-catch may not be avoided and therefore defeat the purpose of the closure.</p> <p>Again allowing Region by Region or some sub-sectors of the industry to operate will also make it difficult to monitor, control and enforce the closed season.</p>
How much fish increase is expected in September when the sea is opened?	Fish Stock is not expected to be increased in September 2018 immediately after the August closed season. However, if pregnant mother fish are protected during the spawning season of August 2018 and subsequent years and IUU is effectively addressed small pelagic landings can reach up to 90,000 metric tonnes by 2030, worth an estimated GH¢270 million.
How the will closed season be enforced and how will illegal fishing be stopped?	<p>The closed season will be monitored through increased Fisheries Enforcement Unit (Police, Navy, etc) sea patrols and beach inspections to ensure that the targeted fishing fleets do not fish.</p> <p>MOFAD is also putting in place deterrence measures to combat the use of illegal fishing methods before, during and after the Closed Season. These measures include arrest and prosecute illegal fishers.</p>
<p>What will be done to those who do not comply, what is the punishment?</p> <p>If the fisher folks oppose the closed season what will be done?</p>	<p>Fishers who flout the Closed Season will be arrested by the FEU and Police and prosecuted in accordance with Section 84 of the Fisheries Act, 2002 (Act 625). Which prescribes that</p> <p><i>(4) A person who engages in fishing during a closed season declared in accordance with this section commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of not less than</i></p> <p><i>(a) \$500,000 and not more than \$2 million in respect of a local industrial or semi-industrial vessel or a foreign fishing vessel; or</i></p> <p><i>(b) 100 penalty units and not more than 500 penalty units in any other case. and in addition, any catch, fishing gear or vessel or any combination of them used in the commission of the offence may be forfeited to the State.”</i></p>
Will the August close season have any negative effect on the fishers?	The August 2018 Closed Season may have the short term negative economic impacts as fishermen will not fish in the month of August, therefore, the expected income for the one month may not be available for the fishers.

Questions	Responses
<p>What mitigation measures or livelihood intervention are you putting in place for the artisanal fishers?</p>	<p>To mitigate the short term negative effects of the Closed Season of fishers, MOFAD is the put in place the following measures:</p> <p>Alternative Livelihood Committee has helped selected communities to implement alternative livelihood schemes e.g. collecting and processing of plastics for money, Salt iodization, Aquaculture, etc.</p> <p>Landing Beach Committees (LBCs) are to use some fixed portions of the 53% of the premix fuel margins meant to support all fishers identified within their LBC zones.</p>
<p>How will there be fish during the closed season for the local market and consumers?</p>	<p>MoFAD will make special arrangement to facilitate increase importation of fish during the closed season to ensure that there is adequate fish for local market and for local consumption.</p> <p>Government will also support women to access the fish imported to keep them in business.</p>
<p>During the closes season will the fish stock not be caught by fishers Ivory Coast or Togo?</p>	<p>The small pelagic fish stocks are mainly available for Ghanaian fishermen in Ghana EEZ. The small pelagic stocks move from west from the Ivorian waters through Ghana to Togo and return back and therefore over 95% of the Stock are available for Ghanaian fishermen. Therefore fishers Ivory Coast or Togo will not catch all the fish during the closed season.</p>
<p>How can the fisher folks and key stakeholders be convinced to accept the closed season?</p>	<p>Active engagements and sensitization has been going on to inform and convinced fisher folks and key stakeholders. The Commission is carrying out education and sensitization programs in many communities and media platforms. The communication will continue through stakeholder meetings, community fora, radio and TV discussions, radio announcements, Information Service Department (ISD) information vans, etc.</p> <p>The Commission with support from CSOs is engaging with traditional leaders; chief fishermen, fishers, Fisheries Commission staff, Fisheries Enforcement Unit Personnel and the Police in Coastal Communities.</p> <p>The police, Fisheries Enforcement Unit (FEU) and all local stakeholders are being involved in the communication.</p>

Questions	Responses
<p>What role are the zonal fisheries officers to play to Combat illegal fishing?</p>	<p>The zonal fisheries officers are to act as communicators to create awareness of the fisheries laws and the impacts of the illegal fishing methods. The zonal officers will support to monitor and report illegal fishing activities in their zones.</p>
<p>What are the role of stakeholders (leaders, District Assemblies, etc) for the closed season implementation?</p>	<p>All stakeholders are encouraged to support the implementation of the closed season by convincing the fisher folks to comply with the closed season to ensure that their own livelihood is protected for total collapse.</p> <p>Stakeholders including but not limited to; chief fishermen, Fisher Association, traditional leaders, District Assemblies CSOs, Media, MPs, etc. have a role to play to make the Closed season successful to rebuild the small pelagic fish stock and save the artisanal fisheries that support over 2 million Ghanaian.</p>

SECTION 3: KEY OUTPUT OF CLOSED SEASON ENGAGEMENT PLATFORMS

The meetings provided that platform to engage stakeholders on the Closed season and the need for urgent actions to rebuild the small pelagic fish stocks. Several thousands of people were also engaged and informed through the various national and local media platforms created to discuss and explain the purpose of the Closed Season. After about a week, of the declaration of the Closed season, the entire media landscape was supersaturated with the closed season discussions. This generated lots of discussions and debate for and against the closed season.

Eventually the Closed season became the topical issue in Ghana and within that period there was an unprecedented awareness of the decline of the marine fish stock and the need for radical measures to rebuild the fish stock. Though there were some concerns but generally stakeholders agreed that there was the need to implement fisheries management measure including closed season for all fleet to as part of efforts to rebuild the marine fisheries.

3.1 Stakeholder Concerns about the August 2018 Closed Season

Though the August 2018 Closed season was meant to benefit the fisher folks in the medium to long term, some of the fisher folks had various concerns and did not support the Closed season. Their concerns included the following; low consultation with the fishers to agree on the exact period for the closed season, the late announcement of the August 2018 Closed on 13th July 2018 did not provide them the time to properly prepare for the closed season due to the short notice, the Month of August has been their bumper harvest so they wanted the closed season to be shifted to another month, they needed compensation and alternative livelihood packages to survive during the one month closed season, etc. They also stated that they wanted IUU fishing to be stopped before a closed season is introduced to provide an enabling environment for the fish stock to be rebuilt.



Figure 11. A picture of Fisher folks demonstrating against the August 2018 Closed Season at Sekondi



Figure 12. A picture of Inshore Fishers presenting their concerns for the August 2018 Closed season.

3.2 Postponement of the August 2018 Closed Season

On 3rd August 2018, the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development announced the postponement of the August 2018 Closed Season. At a meeting with stakeholders she explained that the August 2018 Closed Season was deemed as an important catalyst to contribute to rebuilding of the small pelagic fish stock, however the President of the Republic of Ghana had directed her to postpone August 2018 Closed Season because of the following reasons:

- The late public announcement of the closed season on 13th July (just about 3 weeks to the start of the closed season on 6th August 2018).
- Inadequate consultation with fisher folks and low consensus building
- Low acceptance by most fishers and the increasing resistance by some fisher folks against the August 2018 Closed Season.
- Inadequate financial and other resources to implement the August 2018 closed season.

In a statement delivered by the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development, she explained that the President of the Republic of Ghana had listened to the concerns of the fisher folks and had directed that the closed season be postponed from 2018 to August 2019.

3.3 Meeting with Fisher Folks’ Leaders (GNCFC, NAFPTA, etc) and Other Stakeholder after the Postponement of the August 2018 Closed Season.

A meeting with fisher folks’ leaders (GNCFC, NAFPTA, etc) and other stakeholders was held on August 4th 2018 under the FWG platform. This meeting was originally, scheduled as part of the closed season engagements.

At the 4th August meeting, participants discussed the sudden postponement of the August 2018 closed season and expressed discontent for the postponement. Participants explained that supportive constituencies had been built for the August 2018 closed season from the engagement meetings and the media platforms. They noted that though, some fisher folks did not support the closed season when it was declared, however, majority of the fisher folks and stakeholders supported the closed season after they were engaged through the meetings and the media platforms.

Some of the fisher folk’s leaders, key civil society actors, FC officials, media personnel, traditional leader, etc at the meeting, said they had actively supported the campaign for the closed season and expressed their disappointment for waste of energy, time and resources on the closed season campaign.



Figure 13. A picture showing cross section of Participants at the August 4th meeting.

Participants at the August 4th meeting, however provided some recommendations to promote the successful implementation of the August 2019 closed season and other subsequent closed seasons.

Participants also gave additional recommendations to contribute to rebuild the small pelagics fish stocks.

SECTION 4: RECOMMENDATION

Participants agreed that the closed season for all fleets in the spawning period would contribute to reduce the excessive pressure and over exploitation of fish stocks. Participants therefore, provided the following recommendations to contribute to successful implementation of the closed seasons in Ghana:

- Participants advised MOFAD / FiC to work with fisher folks and stakeholders to design a yearly calendar of annual closed seasons indicating the period and duration for each year, to promote acceptance and high compliance for future closed seasons.
- Participants recommended the need for MOFAD / FiC to engage the leadership of the Fishers (GNCFC, GITA, GIFA, NAFAG, etc) to discuss and find solutions to the issues raised against the August Closed Season. This was to ensure their full support for the closed season.
- MOFAD / FiC was advised to develop targeted communication messages and campaign for the President of Ghana, Cabinet, Ministers, MPs, etc. to ensure they understood and supported the closed season fully.
- MOFAD / FiC was advised to continuously consult and engage stakeholders especially fisher folks to build consensus on how to effectively implement the closed season.
- Participants noted that capacity and effort reduction including closed season implementation raises several concerns for livelihood interventions for fishers, the Government of Ghana, was therefore advised to implement targeted livelihoods programmes for fishing communities to address the concerns.
- Stakeholders recommended that MOFAD / FiC needed to share documents and information of the proposed livelihood projects on the August closed season (salt iodization, Plastic recycling, Aquaculture, etc) to all stakeholders inform stakeholders and fishers to accept the Closed season.
- MOFAD / FiC was advised to document and share the impacts, if any of the closed seasons implemented by Trawlers from 2016 to early 2018 to inform stakeholders.
- Participants also recommended the need for MOFAD/FiC to develop a comprehensive communication plan to engage stakeholders for acceptance and support for the close season including landing sites meetings and meetings with fisher associations and other stakeholders for acceptance and support for the institutionalization of annual close seasons.

SECTION 5: CONCLUSION

At all the meetings participants concluded that there was the urgent need to rebuild the small pelagics fish stocks to sustain the livelihood of fisher folks. Participants agreed that implementation of the NFMP, combating IUU and introducing closed season for all fleets would contribute to rebuild the small pelagics fish stocks.

At the August 4th meeting, the stakeholders engaged concluded that though there were some concerns about the August 2018 Closed season, the MOFAD should had to go ahead with the closure to rebuild the small pelagic fisheries and save it from total collapse.