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SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROJECT (SFMP)

Densu Oyster Co Management Plan Validation Workshop



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For more information on the Ghana Sustainable Fisheries Management Project, contact:

USAID/Ghana Sustainable Fisheries Management Project

Coastal Resources Center

Graduate School of Oceanography

University of Rhode Island

220 South Ferry Rd.

Narragansett, RI 02882 USA

Tel: 401-874-6224 Fax: 401-874-6920 Email: info@crc.uri.edu

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Cover photo: Nii Obgamey III, SakumoWe of Bukom (the traditional custodian of the Densu River) signing the map of the Densu management area as stakeholders validate the draft management plan for the Densu Delta on Oysters

Detailed Partner Contact Information:

USAID/Ghana Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP)
10 Obodai St., Mempeasem, East Legon, Accra, Ghana

Telephone: +233 0302 542497 Fax: +233 0302 542498

Maurice Knight	Chief of Party maurice@crc.uri.edu
Kofi Agbogah	Senior Fisheries Advisor kagbogah@henmpoano.org
Nii Odenkey Abbey	Communications Officer nii.sfmp@crcuri.org
Bakari Nyari	Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist hardinyari.sfmp@crcuri.org
Brian Crawford	Project Manager, CRC brian@crc.uri.edu
Ellis Ekekpi	USAID AOR (acting) eekekpi@usaid.gov

Kofi.Agbogah
kagbogah@henmpoano.org
Stephen Kankam
skankam@henmpoano.org
Hen Mpoano
38 J. Cross Cole St. Windy Ridge
Takoradi, Ghana
233 312 020 701

Resonance Global
(formerly SSG Advisors)
182 Main Street
Burlington, VT 05401
+1 (802) 735-1162
Thomas Buck
tom@ssg-advisors.com

Andre de Jager
adejager@snvworld.org
SNV Netherlands Development Organisation
#161, 10 Maseru Road,
E. Legon, Accra, Ghana
233 30 701 2440

Victoria C. Koomson
cewefia@gmail.com
CEWEFIA
B342 Bronyibima Estate
Elmina, Ghana
233 024 427 8377

Donkris Mevuta
Kyei Yamoah
info@fonghana.org
Friends of the Nation
Parks and Gardens
Adiembra-Sekondi, Ghana
233 312 046 180

Lydia Sasu
daawomen@daawomen.org
DAA
Darkuman Junction, Kaneshie Odokor
Highway
Accra, Ghana
233 302 315894

For additional information on partner activities:

CRC/URI: <http://www.crc.uri.edu>
CEWEFIA: <http://cewefia.weebly.com/>
DAA: <http://womenthrive.org/development-action-association-daa>
Friends of the Nation: <http://www.fonghana.org>
Hen Mpoano: <http://www.henmpoano.org>
Resonance Global: <https://resonanceglobal.com/>
SNV: <http://www.snvworld.org/en/countries/ghana>

Acronyms

CRC	Coastal Resource Center
DAA	Development Action Association
DOPA	Densu Oyster Pickers Association
FC	Fisheries Commission
MOFAD	Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development
SFMP	Sustainable Fisheries Management Project
UCC	University of Cape Coast
URI	University of Rhode Island
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acronyms.....	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vii
SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Objective.....	1
1.2 Expected Outcome.....	2
1.3 Stake Holders at the Validation Durbar (Participants)	2
SECTION 2: MEMBERS OF DENSU OYSTER PICKERS ASSOCIATION – (D.O.P.A) SENSITIZES PUBLIC ON OYSTER MANAGEMENT PLAN AHEAD OF AN “OPENING SEASON” COMMUNITY DURBAR	3
SECTION 3: SOLIDARITY SPEECHES BY STAKEHOLDERS AT THE VALIDATION DURBAR.....	6
3.1 Solidarity Messages	6
3.2 Scientific Data Collection by Members of DOPA.....	8
3.3 Sharing of Experiences – The Study Tour to the Gambia.	9
SECTION 4: STAKEHOLDERS SIGN COMPACT TO VALIDATE THE DRAFT DENSU DELTA COMMUNITY CO-MANAGEMENT PLAN.....	11
SECTION 5: TRADITIONAL LEADERS PERFORM CEREMONY FOR OYSTER HARVESTING OPENING SEASON AT THE DENSU DELTA	15
5.1 Declaring the Densu Delta Open for oyster harvesting.....	15
SECTION 6: OYSTERS HARVESTERS OBSERVES BOOST IN OYSTERS AFTER OBSERVING A “CLOSE SEASON”	17
SECTION 7: CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS	20
7.1 Conclusion	20
7.2 Next Steps.....	20
APPENDIX 1.....	20
8.1 Participant List.....	20

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Cross section of stakeholders invited to the event.	3
Figure 2: Members of DOPA with their placards during the float.	4
Figure 3: Section of members of DOPA on the walk.	4
Figure 4: Members of DOPA on a street-walk.	5
Figure 5: A section of DOPA members on street-walk	5
Figure 6: Mr. Scot Apewudza, the Greater Accra Regional Director of Fisheries Commission delivering his solidarity message	6
Figure 7: Nii Adotei Akwei II, Chief fisherman of Kokrobite	6
Figure 8: Nii Arde Nkpa II, the head of family of Boartianor (the custodians of the Densu River) in Tsokomey delivering his solidarity message in support of the draft management plan.....	7
Figure 9: Nii Ampofo of Sakumo of Bukom and also a member of the interim co-management planning committee.	7
Figure 10: Members (Patience Amudzi, left and Bernice Bebli right) of DOPA demonstrating how scientific data from the Densu Delta are taken.	8
Figure 11: Members of DOPA demonstrating management measures on the Densu Delta.....	8
Figure 12: Two members of DOPA (Bernice Agorogo, right and Beatrice Kukekpor, left) shared some of the lessons learned in Gambia	9
Figure 13: Some members of DOPA entertain in audience with a cultural dance.	10
Figure 14: Some members of DOPA entertain the audience and a role play goo	10
Figure 15: A member of DOPA, Mary Dedzo proudly display some oyster shells	11
Figure 16: Nii Ogbamy the III, the SakumoWe of Bukom (the traditional custodians of the Densu River) was the first to validate the draft plan by signing the compact.	12
Figure 17: Members of DOPA, in solidarity show by hand their commitment to adopt and implement the plan.....	12
Figure 18: Other stakeholders including Fisheries Commission officers, Forestry Commission (Wildlife Division), Traditional leaders take their turn	13
Figure 19: Representative from Ghana Education Service (Ga South Municipal) signing the compact.	13
Figure 20: A Board member of DAA (Ebenezer Kottah, left) representing DAA and a representative of UCC, Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences (Madam Sheila Fynn Korsah) take their turn in the signing of the compact.....	14
Figure 21: The Chief Fisherman of Kokrobite (right), representing fishers in the areas signs the compact.	14
Figure 22: The SakumoWe of the Densu River flanked by the “river priest” Wulomo and other traditional leaders present officially cut the ribbon to signal the beginning of the oyster harvesting activities after the closed season observance.	15
Figure 23: The SakumoWe, pours libation, thanking and asking the “gods” for a bumper oyster harvesting season as he declares the delta open for oyster harvesting activities	15
Figure 24. The SakumoWe, Nii Ogbamy IV flanked by the river priest Nii Commey cutting the ribbons to signal the end closed season	16
Figure 25: The SakumoWe, Nii Ogbamy IV flanked by the river priest Nii Commey cuts the ribbons to signal the end of the five-half long closed season	16
Figure 26: Madam Bernice Agorogo and her companion, harvesting oysters.	17
Figure 27: River bed of the Densu Delta at Tsokomey at low tide showing a boost in the oyster population after the closed season observance.....	18
Figure 28: River bed of the Densu Delta at Tsokomey at low tide showing a boost in the oyster population after the closed season observance.....	18

Figure 29: Harvested oyster at the Densu Delta after the opening. 19
Figure 30: Madam Beatrice Kukapkor, with her harvested oysters after the closed season. ..19
Figure 31: Members of the 15 member Densu Delta Co-Management Committee20

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Open access to Ghana's fisheries resources has resulted in severe overfishing and near depletion of many localized small fishery resources such as oyster in the Densu Delta. This is due to a number of factors including but not limited to overexploitation and overcapacity of many fish resource users. However, these current trends must be reversed to ensure a sustainable fish production into the future.

Protecting local fish resources by the local community that depend on them for food is crucial for the survival of such communities. Managed access to a fishery resource will not only ensure food security but also sustain the economic and social livelihoods of the users that depend on them.

This Sustainable Oyster Fishery Management Plan for the Densu Delta builds on best practices and lessons learned from the USAID-Ghana's 10-day Regional Study Tour on Women's Empowerment and Post-Harvest Improvements in The Gambia and Senegal in 2016 involving 11 members of five women-led civil society organizations (CSOs) and the Fisheries Commission under the Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP).

In developing this community management plan, many stakeholders were engaged through a series of meetings, workshops and trainings, and a learning-by-doing approach at the oyster fishery resource in the Densu Estuary. Early response to equip community resource users with the capacity to address some of the major oyster fishery resource depletion challenges identified include;

- Observance of a 5 month closed season beginning mid November 2017 to mid-April 2018
- Training of 150 community oyster harvesters on oyster ecology and biology
- Training of 30 women on data collection on water quality
- The donation of a river boat to oyster pickers as on-the-water transport facilitate and ease data collection
- Mobilization of the Densu Oyster Picker Association into a formidable group.
- A study tour to Gambia by two DOPA members to observe successful traditional management of oysters and clams in the Tambi River Basin on mangrove restoration through replanting, and nursery management to improve oyster habitat.
- A study tour to observe traditional management of clams in the Volta estuary on mangrove restoration through replanting, and nursery management to improve oyster habitat.

DOPA's membership includes over 150 women who share and make decisions on the sustainable management of their oyster resource. In November 2017 they made a significant decision based on the science they've learned – to close their oyster grounds to harvesting for five months (*from mid-November 2017 to mid-April 2018*) to allow for the oysters to spawn and grow bigger over the period.

1.1 Objective

This photo report shows the series of activities carried out as part of the validation of the draft management plan and the "opening season" ceremony at Tsokomey in the Ga South Municipal Assembly in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The main objectives are;

- Celebrate the success of DOPA for implementing a five and half month long “closed season” for the Densu Delta (the first of its kind in the country for a community fishery resource).
- Validate the Densu Delta Oyster Fishery Management Plan by stakeholders
- Institutionalize the practice of oyster fishery closed season as part of the management of the estuary.

1.2 Expected Outcome

It is expected that, all major stakeholders in the Densu Delta Management plan will lend their full support and acceptance through the public signing of a compact signifying their acceptance of the draft co-management plan of the oyster fishery at the Densu Delta.

1.3 Stake Holders at the Validation Durbar (Participants)

A stakeholder validation durbar was held at Tsokmey landing site on the 10 of April, 2018. This durbar was attended by the Regional Fisheries Officer Mr. Scot Apewudza, representatives of;

- The traditional leaders from Bortianor, Tsokomey, SakumoWe of Bokum (Custodians of the Densu River – Nii Ogbami III),
- Ga South Municipal Assembly, the Zonal Fisheries Officer of Ga South Area (Madam Olivia Horvey),
- Assembly members of the Bortianor electoral area (Abraham Amaquaye),
- Chief Fisherman of Oshie,
- Chief fisherman of Kokrobite,
- Chief fisherman of Bortianor (Nii Akrama),
- The Media,
- Fish processors from Oshie, Kokrobite, Faana, Tsokomey, Bortianor,
- Fishermen from Bortianor, Tsokomey,
- Members of the Densu Pickers Association,
- Forestry Commission (Wild life Division),
- University of Cape Coast (Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences),
- Ghana Education Service (Ga South)

These representatives came to show their support and commitment for the draft Densu Delta Co-Management Plan.



Figure 1: Cross section of stakeholders invited to the event.

SECTION 2: MEMBERS OF DENSU OYSTER PICKERS ASSOCIATION – (D.O.P.A) SENSITIZES PUBLIC ON OYSTER MANAGEMENT PLAN AHEAD OF AN “OPENING SEASON” COMMUNITY DURBAR

The validation of the management plan coincided with the opening of the Densu Delta for the harvesting of oyster after an observance of a five –half month long closed season. The day began with a street-walk in Bortianor and Tsokomey to sensitize the community on the need for self-discipline, compliance and voluntarism in protecting community fishery resources and avoid over exploitation. Members of DoPA held placards with messages such as;

- Eat oysters for better health
- Save Mangroves today, more Mangroves tomorrow
- More oysters more money
- Let’s keep our beaches clean for healthy oysters
- Women support for mangroves
- Our oysters our heritage

The street placard walk was also to serve and inform the community of the existence of an association which is entrusted with the management of the Densu Delta for the exploitation of the oyster resource. The sensitization float ended at the venue for the official opening with merry making, singing and dancing.



Figure 2: Members of DOPA with their placards during the float.



Figure 3: Section of members of DOPA on the walk.



Figure 4: Members of DOPA on a street-walk.



Figure 5: A section of DOPA members on street-walk

SECTION 3: SOLIDARITY SPEECHES BY STAKEHOLDERS AT THE VALIDATION DURBAR

3.1 Solidarity Messages



Figure 6: Mr. Scot Apewudza, the Greater Accra Regional Director of Fisheries Commission delivering his solidarity message



Figure 7: Nii Adotei Akwei II, Chief fisherman of Kokrobite



Figure 8: Nii Arde Nkpa II, the head of family of Boartianor (the custodians of the Densu River) in Tsokomey delivering his solidarity message in support of the draft management plan.



Figure 9: Nii Ampofo of Sakumo of Bukom and also a member of the interim co-management planning committee.

3.2 Scientific Data Collection by Members of DOPA



Figure 10: Members (Patience Amudzi, left and Bernice Bebli right) of DOPA demonstrating how scientific data from the Densu Delta are taken.



Figure 11: Members of DOPA demonstrating management measures on the Densu Delta.

3.3 Sharing of Experiences – The Study Tour to the Gambia.

Some members of DOPA shared their experiences on the various capacity building and trainings they have received since the beginning of the oyster activities and co-management drafting processes begun. They have received training on oyster ecology and biology, research and data collection, mangrove replanting, mangrove nursery establishment, training on how to establish oyster Culture, hygienic oyster handling & processing and participated in a study tour to the Gambia.



Figure 12: Two members of DOPA (Bernice Agorogo, right and Beatrice Kukekpor, left) shared some of the lessons learned in Gambia

“One thing that gives me courage to be able to stand before this gathering is the fact that; when you go to Gambia, you will realize that almost all of the oyster women have not stepped foot in class rooms the whole of their life’s but are able to talk and advocate for their needs”.

Bernice Agorogo – Member of DOPA from Tsokomey branch and Co-Management Committee Member

“We have been taught how to hygienically handle Oysters, by washing them properly before cooking, we must dress neatly before working on oyster. We must wash our hands again before touching oysters after we use the wash room and finally we must also cover it well before pricing it for sale”.

Grace Agbeve - Member of DOPA from Tetegu branch and Co-Management Committee Member.



Figure 13: Some members of DOPA entertain in audience with a cultural dance.



Figure 14: Some members of DOPA entertain the audience and a role play goo



Figure 15: A member of DOPA, Mary Dedzo proudly display some oyster shells

SECTION 4: STAKEHOLDERS SIGN COMPACT TO VALIDATE THE DRAFT DENSU DELTA COMMUNITY CO-MANAGEMENT PLAN.

Several stakeholders signed a compact to publicly validate the draft Densu Delta management plan on oyster and also lend their support for the implementation of the Densu Delta Community Co-Management Plan for the Densu Delta. The stakeholders included the traditional leaders Numo Ogbamey III, the SakumoWulomor – the traditional custodian and head of the Densu delta in Tsokomey in the Ga South Municipal Assembly of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Others include the Greater Accra Regional Director of the Fisheries Commission – Mr. Scot Apewudza, Madam Olivia Horvey, the Zonal Fisheries Commission of the Ga Municipality, Chief fisherman of Kokrobite – Nii Adokwei II, representatives from the Forestry Commission, unit committee members, elders and the entire Densu Oyster Pickers Association (DOPA) pledged and validated the draft Co-Management plan by signing the management area map.

This public declaration paved the way for the implementation of other management measures contained in the management plan.



Figure 16: Nii Ogbamy the III, the SakumoWe of Bukom (the traditional custodians of the Densu River) was the first to validate the draft plan by signing the compact.



Figure 17: Members of DOPA, in solidarity show by hand their commitment to adopt and implement the plan



Figure 18: Other stakeholders including Fisheries Commission officers, Forestry Commission (Wildlife Division), Traditional leaders take their turn



Figure 19: Representative from Ghana Education Service (Ga South Municipal) signing the compact.



Figure 20: A Board member of DAA (Ebenezer Kottah, left) representing DAA and a representative of UCC, Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences (Madam Sheila Fynn Korsah) take their turn in the signing of the compact.



Figure 21: The Chief Fisherman of Kokrobite (right), representing fishers in the areas signs the compact.

SECTION 5: TRADITIONAL LEADERS PERFORM CEREMONY FOR OYSTER HARVESTING OPENING SEASON AT THE DENSU DELTA

5.1 Declaring the Densu Delta Open for oyster harvesting

As part of the validation exercise, the SakumoWe, Chief Priest together with other traditional leaders' performed "rituals" to ceremonially declare the Densu Delta open for oyster harvesting after the observance of a five-half long month closed season.

This was done to institutionalize the practice of closed season on the Densu Delta for oyster harvesting activities during the period set aside by the Densu Co-Management committee. The SakumoWe who is highly revered among the community members led this activity in order to heighten the stature and increase self-compliance among the community folks.



Figure 22: The SakumoWe of the Densu River flanked by the "river priest" Wulomo and other traditional leaders present officially cut the ribbon to signal the beginning of the oyster harvesting activities after the closed season observance.



Figure 23: The SakumoWe, pours libation, thanking and asking the "gods" for a bumper oyster harvesting season as he declares the delta open for oyster harvesting activities



Figure 24. The SakumoWe, Nii Ogbamy IV flanked by the river priest Nii Commey cutting the ribbons to signal the end closed season



Figure 25: The SakumoWe, Nii Ogbamy IV flanked by the river priest Nii Commey cuts the ribbons to signal the end of the five-half long closed season

SECTION 6: OYSTERS HARVESTERS OBSERVES BOOST IN OYSTERS AFTER OBSERVING A “CLOSE SEASON”

On 12th April 2018, two (2) days after “opening season” ceremony to mark the beginning of oyster harvesting at the Densu Delta, several oyster pickers from Tsokomey, Tetegu and Bortianor communities reported high volumes of oysters harvested after a five (5) month period of a “closed season”.

The excited pickers also reported increase in the weight of the oysters in the Delta. They were now convinced on the benefits of instituting responsible fishing and adopting management measures to local resources.



Figure 26: Madam Bernice Agorogo and her companion, harvesting oysters.

“The closed season was a great opportunity for us. When we reopened I made GHC80 (\$20) a day. That was not possible before” says Bernice, a mother of three. “Now we want the closed season to happen every year”

Bernice Agorogo an oyster picker from Tsokomey in the Ga South Municipal.



Figure 27: River bed of the Densu Delta at Tsokomey at low tide showing a boost in the oyster population after the closed season observance



Figure 28: River bed of the Densu Delta at Tsokomey at low tide showing a boost in the oyster population after the closed season observance



Figure 29: Harvested oyster at the Densu Delta after the opening.



Figure 30: Madam Beatrice Kukapkor, with her harvested oysters after the closed season.

SECTION 7: CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

7.1 Conclusion

The invited stakeholders, the people in the community and DOPA members were excited about the success of the program. Even though it rained prior to the program most people still turned up to support.

Stakeholders pledged their support by signing the Co-Management Compact.

7.2 Next Steps

The next steps following the validation the Densu Delta Oyster Community co-management plan include the following:

- Continuous socialization of the content of the management plan, especially the management measures and the various roles for stakeholders
- Collaborate with the Zonal Fisheries Commission officer to build support for the adoption by the Regional Director of fisheries and MOFAD.
- Strengthen the capacity of the co-management committee and improve the communication between the committee and the various stakeholders.
- Increase the visibility of the management committee in the implementation of the early management measures.



Figure 31: Members of the 15 member Densu Delta Co-Management Committee

APPENDIX 1

8.1 Participant List