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USAID/GHANA SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROJECT (SFMP)

TRY Oyster Women's Association Technical Assistance Visit to DAA and Densu Oyster Picker's Association



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THE
UNIVERSITY
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OF OCEANOGRAPHY



TRY
Oyster Women's Association,
The Gambia

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Cover photo: Densu Oyster Picker's Association, TRY Oyster Women's Association and Development Action Associates participants at the DAA Center in Ghana.
(PHOTO CREDIT: TOWA)

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SNV: <http://www.snvworld.org/en/countries/ghana>

ACRONYMS

CCM	Centre for Coastal Management
CEWEFIA	Central and Western Region Fishmongers Improvement Association
CRC	Coastal Resource Center
CSLP	Coastal Sustainable Landscape Project
DAA	Development Action Association
DOPA	Densu Oyster Pickers Association
DQF	Daasgift Quality Foundation
FtF	Feed the Future
HM	Hen Mpoano
MOFAD	Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
SFMP	Sustainable Fisheries Management Project
SNV	Netherlands Development Organization
SSG	SSG Advisors
TOWA	TRY Oyster Women Association
UCC	University of Cape Coast
URI	University of Rhode Island
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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INTRODUCTION

The USAID/Ghana Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) is using a peer to peer learning approach to support development of a women-led shellfish co-management planning process in the Densu River estuary in Ghana in partnership with Development Action Associates (DAA). This activity is part of that approach. It builds on Technical Assistance provided by the TRY Oyster Women Association (TOWA) of The Gambia in January 2017 to conduct a Participatory Rural Appraisal of oyster harvesting communities and activities in the Densu River estuary. The purpose of this current Technical Assistance visit was to follow up on a recent March 2018 study tour of two Densu Oyster Picker's Association (DOPA) oyster pickers and one DAA staff from Ghana to The Gambia and to support the application of lessons learned. The Ghanaian women came to The Gambia to visit oyster harvesting communities and learn the best oyster harvesting methods, good governance and co-management practices, as well as post-harvest processing and marketing techniques.

From May 1 – 5, 2018, a team of three people led by Fatou Janha, Director of TOWA, Lamin Saine from the Department of Parks and Wildlife and Isatou Jarju from TOWA, conducted a 5-day visit to the DOPA women oyster pickers in the Densu River estuary delta in Ghana.

Learning Objectives included:

- Consider co-management institution governance best practices, challenges, successes and lessons learned.
- Consider co-management institution relationships with government institutions, challenges, successes and lessons learned, especially those responsible for RAMSAR sites.
- Share mangrove stewardship best practices and community outreach and communication
- Consider post-harvest processing improvements and market development initiatives that might be undertaken by Densu River estuary oyster communities.
- Share strategies for harvest data collection.

DAY 1 – 1ST MAY: DENSU RIVER TOUR

The team had the chance to observe DOPA data collectors. The collectors shared the training gained from the University of Cape Coast (UCC) on how to use the water quality testing equipment. The data collection is done twice in a month on full-moon and half-moon. The team travelled by boat on the river to visit the pilot oyster farm and for the women to demonstrate the water sampling tests. It was quite impressive seeing the local women doing their own testing.

We visited the depleted mangroves in the river where forestry officers use seedlings, as opposed to The Gambia where propagules gathered from the wild are directly planted. Mr. Lamin Saine of the Gambia and Mr. Andrew Agyekumhene of Ghana Forestry Commission exchanged notes and ideas.



Figure 1 Densu river tour group

DAY 2 – 2ND MAY: LOCAL COMMUNITY VISITS

It is tradition to visit and inform all community heads and heads of the fishing villages to announce your mission before being welcomed to start any program successfully. The team visited the three communities of Sakamore, Bartianor and Kokrobite who welcomed us and hosted the exercise for the whole day.



Figure 2 Community visit - elders of Sakamore, Bationor and Kokrobite who welcomed us and hosted the exercise for the whole day

DAY 3 – 3RD MAY: MEETING AT DAA FISHERIES TRAINING CENTER

A large group of women from communities around Densu estuary attended the meeting. It started with introductions of members and their origins. The DOPA oyster pickers and DAA representative gave a detailed report of their trip to The Gambia. There were many questions raised by the women, which generated debate among the participants.

DAA and DOPA further talked about some of the programs they have started such as oyster culture farming, mangrove planting and bottling oysters for preservation. They spoke about the organizational structure they created and the awareness raising on co-management implementation.

Sarah Agbey-Dedei of SNV, who attended with Maurice Knight, Chief of Party of USAID/SFMP, expressed delight with the women. She advised the women to work together as a team to protect and preserve the mangrove for the future generations.



Figure 3 Isatou Jarju of TRY Oyster Women Association speaks at the meeting at the DAA Center

DAY 4 – 4TH MAY: COOKING SESSION AND EXCHANGING OF OYSTER RECIPES

This session was dedicated to preparing oyster-based dishes and exchange of recipes. It was led by the Center Manager Mrs. Emelia Nortey. It was most interesting because both men and women participated and listened carefully.

Isatou Jarju and Fatou Janha demonstrated how to clean oysters to remove sand and mud, and prepared oyster jollof rice, oyster stew and oyster sandwiches. The Ghanaian participants prepared oyster okra soup served with Banku. Isatou also demonstrated how oysters are bottled and dried in The Gambia.



Figure 4 Cooking session

DAY 5 – 5TH MAY: RECAP

The final day of the program was to recap lessons learned during the visits. There were interactive discussions and all the women expressed their satisfaction on the program as a whole. They raised issues about marketing, membership dues, the closed season and problems from the fishermen and their nets destroying the mangroves planted. They also expressed concern about the effects of the dam opening on the oysters.

At the end of the day a co-management song was composed with the help of Abraham and the women were able to memorize and understand the meaning and sang with joy.

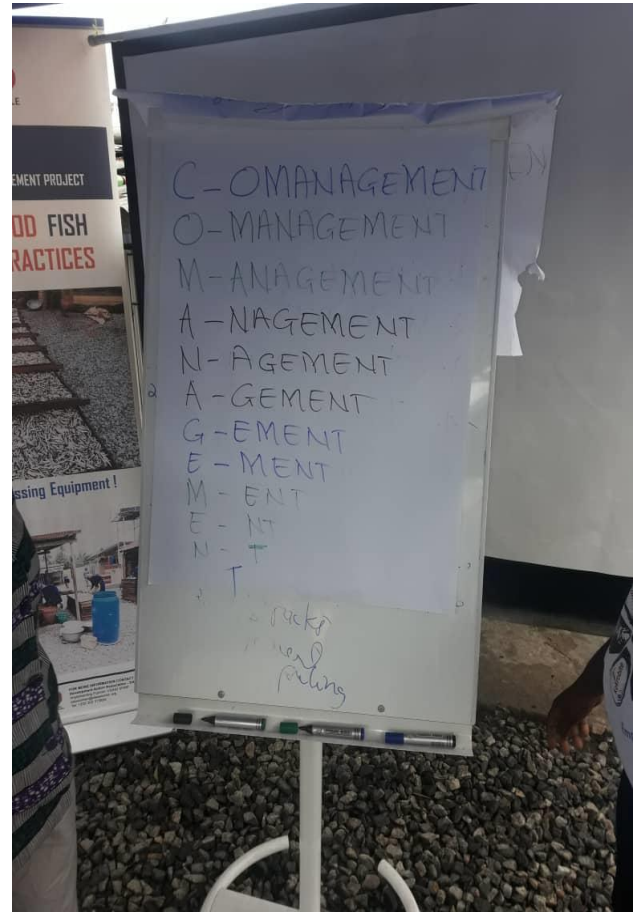


Figure 5 Presentations on water quality testing & the co-management song

Suggestions for further development

- There is a need to conduct additional Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) exercises in other communities sharing the Densu delta estuary resources. Assessment of and outreach to all the resource user communities as a first step and as an on-going process to understand fully who is currently harvesting and using the oyster resources and how they are doing it is important. In Tetegu the elders claimed that they were unaware of DAA activities in the Densu River Delta. As a result, working together may be difficult. Someone like Francis Amporfo, Sakumo We Family Representation (traditional river chief) might be well placed to lead a meeting in these communities not currently well engaged to hear from them about their involvement in resource use and their ideas for engagement.
- Establishment of trust from the community members should be primary before DOPA membership dues are collected.
- Encourage co-management practices involving the different stake holders.

- It might be premature to start closing and opening of the oyster season as this may create oversupply of oysters while demand and prices are still very low. More focus should be put on market development at this stage.
- Despite the high price of oysters in the world, they are still very cheap in Ghana. This is because the processing is very poor and it is commonly accepted that oysters are eaten with sand and grit in them. There is low awareness of the nutritional values and the luxury of eating oysters in Ghana.
- Capacity building is needed within the DAA office on oyster management and value chain additions.
- From the short visit they had in The Gambia, the DOPA women were able to start a pilot program on oyster culture farming. However, observing them on site, it is apparent that more training is needed.
- Observations were also made on environmental pollution in the form of plastic waste in the mangroves. It is therefore highly recommended that the community be educated and sensitized on the negative effects of plastic waste in the environment. The biggest challenge in the Densu river is how to sensitize the communities and primarily the fishermen to understand the value of the mangroves and its positive effects on the environment.

It is very clear the women are very hard working and enthusiastic about the work of sustainable oyster and mangrove ecosystem management, especially after seeing their fellow African women doing the same work. That women learn effectively from their peers has been demonstrated and validated during this visit.



Figure 6 Fatou Janha conducts an oyster rack culture demonstration



Figure 7 Plastic pollution in the Delta River

ITINERARY: TRY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE VISIT TO GHANA.

DATE: APRIL 30 - 6TH MAY, 2018.

ARRIVAL- Monday, April 30

- Arrival by air from Gambia
- Check inn at Hotel (To be determined by SFMP Head Office)

DAY 1 - Tuesday May 1

- Holiday – May- Day
- Data Collection Densu River Tour

Table 1 DAY 2 – Wednesday May 2

TIME	PROGRAM
7:30am	Pick up Fatou and team from hotel
9:00am	Visit to Sakumorwe (Traditional Head- James Town, the Sakumorwe/ Sakumor family who are custodians of the Densu estuary)
10:30am	Snack break
11:00am	Visit to Tetegu Elders (Oyster harvesting community)
12:30pm	Visit to Solowulormor - Bortianor
1:30pm	Visit to Kokrobite Chief Fisherman
2:30pm	Visit to Bortianor Chief Fisherman
3::00pm	Lunch
3:30pm	Visit to Tsokome Elders
4:30PM	Departure

Table 2 DAY 3 – Thursday May 3

TIME	PROGRAM
8:am	Arrival at DFTC
9:30am	<p>Meeting with Densu Oyster Pickers Association- DOPA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Power point presentation by DOPA members on oyster activities ➤ Sharing of experiences of the visitors from Ghana and Gambia ➤ Review of study tour experiences application in the Densu Delta

TIME	PROGRAM
11:30am	Snack Break
12:00pm	Boat ride to the entire Estuary Basin – Harvesting sites (Tsokomey, Faana, Tetegu (depending on the tides)). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Trip discussions, observations and lesson learned ➤ Questions and answers on the management of oyster activities in Ghana ➤ Mangrove protection and restoration activities
2:00pm	Lunch
2:30pm	Meeting with Wildlife of Gambia and Ghana (Wildlife resource persons sharing and exchange session on shellfish co – management in RAMSAR sites.)
4:10pm	Preparation for day five
4:30pm	Closure & Departure

Table 3 DAY 4 – Friday May 4

TIME	PROGRAM
8am	Arrival at iDFTC
8:30am	Oyster value addition training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Grilling ➤ Bottling ➤ Drying, Frying, Salad, Sauce etc.
1:30pm	Lunch with oyster dishes (Fish/Oyster dishes tasting bazaar at DFTC Kokrobite)

Table 4 DAY 6 – Sunday May 6

TIME	PROGRAM
1:00pm – 3:00pm	Debrief at SFMP Head Office <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Outcomes ➤ Recommendations and next steps ➤ Prepare for travel to Benin

- Trip to Benin