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SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROJECT (SFMP)

Dialogue 2 - Follow-Up Meeting With Efutu and Gomoa West District Assemblies



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Cover photo: Leaders of fish processors Associations in Apam with leading members of Gomoa West district Assembly (Credit: Development Action Association)

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ACRONYMS

DAA Development Action Association

IUU Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated

MCE Municipal Chief Executive

SNV Netherlands Development Organization

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SUMMARY

On 5th September 2017, there was a dialogue between fisher folks, District Assemblies of Efutu Municipal and Gomoa West and the Fisheries Commission to address the prevalence of IUU and District Bye-laws regulating fishing and fish processing activities in the Central Region of Ghana, especially Apam and Winneba. The weak enforcement and noncompliance had led to gradual decrease in the stock of fish within Ghana's marine waters due to increasing fishing effort. The resource users as well as stakeholders, law enforcement and byelaw regulating bodies were brought to a central point to dialogue and come out with lasting solutions to the issue of IUU and noncompliance of Fisheries laws in the Country.

The District fisheries bye-laws were read and interpreted to the understanding of the fisher folks for them to abide by the laws. The chief fisherman of Winneba made a promise to sensitize fisher folks and regulate activities of fishermen so as to end IUU fishing. Fishermen and fish processors supported the Chief fisherman to end IUU fishing at the Winneba Landing Beach and beyond.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rate of unapproved methods of fishing at the Winneba Landing Beach is beyond control. The fishermen at the Winneba Landing Beach use unapproved means and methods of fishing. This has contributed to depletion and over exploitation of fish stock in the marine waters of Ghana. Due to prevalence of IUU Fishing in this community, a dialogue was held with Efutu Municipal Assembly and Fisheries Commission at Winneba to verify the roles and challenges which the Chief fisherman and the Assembly face in regulating fishing activities at the landing Beach of Winneba.

The increase in the challenge of unapproved methods of fishing at the Winneba landing beach has created urgent attention. Consequently, a dialogue with the District Assembly and Fisheries Commission was held at the Assembly's Conference Hall to help solve the issue.

There were 16 stakeholders in this dialogue of which 9 were males and 7 were females.

1.1 Objectives

- To ascertain if there are fisheries bye-laws at the District level to regulate fishing activities.
- To know if the District faces any challenges in combating unapproved fishing methods.
- To know some of the problems faced by the Fisheries Commission in regulating activities of fishermen.
- To ascertain the challenges faced by the chief fisherman in his effort to combat light fishing at the Winneba Landing Beach.
- Follow up on the Winneba Beach Beautification Project initiated by the Efutu Municipal Assembly.

1.2 Expected Outcomes of Dialogue 2

Fishermen will understand the current situation of fisheries in Ghana and stop IUU fishing. The District Assemblies and Fisheries Commission will educate and sensitize fisher folks on the bye-laws governing the activities. Fish processors will produce hygienic fish and fish products to markets.

1.3 Opening and Welcome Address

The meeting began with an opening prayer by Mrs. Florence Nartey, followed by a welcome address by the assistant coordinating Director. In his submission, he thanked the Development Action Association and the Fisheries Commission for the consistent support given to the municipal Assembly in the fight against illegal fishing activities in the municipality.

1.4 Purpose of Dialogue

Mr. Abraham Asare gave the purpose of the meeting as one that will help rule out the challenges realized after the decision to ban light fishing by the chief fisherman of Winneba. For sustainability by the Fisheries Commission and other stakeholders of the decision the chief fisherman made a few months earlier, there was the need for vigilance in implementation of the laws.

He asked the chief fisherman about the current situation at the landing sites. The secretary to the chief fisherman responded that issues at the landing sites have been so politicized; thus expanding the challenges for laws to be adhered to by the fishermen.



Figure 1. Cross-section of Stakeholders during the dialogue with the Efutu Municipal Assembly

2. ISSUES RAISED AND POSSIBLE SUGGESTION

The chief fisherman of Winneba said that when he took the decision to ban light fishing, compliance was successful for about five months only. The fishermen in Winneba were angry and decided to continue using light fishing methods since the fishermen in Apam and Mankoadze were still practicing such acts. As such, he pleaded with the government to support and enforce the laws to deter the other two communities under the Gomoa West District Assembly. He called for awareness creation and sensitization to stop such practices.

The chief fisherman was asked whether light fishing was still being practiced in Winneba to which he affirmed. A member blamed the Municipal Assembly for the ineffectiveness of enforcing the law and succumbing to political pressure by freeing culprits found guilty of breaking the laws.

Mr. Kyikyibi Bondzie (a fisherman) denied that there was no fish in the sea due to the use of light fishing by Winneba fishermen, but rather that fishermen from elsewhere engage in light fishing in Winneba. He suggested arrest and expulsion of such people from Winneba anytime they are seen.

Mr. Baiden (Fisheries Commission officer) asked the Municipal Assembly to provide the fishermen with police and military enforcement personnel to maintain law and order at the landing beach.

Abraham Asare asked when the enforcement of laws with respect to light fishing would materialize, since the Fisheries Commission had the mandate and responsibility of calling for enforcement from the central Government.



Figure 2. Leader of the Fishermen at Winneba Landing Beach suggesting possible ways to end light fishing



Figure 3. Chief fisherman promising to ban light fishing at the Winneba Landing Beach

He said that although military enforcement was available, the Commission mostly preferred using peaceful means of dealing with violations of illegal fishing practices. He however assured stakeholders that shortly military enforcement would be evident at the Winneba landing beach.

Mr. Anthony Appiah said that a long list of fishing laws had already been explained to the fishermen, purposely because the Fisheries Commission wanted to use voluntary compliance and co-management for the stakeholders to fight against light fishing. He added that recently, the Municipal Chief Executive suggested a stakeholders' round table meeting between the Effutu Municipal Assembly, Gomoa West District Assembly, the police, Fisheries Commission, fishermen and other stakeholders; since Apam and Mankoadze are the communities continuously practicing light fishing. He indicated that the Adiso Committee is also planning to meet with the Member of Parliament, the Municipal Chief Executive and the Fisheries Commission.

Mercy Frimpong (fish processor) indicated that, "fish processors are part of the light fishing challenge". She explained that they travel from Winneba to the communities practicing light fishing, namely Apam and Mankoadze to buy fish harvested with light.



Figure 4. Madam Judith Ayitey communicating support of fish processors at Winneba Landing Beach to combat unapproved methods of fishing



Figure 5. Madam Mercy Frimpong, a fish processor from Winneba explaining what encourages fishermen to use light in fishing

She explained that as such fishermen in Winneba will be encouraged to also use light fishing since women patronize the fish.

She indicated that at Nyanyano and other places, the chief fisherman has formed a security enforcement team of fishermen that patrol and arrest strangers who come to fish illegally in their territory; and that if Winneba also cultivates this practice, it would help stop the light fishing menace.

The Municipal Chief Executive (MCE) said that since Nyanyano and other communities have been able to stop light fishing; fish processors, Fisheries Commission and the Development Action Association should support the move to use the police to enforce the laws.

He added that politicizing issues at the landing beaches must be resisted for the wellbeing of fishing communities.

Abraham Asare asked the MCE about the beach beautification project proposed by the Municipal Assembly. He revealed that plans were far advanced to start a coconut plantation from Akosua village to the Winneba landing beach but due to the open defecation issues at the beach, the assembly was going to build toilet facilities at the beach. Abraham Asare suggested that the Netherlands SNV should sponsor building the toilet facilities at the beaches.

3. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recognition and assumption of duty of konkohemaas at the landing beaches.
- Involvement of others (opposition) in decision making.
- Meeting of stakeholders from Gomoa West District Assembly and Efutu Municipal Assembly on light fishing.
- Meeting of stakeholders and Fisheries Commission on awards to fishermen.
- Meeting with subcommittee members responsible for fisheries award selection to sensitize them on unapproved methods of fishing for selection of fishermen for the awards.

4. CONCLUSION

The Municipal Executive Director promised to form Winneba Landing Beach Committee to reinforce the Municipal Fisheries Bye-laws to regulate activities of fishermen.

A decision was also reached at the dialogue to bring on board all stakeholders from Apam, Mumford and the surrounding communities to find lasting solutions to IUU fishing in the country.