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SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROJECT (SFMP)

Hygienic Fish Handling, New Improved Stove And Consumer Awareness Campaign



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Cover photo Participants possessing during the campaign at Moree (Rose Affel)

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ACRONYMS

| | |
|---------|--|
| CEWEFIA | Central and Western Region Fishmongers Improvement Association |
| CRC | Coastal Resource Center |
| CSLP | Coastal Sustainable Landscape Project |
| CLaT | Child Labor and Trafficking |
| DAA | Development Action Association |
| IUU | Illegal Unreported Unregulated |
| SFMP | Sustainable Fisheries Management Project |
| SNV | Netherlands Development Organization |
| URI | University of Rhode Island |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Hygienic Fish Handling, New Improved Oven and Consumer Awareness Creation Campaigns were organized in the four Project target Communities in Central and Western Regions of Ghana namely Elmina, Moree, Anlo-Beach and Sekondi/Ngyeresia. Each of the campaigns was climaxed with a grand durbar. In all, 483 people participated in the campaign comprising of Chiefs, Chief Fishermen, Canoe Owners, Elders, Market Queens, District Assembly Representatives, Food and Drugs Authority Representatives and Fishermen and Fish Processors/Mongers. The campaign has for its purpose awareness creation on the importance of handling fish under hygienic conditions from net to plate. It was also to educate the people on the new improved oven (Ahotor Oven). The durbar ended successfully with its objectives achieved.

SECTION 1 BACKGROUND

Hygienic Fish Handling Campaign is often organized to create awareness among the people on the need to handle fish under proper hygienic conditions. The campaign gives us the opportunity to re-sensitize the consumers on what to look out for when patronizing fish and fish products. This also helps increase people's awareness level on the new improved fish smoking oven which is locally known as Ahotor Oven.

In line with IR 3 of Year 4 Work Plan of SFMP, CEWEFIA is to organize a Hygienic Fish Handling and New Improved Oven Campaign among the target communities. In light of this, a one-day Hygienic Fish Handling, New Improved Oven and Consumers Awareness Creation campaign was organized at Elmina, Moree, Anlo-Beach and Sekondi on 31st January 2018, 1st and 8th February 2018. At Moree and Elmina it was held on 31st January, 2018; on 1st February at Sekondi and lastly on 8th February at Anlo Beach.

1.1 Goal

Improvement in the knowledge of Fish Handling Practices and New Improved Oven among the beneficiaries and the community as a whole.

1.2 Campaign Objectives:

The objectives of the campaign were

1. To increase awareness level of participants on hygienic handling of fish and fish products
2. To sensitize consumers to be aware of what to look out for when patronizing fish and fish products
3. To educate the community on the new improved smoking oven

1.3 Expected Outcomes

Expected outcomes of the campaign include:

1. The campaign will change the old ways of fish processors in handling fish for marketing centers.
2. Processors will be well-equipped to handle fish in a proper hygienic condition in order to produce quality, safe and healthy fish.
3. Consumers will be well abreast with the quality of fish to purchase
4. The awareness level of the participants on the new improved oven would be increased for its adoption.

SECTION 2 HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MEETING

In each of the target communities, the campaign started with a float. The participants accompanied by brass band music and police escort marched through the principal streets with placards bearing fisheries messages such as, “Together we can sustain our fisheries; Let’s fish responsibly; Irresponsible fishing destroys our fish; Use the new improved fish smoking oven for improved health and more profit.” After the float, all the participants converged at the durbar grounds where the program was officially held.

2.1 Attendance

A total number of 483 people attended the program comprising of Chiefs, Council of Elders, Chief fishermen, Women Fish Processors, Fishermen, Canoe Owners, Queen Mother (Anlo Beach), Market Queens (Konkohen), representatives of Fisheries Commission (Central and Western Regions), Ghana Education Service, Municipal/District Assemblies of KEEA, AAK and Shama, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Food and Drugs Authority of Cape Coast and Sekondi, Albert Bosomtwe Sam Fishing Harbor Representatives, Environmental Health Department etc.

The details of the attendance are provided in the Table below:

Table 1 Detailed attendance of Participants at the Campaign at Sekondi, Anlo Beach, Elmina and Moree

| Community | Male | Female | Total |
|------------|------|--------|-------|
| Sekondi | 18 | 73 | 91 |
| Moree | 22 | 140 | 162 |
| Elmina | 2 | 74 | 76 |
| Anlo-Beach | 32 | 122 | 154 |
| Total | 74 | 409 | 483 |

2.2 Purpose of Gathering

The purpose of the gathering was given by Nicholas Smith, the Project Officer for Central Region. According to him the campaign was to create awareness of the need to handle fish under proper hygienic conditions and for consumers to be aware of safe and healthy fish and fish products. It further aimed at increasing the awareness level on the new improved oven (locally called Ahotor Oven) and its usage for profit maximization, quality fish and improved health of processors.

2.3 A message from official's present

The representatives from Municipal and District Assemblies and also the Government Agencies were given the opportunity to speak at the program. Below is the summary of their messages:

At Elmina, Mr. Benjamin E. Mensah (KEEA Municipal Deputy Coordinating Director), in his speech urged all the fisher folks to stop incurring avoidable cost in their fishing businesses by making use of the best fishing and fish smoking practices through education given by CEWEFIA and other NGOs who organize similar programs for them. He further touched on the nutrition and health value of fish and urged the fish processors to consider hygiene in their fish processing activities.



Figure 1 participants in procession during the campaign at Moree

Mr. Kwame Damoah, the Acting Regional Director of Fisheries Commission in the Central Region also highlighted the closed season which is currently being implemented by the industrial fishing vessels. He assured the fishermen and fishmongers of improvement in the fish stocks in subsequent years. He cautioned all fisher folks to comply with every fisheries rules and regulations which govern fishing businesses in order to ensure the realization of the fish stocks being replenished. He pleaded that fisher folks should support them in executing their duties. He further spoke on Ahotor oven with emphasis on some of the benefits of the new improved fish smoking oven. Some of the benefits according to him were less fuel wood, quality fish, more profits and good health. He concluded by urging all and sundry to adopt the new improved oven.

The Planning Officer for KEEA municipality also stressed on good fishing practices. He opined that the fishermen should use good methods in fishing and shun illegal fishing. He also advised the fishmongers to use ice blocks to keep their fish fresh and to keep them in good condition.

The Elmina Market Queen also urged the women fish processors to use the new improved technology to smoke their fish for quality fish. She added that they should apply the lessons from the education and training given to them by CEWEFIA, especially fish handling education.

Representatives from Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) in the Central Region also touched on the nutritional value of fish and the need for the consumers to consider the health aspect whenever they are patronizing fish products. They said fish is food and that we must treat it as such.

At Sekondi, the Fisheries Commission representative added that we must respond to positive change especially in our fishing business. He said there are so many diseases that we get from handling fish under unhygienic condition, and that the fishmonger should observe hygiene to avoid contracting such diseases. He further highlighted on some of the bad fishing practices

such as light fishing, chemical fishing, fishing with small size net etc., and urged the fishermen to desist from these and other bad practices and observe the good fishing practices. He again encouraged the women to use the new improved fish smoking oven for quality fish.

The General Manager of Albert Bosomtwe Sam Fishing Harbor and Ghana Ports and Harbors Authority in Sekondi placed emphasis on the problem of fishmongers not selling their fish under the shed provided at the harbor. He said fish must be sold under a shade not in the sun; and that consumers should take note whenever buying fish. He urged the fishmongers to desist from pouring fresh fish onto the quay or the platform while counting it at the shore, and also from selling close to the sea shore.

Another Officer also added that women had power to influence change. She said the women should know that they had the ability to influence the fishermen to fish responsibly. She urged the women to make use of their feminine power and ability to effect positive change in the fishing business.

At Anlo-Beach, the Chief of Anlo Beach (Torgbui Tekple Garrikor I) shared his concern on the need for fishermen and women fish processors to adhere to good fishing practices. The facilitator (Miss Josephine O. Addo) in her introduction opined that the fishermen should maintain the fish fresh always using ice blocks. She further pleaded with the Chief Fishermen present to ensure their fishermen keep the fish fresh and of the highest quality after harvesting.

On the issue of Ahotor Oven she explained the financial scheme of the oven and how interested persons could obtain one. The environmental compliance that one owning the oven must meet prior to the building of the oven was also explained. The environment for the construction of the oven must be clean, devoid of stagnant water, refuse dump and rodents. There should be provision of hand washing equipment and the place should be plastered or cemented for easy cleaning.

At Anlo-Beach, the Environmental Health Officer from Shama District Assembly was given the platform to make a presentation. In her speech she congratulated SFMP Partners on the good work done at the coastal communities towards ensuring replenishment of the marine fish stock and general sanity in the fishing business in Ghana. She highlighted on the report of a meeting she attended at Takoradi which was organized for fisheries stakeholders from the six coastal Districts in the Western Region early this year.

2.4 Summary of key points of the meeting.

1. Registration of Canoes: it was agreed at the meeting that all fishermen should register their canoes with the Fisheries Commission. This according to her will help regulate the number of canoes on the sea. Also the data obtained from the registration can guide in planning for any developmental intervention in Fisheries.
2. Transshipment (popularly called Saiko): the fishermen were encouraged to desist from Saiko business and that there would be a ban on Saiko business.
3. Quality fish: the fishermen and fishmonger were encouraged to patronize good quality fish for maximum income.
4. Good fishing practices: the fishermen were urged to avoid fishing using small mesh size net, poisonous chemicals, defying fishing holidays etc.
5. Alternative livelihoods: alternative livelihood skills were also promoted among the fisher folks especially during the lean season. Since fishing is seasonal, the alternative livelihood skills will help the fisher folks to always be in business during the lean season.

6. Personal Savings: personal savings was encouraged among the fisher folks especially women fishmongers and processors.

She concluded by encouraging fishermen and women to comply with the rules and regulations governing fisheries sector, especially the ones just mentioned above in order to ensure sanity in the fishing business. Also the fish processors should adapt the use of the new improved smoking oven for quality fish and improved health; and also observe hygiene when handling fish in any form.

2.5 Open forum

Participants were allowed to share their views. These were some of the views shared by the participants:

1. One of the participants from Elmina pleaded with the fishermen to shun illegal fishing because according to them it affects their fish processing business. She further encouraged the women to take firm action to avoid buying bad fish.
2. Another participant from Sekondi urged the fishmongers to make use of the fish market provided at the landing site, and desist from selling fish in the sun. The processors should observe sanity in processing their fish.

2.6 Presentation of Ice Boxes

The SFMP Officers from Accra led by Dr. Margaret Atikpo together with the Fisheries Commission representatives presented two ice boxes to Sekondi/Ngyeresia community to be used by the fishmongers, two to Elmina community and one to Moree community. The presentation was led by Dr. Margaret Atikpo. According to her it was a pilot based project.

In Sekondi the participants were formed into two groups, the Ngyresia-Essikado group and European Town–Sekondi group. The names of each group were taken. This grouping was also repeated in Elmina and Moree. Dr. Margaret Atikpo pleaded with the leaders of each group to ensure effective handling and use of the ice boxes.

SECTION 3 CHALLENGES

1. These were the challenges encountered during the campaign in all the four communities (Elmina, Moree, Anlo-Beach and Sekondi):
2. Most of the community members, especially fishermen and fish processors who were not CEWEFIA-trained members had the perception that if there was any durbar or campaign program, only the CEWEFIA members were supposed to attend.
3. Almost all fish processors purchase fresh fish with trays and bowls which collect oil, water and blood from the fish thereby facilitating its spoilage.
4. The fishmongers who sell fresh fish at the landing site at Albert Bosomtwe Sam Fishing Harbor (Essikado) do not patronize the shed provided thereby selling the fresh fish in the sun which leads to spoilage by the heat of the sun.
5. Most of the members in all the project communities are crying out for soft loans due to financial difficulties.
6. Some of the fish processors who process fish by salting and drying have no raised structures to dry their fish on. Thus they dry the fish on the ground.
7. Some of the fish processors still smoke fish under unhygienic conditions, despite the numerous hygienic fish handling trainings and education.
8. At Sekondi, misinformation on the use of the new improved oven is preventing many fish processors from adopting it.

9. Some of the members demand for items such as T-shirts and money before they would participate in any fisheries programs.
10. The poor security network at Elmina fish market poses a threat to the fishmongers and fishermen, as well as the market queens.

SECTION 4 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. More fish smoking demonstrations on the Ahotor oven should be organized to convince the fish processors to adopt it.
2. At Sekondi, more of CEWEFIA activities or events and durbars should be organized at the Albert Bosomtwe Sam Fishing Harbor to yield the maximum result, since most of the fisher folks from far and near converge there.
3. The Chief Fisherman at Moree recommended to the fish processors to use wooden or plastic crates to buy the fresh fish to minimize fresh fish spoilage.
4. The fishermen and fishmongers/processors should use ice blocks to keep the fish fresh all the time to reduce postharvest losses. The market queens (Konkohenmaa) must ensure quality fresh fish is provided to the fishmongers at the landing sites.
5. The Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly assured the fish processors at the European Town of Sekondi that more smoking sheds would be constructed by the municipality to supplement the existing ones. This has been factored into the Metropolitan Assembly's 2018 - 2021 Medium Term Development Plan.
6. The General Manager of Albert Bosomtwe Sam Fishing Harbor and Ghana Ports and Harbors Authority assured all the women who patronized the harbor of maximum security.
7. At Elmina landing site, the KEEA Municipal Assembly promised the fisher folks that all the broken gates and doors would be repaired and locks provided with keys to ensure security. Again urinal and toilet facility will be provided at the fish market.

Additional Lessons Learned:

1. More fish smoking demonstrations when organized will convince most of the fish processors to adopt the use of the AHhotor oven.
2. At Sekondi/Ngyeresia, more CEWEFIA's intervention activities when organized at the Essikado Fishing Harbor will yield the maximum results since most of the fishers from far and near converge there to do their fish business.
3. The problem of fish spoilage can be minimized if fish processors/mongers adopt the use of either wooden/plastic crates or raffia/plastic baskets to store the fish at the landing sites before buying and sending it to be processed.
4. A lot of fish processors and fish mongers will participate fully in CEWEFIA's planned activities if it finds the need to provide them with soft loans.

SECTION 5 CONCLUSIONS

The campaign was very successful. All the fish processors in the target communities appreciated the efforts by CEWEFIA to enlighten them on the best practices of handling fish from net to plate, to maximize profits. Amongst all the project targeted communities where the program was organized, almost all the fish processors, fishermen and fisher folks who participated in the placard procession amidst brass band music, and at the Durbars appreciated the efforts in implementing various activities under the USAID/SFM Project including the just ended activity in their communities all in the name of sustaining the fishing industry. Moreover, the participants stated categorically that, they were going to complement CEWEFIA's efforts by adhering to the dictates of Hygienic Fish Handling Practices and adopt the use of Ahotor oven to increase their profits, and provide their customers with safe and healthy fish. Finally, it is being anticipated that these campaigns, if regularly organized will change the old ways of processing fish by the fish processors and adopt the modern methods of handling fish hygienically, packaging and branding for hotels, super markets, malls, other mini markets emerging and especially for exports to earn foreign currency.

The chairman gave his closing remark. He said fishmongers should ensure proper use of the ice boxes presented to them to enable them achieve the purpose in which the box was given. The women must influence the men to fish responsibly. He further threw more light on good packaging of fish and marketing. Lastly he urged all and sundry to adhere to the education given by CEWEFIA.

He congratulated some fishmongers and processors who have already been observing hygienic practices in handling their fish products. He gave an appeal to the Fisheries Commission, SFMP Officers from Accra and CEWEFIA to support the fish mongers financially.

The durbar came to an end at 2:45 pm in Sekondi and Anlo Beach; at Moree at 2:00 pm and at Elmina at 4:00 pm on the respective dates.

The campaign ended successfully with participants well-informed on the hygienic ways of fish handling and improved oven usage.

Moree recorded the highest participants followed by Anlo-Beach then Sekondi; and the least participation being at Elmina.

APPENDIX 1



Figure 2 A cross section of participants at the durbar grounds at Moree with Nicholas Smith (arrowed), Project Officer for Western Region addressing the audience



Figure 3 Participants in procession at Elmina (left) and Sekondi (right)



Figure 4 Presentation of the ice box at Sekondi with Dr. Margaret Atikpo (in African print)