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SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROJECT (SFMP)

Fisher-2-Fisher Consultation Initiative with GNCFC and NAFPTA



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Cover photo: Group discussion on fisheries management measures in the Volta region during an F2F training event (Credit: Socrates Apetorgbor)

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ACRONYMS

CRC	Coastal Resource Center
F2F	Fisher-2-Fisher dialogues
FC	Fisheries Commission
GNCFC	Ghana National Canoe Fishermen’s Council
GOG	Government of Ghana
IUU	Illegal Unreported Unregulated fishing
MOFAD	Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development
NAFPTA	National Fish Processors and Traders Association
NFMP	National Fisheries Management Plan
SFMP	Sustainable Fisheries Management Project
STMA	Secondi Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly
STWG	Scientific and Technical Working Group
URI	University of Rhode Island
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ghana is currently experiencing a sharp decline in the small pelagic fish stocks as attested by the fisherfolk and scientists alike. Supported by the USAID/Ghana-Sustainable Fisheries Management Project, the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen's Council led the organization and facilitation of series of dialogues across the coast of Ghana. The purpose of the regional dialogues is to assist Fisheries Commission with the timely implementation of the National Fisheries Management Plan (NFMP 2015 – 2019). This report details the responses collated from the four coastal regions in the phase two of SFMP dialogue series dubbed Fisher-to-Fisher dialogue (*F2F*). 1406 fisherfolk made up of chief fishermen, canoe owners, fishermen and fish processors were engaged in discussions on how to sustain their livelihood in line with the objectives of the NFMP. The discussions focused on four management measures outlined in the NFMP for the Artisanal fishery, namely:

- Moratorium on new entrants of canoes,
- Registration and embossment.
- Implementation of additional non-fishing day.
- Proposed closed season.

Representatives from key stakeholders in the fishing industry such as the Fisheries Commission, the district chief executive of Gomoa East District Assembly as well as traditional rulers from the various regions participated in the district level training events. In all the regions where the events were organised, the stakeholders including fishers expressed willingness to contribute in achieving the goals set to help restore the depleted fish stock. The representatives from Fisheries Commission also gave a talk on the overview of fishing industry in Ghana which included the current status of the fishing industry in Ghana, its management challenges and some management actions mainly: (canoe registration and embossment) which are been implemented to reverse and to improve issues threatening food security and livelihoods.

1. BACKGROUND

The main fisheries resources of Ghana have been determined overfished. The small pelagic resources, particularly sardinella, are on the verge of collapse. In response, the Government of Ghana (GoG) and fisheries stakeholders have embarked on a five-year National Fisheries Management Plan (NFMP) to end overfishing and reverse the declining trends of landings and abundance. The plan was prepared and presented by the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (MOFAD) and the Fisheries Commission (FC) to stakeholders and later approved and gazetted in October 2015. The plan calls for a series of management measures to address overfishing and overcapacity, improve fisheries data collection, strengthen fisheries law enforcement and improve value chain and market strategies. The implementation of the fisheries management plan is in motion by first establishing three seasonal closures for the industrial trawlers (November 2016, February – March 2017 and January – February 2018).

Another contributing factor to the depletion of Ghana's small pelagic stock is the lack of effective collaboration between the Fisheries Commission (FC) and the major stakeholder (Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council (GNCFC)). Fishermen see management initiatives from the FC as some alien restraint imposed on them by government and as such do not consent themselves fully to its implementation. This, coupled with lack of sense of ownership of the fisheries resource and irresponsible fishing practices have contributed to the failure of formal fisheries management practices to yield the desired results. Effective implementation of the National Fisheries Management Plan (NFMP) therefore requires an effective partnership between MoFAD/FC and the fisheries stakeholders. To this end, the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council (GNCFC) has been actively involved in the consultation process for rolling out an effective implementation process of the fisheries management plan in order to improve the conditions of the fisheries they depend on and increase business opportunities for their communities. This is in recognition that fisheries management and conservation is the only way to a better and more prosperous future of the industry and the fisheries resources. The Council is committed to initiate new projects to support the implementation of the fisheries management plan and promote the voluntary guidelines of responsible fishing and self-governance adopted by many fishing communities.

As a sign of commitment, the executive members of the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council (GNCFC) referred as "The Council" and the Chief fisherman from Elmina met on July 8th, 2016 to discuss a proposal to support the Fisheries Commission in implementing the fisheries management measures approved in the National Fisheries Management Plan (2015-2019). The proposed project was reviewed and approved for funding by USAID/SFMP in the project's year-3 (FY17) and subsequent (FY18) workplan.

1.1 Objective

The overall objective of this project is to assist MOFAD/FC to achieve in a timely manner the objectives of the NFMP and build appropriate fisheries development models of the artisanal fishing sector through voluntary compliance and self-governance. This will relieve the government of potentially substantial development and regulatory responsibilities that would place additional burdens on an already understaffed and under-funded MOFAD and Fisheries Commission

1.2 Expected outcomes

The expected outcome of the training events is to increase fishermen's engagement to voluntarily assist MoFAD/FC with the implementation of the NFMP (2015-2019). The desired results of the Council is a full implementation of the following management measures

outlined in the plan with full participation of fishermen and other stakeholders. The Council focused on the following actions for 2018:

- C.1.1: Assist the FC to complete the canoe registration nationwide.
- C.1.2: Propose and implement the addition of a second traditional non fishing day.
- C.1.3: Assist the FC to establish a moratorium on new entrants to the fisheries.
- Assist the FC to address IUU and implement 2018 closed season for all fleets.

2. ACTIVITIES AND METHODS

The Council is a key representative of the artisanal fishermen of Ghana and a partner with MOFAD and FC in the development and management programs of the artisanal fisheries sector. The Council took steps to seek solutions outside the contemporary fisheries management model, often designed for the industrial fisheries sector, to address the artisanal fisheries as a viable fishing industry responsible for the large share of fishing effort and harvest. The Council focused on traditional and local methods based on the long standing and recognized social order within fishing communities led by the Chief Fishermen to regulate the fisheries catch and effort.

The key contribution of women in Ghana's fish value chain cannot be overemphasize. Not only are they involved in processing landed fish but also provide financial support, including sponsoring fishing expedition, to the fishermen as well as boat owners. They determine market value of fish through direct sales or bargaining power on behalf of the fishermen. But their active involvement in decision making and implementation of fisheries management measures aimed at rebuilding the fish stock, has been limited over the years though they have also indirectly contributed to the depletion of the small pelagic fish stock. As a result they were also included in the Fisher-2-Fisher (F2F) dialogues to draw their support in implementing the NFMP while giving them a voice to contribute to key decision making in the fishing industry.

In this context, the Council led the organization and the facilitation of a series of dialogues between Fishermen and NAFPTA, named Fisher-2-Fisher (F2F) to organize its members and that of the National Fish Processors and Traders Association (NAFPTA), and increase the capacity of the Council to be able to address the expected responsibilities in fisheries resource management. Chief fishermen and women who were engaged in year 3 facilitated the district level workshops in the four (4) coastal regions of Ghana. It provided direct contact with fishermen, boat owners, captains and fish mothers who have been left out in decision making processes.

The traditional authorities were also directly involved because of their authority to endorse traditional/customary rights which support responsible fishing practices. It also provided an opportunity to educate them on management initiatives and irresponsible fishing practices taking place in their area of authority. They urged their fishers to adopt responsible fishing and effectively collaborate with MOFAD/FC to rebuild the stocks.

In order to improve effective collaboration and build trust between MOFAD/FC and fishers, representatives of the ministry and commission were included in the district level training events. This provided the platform for FC to engage the fishermen and work hand-in-hand to complete the registration and embossment mop-up exercise of the canoes.

The training events involved two sessions; where technical persons from SFMP and FC educated fishers on various management measures outlined in the NFMP (2015 – 2019) and a breakout session facilitated by chief fishermen which gave fishers an opportunity to further discuss the presentations and make input on how to effectively implement such measures.



Figure 1. Left: A facilitator explaining the significance of closed season to a section of participants during F2F in Half Assini. Right: a fish processor reporting out to participants during F2F in Takoradi, Western region



Figure 2. Left: Chief fisherman facilitating a group discussion; Right: Madam Rebecca Sackey-Mensah, a Fisheries Officer explaining the rationale behind canoe registration and embossment at the Volta Regional F2F training event

2.1 Results of the training events across the four (4) regions of Ghana

In total, thirteen (13) districts were selected across the four (4) coastal regions of Ghana with a target of 1600 fishers including boatswains, canoe owners and ordinary fishermen. The series of engagements started in the Adina landing beach in the Volta region and ended at the Secondi Takoradi Municipal Assembly (STMA) in the Western region. The tables below gives the breakdown of the total number of fishers engaged and their responses.

Table 1. Total number of fishers engaged across all four regions

REGION	Male	Females	FC	TOTAL
Volta Region	251	104	3	358
Greater Accra	197	81	4	282
Central	249	111	9	371
Western	294	119	11	424
TOTAL	991	415	27	1433

Table 2. Response of Fishers on management measures

Management measure	Response	Regions				Total (Participants)
		Western	Central	Greater Accra	Volta	1404
Extra non fishing day	Yes	403	358	278	355	1394
	No	10	0	0	0	10
	Undecided	0	0	0	0	0
Moratorium	Yes	130	120	90	100	440
	No	190	150	160	190	690
	Undecided	93	88	28	65	274

Fishers unanimously agreed to add a weekly additional non-fishing day to the existing traditional non-fishing day (tab 2). They agreed to add Sunday to the existing traditional non-fishing day which varied from respective regions. Fishers in Volta region adopted a Sunday and Saturday as the two non-fishing days whereas majority in the three other regions agreed on Sunday and Tuesdays.

In as much as fishers agreed that overcapacity is a major contributing factor to the decline in the small pelagic stock, they found a moratorium on new entrants a difficult measure to adopt. Instead, they proposed that government adopts a rotational system for the canoes. Others proposed that the canoe fleet can be regulated while new ones are allowed, “*a canoe owner who has more than four (4) canoes should not be allowed to bring in a new canoe*” as indicated by the majority.

2.2 Position of fishers on the proposed August 2018 closed season for all fleets

A closed season for all fleets is one of the key management measures recommended by the Science and Technical Working Group (STWG) to address the dwindling small pelagic stock. The month of August was recommended based on scientific evidence that it is, the peak spawning season for the *sardinella* species, anchovy and the chub mackerel as well as the peak upwelling period. However it is also the bumper season for fishers who use that period to settled debts and maximize profit. Even though the current state of the small pelagic stock

means that fishers have not really had a bumper period for about 7years now, they continue to budget and prepare their inputs in anticipation of a good catch during August. In as much as they agreed to a closed season, the majority did not embrace the August closer but rather suggested other months based on local knowledge about the fisheries.

Below is a breakdown of responses from the fishers on the closed season.

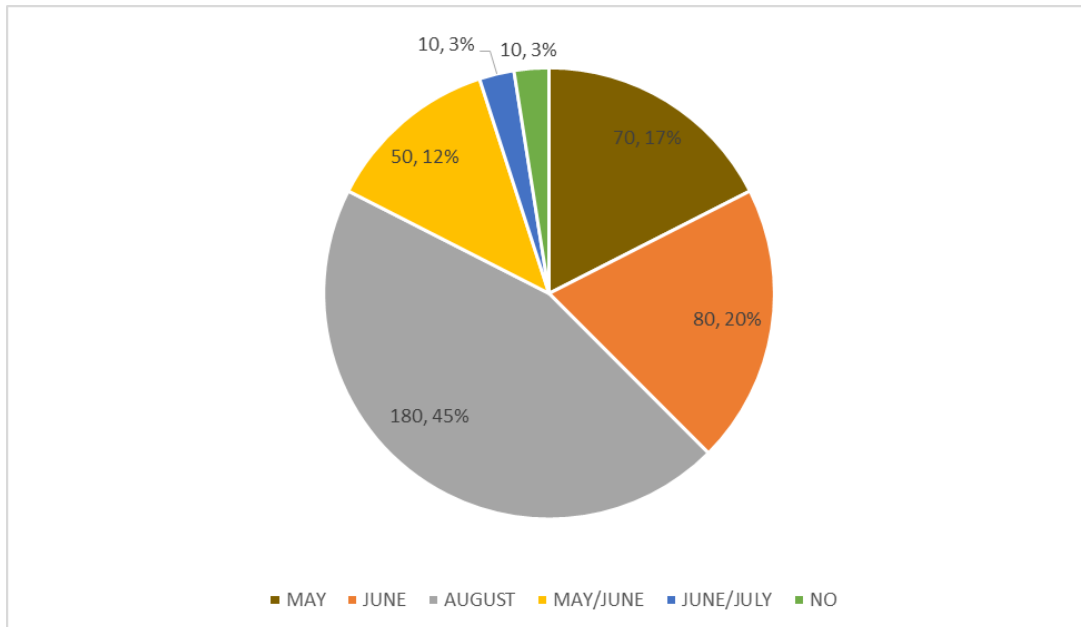


Figure 3. A chart showing the preferred month for the close season by fisher folks in Western region

Fishers who agreed to an August closure (Fig 3) in the Western region did so on condition that government will provide alternative livelihood and show considerable commitment to addressing Illegal Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. Others who disagreed with the recommendation from the STWG, proposed May and June as the best time to close the fishery.

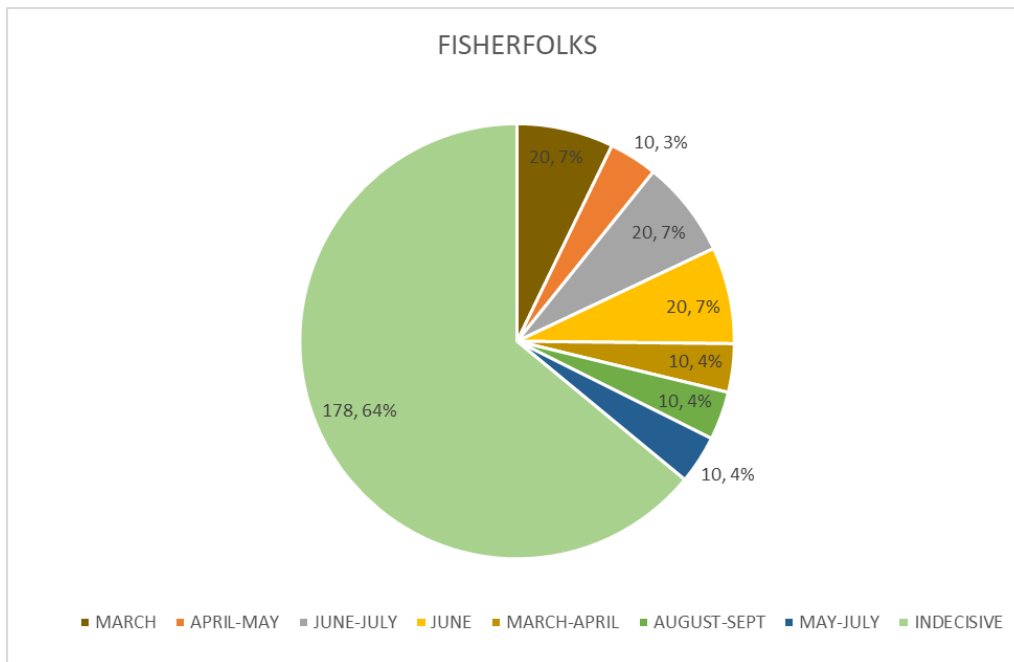


Figure 4. A chart showing the preferred month for a close season by fisher folks in Greater Accra region

Fishers in the Greater Accra did not agree to a closed season even though they agreed the stocks were on the verge of collapse. They believe the major contributing factor to the declined stock is IUU and urged MOFAD/FC to adopt stringent measures to address it in order to save the industry. Another reason to their disagreement is the lack of alternative livelihood options in the capital city. Unlike the other three (3) regions where some fishers have lands and can thus cultivate crops or other forms of farming during the period of the closed season, the same cannot be said of those in Greater Accra due to urbanization and industrialization. Fishers therefore could not fathom sitting at home without doing anything.

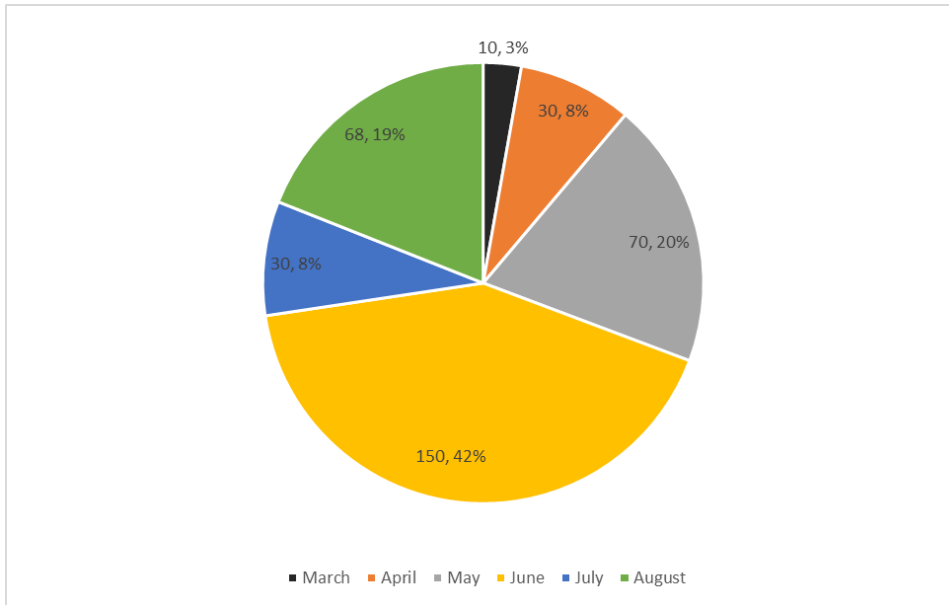


Figure 5. A chart showing the preferred month for close season by fisherfolks in the Central region

Fishers in the Central region expressed similar concerns as those in the Greater Accra region though they suggested June on condition that government will support them with alternative livelihood options. They believe that a closure in June will allow a good catch in August.

Fishers in the Volta region agreed to an August closed season but pleaded with MOFAD/FC to implement it in 2019 to allow them ample time to save towards it. They supported the recommendation from the STWG and urged MOFAD/FC to map out strategy to assist them address IUU in the region before implementing the closure.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The F2F continue to improve effective collaboration between government and key stakeholders in the fisheries sector, gradually building the needed constituencies that provide the political will and public support necessary to make hard choices and changed behavior needed to rebuild the nation's stock.

3.1 Canoe registration and embossment

Fishermen in all four (4) regions reiterated their commitment to support the FC in the canoe registry clean-up. As a follow up to initial comments on the inflation of the number of canoes due to the registration of inactive vessels, the fishers proposed effective collaboration between fisheries zonal officers and chief fishermen to clean up the registry of all inactive vessels as well as persons without canoes. In response to this initiative, the FC agreed to print and share the canoe registry with the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council (GNCFC) who will facilitate this exercise in the respective landing sites through the chief fishermen. This is the first time the FC and fishers worked together to clean up the registry since the inception of the registration and embossment exercise. The significance of this collaborative exercise is to build trust between government and stakeholders. It is the first significant step to address the issue of overcapacity since fishers rejected the FCs report of over 14,000 canoes.

The FC printed and distributed the canoe registry to all Chief Fishermen on May 29, 2018. This exercise is a follow up commitment from the fishers to support the canoe registry clean-up in order to have accurate data on active canoes. Completion of the exercise will inform decision makers on the canoe fleet size and the needed actions to either reduce or maintain the numbers.

3.2 Additional Non-fishing day

Another key outcome of the F2F is the implementation of the additional weekly non-fishing day in fulfillment of Section C1.2 of the NFMP. Chief fishermen who were trained in the first series of engagements in Year 3 sensitized their members on the importance of adopting of an additional weekly non-fishing day in all regions, in addition to the already established traditional non-fishing day in each region. The fishers also called on the government to implement and codify the agreed two weekly non-fishing days across the four coastal regions. This has become necessary since fishers have already begun flouting the Tuesday traditional non-fishing day due to the lack of fish. They believe the two days are their contribution to reducing the excessive pressure on the fishery resource. Fishers agreed amongst themselves to use the two weekly non-fishing days to rest, address issues at the landing sites and attend social functions.

It was expected that additional weekly non-fishing days would be implemented in each region in quarter two (2) that will designate “no fishing at sea” and “no landing of catch” on days appropriate to each region's tradition practices

The Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council (GNCFC) agreed to organize a press conference on Tuesday 17th April, 2018 at Mensvic Hotel in the Greater Accra Region. The aim was to publicly announce their decision and commitment to observe an additional weekly non-fishing day across all the landing beaches in the four coastal regions of Ghana; in fulfilment of section C1.2 of the National Fisheries Management Plan

The proposed announcement of the additional non-fishing day was postponed by government. Notwithstanding that postponement, fishers in the Volta region agreed to implement it. This decision is borne out of the level of education and subsequent ownership of management measures through the F2F initiative.

3.3 Closed season for all fleets

The F2F also served as a medium to educate the fishers on the proposed August Closed Season for all fleets. In as much as fishers agreed in principle on the need to close the fishery, they found August 2018 unacceptable. Fishers indicated that August 2018 was too close as they were unprepared since they had already taken loans for their fishing expedition and hope to use the month to repay their debt. After the breakout sessions which allowed fishers to discuss and propose measures to effectively implement additional non-fishing day, moratorium on new entrants of canoes, canoe registry clean-up and closed season, they found the August 2018 timing the most difficult decision to accept. Fishers proposed a September 2018 closure since August is a bumper season. They however suggested that ample time be given to enable them save towards an August closure in 2019. They admonished government to take effective measures to enforce and curb IUU to save the fishery. The fishers admitted having erred in adopting irresponsible fishing practices which have contributed to the deplorable state of the stock but emphasized that the government needs to support them to reverse the current trend.

The F2F provided the platform to confirm projections from the STWG report. Fishers reported that three (*Sardinella aurita*, *Sardinella madarensis* and *Scomber colias*) of the four target species projected to collapse by 2020, were hard to land, which has led to their importation. They were delighted to have contributed to scientific findings to make informed decision. This further provides a sense of ownership to management measures which in turn improves the willingness of stakeholders to voluntarily adopt key measures thereby improving voluntary compliance in the communities

3.4 Collaboration between MOFAD/FC and major stakeholders in the implementation of NFMP

The F2F continue to improve effective collaboration between government and key stakeholders in the fisheries sector, gradually building the needed constituencies that provide the political will and public support necessary to make hard choices and changed behavior needed to rebuild the nation's stock. It was highlighted by the GNCFC, which leads the dialogues in all regions with support of SFMP, at 2017's World Fisheries Day Celebration in Keta Municipality, Volta Region, on Tuesday, 21 November. During the celebration, government and traditional authorities acknowledged the success of F2F dialogues in generating consensus on actions aimed at rebuilding and sustaining Ghana's coastal fisheries, as well as the challenges they still face. Stakeholders and government representatives

expressed their high expectations for the F2F as a key collaboration mechanism to rebuild depleted coastal fisheries stocks.

Traditional leaders and fisherfolk see the F2F not only as a tool to educate and build consensus, but to also restore the respect accorded them in years past. An opportunity to be involved in policy formulation and implementation is seen as a way for traditional authorities to help government rebuild declining small pelagic stocks. They see this as a new era where fisherfolk are working with both government and traditional authorities to identify practical measures to address issues concerning livelihoods, food security and community stability

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

One key component of the F2F is to give fishers the opportunity to suggest other measures that can support the NFMP to achieve its objectives. Based on that, fishers made the following recommendations;

- Leadership in the fisheries chain should be strengthened at all levels. In the past, chief fishermen yielded some powers to ensure sanity in the fisheries sector but such authority is nonexistence due to political interference. The issues with IUU activities and other issues could be dealt with if they are recognized with specific roles assigned them.
- The capacity of chief fishermen should be built in order to enlighten them on the laws governing fisheries. Knowledge acquired will be transferred to the fishermen and the entire fisherfolks in every coastal community.
- MOFAD/FC should increase enforcement mechanisms and resources at the various landing sites. Fishermen believe the presence of a Police post at the beach will instill fear in fishermen who are recalcitrant and fast track prosecution to serve as a deterrent to other fishermen.
- In order to help enforce laws as well as effectively support the NFMP, Chief Fishermen are now requesting the Fisheries Commission to authorize them to make arrests where necessary in cases where fishers do not observe the adoption of these new non-fishing days and close seasons
- MOFAD should carry out a series of sensitization and training events throughout the entire landing beaches in the country. The sensitization should create a platform for questions and answers to give fishers absolute understanding on the need to promote responsible fishing.