

## INCREASING APPETITE FOR HEALTHY FISH PROCESSING IN GHANA

Fish processing is a major source of income for the majority of women in Elmina, a fishing community in the Central Region. Their effort contributes to the food security of their families, their products feed much of community, and finished products are exported to many other areas of the country including the northern regions of Ghana.

The women's business expansion and levels of incomes are hindered by a lack of skills and knowledge on how to manage their finances. Most also lack knowledge and skills related to hygienic fish processing, storage, and packaging.

Women like Victoria Koomson, the Executive Director of the Central and Western Fishmongers Improvement Association (CEWEFIA), a local non-governmental organization based in Elmina, provide support to these women to help them address these challenges. She sums up her concern about the plight of women processors, "Seeing the women with their babies strapped to their back smoking fish in the heat of the smokers, made worse by the hot sun beating down on them, was such a worry to me.",

Starting four years ago, Victoria planned her approach. She needed to renovate and upgrade a fish processing facility that her association rents to migrant fish processors to provide a better working environment for these women. Working with support from the USAID Sustainable Fisheries Management Project, and in collaboration with the Ghana Fisheries Commission, she started to work.



### FAST FACTS

#### CEWEFIA Fish Processing Facility

- The CEWEFIA Fish Processing and Training Center offers a safer and more comfortable place to work, it also meets the Fisheries Commission basic standards for local hygienic fish processing kitchens.
- The Center now offers training on hygienic fish handling and processing techniques, hygienic packaging, fire safety, small business financial management, value addition opportunities, record keeping and improved processing technologies like the new fish smoking *Ahotor* oven.
- The *Ahotor*, meaning "comfort" in the local dialect, uses 30 percent less fuelwood, significantly reduces smoke exposure to women and their dependent children, and reduces cancer causing compounds in smoked fish that can affect the health of processors and consumers.
- The CEWEFIA Fish Processing and Training Center was designed around the concept of separate work areas for fish receiving and washing, smoking, cooling, and packaging. This avoids cross contamination as fish move through the separate stages.
- More than 1,823 women processors have received training from the center to improved their skills over the last four years.

“We provide training that ultimately improves all aspects of fish processors’ lives and produces healthier fish for their families and consumers. At the same time, we are addressing specific environmental concerns by reducing pressure on mangrove forests used for fuelwood. This is change by our people for our people”

*Victoria Koomson, the Executive Director of CEWEFIA.*



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#### USAID/SFMP APPROACH

The Sustainable Fisheries Management Project works in close partnership with the Post-Harvest Unit of the Fisheries Commission through its partners to improve fish harvesting techniques, promote the adoption of efficient processing technologies and enhance the packaging of fish products through value addition to meet local and international standards. The project further works to:

- **Introduce efficient fish processing technology (Ahotor oven)** to support national and regional government efforts to improve hygienic fish processing and reduce post-harvest losses in the small-scale fish processing sector across the country.
- **Improve Hygienic Fish handling and Processing methods** to achieve the Class I hygienic fish processing certification established by the Fisheries Commission that signifies the women have achieved the minimum standards of hygienic fish processing and handling in Ghana.
- **Strengthen capacity of fish processors** CEWEFIA’s trainings have already improved the skills of more than 1,823 women processors over the last four years. The capacity of the CEWEFIA’s staff is now at a level where they are driving their own programs and expanding their services to government and communities across in Central and Western Regions.

#### About the Feed the Future:

Feed the Future is the U.S. Government’s global hunger and food security initiative. With a focus on smallholder agricultural and fisheries activities, especially those implemented by women, the Feed the Future program supports partner countries in developing their agriculture, fisheries and other food related sectors to spur economic growth and trade that increases incomes and reduces hunger, poverty and malnutrition. For more information, visit [www.feedthefuture.gov](http://www.feedthefuture.gov).

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