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SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROJECT (SFMP)

COMMUNIQUE:
Fisheries Stakeholder Engagement
2020 Fisher–2–Fisher (F2F) Dialogues Process

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COMMUNIQUE

Fisheries Stakeholder Engagement

2020 Fisher–2–Fisher (F2F) Dialogues Process

The Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council (GNCFC) and the Fisheries Commission (FC) jointly led the coordination and facilitation of series of *Fisher to Fisher (F2F)* dialogues across the coastal regions of Ghana with the support of USAID/Ghana Sustainable Fisheries Management Project. About **1200** participants made up of fisheries officers from the Fisheries Commission, traditional rulers, chief fishermen, canoe owners, fishermen and fish processors, representatives of the various fisheries associations including National Fisheries Association of Ghana (NAFAG) and the Ghana Industrial Trawlers Association (GITA) were engaged in discussions on how to sustain Ghana's fisheries resources. In the Volta Region the F2F was held at two locations - Adina and Keta - and stakeholders within the surrounding villages were invited to participate with active involvement of the regional and zonal staff of the Fisheries Commission at both locations. In the Greater Accra Region stakeholders assembled at four locations; Sege, Prampram, Tema, and James Town. Four locations were selected for the F2F dialogues in the Western Region and these were; Sekondi, Agona, Axim and Half Assin. Attached is the list of participants across the three regions. Due to the directive by Government to ban all public meetings in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, F2F meetings scheduled for the Central Region could not be held.

The overall objective of the F2F dialogue process was to create a platform for all fisheries stakeholders to interact and discuss issues pertaining to the sector and reach consensus on key policy decisions and strengthen collaboration between fisheries managers and fishers (resources harvesters and processors). Taking cognizance of the existing and emerging policy and management concerns within the fisheries sector, the 2020 F2F dialogue processes focused on the following issues:

- Implementation of the 2020 Closed Season for all fleets including the selection of the most opportune period for this year's fishing closed season, based on available scientific data, with the view of increasing recruitment of juvenile fish species in order to rebuild the depleted fish stock.
- Implementation of the Canoe Identification Card (CIC) System associated with the establishment a moratorium on new entrants to the marine canoe sector.
- Preparatory arrangements for the implementation of the Fisheries Co-Management Policy.
- Eradication of Illegal transshipment (*saiko*)

The Deliberations among stakeholders reached the following action points and recommendations intended to inform policy and management decisions in pursuit of sustainable fisheries management measures so as to achieve profitability for the sector.

- 1. Closed Season for 2020:** The fishers acknowledged the need to protect spawning fish stocks in order to improve the small pelagic fisheries such as sardinellas, mackerels and anchovies. Majority of fishers agreed to observe the 2020 closed season for one month between **July and August for all fishing fleets** to attain maximum gains taking cognizance

of the scientific information availed to them. Please see analysis of stakeholder perspectives on which months constitutes the most appropriate period for the implementation of the fisheries closed season below (Figure 1 shows the differences with respect to choice of preferred month for the implementation of the 2020 fisheries closed season by breakout groups at the regional F2F meetings and Figure 2 shows the preferred period for all breakout groups combined). At each location, fishers; both men and women were divided into breakout groups after extensive discussions on the key issues mentioned above. The breakout sessions then discuss further and make recommendations for action on the issues discussed including which month they would prefer to have the closed season for 2020 implemented. Fishers recommended that government should put stringent measures in place to curb IUU, particularly “saiko”, light fishing, use of fine mesh nets, chemical and dynamite fishing after the ban is lifted as promised by government during the 2019 closed season in order to reduce the landing of juvenile fish species in unreasonable and substantial quantities. Failure to curb such IUU fishing practices will render closed season ineffective and lead to noncompliance by fishers with future fisheries management interventions by the FC including unwillingness to participate in subsequent fisheries closed seasons.

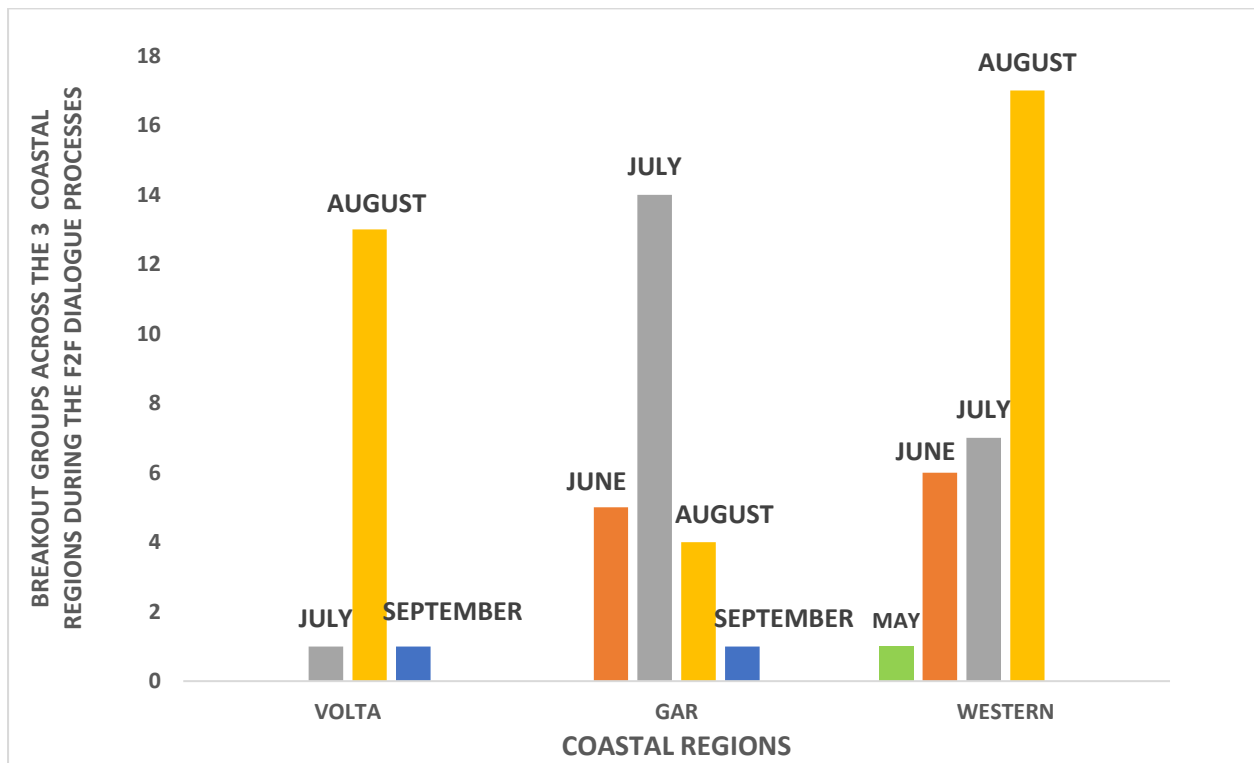


Figure 1. The preferred month for the 2020 closed season by fisher folks in Volta, Greater Accra and Western regions.

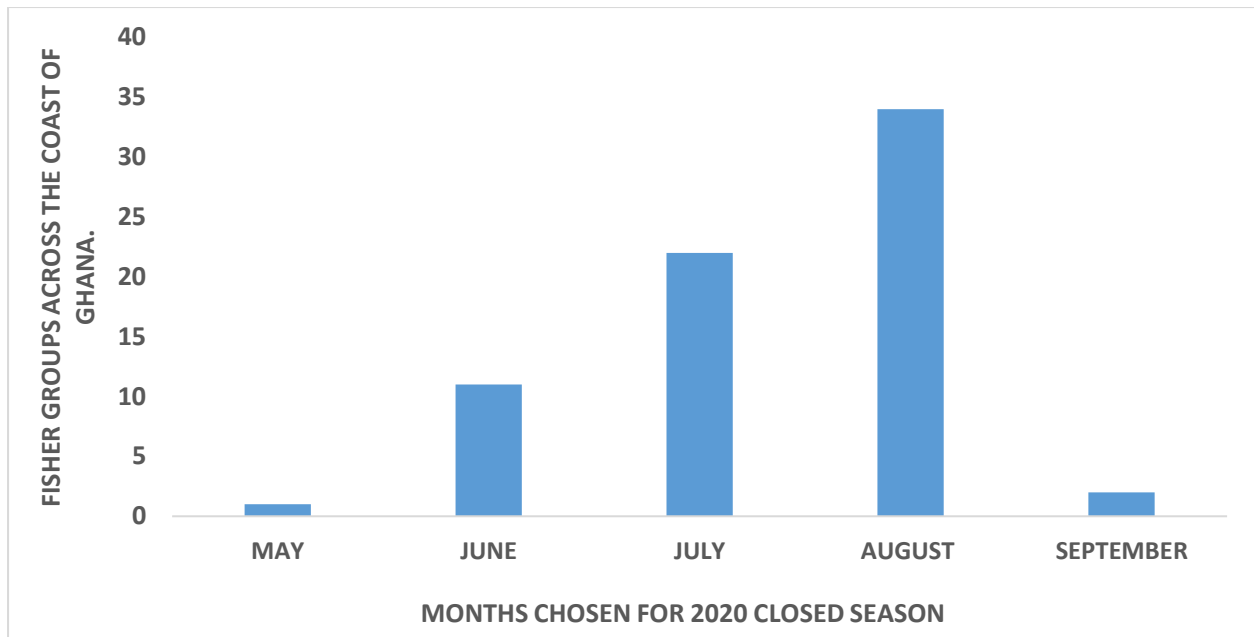


Figure 2. The preferred month for the 2020 closed season by all marine fisher folks in Ghana.

- 2. Canoe Identification Card (CIC) and Moratorium on New Canoe Entrants:** The CIC is a fisheries management tool to regulate the influx of new canoes which will go a long way to contribute significantly to effort reduction. The implementation of the CIC system will also enhance the regulatory functions of the Fisheries Commission and facilitate the work of the Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Unit and help curb illegal fishing activities.

This concept was embraced by all fishers through the Fisher- to-Fisher dialogues (F₂F) as many fishers called for its immediate implementation. The F₂F dialogue process therefore arrived at the recommendation that the Ministry implement a grace period until the end of 2020 after which every canoe owner would be required to have their canoes registered and issued with a CIC. There was the consensus that a moratorium of three (3) years should be observed during which there should be a ban on issuing of cards to new canoes and owners and allow only renewal or replacement of damaged or missing CICs. The dialogue also recommended that the CIC should be linked to distribution and sales or allocation of premix fuel.

- 3. Adoption of an Additional Fishing Holiday:** Through the F₂F engagements, fishers have unanimously maintained that an additional non-fishing day should be declared to complement the already existing non-fishing day, in order to reduce pressure on the severely depleted small pelagic stocks. Consensus reached across the three regions indicated that fishers in Volta Region have committed to observe Saturdays and Sundays as non-fishing days, while Greater Accra and the Western region will observe Sundays and Tuesdays.

Observing these additional non-fishing days will reduce the pressure on the stocks and contribute to stock rebuilding efforts. The fishers therefore appeal to the Ministry and the Fisheries Commission to take the necessary steps to codify the above-mentioned days as non-fishing days for the Volta, Greater Accra, and Western regions and work in collaboration with Chief fishermen and the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council to enforce this effort reduction strategy. A similar intervention should be implemented for the Central Region after consultation with them.

- 4. Implementation of Actions to Eradicate Illegal Transshipment of Fish ('Saiko' fishing):** Trawlers are increasingly exploiting small pelagic fish resources, contributing significantly to the depletion and near collapse of the stocks, depriving artisanal fishers of their livelihoods. The artisanal fishers resorting to illegal practices to harvest the remaining fish has worsened the situation. Under this scenario, efforts at stock recovery such as fisheries closed season will not yield any meaningful result. A recent study estimated that nearly 100,000 metric tons of fish are landed annually through "Saiko", operations all of which are juvenile fish species with approximately 55% these juveniles fish being small pelagic species. The trawlers, although licensed to catch demersal fish are targeting small pelagic species, reserved for the artisanal fishers, and transship them illegally in specially built canoes owned by local businessmen and sell the fish to local communities. The consensus of the 2020 F2F dialogue was that the Fisheries Commission, Fisheries Enforcement Unit and the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development should immediately take necessary steps to eradicate the practice of "saiko" fishing and find ways to reduce the excessive by-catch of juveniles by the trawler fleet.
- 5. Implementation of the National Fisheries Co-Management Policy:** The F2F dialogues recommended that government should empower the chief fishermen to take responsibility on the management of fisheries resources at the community level.

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